Adeshina Afolayan and Demosophy

An Introduction to an African Philosophy of the Future

Nimi Wariboko

This essay offers an interpretative analysis of Nigerian philosopher Adeshina Afolayan's thoughts on the postcolonial predicament and developmental challenges facing Africa and African philosophy. Through a close reading of Afolayan's philosophical oeuvre published between 2002 and 2020, the author offers interpretative insights on how Afolayan's thought can help Africans to address the ideational and developmental challenges facing them today. This work takes the reader into the heart of Afolayan's philosophical beliefs and assumptions that drive his scholarship. The essay names Afolayan's philosophy as demosophy, *providing a survey of its terrain and subjecting it to critical evaluation. The essay brings Afolayan's thoughts into rigorous conversations with a broad range of African and Western philosophers.*

Keywords: demosophy; Africa; postcolonial; postmodern; modernity; hybridity; orthodoxy; orthopathy; shape of spirit

> If your philosophy fails you in the face of the African predicament, your philosophy is poor.*

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> The interpretation of a pleromatic philosophy is an act of (a) uncovering it as a palimpsest of earlier ideas, even as one finds the philosopher's voice and walks with her on her solitary path to wisdom; (b) dialogical interaction with its deep structure: both found and created. Scholars have always interpreted other scholars, in various ways. The point is, however, to make legible their deep structures of thought, and (c) going beyond the "letters" of the conclusions of her work to grasp the key dimensions or recover the creative impulses that she missed in the actualization of her thought.**

Introduction

What becomes of philosophy—I mean African philosophy—if the predicament of Africa is placed at the center of its inquiry? This essay explores the conceptual framework, interpretative logic, and discursive practices of a Nigerian philosopher, Adeshina Afolayan of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, whose body of work responds to this question. By framing philosophical inquiry around the African predicament, he points out the grave inadequacies of philosophy in Africa and the potential for its transformation into a major interlocutor for human flourishing on the continent.[1] Taking the quest for overcoming this predicament as the starting point for African philosophy allows Afolayan to interrogate the impact of the discipline on the everyday life of Africans, ground the connections between Africa and philosophy, and generate an original assemblage of concepts to articulate a new vision for human flourishing.

In Afolayan's scholarship we encounter creative and analytical thought that speaks to contemporary debates about the conceptualization of African development. His burgeoning philosophy, produced between 2002 and 2020 and distilled into a thousand pages, has been directed at the explication of five key subject matters that are highly relevant in postcolonial Nigeria. His is a provocative turn to the poverty of development, to the crisis of Africa's self-identity, its quest for modernity, and the disorder of the postcolonial order—the fundaments of African predicament in his oeuvre—as the primary symbols, generative sources, and articulatory architectonics for philosophical reflection. It is, indeed, a turn to the people (*demos*)—for his thought stands in and stands out of the people—and their existential conditions. In the excruciating existential

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conditions of Africans, Afolayan's philosophy lives and moves. His scholarship is a bold attempt to turn philosophy into a ball-head emancipatory project, whose embrace must swing wide open the door of liberatory development for Africans. Afolayan's scholarly endeavor is directed at correlating the problems of Africa with the resources in African philosophy. For him, both the African postcolony and African philosophy are missing something in their individual cores. They are circulating or structured around a void. They lack the power to address or satisfy the fundamental task of promoting human flourishing. In particular, African philosophy is as empty of power as the statues of Greek gods which no longer bend the knees of devotees of the gods. The deep grooves of his scholarship are structured around how to precisely identify this "lack" and repair it.

There is a certain emptiness in African philosophy or in the African postcolony that traumatizes. Afolayan's scholarship portrays the void that this absence of spirit creates. The void that Afolayan denotes reminds one of the emptiness evoked by Romanian artist Albert György's sculpture *Mélancholie* (Figure 1). This is a figure of a man sitting on a bench, slumped over, with a giant hole as his core. The hollowness portrays the massive hole created by grief when we lose a loved one. For György, the massive hole at the center of the figure denotes the abysmal void he felt when he lost his wife.

The close reading of Afolayan's philosophical publications left me with a sentiment like the effect on me of György's sculpture. I got the unmistakable feeling that the heart, soul, or spirit of either African philosophy or the African postcolony has been devoured by the imps of imperialism and of traumas generated by the crises of self-identity.

The combined weight of a thousand pages of Afolayan's philosophical corpus comes down to this one point: the African postcolony and African philosophy are "spiritless." The curriculum for philosophical education in Africa decidedly does not represent an African philosophical framework that speaks to Africa's indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial realities. He writes: "The implication here is straightforward: teachers of philosophy in [African] universities teach a philosophy curriculum that is grossly out of touch with their immediate realities and sociocultural dynamics."[2] His turn to focus on the African predicament as the starting point of philosophy is structured around his desire to breathe spirit into African philosophy so it can become the living soul in the African body (body politic). Afolayan's philosophy makes visible African bodies (physical, textual, and sociopolitical) in pain, in melancholy. His body of

Figure 1: *Mélancholie*, a sculpture by Albert György, 2012. The sculpture is located at Lake Geneva, Switzerland. Source: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_György

work is a system of philosophical analysis, critique, and deep meditation on the body in pain. His body of work is simultaneously an analysis of the physical suffering of the body in pain and a body of his scholarship bursting out from the forehead of its androgynous parental body in pain.

The African body that captures Afolayan's gaze is postcolonial. This is the framework of rule and subjection, colonial rationality, material practices, symbols, and more that holds Africans under the captivity of violence, disorder, the crisis of self-identity and self-interpretation, and poverty. Postcoloniality for him is

> a complex motif that persistently confronts . . . Africans with the question of agency, identity and development as well as the persistent possibility of alternative material, intellectual and cultural configurations around these issues. The postcolonial challenge, therefore, is that of facilitating the emancipatory project embedded in decolonization but which, like decolonization itself, stands arrested. . . . I am not sure, as we are wont to say, whether it takes little reflection to see the place and role of philosophy in this postcolonial challenge. But philosophy matters in the postcolonial and its attempt at achieving emancipation from colonialism in all its forms. Since it cannot afford to be pretentious or playful, philosophy in a postcolonial context cannot afford theoretical playfulness or complacency.[3]

The task of philosophy is to show the pathway out of this entrapment. But African philosophers—especially Nigerian philosophers he named as *homo academicus Nigerianus*—have not paid adequate attention to this duty.[4] Their so-called theoretically sophisticated philosophies, written to compare themselves with themselves, are at best only the last beautiful veil that covers the specter of extreme poverty that haunts Africans.[5] His abiding attention to this emancipatory task, engaging the populace in philosophy and eschewing "theoretical playfulness" that only thrives in the rarified air of the seminar rooms, led him to develop a philosophy that I will call *demosophy* (*demos*/common people + *sophia*/wisdom or knowledge). I use this term to describe a self-correcting method of properly applying philosophical reason coded in a popular, democratically accessible discourse to resolve national problems and undergird relentless efforts to cast a vision for human flourishing in an egalitarian community. This is a philosophy that is deliberately demotic in character and

conscious of its role in human life as a site for the conception and discussion of the key human values by which a good social order and episteme could be constructed and sustained.

This paradigm of philosophy is not without its problems or tensions. One is compelled to ask: Has the configuration of philosophy as presented by Afolayan not conflated everyday philosophy of governance with professional philosophy?[6] Is philosophizing for emancipation the only valid way of doing philosophy in Africa? Are philosophers in Africa who can afford "theoretical playfulness" not genuinely African? How does Afolayan handle differences? Has he reduced philosophy to social transformation and identified it with only the just ordering of society? In this reduction, how does the "other" to his program of philosophy survive? How should the irreducible presence of the other retune or reorient Afolayan's philosophical praxis? Will he allow the "other philosophy" which he rejects to retain its "otherness"—its particularity and self? Or is it reduced to some projection, caricature, and the ethical domestication of the other?[7] Is Afolayan's philosophy capable of emerging into a *new, authentic* African philosophy in its encounter with the alterity of the other, with the uncanny strangeness of neighboring philosophies? These are some of the questions we will address in this essay on the contemporary task of African philosophy as understood by Afolayan.

We have just completed the survey of the territory of Afolayan's philosophy. Let us proceed to map the terrain as our next job at hand; after that we will execute a structural examination of its mansion. In this mansion, there are many rooms, and I will take time to give you a guided tour of some of them. While at it, I will seek out and identify the "spirit" that dwells in the mansion, that is, the soul (*Geist*) that inhabits his philosophical constructions. In engaging Afolayan's work along these three dimensions, I will follow the trail of his thinking as it folds, enfolds, and unfolds implicitly through his publications. The goal is to regain or uncover the creative impulse that he missed in the actualization of his thought, "to connect to what was already 'in [Afolayan] more than [Afolayan] himself,' more than his explicit system, its excessive core."[8] This is to say, reading Afolayan to isolate the key breakthrough of his thought in his works as they relate to African philosophy, then showing how he necessarily missed the key dimension of his discovery, and "finally, showing how, in order to do justice to his key breakthrough, one has to move beyond [Afolayan]."[9] This going beyond means betraying the *text-flesh* of his thought to grasp its *text-soul*. So,

precisely, what is the dimension of African philosophy that shines through in the explosion of his thought on the philosophy of the African predicament and its concrete actualization in his corpus but slipped into the virtual state and haunts any close reading of his oeuvre? What is the proper embodiment of this excess betrayed by Afolayan's scholarship?

The Terrain of Afolayan's Philosophy

I want to offer a map to enable readers to quickly orient themselves to the terrain of Afolayan's work in terms of *region, period, theme, figures, movement, methodology*, and *deep structure of thought*.

Region: As already indicated, the "geographical place" of his philosophy is Nigeria and Africa: "If philosophy . . . is intimately concerned with the human condition, then it must necessarily be concerned also with the place where the dynamics of that condition are concretely demonstrated."[10]

Period: The Nigeria he focuses his energy on is Nigeria as a postcolony. Nigeria attained political independence from Britain in 1960, and his philosophical studies focus on this post-independence era. He says, "There is no doubt that Nigeria, as a postcolony, constitutes a subset of postcolonial trauma that defines colonialism in Africa. The Nigerian state and society partake, in large measure, of the pain, suffering, and violence dictated by the tragedy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism."[11]

Theme: The themes of Afolayan's philosophy are development, the crisis of self-identity, modernity, a disorder of the postcolony, and film/popular culture.[12]

Figures: The key figures that act as his perennial interlocutors are Kwasi Wiredu, Achille Mbembe, Paulin Hountondji, Abiola Irele, Olusegun Oladipo, Peter Bodunrin, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Antonio Gramsci, Hegel, and Plato. The thinker who has had the greatest impact on Afolayan's scholarship is Wiredu. From his earliest essays to his most mature work today, Afolayan's constant intellectual companion has been Wiredu. For instance, in an early essay published in 2009, recognizing the crucial significance of Wiredu's African philosophical project for his scholarship, he writes:

> I have chosen him because his work is representative of the discursive shape contemporary African philosophy is taking. The first reason why this is so

> manifests in his recognition that African philosophy, beyond the critique of Eurocentrism, stands at the critical juncture between the colonial and the postcolonial. This is the critical intent behind his assertion that "Contemporary Africa is in the middle of a transition from a *traditional* to a *modern* society." Such a transition is however tortured, uneasy and uncategorized.[13]

Although Wiredu is Afolayan's regular intellectual companion, I would not say that Afolayan is a Wiredu scholar. He mines Wiredu's work for inspiration and direction to forge his own thoughts on the connection between philosophy and the African predicament. Let me quickly provide the context or background through which Afolayan chose to embrace Wiredu and the other figures mentioned above. When Afolayan studied philosophy at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the curriculum of the philosophy department was dominated by Western philosophy. According to Afolayan:

> We had more courses that outline the various dimensions of Western philosophy than those that speaks to Africa's philosophical heritage. And so we had few opportunities to reflect on the political power of philosophy vis-à-vis Africa's and Nigeria's postcolonial predicament. Thus, even though Plato's analysis of political power, Sartre's understanding of existential angst, Kant's deontology, Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence or Carol Gilligan's theory of moral development might have some reflexive utility for ruminating on the African condition, the experiential trajectories of these philosophers are far removed from the context of postcoloniality and how it conditions the very act of thinking and acting.[14]

Students like Afolayan who yearned to address the predicament of postcolonial Africa searched for philosophical training that would go beyond Western theories and theorizing. They wanted a philosophy curriculum that would enable them to combine theory and praxis to address the issues of socioeconomic development of Africa. They got what they wanted outside the regular curriculum of studies. While the curriculum was dominated by Western philosophy, there were always vigorous debates going on among key African philosophers within and outside the department that covered topics such as the modern or postmodern stature of Africa, ethnophilosophy, and the predicament facing the African postcolony. The African philosophers whose debates

and works fired the imagination of young Afolayan were Olusegun Oladipo, A. G. A. Bello, Godwin Sogolo, Peter Bodunrin, Dipo Irele, and Kola Olu-Owolabi. Afolayan puts it this way:

> The discourse began to unravel arguments, orientations, and African philosophers that our curriculum did not syllabically indicate: Kwasi Wiredu, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Dismas Masolo, Valentin Mudimbe, Anthony Appiah, and many more. And it was essentially the vibrancy of the postcolonial African philosophical discourse—the issue around the capacity of philosophy to transform the continent—that further deepened my resolve to make philosophy a vocation. And by the time I was up for a doctoral program, it just seemed so natural that I would opt for areas of specialization that explore the postcolonial predicament of Africa, and the spatial and placial philosophical dynamics that push the bounds of human flourishing on the continent.[15]

The training and stimulation that came from the extra-curriculum learning deeply affected his understanding of the role of philosophy in national development. Consequently, he directed the focus of his philosophical thinking to Africa and how to contextualize philosophy in specific African states:

> It began to dawn on me that the concept of "African philosophy" ought to be further delineated in a way that contextualizes what Africa means in terms of the philosophical traditions of states like Nigeria and their unique ways of coming to terms with the African predicament. Philosophy owes a debt to its place and space. And reflecting on that debt at the continental level seems a bit too abstract for me.[16]

According to him, it was this realization that led him to fall in love with ethnophilosophy and how it can be updated to serve Africa's current needs:

> The emotional appeal of ethnophilosophy, despite its internal incoherence, was instantaneous for me. It was a framework that speaks to Africa's denigrated status, and a means of recuperating it, however exhibitionistic that was. And so, the critique of ethnophilosophical reason becomes for me a research program that has the potential to serve as a first step in the reflection about the African renaissance. Within the ambit of ethnophilosophical reason, one is confronted

> with a unique opportunity to explore the dangers of an insular reflection of Africa's past and future, as well as the promises of possible conversations with the rest of the world.[17]

Movement: The philosophical movements (schools of thought) he studies often are "updated ethnophilosophy," postcolonial thought, and philosophy as social criticism.[18] In his hands, philosophical methodology (engagement) assumes the mode of cultural (social) criticism, social creativity, and political engagement in which he enjoins his readers to resist commitment to any knowledge machinery that works to understand the world but not to change it. Philosophy, instead, must provoke moral development and enact constituting and constituted social practices of human flourishing. A philosophy faithful to the spirit of development and decolonization does not allow itself the luxury of bathing in the blithe air of the problematics and vocabulary of past Western philosophy or the thought patterns of colonizing and colonized minds and their spirits (specters), but must continuously work to invent theories, analyses, and language that dismantle systems of oppression and domination.[19]

Methodology: I describe his multidisciplinary research method as *methodological pluralism*. There are three other terms that I will use to describe Afolayan's method of philosophy: a critical analysis of the situation, *transdifferentiation*, and ritual archive. These three enrich our knowledge or appreciation of his methodological pluralism.

I interpret one of the planks of Afolayan's methodology as interdisciplinary "critical theory."[20] What do I mean by critical theory here that is not completely beholden to the Frankfurt School? It is a way of theorizing about, engaging with, or seeing the world that emphasizes (a) social transformation, (b) reduction of domination, discrimination, and oppression, and (c) commitment to justice and human flourishing for all. Critical theory emphasizes connecting ideas, theories, and philosophies to praxis, to social practices of change. Thus, in some sense, critical theory demands that we view the world as much as we can from the justice-seeking, creativity-enhancing, and liberatory-impulse lens in the name of what a community considers as its ultimate concern. Critique is all about marshaling our intellectual, organizational, and other endowments, gifts, or capabilities toward nudging our community's systems, institutions, ethos, norms, and ideologies to deliberately align with times and sites of expansive freedom or human flourishing.

Afolayan's application of interdisciplinary critical theory is always about a particular study of "situation," that is, as a diagnosis of the "socio-political-economic situation" of the postcolonial period. Paul Tillich argues that the "situation cannot be neglected in [philosophy] without dangerous consequences. Only a courageous participation in the 'situation,' that is, in all the various cultural forms which express modern man's interpretation of his existence," can uncover the possibilities of freedom and human flourishing in any given historical period.[21] Afolayan's methodology resembles that of Tillich in philosophical theology—at least that is how I interpret it.

The Tillichian correlational theological method not only helps theologians weave together questions about society (culture or nation) and responses to them from theology, but also enables theological institutions to arrive at meaningful interpretations of the existential tensions in a particular context. The theology here is hermeneutical, interpreting the "situation" that is the nation, polity, economy, or late capitalism. The theology here is not necessarily Christian or Western. Theology (more precisely, theological discourse) under this rubric is an interpretation of a *situation*—that is, positioning, qualifying, and criticizing the specific human condition in a given community—to point it to its "salvation" or "redemption," which is nothing short of human flourishing for all its members. The urgent task before African philosophers today—according to the thought of Afolayan—is to identify the "situations" begging for a radical transformation in the name of justice and human flourishing for all. This is imperative if African philosophers want to overcome the inability of their philosophies "to reach the freedom implied in genuine [philosophical] analysis."[22]

What does it mean to "transdifferentiate" (I have borrowed this term from philosopher Catherine Malabou to press into service here)?[23] While most philosophers can use one or two methods to deftly generate ideas, Afolayan transforms each of the received methods into different types of methods. He transdifferentiates methods, literally changing their difference. The method of postcolonial studies becomes a method in the philosophy of development, and philosophy itself becomes social criticism, critique of the postcolony, and social sciences. In his hands, philosophy acts as literature in terms of inviting immersion into the subject matter at hand and critical conversation, nudging the reader to put herself in the place of the character (Nigeria or Africa), and thus enabling identification and sympathy as a novelist is wont to do.

Generally, Afolayan transforms the various methods into something that approximates literary imagination. The literary imagination, or the novelist's art, enables readers to pay close attention to particulars in the lives of individuals struggling under a social problem and to respond to the persons with sympathetic understanding and mercy.[24] According to Martha C. Nussbaum, "The novelist's structure is a structure of *suggnômê*—of the penetration of the life of another into one's imagination and heart. It is a form of imaginative and emotional receptivity, in which the reader, following the author's lead, comes to be inhabited by the tangled complexities and struggles of other concrete lives."[25] This kind of imagination and response is highly relevant to public reasoning in a democratic society. The public philosopher (organic intellectual) needs this kind of imaginative capability to reason properly about public policy, especially development policy that fascinates Afolayan.

Let us now turn to *ritual archives* as a method that guides Afolayan's methodology—at least, his theorization of his way of doing philosophy that is in service of national socioeconomic development.[26] According to historian Toyin Falola, who coined and theorized the term, it represents

> the conglomeration of words as well as texts, ideas, symbols, shrines, images, performances, and indeed objects that document as well as speak to those religious experiences and practices that allow us to understand the African world through various bodies of philosophies, literatures, languages, histories and much more. By implication, ritual archives are huge, unbounded in scale and scope, storing tremendous amounts of data on both natural and supernatural agents, ancestors, gods, good and bad witches, life, death, festivals, and the interactions between the spiritual realms and earth-based human beings. To a large extent, ritual archives constitute and shape knowledge about the visible and invisible world (or what I refer to as the "non-world"), coupled with forces that breathe and are breathless, as well as secular and non-secular, with destinies, and within cities, kingships, medicine, environment, sciences, and technologies. Above all, they contain shelves on sacrifices and shrines, names, places, incantations, invocations, and the entire cosmos of all the deities and their living subjects among human and nonhuman species.[27]

Ritual archives, as defined by Falola, are broad, but their use in Afolayan's philosophy is circumscribed. Afolayan makes use of ritual archives to illuminate

not only the state of the African predicament but also its trajectory, and he uses them to contextualize, refine, and elaborate the study of philosophy in Africa. In his work we see a description of the ritual archives as primary source material and rectification of the philosophical categories in relation to which African postcolony or philosophy has been imagined.[28]

The use of ritual archives in philosophy necessarily demands transdisciplinarity, as it decries the fragmentation of (ritual) knowledge across unnecessary disciplinary boundaries in the study of African societies. I will first turn to Falola to shed more light on the character of the demand. Next, I will highlight Afolayan's commitment to transdisciplinarity or interdisciplinarity as demanded by the use of ritual archives. Falola writes:

> Ritual archives tell us that we must review and question our externally derived approaches and the limitations of the methodologies we deploy. Western-derived disciplines (such as Religious Studies, History, and Philosophy as subjects of the Humanities) have carefully fragmented ritual archives, but it is time for all those disciplines to combine to provide an understanding of the centers of indigenous epistemologies, to unify their ontologies, and convert them to theories that will be treated as universal. To take an example of how ritual archives can work, if Ifalogy (studies of Yorùbá divination system) had been created as a discipline and department fifty years ago, it could have enabled hundreds of scholars to learn and work across disciplines, and they probably would have decoded its epistemology by now and used it to create other forms of knowledge. They would have uncovered hidden dimensions of the Yorùbá *endogenous* [local African ideas, perspectives, narratives, and talents], which has sustained and guided the people since their genesis.[29]

Afolayan's commitment to interdisciplinarity necessary for a deep study of the Nigerian state and society is discernible in all his works. He challenges African philosophy to initiate conversations across the disciplinary boundaries in the university: "The logic of insularity at work in academic practice in Nigeria ensures that there is a glaring absence of dialogues, conversations, and linkages that ensures cross-fertilization of ideas, insights, perspectives, and paradigms across disciplines. And interestingly enough, philosophy seems most suitably placed to initiate these interdisciplinary engagements."[30]

Deep Structure of Thought: Finally, these orientations toward transdisciplinarity, transdifferentiation, and methodological pluralism bring us to the deep structure of Afolayan's philosophical thought—to the kernel of his *epistemological imaginary*. This term is my crude attempt to signify a framework—one that undergirds and transcends the various theories that Afolayan deploys in his oeuvre—by which I connect his ideas as evident in his various works, with the fundamental imaginings that hold them together. The term envisions how his ideas hang together in theories, images, metaphors, and stories. It is the unifying imagination of an author that makes possible the links between his ideas and gives them a widely shared sense of consanguinity, or gift of familial resemblance. A scholar's epistemological imaginary is the ideological basis for the scholar's pattern of thought. I am also using the term *epistemological imaginary* to play at the edges of Charles Taylor's concept of social imaginary.[31]

Every scholar has her specific form of epistemological imaginary, just as every society has its peculiar social imaginary. I will call Afolayan's "ownmost" epistemological imaginary the *plasticity of thought*. The concept of plasticity is about how Afolayan's epistemological imaginary, coursing through his concepts, ideas, and analyses, is perceived to give, receive, and explode (annihilate) forms of methodology in his philosophical work. Plasticity refers to three of the properties of his epistemological imaginary. It possesses "at once the capacity to *receive form* . . . and the capacity to *give form*. . . . But it must be remarked that plasticity is also the capacity to annihilate the very form it is able to receive or create."[32] Philosophical arguments, literary criticism, film criticism, social scientific analyses, investigation of Yoruba ritual archives, transdifferentiation, transgression, and fluidification of disciplinary boundaries are some of the shapes in which the epistemological imaginary takes, animates, ruptures, transforms, gives, or receives forms. The concept of plasticity of philosophy is an attempt to name, understand, or interpret the richness, polyvalence, and dynamism of Afolayan's epistemological imaginary. Its purpose is to enable us to grasp what leads his methodology toward metamorphosis, to lay bare the metamorphic structure that undergirds its capacity to order, animate, or articulate transformation, to sustain the alterity of his body of work with regard to itself, or to perform exchanges with itself. In this sense, the epistemological imaginary is nothing but the mutability, the plasticity of his thought. Indeed, the epistemological imaginary is a mode of discerning the forms thought (methodology)

assumes in the materiality of actualized existence and is a new imagination of the mode and modifications of thought (methodology) itself.

Let me now bring this section of the essay to a close. Afolayan's philosophy is a relay race between theory and practice, which is *demosophic*. This is a race that accents ordinary people and the knowledge to solve their existential problems. What I have named as *demosophy* he sees as a doublet: political and popular; a pair of words that captures the crucial task of his philosophy as an African philosophy. The political dimension: "Nigerian philosophy must be politically connected to social policy, the context within which human capacities and freedom can be increased and strengthened. What policy initiatives do the Nigerian philosopher's reflection yield on poverty and the infrastructural deficit in Nigeria?"[33] He goes on to say that Nigerian philosophy "needs to be popular in the sense of an archaeological excavation [exploration of ritual archives] of those ideas, doxastic paradigms, models and worldviews that underlie the popular interventions of Nigerians in their existence."[34]

With the foregoing comment on *demosophy,* I have completed the drawing of the map of the terrain in which the philosophical mansion of Afolayan is located. Olusegun Oladipo—a Nigerian philosopher and a late mentor to Afolayan—once described professional philosophers as builders of mansions: "The philosophical mansion is not simply a house of words, which guarantees its occupants an opportunity for a permanent possibility of conversations. Rather, it is a theoretical observatory, which provides a vantage position from which to have a clearer, even deeper, view of the human condition."[35] Afolayan does not agree with this conception of philosophy. Sure, he has a mansion, but it was not constructed for theoretical observation. It is rather a service center for correlating philosophy with social problems in ways that can offer concrete responses or solutions to the sickness he names the African predicament. His mansion (or, at least, parts of it) was also built as a hospital for the "healing" of professional philosophy. He strives to cure philosophy of "its dangerous fixation on theoretical analysis . . . recognizing that philosophy cannot be conceived abstractly outside the complexities of life and history, especially in postcolonial Nigeria. A good Nigerian philosopher cannot just write for personal promotion or produce an anthology of obscure intellection."[36] Philosophy has its space and place, and it must be responsible to them even in its keenest academic exertions.

The Five Pillars of Afolayan's Philosophical Mansion

With my tongue in cheek, let me say I picture the mansion of the Ibadan scholar to be as elaborate and studded with diamonds as the *Interior Castle* of Saint Teresa of Avila. Hers was constructed to encourage the Christian journey of faith which brings a soul through prayer and service to union with God. Afolayan's mansion, on the other hand, was constructed to guide the socioeconomic development of Africa through praxis, that special combination of theory and action. Just as Teresa's castle has many mansions, Afolayan's also has many mansions. Since I do not have the mystical capabilities of the sixteenth-century Spanish nun, but only possess the vision of the blind men that were saddled with describing an elephant, I will make do with groping around for the giant pillars of the Ibadan philosophical castle.

Afolayan's philosophical mansion is supported by five pillars. First is the defense and critique of ethnophilosophy. Second, the role of philosophy in defining or interpreting Africa or the African problem in the postcolonial era. Third, the African predicament, which he defines as four-pronged: the crisis of self-identity, development of Africa, an ill-conceived quest for modernity, and the disaster of the African postcolony. "Within the African philosophical inquiry, [the] new problematic is considered to be that of identity and development. For African philosophers, the issue is that of how to remain truly African and also be truly modern."[37] The fourth pillar is modernity. Here he ponders what it means to consider Africa as modern in the face of its history of colonial subjugation, the postcolonial entanglement, and the premature turn to postmodern philosophy by African scholars to explain the African problematic when it is not clear if Africa has entered its homegrown modern phase of history. The abiding question for him at this dimension of his work is this: How to remain truly African and be truly modern? Finally, his scholarship is an attempt to expand the "narrow" purview of African professional philosophy. He wants his professional colleagues to expand their interests to include discourse on popular culture, films (movies), and arts. Under this fifth category, he takes up the various subject matter as they relate to the already mentioned four foci or areas of interest. It is important to add that these pillars are organically discernible beginning with his earliest essays. They appear not to have been tacked on over time. From the beginning, he presented the African predicament as a five-armed creature that is sucking the life out of Africans. We can name these

five pillars as the defining features of not only Afolayan's philosophy but also of contemporary African philosophy. In Afolayan's work, these features of African philosophy come to one of their finest elucidations.

I am not going to discuss in more detail any of the five pillars. I have structured this essay in such a way that the reader will become conversant with them as she goes through it. Every part of this essay is crafted to inform the reader on these five pillars, the load that they support, and how they enable Afolayan to redefine the context and meaning of African philosophy. Rather than spilling more ink on the pillars, I will focus on his understanding of (a) the function of philosophy and (b) the hybridity of his philosophy. These two subject matters will give us a glimpse of the inner beauty of the mansion.

The Function of Philosophy

The metaphorical five pillars of the mansion frame his professional outlook on the discipline of philosophy in Africa and on university education. Afolayan dismisses what he considers as the utilitarian, production orientation of the university curriculum in Africa. Knowledge production is accepted or considered as a worthwhile pursuit if it adds to the bottom line (profits) of the university, corporations, or society.[38] The current system, he argues, rejects knowledge for knowledge's sake, disdains the university as the universe of knowledge production. His comment on the Nigerian educational system is telling in this respect:

> The trajectory of scholarship and curricular development is fast responding to global dynamics that is defined around the cash-value of any discipline as a development factor. . . . Thus, within the truism that education is necessary for development, there is a warped logic that drives a wedge between the humanities and the sciences as agents of development. The logic of the market therefore reconstitutes the university in terms of R&D, and the commodification of intellectual product in terms of market value.[39]

While I endorse Afolayan's analysis of the ill-conception of the education curriculum in Nigeria, I note that there is a contradiction in the professor's arguments about the place of philosophy in African society. Is his critique of the functionalist or market orientation of education not undermined when he defines philosophy as relevant and authentic in cases where it is in the service

of national development and rejects *tout court* the "theoretical playfulness" of professional philosophers?[40] Once he opened the argument of the relevance of philosophy or any other academic discipline along the route of usefulness or instrumentality, what stops anyone from defining relevance in a crass dollars-and-cents term?[41]

If Afolayan does not like philosophy being under the hammer of the calculative logic of the market, then will he be amenable to an *argōs* (without-a-function) philosophy? Can philosophy be conceived as *argōs*, as the quintessential human endeavor?

Is it not conceivable that the "theoretical playfulness" orientation of the professional philosophers that Afolayan disdains is an unrecognized way that they are grappling with the purposelessness that is at the core of human beings, the surplus of being, or the real within the human being, even as they are grabbed or claimed by the instrumental logic or mesmerizing story of global capitalism? Before we proceed any further let me explain what I mean by *argōs*-being, because it holds a key to comprehending the argument I will be making here. Aristotle wonders if nature left man without a function or work (*ergon*) that is proper to human beings, or if they are essentially workless (*inoperoso*), functionless (*argōs*).

> For just as the goodness and performance of a flute player, a sculptor, or any kind of expert, and generally of anyone who fulfills some function or performs some action, are thought to reside in his proper function [*ergon*], so the goodness and performance of man would seem to reside in whatever is his proper function. Is it then possible that while a carpenter and a shoemaker have their own proper function and spheres of action, man as man has none, but left by nature a good-for-nothing without a function [*argōs*]?[42]

Aristotle quickly retreats from this thought and supplies the answer: "Activity of the soul [is] in accordance with virtue." This is the essence of human beings, at least and insofar as she is in the *polis* and it is the end she pursues. Today, we are no longer quick to identify what is the proper timeless function of human beings. And we even regard the community as *inoperative* as it is only the experience of *compearance* (as Jean-Luc Nancy has taught us). Community or the notion of the community, according to him, is not based on some essence, idea, or project. As he argues in *The Inoperative Community*, the community is not

about communion, an essence, but about being-together, being *ex-posed* to one another.[43] So, and rightly, Giorgio Agamben argues that human action cannot be regarded as a means that makes sense only with respect to an end.[44] Thus, it is not totally out of place for philosophers to understand philosophy not with regard to a particular end but as a sphere that corresponds to the *argōs*-standing of human beings.

Afolayan disapproves of a philosophy that is driven by capitalist logic, but at the same time shrinks from a philosophy that does not have a proper timeless function. The foregoing should not be construed to mean that he is downplaying the need for philosophy and the other areas of humanities to respond to the needs of their immediate context, while they avoid being sucked into the vortex of the crass market logic of production. There are clear dangers for the humanities if they play death before the forces of capitalism. As he puts, "it takes a little reflection to see how the humanities lost the coherence of their research impulse, located within the conceptual context of praxis, to the instrumental notion of practicality very dear to capitalism."[45] Afolayan immediately proceeded to offer suggestions on how to define the task of the humanities as

> the *resignification* of Nigerian postcolonial trajectory in ways conducive to human flourishing. This implies, therefore, the rigorous excavation of knowledges that could assist in re-creating and redefining Nigerian society. . . . It is an attempt to excavate knowledges hidden in the crevices of historical and conceptual spaces that had hitherto been smothered by the national state and relentless national spacing.[46]

(Is there anything we can do with such knowledge that will not service capitalism?) This task of retrieval he names as "postcolonial retrieval" and it would be freighted by concepts embodying knowledge that liberates.[47] Afolayan, following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, celebrates philosophy as concept formation.[48] He writes:

> Philosophy is concerned with the formulation and construction of a rationally justified worldview that enables us not only to come to terms with our reality but also to derive meaning and value from it. . . . Doing philosophy in Nigeria, as elsewhere, must be founded on the understanding of what philosophy or philosophizing mean. For Deleuze and Guattari, "philosophy is the art of

> forming, inventing and fabricating concepts." . . . This is very significant because it is at the point of concepts and conceptual formulation, invention, and fabrication that philosophy engenders the vision that lies at the heart of worldview.[49]

As I read through all thousand-page, published philosophical work, I noticed his deft handling of many concepts, but there is little or nothing by way of "resurrecting" indigenous conceptual schemes for contemporary philosophy. This is despite his commitment to developing resources from traditional African culture to organize philosophical thought. In the Afolayan corpus, it is difficult to see a significant, memorable concept or conceptualization that (re)signifies African philosophy, explicates the dehumanizing objectification of Africans, diagnoses the immiserating poverty of African economy, unravels the crushing hurt of state governance, or evokes the shock and shame of the ruthless looting of Africa's natural resources by foreign powers. The new African philosophy that Afolayan advocates deserves significant generative concepts. At least, the hermeneutical privilege he accords to African-predicament-driven philosophy needs a (theorized) name. (I have offered *demosophy* as a possible name.)

How does one locate or explain this failure to resurrect thoughts or concepts in precolonial times in his quest to cast a vision of a good future for Africa? Why didn't he turn to precolonial sources for his philosophy? This failure to return to the precolonial times, to revel in the "narratives of return," is arguably a deliberate turn to the future, to a "narrative of turn."[50] Afolayan's *narrative of turn* is predicated on a certain orientation to the value of the virtues and vices of the present moment in African history and driven by a certain intellectual orientation to the past. This particular orientation to the present is discernible from the role he assigns to the "popular" in the doublet of political and popular. According to him, "Nigerian philosophy needs to be popular in the sense of an archaeological excavation of those ideas, doxastic paradigms, models and worldviews that underlie the popular interventions of Nigerians in their [current] existence."[51]

This is a turn to Africa reality as the generative source of philosophizing about Africa, and not necessarily a return to some mythical past or pristine era. As Slavoj Žižek is wont to put it, we can see how the past influences the present only when the future is here. No wonder Afolayan finds Ali Mazrui's framework of deliberately falsifying Africa's collective memory useful. The process is that

of consolidating historical invention into false memory for the sake of the future. According to Afolayan,

> The critical challenge, therefore, is how to conceive of Africa at the juncture of being and becoming. This self-definitional imperative is the first condition if Africa must confront its self-sustaining necessity of development as a modern exigency. African cinema's world-making efforts and African philosophy's world-viewing are bound by the necessity of mythmaking, a grand imaginary that ranges over Africa's past and Africa's future.[52]

It is the vision of the future that retroactively re-creates its past, its condition of possibility. To turn to Africa's past does not mean we "return" to the past, does not mean the past is just there to influence us today. The turn to the past is a movement that also changes the past as it is understood today, as it exists now. The past becomes discernible only when it is retroactively reconstructed.[53] To enhance human well-being, to create a good future, Afolayan turns to the future to let the future cast its shadow on the past and the present. The turn is to an opening between actuality and the not-yet. African philosophy in this sense has its form as future (coming) events that cast their shadows before them.[54] This is a form initiated by a longing to raise the living standards of Africans, for Africans to self-actualize.[55] The substance of the shadow is the coming into the presence of creativity, the dense actuality of being, a mode of being for human flourishing.

The last paragraph has raised a subtle point in Afolayan's philosophy. This has to do with the question Søren Kierkegaard once asked: "Is the past more necessary than the future?" In the production of African philosophy, especially under the hammer of the debates about ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy, is the interpretation or retrieval of historical events, institutions, or concepts more necessary than the generation of ideas rooted in the free activity of contemporary minds? Afolayan, in navigating his way through the debates, appears not to commit himself to any argument about the necessity of the past, yet he does not reject the past. And he does not foreclose the future or consider the freedom of a philosopher to create her concepts as illusory. All these are so because he endorses the notion of a future that retroactively re-creates its past. He does not endorse the necessity of the past. Thus, how will Afolayan respond

to Kierkegaard's question? It would not be different from the answer Kierkegaard gave to his question:

> If the past had become necessary it would not be possible to infer the opposite about the future, but it would rather follow that the future also was necessary. If necessity could gain a foothold at a single point, there would no longer be any distinguishing between the past and the future. To assume to predict the future (prophecy) and to assume to understand the necessity of the past are one and the same thing, and only custom makes one seem more plausible than the other to a given generation. The past has come into existence; coming into existence is the change of actuality brought about by freedom. If the past had become necessary it would no longer belong to freedom, i.e., it would no longer belong to that by which it came into existence. . . . Freedom itself would be an illusion, and coming into existence no less so; freedom would be witchcraft and coming into existence a false alarm.[56]

The Hybridity of Afolayanian African Philosophy

The philosophy of Afolayan is a hybrid that combines the cognitive propositional approach of "classical" philosophy and the expressively symbolic dimensions of ethnophilosophy. This hybrid combines the truth claims and informational meaningfulness of philosophical expressions with the symbols of African existential orientation, developmental aspirations, citizens' attitudes, and inner feeling of greatness or deprivations.[57] The virtue of this approach is that it enables us to explain more and envision an African philosophy that does not capitulate to Western philosophy. The problems of this approach are, however, as powerful as its virtues. The combination of the two perspectives is at times not coherent in Afolayan's oeuvre and, thus, not always persuasive. Nonetheless, Afolayan's programmatic approach offers powerful idioms or lenses for constructing or reconstructing African reality, the lifting of living standards, and the living of eudaimonia.[58] Its goal is to establish an enduring self-identity for African philosophy that will not ghettoize it and deprive it of the intellectual currents of other disciplines in the university and other regional philosophies.

The African philosophy Afolayan has envisioned as capable of uplifting the living standards of Africa can be categorized as Philosophy I and Philosophy II. Philosophy I consists of the propositionally encoded explicitly stated precepts, discursive dimensions of philosophy. Philosophy II is the set of skills and practices interiorized and transmitted by policy makers and citizens alike. It is in Philosophy II that the rubber meets the road; philosophy becomes a practical tool of social transformation. It is Philosophy II that indicates that the citizens and their leaders have internalized the power and meaning of philosophy as the instrument of a society's collective self-realization, self-transcendence, and existential self-understanding. Philosophy, as embodied in the rank and file of a society, becomes the *khora* from which significant policies and transforming achievements flow. Philosophy II is the culture-forming power of African (Afolayanian) philosophy. The practical application of this understanding of philosophy is that African leaders or their followers become truly Africans or new creatures (their old things are passed away) as they learn, interiorize, and attune their patterns of thought and sentiments to the language, the language game of authentic African philosophy. (Afolayan never clearly stated his theory of the human being or his philosophical anthropology, but I am tempted to think that he is not far from the Black feminist scholar Sylvia Wynter's notion of "human being as praxis."[59])

While the first (Philosophy I) is the knowledge ("knowing that") of philosophy, the second is the experience ("knowing how") of philosophy. The proper, organic articulation of Philosophy I and Philosophy II transforms African philosophy into a strong abode of propositional cognitivism and vitalizing sources of African socioeconomic development. This is all well and good until you realize that Afolayan is yet to clearly define or explain the experiential-expressive, the "knowing how" of (African) philosophy. Despite this shortcoming, I almost had an epiphanic moment on realizing how deeply religious Afolayan's conception of philosophy is. His argument about philosophy as the ultimate dimension of national or cultural transformation makes philosophy look increasingly like a religion. If philosophy is what gives shape and intensity to the totality of a people's self-interpretation or existential/experiential matrix, then in a way—arguably—it is a religion. Afolayan's picture of African philosophy is "that of a system of discursive and nondiscursive symbols linking motivation and action and providing an ultimate legitimization for the basic patterns of thought,

feeling, and behavior uniquely characteristic of a given community or society and its members."[60]

African philosophy is here called upon to support (celebrate) the ontic self-affirmation, spiritual self-affirmation, and moral self-affirmation of Africans. African philosophy in this very deep religious register combats the anxiety of death of the African way of being, the anxiety of meaninglessness amid the disorder of the African postcolony, and the guilt and condemnation of kowtowing to Western ("universal") philosophy. The Afolayanian African philosophy constitutes the self-affirmation of Africans despite the disasters of Western modernity and the postcolonial order. It is the *courage to be* that is rooted in the potentiality of Africans when their present possibilities for human flourishing have disappeared in the anxiety of meaninglessness.[61]

The Rooms in the Mansion

> There is no doubt that Nigeria, as a postcolony, constitutes a subset of postcolonial trauma that defines colonialism in Africa. The Nigerian state and society partake, in large measure, of the pain, suffering, and violence dictated by the tragedy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. —Adeshina Afolayan (2018)[62]

The Room of Pain (Orthopathy)

The first room to visit in the mansion is the room of theory, which I will also name the room of pain. By now it should be clear to the discerning reader that Afolayan has a "hatred" for philosophy as theory. He has reserved some of his most powerful vituperations for theories, accusing some of his African professional colleagues of being sick unto death with a "dangerous fixation on theoretical analysis" or the "spinning [of] 'a house of words' that lacks potency against underdevelopment."[63] All this notwithstanding, it is an exaggeration to say he hates theory. What he dislikes is a philosophical theory that is not concretely correlated with the African predicament. He loves theories, and he constructs some of his own to explain the situation of gross underdevelopment that is the core of the African predicament. To understand the inner meaning of theory for Afolayan, we must move away from the common academic understanding

of the term and settle for bell hooks's conception of it. Let me quote her as she explains her notion of "theory as liberatory practice."

> I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. . . . I found a place of sanctuary in "theorizing," in making sense out of what was happening. I found a place where I could imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently. This "lived" experience of critical thinking, of reflection and analysis, became a place where I worked at explaining the hurt and making it go away. Fundamentally, I learned from this experience that theory could be a healing place. . . . When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other.[64]

Afolayan's theory or philosophy similarly came out of the lived experience of pain. Hence his philosophy is also fundamentally philosophy as liberating praxis.

The Room of Development (Orthodoxy)

The pain and hurt of the lived experience in the African postcolony led Afolayan to focus his thought—right from his earliest essays—on the task of African philosophy as a philosophy of development in Africa. The burden of African philosophy for him is the unavoidable task of fashioning theories, perspectives, and metaphors to inform development or development policy. In 2007 he wrote:

> Philosophical thinking is an attempt to arrive at a clear and coherent picture of our basic ideas about reality, society, development in order to understand and solve our problems about them. . . . African philosophy within the context of the crisis of African development therefore must be a philosophy of action or praxis, the starting point of a tradition of rational inquiry enabled by thought, wisdom,

> and imagination. This will ensure that . . . such a philosophy is not dedicated solely to thinking alone but also to acting for the sake of all.[65]

For Afolayan, to philosophize is to "developmentalize," to theorize and generate policies for development. Developmentality is a framework for capturing the demotic energies of Africans to become both the agents and beneficiaries of their nations' economic development. Developmentality explores the subjective orientations of African philosophers and the objective modes of writing by which they can focus on the African predicament—how their thoughts can shape the theory and performative actions of social transformation in Africa. The task of philosophy, according to him, is to generate the ideality of development through critical analysis, critiquing and clarifying the visions (or lack thereof) of the development project in Africa. So, he sets about articulating, analyzing, and criticizing fundamental presuppositions and underlying belief systems of the development project as undertaken by African countries. Philosophy is an ongoing argument for and against theories and praxes of development, the quest for human flourishing. African philosophy is the *love of development*, the wisdom of how Africans can live and live well, and live and live together well.

What is the content of wisdom here? It is centered on knowledge and its applications for the well-being of Africans. The most existential task facing Africans is economic development. For philosophers, this raises the urgent question: What are African philosophers' understandings and teachings on the continent's economic predicament? Arguably, the zeal to adequately respond to this question has consumed the University of Ibadan professor. In Afolayan's scholarship, development appears as philosophy and philosophy as development. His thought involves the philosophization of African development or the *developmentality* of philosophy. This practice of thought occurs when the universal, perennial quest for wisdom takes residence in a particular African context, directly engaging the deepest existential predicament of Africans through a self-conscious thinker. The actualization of the potentiality of universal philosophy is the simple content of African philosophy. African philosophy is the consciousness of Africans that is in itself a form of longing for development. Philosophy is the knowledge of one's human condition externalized as one's thought, as an infinite quest for development, and as a way-of-life orientation to overcoming the African predicament. Afolayan goes on to declare

that philosophy is recognized as African only when it is the theorization of development, human flourishing in Africa. He writes:

> Our problem of development is a problem of wisdom, the application of knowledge to human problems. African philosophy within the context of the crisis of African development, therefore, must be a philosophy of action or praxis, the starting point of a tradition of rational inquiry enabled by thought, wisdom, and imagination.[66]

In another place, he writes:

> We have the basis for now suggesting three plausible conditions for an authentic African philosophy of wisdom that will be the first step towards the genuine resolution of Africa's problem of development. (1) African philosophy must constitute itself into a wise and critical avenue for confronting the technical rationality embedded in scientific and technological know-how. . . . (2) African philosophy must, therefore, of necessity, transcend its methodological disputations into an *ethical* confrontation with the problem of constructing a good and happy life for Africans. . . . (3) The final condition for the possibility of an authentic African philosophy of wisdom is what we can call the condition of multi-disciplinarity. This is a critical necessity given the profound arrogance of (professional) philosophers especially to non-philosophical disciplines.[67]

The Spirit Room (Orthopraxis)

All this is not to say that he has collapsed philosophy into development studies. African philosophy as developmentality is a unique incarnation of the placeless "universal philosophy." In this movement, Afolayan differentiates universal philosophy from itself, to be an object to itself, and in this differentiation it is identical with itself insofar as it is still a quest for wisdom. The love of wisdom is the *single subsistence* of the "being" of philosophy, so to speak. It reconciles or mediates contraries. This identity is the spirit of philosophy in Africa or, more precisely, African philosophy. Such a spirit is the non-hegemonic self-recognition in the other. The spirit is the logic and dynamic of maintaining an African identity as Africans sally forth into the otherness of development (otherness here is

the act/art of drawing resources and ideas from outside for raising African standards of living). The spirit of African development is the recognition, construction, or maintenance of identity-in-difference (otherness) such that foreignness and locality, exogeneity, and indigeneity are simultaneously distinguished and united. This viewpoint is not accidental in his scholarship. His early essays dwelled on defining this spirit. He began his career by writing on how Africa can find its identity as it transitions from modernity to postmodernity, or as the ethnophilosophers struggle to retrieve what is authentically African from the precolonial past.[68] In this quest he never once argued that Africa's "essence" could not relate with otherness. He was searching for ways Africa can express itself in indeterminate ideas and deeds, relate itself to itself, and reconcile itself with foreign influences by appropriating otherness or difference in a movement (non-stasis) of self-restoring identity.

In working out this conception of the spirit of African development or philosophy, he never *clearly* theorized the relationship between the self and the other, that is, Africa and its other. Though it is clear that Afolayan does not regard them as mutually exclusive, precisely why are they not so was not explicitly addressed. Let us try to fill in the gap. If Africa (in its development or philosophy) and the rest of the world are regarded as mutually exclusive or merely antithetical, then it means the rest of the world is limited by Africa over against which it stands. Africa is, therefore, portrayed as independent and self-subsistent. And the rest of the world is dependent and conditioned by Africa, which possesses aseity. But if Africa or the rest of the world does not possess aseity, is not subsistent, not independent, it must mean that the "being" of either one of them contains that of the other.[69] Each is shot through with inherent dependency and inward self-contradiction. Spirit is the identity-in-difference of Africa and the rest of the world. Africa or Europe is not only its own being but also the being of the rest of the world. Africa's identity or spirit "comprehends its own difference . . . in such a way that relationship to otherness is a dimension of self-relation requisite for self-realization."[70]

We must be careful here: this relation of opposites, the relation of self and otherness, is fundamentally not driven or beholden to the Hegelian synthesis (mediation) but to its Kierkegaardian version. According to Kierkegaard, "a synthesis is unthinkable if the two [opposites] are not related in a third."[71] Without a positive third there is no synthesis. This positive third Kierkegaard calls the spirit.[72] The positive third that creates the togetherness, the

coincidence of contraries, Africa and the rest of the world, is a philosophy that *absolutely* knows itself as African philosophy; development policy that *absolutely* knows itself as crafted for Africa so that Africans will be not only the agents of their development but also the beneficiaries of their development. Since neither authentic philosophy nor authentic development policy can burst out from thin air, it is only crafted by free people. Africans must self-write themselves. Thus, the spirit of African philosophy or development is the people of Africa, the freedom of Africans, free self-conscious activities of Africans. Put differently, the inner being or spirit of Africa's development or self-identity is a productive synthesis of the traditional and modern, and of African resources and foreign input as constructed by African themselves.[73] This is the right practice ("form of life," "shape of spirit") for overcoming the African predicament.

Let me take a moment to explain the movement from emotion, affection (orthopathy, as we learned in the "room of pains") to orthodoxy (the correct, rational teaching on development, as we learned in the "room of development") and orthopraxis as the shape of spirit as conveyed in the "room of spirit." This movement from the right affection to the right teaching leads to a transformative relationship between Africans and their world. (Afolayan in his "mansion" as explained above not only offers us a powerful representation of the world Africans live in but also the mind-set that enables Africans to overcome the predicament of this world.) The interaction with their immediate reality is transformed into attaining a "higher" knowledge mediated by connections between the world, mind, and grounded hope. Such connections live in each citizen through her common attunement to practices and language of a particular form of life ("shape of spirit"), which Afolayan hopes can result in overcoming the obstacles of the African predicament. The effect is the creation or sustenance of a "shape of spirit." To appropriate Hegel's term for this: immediate knowledge passes into the "shape of spirit" of a particular community, which conjoins "shape of consciousness" and "shape of world." "Shape of consciousness" is basically about a people's representation of the natural world, their representations of individual perceptible things, and the background forces that explain them and their regularities. "Shape of world" refers to the skills, tacit knowledge, practices, and intersubjective agreements that enable persons in a community to negotiate their social world. Terry Pinkard explains how the shape of spirit (or a form of life, being-in-the-world) works in this way:

> Any shape of spirit embeds within itself a joint conception both of what the *norms* are within that form of life and what it is about the *world* that makes those norms *realizable*, what in the world *resists* their realization or tends to make their realization *rare*, and what in the world is thus to be *expected*. As embodying a tacit grasp of a unity of the "is" and the "ought" within which agents live, a shape of spirit thus forms the overall contours of the ways in which those people, individually and collectively, *imagine* how their lives, individually and collectively, ought to go and how they reasonably expect them really to go.[74]

In recognizing this inclination—the "spiritual" dimension, so to speak—of Afolayan's thought, we have precisely touched on the essence of his oeuvre. His scholarship is about the identification of the malaise of spiritlessness that bedevils Africa (in various spheres of life), and developing a philosophical framework, philosophical attitude, or theoretical disposition that will lead to spiritness (spirit, shapes of spirit), authentic selfhood.[75] The primary expression of spiritlessness is the experience of self-alienation of African thought or policy from its immediate reality as a result of being caught in the limbo of transition to modernity while being summoned to the experience of postmodernity.[76] The African self is torn: the disintegration and fragmentation of the African self lead not only to polymorphic problems but also to errors in judgment on how to liberate Africa from poverty.

The key lesson that the Afolayanian philosophy teaches is this: African philosophy can create (re-create) or nurture the spirit for African economic development. Such spirit can "lead to the consequences of expanding the capacities that define the freedom of the citizenry."[77] In another place, he writes: "In the long run, philosophy's task is an educative one; it teaches the fundamental necessity of the exploration and understanding of the human condition and enables the development of the capacities necessary for living the good life."[78]

It is necessary at this point to state that the idea of development, the raising of living standards, the expansion of capacities for the good life that Afolayan is advocating for is not a fixed, metaphysical, ahistorical one. It is post-metaphysical and contingent. The development process as a historical process "is not the necessary unfolding of an ever-present idea, but a contingent sequence of events that arises through the free activity of independent agents."[79] It has to be continuously constructed and reconstructed, sustained and augmented by Africans for their human flourishing.

Let us now bring this section of the essay—"The Rooms in the Mansion"—to a close. In doing this, I want to further clarify what I have named the Afolayanian conception of the spirit of African philosophy or development. Philosophy was once practiced as a way of life, to perform the good life, and not just for endless mental stimulation or ecstasy. Afolayan is trying to regain this lost insight or virtue and expand the same to cover a whole people, Nigerians, and Africans.

In his effort to regain the lost virtues or create the spirit of African philosophy, he does not isolate African philosophy from philosophy in the rest of the world. African philosophy is at once other than and one with philosophy (that is, universal philosophy; philosophy in the rest of the world) and philosophy is both other than and one with African philosophy. In this reckoning, philosophy must see itself in African philosophy and become itself through African philosophy. In the same vein, African philosophy must see itself in philosophy and become itself through philosophy. Each must behold itself in the other—pardon the allusion to Hegel.

Concluding Remarks

Philosophy is the love of wisdom, but this wisdom has no special content; it is an empty cipher. It has to be illuminated by or filled with a particular existential context.[80] Indeed, the wisdom (*pleroma*) that philosophers seek is generated by their contextual analyses of questions and situations that they encounter in their lifeworlds. Afolayan has been seeking and generating wisdom from his African postcolony. His philosophy, produced over nineteen years, has been directed at shedding light on five problems that bedevil his postcolonial Nigeria. First, he has focused on the African predicament, which he defines as four-pronged: the crisis of identity, development, a disaster of modernity, and the disorder of the postcolonial order. This involves crafting a philosophical framework to unearth and interrogate the distinctive existential and cultural predicament of Africa. The second subject matter is about the defense and critique of ethnophilosophy and forms (dimensions) of ethnophilosophical reason in their engagement with and entanglement in the African predicament and willingness to sally forth into international discourses of philosophy from a core of African cultural peculiarity.

The third area of his interests relates to the specification of the role of philosophy in defining or interpreting Africa or the African problem (predicament).

What should be the proper preoccupation of African philosophy today? The point of departure in the search for an answer to this question is (a) an ethnophilosophy that does not reject "universal philosophy" but engages in active dialogue with it; (b) an ethnophilosophy that does not demand unanimity (consensus) of philosophical worldviews of Africans; (c) an ethnophilosophy that is not trapped by the European (outsider's) gaze; and (d) an ethnophilosophy that is not in search of a perfect past era (space and time untainted by alien influences) that will settle the questions of today's existential conditions. The result is an "updated ethnophilosophy" that can address the issue of what he calls the "dispossession of the African self." This alienation of the African self can be addressed by the recuperation of the African self in a new and expanded horizon and enlarged self-knowledge. The reconstitution of the African self, which was effaced by colonialism and imperialism, requires the

> rehabilitation of the African past that bridges the gap between it and modern consciousness. . . . The oral nature of traditional African heritage demands that the materials we must deal with would be ethnographic in nature and that ethnophilosophy must play a significant role in this self-reflection on this traditional heritage that defines, sustains, and legitimizes African postcolonial self-formation. In other words, to fulfill the responsibility for this traditional inheritance, African philosophers must become ethnophilosophers in reflecting upon them in their own lived experiences. It is this phenomenological self-reflection that grounds identity.[81]

The thorny issues of modernity constitute the corpus of his fourth subject matter. What does it mean to consider Africa as modern in the face of its (reaction to the) colonial experience, entanglement in postcolonial condition, and the environment of postmodern philosophy or discourse? What does it mean to understand modernity that is necessarily Westernization or mimicry of the West? The key question for him here is how Africa (Africans) can remain truly African and truly modern.

Finally, we have the practice of expanding what he considers the narrow purview of African professional philosophy. He wants to expand its lens to include discourses on popular culture, film (movies), music, poetry, and novels, and certain transdisciplinary philosophical discourses by non-professional philosophers.[82] (I will put his recent contributions to African Pentecostal studies

under this final category.)[83] In this endeavor, he is searching for the stories (past and present) that claim Africans, or stories (historically, materially, culturally) that they are in. Their knowing such stories is relevant for the way they define themselves, knowing the "who" of themselves. Here he goes beyond texts written by professional philosophers for their professional colleagues. In this practice of expansion, he considers subjects as they cohere with the other four subject matter. Discussions and analyses here are tailored to feed the interests of the four macro themes.

Note that he has not expended much time or substantive ink on the classic philosophical categories of metaphysics (ontology), epistemology, philosophy of mind, language, ethics, aesthetics, time, space, cause, finitude, infinity, logic, God, and so on. This is deliberate, as Afolayan is guided by an admonition that if African philosophy is to remain relevant it must no longer just be for the sake of knowledge, and its practitioners must not lose themselves in "the joy of internal philosophical squabbles."[84] Thus, his philosophy is one that that is geared toward the critique of Africa's social existence, how Africans can perceive their predicament of poor material living conditions and position themselves for increasing human flourishing in the face of modern exigencies. He has set himself the task of completely rethinking the presuppositions that underlie Africans' engagement with modernity and development to rigorously define who Africans are and what can be done once they understand their *strategic identity* (that is, a sense of self that is not originary but originally symbolic, emancipatory, and positioned between authenticity and discursivity). In his reckoning, Africans can answer the question of what they are to do only when they know who they are. This task speaks to (or flows from) the central goal of his philosophical method (philosophy as a mode of or framework for thinking), which is *demosophy*, the wisdom of the people, excavated by the people's organic philosopher, and for the people. And his philosophy (as a discipline) is best described as *philodemosophy*. This means the love of the wisdom of the people, while philosophy is the love of wisdom. In this way, Afolayan calls Africans to be *demosophiaphilic*, to love the collective wisdom of the people, to love themselves and their knowledges.

This kind of love, awareness, and self-recognition seeks integration of the rational, intellect (orthodoxy), behavioral (orthopraxis), and affective (orthopathy) aspects of philosophy, to live fully into the transforming possibilities of *demosophy*. This is a vibrant vision of philosophy as embodied, correlative,

and attuned to the citizens' predicament, creating a paradigm of a holistic approach for policy makers to tap into the demotic energies of the African masses.

On the whole, Afolayan's books and essays are always properly philosophically conceptualized, well rooted in historical analyses, and accented by rigorous social science discourse. His scholarship is truly interdisciplinary. In searing and deeply reflective polemics, Afolayan offers a finely grained and radically uncompromising new vision for philosophy in Africa. His work brilliantly speaks to policy makers, takes African philosophers to task, and makes an urgent call to African scholars to turn their knowledge into concrete developmental paradigms for the continent. His scholarship is outstanding and represents a significant contribution to knowledge. Afolayan writes clearly, and in accessible language he lays out the importance of philosophy for national formation and the need to ground African socioeconomic development in local knowledge generation.[85]

NOTES

1. Adeshina Afolayan, "Rawls in the African Predicament: Some Theoretical Considerations," *Journal of Philosophy and Culture* 3, no. 1 (2006): 17–47; Adeshina Afolayan, "Beyond Postmodernism: The Philosophy of Decolonisation and the Dilemma of African Scholarship," *South Pacific Journal of Philosophy and Culture* 9 (2006–2007): 113–32.
2. Adeshina Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development in Nigeria: Toward a Tradition of Nigerian Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2018), 11.
3. Ibid., 109.
4. Ibid., 20–37.
5. Pardon the allusion to Rainer Maria Rilke.
6. Ibid., 174–75.
7. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 89–90.
8. Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2009), 140.
9. Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014), 33. Žižek adds: "What characterizes a really great thinker is that they misrecognize the basic dimension of their own breakthrough" (34).
10. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 110.
11. Ibid.

12. Recently he has started analyzing African Pentecostalism. Of these five or six themes, this essay will concentrate on two: development and the crisis of self-identity.
13. Adeshina Afolayan, "We Are All Postmodern Now! African Philosophy and the Postmodern Agenda," *Hekmat va Falsafeh (Wisdom and Philosophy)* 5, no. 2 (2009): 74.
14. Email correspondence with Afolayan Adeshina, September 8, 2021.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. See, for example, Adeshina Afolayan, "Abiola Irele and the Context of African Philosophy Discourse," *Research in African Literatures* 49, no. 2 (2018): 1–19; Afolayan, "Rawls in the African Predicament"; Afolayan, "Beyond Postmodernism."
19. For more on philosophy or theology as social/cultural criticism, see Nimi Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle: Ethical Methodology in New Spirit (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 168; Nimi Wariboko, *Ethics and Society in Nigeria: Identity, History, Political Theory* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 73–97.
20. The description of interdisciplinary critical theory is drawn from Nimi Wariboko, "Review of the *Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology,* Edited by Stefan Schwarzkopf," *Religious Studies Review,* December 2020, 519–21.
21. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 5.
22. Victor Anderson, foreword, in Wariboko, *Ethics and Society in Nigeria*, ix.
23. Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brains?*, trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 16.
24. Nimi Wariboko, *Methods of Ethical Analysis: Between Theology, History, and Literature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 126–28.
25. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 170.
26. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 153–55.
27. Toyin Falola, "Ritual Archives," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Social Ethics*, edited by Nimi Wariboko and Toyin Falola (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 472.
28. I have borrowed Blanton's language of redescription and rectification to express my understanding of Afolayan's work. See Thomas R. Blanton IV, *A Spiritual Economy: Gift Exchange in the Letters of Paul of Tarsus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 5–6.
29. Falola, "Ritual Archives," 476.
30. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 155.
31. Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23–30.
32. Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brains?*, 5.

33. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 174.
34. Ibid., 175.
35. Olusegun Oladipo, *Thinking about Philosophy: A General Guide* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2008), 1, quoted in Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 174.
36. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 174.
37. Afolayan, "Abiola Irele," 4.
38. Adeshina Afolayan, "On Political Leadership: Philosophy, Education, and the Dilemma of National Development in Nigeria," in *Governance and Leadership in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges*, ed. Julius O. Adekunle and Apollos O. Nwauwa (Glasboro, NJ: Goldline and Jacobs, 2016), 113–40; see also Adeshina Afolayan, "Humanities and the Dilemma of African Modernity," *Philosophia* 41, no. 2 (2012): 154–67.
39. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 43.
40. Ibid., 174.
41. When I raised this question with him, he provided this answer on June 11, 2021: "My response will be that philosophy encodes theory and practice—praxis—in ways that transcends simply reducing a discipline to its cash values. The theoretical playfulness of philosophy is both for its own sake and for humanistic purposes—to enlighten the human intellects and enable human flourishing."
42. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b 25–30. The translation is by Martin Oswald (Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1962).
43. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
44. Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115–16.
45. Adeshina Afolayan, Introduction, in *Identities, Histories, and Values in Postcolonial Nigeria,* ed. Adeshina Afolayan (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2021), xx.
46. Ibid., xxi. Italics in the original.
47. Ibid.
48. Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2–3.
49. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 147.
50. According to C. B. N. Gade, "African postcolonial narratives of return have typically contained the idea that in order to create a good future, society needs to *return to something African* which does not stem from the previous period of colonial oppression but which is rather rooted in pre-colonial times." Gade, "The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on Ubuntu," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. (2018): 304, quoted in

Martin Odei Ajei and Richmond Kwesi, "Consciencism, Ubuntu, and Justice," *Nigerian Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2018): 73.

51. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 175.
52. Adeshina Afolayan, "African Philosophy at the African Cinema," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 534.
53. Slavoj Žižek, *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 128; Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 229–31.
54. I have borrowed this phrasing from Paul Samuelson. He wrote: "We would expect people in the marketplace, in pursuit of avid and intelligent self-interest, to take account of those elements of future events that in a probability sense may be discerned to be casting their shadows before them. (Because past events cast their shadows after them, future [coming] events can be said to cast their shadows before them)." See Samuelson, "Proof That Properly Anticipated Prices Fluctuate Randomly," *Industrial Management Review* 6 (Spring 1965): 44.
55. Afolayan, "Rawls in the African Predicament," 24–25.
56. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson, rev. Howard V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 96.
57. This paragraph was inspired by George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 2.
58. Ibid., 4.
59. See Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblage, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). According to Wynter, the human being is a praxis rather than a noun, a performative enactment of being a human. Every person is *hybridly* (flesh/mythoi, person/stories, *bios*/narrative coding, historicized unfolding of *being*/political coding of *being*) collective. *Bios* here connotes two senses: (a) biological life, the flow of natural reproductive life of the people, life as bare potentiality; and (b) the political life as Giorgio Agamben uses it in his notion of the *homo sacer*. In his second sense *bios* refers to the political life of citizens. What it means to be an African or Nigerian and who and what the Nigerian or African is as a human being is narratively constructed: the particular form of humanity or citizenship in any given nation is always a result of human activities, an outcome of contingent processes that are articulated, interpreted, or written as (into) the "body" of the nation (what they experience themselves to be). To *rewrite* a nation we must begin by entering into its story, if only to recast it.

60. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 48.
61. Pardon my allusion to Tillichian language here.
62. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development*, 110.
63. Ibid., 174
64. bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice," in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 2013), 28–29.
65. Adeshina Afolayan, "The Rise and Fall of Development: A Discourse of African Development from an Epistemic Standpoint," in *Perspectives on African Communalism*, ed. Ike Odimegwu (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2007), 332, 341.
66. Ibid., 341.
67. Adeshina Afolayan, "African Philosophy as the Love of Wisdom," in *Four Decades of African Philosophy: Issues and Perspectives*, ed. M. F. Asiegbu and J. C. Agbakoba (Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publications, 2008), 155–56.
68. Afolayan, "On Political Leadership," 115–16.
69. Adeshina Afolayan, "Is Modernity Single and Universal? Olaju and the Multilateral Modernity," *Yoruba Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2016): 85–104.
70. Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 154.
71. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 39.
72. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 146; Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, 44; see also M. C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, 169–71,
73. Afolayan, "On Political Leadership," 115–16.
74. Terry Pinkard, "What Is a 'Shape of Spirit'?," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, ed. Dean Moyar and Michael Quante (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 144.
75. Adeshina Afolayan, "Introduction: Philosophy, (Neo-)Nollywood, and the African Predicament," in *Auteuring Nollywood: Critical Perspective on the Figurine*, edited by Adeshina Afolayan, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2014), 9, 31.
76. Ibid., 8–9.
77. Adeshina Afolayan, "The Arab Spring and the Politics in West Africa," *History Compass* 16, no. 8 (2018): 1.
78. Afolayan, "On Political Leadership," 129–30.
79. M. C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, 127.

80. Adeshina Afolayan, "Demystifying Philosophy in the African Predicament," *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 11–12 (2002): 99–109.
81. Afolayan, "Abiola Irele," 17–18.
82. Afolayan, *Philosophy and National Development,* 175.
83. Adeshina Afolayan, "Pentecostalism, Political Philosophy, and the Political in Africa," in *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, and Toyin Falola (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 223–24; Adeshina Afolayan, "The Grasshoppers and the Pentecostal: Rethinking the Pentecostal Principle," in *The Philosophy of Nimi Wariboko*: *Social Ethics, Economy, and Religion*, ed. Toyin Falola (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2020), 321–47.
84. Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola, "Introduction: Rethinking African Philosophy in the Age of Globalization," in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 12–13.
85. Thanks to Dr. Abimbola Adunni Adelakun and Mr. Oluwatosin Vincent Adepoju for their assistance in proofreading the first draft of this essay.