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'QUIS ERIT, ERIT': FATALISM AND ÀYÀNMÓ IN ANCIENT GREEK AND TRADITIONAL YORÙBÁ PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS.

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Abstract

Fatalism is a philosophical concept generally used to refer to the belief that man is powerless to do or change anything in the face of future events which are believed to be inevitable. The idea is that there is no point trying to control the future. Thus, the concept of fatalism often leads to the attitude of resignation in the conviction that man does not have control over the events in his life, hence 'what will be will be'. Many ancient Greek philosophers, especially the Stoics, used the term *moirai* for fatalism and argue in support of and against the concept. For instance, one of the famous arguments of the ancient Greek philosophers is that if an event is fated, it would be futile to make any concerted effort to avoid or bring it about. The Yorùbá, like the Greeks, use words such as *àyànmó* (destiny), *kádàrá* (fate), *àkòsilẹ̀* (predetermination) among others to describe the futility of trying to change or control what has been predetermined or predestined. Therefore, the concept of fatalism is greatly reflected in various traditional Yorùbá proverbs and songs. The question which this paper focuses on is: is man really helpless in the face of fatalism? This paper engages a comparative and critical analysis method of enquiry to react to this question.

Keywords: Fatalism, Greek Philosopher, *àyànmó*, Yorùbá, Belief

Introduction

Is man really helpless in the face of fate or destiny? Is there anything like destiny or fate? These are questions that have mystified humanity throughout history. People from various backgrounds have strived to ascertain the roles played by fate in human lives and have contemplated the effect of divine or diabolical power, as well as the influence of genetics and environment in determining whether or not man has controlover his lot in life. To go by Heraclitean idea, everything depended on destiny. In relation to this philosophical idea, many theories have been developed over centuries to explain events in man's life, two of such theories are Fatalism and Determinism.

The terms fatalism, determinism and predeterminism have been used interchangeably in translating the Greek word '*moirai*'. These terms are used to stress the futility of human efforts in attempting to contain the foreordination of destiny or fate. However, while determinism expresses that every event has its determining conditions in its immediate antecedents, fatalism, on the other hand, emphasises that "all events take place according to a predetermined and inevitable destiny that cannot be controlled or influenced" (Adebowale, 2017:45). The ancient Greeks believed that fate was the will of the gods and played an important role in shaping and determining human life which is beyond human control. Homer, the ancient Greek poet, in *Iliad*, portrays characters struggling with the notion of fate, questioning and fighting against it but finally resigning themselves to their

fates. The Yorùbá, like the ancient Greeks, believe that all human beings have *àyànmọ* or *ipin* (destiny, fate) which is expected to come to pass irrespective of efforts made to change or alter it. This belief usually stands as the basis for explaining several inexplicable fortunes or miseries in human life that shape the attitude of the individual, both in ancient Greece and traditional Yorùbá society, to that of resignation that 'what will be, will be' and there is nothing man can do to thwart the will of the gods. Many scholars like Richard (1962), Kane (1966) and Segal (2001) have considered the conception of fatalism in line with the concept of moral responsibility. They argued on whether or not man could be held responsible for his actions in the face of destiny. This paper, with its focus on Stoics and Yorùbá philosophical thoughts, however, examines the notion of fatalism from attitudinal perspective of resignation to the common saying 'what will be, will be'. It investigates the notion that man is helpless in the face of certain destined events in his life using the Lazy or Idle Argument.

Ancient Greek philosophy and the question of fatalism

The ancient Greek philosophers were the first thinkers to search for causes of events rather than attributing controlling of events to the gods. These philosophers attempted a transformation of pre-philosophical debates about gods controlling events in human life. Some conveyed the concept of fatalism and determinism through their philosophical thoughts and doctrines. For instance, Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic philosopher, believed that "every event in the world is determined, and wholly determined, by causes" and that "the law of causation admits of no exception whatever" (Stace, 1920:76). Pythagoras, another pre-Socratic philosopher, expressed the doctrine of determinism through his theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul. According to metempsychosis' theory, the soul reincarnates after the death of the body and the form into which the soul reincarnates is determined by the deeds of the previous life.

Leucippus and Democritus, known as the atomists and materialists were, however, the first of Greek philosophers to have fully projected the idea of determinism. To these atomists, all aspects of existence are determined by physical laws. According to them, the physical matter of the universe operates in fixed, knowable laws. The atomists are of the mind that every physical matter is composed of small, smooth, and round atoms, energy atoms can be found throughout the bodies of both humans and animals and even the rest of the world. The atoms, as described by the atomists, constitute the smallest particles that form the constituents of any solid body (Russell, 1975: 82). Russell (1975:87) explains that to Leucippus, the full solid body or matter requires a vacuum in order to give room for movement and multiplicity. These solid bodies fill the vacuum through an automated movement beyond their control. The atomists are of the view that nature itself is just a causal play of atoms. With this notion, it can be inferred that man and the entire universe obey the cosmic law of flux and are subject to laws beyond their control. Thus, the basis of the teaching of the atomists is the deterministic principle that "nothing happens without reason, but everything happens through a reason of necessity and the principle of universal causality" (Composta, 1988:87). Russell sums up the argument of the atomists thus:

... everything is composed of atoms, which are physically, but not geometrically indivisible; that between the atoms there is empty space; that

atoms are indestructible; that they always have been, and always will be, in motion... and their movements are determined outside them (Russell, 1975:83).

From the above, it can be surmised that the movement of the atoms are determined as they hover in motion unconsciously without the ability to control themselves or their own movement, and since man is a combination of atomic particles, it is beyond his power to control his actions or the events of his life.

Socrates, a contemporary of the atomists, analyses the tenet of fatalism and determinism from another perspective. Socrates held the view that the soul of man makes an oblivious choice in the pre-existence of what its rebirth should be. Many of Plato's dialogues make references to the destiny of the soul before and after death. The myth of Er, as narrated in Plato's *Republic*, describes the procedure through which man is determined by the choices he makes for his next life. This notion serves as the central theme of Plato's theory of immortality of the soul. In this myth, Er, the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian, was killed in a battle and ten days later the bodies of the war victims were found decayed except that of Er; he was found whole and the body was taken away for burial. On the twelfth day, while he lay on the pyre, about to be cremated, he came to life again; and there, Plato relates what Er had seen in the Underworld. According to Plato, Er saw the souls of different people choosing their various lots. For instance, he saw the soul of Orpheus "choosing the life of a swan out of enmity to the race of women, hating to be born of a woman because they had been his murderers"; he also observed "the soul of Thamyras choosing the life of a nightingale". Er did not only see the souls of humans choosing their lots, but he also saw the souls of birds, like swan and other musicians, wanting to be men and many others like Agamemnon, Odysseus and Ajax, choosing the life of an eagle, private man and lion respectively. After choosing their lots Plato explains what follows thus:

All the souls had now chosen their lives, and they went in the order of their choice to Lachesis, who sent with them the genius whom they had severally chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fulfiller of the choice: this genius led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny of each; and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible (Plato *The Republic*, Book X, 620a – e).

The Pythagoreans and both Socrates and Plato endeavoured to hold man responsible for his actions by linking human freedom with determinism and causal law. Pythagoras indicated that the past deeds affect future events while Socrates and Plato signified that whatever choice man makes affects the future events of his life.

According to Greek mythology; Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos with a collective name: *Moirai* (Moirai) Fates, were the daughters of the Goddess of Necessity known as Themis. These sisters "skilfully structured and controlled the metaphorical thread of life of every human from birth to death" (Adebowale, 2017:44). The Greek mythology, as expounded by Adebowale (2017:44–45) designated each sister with responsibility. For instance, Clotho, the Spinner, had the responsibility of

weaving the thread of life; while, Lachesis, the Apportioner, measured the length of the thread and Atropos, the Unturnable, cut the thread with her great shear. With the collective activities of the sisters, they personified the inevitability of human destiny.

Stoic Determinism and Fatalism

A paradigm shift on the concept of fatalism came with Stoicism. Stoicism was one of the philosophical schools of thought that flourished during the Hellenistic age. It was founded, by Zeno of Citium, in Athens. The Stoic philosophy is primarily concerned with conduct, end of man and his chief good, which is happiness. For this happiness to be attained, the Stoics believe that man must lead a life that is in accordance with nature. To live according to nature, a man is to conform himself to the laws of the universe since the universe is governed by the law of nature. The ethical end, therefore, according to the Stoics, consists essentially in submission to the divinely appointed order of the world. The Stoics see virtue as the only good from which happiness emanates. Virtue, to the Stoics, means living according to reason and reason tells man that all that happens must happen in order to actuate a superior goodwill by God, who is immanently conceived. Hence, a man is virtuous when he wishes that which happens and nothing else.

The Stoics' view of fate is entirely based on their perception of the universe as a whole. Zeller observes that, to the Stoics, "individual things and persons only come into consideration as dependent parts of this whole" (Zeller, 1880:177). Everything is, in every manner, determined by this relation, consequently, it is subject to the general order of the world. Most of the arguments of the Stoics on the concept of fatalism and determinism came from the testimony of later writers such as Sextus Empiricus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Aetius, Eusebius and Cicero who wrote extensively on the Stoics, Epicureans and new Academy philosophy. This is due to the fact that virtually all of the writings of the Stoics are lost.

The determinism thesis of the Stoics argues that everything happens by fate and that everything that happens in the universe is fully determined to the last detail by Zeus. The Stoics consider fate as a "rational account of the things ordered in the universe by providence" and believe that fate is an escapable, invincible and inflexible series of causes (Meyer, 1999:253). According to the Stoics, the universe is one including all existing things and is governed by nature in order for it to have an everlasting government of being in a certain chain and order. The Stoics are of the opinion that nothing in the universe comes to be without a cause—the first things become the causes of things that come to be after them and as such, all things are bound to one another. To the Stoics, nothing comes to be in the universe that in such a way that something else does not, in any case, follow on it; nor can any of the things that followed be detached from the things preceding it.

The Stoics' conception of fate was rigorously criticised in ancient Greece and by contemporary philosophers. For instance, the Epicureans criticise the Stoics notion of fate as worse than the traditional belief in gods, for this, according to the Epicureans, destroys freedom and responsibility. Epicurus, the founder of Epicureanism, assumes that belief in fate as the Stoics interpret it, can be described as a fatalist belief that the future seems to be fixed independently of human choice. One of the important formulated objections by the Stoics in antiquity was known as the Lazy Argument. As reported by Cicero, the argument states:

If it is fated for you to recover from this disease, then you will recover, whether you call the doctor or not; similarly, if it is fated for you not to recover from the disease, then you will not recover whether you call the doctor or not. But one or the other is fated, so there is no point in calling the doctor (Cic. *Fat.* 28-29 [LS 55S2-3]).

From the argument above, Cicero shows that the idle argument is purported to show the futility of attempting to take charge of one's fate. This argument could lead to a life of inaction and idleness. It is evident that it is called the Lazy Argument because all activities will be removed from life, given that an outcome is determined by antecedent event(s), nothing is necessary to be done in order for it to occur or not to occur. Buller (1995: 111) uses another version of an idle argument as follows:

- (1) Either I will be killed in the air raid or I will not.
- (2) If I will be killed, I will be killed whatever precautions I take.
- (2') So, if I will be killed, all precautions will be ineffective (from 2).
- (3) If I will not be killed, I will not be killed whatever precautions I neglect.
- (3') So, if I will not be killed, all precautions will be superfluous (from 3).
- (4) Therefore, all precautions are pointless (from 1, 2 and 3).

Considering Buller and Cicero's idle arguments, it is glaring that the arguments depend on dormant bridge premises. From the two arguments, (1) if death is fated, either from sickness or air raid, whatever the form of precaution taken, the precaution will be ineffective, (2) if survival is fated, whatever form of precautions neglected will be superfluous. The arguments can be concluded to infer that (3) whatever precautions taken or not taken make no difference since whatever is fated cannot be averted; hence, a precaution that is futile or gratuitous is a waste of time. Criticising this line of argument, Hospers (1967:323) rejects the premises saying:

These two hypothetical propositions are about as clearly false as any empirical proposition can be. It is a plain empirical fact, which any set of statistics will bear out, that those who neglect to take precautions stand a higher chance of being killed and those who do take precautions stand a higher chance of remaining alive.

Here, Hospers is of the opinion that if certain precautions that can be taken are taken there is the possibility of keeping oneself alive. Meyer (1999: 253), considering the Lazy Argument of the Stoics, argues that the argument "fallaciously infers that if an outcome is antecedently determined, then nothing I do is necessary in order for it to occur." The Stoics, however, believe that even if something is fated, it still might require specific antecedent causes, thereby introducing the Co-fated theory. Regarding this theory, Cicero (*Fat.* 30, [LS 55S2-3]) declares of the Stoics thus:

“For”, he [Chrysippus] says, “there are some cases that are simple, others complex. A case of what is simple is ‘Socrates will die on that day’; whether he does anything or not, there is a fixed day for his death. But if it is fated that ‘Oedipus will be born to Laius,’ one will not be able to say ‘whether Laius has slept with a woman or not’; the matter is complex and ‘co-fated’” – for that is what he calls it, because it is fated *both* that Laius will sleep with his wife and that he will beget Oedipus by her. Just as if someone had said “Milo will wrestle in the Olympic games” and someone else answered “So, whether he has an opponent or not, he will wrestle,” he would be wrong, for “he will wrestle” is complex. For without an opponent there is no wrestling. So all captious arguments of that sort can be refuted in the same way. “Whether you call in the doctor or not, you will get well” is captious; it is as fated to call in the doctor as it is to get well. These cases, as I said, Chrysippus calls “co-fated.”

From the above, Cicero shows that from the Stoics point of view, if two events are co-fated, the other is necessary for the fated event to happen. From the Stoics’ co-fated theory, it can be inferred that if calling the doctor is necessary for the recovery, then recovery is fated, so too is calling the doctor. In this case, then, it will be erroneous and misleading to draw an inference from the assumption that recovery is fated no matter what is done or not done.

The theory of Co-fated of the Stoics echoes the concept of determinism more than fatalism. Here, the Stoics believe that every event is caused by a previous event according to laws that necessitated each event. Thus, the Stoics’ belief in fate is simply a belief in determinism. To the Stoics, there are a series of causes, which because of the unchanging laws of nature, is sufficient for the effects. The Stoics believe that the series of events stretches back into the distant past and without disruption, continues into the future. However, this chain of causes does not make the different links in the causal chain unnecessary. By saying that some events are co-fated, the Stoics mean that if the laws of nature and the past is what it is, it then follows that certain intermediate events are fated if the outcome is fated. If, for instance, a person is fated to drive his car from a place to another on a particular day, it is also fated that there would be fuel in that car on that particular day.

Yorùbá Philosophical Concept of Àyànmó

The belief in destiny permeates Yorùbá culture, like that of most cultures of the world. The Yorùbá concept of destiny is expressed in connection with the philosophical perception of *orí* (personality soul). Many Yorùbá scholars like Wande Abimbola (1971), Olusegun Gbadegesin (1983), M. A. Makinde (1985), Olusegun Ladipo (1992), S. A. Alli (1995), E. O. Oduwole (1996) have debated extensively the relation between *orí* and destiny. *Orí* in this context is regarded as the immaterial entity known as inner head (*orí-iní*) which is responsible for the actuality and worth of a man in the real world. *Orí*, for the Yorùbá, is considered not only as the bearer of destiny but also the essence of human personality that rules, controls and guides all man’s life activities (Idowu, 1996:184). According to the Yorùbá myth of creation, there are certain supernatural forces behind the acquisition of *orí*.

In the Yorùbá myth of creation, though at variance with other creation accounts, *Òrìṣàṅlá*, the Arch-divinity, is saddled with the responsibility of forming the body which he later passes on to *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Deity, for the impartation of *ẹ̀mí*, the life force, into the lifeless form moulded by *Òrìṣàṅlá*. However, before coming into the world, the human-to-be goes to the *Àjàlá*'s warehouse to choose an *orí* from the large number in the warehouse. Ironically though, *Àjàlá*, in the myth, who has the responsibility of moulding a fitting *orí*, is described as a drunkard, debtor, and an irresponsible and careless workman who through sheer negligence, moulds heads of diverse traits and attributes. At times, he makes the kind of *orí* which Yorùbá call *orí-rere*, fortunate *orí*; at other times, *orí-buríkú*, unfortunate *orí*, is what is made (Morakinyo 1983:78). Getting the *orí*, as conceived by Morakinyo (1983:72), "is done by kneeling before *Olódùmarè*" who then bestows on humans their *àyànmọ́*. The idea of *àyànmọ́* is conceived and explained in various terms depending on how it is acquired. Idowu (1996:183) explains ways of one acquiring his destiny thus:

According to the general conception, a person obtains his destiny in one of the three ways: he kneels down and chooses his destiny; for a destiny which comes upon a person in this way, we have the name *À-kúnlẹ̀-yàn*— 'that which is chosen while kneeling'; or he kneels down and receives his destiny; for this, we have the name *À-kúnlẹ̀-gbà*— 'that which is received kneeling', or his destiny is affixed to him— for this, we have the name *Àyànmọ́*— 'that which is affixed to one'.

The word 'destiny' has been described in various terms by different scholars, for instance Gbadegesin (1998:47) depicts it as "pre-ordained portion of life wound and sealed up on *orí*," and further explains that "human beings have an allotment of this destiny which determines the general course of life." *Orí* is regarded as the compass of an individual's destiny. Oladipo (1992:37) expansively sees destiny as the belief that every person has his biography written before coming to the world which consequently implies that anything one does is not something done out of free will but something done in fulfilment of preordained history. Balogun (2007) describes human destiny as the mysterious power that is believed to control the events of human life. Destiny or predestination, in Yorùbá philosophical concept, is the belief that whatever happens or will happen has been preordained.

The various terms (*Àkúnlẹ̀yàn*, *àkúnlẹ̀gbà*, *kádàrà*, *àkọ̀silẹ̀* and *àyànmọ́*) used to express the concept of destiny convey the notion that whatever is conferred on man is unalterable and thus becomes his portion throughout life (Idowu 1996:184). In Yorùbá philosophical analysis, it is held that no man can achieve anything contrary to his allotment portion through *akúnlẹ̀yàn*, *àkúnlẹ̀gbà*, *kádàrà*, *àkọ̀silẹ̀* or *àyànmọ́*. There are several sayings among the Yorùbá s that confirm their strong belief in the strength of destiny and the fact that it is unchangeable. For instance, when a person is seen struggling to succeed but the efforts are to no avail, they declare "*àyànmọ́ ọ̀ gbóògùn, orí lẹ̀lẹ̀jọ̀*" (*àyànmọ́*/destiny is unchangeable; it is a matter of *orí*). However, three of these terms are used consistently namely; *àyànmọ́*, *kádàrà* and *àkọ̀silẹ̀*. Most times, *àyànmọ́* is used in positive matters while *kádàrà* and *àkọ̀silẹ̀* are often used in negative circumstances especially, when sympathising with someone who has lost a loved one to death. Expressions such as; "*ẹ̀niti kò bá gbakádàrà yóo*

gbakodoro” (he that does not accept his fate or destiny, will be forced to accept emptiness), “*àkọsílẹ̀ kò lèè tà.sé*” (that which is written cannot go unfulfilled).

Àyànmọ́ is believed to be a mysterious power controlling human events. This mysterious power is usually accredited to Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being; he is believed to have pre-existentially fixed all the events that would take place in a man’s earthly existence. Hence, the saying: “*ewé kan kò lèè jábọ́ láraigikí Ọlọrun má mò sí*” (there is no leaf that will drop off a tree that escapes the notice of God). The implication of this expression is apparent: nothing can happen to human in this life without God’s knowledge and sanction.

An interesting part of the procedure of destiny allotment is described by Idowu in the following manner:

When the rite before Olódùmarè is completed, the person starts on his way into the world. He arrives at the gates between heaven and earth, and encounters the Oníbodè— ‘The Gate Keeper’—to whom he must answer some questions before he passes through. The questions and answers go something as follows:

- ONÍBODÈ: Where are you going?
 PERSON: I am going into the world.
 ONÍBODÈ: What are you going to do?
 PERSON: I am going to be born to a man named X, of a woman named Y, in the town of Z. I shall be an only son. I shall grow up to be handsome and in favour with everybody; everything I touch will prosper...At the age of ninety, I shall be ill for a short while and then die peacefully in my house, to be mourned by all and to be accorded a grand burial.
 ONÍBODÈ: Tó (it is sealed).

And so the person passes into the world with his destiny doubly sealed. By the passing into the world, he forgets at once what has happened to him in heaven, including the content of his destiny (Idowu, 1996:184).

Corroborating Idowu’s assertion above, Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) explain that when the journey is being made into the world, *orí*, in the form of human’s double passes the gate situated between heaven and earth. There, the *Oníbodè Ọrun* (the heaven’s gate keeper) asks him/her to declare his/her destiny, they state:

There the destiny is doubly and finally sealed, and man is born into the world. But he forgets everything about his destiny. It is only his *Orí*, guardian angel or counterpart that knows all about his destiny, and therefore guides him throughout life. But the Yorùbá believe that there is always the

oracle divinity, *Òrúnmìlà*, who is present when man's destiny is sealed before Deity. He also knows all about man's destiny, and he can always put him in line with regard to his duties and obligations, what to do and what to avoid, so that all may be well with him (Awolalu and Dopamu, 2005:184–185).

From the above, "the 'finished' person becomes a thing in the womb, born of a woman" and passes into the world with a sealed destiny which was known to him at a point but is later forgotten.

The Greeks, unlike the Yorùbá, believe that man chooses his own destiny without the interference of the gods as presented by Plato in his myth of Er. In Plato's myth, it is believed that Er died in a battle, but his body was still intact some days after his death, refusing to decompose as it was supposed to. The myth reveals that Er's soul then sojourned to the super-sensible realm where he was made to see how human destiny is chosen and sealed by the three daughters of *Necessity*: *Lachesis*, *Clotho* and *Atropos*. The souls, after their contact with these three daughters of *Necessity*, passed beneath the throne of *Necessity* and began their journey "to the plain of Oblivion, through a terrible and stifling heat". Though Plato's focus here is on the process of reincarnation, a critical analysis shows that any soul that is being born or reborn had to choose his destiny during each reincarnation process. Thus, the souls, like the Yorùbá metaphorical head – *orí*, were led to the "River of Forgetfulness" from which they were all required to drink a measure of the water in order to prevent them from knowing and remembering what has been determined for them by the lot chosen by each of them. And as the story goes, in the middle of the night, they fell asleep, and then "there was a sound of thunder and a quaking of the earth, and they were suddenly wafted then one this way, one that, upward to their birth like shooting stars".

From the discussion so far, the Greek and Yorùbá conceptions of human destiny can be construed in two broad related senses. From both angles, there is an unconscious self that makes a free choice of his life course; it also refers to that which is chosen, the human destiny or lot. This conception fundamentally attributes the choice of human destiny to his own choice of the lot or luck that had already been determined for him. Since the choice made by the unconscious self is unknown to the now conscious person who is now in the world, it is possible for such a person to engage in a project that is not part of the destiny allotted to him. Whatever effort is devoted to such vocation would result in futility (Gbadegesin 1983:183). The implication of this is that the foundation for many of the events that would occur in the life of an individual person has already been laid before him and that once a person's destiny is sealed, nothing can be done to alter it.

The Greek and Yorùbá philosophical conceptions of fatalism or *Àyànmó* are a step away from the general belief of fatalism. At a glance, it seems that an individual is responsible for the choice of his own lot and in line with the general notion of fatalism, once a choice has been made, it is irrevocably sealed. In other words, certain events of human life are such that cannot but occur and since everything is not within human control, what is going to happen will happen, *quiserit, erit* (what will be will be). However, Oduwole (1996:53) contests the so-called act of choice present in the acquisition of *orí* before coming into the world; she does not consider man as having freedom of choice in acquiring an *orí*. To her, the choice of *orí* is forced on man by forces more powerful than himself. A critical analysis of Oduwole's submission shows that whatever choice of *orí* a man

chooses, his destiny is still beyond him because each *orí* has an affixed destiny, either for good fortune or for misfortune.

General Analysis of the Greek and Yorùbá Conception of Fatalism

From the concept of fatalism, it seems that once the issue of an individual's destiny is settled before the soul or *orí* departs from heaven, everything is sealed and nothing can be done to alter or enhance the destiny. From the Stoics argument, belief in fatalism leads to laziness or idleness. Many Yorùbá scholars have argued the possibilities of averting human destiny; for instance, Abimbola (1976:115) argues that it becomes almost impossible to alter a man's destiny once a person has chosen his destiny by selecting an *orí*; pointing out that even the gods do not have the power to avert human destiny. Idowu (1996:186) also argues that the Yorùbás are incurably fatalistic in their belief in *orí* and human destiny. Oduwole (1996:48) extensively argues for the possibility of giving a fatalistic interpretation to the Yorùbá concept of *orí* and human destiny. She claims that for the Yorùbá, a person's biography has been written before his coming into the world, in such a way that his whole life is guided and controlled not by his choice but by his preordained destiny. Oduwole (1996:52) maintains that a fatalistic interpretation of the Yorùbá conception of *orí* and human destiny is more consistent with Yorùbá belief than any other interpretation.

However, there are certain Yorùbá ideologies and practical experiences whose interpretations are capable of making the Yorùbá concepts of destiny and predestination, and the fatalistic interpretation given to the Yorùbá concept of *orí* and human destiny inappropriate and absurd. Idowu (1996:186) alludes to the fact that the Yorùbá concept of the inalterability of destiny is considerably modified. From Idowu's notion, it is not out of context to assert that the Yorùbá people considerably believe that man's destiny can be altered one way or the other, either for good fortune or misfortune. Fashina asserts that the Yorùbá:

belief system and philosophy of *orí* as predestination does not foreclose the strong moral and philosophical insistence that a person must work hard to achieve success in life instead of expecting his/her *orí* to give success to the lazy and idle person (Fashina, 2009:255).

Fashina's proclamation goes along with the Yorùbá proverbs that *àtẹ̀lẹ̀wọ́ ẹ̀nikíí tan níi jẹ́* (literally, one's palm does not deceive one) and *ìşé l'ògùnìşé* (work is antidote to poverty). These expressions have deeper connotations than the literal one given above; they mean that success cannot be attained without one working for it even if one has chosen a good destiny. This idea is reflected in excerpt from *Ifá* Divination below as quoted in Fashina:

Bí Orí ẹ̀nibá dára

Ìwọ̀n ní ká yọ̀ mọ̀

Nítòrí ìşé kíl pá ní

Ayọ̀ ní í pà 'yàn

A difá fuń Àkèrẹ̀ ọ̀mọ̀ Onisun 'ko

Tí wọ̀n ní yóoj'ọ̀ba

If one's Ori is good

One should joy in limits

Because, hard work does not kill

But idleness kills a person

Divined for the frog, son of the king of brooks

Who was destined to reign

Ayò àyòjù, Akerewá fì tànṣe

He was idle, relying on destiny to work out the success

E ẹ wáa wo ọmọ alaigboran
Bí iná orí Èṣù tí n' j'ó wọn

O! Come and see how the indolence heir
Is gutted by fire from Esu's furnace!
(Fashina, 2009:255).

The above excerpt shows that success cannot be attained without hard work even if one is destined for it. Using the Stoics' theory of co-fatedness, if one is destined to be successful, he is also necessarily destined to work hard in order for the fated outcome to come true. Hence, both the Stoics and Yorúbás believe that a person's action is necessary for one's fate to come true.

There are other factors that the Yorúbá believe can alter an individual's destiny. One of such is an individual's inordinate appetite and ambition; this can alter the fortune from good to bad. The Yorúbás refer to this as *àfowófà* (that which one brings upon oneself). Idowu (1996: 190) states that an individual's destiny "can be affected for the worse by his own character." According to him, "the Yorúbá believe that a good destiny without character is worthless"; hence, the saying: *ìwà lẹ̀'baàwúre* (character is the king of fortune). Examining the concept of *ìwà* (character) in relation to destiny, it is glaring that an individual should not expect his good destiny to be fulfilled automatically; he must work in partnership with his destiny by procuring and practising good character.

Another factor that can alter a person's destiny for worse is referred to as the malevolent forces in the world that operate through human agents. Idowu (1996:187) refers to this as *ọmọ aráyé* (children of the world) or *elénini* (the implacable) such as witches and "anyone who is given to evil practices or machination". The Yorúbá believe that these agents have the power to destroy people's lots, no matter how good the destiny they have chosen. *Ogbè-Èdí*, quoted in Idowu (1996: 188), states: "*Orí kúnlè ó yàn'wà, elénini ò jẹ kó ẹ é* (*Orí* knelt and chose the portion, *elénini* hinders it from its fulfilment)." The Yorúbá believe that malevolent forces which they call '*ayé*' have immense power that it can alter the operation of nature, hence the saying:

Bí ẹ rí ayé, ẹ sá f'áyé,

if you encounter ayé, flee from ayé,

Bí ẹ rí ayé, ẹ sá f'áyé:

if you encounter ayé, flee from ayé:

Ìṣẹṣẹ w' ayé ijimèrè dúdú,

The primeval *ijimèrè* was black,

Ayé nàà l' ó t' aṣo ijimèrè b' epo;

this aye it is that soaked *ijimere*'s
clothes in palm oil;

Ará 'yé nàà l' ò p'ògidán;

this ayé it is that slew *ògidán*

Ògidánolóóla ijù;

Ògidán the surgeon of the wilderness

Bí ẹ rí ayé, ẹ sá f'áyé.

if you encounter ayé, flee from ayé

(Idowu, 1996:189–190).

From the above, it is evident that human destiny can be enhanced or augmented through hard work; it can also be altered either for good or bad.

On the surface, the concept of fatalism seems to paralyse the spirit and will of man providing the easy pretext of man absolving himself of the responsibility of the deeds of his life believing that

what will be will be, no matter his actions or inactions. He does not care to promote his personality leaving everything to fate. However, by the foregoing, it can be summed that humans have significant roles to play through their own actions or inactions with regards to general life experiences. What happens to man is, therefore, not just pre-arranged (fated) to happen but certain (in) actions caused the eventuality or prevented it. The argument of the Stoics about co-fated events shows that even if everything is destined or fated, a person can still do something about what happens; therefore, a man has some abilities and control over the happenings in his life. The co-fated theory of the Stoics also shows that if the fated events are to occur, choices are needed. In other words, decisions are to be made by individuals. The Stoics argue that man does not only contribute to what happens but also contributes as a free agent linking the argument to their doctrine of causes. The Stoics reiterate that “fate is an order and series of causes since the connection of cause to cause generates things from itself” (Cicero, *Div.* 1.125 [LS 55L; SVF 2.921]).

Conclusion

The concept of predestination is one that has been long debated both in scholarship and everyday life. Scholars have appraised the phenomenon of predestination from two major theoretical frameworks which are fatalism and determinism. These terms have been used by scholars to emphasize the futility of man’s efforts in attempting to contain the foreordination of fate or destiny. While fatalism holds that all events take place according to a predetermined and inevitable destiny, determinism opines that every event has its determining conditions in its immediate antecedents (Adebowale, 2017: 45). In line with these two theoretical anchors, this paper attempted a comparative study of the helplessness of man in the face of predestination in the Yorùbá and the Greek traditions.

The paper finds that in the Greek tradition, modern philosophical thoughts have dismissed fatalism, which attributes events to God’s control over everything for a cause and effect parameter of human experiences as the basis of human fate. This is the crux of determinism. The Yorùbá in their own worldview subscribe to predestination which is expressed with terms such as *Ori* and *Àyànmọ́*. The assumption is that the human life is predestined and human beings are subject to fate. However, there are also Yorùbá philosophical thoughts which express the inevitability of man’s role in what becomes of him. These are expressed in their many proverbs which give credence to human efforts such as *atéléwọ́ ẹnikíí tan níi jẹ, isẹ́ l’oògùnìsẹ́*. The paper concludes that humans have significant roles to play through own actions and inactions with regard to their life experiences. What happens to man is not just prearranged to happen but certain actions or inactions bring about the consequence or avert it. The paper, therefore, submits that man must take account for a large chunk of what becomes of their lives rather than submitting to fate.

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