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Artifacts in Cultural Identity and Spiritual Practice

Editors-in-Chief

Dan CHIȚOIU & Corina DOMNARI

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EDITORIAL

Artifact Role in Shaping Identity and Empowering Spiritual Practice

Artifacts play an essential role in the contours of a cultural tradition, constituting the constant landmarks of a perennial. Within a given cultural horizon, those artifacts that express the ethos of that horizon in an exemplary way are the most important. In most cases, the artifacts embody symbolic codes and forms belonging to the original, coagulating times of that cultural horizon. Not many artifacts are essential to a cultural pattern, even if they are found on various material supports and configurations. In each culture, particular material supports are favored, and this is an important indication of the landmarks in which a cultural tradition has developed. The reasons why certain artifacts are constantly reproduced, even with certain variations, is a research topic of exceptional importance in understanding the ethos of a culture, a people, or a community. Such an artifact sums up and expresses much more in a symbolic concentration that resonates with the particularities of the material support on which it is found. It is practical wisdom built up over generations, expressed through the genius of the person who decides how to print it on one material support or another.

The realization of a culture's essential artifacts is decided in times and places where the genius of a craftsman shapes the essential code and the preferred material support through which the identity mark of a culture is expressed. The very special significance of artifacts of this kind relates not only to the contours of a collective identity but also to a way of relating to reality, which is part of an everyday spiritual practice. In this sense, spiritual practice is not only about relating to the many aspects of the concreteness of life but also about the actual existence and presence of that beyond materiality, being supernatural forces and powers that influence and make their presence felt concrete. The artifact's symbolism exemplifies this

awareness of the co-presence of the natural and the super-natural. Hence, the complexity of the symbolism of the at sums up several modes of expression and refers to multiple ways of understanding and use. The artifact has *power* because it is where the natural meets the supernatural, so its presence or use means channeling and manifesting a *nexus* between realities and worlds. This is why these artifacts have always been regarded as having the potential to mediate and initiate links and connections. Special attention has been paid to the correct and efficient realization of how specific symbolic codes are imprinted in a particular material support. Deviation from the symbolic code is tantamount to the artifact's inefficiency as a nexus. The aesthetic aspect is secondary. What matters is something else. The imposition of symbolic codes counted as effective in the act of unification and intermediation is related to how a particular community has represented reality, heavenly or earthly, and this has also determined the frameworks in which that community has to live. Otherwise, it is impossible to understand the cohesive force of a community or culture over generations and historical epochs.

Studies in this *Issue* illustrate the above exemplary evidence of the distinct and diverse ways a culture has shaped its symbolic and power frameworks in material support. Jānis Ozoliņš, in his paper *Interpreting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art and Artefacts*, sees that artifacts must be understood not simply as objects that can be described in terms of their physical characteristics and the use made of them but also as objects that have cultural, historical and religious significance. We should see Australian artifacts not just starkly as having utilitarian purposes but immersed in an Aboriginal world in which they will have different meanings, if not uses, for different Aboriginal communities. It is also important to stress that every Aboriginal community has prohibitions on outsiders, knowing certain things that are sacred to that community and that only designated community members can know. Unless individuals are members of that community, they will not be privy to their secret matters. This is to preserve the value of certain ceremonies and rituals and specific designs, totems, and objects. On the other hand, in the African context, Ernest Beyaraza (in *Artifacts in Cultural Identity and Spiritual Practice. Disjointedness of Traditional and Modern Artifacts, Symbols and Signs with Living Examples from*

Africa) stresses that man and nature are not merely observable physical phenomena. Humanity combines physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual nature. This tripartite phenomenon is reflected in cultures. Nature, too, is not inanimate clay from which cultural objects are modeled, a typical mistake of naturalism and scientism. Man and nature are different entities but complement each other. There is a supra-natural reality beyond them. Thus, artifacts are made about personal needs, natural dictates, and spiritual roles. Artifacts also reflect human relations. Human contacts initiate a cross-fertilization of ideas, concepts, perspectives, aspirations, practices, artifacts, and other aspects of life. Such perspective is very well illustrated in Ikechukwu Monday Osebor's paper on "*Ofo*" in *Cultural Identity and Spiritual Practice in Owa Culture*. *Ofo* is a cultural artifact deeply rooted in the traditions of the Owa people, part of the Ika-Igbo nation in Delta State, Nigeria. It represents personal accomplishment, power, and individual success, often associated with the male's personal deity or "Chi." *Ofo* is typically a wooden staff carved from a specific type of tree believed to have spiritual significance, serving both spiritual and social functions. The wood is usually polished and may be adorned with symbols or decorations. It often features intricate carvings, including anthropomorphic figures, animals, or geometric patterns. These carvings are not merely decorative but hold symbolic meanings related to the owner's lineage, status, or spiritual beliefs. Another excellent contribution to *Issue*'s topic is André Bueno's *The Book as a Cultural Artifact in Brazilian Spiritism*, which examines the religious doctrine of Christian spiritualism that emerged in the 19th century in France but achieved significant expansion in Brazil, becoming one of the primary religious expressions in the country. Brazilian Spiritism places great emphasis on study as a form of knowledge and development of the doctrine, making the Spiritist book central to constructing a Spiritist cultural pedagogy. Bueno sees the Spiritist book mainly as an artifact that has diverse functions in the continuous transformation of the Brazilian Spiritist movement.

Dan CHIȚOIU, Corina DOMNARI
(*Editors-in-Chief*)

RESEARCH ARTICLES

*Artifacts in Cultural Identity and Spiritual
Practice*

Interpreting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art and Artefacts

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The artefacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, common with other ethnic peoples, have to be understood not simply as objects that can be described in terms of their physical characteristics and the use made of them, but also as objects that have cultural, historical and religious significance. It is crucial that we see artefacts not just starkly as having utilitarian purposes, but immersed in an Aboriginal world in which they will have different meanings, if not uses, for different Aboriginal communities. It is also important to realise that every Aboriginal community will have prohibitions on outsiders knowing certain things which are sacred to that community and which only designated members of the community can know. Unless individuals are members of that community, they will not be privy to their secret matters. This is to preserve the value of not only certain ceremonies and rituals, but also specific designs, totems and objects. This means that the significance of the artefacts considered below can only be partially understood since our ability to enter the world of a specific Aboriginal community is limited. We remain outsiders and even if invited into the community we can only participate in the community to the extent allowed by the taboos, rituals and laws of the community. This does not mean, however, that we cannot appreciate and admire the aesthetic and cultural value that these artefacts have. We will consider the following artefacts that are distinctly part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and tradition: (i) the boomerang, (ii) the woomera, (iii) a cave painting and (iv) a piece of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. We will draw on Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* and

Being to help understand and interpret these artefacts in the context of the Dreaming and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Dilthey's notion of historicity leads Heidegger to realise that meaning and significance originate in human history, since human ideas are formed from within a specific time and culture. In Heidegger's view, this means that we cannot make any sense of human life except through an understanding of its specific context. While a kind of objectivity may apply within the natural sciences, in trying to be objective about human life, we leave out what is central to our lived experience, namely the life world in which we are immersed, and which gives meaning to our activity within it. Heidegger says that *Dasein* is the Being-in-the-world and explains that Being-in is a state of *Dasein*'s Being, but of a different character. In relation to *Dasein*, it means "dwelling" or "residing" in, it means something like "inhabiting the world". Heidegger says that "Being-in" is the formal existential expression for the Being of *Dasein*, which has *Being-in-the-world* as its essential state.¹ When Heidegger speaks of *Being-in-the-world*, he means it in an everyday sense in which we are immersed in our lives. When we encounter objects in our everyday world, they are not objects of study or observation, rather they are objects that are "ready-to-hand", objects which we make use of in our daily lives. We do not think of them as objects, rather as tools. For example, we use pens, hammers, glasses, cars and any number of other items that are at hand. These are functional items that Heidegger calls equipment (*Zeuge*).² To understand anything about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders we have to understand them, as Heidegger argues in relation to *Dasein*, the Being-in-the world, in their "Being-in". This means an understanding of the objects which for them are ready-to-hand, having a use but also charged with meaning as instruments of ritual and spiritual significance. It also means having an understanding of what "Being-with" is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples.³ This is because the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), to use Husserl's term that Heidegger also uses in his Freiburg lectures, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 80.

² *Ibid.*, 97.

³ Note that I use the older term for the First peoples of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, rather than the term now in common use, First Nations, because the term nations does not apply to the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders organized their communities.

dictates not only the number and kind of objects or artefacts that are ready-to-hand but also their significance. A nomadic life-world has no use for the accumulation of artefacts and so those things that must be carried from place to place must serve multiple purposes.

Although no analysis of the uncanny resemblance of the Dreaming with Heidegger's conception of the relation between *Dasein* and the world is attempted here, his conception of Being helps us understand the nature of the Dreaming. Heidegger says that the relation between *Dasein* and the world does not coincide with the division between subject and object.⁴ One reason for resisting this for Heidegger is that it creates a gap between *Dasein* and the world. Heidegger argues that the relation is one in which *Dasein* has *being-in* and is towards the world. He observes that knowing is not in the objects known but belongs solely to those entities which know. The question becomes one of explaining how the entity which knows comes out of its own sphere into another external sphere. Heidegger says that no adequate explanation is forthcoming: it is just assumed that there is a connection. The way around this problem is through construing knowing as a mode of Being of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world. In knowing, *Dasein* achieves a new *status of Being* [*Seinsstand*] towards a world that has already been discovered in *Dasein* itself. Knowing, concludes Heidegger, is a mode of *Dasein* founded upon Being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is a basic state and must be interpreted beforehand.⁵ For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, there is no division between themselves and the world in which they are immersed. The Dreaming abides, forming the ground of their Being. It is more than just the historical world of culture, religion and tradition that Aboriginal *Dasein* has its Being-in. The Dreaming is the source of the Aboriginal world and of themselves. In the Dreaming, everything has its being, past, present and future.

It should always be remembered that in speaking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture that we are generalising, and should really be speaking of Aboriginal cultures, since there is as much variety and difference in Australian Aboriginal cultures as there are in European cultures. We can identify commonalities, just as we can in European cultures, but it is equally wrong to suppose that they are uniform.

⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁵ Ibid., 88-90.

Traditions and customs vary from region to region, so that what is a custom in Northern Australia, for instance, may not be in Southern or Western Australia. Thus while the world in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have their Being-in varies, the Dreaming and the Law form the Heideggerian truth of being of which all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are conscious. Place, however, which forms the particular world in which Aboriginal *Dasein* has its Being-in, is important and is reflected in both the art and artefacts of specific communities.

Aboriginal peoples did not use writing to convey stories and traditions, but they did make extensive use of symbolism in their art in order to convey meaning. An important aspect of Aboriginal religion and culture are creation stories from The Dreaming. Aboriginals had a conception of the world as comprising human beings, the plant and animal world, the physical environment and a spiritual realm. Two crucial principles form the basis of Aboriginal world views, and these are the Law and the Dreaming. The former, the Law, provides the rules for the conduct of life and these were handed down to human beings during The Dreaming. It specifies what can be done and what is held to be taboo.⁶

The Dreaming is a symbolic formulation of an intuition of a mystery, which is the *significatum* of the religious rites and myths. Its subject is the imprisoning dialect of human life in aboriginal society, a perennial condition of good-with-suffering.⁷ A central meaning of it is that of a sacred, heroic time long ago when man and nature came to be as they are. The Dreaming conjures up the notion of a sacred, heroic time of the indefinitely remote past, but a time also part of the present. The Dreaming is many things in one. (i) It is a kind of narrative to things which happened, (ii) a charter of things still to happen, (iii) and a kind of *logos* or principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man or woman.⁸ If we are to understand what is mean by the Dreaming, then it is wise not to

⁶ Robert Tonkinson, "Australian Aboriginal Society and Culture: An Overview," in James D. Wright (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd Ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 236.

⁷ W. E. H. Stanner, and John Hilary Martin, *People from the Dawn: Religion, Homeland, and Privacy in Australian Aboriginal Culture* (Antioch, CA: Solas Press, 2001), 64.

⁸ W. E. H. Stanner, *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Collingwood, Victoria: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009), 58-59.

think in non-Aboriginal categories of understanding, but to conceive of things in the metaphysical categories used by the Aboriginal people themselves. Nevertheless, it helps, for non-Aboriginal people, understanding the Dreaming if it can be compared to more familiar ways of thinking. Heidegger's notion of Being as the time or duration in which *Dasein* becomes conscious that it has its being-in-the-world, helps explain how the Aboriginal peoples perceive their relationship to the Dreaming.

The Dreaming is not an accurate rendition of the meaning of the Aboriginal terms used to describe it and has much greater depth of meaning. Thus, the Aranda phrase *altjiranga ngambakala* has the connotation of "having originated out of one's own eternity", immortal, uncreated, and this is essential to the concept of the Dreaming. There is something of Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*'s "thrownness" here. The Dreaming is a plurivocal term with a number of distinct though connected meanings. (i) It is a narrative mythical account of the foundation and shaping of the entire world by the ancestor heroes who are uncreated and eternal. (ii) It refers to the embodiment of the spiritual power of the ancestor heroes in the land in certain sites, and in species of fauna and flora, so that this power is available to people today. The land itself is a kind of religious icon, since it both represents the power of the Dreamtime beings and also effects and transmits that power. (iii) It denotes the general way of life or "Law" – moral and social precepts, ritual and ceremonial practices, etc. (iv) It may refer to the personal way of vocation that an individual Aboriginal might have by virtue of his membership of a clan, or by virtue of his spirit-conception relating him to particular sites. The Dreaming is a present reality – individuals can, through ritual, enter the spirit world, contact the Dreamtime presences and become identified with them. The Aboriginal person through the ritual becomes absorbed into the very essence of the being (such as a rock kangaroo) as it exists in the Dreaming.⁹

The Dreaming brings together the past, present and future, they are the one thing. For Aboriginal ontology there is a sense of permanence and stability about life and human beings. That is, we can understand the Dreaming, while it contains a narrative about creation events, is not about

⁹ Max Charlesworth, "Introduction," in Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell, and Kenneth Maddock (eds.), *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology* (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1984), 9-10.

either the past, present or the future. In it, the past, present and the future disappear, and the Dreaming abides. It can be thought of as cosmogony, an account of the begetting of the universe, a study of creation and a cosmology, an account of how what was created became an ordered moral system. The stories of the Dreaming are a type of commentary on what is thought to be permanent and ordained at the very basis of the world and life. It determines not only what life is, but also what it can be and provides a guide, through stories, of how good persons should, and bad persons will, act now. These stories are a key or guide to the norms of conduct, and a prediction of how human beings will err. Aboriginal people have a mythology, a ritual, and an art which expresses an intuitive, visionary, and poetic understanding of ultimates such as reality, truth, goodness and beauty. This Aboriginal philosophy steeped in mythology, the product of an indeterminate past, is lived out through ritual and an expressive art, and in part through non-sacred social customs.¹⁰

There is something reminiscent of Heidegger's elucidation of time or temporality in this characterisation of the Dreaming. Heidegger rejects the idea of time as a linear succession of "nows", originally proposed by Aristotle, taking as his starting point the human being, *Dasein*, in his phenomenological experience of being-in-the-world. *Dasein* in its ownmost being, its authentic self, is the coming to be being. This, however, cannot be divorced from what *Dasein* has been in the past. Heidegger says that I am nothing but the future of *Dasein* and with it its past.¹¹ Heidegger says that the past, present and future for *Dasein*, the human being, are form a unity and should be thought of as containing the being of *Dasein*. Likewise, though it is a much richer concept of what it means to be a human being, the Dreaming forms a unity in which not only the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander persons have their being but is the very ground of their existence. Just as for Heidegger, *Dasein* cannot be divorced from being-in-

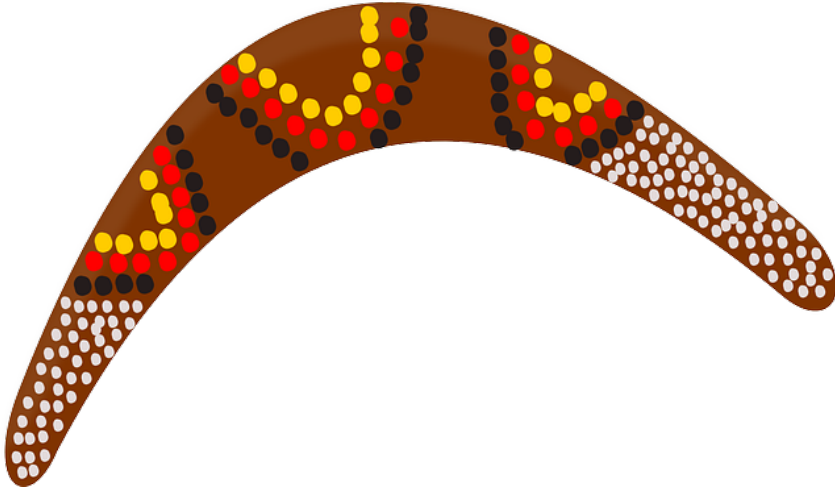
¹⁰ W.E.H. Stanner, *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Collingwood, Victoria: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009), 67-69.

¹¹ See the discussion in the following texts of Heidegger: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), Section 68; Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991); Martin, Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 319.

the-world and being-with, neither can the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person be divorced from his or her place enmeshed in the world and in the timelessness of the Dreaming.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts below offer a glimpse into an ancient and sophisticated culture, as well as an insight into how the Aboriginal peoples of Australia lived for thousands of years before the waves of migration, commencing with British colonisation in 1788, that have created modern multicultural Australia. There is much to be learned from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of living in harmony with their environment. Not only this, but perhaps also a deeper insight into what it means to be human.

The Boomerang



The boomerang is probably one of the most recognisable symbols of Australia, even though it historically has been found in other civilisations.¹² It evolved from a throwing stick which was designed to kill animals for food or as a weapon of war. Some, made in pairs, are used as percussion instruments in ceremonies and rituals, as well as to just make music. There

¹² See P. Valde-Nowak, A. Nadachowski, and M. Wolsan, “Upper Palaeolithic Boomerang made of a Mammoth Tusk in South Poland,” *Nature*, 329 (1987): 436-438. Excavations in a cave in South Poland uncovered a boomerang made from a mammoth’s tusk. This artefact was dated to about 21,000 years B.C. Nevertheless, it was the Aboriginal peoples who perfected the returning boomerang.

are, therefore, several different types of boomerangs, depending on the use that is to be made of them. For example, not all have the curved aerodynamic shape depicted in the above picture, that is the shape of the returning boomerang, which was invented by the Australian Aboriginal people. The curve of the boomerang is not its main feature, rather it is the shape of the two sides that is important. The upper side of the boomerang is concave, while the underside is flat. It is this shape which gives it the aerodynamical features which enable the boomerang to return to its thrower.¹³ The boomerang has to be in a vertical orientation when it is thrown and when it returns, it will be in a horizontal orientation. Most boomerangs were not designed to come back but had to be fetched from where they had landed. The returning boomerang was not designed to bring down game, but to disrupt the flight of birds so that they became ensnared in nets and could be captured. Other boomerangs were used to catch fish, also having a flat curved shape, in order to be able to smoothly enter the water. Heavier boomerangs were also used for warfare. Medium weight boomerangs would be thrown at opponents and could be deadly, while two-metre tall boomerangs were used for fighting in close quarters. Such boomerangs did not have the curved shape of the aerodynamic, returning boomerang.

The boomerang could also be used as a digging stick for foraging for root vegetables, such as the youlk, a plant the roots of which look like a potato and taste like a nashi pear and radish crossed with kohlrabi and potato. It is found in the sandy soils of South-western Australia. The sharp edge of the boomerang could also be used to make fire by rubbing it on a soft wood. Like other artefacts of the Aboriginal peoples, the boomerang is very versatile and has many different uses.

¹³ For a discussion of the aerodynamics of the boomerang, see Felix Hess, "The Aerodynamics of Boomerangs," *Scientific American* 219, no. 5 (1968): 124-139, and Daniel Drollette, "Return to sender: Aboriginal design is still the best place to start if you want to get your boomerang back," *The Sciences* 38, no. 3 (1998).

The Woomera



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The spear was the most common hunting and fighting weapon used by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Spears were made from flexible wooden rods hardened by fire and were up to three metres long, depending on the individual and its intended use. While few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live a traditional life, some maintain the skills passed down from their elders. Different materials are used for the spears depending on the region. In Arnhem land, in the north of Australia, bougainvillea rods are used, in riverine areas, reeds are used to make lightweight spears and in other parts of Australia, tree saplings are utilised. For a heavier spear, a more dense wood, such as an acacia, would be used. Such a spear would be used to hunt large prey. Sharpened at one end, stone tips would be attached to the spear with a strong binding, usually made from kangaroo tendon or cord made from tree bark. For fishing, microliths, or small sharpened stones would be hammered into the top of the shaft of the spear to form barbs. These would ensure that the spear remained in the prey until it was retrieved. In order to extend the throwing range and the force with which the spear could be thrown, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people invented the woomera or miru. This device is unique to the Australian Aboriginal peoples. The woomera uses leverage in order to attain greater velocity and hence distance for the spear. As indicated in the picture, at one end there is a peg in which the spear rests. The woomera

is gripped by the thrower at the other end. If the spear was being used for fishing, it would be angled towards the water, as illustrated, if it was to be thrown at a wallaby or land prey, it would be angled upwards. The woomera could be thrown with great accuracy.

The woomera itself is made from mulga and, like the boomerang, serves multiple purposes. It also comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the particular tribe and part of the country from which it originates. In general, the woomera will be around 60 centimetres long and about 12 centimetres wide. Wider woomeras can be also useful for deflecting enemies' spears during warfare. The woomera usually has a shallow concave surface, though in some regions they are flat, and an elliptical shape, narrowing at both ends. This is because at one end will be the peg in which the spear rests and at the other, the grip which enables the spear to be thrown. The grip itself is made from a spinifex resin, which is rounded into sphere. The resin, formed by beating the resin out of spinifex and other grasses such as porcupine grass, cleaning and heating it to form a black sticky substance, is a form of thermoplastic capable of binding rock to wood. The peg could be made from a variety of materials, such as a large tooth of a kangaroo, a piece of bone or a sharp piece of quartz. In South-Eastern Australia, the peg may be made of wood. The end of the spear is held in place by the sharp point of the peg until it is ready to be launched.

Generally, the type of spear that could be thrown utilising the woomera is lighter than one that was thrown by hand. This is because the main purpose of the spear thrower is to generate greater speed and distance. The woomera utilises leverage, with the fulcrum being at the end grasped by the thrower. The other end of the lever moves through a larger distance and so generates a much higher velocity at the point at which the spear is released. The longer the spear thrower, the lighter the spear has to be in order to achieve the speed and distance required to successfully hunt smaller animals and birds. Shorter woomeras could be used with heavier spears to hunt large animals. The speed and accuracy of Aboriginal spears aided by the spear throwers meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples never had a use for bows and arrows.

While its primary function was as a spear thrower, the woomera had other uses. The sharp piece of quartz could also be used as a cutting tool, while

the edge of the woomera could be used to make fire by rubbing the edge on a soft wood. Since it was pointed at one end, it could also be used as a digging stick. The slightly concave ones could be used for mixing ochres for use in painting or decorating the body for ceremonies and rituals. It could also be used as a receptacle for carrying various items. The woomera itself was often decorated using ochres to paint them, or they were carved with various tribal symbols. Both the differing shapes of the woomeras and their carvings and decorations were an indication of which clan or tribe they came from. Central desert woomeras, for example, are a wide with a concave shape, while those from the Kimberley region are narrow and flat.

Rock Art



(By Thomas Schoch [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons)

The painting depicted is Aboriginal Rock Art, Anbangbang Rock Shelter, Kakadu National Park, Australia. It shows Namondjok, a Creation Ancestor, who later becomes Ginga, the Saltwater crocodile at the top, the Lightning Man, Namarrgon, to the right with his wife Barrginj below to the

left, and a group of men and women with ceremonial headdresses underneath. These Spirit figures were repainted between 1962 and 1964, the last major rock painting at the Anbangbang Art site in Nourlangie Rock. Repainting was undertaken by Aboriginal rock artist Najombolmi (1895-1967) and can only be carried out by someone authorised to do so, though not all rock art can be repainted. Anbangbang Rock Shelter was a place in which people sheltered during the rain in the monsoon season. It was a place for making tools, telling stories and playing games while food was cooking. It was an important place for the Warramal clan of Aboriginal people. Archaeological evidence at the site indicates that it has been used as a shelter by Aboriginal people for at least 20,000 years. The materials found suggest that the site was used by a family group as a base camp, as animal and plant remains have been found. These indicate a varied diet, with fish, magpie geese, freshwater mussels, waterlilies, fruits, wallabies, goannas, flying foxes, echidnas, and crocodile eggs all featuring on the menu.¹⁴

Aboriginal art, as depicted in the painting, has meanings which non-Aboriginal people are not entitled to know, hence, any explanation of the figures depicted will not convey the full meaning of the rock art. Namondjok, the largest figure in the painting, is a creation ancestor, and there a number of different stories surrounding him. He now lives in the sky and can only be seen as a black spot in the Milky Way. To his right, is Namarrgon, also a creation ancestor, known as the 'Lightning man' because he creates the violent lightning storms that commence in Northern Australia during the monsoon season. Below Namondjok and to the left is Barrginj, Namarrgon's wife. Their children are the Alyurr (Leichhardt's Grasshoppers) who are important to the local Aboriginal people, because they gave them their language, beliefs, values and the structure of their society during the creation time. The Alyurr grasshoppers, blue and orange in colour, are quite rare, and having been described in 1845 by Ludwig Leichhardt, were not rediscovered by non-Aboriginal people until the 1970s. They feed on one particular plant, *pityrodia jamesii*, a flowering member of the mint family, and are seen just before the wet season. Below the three creation figures

¹⁴ "Nourlangie Art Site," Nomad Explorers Site, accessed October 4, 2024, <http://thenomadexplorers.com/sites/default/files/users/65/files/australia-northern-territory-kakadu-and-surrounds-202/nourlangieartsite.pdf>.

are a group of human beings wearing headdresses, which suggests that they might be going to a ceremony.¹⁵

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia have an elaborate and complex understanding of their relationship between themselves and the land, as well as the plants and animals that abound. Their art, their sacred ceremonies and the stories of the Dreaming express their understanding of creation and of their place in the order of heaven and earth. Arguably, they have a heightened sense of what being-in-the-world means and this meaning is specific to the particular world which they have their being.

Indigenous Painting



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The painting depicted above has several layers of meaning, only some of which can be known by non-Aboriginal peoples. Various techniques of

¹⁵ Ibid.

painting, such as the use of dots (as in the picture) belong to specific tribes and cannot be used by others. There are usually three layers of meaning: (i) the first is the most obvious depiction of either landscape or a scene from daily life; (ii) conveying in symbolic form, knowledge specific to a tribe and (iii) a deeper, cosmological Dreamtime meaning. Though there are some common symbols, such as concentric circles to represent a camp site or a water hole, and wavy lines to represent water, knowing the common symbols will not reveal the full story.

There are four separate series of concentric circles below. The largest, which connects to the other three, appears to be a large meeting place, or may be an important water hole. There are clearly tracks between these concentric circles, which suggest that it is possible to journey between these. Running between the water holes are sugar ants moving away from the concentric circles. The curved arcs around each of the waterholes or meetings places could represent people meeting there. Indigenous Australian art has been widely recognised throughout the world and features in many world famous art galleries. The painting process, carried out by indigenous artists, mostly follows traditional colours and materials, though in more recent times, artists have been using acrylic paints which allow for the use of colours not available to earlier generations of artists. This raises questions about the authenticity of the artwork, if it is considered to be an expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and hence authentically representing something with a deeper meaning for the particular clan or tribe.

The four artefacts are by no means the only artefacts that can be said to be uniquely representative of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia. They do, however, allow a glimpse into the rich and complex lives that the peoples of the Australian continent lived before the establishment of the first British penal colonies and the subsequent rapid migration to its shores from every part of the globe. The artefacts, in the first two instances, illustrate how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples developed a simple, but effective technology that could be used in the hunting of a variety of game. The second two artefacts illustrate something of their spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities. We briefly compared the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conception of the Dreaming with Heidegger's conception of Being. While the Dreaming is not the same as

Heidegger's conception of Being, it is at least as sophisticated and as complex a metaphysical account of the relation between human beings and the world in which they find themselves. The Dreaming also explains the rules which govern the relationships between human beings and a transcendent world. There is a great deal to be learned from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

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Artifacts in Cultural Identity and Spiritual Practice. Disjointedness of Traditional and Modern Artifacts, Symbols and Signs with Living Examples from Africa

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Abstract: Animals adapt to nature for survival. Man, instead, makes nature adapt to him. Animals change identity. Man changes skills and environment. In this process, man makes artifacts. Artifact is a derivative of Latin *arte* (skill) and *factum* (made) and means what is created through skill and not merely given by nature. Artifacts, therefore, reflect human success and pride. Indigenous people with familial heritage from their ethnic groups hand down the heritage from old to new generations. So, any people is identified with the heritage. In this heritage, artifacts identify both their producers and the environment. As such, artifacts are typical of certain peoples and places. They cover whatever is man-made. In changing environment, man creates a cultural order and superimposes the cultural on the natural order. Like artifacts, the cultural order mirrors both human ingenuity and natural reality. Cultural order suits human needs in the specific environment and so identifies both creative people and nature. Man and nature are not merely observable physical phenomena. Humanity combines physical, mental or intellectual and spiritual nature. This tripartite phenomenon is reflected in cultures. Nature, too, is not inanimate clay from which cultural objects are modelled - a typical mistake of naturalism and scientism. Man and nature are different entities but complement each other. There is a supra-natural reality beyond them. Thus, artifacts are made in reference to personal needs, nature dictates and spiritual roles. Artifacts also reflect human relations. Human contacts initiate a cross-fertilisation of ideas, concepts, perspectives, aspirations, practices, artifacts and other aspects of life. Globalisation through traditional migrations led to ancient civilisations. These are later destroyed by marauding gangs that culminate into imperialism, colonialism and modern globalization. Due to capitalism, the new forces undermine skills and usage of traditional artifacts. Economically, the artifacts are avoided to open markets for factory products. Mental colonisation turns victims against their artifacts as inferior, immoral and irreligious. Administrative colonisation uses force to ban cultural objects and traditions. Science and technology make local industrialisation produce foreign artifacts that hardly satisfy human,

environmental and spiritual needs. Demand is addition of value to people's raw materials, make money, and develop in all aspects of life, particularly jealously guarding Ubuntu. Knowledge and artifacts transfer serve foreign interests. Independence balances cultures and avoids domination.

Keywords: Artifact; Culture; Symbol; Ethnic indigenous; Identity.

Introduction and Background

This article takes a realistic approach to life, arguing that culture is man-made in space and time, but that man does not make this out of the blue. Nature that provides objects to be modified as artifacts is a reality. This leads to the availability of natural and cultural objects. Natural law organises nature and man. Human capacity organises the cultural order. Man experiences invisible power both in himself and nature. This complexity is augmented by the experience of power that is neither natural nor human. It is common to fail and feel bad, but end up with unexpected achievements that would not be possible if the prior efforts had succeeded. This provides evidence of the tripartite nature of human thought and practice - the natural, the human, and the spiritual. In awareness and recognition of the burning questions of being and meaning, we may begin by discussing culture, artifacts, symbols and signs. Limiting culture to a people's traditional ideas and practices is a common practice. This article extends the meaning of culture to the totality of human response to nature. This response entails material and non-material culture. Material culture includes tools, weapons, utensils, machines, clothes, ornaments, art, buildings, monuments, money, etc. Non-material culture includes ideas, institutions, beliefs, social roles, rules, ethics, attitudes, and other human mechanisms. The two sets of mental and physical culture are shared in common by humanity because man and nature are real. Individual thinkers discover the human and the natural phenomena as such and simply react to them as the given. This explains why indigenous peoples share human nature, human values, natural reality, forces embedded within the tangible and observable physical reality, and independent supernatural forces. From time immemorial, the homogeneity of this holistic approach to reality generates similar civilisations. They understand and apply their different languages to the generally same natural reality that surrounds them. They even share similar world views about supernatural life. Different peoples develop at different paces and so do their cultures, or ways of life. All the

samee, what they share in common make it easy for them to learn one another's languages, perspectives, attitudes, ideas and other aspects of life when they criss-cross. Above all, they treat one another as human beings - the meaning of civilisation. However, modernism mutilates and destroys the natural homogeneity and the indigenous civilisation, thus undermining humanity.

The emergence of modernism and its interference with traditionalism marks a special phenomenon in the process of human development. The problem lies within modernism interpreting reality differently in order to deal a blow to people's world views, belief systems and human values. Modernism initiates a different set of values, creates different perspectives and attitudes to life, establishes new institutions and systems and develops special new languages within languages to express all these novelties. It is this novelty that initiates the crisis of meaning. Due to the importance that modernism assigns itself to, 'culture' ends up being divided into genuine and fake. The genuine is assumed to be the modern because it is dubbed scientific, while the allegedly fake is the indigenous that is accused of being tinged with superstition. This article queries the allegations on the grounds that man is a cultural animal that makes cultural objects and superimposes a cultural order on a natural order for a better life wherever he exists. The article finds that modernism maliciously attacks traditionalism for selfish purposes. The attackers know the value of indigenous artifacts since they steal and safely keep them in their residences, museums and other places. Disjointedness of traditional and modern artifacts, symbols and signs arises because efforts to undermine traditionalism both succeeds and fails. Success is in the destroyed, distorted or disregarded cultures. The best for them is the inferiority of the mentally colonised. Failure is in the culture and cultural objects that still thrive in many parts of the world. Remedy is balance. Urgent attention to indigenous civilisations shouts. Development comes from within.

Disjoined¹ Traditional and Modern Cultures and Objects amidst Information Issues

Currently, co-existence of disjointed modern and traditional cultures within the same society is the order of the day. Normally, cultural identity, spiritual practices and other systems develop at their own pace and mature over a long period of time. Due to passing the test of time, they resist change. A society with its culture and traditions, norms and practices, etc. is clear evidence of such time and resistance. Making artifacts may be quick reactions for survival and other reflex actions, but sophistications like a common world view and associated institutions, practices, let alone a common language to express all this needs real time to accomplish. The most significant aspect of this evolution is education. Society is held together by values, and education is the vehicle of values. Through education people distinguish values from disvalues. They are held together by their common belief systems. The systems are a way of distinguish good from evil, right from wrong among other means of judgement. While traditional education is edification, modern education more informs than forms. Both educational systems equip learners with skills. With values, traditional formation controls skills. Modern education, instead, produces highly skilled people who can easily misuse their skills. School education teaches subjects and disciplines distinguishable by their truths and the different methods and methodologies of establishing and checking the correctness or falsity of these truths. In the final analysis, just as peoples or ethnic groups are held together by their artifacts, cultures, belief systems, spirituality, etc., groups created by educational systems are distinguishable and held together by types of knowledge and methods. Thus, subjects like physical and social sciences, mathematics, arts, humanities, etc. use different methods to teach their truths. The ever increasing needs, natural creativity and purely academic initiatives lead to development of such subjects. School education creates specialists of all types with their own distinct identities. In the final analysis, specialisation creates identities ad infinitum.

¹ Modern society is bedevilled with incoherencies and contradictions of scientific and indigenous practices. Clashes of religions, cultures, ideas and practices abound. Modern artifacts, symbols and signs are narrow, devisive and even dangerous as technical knowledge is too limited and blind. It lacks essentials like empathy. It leads to incomprehensible artifacts, symbols and signs. It creates mechanisms that are at the mercy of systems beyond human control.

Indigenous societies, too, have different cultures, languages, and other aspects that identify groups. There are identities of ethnicity, socio-political and economic roles and status, among other positive identifications. The key difference does not lie in modern sophisticated cultures and artifacts specialists, but, mainly, in human values. One may compare the role of human values with that of a lingua franca. Human values are more than narrow socialisation as they hold all humanity together. Focused modern education has little room for human values. An intelligent crook is preferred to a law-abiding poor performer who fails examinations. The created new identities within the same ethnic groups live apart, without the unitive human values. Specialists of different areas of study end up being 'foreign' to one another, and often form their own objectives and governments to achieve them. These identifications exist even in exact subjects like physics. To make matters worse, the educated and uneducated classes are distinct. Often children and parents differ. Relatives differ. The rural and urban people differ. Differentiations ever increase. Foreign religions, too, make even twin brothers and sisters into enemies with different sets of life ideals and practices. The extended modern nation state introduces new administration techniques and creates new institutions and practices like elections. Unlike institutions like education where the majority, in some societies, have little chance elections, like religion, are for all. This creates room for elections to categorise people into political parties with different ideologies, allegiances and other aspects that create internal wars. Modern social transformation, therefore, takes a different direction from traditional social transformation. While traditional societies' goals emphasise unity and peace among people, modern society creates differences and strife. Traditional societies' encounters retain and even reinforce cultural identity. Modern societies lack encounters as the stronger invade and subjugate the weak. Instead of cultural cross-cross fertilisation, there is a one-sided influence that promotes modernism and undermines traditionalism. These differences lead to disjointedness of traditional and modern cultures, artifacts, symbols etc. These exist side-by-side and clash. As if this were not enough, modern cultures and practices clash among themselves. In some education systems arts and humanities are discriminated in favour of science that also internally clash. This article selects examples of such anomalies from Africa. The disjointedness is not only caused by imposed Western cultures and resilient indigenous cultures, but also by specialisations that follow different directions. The intended Western

cultural dominance over indigenous cultures is a big success in some and a glorious failure in other areas. There are many cultural distortions that cover institutions, artifacts, symbols, and signs. As regards created classes, many remember human values when they drop out of such classes, e.g. political or economic power, employment or urban environment, or when general catastrophes like natural forces, wars, etc. reduce everyone to helplessness.

Unlike the indigenous society that is manageable due to uniform cultures, world views, human values and other tested by time means of social life and transformation, modern society is artificial, mechanical and forcefully governed. Artificiality creates mechanisms and systems that are independent of individual people. This objectivity is a requirement for placing people in an order desired by social organisers, for making things like the legal systems work, etc. One negative variant is lack of the human element. Indigenous society is communal. Order in modern society is more successful for operations, efficiency and the benefit of planners than the common good. This type of system aims at putting in place clear guidelines or laws and regulations whether the people comprehend them or not. The key goal is to produce desired results and reach planned goals. The problem is that resultant amorphous world systems, exacerbated by sophisticated artifacts undermine traditional and modern institutions alike. Modern society uses science and technology to build, define and run social institutions. But, blindly regulated systems threaten to destroy them all. Examples include collapse of empires, governments, monetary and other systems, projects, etc. Traditional societies live together and retain their cohesion through uniform institutional systems. People need one another to survive, and so society devises ways and means of achieving this cohesion. Socialisation, like a thread holding beads together, creates social institutions or structures designed to establish norms, rules, and reliability as means of meeting social interests. These include family - a fundamental institution and basic unit of social organisation. Modernism challenges this by promoting relations that are not pro-creational, etc. Next is education - the key institution responsible for knowledge, skills and human values transmission. Modernism challenges this by avoiding human values. The third category is religious institutions that comprise of organised systems of belief, practices, and rituals centred around spiritual elements that shape moral values. Modernism challenges this by focusing on the physical world,

materialism, consumerism and their relatives. The other category is government and politics or structures and mechanisms for organising the power and authority exercised in society. Traditionalism prefers authority as recognition to modern power that entails force. Then there are economic systems and structures governing production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Here, modernism excels as growing societies need sophisticated services. The problem is that without human values corruption prevails to promote capitalism. The same thing applies to additional institutions. There is a health care institution for maintaining and improving public health. The legal and judicial institution is a framework of rules, laws and regulations for interpreting and enforcing institutions like courts, judges, law enforcing agencies, media and communication for dissemination and consumption of information, art and culture for moral lessons, culture transmission and critique of society, public administration and bureaucracy for government policies, programs both public and private. Artifacts under each category vary according to space and time and the general modernisation process. Such modified artifacts include music, homes, vehicles, ideas, poems, books, paintings, pottery, jokes, scientific discoveries, etc. This article regards man as a cultural animal, and subsumes whatever is man-made, physically or mentally under culture. But due to the specialisation nature of modern education, cultural studies are limited to daily life practices, history, power structures, ideology, politics, economy, knowledge, technology, environment and other defined aspects of life that create different cultures, artifacts, symbols, signs, etc. within the same community. Man cannot stop this expansionism. But a person can stop himself from creating or using a wrong artifact. Total control starts and stops with self.

Culture, Artifacts, Symbols, Signs in a Modern Nation State

The colonial and imperial extension of the Westphalian nation state to the rest of the world results in the dominance that adversely affects general cultures and specifics like artifacts.



The 'rich' grab indigenous artifacts. Insult is added to injury with superiority gub. Humility and repentance beckon.

While cultural identity distinguishes ethnic groups in indigenous societies, a modern independent country is identified by modern modern conditions that include distinct population, boundaries, and symbols like an anthem, court of arms, a flag, currency, etc. A flag does not only symbolise an independent country but also the values of such a country through colours. The symbolic significance of a flag is also taken over by ethnic groups such as the Aborigines in Australia, America and other areas where Natives needs to assert themselves for recognition, or even by local and international organisations. Due to the opportunistic partition of Africa that mutilated the seasoned cultures of the continent, colonies eventually became numerous independent countries with different flag colours that symbolise different things, e.g. yellow for the sun, green for nature, black for the people's skin colour and animals, birds, or whatever is typical of a country as national symbols. The various colours make the map of the continent look like a huge flower, but with boundaries difficult to trace.

The key argument in this article is backed with the reality of independence. Unlike the current flag independence, authentic independence is defined by self-reliance that emanates from the free response of people to their environment for better survival. This phenomenon prevails when free

indigenous societies naturally and creatively reflect on their environment in order to change the circumstances for their advantage.



robertgilbert86.deviantart.com

The boats at Lake Bunyonyi demonstrate self-reliance artifacts as this transport has existed from time immemorial, but are also an example of mixed culture as some of these locally made boats have modern engines that use modern fuel. Jerry cans, instead of traditional pots or wooded containers, can be seen on one of the boats.

There is neither need nor temptation to look elsewhere for anything. The people employ what is in the vicinity to produce and use what they need. In this article, special attention is paid to how artifacts produced in this manner are evidence of naturally creative man being a cultural animal. People do not only create artifacts but also name them - a sign of being their master. Names, therefore, are part of cultural identity. A name identifies an entity. An entity covers whatever is distinct or has an independent existence. One of the philosophical nuances of existentialism is the belief that each human being is responsible for creating purpose or meaning in his or her life. While this may emphasise the idea of being or person vis-a-vis that of doing or action, it may also emphasise artificial existents and externalism as discussed in this paper. Being (in terms of man) refers to an entity or an existent that is characterised by intentionality. Doing refers to action that emanates from this entitativity existence. Due to personal existence, one is in full control of intentionality, but not in the effects of

actions that can even lead to unintended results or generate different effects from what is intended. Thought and practice create their own realities, such as a world order within which individuals or members view life and live it. Meaning depends on who defines and uses what. This challenges scientism, Eurocentricism, and unilateralism. Different people and peoples have their own aspirations, perspectives, and whatever is related to their meaning of life. To attain such a life, they create their own belief systems on whose basis they generate rules and regulations to guide their daily life. In the final analysis, two general realms of mental phenomena and physical phenomena emerge. While the indigenous people's understanding of what meets the eye is informed by their grasping of the mental phenomena, foreign observers build their own understanding of things on their own mental phenomena and perspectives. Consequently, what they express is a half-cast, a quarter-cast till the tiniest fractions of the true reality and even sheer concoction. Unfortunately, this is repeated when the West enforces their culture on others who similarly end up with half-casts, etc. of the foreign realities. This unrealistic and uncomfortable situation is exacerbated by the modern education system that imparts 'knowledge' of such misinformation and disinformation.

In this regard, one of the biggest modern problems comes in form of conceptualisation of issues. Traditionalism builds artifacts and cultures using human creativity, nature and the supernatural. Resultant ideas and concepts are kept in check by human values that make them realistic and relevant. Modernism aims at objective systems that are independent from their makers. The objective laws that guide their making are free of nature and the supernatural. The purpose for which they are put in place is also mechanical. This independence of ideas generates even more independent ideas and systems that are out of touch with reality. In the final analysis, incomprehensible systems that can be handled only by computers, robots, artificial intelligence and similarly yet to come lofty systems are created - some sort of utopia. In creating what is beyond human comprehension and control, man seriously puts humanity at risks. Humanity is characterised by reason, will and emotions. The created systems stand far beyond the control of their creator. The only solace is akin to children's jokes like one erasing a message and the readers console themselves that God read it anyway. The solace is that the Almighty God knows all the man-made systems, including those beyond any human control. Faith, therefore, keeps

people and societies hopeful and sound to the extent that many have no fear of nuclear war. Spiritual life, symbols and signs come in handy. There is a way in which people's world views and their belief systems are more in control than physical might. It is wrong, therefore, that foreign observers of physical phenomena conclude heaven and earth without comprehending the observed people's mental phenomena. Many thinkers build their own ideas on other people's unchecked ideas. They construct concepts on concepts, perspectives on perspectives, theories on theories etc. Ultimately, they come up with amorphous concoctions that populate the world.

Thus, many victims are subjected to concocted academic systems and courses only to graduate and become white elephants, a phenomenon that is farfetched in traditional civilisations. Within indigenous civilisations the meaning of things is tinged with the holistic approach to reality that reduces and limits artificiality to reality. Modern artificiality remains loose and uncontrollable. In modern civilisations, a great part of the world population is imprisoned in concocted and artificial systems that lead to hopelessness. There are very many people who work in these systems just to produce results intended for other people's interests. So many are doing what they do not know, let alone understand. This reduces people to other people's perspectives and life styles. In the final analysis, some people create other people. In them they see their own imagination, not reality. This is typical of people who criticise others basing themselves on their own points of view, regardless of what the other people think or how they feel. The worst scenario is forcing these baseless concoctions down the throat of innocent people - the meaning and mission of modern civilisations. Threads of control in these systems include the administrative machinery with power to discipline errants through regulatory positive law mechanisms, the enforcing police and prison system, the training and indoctrinating educational system, the economic system that reduces people to the haves and the have-nots and other machinations that make modernism, scientism, Westernisation and similar efforts overcome traditionalism and dominate the world. One of the biggest tools used to impoverish and control people is the monetary system. Numismatic artifacts like coins and currency are allocated 'values' that contradict human values. You pay to escape responsibility, violate agreement, twist truth, kill, deny justice and other evils. Stronger states with military and economic prowess exaggerate their own numismatic artifacts and underrate those of dominated countries.

Otherwise, oil-producing countries and those with a lot of precious minerals like gold, diamonds, among other natural materials - like Africa - would have the strongest fund currencies in the world. To the contrary, the rich continent retains the colonial legacy of 53 sovereign states that are divided by 165 borders and use 33 weak currencies - some of which are almost worthless.

Cultural Identity

Entitative existence - ability of being recognised or established as real - is pinnacle to our discussion of artifacts in cultural identity and spiritual practice. The concept of entitativity extends to a group of people perceived as a coherent whole or entity. There is no entity without identity. An entity is what is identifiable. This covers individual particulars and general concepts and abstracts. Names of persons and things fall under this category of representation. Thus, the name Uganda refers to a country that is represented by a flag as a symbol. A symbol is a visual or abstract representation of ideas, concepts, objects, or processes in the form of pictures, drawings, characters, numbers, among other graphic or verbal elements. Cultural objects symbolise people's identity. These objects are influenced by the people's perspectives to life. The general milieu emanating from the shared world view explains the symbolism and spirituality discernable in people's artifacts. This article discerns the usage and significance of artifacts as cultural objects of both modern and traditional societies. Part of the concerns of the article is the impact of modernism on indigenous fundamental thoughts and practices and the inconsistency of modernism. Artifacts play a significant role in cultural identity and spiritual practice. In indigenous societies people systematically make artifacts according to their stages of development. Right at the outset, all humans use what they see and can lay hands on to achieve their immediate needs. The idea that necessity is the mother of invention applies. Although artifacts are universal, the language used here is Rukiga from South Western Uganda. Depending on their environment, people pick objects like a stone *eibaare* and throw them at whatever they need to kill or scare. This develops from Stone Age and usage of a piece of wood *ekiti* to the development of a spear *eicumu*, bows and arrows *obuta nemyambi*, till guns *embundu* become better defence and fighting tools. In many societies, particularly Europe, wars were official traditional ways of exercising

foreign policy. Soldiers faced one another on the battle field, till recently when usage of new weapons radically transformed the war phenomenon. World Wars changed war perception, culture and practice for ever through discoveries and usage of automatic guns that shoot fast and indiscriminately, bombs that blast whatever they land on, chemicals that flow in rivers to belligerents and non-belligerents alike, etc. Luculative sales of arms lead to serious research for more accurate and destructive weapons. Enrichment of the insatiable greedy for power, money and material goods increases in leaps and bounds to the detriment of humanity. These modern developments sharply contrast with traditional expertise². Right from Stone Age, indigenous civilisations rely on human reason, nature and spirituality to improve human relations, relations with nature, and guidance from the divine for better life. Stones sharpen other stones for cutting whatever they need to. Wooden artifacts augment stone artifacts. The first hoes to till land are made out of wood *enkondo*. In many societies, special stones are still being used to grind grain for food and drink *okusa*. Skins are placed on small stones where feet are used to turn them into soft leather *okukandagira*. In forests and bushes, people can simply break nearby pieces of wood to scare away or kill dangerous creatures like snakes and animals. Those advanced in disaster-preparedness carry walking sticks, spears, bows and arrows, etc. Weapons can be fortified using physical or spiritual means. Physically, humans do a lot with nature. Poisoned arrows, chemicals and other scientific means are used in different ways. Repellant plants are used to chase away snakes, mosquitoes and other dangerous creatures. In this process, humans are not only creative but also observant, thus copying a lot from physical objects, plants, insects, birds and animals. Psychologically, humans beings understand one another, discover feelings, intentions and other things that help them live together. Spiritually, they are in contact with supernatural forces and behave accordingly.

² In traditional society, everyone is educated for life and self-reliance. So, education is for all, without an exception. Modern education is unaffordable to the majority. Foreign skills are inefficiently passed to very few and is often inapplicable in situations that lack coherency in development. Thus, some get skills from institutions but fail to apply them in rural areas that lack appropriate equipment. Even in urban areas the skilled who cannot be employed or afford equipment and means of using them end up being white elephants These results into lack of human capitalis and is a big source of underdevelopment.

All this diversity and life richness is dealt a blow by modernism that narrows its scope on physical reality, and behaves as if physical realities and laws existed alone. Nature and natural laws are very well known. Thus, right on the same planet, 'developed' societies are intriguingly building nuclear plants, even on the moon. Equally intriguing, the so-called developed countries focus on other societies and even the outer space, forgetting their mundane realities whereby they are devastated by natural forces like earthquakes and climate change. Due to this myopia, mechanically 'developed' societies suffer socially, politically, economically, and in many other ways. Big institutional threats stem from lack of human values, Ubuntu. Despite 'development', there are helpless people due to cut-throat competition - even oppression of the poor. Ironically, they export this menace by interfering with other societies physically and metaphysically to discredit them as unscientific and superstitious, respectively. As a result, the affected people who would have freely walked through their bushes and forests are shamefully killed in big numbers by a mere snake or mosquito bite. The interference cuts people off their traditional cures, protection and other remedies. Despite this handicap, a mixture of interference and resilience emerges. Traditional medicine and other safeguards are still available. Dangerous creatures, like the deadly poisonous snakes are kept at bay by the Pygmies' leaves copied from a bird, and stones that suck out poison. Elsewhere, they are avoided by building high structures like houses for sleeping in and high vehicles they walk on *mutambuka*.



Ethiopians on their high wooden vehicles for safety from venomous snakes. Pygmies need no vehicles as a leaf on their ear chases snakes away and their stones safely suck out venom. Others motionlessly look at a snake. Trying to run away can make a single snake kill crowds. They cannot run faster as it

hits heads one by one. Natural forces and secrets are also well-known and used for protection and development. Such is the knowledge that ignorant, or rather, hypocritical modernism tries to dismiss under the guise that the knowledge is unscientific and superstitious.

Indigenous people use observable physical and revealed supernatural powers along with their own science and technology. For example, they know and use biology, zoology, botany, chemistry, etc. This knowledge and a variety of usages are natural³. Biology and zoology help them with the knowledge of anatomy and how to treat or harm people and animals. Botany helps them to know different types of plants, e.g. those which are safe or poisonous and use them accordingly. They make medicine to cure and poison to kill, even by placing it on objects like arrows. As already alluded to, they use mathematics and physics to construct bridges, houses, and famous structures like pyramids. They use other sciences to distinguish between different types of soil and land like *wamutara*, where to plant or build what, among other things. As regards man, their knowledge of psychology is impeccable. In addition to telepathy, clairvoyance, etc. they can interview sleeping persons, *okusisya*, and find out their secrets. Victims recall as observers see marks on faces. They can scare or punish outlaws by putting them to sleep and making them wet their pants in public.

Enduring Traditional Artifacts for Life vis-a-vis Weak⁴ Modern Goods for Sale

Gradual progress demonstrates a thread of close connectedness of man, nature and the supernatural. Man and nature are connected by Stone Age artifacts to survive. Gatherers' skills to climb and later build ladders for

³By nature, man knows and respects spiritual, human, and natural powers. Man experiences unexplainable powers spiritually, in humans and in nature. Shallow physical, biological and chemical laws are not enough. Modernism has no means of observing spiritual, human and even special physical powers. Like the demiurge, modernism copies natural laws, but, instead of imitations, uses or misuses them to build good and bad systems that affect life accordingly.

⁴ Indigenous artifacts are all genuine and authentic. There is neither need nor technology for adulterating them. To the contrary, in modern society there are fake goods or imitations. Products like coffee are mixed with other substances. Synthetic products like rice and even meat are concocted for sale to make unrealistic profits. Capitalism without a human face thrives on corruption, a phenomenon that is totally absent in indigenous civilisations.

reaching any high object they need. They also build houses high up in trees to safeguard themselves against dangerous animals. Pieces of wood are used to make seats, beds, doors, *ebitebe*, *ebitanda*, *enyigyì* or bridges across streams *orutindo* and other things. Straw mats *emikyeka/ebirago* are used for beddings and hides *empu/emiguta* for dresses. People swim or use logs, drafts and boats *emigogo obwato* to cross rivers. Brave strong men fly on strong, long ropes *emigoye tied on trees* across rivers and back in the process of building bridges. Other means are used to build long and wide bridges. The bridges are built with strong pieces of wood that are held together using special creepers or climbers and tree barks that are naturally difficult to break. The people's science and technology lead to special knowledge of tree and animal parts for making artifacts. Hides and skins are treated and turned into strong leather clothes. Different ones are made for men, women, young boys and young girls.

Getting into these details is deliberate. Today, clothes for these categories of people are mainly differentiated by size. While in many societies buyers search for their sizes, in affluent societies there are shops for specific sizes where anyone of the wrong size will look out of place like a trespasser. In traditional societies one can look at the way a person is dressed and tell his or her social status. This is expressed through regalia at ceremonies, but traditionally the practice cuts across societies where one tells a married from an unmarried woman, among other differences. Today, cheap and weak objects, including synthetic fabrics and even foods like rice. Imitations like alcohol free beer, bleeding fake meat, fast foods, fast growing animals, chicken, plants and other deceptions are made to make fast money. Many are health hazards. To the contrary, traditional societies make genuine and lasting things. For clothing, strong hides and skins are designed and pieced together into appropriate dresses using ligaments - the long, fibrous straps of leather, i.e. leather being used to stitch leather together. Animal skins are pieced together to make clothes, bags and other containers or objects. Besides using ligaments and leather, selected products are made using tree barks, climbers, and other plant materials *emisi nemirondorondo*. Out of other animal parts, like horns, instruments are made for music, communication, among other functions. Both weak and strong wood are used for different artifacts. Wooden and animal parts are combined to build musical instruments like drums that are played using wooden sticks or human hands. Traditional artifacts are pure or authentic

not adulterated or imitations, useful not fake, and genuine or meaningful, not artificial or empty. There is a serious observation about 'finishing'. Quality traditional artifacts often look shabby and unattractive not shiny like the fake modern artifacts that are polished or made glitter to deceive.

Traditionalism and Modernism

This article lays emphasis on the key problem with traditionalism and modernism, i.e. independence of the former deliberately replaced with dependency syndrome by the latter. This is more marked in colonies, but can even be worse in colonising countries than colonised territories. Historically, traditional societies freely mix and work together both at home and abroad. The internal freedom leads to 'nations' that later build 'nation-states'. The external free movements lead to globalising indigenous civilisations. This globalisation leads to solid societies characterised by peace, social and economic development, self-reliance and other success stories. For example, visitors to what is later dubbed 'Africa' testify to such successes of human development. While traditional life is synonymous with independence, growth and development, modern life of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism is synonymous with the misery of slavery, apartheid, exploitation, destruction among other things that benefit foreigners to the detriment of natives. Free traditional globalisation is replaced with three forms of globalization: the political characterised by oppressors and oppressed or rulers and subjects, the cultural bedevilled with fake ideas like superior and inferior or developed and undeveloped, or cultured and uncultured, etc., and the economic that the other two forms protect. Economic globalisation covers international movement of goods, capital, services, technology, information and similar concerns whose problem is the one-sidedness that favours stronger societies at the expense of weaker ones. It uses sweet language like economic integration where weaker economies are disintegrated to strengthen the invader's economies. It sings interdependence of national, regional and local economies through cross-border movement of goods, services, technology and capital - the trade that sees expensive raw materials being carried away cheaply as diluted products are returned as very expensive. The alleged globalisation of production, finance, markets, technology, organisational regimes, institutions, corporations and people under-develops and impoverishes weaker societies.

Deliberate Dependency Syndrome as a Goal

When the dominated people lose track of their cultures, the well-orchestrated dependency syndrome becomes implemented. The devastation is made worse by failure to repair and replace the lost or distorted cultures. In many societies traditional cultures have survived, but with limited chances for development due to isolationism, lack of competitive ability, and continued interference. In other societies, the cultures are discouraged but modern ideas and practices hardly effectively replace them. Absent or underdeveloped traditional artifacts that are not fully replaced result into many life difficulties. In Africa, for instance, there is superficial talk of Anglo-phone, Franco-phone, Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking areas. There is an account from West Africa where school children sung before colonial masters who admired the *vernacular* singing as spectators admired the same as *French* singing. Part of the problem is the vast majority who do not follow a word. The second is that of grades in which the foreign languages are grasped. Many express themselves in vernacular using foreign words. But even experts in these languages have a number of problems such as who to write for and the difficult topics to handle in foreign languages. Like the language artifact, other artifacts have in many ways been replaced with foreign ones that are difficult to replace when they break down. Shoddy and even fake ones have invaded the market. Many things, e.g. vehicles and buildings become a problem when needed repairs fail due to spare parts, structural knowledge, etc. Water, electricity and other spare parts are not easily available. Some new vehicles are abandoned due to simple things like a carburetor. In general, there is a common problem of maintaining what one does not initiate. This covers institutions like education where some people dream of modernisation through science but fail to provide teachers and students, teaching equipment and other required materials. There is a dire need for a general development that accommodates such dreams. Otherwise, those who qualify to embrace the system often become white elephants in a society where their skills hardly apply. Many no-longer see laboratories, computers, or even simple equipment when they leave school where they pay so much, work so hard and pass so well. Practicing what one learns requires not only materials and market for the products but also general social awareness and appreciation. Above all, foreign control still plays a big role. For example, many qualify in tailoring, shoe making, and other modes of dress that are

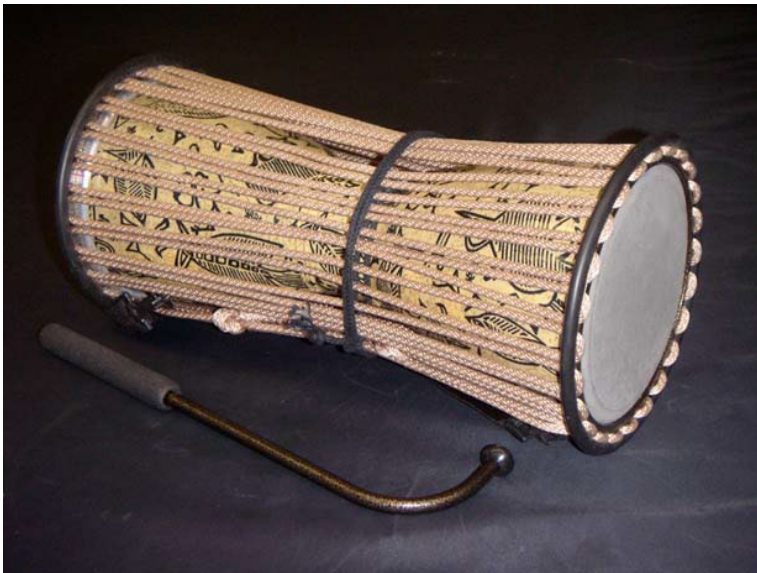
killed by the second hand clothes market enforced on the people by foreign governments. In a nut-shell, balancing modernism and traditionalism is a big issue. Protectng the interfered with cultures as, at the same time, a society tries to catch up with foreign ideas, practices, artifacts, etc. is a real problem.

Some people have been so mentally colonised that they find their traditional cultures and artifacts strange. Some have such artifacts in their houses in a similar manner as foreigners, i.e. as decorations. However, some people who persuade the so-called backward people to abandon desired traditional objects really believe in them, including those dubbed magical and satanic. Many are accused of stealing not only technologically sophisticated artifacts but also the spiritual powers associated with them. This does not augur well with Euro-centrism and the associated unilateral claims of scientific knowledge, technology and religion. It leaves converts to religions like Christianity totally confused. However, all along confusion has surrounded mental phenomena like Satanism that bare no equivalent concepts in many people's cultural practices and languages. In such confusion, some traditional artifacts and practices have been so successfully undermined that some people can hardly speak their mother tongue - a key artifact. To the contrary, others have resisted foreign penetration and change to keep their cultures and traditions intact. Despite the extremes, the porous human boundaries have allowed inter-cultural practices for time immemorial. There are hardly any societies completely free of foreign ideas and practices, even when practitioners are not aware of them. For example, some societies know or assume that artifacts stolen from other lands are their own. Even the true owners pay to see such artifacts in foreign museums. Many Africans admire oblesks standing in Rome, the USA and other foreign lands. They admire modifications of their artifacts or mere value additions to their materials. This is typical of hypocrisy. Many people have clear knowledge about successes of fellow humans and yet create lies - jutification theories. They justify evils like colonilism and imperialism, slavery, apartheid and discrimination, and know that recognising the truth abot the exploited is shhoting themselves in the foot. Artifacts are at the mercy of users. Mass Media artifacts can inform just as they can misinform or disinform. The difference depends on the user's disposition. This is why part of the argument of this article goes deeper than sheer justification of theft, looting and other wrong acts. Isolating people from their culture

affects them as human beings who fulfil themselves in the cultures entrenched in their belief systems. The isolation touches the core of humanity, i.e. doing founded on being. It touches the value of work. In this regard, the key difference between traditionalism and modernism is the idea of closeness of artifacts and humans vis-a-vis their being distanced. Tradition does not disconnect man from artifacts as modern education does. Traditional education is for life. It is edification. It is holistic. Modern education merely equips learners with knowledge and skills for performance. As such, some great thinkers undermine humanities like philosophy, spirituality, culture, among others to promote science and technology that are behind material development. Such a perspective ends up into utter underdevelopment if it lacks human values.

In this article, it is deliberately emphasised that traditional societies rely on what is in the vicinity to produce and use only what is necessary. Thus, artifacts are basically stone tools, bones indicating human modification, wooden objects that can range from spoons to boats depending on environment, pottery vessels, metal objects like weapons, jewellery, or adornments and decorations. Besides bones, from animals, people get artifacts like hides for clothing, horns for music or information, etc. The idea here is that human beings make artifacts out of what is available to them. This underlines independence because there is no possibility of the indigenous people imagining, let alone hoping to depend on other civilisations. Also underlined is environment protection. There is no room for interfering with nature by harvesting or killing what is not yet ready for use as in the case of mechanical fishing. Consumerism and amassing what one does not use or even need, or speculation for better market is modernism. Situations introduced by commercialism like the deforestation that culminates into global warming are unheard of in traditionalism. Deliberately importing quality goods like minerals, timber, etc. and exporting fake or imitations, selling what is not required, producing cheap perishable goods that need quick replacement, and other radical changes - just to earn - mark modernism. This affects both artifacts makers and consumers who no longer find fulfilling connection with artifacts. Modernism deliberately makes artifacts foreign and strange to the people to make them admire foreigners and fail to copy them. Sometimes, factory workers are known as numbers, and use measured skills to produce parts separately that are put together elsewhere to produce end products. Even

to produce a shirt, some people specialise in sawing parts like collars, sleeves, etc. for others to piece up. The creative joy that an expert feels after a complete artifact has died a natural death. One can extend one's imagination to the production of deadly weapons. Piecemeal specialisation may reduce awareness of a complete artifact like a bomb and its havoc. Disjointed pieces of artifacts make full sense to the planners. Culture of focusing on specifics tampers with realisation of nature and effects of wholes. One producing this or the other part may not be thinking of killing people or destroying property. This unawareness is very well orchestrated among the workers in colonies who dig out minerals like copper without knowing it is the bullets that shoot them, plant cotton without thinking of gun powder, go to church to turn the other cheek, among other means of providing ammunitions used to shoot them. Some academic research methods are designed with unethical ulterior motives. So are games that culminate in war weaponry, et cetera. Artifacts have become so specialised that human parts can be exchangeable or artificially replaced. Lucrative trade in human organs is in vogue.



The Nigerian talking drum and similar artifacts are authentic and serve social, spiritual and other needs.

Modernism is the epitome of the scientific development that comes with positive and negative effects on life. Modernism emphasises the type of

intellectualism that distances people from one another as specialists in diverse areas of study. It separates thinkers from personal life as it employs objectivity at the expense of subjectivity. What matters is the analytically explainable. This closely works on physical reality but keeps man out of unanalysable reality and unobservable nature. It keeps man far from the supernatural reality that cannot be scientifically analysed. However, even the material is not totally analysable, thus rendering realistic the philosophical joke: what is matter? Never mind. What is mind? No matter. This myopia is typical of the modern view that only scientific facts and methods render the truth about the world and reality. But truth, world and reality can hardly be subsumed under modern science. The Renaissance period return to classical knowledge of natural or physical laws led to the explosion of knowledge and the modern education characterised by different truths with different methods of establishing them and checking their authenticity. The narrow idea of modern science is deliberate since, etymologically, science means organised knowledge and since science in the sense of application of nature and natural laws knowledge is common to all societies in their levels of development. The shallow concept of science is misused to undermine and even ban 'other cultures' or whatever is not 'scientifically' analysable, like traditional methods of healing and other aspects of life.

There is no argument about the meaning of 'development' of different things to different people. The problem is that modernism endeavours to limit this development to narrow modern science, disregarding indigenous science. True. Lack of the narrow scientific or analytical knowledge denies one of the required skills to understand and use mechanisms put in place to deal with issues in modern institutions. However, lack of the holistic approach to life similarly makes 'modern' societies less developed in terms of understanding general reality anhuman relationships or 'civilisation'. True development is internal, not external. First, people living in places materially developed by others cannot be referred to as developed. Second, even those who develop physically and materially but use the developed artifacts to destroy property and life seriously fall short on development. Human curiosity and subsequent knowledge and actions are inexhaustible and indeterminable. Knowledge is context-sensitive and situation dependent. So, a knowledge artifact and other artifacts are both limited and unfathomable. They are limited because they are accomplished and

observable in space and time. They are describable and definable, but unfathomable because human nature - their source - is illimitable. Thinking, new knowledge, creativity and new artifacts are unstoppable. No one can tell how far knowing and acting - in absolute terms - can go, when, how and why. But while the meaning and results of actions are uncontrollable, intentionality remains under human control and characterises all human beings. Humans physically and intellectually differ. Their artifacts, cultures, aspirations and activities differ. All the same, they morally remain the same. Therefore, developing a person physically and intellectually, the speciality of modern science, can be futile since human rationality has no bounds as is evident in artificial intelligence. Any neglecting of the real and true nature of humanity, i.e. spirituality and morality is planting a bomb to blast the traditional social bridge of unity in diversity. Indigenous people meet and treat one another as human beings - the true meaning of civilisation. Modern societies are enslaved by the type of capitalism that thrives and flourishes on disvalues like theft, cheating, deceiving and other negativities. They invest heavily in artifacts like the lethal weapons to conquer and loot other people's properties, oblivious of human values that run counter to evils like theft, lies etc. Becoming your brother's keeper, not enemy is the right course to human development and civilisation. Without a world-view that defines life and sets living standards, people are relegated to groping in the dark. Without grasping the meaning of life and having a sense of direction, the haves and the have-nots, the knowledgeable and the ignorant - all humanity is equally lost and full of anxiety. Without trust, fear with its ruthlessness colonises the world. You look aside at the risk of losing property to a neighbour. You look over your shoulder all the time. You bid farewell to people and hide to observe their next move. Cutting yourself off human values to chase material values renders you permanently insatiable. Lack of trust cuts you off humans who become worse than natural catastrophe and the brutes than cannot plot. You envy insensitive robots that envy you for feelings. No one feels safe anymore. Happiness migrates from hearts and faces to nowhere. The world deserves far better.

There is a need to reiterate that any discussion of artifacts or culture in general, outside the ambit of humanity, is deceitful. It is this deceit that colonised societies have been subjected to. It would have been less evil if the use of gun-power and the intention to loot had been declared. The defeated and looted would have learnt a lesson. The humiliating defeat and walking

away with the loot would have been a challenge to be met - a wake-up call. It would have served as a chance for disaster preparedness. Such a challenge existed among some pastoralist societies that raided to replenish their livestock, e.g. when natural catastrophes struck. This challenge was 'democratic' as every group knew about it and expected it. The logical explanation and consolation was sharing the raiding causes as today is this and tomorrow is that group in need. In reality, those who raided and looked after the cattle well sustained the cattle-keeping culture. One way of understanding this is the realisation of the modern disastrous practice of raiding cattle for market - to be slaughtered and never seen again. Other ways of appreciating such aspects of culture include the fact that traditional owners of big herds of cattle are not selfish. Neighbours can freely access products like milk as if the cattle were common property. What is being argued here is the dire need for people to be masters of their own situations and destiny. Indigenous societies have problems and related solutions. The situation gets out of hand when foreign problems and related solutions, or none at all emerge. In traditional societies nature, fellow humans, supernatural realities, artifacts, properties, and other forms of phenomena are intertwined. Disconnecting these realities, undermining the holistic approach to life, dismissing unity in diversity, but above all, promoting everything modern and demoting everything indigenous has left an indissoluble mark on both traditional and modern societies as both suffer the threat of losing humanity aspects and trends of genuine life.

Traditional Artifacts for Civilising vis-a-vis Modern Artifacts for Uncivilising

There is no argument about indigenous peace artifacts and modern arsenals. The falsehoods that make traditional societies lose track of their natural development under the guise of 'civilisation' hardly spare any society. There is a sense, therefore, in which attempts to seek the cut off trends cut across all societies, although some are worse off than others. Sometimes one hears of the plight of 'backward' societies that are out of touch with 'modern' civilisation. This 'backwardness' is blamed on ignorance. Concepts like 'mainstream' ideas, attitudes, or activities attributed to Western thought and practice abound. However, one does not need to labour the point of real 'backwardness' and 'uncivilisation' in Western thought and practice like imperialism, all forms of colonisation,

slavery, apartheid, exploitation, deceit and related evils. These characterise modern societies and only overflow to traditional societies. The disclosure of misinformation, disinformation, malicious destruction among other sins against other cultures has hardly influenced the arrogance and impunity that continue to bedevil the world, even when confessions abound. The heavily sponsored scientific research in the production of 'weapons of mass-destruction', biological, chemical and other weapons, misuse of artificial intelligence and other innovations to curtail peace, development, and other human achievements leaves admirers of Western civilisation in utter disappointment and regret. Many societies know terrible things that can be done to destroy others but keep them a secret, particularly to exclude those who could easily use them to hurt others. So, it would be wrong to argue that the West concentrates so much on artifacts that destroy life and property due to their knowledge of science and technology. One can argue that knowledge of science and technology is held in common but some use it while others misuse it. Structures like pyramids, obelisks and other wonders of the world - known and recognised or not - would be impossible without science technology, and other forms of knowledge. Many civilisations had their wise men and women among other experts. These civilisations bequeathed so much knowledge and practice to Western civilisation where thinkers like Aristotle are recognised to have known whatever was worth knowing at their time. In the next epoch, thinkers like Albert the Great are known to have been great scientists. Pre-Romanesque, Romanesque, Gothic and the classical forms of architecture would not be possible without the science and technology that could have been used to build structures for other purposes, if spirituality did not excel. The monasteries that made wine could also have used their knowledge of chemistry to make poison. One can further argue, therefore, that what changed from traditional to modern society is not knowledge but character. Application of knowledge leads to wider and deeper knowledge. So, a lot depends on how one uses knowledge since knowledge can grow and develop either for the better or for the worse. While humans can fail to predict the results of their actions they remain in charge of their intentions. In this sense, what is important is not artifacts per-se, but people who think of them, make them, and use them *mutatis mutandis*. This is a requirement for independence.



Cattle artifacts are multiple, e.g. skin clothes, horn musical and communication instruments, bone tools, foods like meat, milk, firewood, building materials, manure, tilling the land, time-keeping, bride wealth and trade symbols, signs of social status, etc. Like land, cattle are a complete means of livelihood. Pastorarists like peasants are independent.

This article on artifacts, therefore, does not take interest in enumerating artifacts, let alone giving evidence of their existence, quality, etc. Everybody has this knowledge, even more so those who admire other people's artifacts and even steal them only to make an ass of themselves by telling blatant lies about them. The article argues that all humans create and use artifacts as a response to their environment for improved life. Artifacts can also be based on ideas and concepts - positive and negative - to demonstrate perspectives or symbolise realities that people's belief systems hold. Traditional society generally hands down more positive than negative values. This is explainable by the fact that what generations hand down is the common good that is always positive. It is, therefore, of special interest to wonder where the world - whose existence is threatened - would be if modern science and technology were totally employed for the common good or human development. The argument of this article is more the basis of artifacts than the artifacts per se. Artifacts emanate from fundamental realities like the meaning of life and take people back there. Modernism that distorts and reverses the natural idea of artifacts and their purpose of

improving human life and properties leads to destruction instead of construction. Traditional society makes an effort to educate and civilise everybody in order to promote humanity and protect environment - the means of livelihood.

Due to the modernism attempted reversal, many people have lost trust and respect for one another⁵. They suspect one another as enemies. One would rather meet an animal - devoid of malice - than a fellow human being that plans evil. The article argues for humanity, nature, and the meaning of life that entails spirituality. Traditional artifacts reflect these realities. Morality and spirituality are required to reverse the modernism reversal. The situation is so dire that societies that still recognise humanity and welcome all people are disregarded and considered silly and naive. The meaning of human development has changed. Respect for material development is like that of a shining structure whose invisible foundation remains vital. The reversal of values appears to make artifacts more admired than their makers, let alone for what they are made. This is partly because modern artifacts are mainly for practical purposes. Many of them are scientific products and less concerned with symbolism and spirituality. The world is caught up in the modernist trap of artificiality and transient reality. The idea of running away from general reality to specialisation has greatly assisted science and technology. Know more and more about less and less till knowing everything about nothing appears to be evident in a number of ways. First, the replacement of barter trade replaces quality

⁵ Through traditional human encounters, people meet and treat one another as equal human beings, thus breeding trust. There is no such encounter in modern society where newcomers depict themselves as superior bosses over alleged inferior subjects. As hardly anyone takes the nonsense, force ensues and trust is replaced with fear and force as even the fearless must obey. A new type of 'trust' sets in, i.e. surrendering and openly or silently swearing allegiance to institutional superiors. This makes the traditional thinking out of the box difficult, as participation in communal affairs is replaced by challenging or rebelling against authority. As many live in institutions or organisations they do not comprehend, following things sheepishly leads to total darkness. Leaders, however ignorant, set religious, social, political, economic, health and other standards for others. Political parties arise as a means of participating in decision making, but many hardly understand policies, if any exist. Other areas are made difficult by narrow school education and specialisations. Appointment of religious leaders is allegedly from above. Despots become gods and goddesses. Regarding one another as humans civilisation dies a natural death. Systems make some become more human than others. Human rights are relegated to entitlements and deserts to compete for.

materials with symbolic representation. Trade becomes easier when one carries a sheet of paper representing the quantity of possessions, like gold. Eventually, the reversal of true value to concocted value sustains artificial systems. The monetary system ends up being manipulated with currencies without the traditional gold backing. Cheating using valueless currencies to cheaply buy high valued goods sets in. Today, artificial intelligence has concocted so many things that if Angels sounded trumpets to signal the second coming, Jesus would find Himself without audience. This may be conveyed by Bakiga warning against lies - *obeiha tabuura ngabo*, i.e. a liar is not believed even when he or she tells the truth. This puts people in trouble. Highly developed artifacts strongly support and promote the rampant misinformation and disinformation. Science and technology are a double-edged sword. The traditional holistic approach to life safeguards people against such deception through artifacts. Traditional society has quality artifacts unlike modern society whose artifacts are devalued or diluted by disvalues like lying, stealing, etc. and general inhumanity. Disregarding morality emphasises doing at the expense of being. The emphasis makes doing open-ended, as it were, and leads to uncontrollable systems. Robots are immensely strong and extremely intelligent, but have no feelings - no soul searching or self-control. Such feelings or self-criticism characterise humanity. The mechanical systems may be comparable to an overweight person whose body knows no limits for appetite to the extent that the massive body ends up controlling its owner. Complex modern systems generate immense data that require artificial intelligence to analyse. In the final analysis, systems are at the mercy of blind laws. What makes all shudder is that this can easily result into systems that are neither self-controllable nor man controllable. The ultimate outcome is to whom it may concern. The inability to control things threatens the possibility of the unimaginable crash of the artificial systems. This, in turn, threatens to make all creation tilt to a halt.

Internal and External Culture

Artifacts change, grow, and develop in time and space, but they are the very first cultural objects of every ethnic group. Stone Age demonstrates self-reliance. The people look around themselves to cater for their needed tools and equipment. All the artifacts they need are generated from their environment. We also need to note that culture is a two-realm phenomenon. The first cultural realm is ideas. This internal realm visualises the

circumstances and forms ideas. The actualisation of these ideas results into actions and products. Products serve the immediate intended purpose. So, what comes first is environmental challenges that the curious mind reflects on to come up with viable ideas. The second cultural realm is the visible actions that put the ideas in practical use. The temptation of observers to limit culture to the second order arises due to human limitations of using senses to hear a different language, see different artifacts, and observe how differently a cultural order has been superimposed on the natural order. This is natural because people know themselves through observing those who are different. They actually describe and name one another according to what is striking in their observation. Later, a people know themselves as Bakiga just because they are named so. Some people were once dubbed Christians by those who saw them escaping. People hardly observe themselves to know their characteristics and name themselves accordingly. Those who observe them do. Such internality and externality are natural. A child is born and those who observe circumstances name the child accordingly. Bakiga names need a book to discuss.



Bakiga dance, like the above, is highly emitinal and vigorous. Foreign observers regard it as the same dance, but there are, actually, different types of this dance, each with its own music, instrumentals, style, meaning and name.

Naming is generally left to observers, as even old people do not know how they look, walk, speak, etc. but observers know and give them nicknames. Well-known institutions are defended by leaders but remain under the scrutiny of internal and external observers. Members carefully observe

wrong things and point them out. This results into both social strife and growth. Aspects of culture like a sophisticated language, a common world view and the belief systems based on it, traditions and other human aspects need a tremendous amount of time to be accomplished. The issue here is the significance of internal observers and critics without whom society is bound to remain stagnant. This is proper thinking out of the box. The key concern here is that internal critics understand the 'box'. External observation takes yet another turn when ethnic groups observe each other. In this case, what exposes itself to external observers is not natural but what has been put in place i. e. external culture. Traditional societies generally share world views and their cultures are close. Although the assumption that culture is people's artifacts, language, behaviour like dance, music and drama and other externally observed things persists, neighbouring groups may share aspects of internal culture. All the same, due to external culture, peoples describe and name one another according to what they see, hear and generally observe. Ethnic groups cannot observe and name themselves. Only when their identity is discerned and they are named accordingly do they ooh and aah over themselves vis-a-vis other peoples and societies.

The problem of judging people according to their external culture can be demonstrated with admiring or discrediting any visible structures without comprehending their foundations. The first stage - the foundation - is vital. It is the source and the basis of the second. It controls the second and makes thinking out of the box possible. Some people, without comprehending the 'box', criticise such a cultural order, as is the case with colonialism and imperialism. Thinking out of the box is founded on the awareness of the ideas and their purpose. Only people who know the purpose of certain ideas are in position to judge that these ideas have achieved their objectives or not. If yes, they conform. If not, they rebel. The unfortunate who cannot think out of the box tend to conform to established systems, whether their results are good or bad. There is a temptation to associate dogmatic minds with traditionalism, since the tendency of traditional society is to produce people of one accord. While this may be true, a lot depends on what different forms of society entail. The multiplicity of societies leads to innumerable cultures to the extent that there can be personal cultures, or ways of life. Creative minds are individual persons' minds. Cultural objects that emanate from these minds, therefore, are bound to reflect the ever

increasing human challenges and needs. Some colonial efforts to employ experts in all fields to examine and explain certain cultures and products failed because there was nothing fixed to analyse. People's minds are ever reflecting on the ever changing reality. Dogmatism, therefore, tends to belong more to modern societies where experts and workers are required to conform to professional codes. Many people work by applying theories or formulae they hardly comprehend. Religions are guided by unquestionable 'books', doctrines, and other determined systems. Lawyers stick to legal provisions and precedents. Drivers are mechanically guided along roads they do not know, and some have ended in no-way-through positions or even water bodies. Accidents and other problems associated with this dogmatic mind created scientifically and technologically abound.

One crucial modern problem is failure to think out of the box. As mentioned above, the issue of experts, to say nothing of workers, being mechanically controlled condemns these great brains to the box. Besides trusting established laws and regulations, some face the problem of changing lucrative systems, however dangerous they may be found to be. Material gains have in many ways overshadowed human values like the truth, security for life and property, and other human ideals that cultural artifacts are, in the first place, sort after for. Thus, dangerous artifacts are in vogue and widely used to gain fame, favour, material and monetary benefits, etc. Thus, thinking about external culture per se has become well established. There is a dire need to correct wrong mentalities and perspectives to reality. These are the all-important internal cultures responsible for the external cultures and artifact. If those who merely employ the products under their care were able to think out of the box, they would be in position to judge to what extent the external culture fulfils the internal culture. This, of necessity, results into adjustments to meet the challenges. Normal challenges are those to meet in order to improve nature and humanity. To the contrary, thinking within the box or working within the surface of belief systems, dynamic cultures, inexhaustible artifacts, etc. leads to good improvement of for narrow goals like the artifacts for accurately killing targeted people and destroying property. Improvements suit the context that often changes. So, there is a big contradiction between shallow/narrow and deep/wide thinkers who struggle to fulfil the required objectives of culture and artifacts.

Change is routine, despite generally accepted principles, human values, among other aspects of life. Cultural variations are inevitable. So, artifacts as symbols and signs are of such tremendous magnitude that one needs to eat humble pie and quickly plead ignorance in any attempt to do justice to them, together with the culture phenomenon as a whole. From this vantage point, it is clear that the idea of world cultures or artifacts is a dream. Despite this challenge, certain ideas like 'African' culture or artifacts are widely referred to. To begin with, 'Africa' is a concoction that is, actually, negative to so many users of the concoction. Many of these simply close their eyes and, like the good old arm-chair anthropologists, clearly see their 'Africa'. For such thinkers, therefore, talking of 'African' thought and practice make perfect sense. They do not need to look anywhere to verify their claims. Everything is in their empty heads. It is sheer imagination. There are others who have made tireless efforts to create 'Africa' and know what they are talking about when they refer to their script. In the process of registering 'tribes', some people who did not understand what the colonists meant were given concocted tribes. The same issue arose when the baptised had to adopt the Christian names they did not understand. To avoid issues where men could choose female names, and vice-versa, some names were chosen for them. All the same, misspellings, mispronunciations, and other issues abound. Later, some names were dropped as meaningless since they related to no Heavenly Saints. All Bakiga names have meaning and even reflect signs and symbols. Buguuza, for example, is a resister. Bagande means, let them starve. Bujara means one born during hunger. These brothers survived the great famine. Other names given according to events include Kateera who was born when extractive colonialism raged. Minors who blasted stones in search of minerals were called *abateera mabaare*. Other names depict special perceptions. For example, Beyaraza is a rare name preserved for a family, particularly a mother, with good reasons or evidence that they will be envied for the born baby. That is why such mothers are regarded as proud. In modern times, many adopt the name for different reasons.

Independence Requirement for Culture and Artifacts: A Bakiga People Experience

This article argues that human beings are free agents and quite unpredictable. Human nature is founded on freedom of thought that leads

to ideas, concepts, perspectives, cultures, artifacts, among other natural and mental products. Describing culture and artifacts by sheer reference to what meets the eye is shallow and deceitful. To lessen or even avoid the limitation of superficially describing artifacts and mechanically associating them with certain groups of people, this article makes general observations, but narrows its focus on Bakiga people's cultures and artifacts. The choice is guided by ample knowledge of the people as a member. Deep and wide knowledge of this society reveals that the request for illustration of artifacts cannot be exhaustively met. People express quite a lot using artifacts that even verbally enumerating artifacts becomes a problem, let alone translating them into foreign languages. Artifacts are not mere tools but also a language for communication. Some sound out messages, e.g. the West African talking drum, horns, etc. The main language, however, is communication through symbols and signs. One of the examples used in this article is a hoe by Bakiga people. Other artifacts for communication include those that represent mathematical measurements, e.g. how much. Traditional Bakiga traded among themselves and with their neighbours. They practiced barter trade and usually used artifacts as measurements. This led to different sizes and each size with a specific name. Therefore, this article, or even a sizable book would not do justice to presenting the whole range and variety of the artifacts. To make matters even worse, different materials give different names to the artifacts made out of them. The various usages of these artifacts also give them different names. While all this complexity makes Rukiga language formidable and very rich, foreigners find problems catching up with the variety and complexity. It is important to note that all indigenous languages are similarly formidable and complex. The spread of some to other cultures and the need to write them for easy teaching and learning has tended to undermine their expressive power. Their being defined, to some extent, disconnects languages from the ever changing reality they are supposed to capture and express. This ever growing language applies to artifacts, too.



The hilly area that is dubbed the 'Switzerland of Africa' protects Bakiga from foreign invasions and preserves their culture. Rukiga is regarded as one of the oldest languages. Its speakers easily follow other Bantu languages.

At the Bakiga 'give-away' ceremony *okuhingyira*, the hoe symbolises family to sustain society. The ceremony is not centred on bride and groom. It is directly connected with land - means of livelihood. A Mukiga man does not own land, or even a house till this moment, when pieces of family land are allocated to this new family. More significant, however, is the bride's symbolic posture during the ceremony. She could have stood up or knelt and stretched her hands to receive the hoe. The hoe could have been placed on her head. But she had to sit down and stretch her legs before her, *okurambikyiza*. This expression, among the Bakiga, is heavily pregnant. It is often used with *okuhugaho*, to be totally relaxed, less concerned or not involved at all. During the heavy marriage battle between 'divided' relatives, she is like a statue, *okwekyehesa*, or self-reduction to no emotions. She shows no awareness of the battling sides, let alone siding with any. She never utters a word when the hoe is placed on her thighs. This silence or impassiveness symbolises agency, or a neutral existence put in place for whoever would be in her shoes to serve certain purposes. She was a wife to be. A mother to be. A hard worker to sustain a new family. A new member of a society different from where she is born and raised but where she is ordained to live for the rest of her life. This is not unique to her, but a special social status, different from a mere personal achievement or challenge.

However, positions differ from their occupants. After being placed in this cherished position, in traditional society emotions showed in the real act of taking her away. Not only did she cry, but all her relatives and friends did. A special melody in which the bride would publicly say goodbye, express her personal fears, and whatever she felt like saying at this memorable moment *okugabuka* was part of the ceremony.

The Bakiga population is of various origins like the bordering Tanzania, Rwanda, Congo, Ankole, and other areas from which inhibited migrations took place. This population variety, but mainly the nature of the terrain, have made observers dub the Bakiga area, like Kabale, over 3,000 m and 6000 ft above the sea level, the Switzerland of Africa. The Bakiga's innumerable artifacts have no equivalent foreign words, other than general terms like pots, utensils, food stuffs, implements, etc. So, a suggestion to illustrate so that one looks at them makes perfect sense, but space and time prohibit the exercise. For example, artifacts to quantify or contain and serve drinks are made out of clay and plants like climbers. Clay pots, see illustration below, for liquids include a small *engyemeko* (to boil and hold hand washing water) and big ones like *enjoga*, *entango* and *ekyigaara*. Pots for cooking include *orwabya* (for cooking meat, etc.) *enyungu* (for cooking potatoes, etc.), *enyungu egoya* (for mixing bread flour) *okugoya*. There is a small pot, mainly for source, *orwabya*. *Eihungu* that serves the same purpose is curved out of wood. These keep source, mainly meat, hot and palatable. Seed source and vegetables are served in straw containers, like *entemere*. *Ekiibo* is for sorghum or millet bread, *obuhemba* or *oburo*. Other solid food is served in similar straw dishes, *entemere*, *ekiibo*, and even bigger ones like *orugari*, and *entaara*. *Orugari* is also used for grinding grain into flour, *okusa* on a grinding stone *orubengo* using a smaller stone *eseiso*. *Entaara* is also used for winnowing seeds and grains - *okwera* or throwing the mixture into the air to make air remove light chaff from heavy seed or grain. *Okukywa* is a smarter skill of separating food stuffs from stones that they mix with in the course of drying.



Bakiga clay pots are of different shapes, sizes, names and serve different purposes. Thise type is Enyabya mainly for cooking and drinks.

There are also special pots for honey, *obwokyi*. When goods like alcohol are traded, only the drinks are taken. Pots are returned for future use. But a pot of honey never returns. Hence, the expression *kanyungu nabwokyi* meaning forget it - it will never return or be seen again. Size, shape and usage define these pots. Big ones are reinforced and protected with special tree-barks, *okushenga*. Gourds that yield on a climber, *omwongo*, can be cut into open containers like *akashare*, *orushare*, *ekishare* of different sizes. Containers that remain closed include *enkoro*, *enkyeka*, *orugunda*, *ekisisi*. *Orugunda* is a highly symbolic long-necked-calabash. A high bed is built for its climber plant so that under the bed the long neck remains straight. The bottom of it is a large container and its top is a much smaller chick-like shape. Like other calabashes, it is usually decorated and looks beautiful. It is used to serve drinks to special people at special occasions and for special purposes. In religious symbolism and ceremonies, it may be comparable to a Christian Chalice during Mass at the alter.



Sacrifice offering with orugunda. A same shaped pot (engyemeko) can also be used. The broken pots are for meat. Bakiga concept of life goes beyond the scientifically analysable anatomy to duality (body and soul) in which a person is able to transcend himself and even judge himself as wrong or right regardless of what others say. A person is in touch with himself, others, and the invisible world dismissed as unscientific. The experience of this world is undemonstrable and subjective, but sharing it makes it 'objective' in the sense of not being limited to personal experience. Personal experience of a talking piece of wood, consecrated wine dropping on cloth and coagulating, visions of the cross, heaven and purgatory, vivid dreams with clear revelations about the dead, among other experiences live little doubt about the limitation of scienticism and the futility of modernism attacks on spirituality, spiritual practices, artifacts and other realities beyond scientific explanation.

A milking pot, *ekyanzi*, is curved out of wood. But containers for keeping milk and making ghee, i.e. *ekishaabo nekyirere* are gourds. Since in the field of anthropology food could be considered as an artifact, we need to note the complexity added by different types of food and drinks. Animals are raised in special ways for the quality of their milk and meat and even games like fighting. Fresh milk from an animal, *amashununu* is different from milk kept in a container, *amakyunda*, till the removal of ghee *amajuta*. Meat

differs according to the types of animals and parts of the body. It is named and used accordingly for occasions, rituals, and other practices. In certain groups certain animals are never eaten, nor even their milk drunk. The same applies to reptiles, insects and plants. Many plants are not edible but medicinal. Life is regarded so vital that the people do all they can to save and protect it. As we have seen, marriage is for sustaining life. Babies who lose mothers after birth are immediately saved by feeding old women on special fruits that instantly cause relactation. The premature are kept safe in millet husks *omuwezigye* where they grow as if they were in a womb. Plants are used for foods and medicine for life, and are often named according to their usages. Places are also named according to the plants and animals found in those places, just as children are named according when, where, how and other circumstances in which they are born. The animals and plants also serve as clan totems that give them identity and help society to avoid incest and guide intermarriages for health and social reasons. Intermarriages do not only promote healthy and strong families but also implement foreign policies that hold societies together and sustain peace and security among ethnic groups. In a nut-shell, cultural artifacts are not only for utility, beauty, and other purposes but are mainly people-centred. They help people understand and share life.

The Latin dictum, *primo vivere*, captures the concept of this part of the article. People must *be* before they can *do*. Cultural artifacts balance being and doing. Ways of symbolising this reality abound. An example of Bakiga hoe, *efuka*, is used to capture some fundamental ideas and perspectives of this group. As mentioned above, they survive on a difficult terrain and so hard work ing people that traditionally survived on the difficult terrain of South-Western Uganda. The area+ is very hilly, cold, but with fertile volcanic soil and so holds a big population. The people must work extra hard to survive and are proud of it as is evident in their “Kigezi Anthem”. This hard work is carried out on the land that needs artifacts like a hoe to dig and plant crops. A hoe, therefore, is a good example of an artifact that symbolises life, posterity, and prosperity. While Bakiga people enjoy living together, even sharing the same house, married life changes everything. When one becomes married, one is set apart to build a personal house and is given personal land to sustain the anticipated family. The symbolic meaning of a hoe is, therefore, comes out vividly as the closing ceremony of the marriage process. Marriage is a long process that begins with the would

be bride and bridegroom discovering each other, or the families to be united by marriage finding each, or any other way of initiating the marriage process. A go-between is found and guides the bridegroom's relatives to the bride's family to formally announce their intentions. This is followed by the bride's family return visit to check on the suitability of the family before they risk their daughter therein. This was, later on, misunderstood as a bargaining part of the process, *okujugyisa*. Such traditional societies did not have a monetary economy. The suitability of the bridegroom was measured by means of sustaining a family, not by consummation. Other societies focused on the bravery of the bridegroom, e.g. having killed a lion. The idea was safety of the bride to be, and the anticipated family.

This centrality of a hoe can be brought out by comparing marriage with other activities that have a symbol as a climax. A good comparison is the sophisticated process of electing a Pope in which the white smoke symbolises the completion of the process. In modern marriage there are symbols like a ring and signing of a certificate. Certain laws subject these ceremonies to the consummation principle. For the Bakiga people, a hoe announced that at long last marriage had taken place. While in the Catholic church cardinals voted to elect the Pope, for Bakiga the big role was played by an individual person, usually a strong young man capable of protecting a hoe through fierce and strong women who blocked his way to the bride. The man currently called the best man was called *mafuka* – a man of hoes. *Mafuka* went along with the entourage, but with a specific mission. The entourage was received and entertained. At the opportune moment, the man of the hoes carried his hoe to the room where the bride waited with her legs stretched before her. The function of the man was to place the hoe on the bride's thighs. However, the simple function was complicated by a serious battle between women relatives of the bride. One side wanted the bride to go. The other resisted. The most difficult part of the man was to break through the warring women as those who were 'opposed' to the marriage beat him mercilessly while those who approved of the marriage defended him. When the brave man managed to break through them and successfully placed the hoe on the bride, both parties became one and ululated. Ululation is an official sound of jubilation *okuteera empundu*. This is a sign or symbol of a proclamation that everyone was waiting for - marriage.

The interest of this article, however, is what is underneath the ululation that everyone heard without witnessing the long carried hoe accompanied by memorable bruises that lead to Bakiga expression *okuhendekyera busha nka mafuka* bearing pain for no gain. The hoe signified that the patiently waiting bride was now entitled to her own house and land to start a new family - the authorised way of procreation and the foundation of society. Traditionally, marriage is for sustaining society and cannot be of personal concern. A girl of tender age left her family to join the family of the boy but was never at the mercy of the boy. She would be heavily protected by in-laws and feel secure amidst the rest of society. The rampant forms of family violence come as result of modern marriages that detach themselves from culture and tradition, thus opening doors wide to individualism, capitalism, selfishness and other disvalues. The traditional role of women in marriages is widely spread in Africa. In some societies, it is the duty of aunts to prepare their nieces for marriage. In circumcising societies, it is women who cut their daughters. Among the Luo, the aunts play a similar role to that of Bakiga where women control men as regards the tradition of bride wealth. If stubborn uncles show signs of rigidity, the reasonable aunts stop the nonsense by ululating. Just as signs like an ordination prayer declares priesthood, or the visible Vatican white smoke is a public Pope's election proclamation, women's ululation proclaims public Pope's election proclamation, women's ululation is a final sign or proclamation that now there is a husband and a wife. There other rituals to rectify secretly planned marriages. Once an elopement made parents and relatives ashamed of rectification due to age. When they laughed returning threats off, she shyly walked back home. (*Mwije munjugise, nari nyegarukyire!*)

At the surface this scenario might sound like a joke. However, the innocent girl expresses the deeper reality of the nature of the Bakiga social structure. In accordance with the commonly held world-view, everyone has room and a role to play in this structure, right from the unborn to the dead. The holistic view is that life springs from the unborn. The living play different roles to sustain life. The dead guide and protect the process. Life is one. This explains why there is no discrimination. Some observers tell tales of discrimination against children and women, unaware of the anguish families without children or men without wives undergo. If they knew the responsibility assumed by everyone to bring up upright children, if they understood that in polygamous societies elder wives were in charge of

recruiting co-wives and why, if they were aware that in circumcising societies only women cut their daughters, among other ideas and practices, they would talk less. N.B. we need to realise that traditional societies honoured special relationships with fellow human beings and so reveal a lot to colonists and imperialists who misused the generosity by stilling good ideas and artifacts but twisting the truth to present their hosts in negative light. Otherwise, deep human feelings and activities that demonstrate humanity, popularly known as Buntu, are knowable to society members or those that harbour no malice. Linguistic analysis of meanings of names and other signs, for instance, can reveal the nature and status of institutions like a family - a thing that beats the arm-chair anthropologists that have spread falsehoods about 'other' cultures.

Twisting Traditional Artifacts and Cultural Frameworks to Suit Modern Life

Due to the negative stance to them, indigenous societies do not freely welcome foreign ideas and practices, but are forced to. Changing mind-sets thorough educational methods, falsehoods like civilisation, religion, and commerce eventually do a better job than physical force. However, the foreign people and their ideas were partly accepted on humanitarian grounds. An important aspect of Ubuntu civilisation is to welcome and help strangers. Due to their hidden agenda, the foreigners misused the hospitality by studying traditional belief systems, particularly religious ideas and practices that fit new religions like the Christianity that easily took root in Africa. The belief in one God, with a host of names like *Ruhanga* - the sole creator - was not new. The belief in life after death, with demonstrations in saints, miracles, and other examples properly fits the traditional belief systems that entail ancestors, spirits both of the dead and of creatures similar to angels, along with the vivid roles they play in life. This similarity became a hiding place that properly accommodated Western thinkers, including these who had lost faith in God and yet pretended to bring religion to the people that knew God and practiced religion much better. For the sake of discussing artifacts as signs and symbols of faith, we may now examine the relationship between traditional rites of passage and their modernising through sacraments and the usage of sacramentals⁶.

⁶ Sacramentals are a good example of combining culture, artifacts, symbols and signs. They are in diverse shapes, sizes, materials and substances, gestures and acts of piety. Examples include crucifixes, rosaries, candles, scapulars, holy water,

It is important to note that this part is mainly for comparative purposes of traditionalism and modernism. Otherwise, traditional thought and practice view artifacts within the holistic approach to life influenced by the common world view. The materialistic, mechanical and artificial individualisation of people and things together with their defined roles are more modern than traditional.

This explains why modern people and things are valued according to their contribution to narrow interests other than their natural value. This artificiality in values explains why a soda is more expensive than milk and other nutritious foods. Traditional society values children, the disabled, the elders and other inconvenienced people simply because they are human beings. To the contrary, modern society does not value even the youthful able bodied, let alone the physically disadvantaged as long as they are unemployed. One is valued according to what one has or does, not according to what one is. This marks a sharp distinction between being and doing. The dictum, *sic transit gloria mundi* is a significant chapter in the ever wide-open Great Book of Nature⁷. Close observation reveals natural order, human order and natural law that is intrinsic in human nature independent of positive law. Mind and matter differ. Good readers of the Book of Nature realise that what one has or does today can be lost tomorrow. Permanence pertains to human values. In modern times where morals are relegated to the back seat, disvalues like stealing have elevated to political masters, economic guides, and even religious leaders. The world will ever regret losses engendered through demotivation generated by the idea of hard working for lazy bones and brainless thugs to steal. The modern society that abets such misbehaviour tries to mitigate the dire effects by creating remedies in laws and regulations of intellectual property rights like patents, copyright, industrial design rights, trademarks, plant variety rights, trade dress, geographical indications, trade secrets, etc.

anointing oils, the sign of the cross, etc. these artifacts, symbols, and signs are part of the catholic church culture. Disjointedness arises in additions of Satanic symbols for witchcraft, etc. However, one may wonder about this hullabaloo, given the highly praised power of sacramentals themselves, prayer, blessing and exorcism,

⁷ Medieval thinkers connected science and religion through observing nature which they held to mirror God's mind, just as *actus reus* mirrors *mens rea*. According to St. Augustine, natural laws can explain reality but not themselves.

The general problems with these laws is lack of legal knowledge and the weaknesses of positive law as such that many flout with impunity. This systematisation disadvantages and even endangers traditional societies where personal knowledge becomes public knowledge. In Africa, for instance, some traditional artifacts have been patented by a foreign opportunist, leading to serious litigation. Humanity is going down the drain due to capitalism without a human face, materialism and their relatives. This negatively affects humanity that is characterised by a person's rationality, free will, and emotional intelligence that guide individuals in their daily life. Such a human existence is also characterised by work, not as dictated but as willed. Such freedom of work builds artifacts and culture. Modernism has reduced work, i.e. activities motivated and guided by a goal that can be personal, to job, i.e. a specific occupation or profession carried out to satisfy an institution's needs and to earn. While in traditional societies children are educated to enjoy work in helping other people, particularly elders, modern society brings up children with work to earn ideas like job-a-bob. This radically changes the concept and perspective of work. Traditionally people are attracted to and fulfilled by, work. In modern society, an employer is interested in work and an employee is used as a tool. People are reduced to mere artifact when they are trained to perform specific duties. This explains why a better employee replaces a worse one, and why an artificial intelligence artifact, e.g. a robot replaces both. When something better comes up, poor robot dies a natural death, unaware of the fact. Human mechanical systems are comparable to natural forces, like earthquakes, lightning, hurricanes, storms, ad *infinitem*. What all these and their relatives have in common is an inability to know themselves, let alone understand what they do and the effects of their acts. This makes the legal system to promote them to 'acts of God'. Due to mastery of science and technology, there are many ways in which humans please or hurt their fellow human beings. The worst thing a human being can do to nature, himself, fellow human beings and the Boss of all creation is to trigger off natural forces or create a monster of their type and calibre simply because he or she can do it. Traditional experts know so much but apply so little for the good of humanity. When they felt pity and gave medicine to strangers, they knew the poison that could kill them. This, according to this article, needs to be emulated. True civilisation is safeguarding one another.

A Mixture of Modern and Traditional Cultural Artifacts, Symbols and Signs

Dire attempts are made by colonizing forces to replace traditional life, practices, artifacts etc. with foreign ones. Successful ones include currencies, dressing, building, means of communication and transport, but these changes are severe or moderate from country to country or society to society. Some religions have played a big role as conversion, to many, means abandoning traditional practices. In general, colonial countries have interest in replacing cultural with factory products. In addition, the modern states of colonized societies are trying to modernize, i.e. bring home foreign factories. All the same, traditional life persists. This is because neither the colonial state nor the transferred modern nation state is capable of reaching all corners of society. As a result, so many traditional things still survive side by side with foreign ones either as modified or as original. Secondly, there are things that are difficult to replace, e.g. names. Some naming systems are so meaningful that replacing them is as difficult as replacing a language. So, foreign names like Christian or Muslim names are given with traditional names to the same persons. Originally, traditional names are underrated and dubbed kaffir. Later, they are accepted as Birth Names, e.g. Kangye - a great Batendura clan leader - in contrast to Given Names, like Ernest. Most marked, however, are Rites of Passage like Birth *okuzarwa*, Initiation *okuhama*, Maturity *okukura*, and Death *okufwa*. These are so natural, meaningful and universal that Christianity, for instance, cannot avoid 'baptising' or 'christianising' them. The Sacrament of Baptism admits one into the Christian family with rituals. Baptism and naming go together because of one being received as a new member. Traditionally, a baby is a new member of society and is given a name describing the place, time, circumstances, or manner of birth. Some names symbolise the continuity of ancestral relations. Others are signs of good wishes for the newborn, e.g. naming him according to a respected person or hero. This culture is 'baptised' by naming a baby in recognition of a Saint and entrusting the baby to a great personality for guidance and intercession. Others are named according to great events like Noela and Natalie, *natalis dies*, or angels like Gabriel and Archangel. Catholics tend to utilise the rich culture of relying on the Bible, Tradition, Doctrine and other avenues through which they get Blessings, intercession, mentorship, and other sources of the holistic, psychological enrichment necessary for spiritual fulfilment. A life denuded of fulfilment and hope can be dangerously aimless and meaningless.

The common Rite of Initiation is admission into a special group or stage of social development through ritual or ceremony performance. This rite is closely related to maturity and prepares or accepts one to perform what mature people do. The most significant example is circumcision, which prepares one for important social duties like marriage, defending life and property as a warrior, among others. Initiation also makes one officially recognized as a member. Christians initiate through the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. These are the first and invite people to a deeper faith. The next rite of passage is adulthood, marked by marriage. The key concern here is social responsibility. This begins with adolescence whose physical signs are visible as growing breasts or a beard. Different societies prepare the adolescent differently, but generally aunts prepare girls as uncles prepare boys. The final common rite of passage is death into the next world. In traditional societies, death is regarded as a continuity of life. Death does not mean disappearing. Chinua Achebe, an African novelist, vividly brings this view out through his character, Okonkwo, who orders his son, Nwoye, not to become a Christian, and warns him, 'if you dare join them when I am dead, I will return and break your jaw'. This is common as many people report experiences with the spirits of their ancestors and the dead relatives and friends. The Christian saints are equivalent to these ancestors as the spirits are equivalent to angels. Some differences include the concept of God whom the Christians serve but from whom indigenous people expect service. Indigenous thought and practice, however, does not look out for the end of the world - a modern concept that is possible given the looming nuclear war. It is also a Christian idea of Eschatology or the final things, including death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind. Indigenous people's holistic concept of reality has no room for 'final things'. Life is eternal and comprises of the connectedness of the living, the living and the dead, humanity and nature, and all creation with the 'The Above One', 'The High One' *Owaheiguru* or The Almighty God *Ruhanga/Nyamuhanga*. The two views of life are intertwined in the same modern society where they often create and adversely influence culture, artifacts, symbols and signs.

Significance of Disjointedness

Disjointedness of traditional and modern artifacts and symbols signals the *pari-passu* existence of both traditionalism and modernism. *Par-passu* here is deliberately used to emphasise equal-footing. This equality is due to the

fact that some significant traditional tenets and practices remain intact. This signifies the glorious failure of unilateralism, Eurocentrism and related doctrines whose intention was to overwhelm 'other' cultures, i.e. other than Western cultures. Colonization takes different types like administrative, settler, plantation, extractive, surrogate, internal, mental etc. and all of them are vigorously fought. At this juncture we may demonstrate the failure of mentalcolonisation using an example of success of a Mukiga called Ngologoza.



Paul Ngologoza - a great example if indigenous leader of genius - in his Papal Knighthood of St. Gregory regalia.

Ngologoza was introduced to Western culture way back in the early 920s. He covered a distance of 135 km on foot from Bukinda village, in Kabale to Kitabi Parish, in Bushenyi for catechumenate classes, the only education open to all at the time. He was baptized Paul in 1922 and became his village chief *Omukungu/Omutongole* in 1923. In 1923 he was promoted to Muruka Chief, and in 1927 he witnessed many cases of social transformation. These included the banning of a strong powerful brew *enturire*. This is one of the strongest brews, made out of sorghum and mixed with honey.



Enturire, ready to drink. Sorghum omugusha is an important grain that gives both bread and drink. Before it is ground, the grain can be nice to chew, regardless of 'kill step' issues. Hot porridge may be bitter (enkumba) or sweet (ekimyanya), depending on how the grain is prepared (okwinika). The commonest is the cooled down drink (obushera) taken before, during, or after meals. This may be upgraded to an alcoholic level (omuramba), which in turn can be upgraded to the toughest level (enturire). Omuramba can also be mixed with rwarwa (banana wine). With these brews, you can see the happiest faces, hear the best songs, and witness the best dances at occasions, or general happiness.

Ngologoza also witnessed the introduction of marriage registration *okuhandikwa*, the determination of bride-wealth to a cow and a bull *enjugano*, and the registration of births and deaths *okuhandikyisa*. He witnessed the replacement of Baganda and Baziba colonial collaborator chiefs by Kigezi natives and was appointed Kikungiri Gombilola chief. The appointment of Saza Chiefs followed in 1930 and he was appointed Kinkizi Saza Chief. He collaborated with neighbouring Kings for migrations of big populations and was nominated a Committee Member of the Resettlement of Migrant Bakiga, headed by the District Commissioner. In 1946 he was elected the first General Secretary of Kigezi, and was reappointed in 1952. In 1956 he was appointed Chief Judge of Kigezi till 1959 when he was appointed Chairman of Kigezi Appointments Board till he retired in 1960. His honours included OBE (Order of the British Empire) awarded by the Queen, and KSG (Knight of St. Gregory) awarded by Pope Paul the VI. Because of his strong Catholic beliefs he was the first Mukiga and neighbouring areas to travel by air, an occasion that made him a legend right from the 1950s. With all this experience, Paul was so confident and often joked about those who sincerely greeted him in English. This confidence showed during his contact with his British colonial masters. When he was Chief Judge, Governor Andrew Cohen visited Kigezi - a huge District that currently covers a number of Districts that include Kabale which will be a city next year (July, 2025), Kanungu, Kisoro, Rubanda, Rukiga and Rukungiri. The highly influential and feared Governor wondered how someone who did not speak English held such a big position. When this was translated to Ngologoza, he calmly retorted in Rukiga, *Kyo nimugambire ogwo mwana Cohen ngu emishango ndashara eyabakiga tindashara eyabajungu* meaning: Ah, tell that 'boy' Cohen (according to Rukiga *mwana* in this case means child or uninformed) that I judge Bakiga

not European cases. Cohen is reported to have coiled in his seat, surprised by the laughters, the body language and the message. Before his retirement, there were elections issues in Kamwezi. As Ngologoza met a big calm audience, a white lawyer arrived speaking a lot of English. Ngologoza noticed the unnecessarily fast and loud noise, and without waiting to be told the information, in his metallic voice firmly ordered *Ako mukagambire ketonde*. This is difficult to translate because 'ako' is so diminutive that the meaning would be *warn that 'little thing' to take it easy*. Again the laughters that ensued silenced the 'boy' before the unshakeable leader.

Other examples, include *Rwamazi* who was baptised *Rwanyegye* by those who did not understand the spiritual symbolism of naming a child 'shit' *amazi* to protect it from death's jaws. This great warrior single handedly short a White colonial soldier whose forces had reached Lake Bunyonyi, thus stopping the lake from being the boundary between the German/Belgian and the British colonies of Rwanda and Uganda. More significant, however, the disconnectedness between traditionalism and modernism blares out when the proudly celebrated indigenous leaders' authenticity and resilience is ashamedly, surprisingly and embarrassingly twisted, or even reversed by wreckless judgments, clearly tinged with foreign dictates and false belief systems that show evidence of serious mental colonisation or being sell outs instead of liberating the oppressed.

Conclusion

Culture, artifacts, symbols and signs are part of life. Human beings respond to their natural circumstances and creatively work out ways and means of a better life. The result of this creativity is the cultural order that is superimposed on the natural order. Creativity implies thought and practice. At the level of thought there is internal culture. At the level of practical life there is external culture. External culture is the people's way of life and their cultural objects, i.e. artifacts, symbols and signs. These facilitate practical life. For example, they use speech and body language to communicate. Due to distance, they use artifacts like horns and drums. However, these physical objects are complemented by nature as distant communication can also be through natural means like telepathy, dreams, and other social and psychological means. Thus, communication is mechanical, psychological, sociological, socio-psychological, etc. While traditionalism balances society, modernism creates mechanical

relationships that disregard order and uniformity. When empathy is undermined, artifacts, symbols and signs become masters of their makers. Science and technology destroy concepts of meaning and purpose of life that traditionalism highly values.

Scientific and mechanical success hurt the holistic approach to life whereby people share life physically, socially, psychologically, spiritually and other means. Indigenous society recognizes the duality of nature, and creates cultures, artifacts, symbols, and signs accordingly. These, therefore, reflect the perceptions of good and evil, primal and divine, retribution and atonement, the physical and metaphysical, and other opposites. In traditional society, the meaning of life is construed from these realities, while modern society focusses on the physical and material reality and the mechanisms of developing this reality. The monetary system that characterizes modern society focusses on economic institutions, human capital, research, infrastructure, market sophistication, business, sophistication, knowledge and technology, investments and outputs, among others. This focus is selectively on monetary and other types of values that seriously undermine human values as a good Samaritan is a poor economist. Monetary and material gains lead to cut-throat competition that, in turn, leads to misuse of science and technology. Thus, the most developed modern artifacts pertain to war machinery. Ultimately, modernism has created sophisticated artifacts and systems that are beyond human control. Unlike indigenous society where culture, artifacts, symbols, signs etc. are deliberately created for a better world to live in, modern culture and cultural objects are a double sword. While nuclear can kill and save, bombs, biological and chemical weapons, among other lethal weapons are designed to kill and destroy. The situation is made even worse by the idea of amorphous and sophisticated destructive systems and machinery that are beyond human knowledge, understanding and control. There can hardly be worse madness than creating an uncontrollable dangerous system or artifact.

The discussion of disjointedness of traditional and modern artifacts, symbols, and signs dwells on the above-mentioned anomaly. Humanity deserves congratulations on science and technology. The problem is misusing them to kill instead of saving and to destroy instead of building. However, there is also the problem of imbalance. Western developments of

the modern nation state and science and technology are extended to other societies not for development but subjugation. Foreign economies in cahoots with foreign administration undermine the culture and prohibit the production and usage of indigenous artifacts, symbols and signs. The confusion that ensues is unimaginable. However, not everything is destroyed, thanks to the limitation of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and modernization. Given the significance of both traditionalism and modernism, there is a need for balance, not total replacement of one by the other. In addition, true development comes from within. Although modernization can 'jump' or be attained through transfer of science and technology, the need for sustainability calls for independence. During the World Wars many countries were destroyed. Germany easily benefited from the Marshall-Plan because the war destruction had left in place the infrastructure to reconstruct. Most important, no one interfered with the German people. They were left to reorganise themselves. The bombs had destroyed structures, but the experienced architects remained in place. To the contrary, countries interfered with by colonialism and imperialism suffer both physical and mental destruction. The chance for the people to regroup and rebuild themselves is deliberately denied of them. Neocolonialism still persists. Multinationalism and other factors sustain and even worsen both the mental and physical destruction.

Mere flag independence with foreign economic controls, Westphalian state management challenges, and other extensions of means of subjugation and exploitation abound. Meaningful cultural restoration, therefore, leaves a lot to be desired. Total decolonization leads to cultures, artifacts, symbols, signs and whatever the people need. This is the true meaning of independence. Many countries cannot participate in global issues like trade because they have either inferior or no artifacts ready for foreign trade, despite their abundant raw materials. With added value to these materials, such societies provide highly competitive cultural object - artifacts. What is lacking, therefore, is human values through which human beings recognize one another, create cultures and objects for a better life and generate true civilizations. This article is written at the time when an incredible number of modern leaders of genius - social, religious, political, economic, academic, in every aspect of life - are motivated mostly by material and monetary gain in what they do instead of human values. Most institutions and their artifacts, symbols and signs are founded on money making. As if humanity

were at a cursed time, geniuses concentrate more on things than people. The most developed artifacts are lethal weapons. Weapons manufacturers think of death, not life. The more accurately the artifacts kill the more they sell. Objectively, money is the top modern artifact, symbol and sign. Money makes transactions intense and easy, but humans tense and uneasy. Money widens the rift between good and evil. Subjectively, the vacuum that trust leaves behind is occupied by fear. In this fracas, artifacts lose meaning. Traditionally, people united to tame nature. Now, they are divided to tame one another. The new games who dies before who. Where trust creates confidence, fear creates suspicion. Modernism places people in a prison where they keep an eye at each other. The fear of death creates the game of die before I do. The disvalue of greed creates yet another game of die and I take your property. Big and small minds are preoccupied by who dies before who, where, when, how, and why. In this fracas, life loses meaning and direction. In the final analysis, however, the numerous issues raised in this article are bound together by the chorus: nihil disperandum. Culture, artifacts, symbols and signs are man-made for man. A mere slip off the way reverses the order and puts man at the mercy of his creation. The reversal of this reversal is the challenge to modernism. Post-modernism restores self-consciousness. This balances *being* and *doing*. Emphasis on *doing* alone leads to unknowable results. This blinds, fetters and imprisons man in his own futile misuse of science and technology.

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“Ofo” in Cultural Identity and Spiritual Practice in Owa Culture

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Abstract: The Ofo is a cultural artifact deeply rooted in the traditions of the Owa people, part of the Ika-Igbo nation in Delta State, Nigeria. It represents personal accomplishment, power, and individual success, often associated with the male's personal deity or "Chi" (God). The Ofo is typically a wooden staff, carved from a specific type of tree believed to have spiritual significance, serving both spiritual and social functions. The wood is usually polished and may be adorned with symbols or decorations. It often features intricate carvings, including anthropomorphic figures, animals, or geometric patterns. These carvings are not merely decorative but hold symbolic meanings related to the owner's lineage, status, or spiritual beliefs. This symbolic image is, however, challenged by globalization, preservation of sacred objects, and cultural interpretation to make contemporary relevance pose several challenges. This study maintains that the teaching and learning of the ethics of artifacts in our schools would be educational tools, allowing people to learn about the moral protection of artifacts, aesthetic utility, and harms to the environment. The implementation of the ethics of artifacts would encourage the use of conservation and application of techniques to preserve and restore artifacts. This includes chemical treatments, environmental controls, and physical repairs to learn more about the sacred objects and their importance in our environment.

Keywords: Ofo; Artifacts; Owa People; Ethics; Preservation of Culture.

Introduction

Historically, the Ofo represents authority and is often held by community leaders, such as elders, priests, and titled individuals in many parts of Owa

communities in Delta State, Nigeria.¹ 'Ofo' is a symbol of great social, religious and moral achievement. The individual 'Ofo' is inherited by men and has a significant role as the custodian of tradition and moral authority.² In Owa cosmology, the Ofo is believed to be a conduit for spiritual power and ancestral blessings. It is often used in rituals, prayers, and as a symbol of the ancestors' presence and guidance in many communities.³



Ofo comes in different sizes and structures. This is a sample of a carved Ofo among the Owa people, delta state Nigeria.

In Nigeria, many cultural artifacts, including the Ofo, suffer from inadequate preservation facilities, which can lead to deterioration over time.⁴ As societies modernize, traditional practices and the importance of artifacts like the Ofo may decline, leading to a loss of cultural heritage. The movement from rural to urban areas often results in the abandonment of traditional practices and artifacts.⁵ There is a risk of counterfeit artifacts

¹ Chinyere Ndubuisi, "Beyond Carvings And Rituals: Unveiling The Ikenga's Role In Modern Igbo Society," *Journal Of Contemporary Rituals And Traditions* 2, no. 2 (2024): 77-94.

² Jacinta Uchenna Ikegwu, "Ofo As A Global Cultural Resource And Its Significance In Igbo Culture Area," *Ikenga: International Journal Of Institute Of African Studies* 14, no. 1 (2018): 325-343; Rosabelle Boswell, "Scents Of Identity: Fragrance As Heritage In Zanzibar," *Journal Of Contemporary African Studies* 26, no. 3 (2008): 295-311.

³ Igor Kopytoff, "Ancestors As Elders In Africa," *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 129-142.

⁴ V. O. Ekwelem, V. N. Okafor, and S. C. Ukwoma, "Preservation of Cultural Heritage: The Strategic Role Of The Library And Information Science Professionals In South East Nigeria," *Library Philosophy & Practice* (2011).

⁵ Catherine M. Cameron, "Structure Abandonment In Villages," *Archaeological Method And Theory* 3 (1991): 155-194.

being produced and sold, which can devalue the original cultural significance of the Ofo.⁶ The traditional methods of creating Ofo might be lost if younger generations do not learn these skills.⁷ Also, non-Igbo individuals or scholars may often misinterpret the meaning and use of Ofo, leading to distorted representations of this sacred object being stolen and housed in museums and private collections outside. Determining the rightful ownership of Ofo artifacts can be complex, especially when they have been passed down through generations or sold multiple times.⁸ The Ofo can be appropriated in ways that strip it of its cultural significance, reducing it to a mere decorative object. The commercialization of Ofo artifacts can undermine their cultural and spiritual value.⁹ It is now a big challenge that many young urban children and people, even within Nigeria, may not be fully aware of the significance and importance of the Ofo in African traditional thought due to the desacralization of the sacred. There may be a lack of educational resources to teach about the Ofo and its role in Igbo culture.¹⁰ The colonial era saw the suppression and marginalization of many traditional practices, including the use of the Ofo for cultural identifications.¹¹ However, it remained a potent symbol of resistance and cultural identity. Today, the Ofo continues to hold significance in Ika-Igbo communities, both in traditional settings and in the Diaspora. It is used in cultural festivals, academic discussions, and as a symbol of Igbo heritage and identity. There are ongoing efforts to document and preserve the Ofo and its associated traditions. Museums, cultural institutions, and scholars are working to ensure that this vital aspect of Ika-Igbo heritage is not lost.

⁶ Mark Jamieson, "The Place Of Counterfeits In Regimes Of Value: An Anthropological Approach," *Journal Of The Royal Anthropological Institute* (1999): 1-11.

⁷ Christopher I. Ejizu, "Ritual Enactment Of Achievement: "Ikenga" Symbol In Igboland," *Paideuma* (1991): 233-251.

⁸ Babatunde Adebisi, *Legal And Other Issues In Repatriating Nigeria's Looted Artefacts* (Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Press 2012).

⁹ Elizabeth A. Klesmith, "Nigeria and Mali: The Case For Repatriation And Protection Of Cultural Heritage In Post-Colonial Africa," *Notre Dame Journal of International & Comparative Law* 4 (2013): 45.

¹⁰ Teresa Mcguire, "African Antiquities Removed During Colonialism: Restoring A Stolen Cultural Legacy," *Detroit College of Law Review* (1990): 31.

¹¹ Barrister Matthew Obumneme Arum, "Symbolism In Igbo Culture: Towards A Decolonization Of Igbo Cultural Values," *Sapientia Global Journal Of Arts, Humanities And Development Studies* 4, no. 3 (2021).

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes cultural education, better preservation techniques, legal frameworks for repatriation, and efforts to maintain the traditional craftsmanship associated with the Ofo. This study suggests the teaching, learning and the implementation of the ethics of artifact by policies maker for the common good of all.

Ofo literature

In the Igbo traditional religion and its philosophical underpinnings, provide a rich tapestry of Ofo symbolism, connecting beliefs with broader philosophical themes. Ofo is a deity and cult figure in the Owa culture of southeastern Nigeria, often associated with success, personal achievement, and the right hand of man, symbolizing power and accomplishment.¹² While there may be no philosophers directly labeled as "philosophers of Ofo," several scholars and African thinkers have explored the themes and philosophical implications of Ofo within the context of African philosophy. Ethnographers and anthropologists have also documented Ofo, exploring its social, religious, and legal roles within Ika-Igbo society. These studies provide insights into the Ofo multifaceted significance and much literature often references the Ofo, highlighting its importance in storytelling, proverbs, and oral traditions. Authors use it to convey themes of justice, authority, and cultural continuity to explain the relevance of artifacts. Chinua Achebe, in his novels, explores the cultural significance of Ofo and how they shape Igbo identity and values through communalism, personal identity, and the role of traditional beliefs and symbols in shaping philosophical thought in Africa.¹³ Innocent Asouzu made a complementary reflection on "Ibuanyidanda" philosophy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings through symbols and spirituality. This idea often touches on traditional symbols like Ofo, exploring their philosophical

¹² Ejizu, "Ritual Enactment Of Achievement:" Ikenga" Symbol In Igboland."

¹³ Ngozi Dora Ulogu, "African Literature And The Changing World: The Antithetical Ideologies Of Individualism And Communalism In Chinua Achebe's Novels," *Villanova Journal Of Social Sciences, Arts And Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2019); George Ogbonna Mbarah, "Ak {Nauche, Personhood And Social Order In Contemporary Igbo Culture," (Phd Diss., 2017).

implications as a work of art shaped and sculpted.¹⁴ This study presents detailed studies of Owa an Ika-Igbo religion and cosmology, discussing the Ofo for ritual symbolism primarily for the systematic reconstruction, shaping cultural identity and the traditional religious experience.¹⁵ The sacred symbols provide reliable information about indigenous religious thought, decoding Ofo a deity that symbolizes “male sex organ” of the socio-cultural life of the Igbo people.¹⁶ Although its dense meaning content has been affected by globalization, it remains a tool in African traditional thought systems.¹⁷ The role of deities like Ofo in the spiritual and everyday lives of the Igbo people cannot be underestimated.¹⁸ The Igbo metaphysics and the philosophy of symbols explore how symbols like Ofo represent deeper philosophical concepts related to personal achievement and societal roles. It examines how artifacts become integral parts of understanding African philosophies of self and community.¹⁹ Ofo is founded on a community of shared beliefs in the wisdom that the notion of art for art's sake is rendering life to be given a considerable methodological component. Maduabuchi Dukor's contributions to African philosophy include an exploration of traditional symbols and their philosophical meanings discussed Ofo as part of the larger Igbo worldview and its implications for

¹⁴ Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda (Complementary Reflection) And Some Basic Philosophical Problems In Africa Today: Sense Experience, "The Mkpuchi Anya" And The Super-Maxim*, vol. 8 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013).

¹⁵ Christian Sunday Agama, "Symbolism And Social Order Among The Igbo," *Filosofia Theoretica: African Journal Of Philosophy, Culture & Religions* 9, no. 2 (2020).

¹⁶ Christopher I. Ejizu, "Ofo Na-Ogu And Mmanwu: Ritual Symbolism In The Interface Of Igbo Indigenous Religion," *Interface Between Igbo Theology And Christianity* (2014): 31.

¹⁷ Christopher Ejizu, *OFO: Igbo Ritual Symbol* (Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, 1986).

¹⁸ Ikechukwu M. Osebor, "Inclusive Symbolic Frames And Codes Shaping Cultural Identity And Values," *Meθexis Journal Of Research In Values And Spirituality* 4, no. 1 (May 2024): 82-99.

¹⁹ Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "The Ofo In Igbo Forest Of Arts, Crafts And Symbols: Implications For Peace-Building," *Igwebuike: African Journal Of Arts And Humanities* 6, no. 5 (2020); Christopher I. Ejizu, "Better Late Than Never: The Dialogue Of Ofo, Igbo Indigenous Ritual Symbol And The Roman Catholic Faith," *Ministerium: A Journal Of Contextual Theology* 1 (2022).

understanding personal and collective success.²⁰ This assertion entails that the evolution of the human mind was accompanied simultaneously with the evolution of symbols and their exploration for the best interest of all.²¹ The above contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional symbols and deities continue to influence and shape African philosophical thought.²² However, subjectivity in interpreting the symbolic nature of Ofo and the reliance on elders and traditional authority for interpreting ethical principles can lead to subjective ethical considerations.²³ Without standardized frameworks, there is a risk of inconsistency in the application of justice and fairness. Additionally, prioritizing Ofo ownership for communal welfare over individual rights might conflict with contemporary human rights principles.



A sample of cut-to-size Ofo from the mythical Ofo tree, among Owa people delta state Nigeria.

²⁰ Maduabuchi Frank Dukor, "Philosophy and Bread On The Table Reflections On Existence And Essence Of Being," *UnizikSpace, The Institutional Repository of Nnamdi Azikiwe University* (2023).

²¹ Cynthia Adjovi Mawuli, "Transmission And Embodiment Of Heritage: An Analysis Of Adinkra Symbolology On Traditional Clothing In Ghana," (Phd Diss., Master's Thesis, Central European University, 2019).

²² Oladapo Jimoh Balogun, "A Redescriptive History Of Humanism And Hermeneutics In African Philosophy," *Open Journal Of Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2013): 105-112.

²³ O. Monday, "Is Altruism Always Sufficient For Organ Donation? Vroom's Expectancy Theory, For Expanding The Organ Donor Pool," *Saudi Journal Of Kidney Diseases And Transplantation* 31, no. 2 (2020): 503-507.

Ethics of Artifacts

Addressing the moral challenges of Ofo requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines philosophical principles with practical methodologies to preserve cultural heritage for future generations.²⁴ Philosophical theories, such as deontology, emphasize duties and responsibilities, suggesting that we have an inherent duty to protect artifacts. This study suggests the adaptation and implementation of the ethics of artifact for the preservation of Ofo and its relevance. The ethics of artifact examines the intrinsic and extrinsic value of artifacts.²⁵ It outlines the manners, practices, or principles by which communities or social organizations view their objet d'art.²⁶ The moral considerations surrounding the creation, use, and impact of human-made objects, particularly in terms of their influence on society, individuals, and the environment, has been studied.²⁷ The beliefs of Ofor explore moral principles and why people make moral and immoral decisions in the context of artifacts.²⁸ This field focuses on how individuals should behave in the development, use, and preservation of artifacts based on their moral compass, values, and society's shared values, laws, and traditions.²⁹ This study maintained that the ethics of artifacts should be geared towards preserving the cultural, historical, and aesthetic value of artifacts.

In this perspective, ethics would help to consider the impact of environmental factors on artifact preservation.³⁰ Pragmatic ethics advocates for practical solutions that work best in real-world scenarios for

²⁴ Sarah Harding, "Value, Obligation and Cultural Heritage," *Arizona State Law Journal* 31 (1999): 291.

²⁵ Michael Klenk, "How Do Technological Artefacts Embody Moral Values?," *Philosophy & Technology* 34, no. 3 (2021): 525-544.

²⁶ I. M. Osebor, "The Role Of Structural Ethics In Restraining "Japa" Among Clinicians," *Ramon Llull Journal Of Applied Ethics* 15 (2024).

²⁷ Helena Siipi, "Artefacts And Living Artefacts," *Environmental Values* 12, no. 4 (2003): 413-430.

²⁸ O. I. Monday, "The Relevance Of Deep Ecological Principles In The Aquatic Crisis: A Philosophical Analysis," *Bangladesh Journal Of Bioethics* 11, no. 2 (2020): 42-48.

²⁹ O. I. Monday, "Ethics Of Cognitive Restructuring: A Rehabilitation Of Rape Victims And Offenders," *Voice In Bioethics* (2020).

³⁰ I. M. Osebor, "Native-Centric Ecology As A Panacea To Aquatic Crisis?," *Sapientia Journal of Philosophy* 18 (2023).

the preservation of artifacts, considering current technological and economic constraints.³¹ Value theory, also known as axiology, explores the nature of the value of artifacts, including what is valuable, why it is valuable, and how value judgments are formed. Ethical considerations include restoration practices that respect the artifact's authenticity, ensuring accessibility to the public while also respecting the rights of original owners or communities. The production, use, and disposal of artifacts can have significant environmental impacts, such as the use of sustainable materials, energy efficiency, and reducing waste and pollution.³² Ethics are closely tied to the concept of the circular economy, where artifacts are designed for reuse, recycling, and minimal impact on the environment, making it a crucial ethical consideration. The moral implication of artifact preservation involves sensitivity to the cultural contexts from which they originate. The Owa people's wisdom regarding artifacts includes respecting the wishes of descendant communities regarding how artifacts are displayed and used. Ethical practices should consider the long-term sustainability of both the artifacts and the methods used to preserve them.³³ Ethical practices applied over time in museums and archives play a crucial role in the preservation of artifacts. They use specialized techniques and controlled environments to maintain the condition of artifacts. The moral code of artifacts explains the extrinsic value derived from their utility, educational potential, or the meanings attributed to them by individuals and societies, linking them to the past and providing insights into historical events, cultures, and practices.³⁴ The preservation of artifacts ensures that this historical knowledge is not lost. It embodies the cultural heritage of a community, reflecting its traditions, customs, beliefs, and artistic expressions.

³¹ Catherine Sease, "Codes Of Ethics For Conservation," *International Journal Of Cultural Property* 7, no. 1 (1998): 98-115.

³² O. I. Monday, "The Ethical Implications Of Eco-Individualism On Sustainable Environments," *European Journal Of Sustainable Development Research* 5 no. 3 (2021): 7.

³³ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "World Heritage And Cultural Economics," *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (2006): 161-202.

³⁴ Osebor, "Inclusive Symbolic Frames And Codes Shaping Cultural Identity And Values."

The significance of Ofo in African traditional thought

The philosophy of Ofo is central to the African traditional judiciary system and is used in oath-taking ceremonies as a symbol of truth and justice.³⁵ The presence of an Ofo during legal proceedings emphasizes the gravity and sanctity of the process, forming an integral part of rituals honoring the ancestors and protecting cultural heritage. It is believed that Ofo has the capacity to invoke the presence of ancestors and seek their blessings or guidance.³⁶ During significant life events, such as marriages, funerals, and initiation ceremonies, the Ofo is often present, symbolizing continuity and the linkage between the living and the ancestors.³⁷ In matters of dispute or when someone needs to swear an oath, the Ofo is used to symbolize the seriousness of the commitment and the spiritual consequences of falsehood. The Ofo remains a powerful symbol of Igbo cultural heritage, embodying the community's values, beliefs, and historical continuity. Advances in technology have made digital preservation possible, allowing artifacts to be digitized and stored in formats that can be accessed widely without risking damage to the original objects. Their preservation ensures that this educational resource remains available. Some artifacts have significant economic value due to their rarity, demand, or potential for tourism. Preserving such artifacts can have economic benefits for communities and institutions. Artifacts often hold personal or collective sentimental value. They can be symbols of heritage, identity, or significant events, making their preservation emotionally important.

Conclusion

This study maintains that the ancient roots of the tradition of Ofo date back centuries, with roots in pre-colonial Igbo society. It has evolved over time and remains deeply ingrained among Owa people. The Ofo artifacts are challenged by colonialism and conservation practices yet remain powerful

³⁵ Aniekan Etim Nana, "Oath-Taking In Ibibio Society: A Means Of Settlement Of Traditional Dispute," *Journal Of African Studies And Sustainable Development* 6, no. 4 (2023).

³⁶ Friday Ifeanyichukwu Ogbuehi, "Traditional Legal System A Paradigm For Judicial System In Nigeria," *IgboScholars International Journal* 4, no. 1 (2017).

³⁷ I. M. Osebor, and B. P. Irabor, "The Role Of Metaphysics In The Development Of Native-Centric Education," *Oracle Of Wisdom, Journal Of Philosophy And Public Affairs (Owijoppa)* 7, no. 3 (2023).

tools for cultural expression and spiritual significance among Ika-Igbo people. The study concludes that addressing the challenges of Ofo artifacts requires education, and implementation of the ethics of artifacts. This provides a framework for understanding why artifacts should be preserved and guides for making practical, informed decisions on the use of artifacts and how best to preserve them for future generations.

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The Book as a Cultural Artifact in Brazilian Spiritism

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Abstract: Spiritism is a religious doctrine of Christian spiritualism that emerged in the 19th century in France, but which achieved great expansion and consolidation in Brazil, becoming one of the main religious expressions in the country. Brazilian Spiritism places great emphasis on the role of study as a form of knowledge and development of the doctrine, which makes the Spiritist book an important artifact in the construction of a Spiritist cultural pedagogy. In our brief text, we will see some of the particular characteristics that construct the Spiritist book as a cultural artifact, and its functions in the continuous transformation of the Brazilian Spiritist movement.

Keywords: Cultural Artifact; Spiritism; Brazil; Allan Kardec.

It is no exaggeration to say that all religions are basically based on their sacred books. The religious traditions have their own literatures, which are almost always born with books revealed by the deities. In Spiritism, the relationship with the book acquired a singular character. Spiritist doctrine was born in the 19th century in France; its founder, Allan Kardec (1804-1869), was a scholar of the mediumistic phenomena (contact of incarnated spirits with disembodied spirits), and his research on this theme provided the fundamental material for the construction of the first five founding works of spiritualism. *The Book of Spirits* (1857), *The Book of Mediums* (1861), *The Gospel According to Spiritism* (1864), *Heaven and Hell* (1865) and *The Genesis* (1868) would have been written in direct contact with spirits, through Of the mediums, constituting a new type of religious literature.¹

¹ Some references: Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism* (London: Cassel and Company, 1926); Victor Ribas Carneiro, *ABC do Espiritismo* (Curitiba: Federação Espírita do Paraná, 1996); Dora Incontri, *Para entender Allan Kardec* (São Paulo: Comenius, 2004); Paulo Henrique Figueiredo, *Revolução espírita: a*

Kardec's work expounded the scientific and moral questions concerning the existence of the soul, reincarnation, and the contact between the material and the spiritual spheres. Spiritism proposed to be a doctrine of threefold aspect: science, religion, and philosophy. In this sense, the Spiritists understood to have elaborated a method of rational, safe and constant contact with the disembodied souls, who continued to provide orientations and teachings on the immortal life. For this reason, Spiritist literature has acquired a special character. A great number of spiritist books were produced directly by the spirits, with the help of the mediums that psychographed them (they transcribed what was dictated by the spirits).

But it was in Brazil that Spiritism reached a remarkable expansion, since the end of the 19th century, practically becoming a Brazilian religion.² Although Spiritism is averse to the use of symbolic artifacts, the spiritist book has gained a special dimension as a legitimate form of expression of the Brazilian Spiritist movement. As we will present, "Cultural artifacts are concrete manifestations of culture, including objects, symbols, rituals and language that are observable and interpretable."³ Starting from this basic notion, we will discuss how the Brazilian Spiritist book became an important cultural artifact in the dissemination of the doctrine, and how this object serves for the continuous construction of a cultural pedagogy⁴

teoria esquecida de Allan Kardec (São Paulo: Feal, 2021); José do Carmo Rodrigues, *Espiritismo no Brasil: história, prática e conversão* (Curitiba: Appris, 2023); Jean Prieur, *Allan Kardec e seu tempo* (Niterói: Lachatre, 2016);

Jean Prieur, *Em torno de Rivail - O mundo em que viveu Allan Kardec* (Niterói: Lachatre, 2016); Dalmo Duque dos Santos, *Nova História do Espiritismo. Dos precursores de Allan Kardec a Chico Xavier* (Rio de Janeiro: Corifeu, 2007).

² José Santos, *Espiritismo - uma Religião Brasileira* (São Paulo: Moderna, 1997); José do Carmo Rodrigues, *Espiritismo no Brasil: história, prática e conversão* (Curitiba: Appris, 2023); Dalmo Duque dos Santos, *Nova História do Espiritismo. Dos precursores de Allan Kardec a Chico Xavier* (Rio de Janeiro: Corifeu, 2007); André Bueno, "Is Spiritism a Brazilian Religion?," *Intercultural Encounters* (2017), <https://interculturalencounters.blog/team/>.

³ Rodrigo Bastos, Marco Barón, Ravi Resck, *Hacking Cultural - Um guia prático para agentes de mudança* (Target Teal, 2023), <https://docs.targetteal.com/hacking-cultural/2-afetando-a-cultura-de-forma-intencional/dimensoes-da-cultura/2-3-3-desenhando-artefatos-culturais-para-mudanca-e-emancipacao-social/>.

⁴ Silmara Santos, "Artefatos culturais e letramento: pedagogias que (des) constroem sentidos," *Revista Catavento* (Junho, 2022), <https://www.unifeg.edu.br/revista-catavento/ed1-2022.html>; Paula D. Andrade, "Artefatos culturais midiáticos e pedagogias culturais: uma análise para explorar as qualidades pedagógicas da vida contemporânea," *Anais da 38ª Reunião Nacional da ANPED: Pedagogias culturais*

related to the dynamization of the Brazilian Spiritist movement. This movement is traversed by tensions and critical discussions, which make the Spiritist book a mobile object of construction and interpretation.

The Spiritist book in Brazil

In Brazil, the production of Spiritist books has never ceased. They are not just commentaries or studies; the presence of mediumship as a mechanism for contact with the spiritual world has led to a gradual development of the Spiritist doctrine, in accordance with the guidance provided by the spirits. This becomes evident, for example, when we analyze Kardec's seminal work. The first version of the 'Book of Spirits' contained just over five hundred questions asked to the spirits, while the second edition – currently considered the definitive version – contained over a thousand questions.⁵ Although these books – as well as the others written by Kardec – have achieved the status of 'codification' (and many practitioners of Spiritism usually refer to Kardec's five books as the “Pentateuch”, incorporating a biblical language that is much criticized in the definition of the Spiritist doctrine) – a fundamental pillar of the development of Spiritism, especially in Brazil, was the continued receipt of communications from the spiritual world.

This material gave a series of new characteristics to the spiritist literature, taking on the characteristics of important learning and research instruments. This is the case, for example, of the book 'Nosso Lar' (literally, 'Our Home'), by the medium Chico Xavier⁶, published in 1944.⁷ Until then, spiritist texts were vague in their descriptions of what the spiritual world would be like, its contours, possibilities and limitations. According to André

(2017). Dora Incontri, *Kardec para o século XXI* (Curitiba, 2024), Comenius: 221-227. See include the site of “Associação Brasileira de Pedagogia Espírita,” *Brazilian Association of Spiritist Pedagogy*, <https://blogabpe.org/>.

⁵ Allan Kardec, *O Livro dos Espíritos - Edição Histórica Bilingue*, trans. Evandro Noleto Bezerra (Rio de Janeiro: FEB, 2021).

⁶ The most prominent spirits' medium in Brazil, Francisco Candido Xavier (1910-2002) published more than four hundred works dictated by the spirits. His books are of the most varied genres; Novels, message books, poetry, short stories, reflections of doctrinal character, letters of disincarnating, among others. The great amount of works is marked by a remarkable quality and by great diversity, which caused great impression in the Brazilian public. See Marcelo Souto Maior, *As vidas de Chico Xavier* (São Paulo: Planeta, 2003).

⁷ Chico Xavier, *Nosso Lar* (Rio de Janeiro: FEB, 1944).

Luiz – the spirit who dictated the book to Chico Xavier – the spiritual world is organized into communities very similar to those we find on planet Earth. In fact, according to the book, the material world would be an imperfect copy of the spiritual world, limited by physical and natural conditions. The book caused surprise and controversy at the time of its release, largely because it clashed with the idealizations that were made about the spiritual world.⁸ In André Luiz's narrative, the spirits also lived with problems specific to their state of development, revealing that there were several levels of moral and physical evolution yet to be achieved.

'Nosso Lar' gradually became established as an authoritative narrative within Spiritism about what the Afterlife would be like, and served as a starting point for a collection of books that would continue to describe the world-wide experience that André Luiz would narrate from a spiritual point of view. In this sense – and taking as a basis our intention to understand books as cultural artifacts – it can be said that 'Nosso Lar' became an almost canonical reference on how to conceive and imagine the aesthetic dimensions of the spiritual world. It is not uncommon for many practitioners of Spiritism to claim to have begun their knowledge of the doctrine through this book, even before undertaking a more in-depth study of the conceptual foundations of Spiritism in Kardec's work.

In the same vein, another work that would become seminal within the Brazilian Spiritist doctrine is the book “O Consolador” (“The Consolator”, literally), dictated by the Spirit Emmanuel (considered the guide and spiritual protector of the medium Chico Xavier). Published in 1941⁹, the book encompasses the three dimensions of the Spiritist doctrine – religion, philosophy and science – organized into a series of questions that address the relationships between the spiritual world and human sciences such as chemistry, physics, history, sociology, art, among others. Repeating the procedure carried out by Kardec in the 'Book of Spirits', the group that assisted the medium Chico Xavier selected a series of questions, related to the contemporary world, so that Emmanuel (in the company of other expert spirits) could answer and point out directions on current human issues. The book sought to resolve, in some way, the almost always perennial conflict between science and the dimension of religious belief (usually understood as beyond natural laws). The aim of the work was to present the

⁸ Fabiano Vidal, *Em torno de Nosso lar: as controvérsias do espiritismo* (Curitiba: Appris, 2020); Dora Incontri, *Kardec para o século XXI*.

⁹ Chico Xavier, *O consolador* (Rio de Janeiro: FEB, 1941).

perspectives of the spiritual world on the advances and achievements of science, understood precisely as an expression of human spiritual development. On the other hand, it highlighted the ethical problem of the application of scientific and philosophical knowledge, something that would prove crucial in the following years, with the unfolding of the Second World War, the discovery of the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs. In this sense, “O Consolador” would become a crucial reference in the need for dialogue between the advances of science and the perspectives of a life ethically shaped by the Spiritist doctrine.

This issue would remain a turning point in the spread of Spiritism within Brazilian society. The importance given to written Spiritist texts as cultural artifacts reached prominence beyond the religious scope of the doctrine. Between 1973 and 1980, the medium Chico Xavier psychographed several letters from people who had died in tragic circumstances.¹⁰ In three cases, these letters were used as reliable messages in cases in which the people involved had died under suspicious circumstances. When presented at trial, the letters were responsible for the acquittal of the defendants in all cases, who were exonerated by the spirits who communicated through the medium.¹¹ Many of these psychographies became textual pieces of historical value within the doctrine, and are usually preserved as proof of the real action of mediumship in human existence.

Other works

It is important to emphasize that, as the book is the fundamental artifact of the Spiritist movement, other mediums contributed substantially to the construction of a literary body that would serve as a basis both for the study of the doctrine and for its epistemological and religious development.

This is the case of the medium Yvonne Pereira (1900-1983), an equally prolific author who made a crucial contribution to studies on mediumship through her books ‘Devassando o invisível’ (1963)¹² and

¹⁰ Chico Xavier, *Coleção Cartas Psicografada* (São Paulo: IDE, 2022); Márcia Bacell, *Cartas de Chico Xavier* (Catanduva: Leepp, 2020).

¹¹ Cintia Alves Silva, *As cartas de Chico Xavier* (São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica, 2012).

¹² Yvonne Pereira, *Devassando o invisível* (Delving into the invisible) (Rio de Janeiro: FEB, 2012).

'Recordações da mediunidade' (1966).¹³ In them, the author explores various personal experiences, combined with systematized elements of the Spiritist doctrine, which help to understand the mechanisms of communication with spirits within what would be understood as a scientific prism. Like Chico Xavier, she also published novels and studies dictated by spirits, composing a vast and referential work within Brazilian Spiritism.

Another notable medium is Divaldo Franco (1927), an author still active and seen as a reference within the international Spiritist movement. Author of hundreds of lectures in several different languages, Divaldo also published a vast list of works dictated by spirituality (especially from her spiritual mentor, Joanna de Angelis), of which the so-called 'Psychological series'¹⁴ stands out – a collection of sixteen books, psychographed between 1989 and 2011 – which establishes a relationship between Spiritist thought and Carl Jung's psychoanalysis, providing a new dimension to the psychological and philosophical characteristics of Spiritist ideas. Another important book by this author is 'Atualidade do pensamento espírita'¹⁵, in which he proposes, precisely, an update on the questions raised by the book 'O Consolador' from 1941. Such consideration shows the constant concern that spiritist intellectuals have to continue in continuous dialogue with the sciences.

As we can see, these books added important interpretations to the central theoretical body of the works written by Kardec. In this sense, the analysis of his ideas is fundamental to contemplating the development of the Spiritist doctrine in Brazil and its polysemic interpretations. The book thus becomes a means of reworking Spiritist thought in a continuous and dynamic way, avoiding its rigidity in a dogmatic body of ideas. For a large part of Spiritist intellectuals, this is a central point inherited from Kardec's proposal: without continuous development, the Spiritist movement runs the risk of incorporating archaic religious elements, reproducing ancestral rituals and ideas, which could undermine the rationalizing systematization of Spiritist thought.¹⁶ For this reason, the book, even as an artifact, is also

¹³ Yvonne Pereira, *Recordações da mediunidade* (Records of Mediumship) (Rio de Janeiro: FEB, 2012).

¹⁴ Divaldo P. Franco, *Série Psicológica* (Salvador: Leal, 2014).

¹⁵ Divaldo P. Franco, *Atualidade do pensamento espírita* (Salvador: Leal, 2022).

¹⁶ Paulo Henrique Figueiredo, *Autonomia: a história jamais contada do espiritismo* (São Paulo: Feal, 2022); Figueiredo, *Revolução espírita*; Dora Incontri, *Para entender Kardec* (Curitiba: Comenius, 2004); Arribas, Célia da Graça, *Afinal espiritismo é*

a legitimate and powerful means and instrument of action for maintaining the vitality of the Brazilian Spiritist movement. As we have seen, it constitutes one of the central elements of a Spiritist cultural pedagogy, permeating the construction of training curricula.

Production and consumption of the Spiritist book

One aspect that should be highlighted is the importance given to the dissemination of books as a central element in the dissemination of the Spiritist doctrine, fulfilling a special role as a cultural artifact.¹⁷ For decades, Brazilian Spiritist publishers have made a point of producing publications that were easily accessible, low-cost, small in size and aimed at popularizing the doctrine. These books could be easily purchased by large sections of the population, had a simple finish, small print and a portable size that allowed reading in any environment. For a long time, this strategy worked well until the advent of the Internet. With the digitalization of books and the free dissemination of Spiritist works online, it is now possible to find most of these books available on the Internet, which has significantly reduced the consumption of physical books. For this reason, Spiritist publishers have changed the standard of their publications, with more refined finishes that dedicate special paper to the works. The use of hard covers aims to grant a status of importance to certain works, just as the visual programming has adapted to more modern aesthetic standards. In another sense, these books show a concern with reaching a specific segment of the public that usually has difficulty reading, or they seek to be more attractive to be given as gifts.

Thus, there is a change in the perspective of the book as a cultural artifact. The dissemination of works in hardcover and with higher prices reinforces the attempt to legitimize certain works considered seminal within the Spiritist movement. Although recent, this aesthetic change reveals the concern to give prominence to Spiritist productions, distancing them from the idea of 'cheap books with poor content'.

religião? A doutrina espírita na formação da diversidade religiosa brasileira (São Paulo: Alameda, 2010).

¹⁷ Ana Claudia Silva e Verônica Bemvenuto de Abreu Silva, "Quem lê livros espíritas?," *Estudos De Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea*, Brasília, no. 57 (2019): e5718, <https://doi.org/10.1590/2316-4018578>.

As a cultural artifact, Brazilian Spiritist books also have an important distinctive characteristic. They do not tend to become relics that hold some kind of sacred power, but rather become mobile elements for disseminating the doctrine. As we have seen, changes in the morphological character of books are intended to meet market demands, but their contents can also be discussed within the critical Spiritist world. Even some fundamental books, which serve as a theoretical basis or reference within the Spiritist movement, can be subject to philosophical or scientific questioning.

A clear example is the recent modification of the 'Book of Spirits' and the 'Gospel According to Spiritism'¹⁸ into anti-racist versions, carried out by Brazilian Spiritist groups who wish to adapt the work to the new context of biological and social sciences. Thus, the use of outdated terms such as 'race', 'color', 'inferiority' or 'evolution' were reviewed and changed, towards the essence of the Spiritist thesis that originally defends equality among beings and their possibilities for spiritual development. As we can see, this means, in practice, that "Cultural artifacts can also be used to challenge entrenched assumptions and promote a more critical perspective"¹⁹. This consideration is absolutely pertinent to the Spiritist book.

Conclusion

This means that, as a cultural artifact, the Spiritist book does not necessarily become a relic of worship, but rather plays a central role in the dissemination of the doctrine and the reproduction of knowledge. This issue becomes more evident when we also observe that in the early years of the Spiritist movement, there was limited concern with the preservation of the heritage of books or objects linked to the formation of the history of Spiritism, both in France and in Brazil. The search for and preservation of material elements of Kardec's life is ongoing, just as the movement to preserve historical materials linked to the great exponents of Brazilian

¹⁸Allan Kardec, *O livro dos espíritos (livro eletrônico): edição antirracista*, trans. Guillon Ribeiro (Salvador: Espíritas à Esquerda, 2023); Allan Kardec, *O Evangelho segundo o espiritismo (recurso eletrônico): contendo a Explicação das máximas morais do Cristo em concordância com o Espiritismo e suas aplicações às diversas circunstâncias da vida: edição antirracista*, trans. Guillon Ribeiro (Salvador: Espíritas à Esquerda, 2022).

¹⁹ Bastos, et.al., *Hacking Cultural - Um guia prático para agentes de mudança*.

Spiritism is recent.²⁰ It is noteworthy that, often, we have very few copies of the first editions of works that are today considered fundamental, which shows that the concern with the dissemination of the doctrine was much more important than the artifactualization of the book itself.

Although not a relic and lacking in sacralization, Brazilian Spiritist books constitute an open space for critical discussions about the development of the doctrine and its basic concepts.²¹ This has profound ethical and philosophical implications, with regard to the formation of Spiritist opinions on moral, social and political issues. Often, books continue to be important cultural artifacts because they are effective disseminators of ideas and proposals; and often, the success of a given publication can be understood, occasionally, as an index of importance and 'truthfulness'. Obviously, it is important to be aware that the fact that a work sells well does not mean that it is 'true'; but in the worldview of a majority of Spiritists formed by non-specialists, critical discussion of these works encounters limitations, with their 'truthful' character usually prevailing. For this reason, many Brazilian Spiritist book producers have a fundamental concern with the continuous construction of a Spiritist cultural pedagogy, focused on intellectual study, usually anti-canonical and anti-dogmatic. In this sense, the "Spiritist book-artifact" is the fundamental pillar, and the battlefield, of philosophical, scientific and religious ideas that develop within the Brazilian Spiritist doctrine.

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²⁰ Figueiredo, *Autonomia: a história jamais contada do espiritismo*.

²¹ Ibid.; Figueiredo, *Revolução espírita: a teoria esquecida de Allan Kardec*; Incontri, *Kardec para o século 21*; Incontri, *Para entender Allan Kardec*.

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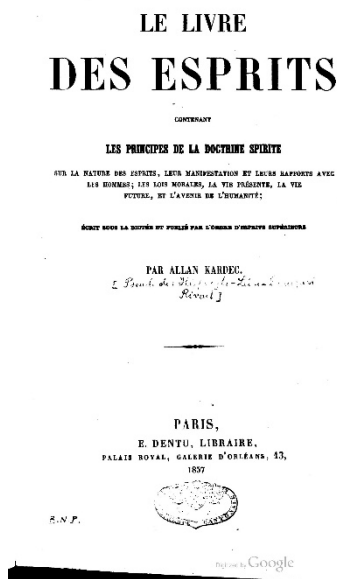
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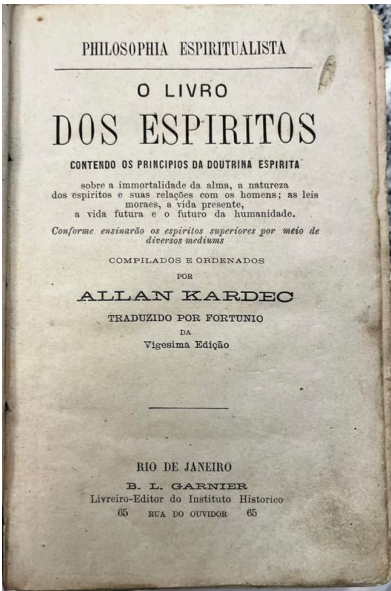
André Bueno
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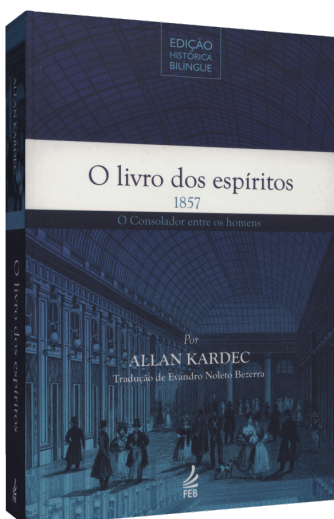
Spiritits Books in Brazil: Artifacts



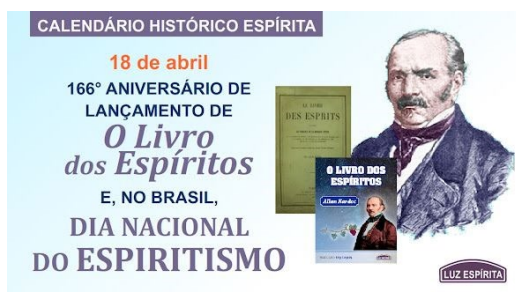
Cover of the first edition of the ‘Book of Spirits’ published on April 18, 1857. Few copies of the originals remain, but a movement to preserve the Spiritist historical heritage is being promoted, mainly by Brazilian practitioners of Spiritism.

Cover of the first translation of the ‘Book of Spirits’ published in Brazil. The reception of Spiritism in Brazil was rapid and intense; in less than three years, all five of Allan Kardec’s main works were translated into Portuguese. They underwent successive revisions and adaptations, as we will see.



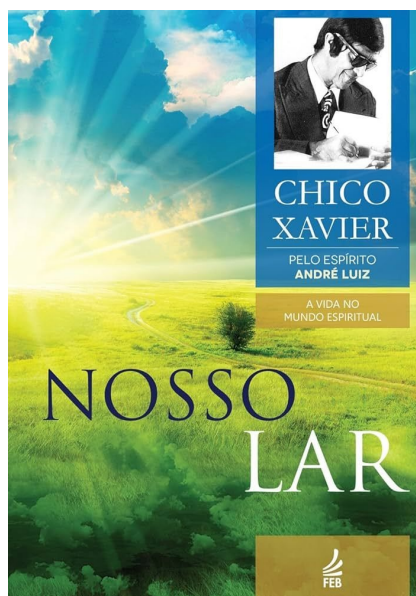
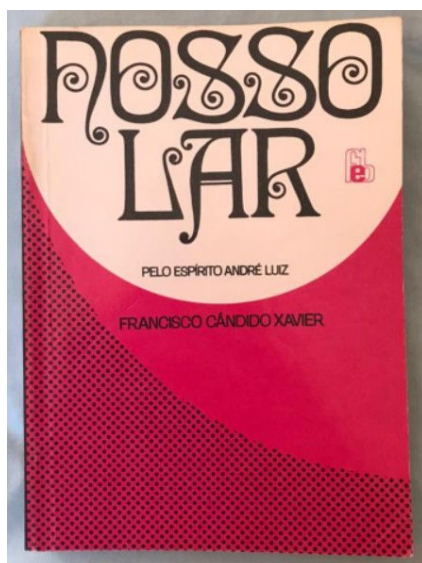
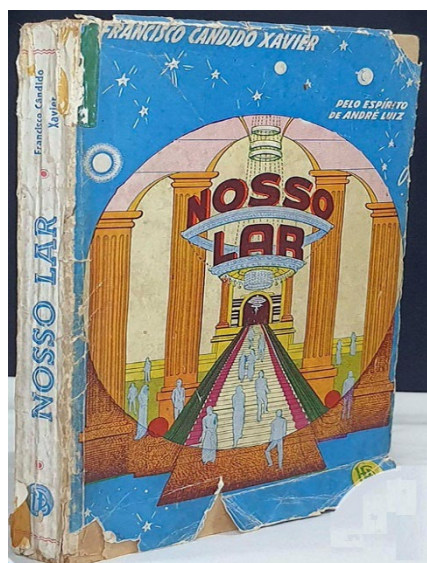


Cover of the commemorative edition of the Launch of the 'Book of Spirits'. By making a new translation comparing the first edition in French and a new one in Portuguese, the objective of the work was to analyze and understand the changes that occurred in the book, and their impact on the formation of Spiritist theories.



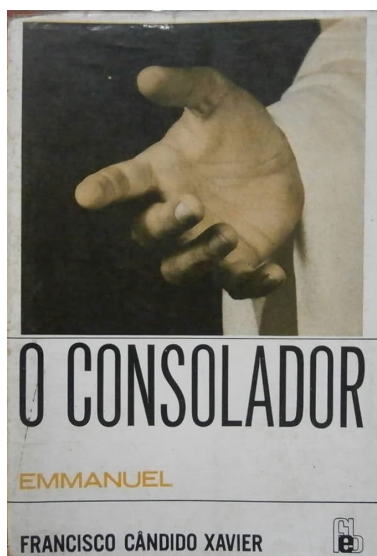
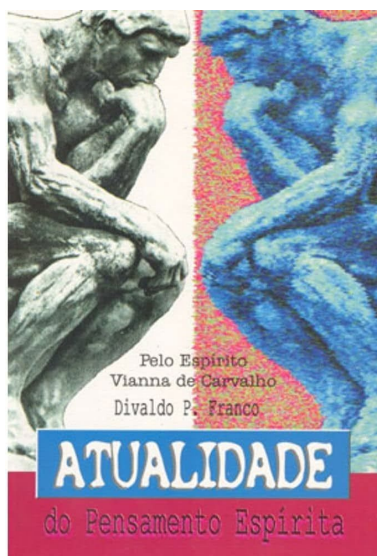
The importance of the Spiritist book as an artifact is evident in the celebration of April 18, the date on which 'National Spiritism Day' is celebrated. This day is also called 'National Spiritist Book Day', when several Spiritist book fairs are organized in the country to promote the publication of Spiritist literature.





First edition of the book ‘Nosso Lar’, from 1944; initially the book was released in a relatively large version, but later versions sought to increase its dissemination in the market. Next, we have the pocket volume of ‘Nosso Lar’, an edition that prevailed for almost forty years and could be easily carried in a small bag. It contrasts with the edition released in the 21st century, which emerged after the internet phenomenon. With the dissemination of digital books, low-cost books lost their meaning; for this reason, the current version has returned to being large in size, larger letters (for people with visual impairments) and a modernized

presentation. It is common among spiritists to give books as gifts, thus valuing their aesthetic function.



First edition of the book ‘O Consolador’ from 1941 and ‘Atualidade do Pensamento Espírita’ from 2003. Both books reflect the spiritists’ concern with maintaining a close connection between science and spirituality. Books like these were – and continue to be – important references on ethical, philosophical and epistemological issues among Brazilian spiritist thinkers.

Comparison between the second edition of the book ‘Jesus e a atualidade’ from 1989 and the hardcover version, released in 2014, and included in Divaldo Franco’s ‘Série Psicológica’. Although spiritists are generally very concerned with avoiding the creation of dogmas and rituals, it is common for some works to be almost ‘canonized’ as references on certain subjects. In this process, the valorization of the book’s content, done through an elaborate presentation, often



adds a new type of imaginary value. It is not uncommon to find practitioners of Spiritism who believe that a work is 'better' because its presentation is more elaborate. This reveals a clear confusion between the material aspect of the books and their actual content. The 'Psychological Series' is considered a very important collection within Spiritist thought, but many people question its accessibility in terms of cost.



'Book of Spirits – anti-racist edition' and Gospel according to Spiritism – anti-racist version'. Published without digital media, so as to be accessible to the general public, these two publications also demonstrate the concern of various segments of the Brazilian Spiritist movement in modifying the scientific terminology used in the 19th century. With the advancement of science, it is necessary to modify certain terms and concepts that belong to outdated or surpassed theories. Allan Kardec himself defended that Spiritism should go hand in hand with scientific development; for this reason, periodic reviews of the fundamental books of Spiritism are a necessity, providing dynamism to the Brazilian Spiritist doctrine.

IN FOCUS

Landscapes of transcendence: The aniconic sacrality of mountain geographies

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Abstract: This study presents a philosophical and theoretical overview of the process by which “geography and spiritual growth converge” in the construction of sacrality and experience of transcendence in the aniconic mountain sacredscapes of the world. Parallel concepts such as apophysis and archetypicality are explored in order to emphasise their points of convergence. It is supported by a literature review that explores the commonalities between Buddhist Insight Meditation, geo-phenomenology and major Western discourses on transcendence and the wilderness as a restorative landscape. In this fashion, common ontological and epistemological ground is sought against the backdrop of what is evidently a rapprochement between these traditions in the modern era. This paper, therefore, is an attempt at integrating South and Southeast Asian notions of sacrality with Western psychobiological perspectives. The outcome shows the challenges and possibilities for the resacralisation of mountain sacredscapes the world over.

Keywords: “sacredscape”; mountain; transcendence; aniconic; archetypal; nature; phenomenology; apophatic.

1. Introduction

1.1 Mountain as “sacredscape”

The notion of “external landscapes [functioning as] a projected map of internal states of consciousness”¹ is one that is well established in pilgrimage studies.² It carries the implication that “any landscape is a condition of the human spirit”³ and that the world is “pan-semiotised”⁴, an idea that gained currency in the Asia-Pacific region centuries before the rise of Christianity⁵ and much more recently in the West with the advent of Romanticism⁶ and disciplines such as humanistic geography (Tuan, 2013).

A pilgrimage, by virtue of this logic, becomes a metaphor for our search for the eternal verities of existence. In such instances, the outer pilgrimage becomes a vehicle for the inner pilgrimage,⁷ the goal of which is union with God or self-realisation. This twofold aspect of pilgrimage correlates, respectively, with the two types of sacredscapes as defined in ancient Indian sacred lore, in the form of the Bhauma Tirtha and Manasa Tirtha.⁸ The former concerns itself with the physicality of the terrain and the latter with the purified mental space of the individual who has achieved some form of self-transcendence.⁹ The mountain landscape corresponds to a Bhauma Tirtha, replete with sensory cues that could help engender

¹ Belden C. Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

² Rana P. B. Singh, “Towards deeper understanding, sacredscape and faithscape: an exploration in pilgrimage studies,” *National Geogr. Soc. India* 41, no. 1 (1995): 97.

³ M. Boettcher, “Spirit,” *Blogspot*, January 1, 1970, <http://realizingzen.blogspot.com/2013/11/spirit.html>.

⁴ Paulo M. Barroso, “The semiosis of sacred space,” *Versus* 46, no. 2 (2017): 355.

⁵ Gamini Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” in Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan and Individual Contributors (Eds.), *UNESCO thematic expert meeting on Asia-Pacific sacred mountains. Final report* (2001), 49.

⁶ Paola Giacomoni, “Mountain landscape and the aesthetics of the sublime in Romantic narration,” *Romantic Prose Fiction* 23 (2008): 118-119.

⁷ Ratna Navaratnam, “Karttikeya: the divine child; (The Hindu testament of wisdom),” *Bhavan's book university/Rupee series* 182 (1973): 15.

Simon Piasecki, “A Mountain as Multiverse: Circumnavigating the realities and meta-realities of a Kailas pilgrim,” *Performance Research* 24, no. 2 (2019): 17.

⁸ Singh, *Towards deeper understanding, sacredscape and faithscape: an exploration in pilgrimage studies*, 97.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Manasa Tirtha, which is a heightened state of consciousness achievable at its summit or while summiting it.¹⁰

By virtue of this symbolism, mountain landscapes function as axes mundi,¹¹ “cosmic centres”¹² and contemplative settings for the transcendence of mundane existence,¹³ obviating the need for any religious structure on its summit or slopes.¹⁴ By the same token, to mar their sacredscapes by building would be tantamount to an act of sacrilege,¹⁵ due to the overwhelming presence and scale of nature that supersedes any form of sacrality engenderable through human intervention mediated by the built environment.¹⁶ Mountain settings in this fashion function as aniconic sylvan sacredscapes. As such, a philosophical and theoretical overview of the process by which “geography and spiritual growth converge (Tuan, 2013)”¹⁷ in the construction of sacrality and experience of transcendence on mountain sacredscapes would be a phenomenon that merits investigation.

1.2 *The aniconic, apophatic and archetypal*

Before venturing any further, a few words of clarification regarding the above concepts might be in order. The words “aniconic” and “aniconism” have a long historiography, which harks back to ancient Greece by way of two 19th century German neologisms, *anikonisch* and *aniconismus* respectively. Both words are coinages of leading German classical

¹⁰ E. Bernbaum, *Sacred mountains of the world* (New York: Random House, 1990), xiii.

¹¹ René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross. Sophia perennis*, trans. Angus Macna (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 2001), 51; P. Harrigan, “Kailasa to Kataragama: Sacred geography in the cult of Skanda-Murukan,” *Kataragama: The Mystery Shrine* (1998), para. 13-15, http://kataragama.org/research/Kailasa_to_Kataragama.pdf.

¹² Singh, *Towards deeper understanding*, 96.

¹³ Nan Shephard, as cited in Michael Jordan, “The living mountain: attachment to landscape and its importance in regulating emotions,” *Journal of holistic healthcare* 6, no. 3 (November 2009): 14.

¹⁴ Selvam Kalyanasunderam, “A history of Kataragama and Theivanaianman Thevasthanam,” (B.A., Diploma-in-Journalism, London, 1980), 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Fredrick & Anderson (1999), as cited in Kathryn Williams, and David Harvey, “Transcendent experience in forest environments,” *Journal of environmental psychology* 21, no. 3 (2001): 249-260.

¹⁷ Belden C. Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1998), 11.

archaeologist Adolph Overbeck,¹⁸ who derived them from the ancient Greek *aneikoniston*, which simply designates “the quality of being not representable.”¹⁹ This definition also includes the rejection of figural representation by the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, based on the “impossibility of representing the invisible God in visible form”²⁰, which is referred to as “anti-iconism”²¹. The foregoing definitions bring us to the crux of the matter, problematizing the notion of the aniconic. Are elements of the landscape such as mountains, rivers and trees²² “aniconic forms of deities that are originally anthropomorphic, or are the anthropomorphic forms the secondary forms of gods that are truly aniconic? What is the true form of a god?”²³. I will attempt to provide an answer to this question in my validation of the use of the neologism “sacredscape” over the more commonly accepted “sacred landscape”.

Throughout this paper, I have frequently opted to use the word “sacredscape”²⁴, which is a neologism coined by Singh by combining the two words “sacred” and “landscape” in lieu of the phrase “sacred landscape”, since it is an elegant and less cumbersome coinage equivalent in meaning to the latter. I also have resorted to using the terms alternately, one as a synonym for the other, to provide variation and nuance to the narrativity. Singh (1995) suggests that a sacredscape is more than a product of the mind and goes on to say that it is also the landscape of faith, belief system and a state of transcendental consciousness. He also goes on to explicate the process by which the “materialistic identity” of a place is transformed into a “cosmic integrity” where its “wholeness” is preserved” which, he avers, is what is meant by the word “holy”²⁵. In the spiritual lexicon of Hindu India, this process is referred to as the transformation of *mrinmaya*, or matter,

¹⁸ Overbeck (1864), as cited M. Gaifman, “Aniconism: definitions, examples and comparative perspectives,” *Religion* 47, no. 3 (2017). DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2017.1342987.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 336-337.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 346.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 349.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 348.

²⁴ Singh, *Towards deeper understanding*, 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

into *chinmaya*, or divine consciousness.²⁶ The ensuing “faithscape”²⁷, yet another insightful neologism, “encompasses sacredness of place, sacred time, sacred meanings, and sacred rituals and embodies both symbolic and psyche elements”²⁸. Here we have an answer to the conundrum, “What is the true form of a god?”²⁹, provided by the Hindu ethos of ancient India. It is in the mind of the devotee that the materiality of nature, or *mrinmaya*, in the form of mountains, rivers, trees, is transformed into the spiritual stuff of divine consciousness, or *chinmaya*³⁰. Aniconism for the Hindu genius, which predates the Greek,³¹ is a way of understanding the immanent spiritual reality of the illusory, visible universe of form, or Maya.³² It is, therefore, a device and virtually a prerequisite for intuiting the reality that underlies the phenomenal world. This is the stance adopted throughout this paper with regard to the concept of aniconism and the aniconic sacrality of mountain geographies.

Closely tied up with the concept of aniconism is the notion of apophasis defined as “a discourse in which any single proposition is denied as falsifying, as reifying”³³. Within the context of religion, this refers in particular to the universal ineffability of religious experiences due to their transcendental nature.³⁴ Consequently, any attempt at communicating the reality of such experiences (as opposed to understanding their logocentric doctrinal and scriptural aspects), is bound to end in failure on account of the limitations that inhere in any form of verbalization of an experience. What is required, according to Sells is a “mystical language of unsaying”³⁵ popularly known as the *via negativa*³⁶, that would be capable of deconstructing the overconfidence placed in the very use of imagery and the

²⁶ “Krishna Thrishna. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks,” Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (n.d.), 1996, <https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/krishna-thrishna>.

²⁷ Singh, *Towards deeper understanding, sacredscape and faithscape: an exploration in pilgrimage studies*.

²⁸ Ibid, 96.

²⁹ Gaifman, “Aniconism: definitions, examples and comparative perspectives,” 348.

³⁰ “Krishna Thrishna. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks.”

³¹ Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” 49.

³² R.E. Hanahan, *Apophasis/kataphasis: The semiotics of flight* (2002), 2.

³³ Sells (1994), 12 as quoted in Hanahan, *Apophasis/kataphasis: The semiotics of flight*, 1.

³⁴ Hanahan, *Apophasis/kataphasis: The semiotics of flight*, 2.

³⁵ Ibid., 1.

³⁶ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*.

written word.³⁷ This brings us to the antithesis of the apophatic mode, known as the cataphatic, which relies solely on imagery and the written word to affirm the presence of the spiritual and divine. The pilgrimatic function of sacred landscapes such as rivers, forests, mountains and natural elements such as trees, stones³⁸ and land formations, on account of their archetypal and aniconic resonances, resists all attempts at being explained away verbally due to their mystique of inexpressibility. As such they fall under the category of apophatic “lean imagery”. Lane (1998/2007) suggests that “landscape images derive their energy from the archetypal experience of Moses in the desert of Sinai”³⁹, a statement that implies the archetypal nature of lean landscape imagery in sacred traditions the world over.⁴⁰ Landscape imagery, in this fashion, falls broadly under the category of landscape archetypes as well.

This brings us to the final variable we shall be considering in this section namely, the archetype. Jung (as cited in Nash, 1997) posited the existence of a collective unconscious common to humanity in its entirety, the contents of which he referred to as archetypes. It is believed that their formation harks back to our dim and distant past when human consciousness was incapable of thinking and could only perceive.⁴¹ Archetypes, due to this anomaly, stand outside the sphere of ratiocination and analysis; any encounter with such deep structures, containing perhaps a record of the impact of primordial imagery in prehistoric landscapes on the human psyche, would only result in certain embedded retentions associated with them being released, giving rise to the original emotions felt by our progenitors in those primeval times. I will go on to show elsewhere in this study how the aniconic, apophatic and archetypal dimensions of mountain sacredscapes begin to coalesce and resonate, when the individual attains to self-transcendence while traversing such landscapes.

³⁷ Ibid., 4.

³⁸ Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” 49.

³⁹ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 4.

⁴⁰ Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” 49.

⁴¹ R. J. Nash, “Archetypal Landscapes and the Interpretation of Meaning,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1997): 59.

1.3 Challenges for resacralisation

In recent times, however, sacred landscapes the world over have come under threat due to rampant globalization.⁴² The consumerist culture that has come into being in its wake has resulted in the deconsecration of the world's sacredscapes with the concomitant "erosion of many religiously informed traditional practices"⁴³. Mountain sacredscapes too have not escaped the depredations of the contemporary globalized consumerist culture, as evidenced by the motorable roadways that mar their slopes⁴⁴ and the meaningless construction work that already exists and have been proposed for their summits,⁴⁵ degrading them into secular holiday destinations. These developments militate against the very tenets of sacrality, especially the notion of a mountain as a sylvan, or nature, shrine. The fact that the climb to the summit has to be undertaken on foot as a form of walking meditation and an act of "penance and pain"⁴⁶, presenting less attraction to the senses⁴⁷, seems to have escaped those responsible for these acts of iconoclasm. We are now facing the dire consequences of timeless notions such as sacrality and pilgrimage, being conflated with that of recreational tourism and holidaying.⁴⁸

The foregoing developments unequivocally imply a disappearance from our society of a genuinely religious consciousness, capable of attainment to heightened levels of awareness or self-transcendence. In response to the prevailing profanation of our sacred realm, therefore, this literature review seeks answers to the following question. "How does one resacralise the once pristine sylvan mountain sacredscapes, when

⁴² Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 136.

⁴³ Obaji M. Agbiji, and Ignatius Swart, "Religion and social transformation in Africa: A critical and appreciative perspective," *Scriptura: Journal for Contextual Hermeneutics in Southern Africa* 114, no. 1 (2015): 10.

⁴⁴ M. Wijesinghe, "Ascent of faith," *Sunday Observer*, May 26, 2018, <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2018/05/27/spectrum/ascent-faith>.

⁴⁵ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 136.

⁴⁶ Navaratnam, "Karttikeya: the divine child; (the Hindu testament of wisdom)," 217; Deana L. Weibel, "Magnetism and microwaves: Religion as radiation," in D. Cave & R.S. Norris (Eds.), *Religion and the Body* (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 175.

⁴⁷ Kalyanasunderam, "A history of Kataragama and Theivanaianman Thevasthanam," 7.

⁴⁸ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 136.

knowledge of conservation principles derived from people's intimate experience of self-transcendence, (which is the fruit of any religious endeavour), has all but disappeared from our society?" A secondary and, perhaps, an even more important question which arises from the former would be, "What natural elements are we really trying to conserve in such sacredscapes?" Rapoport (1990), in his now classic *Meaning of the built environment*, refers to how the collective psyche of a nation manifests itself as people's "cognitive schemata"⁴⁹, a process that could provide answers to the foregoing questions. He proposes that, since cultural settings may be understood as "cognitive domains made visible"⁵⁰, it might be possible to approach the question of resacralisation through an understanding of the images of sacrality that are collectively held by society.

Congruent with this theoretical stance, the primary objective of this study would be to review the extant theoretical and empirical studies of people's phenomenological experiences of self-transcendence in mountain landscapes where nature predominates. This would pave the way for the secondary objective of identifying the cues that give rise to experiences of transcendence in such settings. The final objective of this study would be to ensure the preservation of such cues as integral features of mountain sacredscapes, for the purpose of precipitating states of self-transcendence in pilgrims and even casual visitors. It is hoped that such interventions would, in the final analysis, help conservators ensure the continuity of mountain sacredscapes as aniconic contemplative landscapes, wilderness settings in other words, where pilgrims would be able to attain to heightened levels of awareness and achieve self-transcendence as a matter of course. Mountains happen to be the biggest and most significant subset in the greater category of the world's sacredscapes. Due to this reason the phenomenological experiences of people traversing the sacredscapes of the world and the principles that generally govern their attainment to self-transcendence in such loci, would be equally (if not more) valid for mountain sacredscapes. Hence, the terms "sacredscape" and "mountain sacredscape" are used more or less interchangeably throughout this study, since that which is relevant to the former would most definitely be applicable to the latter.

⁴⁹ Amos Rapoport, *The meaning of the built environment: A nonverbal communication approach* (United States: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64.

2. *The mountain as multiverse*

2.1 *The aniconic mountain sacredscape*

When one considers the necessity for the continuity of mountain sacredscapes in their pristine state and their potential for the engenderment of transcendental experience, the enormity of what humankind stands to lose through their desacralisation is thrown into sharp relief. “As the highest and most dramatic features of the natural landscape, mountains have an extraordinary power to evoke the sacred”⁵¹. Hence, mountains function as the last bastions of the world’s aniconic sacredscapes. Apart from their significance as sacredscapes, it is worthwhile noting that mountains⁵² are home to 10% of the world’s population, found in 75% of the world’s countries, cover 20% of the earth’s surface and, more importantly, are the source of origin for half the world’s freshwater.⁵³

As should be evident by now, mountains hold an inexplicable fascination for humankind and continue to evoke intense emotions in us as evinced in the aniconic traditions of nearly all the major religions of the world. Myths and legends woven around mountains such as Kailas in Tibet, Sinai and Zion in the Middle East, Olympus in Greece, T'ai Shan in China, Fuji in Japan and Sri Pada or Adam’s Peak in Sri Lanka⁵⁴ give credence to this fact. In the mind of wonder, therefore, the mountain is a cosmic centre, always archetypal and oneiric, imbued with what Otto (as cited in Sonntag, 2014) refers to as the *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinans*⁵⁵. Before the ineffable presence and otherworldly presentiment that Otto conjures up through the foregoing phrase, the poverty of imagery and the written word becomes evident. Yet, with equally awe-inspiring force and the compelling brevity of a koan Ryōkan Taigu, an 18th century Zen Buddhist monk from Japan, gives life and form to Otto’s phrase and succeeds in evoking the indescribable spirit of the mountain terrain through his immortal lines.

A lonely hermitage on a mountain peak,

⁵¹ Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” 52.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53-56.

⁵⁵ K. E. Sonntag, “The Role of the Transcendent in Landscapes,” (All Graduate Theses and Dissertations, Utah State University, 2014), 25, <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/3697>.

Towering above a thousand others—
One half is occupied by an old monk,
The other by a cloud!
Last night it was stormy
And the cloud was blown away;
After all a cloud is not equal
To the old man's quiet way.⁵⁶

In the eyes of Ryōkan, both monk and hermitage are extensions and, hence, representations of the mountain peak “towering above a thousand others”, metaphors of its kenotic power to strip bare the human soul of its mundane trappings. It is this voidness of iconographic imagery attributive of the sacrality of a mountain setting’s natural terrain that is referred to as aniconic. Such stark minimalist landscapes, characteristic of wilderness settings devoid of material evidence of sacrality, are constitutive of what Lane (1998/2007) refers to as “lean” or “spare” apophatic imagery.⁵⁷ Such imagery tends to subvert the power of the more explicit and logocentric cataphatic imagery that drives cultural and doctrinal religion. At the very onset it must be stated, therefore, that this literature review concerns itself solely with apophatic imagery comprising the matrices of meaning, or cues, which trigger the experience of transcendence in sacred wilderness settings. Apophatic religious imagery in this fashion becomes a clarion call and inspiration for a corresponding kenosis, or an emptying of the inconsequential in our inner being, which prepares us for the experience of self-transcendence.

As the largest formations on the face of the earth⁵⁸, however, mountains are much more than harbingers of Otto’s *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinans*. They are defined variously as cosmic centres, homes of the gods, gods themselves, mystical forbidden places, gardens of paradise, centres of pilgrimage, places of inspiration, revelation and transformation, places sanctified by the presence of holy men, homes of ancestral spirits, sites of sacred monuments, sources of fertility, places associated with

⁵⁶ L. A. Govinda, *The way of the white clouds: A Buddhist pilgrim in Tibet* (United States: Shambhala Publication, 1970), 7.

⁵⁷ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 4.

⁵⁸ Wijesuriya, “Protection of Sacred Mountains-Towards a new paradigm in Conservation,” 52.

communal identity and nationally important legends⁵⁹ and so on. On account of the foregoing myriad ontological functions attributed to them mountains may be considered as multiverses on the face of this earth.

2.2 *The many dimensions of transcendence*

The concise literature survey that follows will demonstrate how the sentient individual stands at the intersection of multiple disciplinary frameworks,⁶⁰ which could be triangulated to provide a faceted understanding of the transcendental experience of pilgrims traversing the world's mountain sacredscapes. Self-transcendence is defined variously in empirical research, so much so that it runs the gamut of ontologies pertaining to heightened states of consciousness. Some of these states of being characterised as being transcendent are James' mysticism; Laski's ecstasy; Maslow's peak experience; and Csikszentmihalyi's flow,⁶¹ all of which have in common key traits such as feelings of strong positivity, going beyond the bounds of quotidian existence, the sense of being as one with a greater reality and total immersion in a tenseless present.⁶²

Etymologically speaking, this sense of "going beyond" is in keeping with the Hindu word for sacredscape, which is *tirtha*, meaning "crossing the ford".⁶³ The word *tirtha* itself is derived from the Sanskrit *taras*⁶⁴, which is cognate with the Indo-European *ter*. It is from the root *ter* that the English words transcend and transport, through and thoroughfare are derived via the Latin preposition "trans" and German "durch" respectively. In this fashion "transcendence" and *tirtha* become cognate words that convey a similar meaning, that of an existential crossing or a place of spiritual going beyond. Singh (1995) expands further on this theme in order to explain how a *tirtha* serves to connect the 03 cosmic spheres of the macrocosmos (the heavenly abodes and realms of the gods), mesocosmos (its physical "earthly representation") and microcosmos (the human psyche and emotions).⁶⁵ In

⁵⁹ Ibid., 54-56.

⁶⁰ R. Scriven, "Pilgrim and path: The emergence of self and world on a walking pilgrimage in Ireland," *Cultural Geographies* (2019): 3.

⁶¹ Williams and Harvey, "Transcendent experience in forest environments," 249.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Singh, *Towards deeper understanding*, 97.

⁶⁴ A. Thorley, and C. M. Gunn, "Sacred sites: An overview," A report for the Gaia Foundation, *The Gaia Foundation* (2007), 33.

⁶⁵ Singh, *Towards deeper understanding*, 97.

reality, each sphere may be considered a metaphor that affirms the existence of the other two: each sphere implies the existence of the others.⁶⁶ The unification of all three spheres is achieved through the human being's attainment to divinity through the mediation of its earthly representation, which is the sacredscape.

In addition to the etymology and aforementioned discourses on transcendence, research into the salutogenic effects of Vipassana, or Buddhist insight meditation, has shown that self-reflexive monitoring of our embodied interactions in the world, subverts discursive thought to generate a unified consciousness.⁶⁷ Schattschneider (2000), in a similar vein, suggests that a worshipper's self-identification with the physicality of a mountain sacredscape helps wean him away from his everyday sensibility, enabling him to attain to a unified consciousness.⁶⁸ In both situations, the individual's subjective awareness of an objective external world collapses and coalesces into a dynamic unity where, according to Mead; Rosenberg; Gecas and Burke (as cited in Pagis, 2009), the individual simultaneously becomes the "observing subject and the observed object".⁶⁹ The commonalities that exist between the mindsets of the meditator and pilgrim traversing a mountain sacredscape are foregrounded in this fashion. We encounter similar states of unified consciousness spontaneously arising in the wilderness experiences of people who have been profoundly moved by the dissolution of their subjectivity: in the overwhelming stillness of desert landscapes,⁷⁰ in the pregnant silence of the forest⁷¹ and rarefied atmosphere of mountainscapes.⁷² Such holistic perspectives also constitute the basis of major western discourses such as medical geography, environmental psychology, ecological psychology and

⁶⁶ A. Sinha, "Nature in Hindu art, architecture and landscape," *Landscape Research* 20, no. 1 (1995): 3, DOI:10.1080/01426399508706449.

⁶⁷ M. Pagis, "Embodied Self-reflexivity," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2009): 266, DOI:10.1177/019027250907200308.

⁶⁸ E. Schattschneider, "My Mother's Garden: Transitional Phenomena on a Japanese Sacred Mountain," *Ethos* 28, no. 2 (2000): 148, DOI:10.1525/eth.2000.28.2.147.

⁶⁹ Pagis, "Embodied Self-reflexivity," 266.

⁷⁰ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 37.

⁷¹ Hempton, as cited in "Sanctuaries of silence," *Emergence Magazine*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUOzTsmugb0>.

⁷² Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 37; Csikszentmihalyi's notion of flow, as cited in Williams and Harvey, "Transcendent experience in forest environments," 250.

horticultural therapy⁷³, which pertain to our understanding of nature as a therapeutic landscape and healing garden.

2.3 The “phenomenological walk”

What may be inferred from extant literature, then, is an understanding of aniconic mountain sacrality that is centred and dependent on the overwhelming presence of the wilderness and controlled human intervention resulting in a bare minimum of built areas. However, we need to come to grips with the micro-settings of the forest-covered mountain sacredscapes in order to understand the nature of the cues in such natural environments that help trigger these heightened states of awareness or self-transcendence. Since what is true of sacredscapes in general would definitely be true of mountain sacredscapes as well reference is made, very specifically, to the matrices in sacredscapes that encapsulate meaning, with the potentiality to engender such numinous moments when encountered by the self-aware and place-aware pilgrim. In order to isolate such cues archaeologist Christopher Tilley (as cited in Ljunge, 2014) proposes the “phenomenological walk”, which is a manner of experiencing the landscape directly through our sensory apparatus without being encumbered by preconceived notions, theories or pre-understanding of what is being experienced.⁷⁴ During the “phenomenological walk” Tilley and Bennett⁷⁵ propose that one immerses oneself in the landscape being traversed whilst self-reflexively monitoring ones experiences by writing them down. Pagis (2009) differentiates between two types of reflexivity: discursive self-reflexivity which occurs as verbalisation through practices such as talking to oneself or others; and embodied self-reflexivity which is a process based on awareness of the body through the senses in its act of experiencing the environment. In fact, what is experienced is a merging of self-awareness

⁷³ S. Jiang, “Therapeutic landscapes and healing gardens: A review of Chinese literature in relation to the studies in western countries,” *Frontiers of Architectural Research* 3, no. 2 (2014): 142, DOI: 10.1016/j.foar.2013.12.002.

⁷⁴ M. Ljunge, “Beyond ‘the Phenomenological Walk’: Perspectives on the Experience of Images,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 46, no. 2 (2013): 4, DOI:10.1080/00293652.2013.821160.

⁷⁵ A. Koussoulakou, V. Tsioukas, and K. Efkleidou, “Building maps for “the phenomenological walk”: Three-dimensional digital cartographic representation of archaeological landscapes using deformed perspective,” Paper presented at 27th *International Cartographic Conference ICC*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 2015.

and place-awareness⁷⁶ in a self-reflexive and “omnijective”⁷⁷ awareness involving embodied consciousness. “Omnijective” refers to the dissolution of one’s subjectivity and objectivity where the external world and one’s subjectivity come together in a holistic awareness of oneness, a spiritual state that is attainable through practices such as Buddhist walking meditation. This differs from the casual and banal act of walking during which the mind remains unfocussed on the action of walking. The non-reflexive and discursive thought processes that arise in random fashion in the mind during such moments, preclude awareness of the terrain being traversed. In such mundane everyday situations, there is a disjunct between one’s thought processes and the physical activity that is taking place resulting in a distracted and, hence, profane mundane awareness. Pallasmaa (2015), referring to the experience of “powerful architecture”, draws our attention to the manner in which impressive spaces bring about a state of quiescence in our being, where we become aware only of our heartbeat.⁷⁸ Once again, this too is a state of self-reflexivity involuntarily brought on through poignant embodied awareness of the external world. In the final analysis, and as mentioned previously, this is also what the pilgrim and meditator experience during the self-reflexive monitoring of their embodied consciousness during pilgrimage and Buddhist insight meditation respectively. However, for these two spiritual categories, self-reflexivity is a process where the individual’s mind turns toward itself in order to experience embodied consciousness. This differs diametrically from the self-reflexive embodied consciousness that culminates in the verbalisation and writing down of experiences during the phenomenological walk. I am drawing attention here to the manner in which the phenomenological walk could, for the self-reflexive individual, function as a form of walking meditation through the awareness of the environment via the body and the body via the environment. This is a serene unification of subject and object steeped in the immediacy of the moment and is, therefore, a spiritual state and an instance of self-transcendence.

⁷⁶ K. Lund, “Landscapes and narratives: Compositions and the walking body,” *Landscape Research* 37, no. 2 (2012): 225, DOI:10.1080/01426397.2011.651111.

⁷⁷ Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and the New Physics* (New York: Penguin Arkana, 1993), 166.

⁷⁸ J. Pallasmaa, “Light, silence and spirituality in architecture and art,” in J. Bermudez (ed.), *Transcending architecture: Contemporary views on sacred space* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 29.

Whilst traversing a sacredscape during the phenomenological walk, one could expect a pilgrim's self-awareness to be triggered by aniconic "placial" experiences,⁷⁹ especially where the "natural patterns embedded in the landscape"⁸⁰ create timeless earthbound imagery. For Conforti⁸¹ such imagery (as mentioned earlier) is directly related to archetypes, which Jung⁸² defines as constituting "the chthonic portion of the psyche...that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature, or in which its link with earth and the world appears at its most tangible". He goes on to add that the "psychic influence of the earth and its laws is seen most clearly in these primordial images"⁸³. What is relevant to this study, therefore, are the mountain landscape archetypes and their micro-settings⁸⁴ such as valleys, ravines, piedmonts, pathways, cliffs, bluffs, caves, ridges, summits along with their climate and fauna and flora. Barroso (2017) refers to these micro-settings as nooks, to which an inner compulsion, perhaps, prompts devotees to respond by providing them with names of saints, deities and erecting symbolic marks and structures of worship.⁸⁵ As stated before, it is probably their archetypal attributes that make them familiar to the human psyche, allowing us to recognise them as cues, which are then humanised to create culturally meaningful sacred loci in the wilderness. The devout would most certainly encounter these elements spread out across the terrain or silhouetted against the sky during a walking pilgrimage, which we could now define as a spiritualised phenomenological walk. This is the individual's experience of self-reflexive embodied awareness facilitated by the convergence of the natural environment's lean imagery (apophatic), aniconism and archetypality. At such times, the individual simultaneously becomes the "observing subject and the observed object". I would like to propose that when this unification occurs, phenomenology and archetypality become subsumed in the greater context of walking meditation, in a climactic experience of spirituality and transcendence.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Conforti (1999), 13, as cited in E. A. Perluss, "Landscape archetypes: Islands, valleys, mountains, and deserts (UMI No. 3155818)," (Doctoral dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2004), 8.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Jung (1931/1970), 31, as cited in Perluss, "Landscape archetypes: Islands, valleys, mountains, and deserts (UMI No. 3155818)."

⁸³ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁴ P. M. Barroso, "The semiosis of sacred space," *Versus* 125, no. 2 (2017): 355.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

The massing of such elements also create interesting proportions. Le Corbusier, one of the fathers of modern architecture, has this to say about proportions in architecture, which by extension include land formations as well. Corbusier queries rhetorically: “Are we sufficiently aware that it’s all here, that our capacity to perceive proportions and they alone, determine our spiritual values?”⁸⁶ One could indeed anticipate such features, which we may now refer to as archetypes,⁸⁷ functioning as trigger factors, cues, matrices of meaning or nooks, in bringing about moments of self-transcendence through the merging of place-awareness with self-awareness during the phenomenological walk.

2.4 *Sacredscape to faithscape*

However a locus, simply because it is designated as being sacred, provides no guaranty that our engagement with it will precipitate self-transcendence each time we traverse it. Lane (2002) makes the very important distinction between “being bodily present” in a designated sacred setting and the experience of “fullness of being” where one is fully present to it.⁸⁸ The latter scenario is akin to experiencing it for the first time and this is a feeling of “jamais vu”, of never having experienced something before, which is diametrically opposed to that of having become habituated to it. Our sudden strangerhood to a setting⁸⁹ to which we have become accustomed, that is the sense of entering it anew and experiencing it for the first time, is what provides us with a fresh perspective that triggers the experience of transcendence.⁹⁰ Lane (2002) affirms that this is the “most important manner by which meaning is continually renewed in any community.”⁹¹

In this regard, Rana Singh’s insight into the manner in which sacredscapes are transformed into faithscapes has tremendous significance. According to Sing (1995) “the overall wholeness of landscape creates a *faithscape* that encompasses sacred place, sacred time, sacred meaning,

⁸⁶ J. Guiton, *The Ideas of Le Corbusier on Architecture and Urban Planning*, trans. M. Guiton (New York: George Brazillier Inc., 1981), 18-19.

⁸⁷ Conforti (1999), 13, as cited in Perluss, “Landscape archetypes: Islands, valleys, mountains, and deserts (UMI No. 3155818),” 8.

⁸⁸ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 29.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁹¹ Ibid.

sacred rituals and embodies both symbolic and tangible psyche elements in an attempt to realise man's identity in the cosmos."⁹² It might not be farfetched, therefore, to hypothesise⁹³ that landscape archetypes with their significant proportions awaken dormant primordial memories and activate cognitive structures buried deep in our collective unconscious, which conduce to the unification of our being.⁹⁴ Perhaps, this may be the reason that prompted Eliade⁹⁵ to observe that sacrality inheres in place and that it cannot be created by human beings. By the same logic therefore "the sanctity of a sacred mountain is largely derived from its special natural and physical attributes rather than its stature"⁹⁶. Bernbaum (2001) cites Mt. Kailas in Tibet which, despite being 2000 meters lower than Mt. Everest, remains the most sanctified and venerated peak in all of the Himalayas, if not the whole world, as a prime example of this paradox.⁹⁷ As Sherpa (2001) avers, "shrines and temples are only a result rather than cause for the sacredness"⁹⁸. Hence, of all landscape archetypes, the mountain remains the most evocative of the sublime, that which is most relevant to the transcendence of the human condition of finitude and being bounded in space and time. The reason for this is the fact that every mountain is considered an earthly representation of the cosmic mountain archetype, or axis mundi, which connects earth to heaven, and since it is also the "highest point on earth"⁹⁹ it becomes "the closest physical place to heaven"¹⁰⁰. Consequently, mountain sacredscapes relieve the human being of his burden of mortality by helping him touch that which is boundless in him.

⁹² Singh, *Towards deeper understanding*, 96.

⁹³ Jung (1968), as cited in Nash, "Archetypal Landscapes and the Interpretation of Meaning."

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹⁵ Eliade, as cited in S. Walker, "My [sacred] space: Discovering sacred space in cyberspace," *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 22, no. 2 (2010): 5-6, DOI:10.3138/jrpc.22.2.005.

⁹⁶ L. N. Sherpa, "The sacred mountains of the Nepal Himalaya," in Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan and Individual Contributors (Eds.), *UNESCO Thematic Expert Meeting on Asia-Pacific Sacred Mountains* (2001), 223.

⁹⁷ Edwin Bernbaum, "Sacred mountains: mountain themes and cultural landscapes," in Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan and Individual Contributors (Eds.), *UNESCO thematic expert meeting on Asia-Pacific sacred mountains*, Final report (2001), 70.

⁹⁸ Sherpa, "The sacred mountains of the Nepal Himalaya," 223.

⁹⁹ Eliade, as cited in Walker, "My [sacred] space: Discovering sacred space in cyberspace."

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

3.0 *Framing the phenomenon*

In this literature review multiple theoretical perspectives have been used to provide an understanding of the concept of transcendence. In order to obtain insight into people's experience of the phenomenon, however, one needs to understand its fundamental associations with place, since the phenomenon cannot be examined in vacuo: "Religious experience is [therefore] 'placed' experience."¹⁰¹ Lane cites three frameworks for the purpose of defining what constitutes a sacred place with its place-based experience of transcendence, which in turn leads us to the philosophies and research methodologies associated with these approaches. They are namely: the ontological approach where a sacred place is considered as being consecrated and completely cut off from profane interactions, the cultural where sacrality is considered as a social construction of reality and the phenomenological with its emphasis on harking back to the place itself with its topography and materiality suggesting the manner in which it could be interacted with.¹⁰² However, as Lane (2002) points out, any analytical framework possesses both advantages and disadvantages. The ontological approach, for instance, possesses the advantage of a sacred place being comprehensible from within, although it fails to take into account the fact that the sacred and transcendental are invariably enmeshed in cultural associations. On the other hand, the cultural approach functions on the basis of sacrality and transcendence being social constructions bereft of any intrinsic meaning, while the phenomenological fails to take into account the theological and social aspects of the convergence of transcendence and culture.¹⁰³ In order to obtain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of transcendence as placed experience, Lane believes that sacrality and transcendence needs to be viewed through these three frameworks in order to obtain a more faceted view of the phenomenon. However, when the findings in this study regarding the commonalities between phenomenology, Buddhist walking meditation and insight meditation are taken into consideration, it would seem that a phenomenological enquiry that unifies within its fold the essences of both the above categories of mediation, on account of the irrelevance of non-apophatic theological and

¹⁰¹ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 32.

¹⁰² Ibid., 42-44.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 43-44.

sociological attributes, might be more than adequate as a mode of enquiry into the nature of mountain sacrality and self-transcendence in such settings.

4.0 Conclusions

Despite the “placed” nature of religious experience Miller¹⁰⁴ observes that “our destination is never a place but a new way of looking at things”¹⁰⁵. This is a profound statement indeed since this means that place and time become, in the final analysis, subservient to a manner of “seeing” or being in the world. This is similar to what happens during the “phenomenological walk”¹⁰⁶, where what matters is not so much the noting of the details of the landscape as the awareness of the self as it engages with the landscape. In this fashion, as mentioned previously, the phenomenological walk ties up with the age-old practices of pilgrimage as Vipassana walking meditation.¹⁰⁷

Miller’s insight may be further clarified through a proper understanding of the Greek words for place and time, respectively *topos* and *chora* and *chronos* and *Kairos*.¹⁰⁸ “*Topos*”, a coinage of Aristotel, refers to a mere point in space without any distinct character whereas “*chora*”, coined by Plato, is the exact opposite in that it refers to the character and ambience of a specific place. In similar fashion, “*chronos*” refers to time as a physical entity in the form of the evenly measured out units of a ticking clock, whereas “*kairos*” refers to time as a significant and momentous occasion that would remain forever etched in the memory of the person who experiences it. However, when both “*chora*” and “*kairos*” converge momentarily during rare occasions, we encounter a singularity that is transcendental, numinous in nature.¹⁰⁹ Mann¹¹⁰ explicates: “There are

¹⁰⁴ Miller, as cited in Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁶ K. Lund, “Landscapes and narratives: Compositions and the walking body,” *Landscape Research* 37, no. 2 (2012): 236, DOI:10.1080/01426397.2011.651111.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, “Walking Meditation: Being Present and Being Pilgrim on the Camino de Santiago,” para. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Lane, *The solace of fierce landscapes: Exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, 39-41.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁰ Mann, as cited in Sonntag, “The Role of the Transcendent in Landscapes.”

many sacred landscapes in the world, but *our* experience of them is out of this world. Although such places exist in time, our experience of them is *outside* time.”¹¹¹ It is this quality of being beyond place and time, in other words the ineffable convergence of “chora” and “kairos” engenderable through the mediation of cues embedded in aniconic sacredscapes such as mountain settings, that conservators should try to preserve as our religio-cultural heritage for the generations yet to come.

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¹¹¹ Sonntag, “The Role of the Transcendent in Landscapes,” 1.

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Falling in Love

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*Can we only love/
something created by our own imagination?*
T.S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*

Abstract: The phenomenon of falling in love is undoubtedly highly valued but at the same time is often viewed with skepticism. The “face-to-face” nature of romantic love, accompanied inevitably by a measure of obsession, seems to conflict with the more stable friendship-love, imagined as “side-by-side” and focused – as in Aristotle – on the cultivation of virtues of character. In this paper I argue that a more positive take on romantic love is made possible by a certain kind of metaphysics of the person. In particular, Feuerbach’s notion of the “inner life” constitutive of personhood, can be expanded beyond Feuerbach’s materialism to ground the possibility of fully transferring one’s self-love to the other person. Key to this interpretation is Rahner’s idea of the human being’s openness to an infinite horizon, corresponding to the infinite longing of romantic love, and not at all doomed to the frustration that Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, would have it. I draw on Aquinas’ distinction between love that is concupiscence and love that is friendship, to make this point.

Keywords: Romantic love; inner life; Feuerbach; Rahner; Aquinas; Sartre; limerence; God.

I’m interested in falling in love. Both for its own sake, and as a preliminary project to better understand what is meant by “love of God”. I take my cue from the remark by Robert Doran, in his *Theology and the Dialectics of History*¹ that an inquiry into romantic love is the best way to understand the love of God. From the sheer volume, in the various media, of lyrical descriptions – and from common observation too – falling in love would seem to be highly valued, although not always unambiguously so. The idea

¹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 31.

that true love is “spontaneous and wells from within,” argues David McCarthy², and that it is “free over against the routines of everyday life,” is likely to undermine the rooting of married love in the institutionalized spirituality of the church. Drawing on Michael Walzer’s analysis, he points to the private bond of love, negotiated through “the date”, which is free from all constraints apart from individual choice. But this means that the unconditionality of married love seems to conflict with what “love” has come to mean. Other critics argue that love can and should be re-described in pre-personal categories, for example, to do with evolutionary biology.

Common to both points of view is the idea that the projection that is part and parcel of romantic love will necessarily frustrate the growth of the kind of intelligent friendship that would enable both persons to flourish. In this paper I will interrogate the grounds for the high regard for romantic love, and argue in particular for more notice to be taken of the important metaphysical questions. Taking my cue from Feuerbach’s notion of the human person as “having an inner life” I argue that the capacity to project the infinite raises a (strictly religious) question about the motivation behind such ideals. Contrary to what is maintained in reductionist accounts of human behaviour, in the drama of romantic love qualities of character play a central role. It remains to explain why it is not, however, *character* that is the term of romantic love (which would impossibly strain the relationship), and in the final section of the paper Aquinas’ concept of love as connaturality opens the way toward understanding how the radical self-affirmation of the kind that is seen in the capacity to have an inner life, can be transferred to another person, in an attitude of other-affirmation.

Outlining the problem

The academic literature on love is so vast and impressive that one’s choice of key orientating texts is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. As starting point we can take Robert Johnson’s (1983) still useful account of the (Jungian) psychology of romantic love, by way of an analysis of the legend of Tristan and Isolde. This brings out the long-established idea, which began with medieval courtly love, that the object of one’s being-in-love must by

² David McCarthy, “Becoming One Flesh: Marriage, Remarriage, and Sex,” in S. Hauerwas and S. Wells (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 283.

definition be unattainable – implicitly implying that the projection, if realised, will be shattered in the reality of the person loved. How could it be otherwise? What one desires is the perfect counterpart to all one's basic longings as a person.

Robert Johnson comments on the courtly protagonists in contemporary culture:

They refuse to make a real commitment to a human being, because they will only commit themselves to their inner vision, their inner idea. Their search for the perfect manifestation of anima or animus, their search for the divine love. Since they have not learned that this is an inner task, ...they must always reserve the right to follow wherever the inner ideal is projected.... Instead of realizing he is longing for the divine love, for the inner experience of anima *that is his own responsibility*, he finds fault with the woman. She is not making him happy; she is not good enough; she does not fulfil his dreams.³

As is often remarked what is needed in moving from the falling in love, to loving, is commitment. But the nature of that commitment is obscure, for in order not to betray the genius of the original love it must disregard the fact that the other person is “merely” finite. (The romantic vision, the “inner ideal”, seeks something unlimited, corresponding – this is what I will argue – to the unlimited capacity of our intellectual powers and to the scope of our willing.) This would make the relationship inherently unstable.

What Johnson means here by their search for “the divine love” can be understood by referring back to the idea that courtly love will always struggle against conditions which disallow the love. In one version of the legend, Isolde is already married to the king, for example. The *capacity* for such absolute love is there, but the *actualisation* of such love is beyond the powers of the protagonists. The interaction between the inner longings and outer circumstances constitutes the challenge to the characters, and the interest for the audience in the romantic narrative. The working out of their personal history is not entirely in their hands, and fulfilment can only come about through a power which is beyond their own (fortuitous encounters? Cupid smiling on them?), even though working through them. For Johnson,

³ Robert A. Johnson, *The Psychology of Romantic Love* (Penguin, 1983), 140.

as for Jung, the story will always have an implicit religious dimension. A failure to be conscious of this will contribute to the failing of the project. Johnson⁴ argues that “at the end, their only concern is to use each other to break free completely from the ordinary search, to fly to that magical, imaginal world where “great singers sing their songs forever””.

“They have not learned that this is an inner task.” What this means will be explored later. Sometimes this very failure is taken as paradigmatic of romantic love, as in Dorothy Tennov’s (1979) well-known descriptive study of the state of – the term she coins – “limerence”. Limerence has certain basic components: intrusive thinking about the limerent object; acute longing for reciprocation; some fleeting and transient relief from unrequited limerence through vivid imagining of action by the limerent object that means reciprocation; fear of rejection and unsettling shyness in the limerent object’s presence; intensification through adversity; acute sensitivity to any act, thought, or condition that can be interpreted favorably, and an extraordinary ability to devise or invent “reasonable” explanations for why neutral actions are a sign of hidden passion in the limerent object; an aching in the chest or stomach when uncertainty is strong; buoyancy (a feeling of walking on air) when reciprocation seems evident; a general intensity of feeling that leaves other concerns in the background; a remarkable ability to emphasize what is truly admirable in the limerent object and to avoid dwelling on the negative or render it into another positive attribute.

A further claim made is that the limerent object must be a potential sexual partner. Whatever the truth of this is, it would seem to point to an essential element in the phenomenon, namely the awareness of vulnerability and need evoked by the other person. There is an awakening to a need in oneself that has been repressed, and which is accompanied by fear and anxiety at a new sense of one’s lack of control over how things turn out. This point is well made by Allan Bloom (1994) in his study of modern romantic literature, heralded, says Bloom, by Rousseau. Rousseau, he says, “marks the beginning of the frantic sexual search for genuine human contact and

⁴ Ibid., 142.

reciprocity in the isolation of bourgeois life that endures in one form or another up to our own day.”⁵ Rousseau himself writes as follows:

In love everything is only illusion. I admit it. But what is real are the sentiments for the truly beautiful with which love animates us and which it makes us love. This beauty is not in the object one loves; it is the work of our errors. So, what of it? Does the lover... any the less suffuse his heart with the virtues he attributes to what he holds dear? ... When those romantic maxims began to become ridiculous, the change was less the work of reason than of bad morals.⁶

And earlier, Bloom quotes Rousseau along the same lines:

And what is true love itself if it is not chimera, lie and illusion? We love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it.⁷

Bloom then moves through various novels effected in one way or another by the latter ideas: Stendahl's *The Red and the Black*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.

For both Bloom and Rousseau romantic love is basically seen as, if one can put it this way, a worthwhile project. But in terms of the nineteenth century novels he discusses, the vote is divided, two in favour (Austen, Stendahl), two against (Flaubert, Tolstoy). In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the attitude of possessiveness on the part of Darcy, or desire for independence on the part of Elizabeth, will frustrate any loving partnership, but this is made possible through greater self-knowledge, and deeper acceptance of the other, in each case. The great loves of *Madame Bovary*, or of *Anna Karenina*, however, are in both cases frustrated, in both cases suicide is seen as the only way out.

For Bloom, the stumbling block to a positive view of romantic love is the current philosophical thesis, often termed scientism, that “modern natural

⁵ Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

science is the only form of knowledge, a denial of the view that the methods for studying the instrument of knowing must be different from those appropriate to knowing [non-human] nature.”⁸ This denial is misplaced, he argues. It is precisely one’s imagination itself that, so far from being an obstacle, gets to the reality of the person, whether self or other.

A more developed thesis, along the same lines, is given in Christopher Booker’s (2004) study of premodern and modern European fiction (see the discussion). No personal growth of the kind that is beneficial to the project of romantic love is facilitated, argues Booker, in the modern culture. This is due to a loss of a sense of nature as normative for us (as it was, for example, for Shakespeare). “In the dramatic advances of scientific knowledge,” Booker contends, “of which the immense material changes being brought by the industrial revolution was only the most obvious outward sign, man had begun to step out of his natural frame in a way that had no precedent.”⁹

How the experience of romantic love is interpreted will therefore depend on one’s philosophical presuppositions. For Shakespeare love fails when an aspect of “nature” (going against what a man or woman is and by nature has to do or develop) is neglected: an example would be obvious character flaws shown up in the characters in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. For contemporary writer Sebastian Moore (1985) intimacy, or what he calls “mutual in-existence” is not to be understood, as romantic love sometimes is, as just something that *happens* to you (people say, Oh the chemistry is just not there anymore...). “Rather, we have to see it as something more like a skill, a virtue (= a power), that can and should be developed. A person can become more attentive to self and other in more and more encounters. One can create the optimal conditions for some degree of intimacy... to occur.”¹⁰ Following Moore, we will posit a continuum between the experience of falling in love, and the development of certain important virtues which would sustain the friendship. But the problem can be heightened by looking at it in the following way.

⁸ Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 264.

⁹ Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots. Why We Tell Stories* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 364.

¹⁰ Sebastian Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You. The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ* (Winston Press, 1985), 24.

In the love of friendship (*philia*) the image is that of “side by side”, “two persons walking together”. The friendship is constituted by what both parties are, separately, interested in, for example, competitive sport. To the extent that that interest is peripheral (say, a shared passion for La Liga football matches) or more central to their lives, to that extent is the friendship shallow or else deeper. In Aristotle’s account of friendship the deepest is when the parties are friends for the sake of virtue: they are both interested in goodness, and in the growth of happiness or flourishing in themselves and the other.¹¹ Now the image for erotic love, in contrast, is “face to face”. The interest of each is precisely the other person themselves. And if falling in love involves projection, being captured by an illusion, then we have to ask whether this might be simply out of synch with the kind of friendship-love which would sustain a partnership in which both flourish. Even if you add commitment to the attraction of each to the other, it might be the case that no, or no adequate, growth occurs in self-*understanding* and in virtues of the kind that would enable both to flourish. One could for example love or be committed to the commitment, not, ultimately, to the person. How, as projection, can romantic love *not* lead to frustration, impeding such growth?

The result would then be the following: any long-term union of two persons would have to be based on a commonly agreed set of common beliefs and values. The occurrence of limerence, or falling in love, would be seen as a kind of *trap* which drops one into a commitment which has no particularly sound base for sustainable friendship-love. In other words the basis for the union, the common interest, would be a “construct”, something invented, with a certain arbitrariness attached to it, and only altered with difficulty and with trauma on both sides. For example, who constitute our mutual friends? What are the values we both agree on? And so on. Each change in these sets of beliefs by one partner would seem to endanger the union. In a previous age and culture these sets of beliefs about values could be specified by one’s social class (‘what people like us believe’) and it would be courting disaster to choose a partner outside one’s class.

The problem is exacerbated by contemporary liberal society which, prioritizing autonomy as locus of human dignity, is centrifugal so far as

¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), esp. 1156-1157.

concerns moral values, making friendship of the Aristotelian kind – entailing shared beliefs about shared values – difficult. Terry Eagleton, for example, remarks that in a liberal culture, so far as concerns values, “everyone may believe more or less what they want – but only because they don’t matter much in any case, and because the idea of human solidarity has withered at the root.”¹² The identification with the other (as in Brontë’s novel, *Wuthering Heights*, where Catherine Earnshaw confesses, “Nelly, I am Heathcliff”) is likely to be seen as a “trap”. At which point some evolutionary biologists – one can think of Dawkins’ *The God Delusion* – not afraid to move beyond the bounds of their discipline, are quick to fall vulture-like on the corpse of erotic love, giving credence to this interpretation. Roger Haight points to the problem: “Metaphysics as a constructive enterprise comes close to the basic beliefs of a religious faith commitment. [Hence] the sheer diversity of lifestyles and worldviews surely encourages metaphysical skepticism.”¹³

Bringing in a metaphysical dimension makes it appropriate to turn to the most metaphysical of commentators on love, namely Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre’s take on this is well known. Sexual love, at least, is doomed to frustration. For Sartre, romantic love or erotic love does indicate something to do with yourself as a whole, something “infinite”. The desire, he says, takes hold of you, or as he puts it, “compromises you.”¹⁴ His description comes close to that of “limerence”, with its obsessive character. You slide towards a passive consent to the desire: it takes hold of you, it overwhelms you, it paralyzes you. This being its nature, Sartre concludes that love of the kind we have been calling a worthwhile project, is impossible; in the terminology of this paper, I cannot in principle “get” the other.

At the root of the problem is Sartre’s understanding of knowing as “looking”, a view taken apart in his classic of cognitional theory by Bernard Lonergan (1970). (I am rehearsing here). In “the look” the other confronts me as an object “out there”, opposing me or my subjectivity. But this is a very truncated view of how one knows anything, including other persons.

¹² T. Eagleton, “The Pope of Russell Square. T.S. Eliot’s Conservative Modernism,” *Commonweal*, May 26, 2022, <http://commonwealmagazine.org/pope-russell-square>.

¹³ Roger Haight, *The Nature of Theology. Challenges, Frameworks, Basic Beliefs* (New York: Orbis Books, 2022), 11.

¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Washington Square Press, 1956), 404-405.

Looking, Lonergan points out, simply provides the *data*; this calls for the further act of intelligent interpretation of the data, and, finally, the act whereby one's interpretation is judged to be reasonable or not. An objective view of things, for example of the other person, is not reached through looking alone, but is the fruit of our personal cognitional powers, the fruit of attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness. The argument, as Lonergan says, turns on "what no subject can avoid. You cannot avoid experience. You cannot avoid trying to understand..." If you want to play the fool, to play being stupid, still you do that intelligently. "Again, you cannot avoid the exigences if your own reasonableness... If you to renounce your reasonableness you would find yourself asking reasons for it."¹⁵

The problem is thinking of the object of knowing as "out there", to be looked at, i.e. confronting oneself as a subject. Knowing is thought of by Sartre as a confrontation of self and other, a confrontation that *necessarily* denies of the other the status of being a *subject*. Sartre writes:

In the primordial reaction to the Other's look I constitute myself as a look. But if I look at his look in order to defend myself against the Other's freedom... then both the freedom and the look of the Other collapse.... The Other escapes me... If I have preserved my awareness of a transcendent freedom in the Other, this awareness provokes me to no purpose by indicating a reality which is on principle beyond my reach and by revealing to me every instant the fact that I *am missing* it, that everything which I do is done 'blindly' and takes on a meaning elsewhere in a sphere of existence from which I am on principle excluded.¹⁶

The upshot is that all I can love is the object of my own imagination. Thus for Sartre, the blindness of love is evident; it is a trap, and it leads to frustration.

For these reasons I want to explore the philosophical anthropology that seems to be entailed in the claim that a mutually fulfilling outcome is

¹⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 22 (University of Toronto Press, 2001), 317.

¹⁶ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 510-511.

possible for romantic love. In the notion of the inner life developed in the post-Hegelian tradition of Feuerbach and others, exactly this is the case. Feuerbach is linked in an interesting way to the novelist George Eliot, his translator into English: in Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, the love connection is, as already mentioned, given only a fantasy resolution, where the corpses of the two protagonists are seen together, floating down the river Floss.

The inner life: openness to an ever-broader horizon of being

*Either you had no purpose/
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured/
And is altered in fulfilment.*
T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*

In the first place, by “inner life” is not meant the Cartesian idea of a privileged and direct access to knowledge of my self in a way that is different to my knowledge of other things and persons. I do of course have self-awareness, or better, self-awareness is what constitutes me as a subject, the awareness that accompanies my acts of knowing and choosing. What is meant by “inner life” is a life which is not entirely determined by the encompassing pressures from its environment, but to some extent “from the inside”, precisely through this self-awareness. The self-awareness is not equivalent to but the *condition for* insight into myself. Explicit self-awareness is achieved in the same way as any other knowledge; only the object here is the acting subject itself. This means such knowledge is always incomplete, a tentative grasp of the self, never fully luminous. The capacity for an inner life refers not to the actual achievement of complete luminosity about oneself but rather to the ability to confront oneself as a whole, to raise questions particularly about values and so to necessitate the use of some such term as ‘responsibility’ as the only phenomenologically adequate description of human behaviour. And this in spite of what one can say about the *conditions* (psychological, biological, social) circumscribing the exercise of free agency. The appropriation of this capacity is done bit by bit, in a never complete way. One grows in one’s inner life.

We can understand this better by recalling some ideas of Hegel. Hegel sees his task as overcoming the unhelpful isolations, inherited from Kant, of mind from body, of reason from inclination, and of one individual from

another. The first term he uses to express the unity of the person is “life”. This names the idea that one’s inner unity expresses itself in a manifold of *development*, in accordance with its natural potentiality. “Life is the union of union and non-union” is an early formulation of this idea in his essay “Fragment of a System.”¹⁷ This way of putting it points to the never final nature of any achieved union of the self, which must always reckon with what is still *not* assimilated. The term “spirit” (*Geist*) clarifies this idea by pointing to the fact that it is self-consciously and *freely* achieved. The basic idea is that the “other” – the non-union with yourself – is not, finally, a restriction on oneself but is taken up and used creatively in order to enact oneself freely. You are able, “within yourself” to go out of yourself.

For example, through insight, reflection and judgment you can judge the truth about things as they really are, and so move from having a biologically finite animal habitat to living in a world shared with others through the meanings expressed in language. Likewise you can value and affirm things, without limit, and so “take on” the world, take it into yourself, as it were. Hegel’s mature term for this capacity is “spirit”. The implications for our topic are evident. If you can truly “go out of” yourself in this unlimited way, then there is the possibility for what one longs for (union with the other) is not necessarily doomed to frustration. We have an unlimited side to us. We have the capacity for in some way sharing in the actualization of that dream-person envisioned by the other. And this is evident in the normal everyday experience of being a subject. In this sense one’s finiteness does not *per se* constitute a barrier to accepting the other as open to growth, and vice versa. You are what you are only through interaction with your environment, and in particular through other persons. A contemporary writer who develops this idea is Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy writes, in the spirit of Hegel, of love and communion with the other through his idea of “having in another the moment of one’s subsistence.”¹⁸ His analysis is very much along the lines of our own, affirming a natural desire for loving, for transcendence, but without any clear resolution thereof – this is clear not only in his chapter on love, but also that on community.

¹⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, “Fragment of a System,” Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 312.

¹⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 12; 95.

We want, long for, some other who can “get” me, perfectly: but that would mean without the constraints of their finite limitations. What would this mean? We have an unlimited side to us, and so can envisage a corresponding fulfilment, an objective correlate to the subjective capacity. We have seen in the Hegelian notion of spirit the idea of a power which can go out of itself to what is truly *not* itself (non-union) but at the same time remaining itself. But what is not self is of course without limit, limitless. In this sense one’s finiteness does not *per se* constitute a barrier to accepting the other as open to growth. True or authentic union with the other, sharing, would seem at least *possible*.

Hegel’s notion of the reality of spirit is usually interpreted idealistically, as occurring on an ideal, or mental plane. In his classic of philosophical anthropology, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841/1957), Feuerbach’s aim is to translate these ideas within a non-idealist framework: for him, union with the other is indeed the natural actualization of our human potential. It is our consciousness, he says, that distinguishes us as human. And this means relating ourselves to our “species-being” (his term for our union or connectedness with others).

Consciousness is given only in the case of a being to whom his species, his mode of being, is an object of thought. Although the animal experiences itself as an individual – this is what is meant by saying that it has a feeling of itself – it does not do so as a species.¹⁹

And this means knowledge in the exact sense of *science*, is possible. Feuerbach continues: “Only a being to whom his own species, his characteristic mode of being, is an object of thought can make the essential nature of other things and beings an object of thought.” So an animal has a simple life but the human being a twofold life: an inner and an outer, i.e. relates himself to his mode of being – he “thinks, converses, enters into dialogue with himself... Man is in himself both ‘I’ and ‘You’.”²⁰ He can make his essential mode of being an object of thought.

¹⁹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Consciousness, in other words, is not something *added onto* our bodily being: the human being is incorrectly thought of as “an animal but one possessing consciousness in addition.” Rather, there is a qualitative difference. What this must mean is that the human being can relate himself to himself as a whole: he can determine himself (as a species). This means that the human being is not *limited* by factors which are pre-fixed: those limits are precisely what are incorporated into his further interaction; and this consciousness of his power is consciousness of being free, unlimited, being not finite. Feuerbach argues that, in contrast, a “really finite being has not even the slightest inkling, let alone consciousness, of what an infinite being is... .”²¹

What has this to do with our topic? Just this: such a description seems to correlate with what is required of the *ideal object* of romantic love. From Sebastian Moore we have the idea of this ideal object, that deep longing expressed in the romance narratives, for something that can be:

*knowing me like I know myself;

*but without limit, since the limitedness of the other *prevents* them knowing me in this way;

*other than myself;

*but not like others are other, because of their finite, or limited nature.

For Moore, this yields an idea of God. Feuerbach on the other hand is concerned to deconstruct the religious interpretation of the sense of being without limitations. Since only sensuous beings actually exist, he argues, the notion of God must be an incoherent one: such a being would be other than ourselves, external to us, and so would be *either* simply figuratively external (and so possess a figurative existence only) or else a real non-figurative “external” being in real space and time, existing even when I am not thinking of it, or seeing it. It is clear that the latter would be a finite being.

But our interest lies rather in something other than this. What we are sensing is our *own* capacity for freedom as self-determination, and also for love. Feuerbach is correctly translating a premodern, dualistic way of thinking of “spirit” into a contemporary “secular” worldview: “If you think the infinite, you think and confirm the infinity of the power of thought; if

²¹ Ibid.

you feel the infinite, you feel and confirm the infinity of the power of feeling.”²² It is we ourselves who have the capacity to love and create true human community.

As we have seen, romantic love highlights both this capacity or infinite longing, and the conditions radically adverse to its fulfilment. So in spite of Feuerbach’s criticisms of the notion of God, there seems to be an inevitable ethical and religious dimension here – one can always ask, Is it worthwhile to hope? Religion, mentioned by Johnson as a component of the romantic equation, has to do with a human capacity whose actualization and fulfilment is not entirely at one’s free disposal.

To get any further with this exploration of romantic longing we are forced, then, towards a critical metaphysics which addresses this issue. Feuerbach’s position seems not fully coherent: we are beings that have the capacity to determine ourselves freely, for example through science as a method; but the only beings that exist in reality are those demarcated by the empirical sciences (“sensuous beings”); and such beings are fully determined by finite forces, and *not*, therefore, freely determining themselves through their capacity to make their own essential being an object of thought. Feuerbach’s genius, following on Hegel, is to bring out the extent to which we participate in the making of our social and religious world through our creative imagination, through our projections. But such insight does not determine one way or the other, the question of the adequacy of our imagination to how things truly are. We can project and find identity in an imagined object, such as, say, our family, and this object of our imagination has objective reality; or we can project and find identity in an imagined object, such as the superior Aryan race, for example, and this has no objective reality. In the first case, our imagination contributes to actualizing something which is truly identity-giving and, other things being equal, will contribute to the realisation of greater identity through family in some humanly beneficial way (contributes to human happiness); in the second case, this is not the case, we are deluding ourselves and only able to sustain our identity through falsifying the facts, or suppressing questions. Thus it is not the case that all we have is imagined projections of our imagination, without any recourse to verification. For this reason, Feuerbach is mistaken in arguing that “God does not exist for me, if I do not

²² Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 9.

exist for him; if I do not believe in a God, there is no God for me. Thus he exists only in so far as he is felt, thought, believed in; the addition ‘for me’ is unnecessary.”²³

I am calling on the whole continental tradition in philosophical psychology as interpretative framework for understanding the phenomenon of falling in love. I am using this phenomenon, apart from its intrinsic interest, in part as an illustration of the continuing importance of philosophical debates of this nature. To further emphasise this point I want to draw upon a recent discussion about how to interpret human behaviour, the example here being that of the behaviour of the central characters in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. For reasons of space it is only possible to point to, rather than give a full treatment of, what I take to be salient points in this debate. The *Oedipus Rex* example is of further interest because the legend is picked out by one commentator – Sebastian Moore (1985) in his *Let This Mind Be in You*, subtitled, *The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ* – as marking a huge cultural shift from an external rule-based regulation of social order to one regulated through the dialectic of the inner life, and, taking this a step further, by the exigencies of romantic love. The latter, according to Moore, can be seen as part and parcel of our inherited culture, a characteristic feature of our imaginative landscape. In the case of the Oedipus story the unquestioned divinely sanctioned external rule is the taboo on incest.

The ethical dimension of the Oedipus drama is discussed by Grant Gillett and Robin Hankey (2005): the interest lies in the focus on the kind of moral effort and moral discernment required for normal complex situations. Thus both Laius and Jocasta, as well as Oedipus, have failings of a moral nature – for example Oedipus is too impulsive in retaliating to a blow to the head with a murder (of the king, his father, in disguise), while Jocasta gives up on trying to do the right thing in the adverse circumstances:

Why should man fear since chance is all in all
for him, and he can clearly foreknow nothing?
Best to live lightly, as one can, unthinkingly.²⁴

²³ Ibid., 200.

²⁴ G. Gillett, and R. Hankey, “Oedipus the King: Temperament, Character and Virtue,” *Philosophy and Literature* 29 (2005), 279. DOI: 10.1353/phl.2005.0022.

The attempt to assert control over one's life (scepticism is also a kind of control) leads to tragedy. But this notion that character is important only makes sense if persons can indeed appropriate their lives, by their ideas and choices determining their own character at least to some extent Gillett and Hankey are concerned to show, against Gilbert Harman (1977), that this is in fact the case.

Harman appeals to certain well known psychological experiments involving subjects who seem to act in ways contrary to their formed moral character. Harman argues, as Gillett and Hankey write,²⁵ that "human behaviour is situationally driven rather than indicative of enduring character traits." The precise details of these experiments mentioned by Harman – that of Stanley Milgram and the Good Samaritan Experiment – are not our concern here. However we can note (Gillett and Hankey do not) that in each case the deception of the subjects is integral to the experiment, and they are for that reason subject of debate in the context of ethics of scientific research. In other words, we can subject them to a value critique; and this implies that there is a framework of values *not established through the empirical science itself*. In both cases there are criteria for arguing that the deception involved can be justified. But unless this argument begs the question, it will have to involve the controversial idea of the overriding human good (in the face of which the lesser evil – deception – is seen as justified because necessary, in this particular case). This assumes the capacity for human transcendence. Harman, on the other hand, wants to claim that aspiring to be virtuous is an incoherent project, as pointed out by Gillett and Hankey.²⁶ But this would seem counter-intuitive: while social psychology might (as the authors suggest) have an a priori commitment to the contextual thesis (to which one would have to add, or/and the thesis about innate aspects of temperament), practical discernment of what is best to be done would seem a perfectly common-sensical value to aspire to.

Only if we take into account those realities discussed in this section, the transcending subject as spirit, dealing with himself or herself as a whole, the presence to the subject of a horizon without limitations, without which we could not be present to ourselves, the drawing power of objective value (affirmed for reasons perhaps not entirely made explicit), can we make

²⁵ Ibid., 270.

²⁶ Ibid., 271.

sense of love as a union which enhances, because awakening and engaging the inner life. At least this is what we have argued.

It would make sense, then, to prescind from Feuerbach's restrictions on "being" as *necessarily* "sensuous", i.e. material. But is the horizon of our inner life real, in this sense? We can recall Bloom's contention that science must yield its place as sole arbiter of what counts as knowledge, and a place must be given to knowledge through the imagination. What is needed for our purposes is a philosophical justification for this. The notion of the person as able to *relate* to his or her incompleteness gives the lie to the tendency to restrict our notion of "real" to "middle-sized objects in the world" (Quine). And contemporary science and religion discussions draw our attention to the changing shape of what might, given the evidence from the sciences, be reasonably affirmed as "real". In their account of the evolutionary science of the universe, Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, for example, point to how this insight can come as a surprise to the researcher: "Suddenly," they write, "with a shock of recognition, we discovered ourselves as humans emerging within this process."²⁷

The existentialist writers too point to the anxiety or angst accompanying this awareness of subjectivity. From Kierkegaard on they have stressed how in confronting your idea about something or disposition towards something of value, you confront your own freedom. This point is well brought out by the German theologian Karl Rahner, who has learnt from this kind of philosophical thinking. He is worth quoting at length.

Man experiences himself as infinite possibility because in practice and in theory he necessarily places any sought-after result in question. He always situates it in a broader horizon which looms before him in its vastness.

This broader horizon, always the backdrop for human subjectivity and agency, is not an object in time and space.

For the object of such a transcendental experience does not appear in its own reality when man is dealing with something individual

²⁷ Brian Swimme, and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 232.

and definable in an objective way, but when in such a process he is being subject and not dealing with a 'subject' in an objective way.²⁸

In this Rahner is in agreement with Feuerbach. But it also makes no sense to identify *oneself* as this horizon, as Feuerbach seems to do. As Rahner²⁹ continues: "Man is not the unquestioning and unquestioned infinity of reality. He is the question which rises up before him, empty, but really and inescapably, and which can never be settled and never adequately answered by him." If, on the contrary, one identified oneself with the horizon what is aspired to (that fulfilment to which one's sense of self points), would be reducible to mere, i.e. only subjectively grounded, projection or wish fulfilment. Eric Voegelin sees the whole trend of this kind of thinking in modernity, a *deformation* – by Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Lenin and others – of the original insights into the transcendence of the human spirit, into the divine grounding of ordinary human experience. "A radically egophanic 'history' is constructed with the intent of leaving no room for theophanic experiences and their symbolization."³⁰ And in a similar vein, Robert Tucker saw in the Hegel-Marx philosophical tradition a "dialectic of aggrandizement."³¹

To speak about what it is to be "subject" (or "spirit") is to speak at the same time about a reality which cannot be the subject matter of any science, which deals with the terms and relations within a system of finite objects. Subjectivity is not one "part" of the person alongside other parts (the body, say) but it is *constituted* by its capacity to take stock of its relation to everything that is "other" than itself. The units within any finite system confront one another in an "external" way; while spirit or subjectivity denotes a way of living an "inner" life. This ability constitutive of our being human is not to be thought of as another element *alongside* the body (reason, or the immortal soul). The ability to be related to oneself, as Rahner elaborates, "constitutes the subjectivity of man as distinguished from his

²⁸ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. W. Dych (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1978), 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ Eric Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age. Order and History*, vol. 4 (Louisiana, United States: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 261.

³¹ Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 57 ff.

objectivity, which is the other aspect of him.”³² Any system determinable through the sciences, in other words any finite system, argues Rahner,

cannot confront itself in its totality... It does not have a relationship to its own point of departure [which in its case is imposed on it]. It does not ask questions about itself. It is not a subject. The experience of radical questioning and man’s ability to place himself in question are things which a finite system cannot accomplish.³³

The link with our topic is clear. Romantic love touches on this sense of one’s subjectivity. To be sure the context is not primarily questioning in the intellectual sense, but one involving one’s conative and in particular affective dimensions. Still, the longing associated with romantic love seems to evoke an awakening of the idea of relating intensely to what is not finite. An intense sense of being worthy of being known, loved, affirmed, of wanting to share yourself, of overcoming the perceived limits of finitude. And either the moral effort of trying to create this kind of relationship is worthwhile, or it is not. The decision about this is the “inner task” of which Robert Johnson drew our attention in his analysis of Tristan and Isolde.

Ralph Ellis (2006) disagrees. He points to the problem of projection and the lack of selfless love: “since no *extrinsic* or *instrumental* value can exceed the *intrinsic* value of the experience it facilitates, this circle of egocentricity automatically renders all other objects less valuable (experientially) than the self and its own experience... ”³⁴ But here Ellis overlooks the experience of the worth of our being, against the ever-broader horizon of being: affirming oneself in this experience, one opens oneself to transferring that affirmation to the other person. Ellis lacks any adequate metaphysical equipment.

For Jane Austen, for example, love and virtue are mutually enhancing through growth in self-knowledge and self-affirmation. (For our purposes, we can ignore how Austen overlooks the social conditions of the personal drama, the role played by money and, in addition, the exploitative colonial

³² Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 30.

³³ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

³⁴ Ralph Ellis, “Spiritual Partnership and the Affirmation of the Value of Being,” *The Pluralist* 1 (2006): 10.

origins of English middle-class wealth, a point made by Sagar.³⁵ For George Eliot on the other hand, virtue (ties of engagement) *competes* with passion, with the longing that is romantic love. Or at least, as already seen, this is the case in *Mill on the Floss*. Stephen and Maggie Tulliver find a resolution only in death. (One could imagine Sartre asking why she did not simply follow her passion; his point would be that there is no *objective* resolution of this choice, it is entirely subjective or arbitrary.) As English translator of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, George Eliot was surely influenced here by what she had absorbed from him, that *disallows* the kind of opening-into-being that is crucial for the project that we have proposed.

In the drama of romantic love, then, qualities of character play a central role. The sense of subjectivity that is awakened can reasonably be affirmed as an indication of a reality which is beyond any finite object and also a value unconditional because constitutive of my sense of self. The moral effort, focusing on developing oneself in accordance with values common to self and other and therefore making friendship possible, would therefore seem worth one's while. This would be in accord with one's "infinite longing". It remains to clarify why nevertheless it is not exactly these qualities of character that are the *object* of love – a mistake that would strain any relationship to breaking point. And here the pre-romantic Thomistic concept of love as connaturality can, rather surprisingly, throw light on this. For his concept of love benefits from a metaphysics of the person as "spirit", as self-enacting. And this means that the "infinite longing" can be affirmed not only of one's self but also of another.

Love as normal expression of the inner life

And the fire and the rose are one

T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*

At first glance what goes for "love" in Aquinas' philosophy is far removed from the "infinite longing" that characterizes romantic love, for "love" in Aquinas is basically "connaturality", a sharing of one's nature, a natural affinity. To take the extreme case, gravity could be seen as the love of stones. Nevertheless it is useful to draw upon the Thomist distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae*, literally love of concupiscence and love of friendship, but as reformulated by Augustine Shutte (2024)

³⁵ Keith Sagar, *Literature and the Crime Against Nature* (Chaucer Press, 2005), 271.

(whom I am, in part, summarizing in what follows) in terms that are less likely to sow confusion, namely desire on the one hand, and direct love on the other. (Shutte is drawing on the classic elaboration of the philosophy of Aquinas on love, Robert Johann's (1966), *The Meaning of Love*.)

This distinction has its roots in Aristotle. Love of the friendship kind, for Aristotle, is "to wish good to the other". Or more elaborately, "wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about."³⁶ The two elements that can be distinguished in this definition are the good things that one wishes or desires, and the other person *for whom* one wishes them. The object of direct love is the person, not the good things (for example, character traits) that one wishes for them: the latter are the objects of *desire*.

We can now address the question posed above, namely, whether it is not the case that love, which is "face-to-face", will always have to be put aside in favour of the need to create a long-lasting friendship ("side-by-side") based on agreed common interests. Those interests, we can now see, are what are *desired* for both self and other, but this is not the *foundation* of the union of the two persons, which is the *direct love* of each for the other. We saw that the understanding of the person as having an inner life means they have a relation to themselves as a whole and in this way go beyond any single set of finite determinations, in discerning the truth of things and consenting to what is seen as of real value. To affirm oneself as subject in this way is precisely the affirmation of self-less or "transcending" nature. In these typical human acts one orientates oneself in accordance with what it of value, regardless of 'advantage' to one's self. For example in judging the truth of a point of view one takes into account possible biases one might have. So there is no reason why this act of affirmation, of self-love in this sense, cannot be transferred to another. I can "see" that it applies to them as it does to me.

It is clear that here I do not affirm myself as a *kind* of thing, but myself in act, as subject and only in one's acts as subject. For Aquinas, when I know anything, say a cat, I know that it is the *kind of thing* that cats are, but I also know or affirm that it is a *really existing* kind of that thing (a unicorn,

³⁶ Aristotle, "Rhetoric II," trans. R. Rhys Roberts, in R. McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 1328.

or phlogiston, are kinds of things, but not real), I affirm it being itself. So I cannot *love* a cat (with love of friendship or direct love) because I cannot transfer my act of self-love to the cat. The difference is illustrated in the recent film, *Grizzly Man* (dir. Werner Herzog, 2005). There is a break-down of personal integrity on the part of the protagonist, who, lacking a sense of self, attempts to achieve it through “falling in love” with grizzly bears. His unresolved ambivalence towards achieving communion with other persons is illustrated time and again in the improper term of his disproportionate anger.

Why *should* I transfer my act of self-love to another person? In the experience of romantic love this question seems to answer itself: I am awakened to the sense in which I am worthy of being known and affirmed by another, and, as I desire my own flourishing, I desire, in the same movement, the friendship for its own sake. This is the infinite longing of romantic love.

This sense that the project is a worthwhile one, depends upon a metaphysics of the kind we have averted to above. One can objectively affirm the reasonableness of “being subject”, along with the conditions for such opening out to the infinite horizon. One persuasive indication of this reality would be the experienced fact of direct love for another person, never grasped as a “fact” but always held to with some uncertainty. Sebastian Moore calls this experience, affirmed as the condition for subjectivity (which is also the origin of our capacity for science, thus an irreducible datum), the experience of “the other within” – it entails the inner task of which Johnson spoke, in other words it has an ethical dimension. There is a “strangeness” at the heart of one’s experience of oneself as subject (the “non-union” of which Hegel spoke, part and parcel of one’s personal unity). And this allows one to accept the radical strangeness of the *other* person, taking the pressure off intimacy. As Moore³⁷ points out, “If it is only the intimacy between two persons that is the alternative to their radical strangeness to each other, then there is going to be some fear that this strangeness will threaten the intimacy.” But the intimacy has its grounds in one’s very subjectivity, one’s capacity for transcendence. My own affirmation of the project being worthwhile includes the other in this affirmation.

³⁷ Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You. The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 19.

It is this capacity for an inner life, then, that can allow the kind of commitment and sympathy that is required for the combination of passion and friendship we have posited as the possible term of romantic love.

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