African Traditional Values in a Fast-Changing World: A Philosophical Analysis

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Abstract*: The paper is a philosophical investigation of the state of African traditional values in a fast-changing world. It notes that globalization has introduced a plethora of foreign values that are not only at variance with some core African traditional values but are vastly eroding the latter in many areas of life. What are the philosophical implications of, and what should be an appropriate response to, this state of affairs? This question is contextualized within the ambiance of cultural philosophy and the theory of value. However, narrow axiological classifications are excluded in the paper's treatment of the latter. Citing evaluative insights from moral and social philosophers, including Western and African ones, the paper harps on the inevitability of enduring cohabitation between authentic African values and positive values from other parts of the world.*

I. Introduction

As borders of cultural practices, systems and ideas collapse under the overwhelming impact of globalization and information and communications technology (ICT), and as unprecedented numbers of people migrate across the world, the authenticity, sustainability and survival of African traditional values are seriously threatened. This paper investigates what the fluxes of our modern world portend for African traditional values and what philosophical angle of vision should be the right response to managing this burgeoning cultural conflict.

To facilitate our understanding of the key phrase, "African traditional values," let us define each of its constituent words. The word, "African," refers to the African person or society but it also refers to what originates from or relates to Africa. However, our concept and usage of the term is not necessarily monolithic as Africa is as culturally diverse as it is geographically and linguistically variegated So, as long as an issue or set of issues under discussion is narrowed to or amplifies the age-long experience or experiences of Africans, within and outside the African continent, our deployment of this term is to that extent African.

"Traditional" is an adjectival derivative of the noun, "tradition"; its meaning rests upon our understanding of the latter. And "tradition" has been defined as

> 1. The passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation, especially by oral communication: cultural practices that are preserved by tradition. 2. a. A mode of thought or behavior followed by a people continuously from generation to generation; a custom or usage… b. A set of such customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present... ("Tradition")

Tradition, when customarily shared by a group of people, is synonymous with culture. Hence, the concept of cultural philosophy, even if to a limited extent, is inhered in our exploration of this term.

The next constituent word, "values," generally held to mean standards, norms, codes or principles, can more precisely be defined as "beliefs of a person or social group in which they have an emotional investment (either for or against something)." ("Values") But in philosophy, there are relational and ethical angles to this definition, and we will survey these perspectives, as they relate to our topic, later.

Since this paper is a philosophical examination of African traditional values against the background of a fast-changing world, we need to stress how remarkably "fast-changing" today's world, in relation to past epochs, has become. At no other time in human history has mankind interacted more speedily and more extensively than in the late twentieth century, and the pace has remarkably accelerated in the 21st century. Facilitated, among other factors, by enormous advances in technology (including ICT, and notably the internet), in transportation, resulting into mass movement of people and goods, and in knowledge and trade liberalization, developmental and cultural walls have significantly been collapsing across the world. And this phenomenon has been summed up in the catch-all phrase, "globalization."

How epochal is globalization, and how has it raised the tempo of change across the world? Massive globalization is said to have started in the 1820s (O'Rourke and Williamson 23-50) but it was only in the 1970s (James and Steger 417-34) that "globalization" took on the transformational sense defined below:

> Globalization can refer to those spatial-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents. Without reference to such expansive spatial connections, there can be no clear or coherent formulation of this term. …A satisfactory definition of globalization must capture each of these elements: extensity (stretching), intensity, velocity and impact. (Held et al)

II. Forces Fast-Tracking Diffusion Of Africa's Traditional Values

This paper's philosophical evaluation will be limited to the cultural effects of globalization's "extensity…intensity, velocity and impact" on African traditional values. However, it should be noted that the seed of Africa's conflict of cultures was sown by colonialism, not by globalization. Africa was already culturally diffused before the 1970s. The racy trends brought on by globalization only amplified or expanded the cultural baggage of Africa's colonial past and its lingering effects.

Although globalization and ICT may have widened people's awareness of and contact with new communities and their little-known cultural elements, such as language, food, clothing, music, art, and gadgets, foreign influences have overwhelmed many local communities, altering traditional values and alienating people from their cultures. The forces of globalization and ICT, in spite of their material benefits, have largely, for Africans, exacerbated the cultural dislocations colonialism had earlier inflicted upon Africa, This is why our emphasis in this paper is on the new impetus this long-standing clash of cultural values has currently taken. And it is precisely why the paper is focused on the impact of our *fast-changing* world on Africa's traditional values and the philosophical implications of that impact.

Globalization and ICT may have brought communities across the world closer to each other by virtually opening up previously unknown cultural and social spaces but there are two other forces we need to mention. They are tourism and migration. Tourism and migration are also behind the fast-changing ethical landscape of Africa. Foreign visitors, be they colonialists or tourists, have exacted great impact on African culture. While some results of this impact, such as education and infrastructural development, may have been positive, others have undermined or are undermining Africa's indigenous languages, religions, and modes of social organization.

Currently, there is a growing trend in tourist visits to Africa. While this brings some economic benefits to Africa, it also makes tourism a notable force in any factual evaluation of the diminishing influence of Africa's traditional values. *Africa Tourism Monitor*, an annual report of African Development Bank (AfDB), has documented this trend:

> One of the key findings of the report, as indicated in its introduction, is that the tourism sector in Africa is growing. In 2014, a total of 65.3 million international tourists visited the continent – around 200,000 more than in 2013. Back in 1990, Africa welcomed just 17.4 million visitors from abroad. The sector has therefore quadrupled in size in less than 15 years.
>
> According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Africa's strong performance in 2014 (up 4%) makes it one of the world's fastest-growing tourist destinations, second only to Southeast Asia (up 6%).

Africans cannot be said to be mere stationary victims of foreign visitors or influence. Some of the factors which have led to the diffusion and disregard of African traditional values is the economically-induced migration of Africans to other parts of the world, especially Asia, Europe and America. In those foreign shores, and in a desperate bid to survive, African migrants easily get culturally assimilated to the utter neglect or dismissal of African values not only in those countries but even when they visit or return to their African home bases.

This point is supported by current statistics. Since the mass exportation of Africans to the Western world during the long era of the slave trade, Africans have never migrated to non-African societies in greater numbers than what is currently obtainable. According to the UN International Migration Report 2017,

> The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in recent years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000....
>
> In 2017, of the 258 million international migrants worldwide, 106 million were born in Asia. Europe was the region of birth of the second largest number of migrants (61 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (38 million) and Africa (36 million). (UN Report ST/ESA/SER.A/404)

Supposing the above-noted 36 million Africans represent the annual number of Africans that migrate from Africa to other continents, in 10 years, 360 million Africans (not to talk of countless illegal African migrants) would have moved to foreign lands and cultures. Often, the African values these migrants had imbibed, prior to their departure, hardly remain intact in their foreign environments or even when they later return to Africa.

III.   African Traditional Values Vs. Foreign Values

In this section, we will identify some of the traditional values that are common to most African societies. We will contrast them with some of those foreign values that hinder, or are attempting to hinder, African traditional values' capacity to direct and shape the lifestyle of Africans. Although Africa, like other continents, is culturally diverse, we can talk of African values in the same way one can reasonably talk of European or Western values.

Africa has shared values that express and distinguish its unique worldview as well as its customary understanding of and response to the complexities of its peculiar environment. So, in spite of cultural variations among African groups, we can identify a distinct set of values as traditional values of Africa and this, according to Blake (3), refers to

> a composite set of principles, and to an extent knowledge and beliefs that are held in high esteem embedded in African societies, and that are deemed worthy of being regarded as the guidelines for human behaviour in interpersonal, group and inter-group communications and relationships.
>
> The presupposition here is that African societies share certain fundamental values that guide the day to day life of inhabitants …values such as respect for elders; acceptance of the supremacy of hierarchical structures; performance of certain rituals in respect for ancestors; performance of rituals for various occasions ranging from farming to death and burial ceremonies; sibling relationships, etc.

To appreciate the difference between African and non-African traditional values, and as a prelude to our philosophical examination of the issues, we will discuss below, among other ones, five African traditional values. Each of them will be contrasted with alternative values, attitudes and orientations from foreign shores.

A. Respect for Hierarchical Authorities and Instruments

Traditionally, African societies are hierarchically-structured and the typical African unexposed to external influences grows up imbibing respect for established social hierarchies. Such hierarchical groups, institutions and instruments include, but are not limited to, monarchical institutions, elders' council, village-square assemblies, traditional chief priests and their oracular pronouncements, kinship units, age-grade groups and secret societies. African traditional societies are governed via these or similar customarily established structures under strict spiritual strictures that eliminate or minimize abuse of privilege at all levels of the social strata.

And it needs to be said that the existence of the above hierarchies does not mean that those under their influence are robots. Reasoning is not necessarily suspended as every rule or behavioural order is dictated by long-established bodies of knowledge and raisons d'être internalized by the average member of a given African society. Blake (3), again, elaborates:

> The values embedded in a given tradition also form the basis for some form of "knowledge" about how one goes about fulfilling his rights in society. This "Knowledge" has been referred to by some as "traditional" knowledge or "indigenous" knowledge. It is this knowledge that equips the individual to know when to speak, to whom, at what place and at what level of involvement. The knowledge acquired depends upon the socialization process — the way a man or woman is taught to speak, his/her choice of words, his/her style and a full

understanding of context. The composite set of factors mentioned above represent the value system that guides discourse.

In those African communities where this hierarchy-based traditional system held sway, it was not merely used as an instrument of social control but its structures also served as stabilizing platforms for equitable distribution of common resources and for conflict resolution within and between communities. Unfortunately, the colonial masters and their preferred visionless post-colonial successors failed to incorporate, even if in modified form, Africa's traditional social structures into the post-independent constitutions.

This might be one of the reasons why Africa is today the continent with the greatest number of violent conflicts – conflicts led by opportunistic warlords exploiting the vacuum created by the systemic dismissal, after independence, of Africa's once-portent communal-control structures. The nature of African conflicts, reported by Jeffrey Gettleman, seems to lend credence to this:

> There is a very simple reason why some of Africa's bloodiest, most brutal wars never seem to end: They are not really wars. Not in the traditional sense, at least. The combatants don't have much of an ideology; they don't have clear goals.... Look closely at some of the continent's most intractable conflicts, from the rebel-laden creeks of the Niger Delta to the inferno in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and this is what you will find...what is spreading across Africa like a viral pandemic is actually just opportunistic, heavily armed banditry....I've witnessed up close — often way too close — how combat has morphed from soldier vs. soldier (now a rarity in Africa) to soldier vs. civilian. Most of today's African fighters are not rebels with a cause; they're predators.... This is the story across much of Africa, where nearly half of the continent's 53 countries are home to an active conflict or a recently ended one.

In many parts of Africa, traditional modes of social organization that customarily hemmed in undue ambition and criminal tendencies, thereby ensuring law and order, equity and stability, have been jettisoned. Rather than domesticate, after independence, Western democracy brought by the colonial masters by modifying and weaving our traditional structures into the process, African nations entirely excluded such structures from the political system. This error, coupled with other factors, has bred multiple conflicts.

B. Respect for Gods, Ancestors, and Elders

Almost every African society customarily respects the gods, ancestors and elders of the land. Without ever questioning the supremacy and unitary nature of God Almighty, African societies traditionally acknowledge the existence of other gods. African peoples, however, worship these gods in conscious awareness of their roles as mediatory beings or instruments by which they can gain access to or favours from the Supreme Being. One can, therefore, say that Africa's traditional religious leaning is both monotheistic and pantheistic. Different gods oversee different areas of human activities.

Traditional Africa's spiritual ladder is not limited to gods. Beneath gods are ancestors, and these are worshipped and venerated (Merwe 3.4). Ancestors are called upon to intercede for the living, and they are believed to play a role in determining the fate of both the living and the unborn, thereby symbolizing traditional Africa's belief in the cyclical nature of existence.

This traditional value of respect for Gods, ancestors and elders has virtually collapsed in many parts of Africa. Unrecognized by no African constitution, this value and its predictable system of social order, kinship affinities, and the traditional system of justice and punishment that served African communities well in the past, have been shoved aside. In its place is now foisted a secular system of law and order that is highly subject to easy manipulation by law-enforcement and judicial officers. The dreaded traditional oath-taking that once punished the guilty instantly and deterred criminals is now replaced with impotent declarations that have no spiritual backing whatsoever. Many local communities are now in disarray because due respect is no longer paid to the unifying heritage of ancestors nor to the wisdom and guidance of elders.

C. Respect for Family Values and Censure of Same-Sex Marriage

Probably more than other societies, traditional African communities put a high premium on marriage and regard it as a sacred institution. In traditional African settings, marriage is not an end in itself, not a mere journey of love, but a means to an end, namely, procreation and inter-generational perpetuation of the nuclear and extended family, and of the ethnic group and its language and culture.

Because polygamy is allowed, marriage is strictly seen in the traditional African environment as a union between a man and a woman or between a man and two or more women. Same-sex relationship of whatever manner has never been regarded as marriage in traditional African societies; it is rather seen as an abomination and ruthlessly sanctioned by both men and women.

This sacred value is now threatened by foreign values wrapped up in the Western world's toleration and exportation of the LGBT rave to Africa. Many educated Africans living in Africa honestly do not know what this abbreviation stands for, and even when you explain that it stands for Lesbians, Gays, Bi-sexuals and Transgenders, many would still be at a loss as to what the last two words mean. Lesbians and gays, rare and regarded as deviants in traditional African communities, are now being spurred by Western support groups to push for legal recognition of their status in Africa. And African states are being pressured to violate Africa's traditional values and legally recognize LGBT "rights" to openly display romantic and sexual behaviours most Africans consider immoral and offensive. Ngugi (2018) comments:

As Africa continues to advance, it is being forced to adopt many new ways of life, some of which are a complete change in what Africans believe in and how they do things…

One of such practices is homosexuality. Although some African countries are slowly accepting same-sex marriages, many are still very categorical in their denunciation of the idea. Some have even made it a capital offense punishable by death.

Many members of the LGBT community in these countries have…fled their homes for fear of being attacked. In Uganda for instance, same-sex relationships have been illegal since British colonial rule, and in the neighboring Tanzania, the situation is not different…. According to a study done by Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2007, at least 95 percent of Tanzanians believe homosexuality is an unacceptable way of life… It is also estimated that at least nine in ten Nigerians believe homosexuality should be completely rejected by society. And in Senegal, Ghana, and Kenya, the percentages don't change much.

If LGBT is so obviously odious to Africa and Africans, why must Africa be forced by the West to give it a stamp of legality?

D. Strict Observance of Norms, Mores and Taboos

It is said that where there is no law, there is no offence. This truism is relevant to both coded and uncoded law. Africa's norms, lores and taboos constitute her unwritten codes of behavior. They express in the minds and hearts of the traditional African those things that he can or cannot do. The norms recommend the acceptable manner of behavior in different areas of life. While the same norms apply to both men and women in most cases, some norms are gender-sensitive. For instance, in African villages, it is unacceptable for men to wear ear-rings. This is being violated now by some African male returnees from the Western world who visit their local communities wearing ear-rings, thereby encouraging more young people to resort to deviant behaviour

Mores represent the moral standards of a group of persons; in traditional African environments, such standards are strictly enforced. The LGBT phenomenon, earlier mentioned, is a violation of the mores that govern sexual behavior and marriages in Africa.

Taboos are those practices that are spiritually, culturally, and socially forbidden. Taboos ensure that people do not become too free to do anything they like. In Africa, taboos may curtail the exercise of certain "rights" by the individual in the interest of the community or that of the individual himself. For instance, it is a taboo in many African societies for someone to unmask a masquerade or commit suicide.

Norms, lores and taboos are integral part of African culture. Violating them, which are now frequently done because of foreign influences, amounts to violating the culture of the people. And Africa is not likely to develop sustainably without protecting its cultural integrity because

> Culture is a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts. Peoples' lifestyles, individual behaviour, consumption patterns, values related to environmental stewardship and our interaction with the natural environment are mostly influenced by their cultures.
>
> If development can be regarded as the enhancement of our living standards then efforts geared to development cannot ignore culture. Interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and the particularities of a place and community, and advance a human-centered approach to development, are most effective, and likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes. (Kimanuka)

E. Observance of Rituals and Rights of Passage

Rituals and rights of passage, be they secular or spiritual, are observed all over the world in one form or another. In African settings, such rituals or rites of passage include naming and burial ceremonies, new yam festivals, age-group initiations, fertility rituals, and sundry spiritual rituals that recognize the role gods and ancestors play in the lives of the people.

While in many non-African communities such social events are freely celebrated, in Africa some vital local rituals and rites of passage have been phased out or are currently been discouraged or banned by foreign-influenced authorities. For instance, in the eastern part of Nigeria where masquerades are seen as ancestral spirits, the annual celebration of the Odo masquerade festival in some communities sometimes resulted into violent clashes because of misunderstandings between the masqueraders or traditionalists and some Christian groups. We would let Joseph Chukwuma Ezechi, who has carried out "wide enquiries" within the affected area (the defunct Odo-Ozo Local Government Area, Enugu State) narrate and comment on the conflict:

> Conflicts between Christians and traditionalists in "the part of Igboland in which Odo is celebrated," Igbo Odo, have grown unconscionable in the last three decades. The unprecedented rate of confrontation between the gospel message and traditional values, with particular reference to the Odo, brings disunity and unrest into many communities that once lived peacefully...These conflicts also seem to debunk the purported consolidation of Christianity in the culture area in spite of the obvious numerical strength of the local church.
>
> The named incidents are some of the major conflicts, but the phenomenon of "Odo crisis" is an everyday war of wits in the culture area, especially during Odo seasons. The harmony that exists in the ordinary season is particularly remarkable. The future of the church could not be as bright as it appears under this scenario, and on the other hand, traditional culture seems to be at stake. The people are at the crossroads and may remain bemused until the situation is studied and straightened.

Having shown, via the above examples, how foreign cultural values can conflict with or erode African traditional values, we will explore next, within the context of cultural philosophy and the theory of value, what the appropriate response or responses to this state of affairs should be.

IV.   Philosophy of Culture and Africa's Conflict of Values

Culture has been classified as "philosophy of the first order activity" (Mbaegbu 492). Philosophy of culture is concerned with the meaning of culture. It has been defined as

> a branch of philosophy that studies the essence and meaning of culture. The term was first used in the early 19th century by the German romanticist A. Müller. Philosophy of culture must be distinguished both from philosophy of history—inasmuch as the process by which mankind creates culture does not match the pace of historical evolution—and from sociology of culture, which is the study of culture within a given system of social relations. (Philosophy of culture)

Among the early philosophers who offered philosophical insights into culture were Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder. Their view of culture is rather too narrow for our purposes here. Wilhelm von Humboldt and Adolf Bastian's views on culture, though mutually contradictory, would help in moulding a philosophical perspective out of the conflict of values being raised in this paper.

Bastian attempted to blur cultural differences between different societies by positing that all cultures consisted of a commonly shared "elementary ideas" in spite of the existence of localized "folk ideas". (Wikipedia) Humboldt's brand of *Kulturphilosophie* (Philosophy of culture) contended that each culture has a unique *weltanschauung* (worldview), a view which reflected the prevailing notion of that era:

> According to this school of thought, each ethnic group has a distinct worldview that is incommensurable with the worldviews of other groups. Although more inclusive than earlier views, this approach to culture still allowed for distinctions between "civilized" and "primitive" or "tribal" cultures.

While this paper accepts the "distinct worldview" aspect of this definition, it vehemently rejects the arbitrary and prejudicial classification of any culture on the basis of its unique social experience. Grouping cultures into "civilized," "primitive," or "tribal" lays an undesirable foundation for cultural imperialism or the conscious effort to overwhelm and impose one's culture upon the culture of another distinct group.

In the 1870s, the British scholar, Edward Tylor, gave his landmark definition of culture, describing it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1)

Tylor's "habits acquired by man as a member of society" made culture a unique society-based experience. A society's experience is conditioned by its values. Foreign values, when forcibly or unduly grafted into a local setting with a different value set, will necessarily breed conflict and confusion. As values are different, so are societies, but this does not make one cultural group superior or inferior to another. The traditional values of the Igbo people, for instance, distinguishes them from any other ethnic or racial group and make their philosophy of life, summarized below, notably unique:

> That philosophy is unwritten and unsystematic. It was at the same time personalistic, highly ritualized and full of myths and unanalyzed imagery. It was authoritarian, being an instrument of social control. It was pragmatic, meant to solve practical problems of food, security, peace and the general welfare of the community. It was thus non-systematic, less abstract in content, a bit conservative and led to some narrow-mindedness. Besides, it was religiously oriented with an economic base. Its ontology emphasized their belief in the spiritual nature of things and a type of cosmic harmony in which man and his actions are central, with supernatural powers and forces superintending. (Nwala 7-8)

Based on the positions canvassed above, we can conclude that although cultural values differ from one society to another, they cannot form a basis for considering one society superior or inferior to another.

V.   Value Theory and Africa's Conflict of Values

Above, we identified values as drivers of culture. The values of a social group galvanize and direct their lifestyle and the various activities they carry out to meet their daily need for food, clothing, shelter, and social organization, among other personal, social, and environmental needs. Values constitute the unseen aspects of culture, and this is why a number of philosophers, recognizing their importance, have theorized on the subject of value. To reiterate an earlier statement, our interest in value theory, in this paper, is broad-based and non-axiological.

Broadly speaking, the term "value theory" is employed to

> encompass all branches of moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and sometimes feminist philosophy and the philosophy of religion — whatever areas of philosophy are deemed to encompass some 'evaluative' aspect. (Schroeder)

Our interest is limited to the evaluative nature of values and how it relates to issues of morality. Basically, the theory of value, in the evaluative sense, is about determining whether a statement or subject matter is good or bad. This determination is aimed at reaching a decision as to which action or assumption should be preferred over another. The following statements require decisions from individuals or groups:

"Drinking bear is good/bad."
"Halloween parties are good/bad."
"Gay or lesbian marriages are good/bad."
"Ancestral worship is good/bad."

Reaching that decision is what invests the preferred matter with value. So, the value is not in a thing but in someone's decision that that thing is valuable. People in any given culture are the ones who invest value upon whatever cultural assessment they make regarding any object or course of action. They would choose one or the other based on their "distinct" worldview, as we earlier determined when we discussed philosophy of culture.

VI.   Towards a Resolution of Africa's Crisis of Values

Kwame Gyekye, the Ghanaian philosopher, writing on African ethics, notes that "African societies, as organized and functioning human communities, have undoubtedly evolved ethical systems – ethical values, principles, rules – intended to guide social and moral behavior." But the influx of foreign and discordant values into Africa has created the need for a resolution of the continent's current conflict of values. In conflict situations, such as this, what should be the philosophical way out? This is what we will briefly discuss in this final section of the paper.

This paper posits that one key to a resolution of this ethical crisis is to recognize that there are fundamental differences between diverse worldviews and that these differences mean that the ethical priorities of one society are not necessarily another's. For example, while the ethical foundation of the Western world is built around individual rights, Africa tends to emphasize the individual's duty to the community over his "right" to make ethical choices that offend communally-determined acceptable ways of behavior. As Gyekye puts it, "the social character of African ethics" and "its affiliated notions of the ethics of duty (not of rights) and of the common good" constitute some of the "humanistic foundations and features of African ethics." One key question, therefore, that Africans should answer before embracing a foregn value or value system is, "Is this commonly good for Africans?"

In his "Morality in African traditional society," Steve Nwosu, a Nigerian philosopher, views morality as "a timeless definition of humanity influenced by locality." He sees "(traditional) religion and morality as correlative values" and posits that from the naturalist point of view,

> (1) there is collaboration between individual and public morality through the intermediation of moral agents, (2) the society is morally self-sufficient by which a sustainable polity is realized, and (3) while the enforcement of rules is not coercive as in the modern state, the rules achieve core indices of civilization—discipline, peace and harmony. They stick in the consciousness of the people, progress from hypothetical to categorical imperative, and ensure progress, as obedience becomes a duty for duty's sake. Thus a fundamental impact of morality involves the domestication of humanity.

The above African perspectives, as authentic as they may sound, need to be weighed against the reality of fast-encroaching foreign influences whose impact may be primarily individualistic, not communal. The cultural landscapes of the world are changing and all distinct groups, including Africans, should make needed adjustments. According to Heraclitus, the 6th century Greek philosopher, change is central to the universe but it should be based on a unity of experience: "Opposites are necessary for life, but they are balanced in a system of balanced exchanges." (Graham)

Heraclitus' unity of opposites fundamentally includes the maintenance of order in a given society or "city-state." His vision of "balanced exchanges" does not exclude the need for distinct societies to maintain and protect their (moral) laws. According to Heraclitus, and as cited in Graham,

> The people [of a city] should fight for their laws as they would for their city wall. (DK22B44)

> Speaking with sense we must rely on a common sense of all things, as a city relies on its wall, and much more reliably. (DK22B114)

So, no matter how fast-paced the influx of foreign moral influences into Africa, it should be up to Africans, not foreigners, to choose, based on Africa's unique environment and cultural sensibilities, what values to allow or disallow. Africa "must rely on a common sense of all things, as a city relies on its wall."

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