Knowledge, Beliefs and Values

Segun Ogungbemi
Department of Philosophy
Adekunle Ajasin University
PMB 01
Akungba – Akoko
Ondo State, Nigeria

Abstract

The remarkable elements that reveal a distinctive nature of humans from all other beings are basically knowledge, beliefs and values. The three constituent elements, knowledge, beliefs and values, are epistemologically and ethically integrated into human creative activities, which form the basis of human culture. While this is so, the ability to preserve culture although it is not static, yet it has instrumental, intrinsic, and enduring appreciation that is embedded in values. It is my interest in this paper to engage in the epistemic discourse of knowledge, beliefs and values as power inherent in human creative activities. The ability of humans to exhibit this is also manifested and demonstrated in the work of art that understands knowledge in terms of acquaintance and competence which has contributed to human understanding of African beliefs and values as treasures of African genius. In this regard, this paper further examines the notion of African work of art as power of invocation and power of virtuosity which by its very nature constitutes positive values. Let me say from the onset that knowledge and beliefs as explicated in this paper are creative values that nurture and guide human actions. My primary or original objective in this paper was to limit my concentration on knowledge as acquaintance and competence as related to African work of art but some remarkable events that will be explained later made me to expand the scope of the paper to include other cognitive and scientific aspects of human beliefs and values. This must not be taken as a paper that dwells on scientific knowledge. That is beyond the scope of my focus in this paper. Now let me begin with the analysis of my focus on the three concepts of this paper namely, knowledge, beliefs and values.
Knowledge

The starting point in our understanding of knowledge is to give a brief explanation of the nature of knowledge by raising some pertinent questions. What is the nature of knowledge? Or what are the constituent elements of knowledge? Or what are the categories of knowledge? What is knowledge? How do we know we have knowledge? What makes knowledge a value or what makes knowledge a property of value? There are so many questions one can raise with regard to knowledge because of its importance to human understanding of himself or herself and the environment. According to Antony Flew, “Philosophical questions about the nature of knowledge belong either to epistemology or to the philosophy of mind. The two groups of questions may be roughly separated by saying that the first group concentrates on the nature of knowledge, whereas the second concentrates on the nature of the knower” (Flew, 1979, 180).

In Anglo-American Western traditional philosophical thought system derived from classical Greek ancestry, which has paraded itself as universal philosophical tradition of the world, there are two basic epistemological schools of thought namely, rationalism and empiricism (Bewaji, 2007). The rationalist argues that a priori knowledge which employs deductive reasoning gives us a sole foundation of what we know on “reason” alone, while the empiricist argues to the contrary that a posteriori knowledge based on “experience” is what gives us true knowledge and that reason is its errand boy. The debate on what epistemologically gives a priority to each of these arguments in Western traditional thought system of philosophy, from Plato to the present, remains of interest to students and scholars of philosophy. There is, however, the third nature of knowledge that emanated from both Reason and Experience which is called scientific knowledge. Stanley M. Honer and Thomas C. Hunt explain, “It is a widely held view that science is basically an inductive-empirical method for obtaining knowledge. There is some justification for this popular assessment, because scientists do put great store in specific facts, observations, and sense data” (Honer and Hunt, 1982, 80).

Having given the basic three areas of knowledge above, the question remains: What is knowledge? How do we acquire knowledge? Can we be sure or absolutely certain that we know something? To know something requires an understanding of the object of what is known. For instance, if one says he knows God, the object of what is known in this case is God. An interesting question that is likely to follow is: How do you know God? He may say I read it in the Bible or in the Qu’ran and I believe it? Or he may say God reveals Himself to him in his sleep. Another question that has to be answered is: How are you sure or certain it is God that revealed Himself to you in your sleep and not some sort of a being called the Devil?
I have used this example not with the intention of proving whether the knower indeed knows and the object of what is known is verifiable, but rather to show the intricacies in propositional knowledge (Bewaji, 2007). Whichever way we look at the concept of knowledge, the most important to us in this discourse is the fact that human beings are saddled with the problem of knowledge. From the foregoing, I want to argue that human beings are creatures properly endowed with creativity to exercise their faculties of knowledge. Knowledge, in this regard, I want to submit, are intrinsic and extrinsic values that have moral application. Because human beings are creative, with values, knowledge becomes power with which to unravel what appears a mystery and to liberate them from fear and ignorance.

To acquire knowledge requires education and training. By virtue of being humans, nature has given everyone a genetic trait that is inherited, but as Socrates argues, according to Louis Pojman, that we are clouded by ignorance and what is needed at any level of human development is “a suitable guide, a teacher, to bring out the best in us, to question and guide us like a mid-wife inducing labor, until at last we give birth to knowledge. The teacher has no truths of his own to impart, but to help us to recover knowledge which we must have learned in a previous existence” (1986, 14). What this amounts to is the idea that we were born with innate ideas or knowledge. It is notable that John Locke rejected this position, arguing that no human beings have innate ideas, what we acquired in terms of knowledge is from experience and environment (1974, 9).

If knowledge is creativity developed by human faculty, by whichever manner or method it is acquired, as I have argued, it is inherently a treasury of value that we cannot afford to ignore at any level of human development. I am concerned in this discourse with the traditional Yoruba knowledge of science and technology and work of art that gives express credence to the above understanding of the nature of knowledge, without necessarily thinking that the theoretical explanation as espoused thus far is purely a Western concept. The reason for this presupposition is that, in my view, knowledge is a universal phenomenon that all sentient beings have the capacity to access, produce, reproduce and utilize (Bewaji, 2007).

Let me give some concrete examples from the traditional practice of medicine. If a scorpion stings one or someone is having a terrible headache, an incantation is used to remove the venom where the point of bite is cut to express the poison we are told, if the incantation is properly made, by observing its procedures without violating any of its taboos or making any mistakes in the incantation, the patient will be cured without having any recourse to Western orthodox medical intervention. This form of traditional healing process is what I call *Yoruba scientific medical speech-act healing*. The mode of incantation is not a mere spoken words alone but rather getting to know the *inner-person* and the ability to call the *inner-spirit* which has a direct link with the particular part of the
body that needs to be healed. The power to enact this form of efficacious scientific-medical healing among the Yoruba that I am most conversant with deserves universal or global recognition. Another example is the importance of the river goddess of Osun in Oshogbo, Osun State in Nigeria, where barren women who make appeal to the goddess for children during her yearly festival become pregnant and have babies within a year.

This form of scientific-medical solution to barrenness cannot be undermined among the Yoruba in Nigeria. Perhaps A.B.T. Byaruhanga-Akiiki and those who follow his school of thought may disagree with my classification of this form of solving barrenness as medically scientific, but rather a theology of healing since it involves a deity (1991, 23-33). The scientific-medical verifiability that the pregnancy and the eventual birth of the baby demonstrate is a by-product of the power of Osun river which makes it not, in my view, a theology of healing. It is scientific-medical knowledge per excellence which has made Osun Festival a remarkable tourist attraction and a haven to those who need medical and spiritual healing. What needs further investigation is the medicinal content of the resources administered to the women who visit Osun River, in order to identify the chemical components or hormone inducing ingredients that may be responsible for reversing hormonal imbalance and causing its alleviation of infertility in women.

When it comes to the Yoruba work of art, I consider its knowledge as acquisition and competence. It is a skill learned or a creativity that disseminates some form of information towards improving or influencing the quality of life of people(s) who have interaction or contact with the artwork. I will discuss this issue later after I have given a brief theoretical explanation of beliefs and values.

Beliefs

What is the nature of belief and its relationship to knowledge? Is belief the same thing as knowledge? What makes belief a value? Pojman explains that, “A belief is the outcome of a thought. Belief-acquisitions are internal ‘yesings’, assentings, which we can consciously experience” (1986, 19). H. H. Price writes, “Belief is often contrasted with knowledge, as in ‘I do not know where he lives in Bradford’. Knowledge is what we aim at in all our enquiries and investigations. But often we cannot get it. Belief is a second best” (1969, 72). We cannot have knowledge without having some form of belief. But such belief has to be defined or explained within the context it is being used. How do I mean? For instance, I have knowledge where Adekunle Ajasin University is located in Ondo State in Nigeria because I teach there. It necessarily follows that I believe there is a University called Adekunle Ajasin University and I know its location in Ondo State. However, if someone says he read in the newspaper or in a geography book where
Adekunle Ajasin University is, he may not claim to know it for certain. He simply has an idea where the University is. All he can say is that he read about it in such and such place or someone told him where the University is said to be located. He cannot claim to have absolute knowledge of its location. But his belief is that there is a University called Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko in Ondo State, Nigeria.

We must also bear in mind that belief is attitudinal. That is to say my belief of a proposition is occasioned by my attitude towards it. For instance, if someone comes to me and says when he dies, he will go to heaven. He may not be able to provide any logical proof to substantiate his belief but talking about it and living according to the tenet of his belief becomes attitudinal. This form of belief is not saying that we must believe according to evidence, or we must have self introspection of what we believe. To the believer, subjecting his or her belief to a philosophical or a scientific analysis is to betray and ridicule the object of his belief. In other words, asking for more and more evidence until a proposition is believed is unnecessary. For a believer to be provocative, a man or woman of faith/belief does not need such irreverent philosophical or scientific evidence could regard, as a matter of fact, asking for the kind of evidence proposed in this discourse is unnecessary.

There is another dimension of belief that is more profound among the religious people that need to be addressed, and that is faith. Belief and faith to the religious people are used interchangeably. The works of H. H. Price, Belief (1969) and Louis Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will (1989), among others, are of significant importance to this discourse. These scholars have given a more profound analysis and exposition of belief and faith, which ordinarily I should not say much about it. For the sake of clarification and for the sake of those who might have not read their works, it is necessary for me to explain the relationship between belief and faith. When belief is conceived in terms of faith it does not ask questions because it is what God has said or what the man of God says is the gospel truth and anyone who questions the veracity of the belief or faith becomes ‘irrational’ or is seen as an enemy of faith.

By the very nature of faith, which St. Paul in the New Testament defines as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrew 11:1), therefore subjecting it to epistemological scrutiny to the believer is unwarranted. Generally speaking, in Nigeria and particularly among the religious zealots or religious fundamentalists, it is sacrilegious or profane to question the basic tenets of their belief or faith because it is a “precious value”. In philosophy of religion and philosophical theology such is conceived as irrational faith or unreasoned belief or “just believe” as Celsus, the first critic of Christianity accused the early Christian believers (Dodd, 1970, 120-121). I have dwelt on belief/faith in the field of religion because that is where it is most prevalent. This takes us to the next concept-values.
Values

When we talk of value(s) we mean something that is good or something that has worth. I have maintained, from the onset in this paper, that knowledge and belief are values, because of their intrinsic and extrinsic worth to humans. There are different ideas and beliefs about values. We have, for instance, material, spiritual, linguistics, cultural, academic, intellectual, economic, religious, social and moral values etc. The sum total of human values is generally conceived as derivable from cultural values. In the study of axiology, moral theories including ethics, the theory of value has dominated a large proportion of what morality is all about. And given our inheritance of most of the academic discourse from Western orientation, this means that a lot of the determination of values that seep into scholarship is also derived therefrom. But first, how is the theory of value defined? According to this tradition one can see that a theory of value is a theory about what things in the world are good, desirable, and important. Such theories aim at answering a practical rather than a purely theoretical question since to conclude that a state of affairs is good is to have a reason for acting so as to bring it about or, if it exists already, to maintain it. Within the context of moral philosophy, the central problem is the relation between the moral rightness of certain actions, for example, telling the truth and the non-moral value of certain state, for example, happiness.

Considering human values from the perspective of propositionally derived knowledge or ethical studies based on Euro-Western scholarship will limit the scope of human values. To this end, my concern is to conceive of human values as diverse as humans scattered around the globe. I am aware that relativism becomes a relevant discussion, once human values are conceived as diverse because of our different cultural backgrounds, environment, social status, tastes, aesthetic principles etc. Our priorities in life are based on their values or the values we placed on them as derived from the socio-cultural environments that gives meaning to our existence. Some people place their values on having many children so that when they grow old the children will look after them, since in Nigeria we do not have life insurance or nursing homes where the aged can be taking care of. There are others who place there values on intellectual and academic pursuit for human capacity building and development. While some others place their values on material wealth by accumulating money in fat bank accounts, acquiring landed properties and houses, exotic cars, aircrafts, etc., for their own selfish ends. Within academia, there are scholars who place their values on the accumulation of artifacts because of certain satisfaction they derive from it. There are those who derive inspiration and academic satisfaction in the study of philosophy, which in itself is a value. All that I have said about the plenitude of values is to emphasize a characterization of humans as conscious and creative beings. If humans are not conscious and creative, their sense of
values and the general utilization of their ability to enhance the quality of life will not be meaningful or attainable.

The nature of Yoruba works of art

Before I begin to give some philosophical exposition of Yoruba artwork, let me make a general supposition of the universality of art. Plato reminds us of two composite natures of art, namely, divine art and human art. By divine art, he means art that is made by nature and human art is made by human beings (Hofstader and Kuhns, 1976, 46).

The term African works of art or African art or African aesthetics or artifacts or artwork as used in this paper means the same. Furthermore, I am concerned with the indigenous or traditional works of art, which is otherwise known as classic traditional art. This is the work of art that was in existence before Erulo-American contacts. It is an “undiluted work of art”, which was not meant primarily for commercial purpose (Bewaji, 2013).

Our knowledge of Yoruba aesthetics stems from two major sources namely, the local artists as presented and preserved in Yoruba culture and scholars who have written on the significant contributions that Yoruba aesthetics have made to human civilization. Prominent among the scholars were William Fagg, William Bascom, Henry Drewal, John Pemberton, Kevin Carroll, Suzanne P. Wenger who became known as Aduni Olorisa, a devotee of Osun, the river goddess in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, Robert P. Armstrong, Frank Willett, Robert Farris Thompson, Eyo Ekpo, Wande Abimbola, Wole Soyinka, John Ayotunde Bewaji and Samuel Ade Ali. They, among others, have made African art in many ways a major Africa’s contribution to human civilization. The knowledge disseminated by the artists in poetry, music, dance, songs, painting, sculpture etc in all forms of subtle language of aesthetic science of its own prove significantly the talents of the genius who consciously or subconsciously engaged themselves with how best to understand the nature of existence and the footprint of the dynamics of human spirit on the environment that became his own. This takes us to two dimensions of knowledge-based argument of the ontological and empirical spheres of Yoruba aesthetics with regard to its contents and forms. The two are in my view not necessarily diametrically opposed but rather complementary, if properly understood. Writing on African art, Dele Jegede explains:

Since African art functions at various levels-for the living and the dead, physical and metaphysical, secular and sacred, legislative and judicial, social and educational, symbolic and aesthetic-it is art for life’s sake. While we may admire and appreciate its forms and expressive qualities, it has a primary function, which
is often central to the social and religious values of the cultures that produced it (2002, 282).

The work of Theodor W. Adorno clearly and explicitly expresses the inseparable fact of form and content when it comes to understanding art. According to him, Art negates the categorical determinations stamped on the empirical world and yet harbors what empirically exists in its own substance. If art opposes the empirical through the element of form-and the mediation and content is not to be grasped without their differentiation-the mediation is to be sought in the recognition of aesthetic form as sedimented content (2006, 5).

The Yoruba work of art exemplifies the uniqueness of both forms and contents in the execution of artistry. To understand the genius at work one needs to be broadly exposed to the philosophy, psychology and culture of the artists who are in the world of diffused cultural dilemma on the one hand, and on the other trying to make sense in explaining what it means to be aesthetically human. From the foregoing I do not want to give an impression that African art, as we know it today, was conceived as “art for art’s sake”; rather it was art for specific occasion to serve a pragmatic or an ontological purpose to enhance and maximize the quality of life of individuals or community or both. It, however, depends on the end to which a particular work of art is set to serve; for instance, pottery and its geometric designs could be for a commercial purpose or for a ritual to ward off evil forces and bring peace, unity and prosperity to individuals and the society.

Having briefly discussed the nature of Yoruba works of art let me begin with some specific areas of interest that this work is concerned with namely, aesthetic of invocation and aesthetic of virtuosity, and how they contribute to human knowledge and values.

**Aesthetic of Invocation**

In my study of Yoruba work of art, I became more intimately impressed with the sculptures, because of their aesthetic expressions. The spirit of transcendence and creativity of the artists keeps the imaginative mind wondering the import of the reality in human existence they have graphically demonstrated, such that without necessarily putting it in book volumes, yet an individual or individuals perceiving the works can make volumes out of them. I became more enthused about Yoruba works of art when Armstrong, a humanistic anthropologist taught me African Aesthetics in the 80s. According to him, Yoruba aesthetics are divided into two different components, as a result of two cultural traditions under which it has influence, namely, Yoruba society and European-American culture. Within Yoruba culture Armstrong argues that the artwork is
viewed as having powers of invocation, which I call aesthetics of invocation and powers of virtuosity which is otherwise here called aesthetics of virtuosity. I will discuss each of these conceptions under its subdivisions. Let me begin with his conception of powers of invocation. What does he mean by powers of invocation? Armstrong explains:

In all cultures certain things exist which, though they may appear to be but ordinary objects, yet are treated in ways quite different from the ways in which objects are usually treated. Consider, for example, a wedge-shaped stone about two inches in length and no more than one and a quarter inches at its widest part. The casual observer may think it to be no more than a stone brought to its present shape by the natural processes of wearing away that time brings about. More sophisticated viewers will observe that it has been worked to such a shape. But whatever the case, it is unlikely that either observer will be prepared for the honors paid to such a stone in a Yoruba village in west central Nigeria, by a Shango priest, who will bow before it, clapping his hands and reciting praise poems to it. What is this thing? Is it a god? Is it a relic of some special merit? Does it own power? Is it a work of art? Perhaps to the questioner’s great surprise, each of those questions may be answered affirmatively: the stone celt is in some respect or other of divinity, meritorious, powerful, and a work of art; or, more properly, it belongs to that order of phenomena of which what we call “works of art” are but a suborder (1981, 3).

Let me corroborate what Armstrong has said above with another concrete example. In my hometown, Idofin-Isanlu in Yagba East Local Government Area in Kogi State, Nigeria, there is a deity called *Origba*. The ontological characteristic of this deity is that its costumes are sacred and being so means they cannot be disturbed with anyhow without severe consequences. In this town there are two old mission churches, namely Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), now known as Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and the Baptist. In order to serve the God of Christianity fervently the worshipers went to buy two electric generators to give them light every evening they wanted to worship the Benevolent, Omni-Powerful and Omni-Present Being. There was a melodrama in the town in the early 90s when some robbers came to steal the two electric generators the same night and one of the costumes of the *Origba*.

The two electric generators that belonged to the above-named mission Churches were successfully stolen but the unfortunate happened when they made attempt to go away with the *Origba* costume. As the costume was being taken away from its Shrine which till now does not have any security lock unlike the mission Churches where the electric generators were carted away, there was a sudden strike of lightning that frightened the robbers, and they took to their heels and left the costume of the *Origba*. It
is expedient to say here that the stealing of the costume of the Origba and the spontaneous reaction that made the robbers to return it was an act of offensive provocation. The exhibition and the execution of the power of the *affecting presence* were ontologically manifested. When the robbers were not able to cart away the costume of the *Origba* the rage and ravaging powers of the *affecting presence* were assuaged.

The whole town was alerted that a strange phenomenon had happened and there was need for the priests to appease the deity. The costumes of the deity, according to Armstrong, in this case, are potent with *power of presence*, whether it is invoked or not. The robbers could not disappear with the costume of the *Origba*, but that cannot be said about the two electric generators of the two Churches whose God is too *merciful* to act (1997, 39).

It is important to explain or define what the *affecting presence* is. Armstrong writes, “It is factually true that the affecting presence is not in its distinctive and definitive sense a symbol, though it may, and indeed often does, also bear symbolic attributes. Rather it directly presents affect. It is only in this sense, namely that form does incarnate affect, that it may be said that there is a universal aesthetic” (1975, 13).

There is an academic contention whether the sculptures, which we are part of that we call African works of art, are symbols, or representations or presentations. For instance, Susanne K. Langer considers sculptures as symbols and that the functions of the symbols are representational (Armstrong, 1981, 21). From what Armstrong has said, however, in the above quotation, the affecting presence of the sculptures are presentations and not symbols or representations.

It suffices to say that when the sculptures were taken to Europe, America, Asia and other parts of the world outside the continent of Africa, the deities they present were not taken along with them (Bastide, 1978). But the fact remains that when the sculptures are in foreign lands, the descendants of Africa in the Diaspora whose ancestors went with the artifacts, made the worship of the deities namely, Ogun, the god of iron, war, peace and justice, Sango, the god of thunder, Yemoja, the goddess of water and fertility, Esu Elegbara, the god of indeterminacy etc an integral part of their cultural heritage. Wherever the gods are worshiped in those foreign lands like Brazil, Jamaica, Haiti, etc the sculptures that present the forms and the contents of the art demonstrate the *power of the presence* especially during their festivals or anytime they are invoked.

To place the values of the *affecting presence* in perspectives within the political system in Nigeria one would have loved to see all our political office holders use any of the objects of the gods to swear during their oath taking exercise. If this were done perhaps the level of corruption that is so common among the political office holders would be non-existent because like the example of the *Origba* given above it would be foolhardy to swear falsely when one knew that the *power of the affecting presence* would
consume him or her. Rather than using our African form of oath taking, Nigerian political and office holders prefer the use of the Bible or the Qu’ran which they know will not harm them if the go contrary to the terms of office and responsibility. It is this abandonment of our cultural values and the embrace of foreign cultures with their religious values and practices that perhaps have exacerbated the recklessness of immoral behaviours of African leaders while in and out of office. The implication of what I have said here is that there are inbuilt moral values in Yoruba aesthetic of invocation which ought not to be ignored. What this implies, in my candid opinion, is that it is high time we resolved to embrace the moral values exemplified in African cultural values.

Aesthetic of Virtuosity

When we talk about African aesthetic with particular reference to sculptures as having power of invocation and power of virtuosity it becomes a phenomenon of dualism as perceived by the cultural spectators. To the genius of the works of art there is no dichotomy except the forms and the contents. But to the foreign admirers of the sculptures like Armstrong and others from his culture, the contents within the cultural environment from where the works derived their existence, the sense of their values differentiate what the works represent to the indigenous people. That is why Armstrong classified sculptures from Africa as having powers of invocation and powers of virtuosity. To Africans, Armstrong writes:

Although in our culture we do not make sacrifices of blood to such special things, yet we too have analogous “objects.” To them, Americans and Europeans and Japanese-for example-also offer “sacrifice.” We may or may not write poems to them, but we lavish our resources upon their purchase and upkeep. And we house them in some of the grandest structures our culture produces, designed by our most gifted architects and executed in the most expensive of materials. But it is not only the housing of such works that is expensive. There are also the services they must have: insurance, guards to protect them against vandalism and theft, conservators to cure them of their ills and to maintain them in the greatest degree of health, specialists to mount them and place them in dramatically disposed and lighted displays (1981, 4).

Armstrong is right with his explanation of the cultural bifurcation assessment of the way and manner the sculptures designed for traditional concerns are treated in its homeland and in the foreign land because the intentions for which they were made to serve were never the same. Anyone who has visited individual home collections of African sculptures as I did at Armstrong’s house in Downtown Dallas, Texas, United States of America, Museum of Mankind in London, United Kingdom and Art Galleries in
other parts in Europe, America etc will not dispute what Armstrong has said. Due to the influence of modernization the sculptures and other works of art of individual, social and national interests in Nigeria and other parts of Africa receive similar care and treatment. Dele Jegede in a similar way writes, “Many who are privileged to view African art works in museums are touched by their visual presence, their aesthetic power, and their formal attributes” (Jegede, 1999, 280). Let me say in this regard that the preservation of Africa works of art by the Cultural Heritage Museum University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria deserves mention for its aesthetic worth and expression.

John Ayotunde Isola Bewaji gives a general view of African sculptures which captures a more profound way of conceiving the nature and purpose of their state of being. Bewaji explains:

Thus, we can say that sculptures are important in the artistic terrain of Africans. They are often grandiose, noble, intimate, intricate and even disturbing. They help to record history as they chronicle their times and epochs and they serve mementos and memorials, endearing monuments to, and of the time, as well as commemorating for posterity and for self achievements or the travails of the people as they journey through the ages-that is, as they undergo the necessary transition through space and time. And sculptures are also capable of serving to express the architecture of the people, in that the conglomerate of power may dictate that certain methods and materials be used in building certain edifices. These are ways of adapting creativity to life and living (2013, 142).

The import of African sculptures as explained by Bewaji in the cultural context is very true but one can add that the fact that the genius of the production of the artwork did not write down their ideas does not rob them the philosophical exposition of their world view which contain their metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, syndetic logic, religious, scientific and technological understanding of man and his environment. Scholars of contemporary African Philosophy must be conversant with this fact when it comes to giving a definitive nature of African Philosophy. If this had been done there would probably be no intellectuals or scholars or elite who would be in doubt of the existence of African Philosophy. As Toyin Falola rightly noted that, “Art appreciation provides people with leisure activity as they visit museums and monuments. Furthermore, it contributes to modern living and the economy, as people decorate homes and offices with artwork” (2001, 77). With the preponderant evidence of what African works of art has contributed to knowledge within Africa and outside the continent one wonders why its study does not become a major integral part of study in our various institutions of learning.
Conclusion

I began this paper with a view to bringing to focus that knowledge, beliefs and values are essentially a by-product of human creativity. It is because of the level of human consciousness and ability to transcend that makes creativity a distinctive feature of the genius in us. I have given in this paper a theoretical framework of what knowledge, beliefs and values are in relation to our views of African aesthetics particularly sculptures as aesthetic of invocation and aesthetic of virtuosity. The principles of truth telling and honesty that are emphatic in traditional Africa culture as expressed in the beings which the sculptures present and any acts of betrayal or abuse of what they stand for can invoke the wrath of the gods. This value as I have mentioned in the paper is jettisoned by our political office holders thus explains the rampant corruption in our country today. In other words, if our leaders had not devalued the currency of our traditional culture of accountability and embraced the principles of justice engendered in our cultural heritage perhaps Nigeria would have not been listed as one of the notoriously corrupt nations. One of the challenges that we must constantly remind ourselves is the subjective existential import the artwork presents with its affecting presence. As Armstrong argues, “The work of affecting presence holds the mirror up-not to nature but to man. The world is caused to bear the supreme fact of man’s presence in it. It is owing to this achieved end that the affecting presence is presentational” (1981, 81). What makes affecting presence affecting therefore ostensibly, in my view, is human creativity.

The enrichment of human creativity is fully expressed in culture. The diffused nature of culture in the case of Africans and Africans in the Diaspora is better understood in their common background as people of Black race and African heritage. The strange phenomenon of trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism which brought about a divergent polarity and loss of freedom on both sides-the Africans in the continent and Diaspora, notwithstanding, the feelings of belonging to a continent and race plus the attendant sense of dignity, freedom and human worth which has been facilitated by knowledge, beliefs and values inherited in African culture, the mode to transform the continent after independence to a more robust developed State in all ramifications is the most urgent call to service on the part of all African descendents wherever they are. The leadership by example of Toyin Falola, which is worth emulating, in this regard is a courageous step that cannot be over emphasized.*
Bibliography


49

*I want to acknowledge the usefulness of Professor Omobewaji Ademola Dasylva’s comments during a conference presentation of this essay in the development of my thoughts as he drew attention to the power of the speech-act to mean something more than the ordinary usage of words, but something that requires an understanding of the art of incantation that has power to deal with the inner-spirit and the place in the body that requires healing. This comment tallied with my own understanding of the synthesis between knowledge, art and life.*