

29. This is what Benn and Mortimore refer to as "Epistemic Rationality" or "Strong use of the Concept of Rationality" in their book "Rationality and Relativism".
30. Benn and Mortimore refer to this as "Practical Rationality" or "Weak Account of Rationality".
31. S. Lukes, Op. Cit. p. 210
32. E. Evans - Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, Oxford, O.U.P.
33. The author acknowledges and is grateful for the invaluable questions and comments of participants at the Seminar in which this paper was first presented. These have helped in clarifying, more thoroughly, some issues that were raised.

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WITCHCRAFT, CAUSALITY AND THE AFRICAN WORLD

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On the subject of magic and witchcraft in Africa there is a great deal of literature. And yet, one is struck and disappointed by the large amount of ignorance, prejudice and falsification which keeps coming out in modern books, newspapers and conversation on this subject. (Mbiti)¹

INTRODUCTION

The belief in the phenomenon of witchcraft has elicited a lot of controversy among scholars and non-scholars alike. The reason for disputations over the issue is that, like magic, miracle and other paranormal phenomena, the phenomenon of witchcraft is considered to amount to a "transgression of laws of nature"². As the argument goes, events or phenomena sometimes attributed to the activities of witches are at variance with what is generally regarded to be the *natural order of things in the universe*. Witchcraft phenomena therefore, stand nature on its head.

Discussions on the subject have, expectedly, polarised scholars into two opposing camps. On one side are those who hold the view that the belief in witchcraft is a mere fantasy. Their argument include the fact that the phenomenon of witchcraft, in as much as it does not "cohere with a body of known fact, cannot itself be a fact"³. Here, it is taken that for anything to be conceived as *real* it must be "either actual in the sense of conforming with what exist in nature or true in the sense of fitting into a pattern, model or standard" of an already well known system of thought⁴. The belief in the phenomenon of witchcraft is said not to fall within this

bracket. Thus, E. O. Eyo, among others, conclude that witchcraft is a "fantasy" which can only exist "in the mind of mentally sick people"¹⁵.

On the other side of the debate are those scholars who have not only continued to hold the belief in witchcraft, but who have in fact tried to "prove its reality". Among such scholars is Bolaji Idowu who for instance would "assert categorically that there are witches in Africa; that they are as real as murderers, prisoners and other categories of evil workers, overt or surreptitious"¹⁶.

Similarly, John Mbiti, after narrating some experiences of encounters with witches concludes in his book, *African Religion and Philosophy*, that:

*every African who has grown up in traditional environment will, no doubt, know something about this mystical power which is often experienced or manifests itself in the form of magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy even immediate scientific explanation*¹⁷.

According to Mbiti therefore, far from being a fantasy, the phenomenon of witchcraft is "a reality, one with which African people have to reckon"¹⁸.

It is really difficult to take sides in this type of discourse. For, where emotions flow freely as is the case here, reason and passion contend for attention. In such a circumstance it usually works out that reason is relegated to the back seat. That notwithstanding, there is still a great deal for the philosopher to do here if only to ensure that commentators are not saying different things in the same words. He could, that is, clear possible conceptual cloud, part of which is our intention here.

The philosopher's interest in the raging controversy appears to have been summed up in the following question by Sophie Oluwole in a paper incidentally titled, "On the Existence of Witches":

*How does one come to the conclusion that a woman demonstrably asleep on her bed through out the night is the cause of the mysterious death of her neighbour?*¹⁹.

The implications of the above question are many. First, it calls for the justification of the assumption, underscored by the belief in witchcraft, that it is possible, contrary to the general view in western philosophy, for a purely *metaphysical* phenomenon to be the cause of sometimes purely *physical* phenomena. How does one prove, for instance, that *when the witch cries and a child dies*, as it is believed among the Yoruba people; *it is the witch who killed the child?*

The above is among the "gaps" which Oluwole claims that "African authors" are yet to "bridge"²⁰. In this paper I attempt to answer the above question by Oluwole and hope by so doing to bridge "this all important" gap in the discourse of the witchcraft phenomenon in Africa. I want to argue that the problem envisaged by Oluwole and many others who have expressed similar views on this issue, arises because of the categorial superimposition of an alien paradigm on the cultural practice of a people. Here the expression, *alien* does not have any racial connotation. It is rather intended to draw a line of demarcation between *practitioners* and *non-practitioners* of a particular belief. In other words it is possible within the same geographical environment to have both practitioners and non-practitioners co-existing.

The canon of my argument here will be that, when and where it is believed, as it is the case among most African communities, that; "everything that exists is a life force, that there is no isolated force in the universe and that all forces are constantly interacting"²¹, then most, if not all arguments put up against the belief in witchcraft as irrational would be seen to have been misplaced. This author is not a witch, but to prove that there is a strong foundation on which the belief in the phenomenon is built in Africa, is my goal here. If we are able to accomplish this the effort will be worthwhile.

II

It is perhaps important from the onset to clear what may in fact be a conceptual mix-up in the discourse of the witchcraft phenomenon. We want to state here that the philosopher who starts his inquiry about the witchcraft phenomenon with the question, *do witches*

exist?, may sooner than later realise that he is in fact on the wrong lane of the discourse; that his question is a wrong headed one and therefore off the mark. This is so because what is implied by such question is that the disputation over the rationality of witchcraft phenomenon is essentially an ontological one. But as I shall be arguing presently, the witchcraft phenomenon is basically metaphysical. And being a "metaphysical phenomenon, the ontological status of witchcraft is not within the bounds of human reason"¹². Thus, "whether witches exist in reality or they do not is not a question that can be settled by the exercise of the intellect"¹³. It also follows from the above that as metaphysical entities witches are not supposed to be "subject to scientific investigation"¹⁴.

The problem here is that there is hardly anyone, except perhaps a witch who could comment authoritatively about witches. Unfortunately however because of the secrecy with which their activities are surrounded and the negative consequence of an open confession of being a witch, volunteer-witches have been hard to come by. The result is that most commentators on the issue are left to speculate up to the point their imagination could take them. Frustration! Arthur S. Gregory laments:

There is a side to magic, a dark shaded area we have not been able to penetrate. No investigator has been able to explain away some of the powers that the shamans possess, and there are witchcraft phenomena that refuse to yield to our cold western analysis¹⁵.

Another issue that needs to be clarified at this point also is the tendency by scholars to present the witchcraft phenomenon as peculiarly African; as if it is only in Africa that the belief in witches exists. Thus many writers, Africans and non-Africans alike, have tried to relate every discussion on the issue to one African community or the other. In some other instances there is a sweeping generalisation that does not take cognisance of the possibility of variation of the conception even among African believers and practitioners of witchcraft. Few examples suffice here. These include Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*¹⁶; Debrunner's *Witchcraft in Ghana*¹⁷ and

Bloomhill's *Witchcraft in Africa*⁸, to mention just three.

This apparently is misleading, for the truth is that the belief in witchcraft and other mystical powers is not held by Africans alone. In fact that this issue is discussed elsewhere outside Africa is enough an evidence that witchcraft is a universal human problem¹⁹. In fact Cohn's book, *Europe's Inner Demon* is instructive on this. It has an almost incredible view held about witches by people belonging to a culture that could not be said to have been influenced by Africa either directly or otherwise at that period. Cohn writes:

The witches would form a circle facing outwards, and dance round a witch standing bent over, her head touching the ground with a candle stick in her anus to serve as illumination. The dance would become a frantic and erotic orgy, in which all things including sodomy and incest were permitted. At the end of the orgy, the devil would copulate with every man, woman and child present. Finally, he would bring the sabbat to a close by sending the participants off to their homes with instruction to perform every conceivable maleficium against their neighbours²⁰.

If the above views are correct (there are enough corroborative evidence to that effect) then it would be wrong to think that only Africans hold the belief in witchcraft. One plausible, though not in fact tenable, reason for the ascription of the phenomenon of witchcraft to Africans could stem from the assumption that while the practice is still *dominant* in Africa it is no longer taken seriously in the west. This, we want to say, is some distance away from the truth; that is from the present realities in both western and African societies of today.

Kwasi Wiredu tells us that, "there are numbers of white men in London today who proudly proclaim themselves to be witches"²¹. I don't know of any African today who can do that. I doubt if there is in fact any. But if there are white men who are ready to do that today then Sir Karl Popper is correct in maintaining that: "the magical attitude has by no means disappeared from our (i.e.

Europeans) life"²². Maury Terry could not agree more. In a forward to a book about the prevalent *voodoo* practice in America, aptly titled *The Devil's Web*, she regrets that:

*From virtually every corner of the United States incidents of murder, rape, animal mutilations and graveyard desecrations are being reported with disturbing regularity by the press. Consequently 'adult survival' - victims of generational satanic worships are coming forward to relate their stories of horror, abuse and degradations suffered at the hands of parents and other relations who were members of witchcraft or satanic groups....*²³

What evidence do we need again to be convinced that the belief in witchcraft is not limited to Africa alone! But granted that we have proved this fact, it is still very important to note that our project has in no way found a resting place. To establish the fact, as we have done here, that the belief in witchcraft is held by non-Africans, does not in any way obliterate the genuine philosophical problem about the rationality of such belief. In other words, a particular belief does not get justified on the strength of the number of its adherents, but more on the logic that underlines such belief. But what do people mean when they talk of witches or witchcraft in general? This is the next cloud we want to clear before going to the real problem of justification for the African's belief in witchcraft.

III

The question; who is a witch? has elicited a number of responses. Interestingly some of these responses are far from being complementary to one another. A witch, according to Isaac Funk, is "one who is supposed to have influence and dealings with evil spirits or the devil in order to work spell upon human beings or their belongings"²⁴. The above conception of the witch is virtually the same in all the societies where the belief in witches is prevalent. Hallen and Sodipo have also indicated that among most *westerners* the witch is generally conceived as "a person who is quintessentially

evil, anti-social, hostile and deliberately malicious to other people"²⁵. Added to this is also the common belief that witches are usually, if not always, women and therefore that witchcraft is a "supernatural work contrived between a corporeal old woman and a spiritual devil"²⁶.

It is important to state here that witches are not always conceived as capable of doing evil alone in some African communities. Among the Yoruba people for instance, some witches are said to be *aje rere*, meaning good witches. In fact some old women openly confess to being *aje olomo*; that is the witch that loves children. This category of witches are believed to be capable of using their powers to either *give* children to the childless or protect their loved ones against any possible attack by wicked people. Thus, Mbiti declares that some mystical powers used by witches could be employed for positive ends; for curative, protective, productive and preventive purposes²⁷.

The various conceptions of witchcraft may not elicit discourse of a philosophical interest as such, except that, as already stated, it could help in further clarification of what people mean when they talk of witches and about the phenomenon of witchcraft. Of philosophical interest really is what witches are said to be capable of doing and perhaps more importantly, the ways these activities are believed to be brought about. G. E. Simpson listed quite a good number of phenomena that are usually attributed to the activities of witches. According to his account, witches... it is believed;

*can make women temporarily infertile or permanently barren, cause overdue pregnancy as well as miscarriage, make delivery difficult, induce frightening dreams and sleeplessness, cause a person to 'dry up' or to have headache, stomach ache or other illness, cause blindness, make one lose his job or reduce him to painlessness, bring about madness, suck human blood or kill victims by other means and frustrate any type of human effort*²⁸.

Special note has to be taken of the expression, *cause* which is freely and frequently used in the above quoted passage from Simpson's *Yoruba Religion and Medicine in Ibadan*. The implication here is that witches are *causal agents*. But there is a

problem here because going by Field's observation there is a difference between the "killing or harm by witchcraft" and any other forms of killing or harming persons. The difference here lies in the fact that witchcraft killing is "wrought by the *silent invisible* projection of influence by the witches"²⁹. Put differently, witches are capable of acting "at any distance", just as they are also "capable of turning themselves into other bodily forms"³⁰. They can for instance *change* into animals such as snakes, leopards, cats and even birds. In their various incarnates, it is further believed, witches can travel long distances *instantaneously*. Even sometimes witches do not need to take the form of any animal, they simply turn themselves to "disembodied spirit forms, able to kill or harm victims while their bodies remain in bed"³¹.

All the above claims about the ways witches carry out their "diabolic acts" need to be examined closely. It is important to clarify for instance, what is meant by the expression; *witches turn into other bodily forms*. The question here is; does the witch *change completely* into another body - in which case we would not talk of there being two creatures - a cat and a witch but just either a witch or a cat? It would also be of interest to know if the *transformation* involved here is *partial*; that is whether the witch, as it is sometimes believed, only uses *lower* creatures to run *errands* for them. Awolalu and Dopamu appear to affirm both that the transformation could be partial as well as total. In their book, *West African Traditional Religion* they state, first, that witches "send out their spirits invisibly or through lower creatures to harm or do havoc to persons"³². In the same work they assert that witches "turn into owls, bats or black cats"³³, when they want to perform.

Whichever way one interprets this process of incarnation of witches there would be some far reaching implications for the traditional problem of personal identity. Ordinarily, there are two, among other factors, for which a person's claim to be the same as the one he claims are assessed. The first is the establishment of *physical continuity*. The second is that of *memory*.

Now, if the witch takes the form of another creature which is markedly different from hers, on what basis can one be justified in attributing the activities of this other creature to that of a witch? Can we, the question arises, on sighting the cat or the bat, as the

case may be, say 'this is the witch'? Obviously if the witch takes the form of another creature, assuming this is a possibility, then it would be difficult, if not impossible, to effectively establish a logical connection between the witch and whatever act the creature in question here has committed.

The case of memory is not less problematic. Here the problem is compounded by the fact that it is really difficult to say categorically if the cat supposedly used by a witch has the same memory as that of the witch herself. This is largely because one can hardly communicate with such creatures. But even if communication was possible there would still be problem of establishing the particular witch that is using a particular creature. This is a hard nut to crack no doubt.

But there is even another dimension to the problem arising from the explanation that Bolaji Idowu makes about how witches operate. According to him, "the *spirit leaves* the bodies of the witches in form of a particular kind of bird". The implication here is that, "the operation is the operation of spirits ... while the actual bodies lie asleep in their homes"³⁴. There is really a problem of saying exactly what Idowu means by *spirits*. The Yoruba word which is close in meaning here is *emi*. But *emi* has been interpreted to mean the same thing as soul. If this translation is well taken then what Idowu's assertion would mean in effect is that the body of the witch lies in the bed while the soul (or even the spirit) goes out of the same person. There is a problem here. A person, it is popularly believed, is made up of both the soul (perhaps more appropriately, the mind) and the body. In which case it would be proper to speak of a person only when the two component parts are intact.

Now if the *emi* which is in fact the categorical basis of life³⁵ leaves a body are we to understand here what it would still be possible for the body to continue to be alive? Assertion by both Akin Omoyajowo and Simpson further heightens ones curiosity on this matter. Simpson quotes the healer he claims to have interviewed as saying that; "if a conjurer wishes to kill a witch", all he does is to attract her bird to a cage and kill it"³⁶. Similarly Omoyajowo states that "many wounded animals are said to have been heard crying like human beings before dying"³⁷. What this boils down to is that

it is in fact the aspect of man that gives life-the soul-that leaves the body of the witch. We shall return to this later.

One point that continues to recur in the on-going discourse is the fact that we have earlier noted; which is that witchcraft phenomenon is a spiritual or metaphysical one. Now, we return to our earlier question which is; how can a metaphysical act be the *cause* of a physical *effect*? Further still, how is it possible for a person to harm somebody without having any physical contact with his victim? In short how can a woman who was asleep through out the night be the cause of the snake bite of her enemy; for instance?

There is no doubt about the fact that the above question has arisen largely as a result of what Professor Godwin Sogolo has aptly described as the "widespread mechanistic view of causality". In this circumstance, "when C is said to be the cause of E, a necessary connection is assumed to exist between C and E in accordance with certain scientific principles subsumed under a general law"³⁸. Here, as Marx Born tries to explain the matter in his book, *Natural Philosophy of Cause and Chance*:

...causality postulates that there are laws by which the occurrences of an entity B of a certain class depends on the occurrence of an entity A of another class, when the word entity means physical object, phenomenon, situation or event. A is called the cause, B the effect³⁹.

Born further identifies two *attributes* that are usually put into consideration in any discussion of the notion of causality. In the first place, causality, "postulates that cause must be prior to, or at least simultaneous with, the effect"⁴⁰. This is what he describes as the rule of *antecedent*. The second attribute which he calls the rule of *contiguity*, "postulates that cause and effect must be in *spatial* contact or connected by a chain of intermediate things in contact"⁴¹.

The above view expresses what, to a very large extent, has remained a dominant notion of causality in western philosophy. We must quickly add however that not every western philosopher subscribes to this conception. David Hume for instance, has argued that the belief that "the future will resemble the past is not founded on any arguments of any kind"⁴². Hume contends that such

assumption is "derived entirely from habit by which we expect for the future the same train of objects to which we have been accustomed"⁴³. Philosophers are quite familiar with the arguments which Hume has put up against induction to warrant any further elaboration here. In fact such a discourse would not really make any difference to the issue with which we are concerned in this paper.

We have to note also that, as we shall later try to prove in this paper, some of the general assumptions about the relationship between a *cause* and its *effect* in western philosophy do not apply to what is believed to be the case in African philosophy. For instance, the notion that *only* the physical object, phenomenon, situation and/or event can be the cause of another physical object, phenomenon, situation or event as we shall presently show, is not applicable within the African belief system. Perhaps a better way of stating the same point is that the law which says that cause and effect should belong to the same category does not have the same interpretation in the African context as it is conceived in the west⁴⁴.

The question of which of the two views is superior, if it ever arises, is not our immediate concern here. Let us note the fact however, that the conception of causality in western philosophy is not congruent to the belief in witchcraft as it is held by most African communities. It is basically for this reason that the belief in the existence of witches as more importantly, the type of activities attributed to them have been dubbed *irrational*.

But the question of whether witchcraft belief is rational or not is not less contentious as that of what should count as a generally acceptable criteria of rationality. As Hudson puts the matter; "the word rational and its cognates is notoriously hard to define"⁴⁵. This is so partly because rationality is an evaluative concept: Whenever the question of the rationality of a belief is raised it usually turns out to be an attempt to subject the practice of one culture to the values of another. But as already mentioned the question of whether we can have a super criterion for determining the rationality or otherwise of what is going on in all cultures has not been settled. K.C. Anyanwu has argued this point rather vigorously in his book *The African Experience in the American Marketplace*, when he declares:

I doubt that there is any group for the existence of what one may call an independent logic for deciding the best criteria to use in interpreting all cultures, because cultures have opposing sets of criteria ... there is no culturally neutral logic for assessing all cultures⁴⁸ (my emphasis).

The above view thus narrows down the option left for those who want to discuss the rationality question to two: To either work out a culturally-neutral logic with which to assess all practices or accept that rationality is *culture-dependent* and so could only be assessed in their own rights. In other words, we have to accept a practice as rational in as much as it *coheres* with other beliefs in a particular culture or world-view of a people. By so doing one would not need to venture outside a culture to pronounce judgement on it. It is only by this way that one could avoid the almost inevitable tendency of imposing the prejudice of one culture on the other. Against this background Bruce Cain and W. T. Jones declare that "there is simply no escape from the context-relating of the term rationality"⁴⁷.

Sound as this argument appears it is important to point out, as Femi Otubanjo has observed that:

The problem of assessing the rationality of beliefs in this way is that we are unlikely to find in any system of thought belief which either do not follow or imply some other belief ... It is because of this fact that assessing the rationality of alien beliefs in this way is bound to lead to a dead end, in the sense that all such beliefs will, in fact, be found to be connected with some other beliefs⁴⁸.

The sense in which the foregoing discussions is related to the phenomenon of witchcraft is obvious. In the first place, we have to point that the belief in witchcraft in Africa is apparently a violation of some of the laws of nature in western philosophy⁴⁹. It *violates* for instance, what Born calls the rule of *contiguity* which demands that a cause and its effect must have spatial contact either directly or

indirectly. But in the case of witchcraft acts the witch believed to be the cause of an effect; a snake bite or the death of her neighbour's child, for instance, is usually believed not to have any direct contact with the *victim*. Here we are talking of an old woman who, in Oluwole's words, was demonstrably asleep on her bed through out the night being the cause of an event several distances from her.

Furthermore, it is expected, as earlier mentioned, that as a matter of course, a cause and its effect must belong to the same category; that a physical object or phenomenon must of necessity be the cause of equally physical object or phenomenon. In the case of witchcraft however we have an essentially metaphysical phenomenon said to be the cause of physical ones. It is here that the gap between the belief in witchcraft and western science comes to the fore. And it is this gap that Oluwole says most African authors have not been able to bridge Her words:

If asked, 'how do you know that something not tangible, not scientifically provable is real? - many African authors are silent on this all-important issue⁵⁰.

And in her thinking, "any explanations given by the Africans in support of this claim, must not only be logically sound, it must also be experimentally verifiable"⁵¹. In other words, such claim must "have at least some bearing on experience, otherwise it would forever remain a speculation and a fantasy"⁵².

It is really difficult to understand what Oluwole means by the explanation of witchcraft phenomenon having "bearing on experience" here. If this, means however that one should *practically demonstrate* the link between a witch and the phenomenon she is said to bring about then it would amount to begging the question. For if witchcraft is, as we have noted earlier, a metaphysical phenomenon, it follows that one cannot possibly prove it empirically. But if at the instance of the cry of the witch a child dies, we would on force of a repeated or "constantly conjoined occurrence-have the right to suspect causal relationship. And to strengthen our suspicion we need to prove the constancy by many repetitions"⁵³. It is to the second criterion-logicity of the witchcrafts - phenomenon-that we shall be concerned with presently.

IV

We do not hold any pretension here that one can, within the limited space and in just one paper, dismiss all the arguments that have, over the years, mounted against the belief and practice of witchcraft. If works in this area have become, to borrow from Akingbade so "encyclopaedic in bulk and lunatic in pedantry"⁵⁴, then to attempt to take up the whole strand of opinions in a swoop would amount to fighting on too many fronts. Such battles are seldomly won and when that happens it is usually at the risk of many casualties. We have therefore chosen to fight only on a front.

Perhaps a natural point to start the analysis of the belief in witchcraft among Africans is to first understand the African interpretations of reality. This is so partly because, like many other beliefs, witchcraft is underscored, and so makes sense mainly within the African world-view; it is accommodated within the walls of the possibilities and the impossibilities; in short the reality as it is conceived by Africans.

Let us begin by noting that in Africa hardly is anything believed to happen by mere *chance*⁵⁵. There must be *something* behind every phenomenon. This something which is behind every event is what the Yoruba people call *idi* or *okunfa*. The two expressions translate easily as *cause* in English. Thus, when something beyond the ordinary happens the usual thing is for the Yoruba man to search for the cause-*se iwadi*.

It is important to state here that locating the cause of an event is never the starting point for the explanation of phenomenon among the Yoruba people just as it is also the case in virtually every African community. In other words, *sise iwadi* is usually embarked upon when an event, a situation or phenomenon, does not appear to yield to everyday explanations of things generally. It is usually the last resort. As Olubi Sodipo has explained, when there is an occurrence, a child has taken ill for instance, "every available knowledge among relations of what herbs cures what diseases would have been sought and applied ... But if all these fail, people will begin to feel that 'there was something in the illness...'"⁵⁶

The point we are driving at is simply that *witchcraft* is an explanatory model; a means of explaining away events that do not yield to the everyday life experience. Take for instance, the case of somebody who has died as a result(?) of a collapsed building. Ordinarily, the explanation (the scientific explanation, that is) could be that the structure was weak and so had to give way. There is no doubt that under a normal circumstance if the structure of a building is weak that could result to its collapse. It is also not less true that the weight of the rubbles can kill somebody. From these premises it can easily be concluded that since the structure of the collapsed building was weak at that moment it should be expected that it could fall at any time and also that since the weight of the rubbles from such collapsed building is capable of killing somebody then the victim of such a collapsed building died as result of the weight exerted by the rubbles. But this is purely a scientific explanation which definitely would not be enough to convince someone who beliefs in witchcraft. For such a person, the scientific explanation has not answered the question for example, why that particular building, of all the buildings with weak structures in the neighbourhood, had to collapse; it does not also explain why it had to happen at that particular moment when the victim was inside; why that man? is a common question in such circumstance. Worse still, the scientific explanation above does not also give a clue as to why such a misfortune should befall the victim just few days after he had quarrelled with an old woman whom everybody *knows* to be a witch?

Questions like these are beyond what science *qua* science can effectively answer. It is at this stage that metaphysics takes over from the *physics*; here another level of explanation is thought necessary and so sought. Thus, it is not the case that the people who accuse an old woman of being the *cause* of the death of a child who before his death suffered from malarial fever, do not know that exposure to a brand of mosquito for instance could cause malarial fever. But that having applied all the known medications, which ordinarily have worked for many people with similar ailments to no avail, cannot but conclude that *somebody or something must be behind it*; they are justified to affirm *that, this is not an ordinary fever*.

But if we have arrived at the above conclusion; so what; Does that now justify the rationality of the belief in witchcraft by Africans? Does the fact that a people believe that there must be something or somebody behind a phenomenon mean that there are actually such people behind such phenomenon? And if there are such something or somebody, does it follow that if we establish that fact then the genuine philosophical problem surrounding the belief in witchcraft becomes resolved? We can only answer the last question in the negative for as we have argued in this paper, the problem really is not about the ontological status of witches but rather about the plausibilities, within a generally accepted rule, of the events sometimes ascribed to the activities of witches. The question, to recast our earlier statements, is how to establish the logical connection between a purely metaphysical or spiritual phenomenon and purely physical events they are said to have caused. It is only by finding a plausible explanation to this question that one can then say that the missing link in the belief in witchcraft has been filled.

Now, let us start by asserting that to the Africans, "the spiritual universe is a unit with the physical, and that these two intermingle and dovetail into each other so much that it is not easy, or even necessary, at times to draw the distinction or separate them"⁵⁷. Another way of putting across the same point is to say that, in Africa, every existence is believed to have something in common with every other thing in the universe. It is taken for granted that "every reality possesses life force". By implication therefore, "everything has something in common by virtue of life force"⁵⁸.

The foregoing is underscored by the belief by Africans in the *duality* of every existence. In other words, everything that can be perceived or even conceived of, is believed to possess both its spiritual as well as its non-spiritual aspects. As a result of this dualism, everything that exists is capable of, either on its own, manifesting in any of the two forms, or being manipulated by other higher forces to that effect.

*And due to (these) basic philosophical assumptions, the African maintains that everything is similar and shares the same qualities inspite of visible differences as well as an endless multiplicity of forces*⁵⁹.

It is also important to note that in the universe of forces, things (or better still, forces) can change their forms. It follows that "beyond the mechanical and chemical interactions of forces, there are also the psychical and metaphysical interactions"⁶⁰. The universe of forces is hierarchical in structure. There are, in other words, higher as well as lower forces. Not only is it possible for higher forces to influence lower ones, it is also possible for forces to manifest in more than one way. These are the reasons why it could be possible for a witch to take the form of a cat sometime and at the other to just deal with her victim even from her bed. In all these, the means of operation is spiritual. It is against this background; the background of sharing the same universe of forces; that it is possible for the witch to be able to use her influence on the lesser *life force* of a building for instance, to collapse on her enemy.

In a nut-shell, where space and time, the human and the non-human, the material and the non-material, the physical and the non-physical, the spiritual and the temporal, all partake in the same universe of ever interacting and changing life forces, the apparently impossible peels off freely. It is on this foundation that the belief and practice of witchcraft in Africa is based.

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THE PATHOGENIC IMPACT OF COUPS AND MILITARY RULE ON NIGERIA AND HER ARMED FORCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

Soldiers have illegally commandeered and commanded Nigeria's Politics and government for 24 years (see Table I. Many serious works have been carried out on the causes of military intervention in the politics of nations. Examples include Janowitz (1964)¹, and Huntington (1968)². Dudley (1973)³, and Adekson (1981)⁴ are examples of numerous works that have examined the factors underlying military intervention in Nigeria specifically. But adequate attention has not been given to the important area of the devastating and retrogressive effects of coups and military rule on both the military institution itself and the nation at large, which effects are termed "pathogenic impact" here.

The significance of studies as this at this period of Nigeria's history and political experience can not be over emphasised. It is a strategy of presenting a mirror for the soldiers to have a hard and honest look at themselves and what they are doing to themselves and the Nigerian society, through their incessant coups and military rule, and therefore make a permanent exit from Nigeria's political scene, and keep to their professional and constitutional duty of defence. There is also the need to support the political education and mobilisation⁵ of the Armed forces to end military intervention in Nigeria's politics, especially as the several years of military rule have worsened rather than solved the country's political, social, and economic problems.