

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEO-PAGANISM AND SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DIGITAL-AGE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative philosophical study of Neo-Paganism and Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion, exploring their shared emphasis on subjective spirituality, individual autonomy, and rejection of institutionalized dogma, while also delineating their theological and existential divergences. Neo-Paganism's pluralistic, nature-reverent, and celebratory spirituality contrasts sharply with Kierkegaard's existential Christianity, which stresses radical monotheism, the "leap of faith," and the transformative role of suffering. Drawing on philosophical analysis, the study highlights how both frameworks respond to the challenges and possibilities of digital-age religiosity in Nigeria where spiritual exploration, cultural revival, and ethical concerns intersect in unprecedented ways. The paper argues that Kierkegaard's critique of religious commodification and Neo-Paganism's revivalist ethos offer complementary insights into the digital reconfiguration of faith, especially among Nigerian youths. It concludes by urging a critical yet open engagement with both indigenous and global spiritualities, advocating for an ethical and culturally grounded renaissance of faith in Nigeria's digital era.

Keywords: Neopaganism, Kierkegaard, Christianity, Nigeria, Digital Era, Religion

1.0 Preamble

This topic holds a special place for me, not merely as an academic exercise but as an opportunity to explore how ancient traditions and modern spirituality intersect with timeless philosophical questions. Kierkegaard's writings, in particular, have long served as a source of inspiration and challenge for me, his ideas on subjectivity, truth, and the leap of faith are as relevant today as they were in his own time.

The contemporary resurgence of Neo-Paganism, especially among our youths, raises important questions about identity, meaning, and the search for a sacred connection in an increasingly secular world. Through this paper, my hope is that we not only critically examine these ideas but also leave with a deeper appreciation of their implications for how we live, think, and believe. Let us embark on this philosophical journey together, with open minds and a willingness to engage in the kind of reflective inquiry that Kierkegaard himself would have championed.

This study, therefore, is set to explore the philosophical dimensions of Neo-Paganism through the lens of Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion, revealing both points of harmony and fundamental tension. It argues that while Kierkegaard's existentialist emphasis on subjective faith may validate Neo-Paganism's focus on personal spirituality, his monotheistic framework critiques its theological pluralism and immanent worldview. This comparative analysis illuminates the interplay between existential Christianity and modern spiritual movements, offering insights into the evolving nature of faith and belief especially in our digital age Nigerian society.

2.0 Neo-Paganism: Core Tenets and Philosophical Foundations

Neo-Paganism refers to a contemporary spiritual movement that seeks to revive, reinterpret, or draw inspiration from pre-Christian religious traditions. Its roots can be traced to the Romantic

movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, which celebrated the mysticism and perceived purity of ancient traditions in contrast to industrialization and Enlightenment rationality.¹ The 20th century saw a more structured revival, with figures like Gerald Gardner formalizing Wicca as a modern form of witchcraft and sparking broader interest in pagan practices.² This revival was further influenced by growing interest in folklore, archaeology, and esotericism, as well as dissatisfaction with institutionalized religion. Neo-Paganism emerged as a way to reconnect with nature, honour ancient deities, and celebrate seasonal cycles, fostering a holistic and pluralistic approach to spirituality.³ A practical manifestation of neo-paganism is the current return to African Traditional Religion by our youth as observed in many Igbo communities today.

It is important to note that Neo-Paganism is not a monolithic tradition but a diverse and evolving spiritual landscape. Some of its prominent expressions include: (a) Wicca: A modern pagan witchcraft tradition emphasizing duotheism (the God and Goddess), rituals aligned with the lunar and solar cycles, and practices rooted in magic and personal empowerment. (b) Druidry: Inspired by ancient Celtic practices, modern Druidry emphasizes reverence for nature, poetic inspiration, and a deep connection to the Earth and its cycles. (c) Heathenry: Also known as Ásatrú, this tradition revives Norse paganism, focusing on the worship of deities as well as values such as honour, community, and ancestral veneration. And (d) Eclectic Practices: Many Neo-Pagans adopt an eclectic approach, blending elements from various traditions to create personalized spiritual paths. This flexibility reflects the movement's emphasis on individual autonomy and creativity.⁴ Neo-Paganism's diversity is one of its defining characteristics, making it accessible to a wide range of practitioners while fostering a shared commitment to spiritual exploration and reverence for the natural world.

2.1 Basic Tenets of Neo-Paganism

Neo-Paganism encompasses a wide range of spiritual practices and beliefs, unified by core principles that emphasize a deep connection with the natural world, personal spirituality, and communal rituals.

i. Reverence for Nature and the Divine Feminine

A foundational aspect of Neo-Paganism is the veneration of nature as sacred. Practitioners often view the Earth and its ecosystems as imbued with spiritual significance, promoting ecological awareness and sustainable living.⁵ Alongside this, many Neo-Pagan traditions emphasize the divine feminine, celebrating goddesses as representations of fertility, creativity, and the cyclical nature of life. This focus on the divine feminine contrasts with patriarchal religious frameworks, offering a more inclusive spiritual paradigm⁶

ii. Polytheism and Animism

Polytheism is central to many Neo-Pagan traditions, involving the worship or acknowledgment of multiple deities, often derived from ancient pantheons such as the Greek, Norse, or Celtic. Animism, the belief that all entities—plants, animals, rocks, and natural phenomena—possess a spiritual essence, is also prevalent. This worldview fosters a holistic relationship with the environment, treating all life forms as interconnected and sacred⁷. A very typical example of the polytheistic and animistic nature of neo-paganism in our immediate environment is the African Traditional Religions.

iii. Ritual and Community-Centered Spirituality

Rituals play a central role in Neo-Paganism, serving as a means of celebrating seasonal cycles, marking life transitions, and fostering communal bonds. These

rituals not only strengthen community ties but also affirm the spiritual significance of natural cycles.⁸

iv. Emphasis on Personal Spiritual Experience and Autonomy

Neo-Paganism places a strong emphasis on individual autonomy and the personal nature of spiritual experience. Practitioners are encouraged to craft their spiritual paths, drawing from diverse traditions and practices that resonate with their beliefs. This focus on personal spirituality reflects a broader rejection of dogmatic structures and promotes a flexible, inclusive approach to faith.⁹

These tenets collectively define Neo-Paganism as a dynamic and adaptable spiritual movement, offering practitioners a profound sense of connection to both the natural world and their inner selves.

2.2 Philosophical Foundations of Neo-Paganism

Neo-Paganism's philosophical underpinnings reflect a synthesis of historical, cultural, and intellectual influences, rooted in Romanticism, postmodernism, and ecological thought, while rejecting rigid dogmatic structures in favour of subjective spirituality.

i. Influence of Romanticism, Postmodernism, and Ecological Thought

Romanticism played a pivotal role in shaping Neo-Paganism by championing the idea of reconnecting with nature and ancient traditions. Romantic thinkers like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Wordsworth celebrated the sublime in nature, inspiring a spiritual framework that values personal experience over institutional authority.¹⁰ Postmodernism further influenced Neo-Paganism by challenging the idea of

absolute truths and universal religious doctrines. Postmodern thought emphasizes pluralism, subjectivity, and the validity of multiple spiritual paths, aligning with Neo-Paganism's eclectic and inclusive nature.¹¹ The modern ecological movement has also deeply informed Neo-Pagan philosophy. Neo-Paganism shares the environmental ethos that emphasizes humanity's interdependence with the Earth. This ecological focus encourages sustainable practices and a reverence for the natural world as inherently sacred.¹²

ii. Rejection of Dogmatic Structures in Favour of Subjective Spirituality

Central to Neo-Paganism is a rejection of hierarchical and dogmatic religious structures. Unlike institutionalized religions that prioritize fixed doctrines, Neo-Paganism values subjective spirituality, allowing practitioners to explore and create personalized spiritual paths.¹³ This approach aligns with the broader shift in contemporary spirituality toward individual autonomy and experiential faith.

Through embracing subjective spirituality, Neo-Paganism encourages practitioners to draw inspiration from diverse traditions while maintaining a personal connection to the divine. This fluidity reflects a broader philosophical commitment to authenticity and self-discovery, reinforcing its appeal in a pluralistic and postmodern world.

3.0 Søren Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion

Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion emphasizes the existential dimensions of faith, focusing on the subjective nature of truth, the need for an individual "leap of faith," and the stages of life that define human spiritual development. His views on these core concepts offer a profound critique of both institutionalized

religion and secular philosophy, placing the individual at the centre of religious experience. Let us briefly highlight some points in his philosophy:

i. The Subjective Nature of Truth: "Truth is Subjectivity"

For Kierkegaard, truth is not something external to be objectively discovered but is rather a subjective experience rooted in the individual's inner life. He famously declares that "truth is subjectivity," meaning that the most profound truths, particularly those relating to religion, are understood only through personal engagement and commitment.¹⁴ This stance is crucial for his critique of established systems that prioritize objective, abstract knowledge over personal, lived experience. The individual's subjective encounter with the divine is paramount, as only through this personal relation can one come to know God.

ii. The Concept of the "Leap of Faith" and Existential Choice

One of Kierkegaard's most famous ideas is the "leap of faith," which refers to the decision to believe in God despite the irrationality and paradoxes inherent in religious belief. Kierkegaard argues that faith requires an existential choice, a leap beyond rationality and certainty.¹⁵ This leap is not a mere intellectual assent but an existential commitment that requires courage and passion, as it entails accepting paradoxes, such as the belief in the divine incarnation. For Kierkegaard, this leap is the essence of true Christianity.

iii. Stages of Life: The Aesthetic, the Ethical, and the Religious

Kierkegaard's developmental theory of life is divided into three stages: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. In the aesthetic stage, individuals live for sensory pleasure and immediate gratification, seeking meaning in fleeting experiences. The ethical stage marks a transition to responsibility, duty, and moral commitment, where the individual takes on societal roles and obligations. However, it is the religious stage that represents the highest form of existence, where the individual confronts the paradox of faith in the divine and makes a commitment to God despite the impossibility of fully understanding divine truth. The religious stage, for Kierkegaard, is where true authenticity and spiritual fulfillment lie.

iv. Relationship with God as an Absolute, Individual Experience

Kierkegaard insists that the relationship between the individual and God is absolute and non-negotiable. It is not mediated by church institutions or social norms but is a deeply personal encounter between the self and the divine. This relationship involves a profound sense of awe, reverence, and existential commitment, with the individual facing their own limitations and the "absolute paradox" of God's existence as both transcendent and immanent.¹⁶ Kierkegaard's focus on the individual's relationship with God places him in contrast to religious systems that emphasize collective rituals and beliefs, positioning the solitary act of faith as central to his philosophy.

3.1 Kierkegaard's Critique of Institutionalized Religion

Søren Kierkegaard is perhaps most renowned for his scathing critique of institutionalized religion, particularly the established church in 19th-century Denmark, which he regarded as having deviated from authentic Christianity. His opposition to Christendom and the commodification of faith are central to his philosophy of religion, highlighting his advocacy for a deeply personal and inward relationship with the divine.

3.1.1 Opposition to Christendom and the Commodification of Faith

Kierkegaard's critique of Christendom, as he calls it, was rooted in his belief that the church had become a secular institution more concerned with social control and cultural conformity than with the radical demands of true Christian faith. For Kierkegaard, the church had diluted Christianity, turning it into an easily accessible, culturally acceptable system that offered comfort without requiring genuine personal commitment.¹⁷ In his work *The Present Age*, he criticizes the “mob mentality” and how religion had become a matter of public opinion rather than a serious, existential commitment to God.¹⁸ He sees the church's institutionalization of faith as a form of commodification, where religion is marketed as a product, packaged in predictable rituals and doctrines, and offered without the necessity of individual transformation.

Kierkegaard condemns the way in which Christianity had been reduced to a mere societal convention, thereby losing its true essence as a faith that demands personal sacrifice and an encounter with the paradox of divine transcendence. For him, faith should be something that challenges and disrupts the individual, not something that can be passively adopted as part of the social fabric. This critique of Christendom reflects his broader existential concern with authenticity, true faith requires a passionate,

individual engagement with the divine that is not mediated by social or institutional forces.

3.1.2 Advocacy for a Personal and Inward Relationship with the Divine

In stark contrast to institutionalized religion, Kierkegaard advocates for a deeply personal, inward relationship with God. He insists that true Christian faith cannot be institutionalized or made a matter of public display. It requires the individual to confront their own despair, sin, and limitations before entering into a direct relationship with the divine.¹⁹ For Kierkegaard, this inward journey is the essence of faith, and it involves a subjective commitment to the paradox of Christian truth, the belief that God became incarnate in the human form of Jesus Christ.

This inward relationship is essential for Kierkegaard's concept of "authentic" Christianity. Rather than participating in public rituals or subscribing to doctrinal systems, the individual must experience faith as an internal, existential decision. Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism places the individual at the centre of religious experience, where personal commitment to God transcends external forms of worship or ecclesiastical authority. For him, faith is not an abstract, communal idea but a personal, transformative act that occurs in the solitude of the self, requiring constant vigilance and introspection.

4.0 Neo-Paganism and Kierkegaardian Thought: A Comparative Analysis

While Neo-Paganism and Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion may differ significantly in terms of metaphysical beliefs and religious frameworks, there are key philosophical similarities that link them, particularly in their emphasis on subjective spirituality, individual autonomy, and the rejection of institutionalized dogma. These commonalities suggest potential points of convergence, despite the differing religious contexts. Let

us take a look at their similarities and thereafter highlight their differences.

4.1 Similarities

i. **Emphasis on Subjective Spiritual Experience and Individual Autonomy**

Both Neo-Paganism and Kierkegaard's thought place the individual at the centre of spiritual experience. In Neo-Paganism, the focus on personal spiritual autonomy allows practitioners to craft their own paths, often blending elements from different traditions and rituals that resonate with their personal beliefs.²⁰ This emphasis on individual agency aligns with Kierkegaard's existential view that truth is subjective and that religious faith must be a personal, inward journey.²¹ For both, authentic spirituality is not something imposed from without but something that emerges from within the individual – *mu na chi m* (my God and I).

ii. **Rejection of Rigid Dogma in Favour of Personal Engagement with the Divine**

Kierkegaard's critique of institutionalized religion emphasizes the need for a direct, personal relationship with God, free from the trappings of ecclesiastical dogma and societal conventions.²² Similarly, Neo-Paganism rejects the idea of rigid, monolithic belief systems, advocating for a flexible, decentralized approach to spirituality. Instead of adhering to prescribed doctrines, practitioners engage with the divine in ways that are deeply personal, intuitive, and experiential.²³ Both traditions challenge the notion that true spirituality is mediated by established institutions

or fixed religious authorities, favouring instead a direct and often experiential relationship with the sacred.

iii. Focus on Lived Experience and Authenticity in Spiritual Practice

Both Kierkegaard's philosophy and Neo-Paganism emphasize the importance of lived experience and authenticity in spiritual practice. Kierkegaard argues that religious faith must be lived authentically, transcending intellectual assent to become an existential commitment that shapes the individual's entire life.²⁴ Similarly, Neo-Paganism prioritizes spiritual practices that are felt and lived rather than doctrinally learned or externally imposed. Rituals, celebrations, and personal experiences in nature are central to Neo-Pagan practices, emphasizing embodied spirituality that connects the practitioner to the divine and to the natural world.²⁵ Both traditions share a commitment to spiritual practices that are not just intellectually understood but actively embodied and authentically lived out.

4.2 Differences

Despite certain philosophical overlaps, the theological and existential differences between Neo-Paganism and Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy are significant, particularly concerning the nature of the divine, the role of suffering, and the ultimate concern of human life. These differences reveal the distinct orientations of each system, one grounded in polytheism and immanence, and the other in radical monotheism and existential tension.

i. Theological Differences: Polytheism vs. Kierkegaard's Radical Monotheism

One of the most striking differences between Neo-Paganism and Kierkegaard's thought is their respective views on the nature of the divine. Neo-Paganism, with

its polytheistic and animistic worldview, acknowledges the existence of multiple deities and divine forces that manifest in nature and the cosmos.²⁶ Practitioners may worship deities from various traditions, each representing different aspects of life, nature, and human experience.

In contrast, Kierkegaard adheres to a radical monotheism, placing the Christian God at the centre of his theological framework. For Kierkegaard, God is the absolute, transcendent, and paradoxical being, most profoundly revealed through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who bridges the infinite and the finite.²⁷ This monotheistic and personal conception of God is diametrically opposed to the polytheistic and nature-cantered spirituality found in Neo-Paganism, reflecting a fundamental divergence in their religious outlooks.

ii. Kierkegaard's Emphasis on Suffering and the "Leap of Faith" vs. Neo-Paganism's Celebratory and Immanent Approach to the Divine

Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion places a heavy emphasis on suffering, existential anxiety, and the "leap of faith" as the necessary path to spiritual transformation. According to Kierkegaard, true faith requires embracing paradoxes, enduring suffering, and making an existential commitment to God in the face of uncertainty.²⁸ This process involves confronting the self's sinfulness and limitations and making a radical choice to believe in the divine despite the irrationality of faith. The "leap of faith" is a leap into the unknown, fraught with personal anguish and existential tension. In stark contrast, Neo-Paganism tends to focus on the celebration of life, nature, and the divine in its

immanent, tangible forms. Rituals often emphasize joy, creativity, and connection to the cycles of nature, such as the changing seasons and lunar phases.²⁹ Rather than engaging with suffering as a necessary aspect of spiritual growth, Neo-Paganism embraces a more celebratory, life-affirming approach to the divine, where the sacred is found in the here and now, and in the natural world's perpetual cycles. This difference highlights a more optimistic, immanent spirituality in Neo-Paganism compared to Kierkegaard's existential, often sombre view of faith.

iii. Kierkegaard's Ultimate Concern with Eternal Salvation Compared to Neo-Paganism's Focus on Earthly and Cyclical Spirituality

Another key divergence lies in the ultimate concern of each tradition. Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism is concerned primarily with the individual's eternal salvation, positioning the afterlife as the ultimate end toward which human existence is directed.³⁰ For Kierkegaard, religious commitment is tied to the hope of eternal union with God and redemption from sin. The choices made in this life have eternal consequences, and faith is the means by which one navigates the tension between the finite and the infinite.

In contrast, Neo-Paganism tends to emphasize earthly, cyclical spirituality. While concepts of the afterlife may vary, many Neo-Pagans are more concerned with living harmoniously with nature and embracing the cyclical rhythms of life, death, and rebirth. Their spirituality often reflects a more immediate concern with the present, focusing on rituals, seasonal celebrations, and personal spiritual development rather than an overriding concern with salvation or eternal life.³¹ This focus on

the temporal, cyclical nature of existence stands in contrast to Kierkegaard's focus on eternal and transcendent spiritual goals.

5.0 Implications of This Study for a Digital-Age Nigeria

The rapid evolution of Nigeria into a digitally interconnected society has brought both innovation and disruption to traditional religious experiences. Social media, algorithm-driven content, virtual communities, and on-demand access to religious materials have altered the terrain of religious expression and identity. In this dynamic context, the resurgence of Neo-Pagan spiritualities and Søren Kierkegaard's existential theology present significant interpretive frameworks. Together, they shed light on the shifting spiritual topography and offer tools for engaging the challenges and possibilities of digital-era faith in Nigeria. Below are some of the implications:

i. Digital Interfaith Dialogue

The internet offers unprecedented opportunities for interfaith exchange and cooperation in Nigeria, a country known for its complex religious demography. Neo-Paganism, with its emphasis on pluralism, decentralized authority, and respect for varied spiritual paths, promotes dialogical openness in online spaces. Kierkegaard, in contrast, emphasizes the interiority of faith and the "individual before God," advocating for sincerity over orthodoxy.³² This dual lens can be instrumental in shaping Nigerian digital platforms that encourage respectful interfaith dialogue while preserving individual authenticity. Social media platforms, blogs, and online forums could serve as virtual sacred spaces that reflect both communal respect and personal conviction.

ii. Navigating Digital Religious Pluralism

Nigeria's religious landscape is historically pluralistic, but the digital medium often exacerbates theological conflicts through

anonymous aggression and rapid information dissemination. Kierkegaard's critique of Christendom and religious hypocrisy provides a useful critique of digital-age performative religiosity. His call to authenticity challenges individuals to examine whether their online expressions of faith are rooted in personal conviction or public performance.³³ Similarly, Neo-Paganism's resistance to hegemonic truth claims encourages inclusivity and mutual tolerance, which could mitigate religiously charged content on Nigerian social media. This dual approach discourages digital dogmatism and supports civil religious coexistence.

iii. Digital Individualism and Faith Exploration

One of the hallmarks of digital culture is the valorisation of individual expression. Nigerian youths, increasingly disengaged from institutional religion, turn to the internet for spiritual exploration. Kierkegaard's notion of the "leap of faith" speaks directly to such journeys — a subjective and risky commitment to a truth that cannot be rationally justified but is deeply personal.³⁴ Likewise, Neo-Paganism allows for eclectic, intuitive, and experience-based spirituality, resonating with users who construct their faith identities via podcasts, YouTube rituals, and digital divination tools. These frameworks validate individual spiritual quests and caution against shallow consumerism by urging commitment and reverence.

iv. Digital Preservation of Indigenous Religions

Indigenous Nigerian religions face existential threats in the face of global religious hegemony and cultural loss. Yet the digital age offers tools for their documentation, revival, and reinterpretation. Neo-Paganism, which often entails the revitalization of ancient, nature-based religions in the West, offers conceptual tools for appreciating African Traditional Religions (ATRs) without exoticizing or commodifying them.³⁵ Online archives, digital storytelling, and virtual rituals could help preserve endangered

spiritual practices, affirming cultural identity and historical continuity in Nigeria's digital ecosystem.

v. Digital Syncretism and Authenticity

Syncretism, the blending of religious traditions, is a longstanding feature of Nigerian religiosity. The internet, however, accelerates this process through access to diverse religious materials. Kierkegaard offers a helpful warning here. For him, authentic faith requires a subjective encounter with the divine, not a shallow accumulation of eclectic doctrines.³⁶ Therefore, digital spiritual seekers in Nigeria must be wary of reducing faith to a buffet of rituals. Neo-Pagan perspectives can complement this by encouraging respectful synthesis rather than appropriation. Together, they advocate for spiritually coherent and ethically grounded syncretism in a hyperlinked world.

vi. Digital Spiritual Pluralism and National Unity

Nigeria's future stability depends partly on religious tolerance and interfaith harmony. Digital platforms can serve as national resources for showcasing the country's religious diversity. By highlighting shared values, such as respect for nature, community, and transcendence, Neo-Paganism and Kierkegaardian thought can contribute to a more inclusive national identity. However, these benefits depend on the cultivation of digital ethics. Online spaces must be moderated to prevent hate speech and promote authentic, respectful engagement. Nigerian educational institutions, faith communities, and tech developers all have roles to play in realizing these ideals.

6.0 Concluding Reflection

The philosophies of Neo-Pagan pluralism and Kierkegaardian individualism offer timely and profound contributions to Nigeria's digital-age religious discourse. They support frameworks of tolerance, authenticity, and cultural continuity that are vital in

navigating the promises and perils of digital religiosity. In practice, their implications call for new forms of spiritual education, ethical content moderation, and cultural preservation efforts that align with both traditional values and technological realities.

So far, this study has explored the philosophical dimensions of Neo-Paganism in the light of Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion, revealing points of harmony and divergence between these two spiritual paradigms. Having analysed the subjective nature of truth, the emphasis on individual autonomy, and the role of lived experience in both frameworks, this study has shown how each tradition contributes uniquely to the broader understanding of spirituality.

Neo-Paganism's focus on nature reverence, pluralism, and celebration of the divine offers a vibrant contrast to Kierkegaard's existential Christianity, with its radical monotheism, inward faith, and emphasis on transcendence. Yet, both share a commitment to authenticity in spiritual practice, challenging rigid dogmatic systems and advocating for personal engagement with the sacred. This study highlights the potential for Kierkegaard's framework to critique Neo-Paganism's lack of transcendence while simultaneously inviting Neo-Paganism's celebratory ethos to address the existential weight of Kierkegaardian faith. These interactions underscore the richness of inter-traditional dialogue in exploring the universal human quest for meaning, community, and connection to the divine.

In Nigerian digital context, this study offers critical insights into addressing religious pluralism, revitalizing Indigenous spiritual practices, and promoting a more inclusive, authentic approach to faith. It encourages a re-evaluation of spiritual traditions not as competitors but as complementary sources of wisdom that can enrich both individual and communal life.

Very importantly, this study calls for proper African Cultural Renaissance.³⁷ It is important to note here that in the light of Kierkegaard and Neo-Paganism's emphasis on personal engagement with the divine, one must realize that any religious act that contradicts the general good should be resisted both by the government and the people. Such religious acts like *Okeite* that require the killing of human life or the use of human parts for sacrifice should be vehemently rejected. Religious spirituality should be practiced in line with practical reason. We must note that harmful religious practices not only violate ethical principles but also undermine the moral fabric of society. Acts involving human sacrifice, forced initiations, and ritual killings as propagated on the internet are incompatible with the principles of human dignity and social cohesion. Some scholars like Okebukola, Shyllon, Aderinto, Omorovie and Onyima have stressed the need for a balance between cultural preservation and human rights.³⁸

It is pertinent to note at this point that both Kierkegaard and Neo-Paganism call for a deeper engagement with the sacred in personal and culturally meaningful ways. Kierkegaard's emphasis on existential authenticity challenges digital-era Nigerians to confront despair, distraction, and alienation with sincerity and depth. Neo-Paganism's revival of indigenous cosmologies invites a rediscovery of communal memory, nature, and holistic living. The Nigerian digital landscape, though complex and often polarizing, is a site of philosophical and religious reawakening. However, this reawakening must be grounded in critical inquiry, ethical clarity, and personal accountability if it is to enrich rather than fragment the nation's spiritual consciousness. As I strongly argued elsewhere and as we make efforts to engage with the sacred, we have to learn to apply the principle of *Critical Inquiry Before Belief* (CIBB).³⁹ We must not swallow everything we read or watch on the internet. Finally, I wish to emphasise that promoting ethical religious practices that align with contemporary human rights frameworks is

essential for the collective well-being of a digital-age Nigerian society. Faith communities should encourage spiritual expressions that uphold human dignity, justice, and peace. This study contributes to the ongoing philosophical conversations about the nature of faith, autonomy, and transcendence in an increasingly pluralistic and interconnected world such as Nigeria. It is my strong submission that bridging the gap between Neo-Paganism and Kierkegaardian thought, will open new avenues for understanding the interplay between digital-age spiritual movements and existential religious philosophy that will foster mutual respect and deeper engagement across diverse traditions.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94.

² Ibid., 205

³ Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Revised Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 22.

⁴ Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 56.

⁵ Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* Revised Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 67.

⁶ Hutton, 213

⁷ Pike, 82

⁸ Adler, 112

⁹ Hutton, 276

¹⁰ Ibid., 92

¹¹ Pike, 110

¹² Adler, 68

¹³ Hutton, 273

¹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 129.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 55.

¹⁶ C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1992), 102.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 42

¹⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 122.

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 85

²⁰ Pike, 57

²¹ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 129

²² Evans, 102

²³ Adler, 56

²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 55

²⁵ Pike, 64

²⁶ Ibid., 82

²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 95

²⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 172

²⁹ Adler, 112

³⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 68

³¹ Pike, 123

³² Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 39

³³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 68.

³⁴ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 54

³⁵ Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York: NYU Press, 2003), 87.

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