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DESTINY, AUTONOMY, AND THE ETHICS OF EUTHANASIA IN YORUBA CULTURE

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Abstract
Contemporary debates on euthanasia are largely shaped by Western bioethical frameworks that prioritize individual autonomy and self-determination. Within this paradigm, voluntary euthanasia is frequently justified as an expression of rational agency and personal control over suffering. However, such arguments presuppose a metaphysical conception of the self as autonomous and self-owning an assumption that is not universally shared. This paper examines the Yoruba concept of *Ori* (destiny) as a metaphysical foundation for rethinking end-of-life ethics. In Yoruba cosmology, the human person is constituted by *ara* (body), *emi* (spirit), and *Ori* (inner head), with *Ori* functioning as the bearer of pre-chosen destiny and the spiritual core of personal identity. By analyzing the metaphysical and ethical implications of *Ori*, this study argues that life, within Yoruba thought, is not an absolute personal property but a divinely mediated trust embedded in cosmic order. Consequently, autonomy-based justifications for euthanasia are philosophically destabilized within this framework. While Yoruba thought recognizes moral agency, such agency operates within the constraints of destiny and communal harmony. Through conceptual analysis and comparative engagement with contemporary bioethics, this paper demonstrates that *Ori* offers a distinct normative perspective capable of enriching global euthanasia discourse and expanding the philosophical scope of intercultural bioethics.

Keywords: Ori, Yoruba Cosmology, Euthanasia, African Bioethics, Destiny and Moral Agency.

Introduction
Debates surrounding euthanasia have remained among the most controversial issues in contemporary bioethics. At the center of these debates lies the principle of autonomy, the

idea that competent individuals possess the moral right to determine the course and termination of their own lives. Proponents of voluntary euthanasia often argue that self-determination, freedom from unbearable suffering, and control over one's dying process justify assisted death under certain conditions. Within dominant Western bioethical discourse, the individual is typically conceived as a self-owning, rational agent whose choices carry ultimate moral authority[1]. However, this autonomy-centered framework presupposes a particular metaphysical understanding of the self, one that may not be universally shared across cultures. African philosophical traditions, and particularly Yoruba metaphysics, offer an alternative account of personhood and moral responsibility that complicates autonomy-based defenses of euthanasia. In Yoruba cosmology, the human person is not merely a biological organism endowed with rational choice; rather, the person is understood as a composite being constituted by ara (body), *emi* (life-force or spirit), and *ori* (inner head or destiny bearer)[2]. Among these elements, *Ori* occupies a uniquely significant position. It is widely regarded as the bearer of destiny, the metaphysical core of personal identity, and the spiritual principle that guides an individual's life trajectory[3]. The belief that one chooses one's destiny before birth, kneeling before *Olodumare* to select an *Ori* introduces a profound metaphysical dimension to questions about life, suffering, and death.

If life is the unfolding of a pre-chosen destiny, then the ethical permissibility of intentionally ending that life becomes philosophically complex. Does voluntary euthanasia represent an exercise of moral agency, or does it constitute a disruption of a divinely sanctioned destiny? Can one legitimately terminate a life whose course is metaphysically grounded in *Ori*? These questions have received limited attention within global bioethical scholarship, which often marginalizes indigenous African metaphysical frameworks. As Olusegun Oladipo observes, African philosophy has frequently been treated as anthropological curiosity rather than a source of normative theory[4]. Consequently, the ethical implications of *Ori* for end-of-life decision-making remain underexplored. Furthermore, Yoruba ethics is deeply communal. Moral action is evaluated not solely by individual preference but by its harmony with cosmic order and communal well-being. The concept of *iwa* (character) underscores moral responsibility within a relational universe[5]. Ending one's life, therefore, may not be interpreted simply as a personal decision but as an act with metaphysical and social consequences. If existence is interwoven with ancestral continuity, divine ordinance, and communal identity, then the moral meaning of euthanasia must be reconsidered beyond individual autonomy.

This paper argues that the Yoruba concept of *Ori* fundamentally challenges autonomy-based justifications for euthanasia. By grounding personhood in a destiny-bearing metaphysical principle, Yoruba cosmology reframes life not as absolute personal property but as a divinely mediated trust embedded within cosmic order. While this framework does not eliminate human agency, it constrains the moral legitimacy of intentionally terminating one's destiny. Through conceptual analysis of *Ori* and critical engagement with contemporary euthanasia debates, this study seeks to contribute an indigenous African

[1] Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 7th ed., Oxford University Press, 2013. 101.

[2] Abimbola, Wande. *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*. Oxford University Press, 1976. 73.

[3] Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. Longman, 1962. 110.

[4] Oladipo, Olusegun. *Philosophy and the African Experience*. Hope Publications, 1993. 42.

[5] Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. Peter Lang, 1991. 56.

metaphysical perspective to global bioethics discourse. By bringing Yoruba cosmology into conversation with contemporary end-of-life ethics, this paper does not merely compare cultures; it proposes that African metaphysical thought can generate normative insights capable of reshaping global ethical debates. In doing so, it participates in the broader project of decolonizing bioethics and affirming the philosophical depth of African traditions.

Euthanasia and the Autonomy Paradigm

Euthanasia, broadly defined, refers to the intentional ending of a person's life in order to relieve suffering. In bioethical discourse, distinctions are commonly made between voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia, as well as between active and passive forms. Voluntary euthanasia occurs when a competent individual explicitly requests assistance in dying. Active euthanasia involves a direct act such as administering a lethal injection intended to cause death. Passive euthanasia, by contrast, refers to withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment, allowing death to occur through underlying illness. In contemporary Western bioethics, these distinctions are central because they frame the moral debate in terms of consent, intention, and agency rather than metaphysical or theological considerations.[6] At the heart of modern arguments in favor of euthanasia lies the principle of autonomy. Within the dominant framework articulated by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, autonomy is understood as the capacity for self-governance, that is, an individual's ability to make informed, voluntary, and intentional decisions about their own body and life. Respect for autonomy requires that competent individuals be permitted to determine the course of their medical treatment, even when such decisions may result in death. From this perspective, assisted dying is often defended as a logical extension of the same ethical principle that justifies a patient's right to refuse unwanted or life-sustaining medical interventions.

The autonomy paradigm has deep philosophical roots in liberal political theory and modern conceptions of personhood. In John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, the harm principle asserts that individuals are sovereign over their own bodies and minds, provided they do not harm others.[7] Contemporary defenders of euthanasia frequently appeal to this vision of self-sovereignty: if a person's continued existence entails unbearable suffering, and if the decision affects primarily the self, then denying assisted dying appears as a violation of personal liberty. The body becomes a domain of ownership; life, a possession over which the individual exercises final authority. Closely tied to autonomy is the notion of self-ownership. This idea presumes that the individual is the primary proprietor of his or her life. Within such a framework, choosing death under certain conditions is interpreted not as self-destruction but as a rational exercise of agency. Legal developments in countries such as Canada and Netherlands reflect this shift, where medical assistance in dying has been institutionalized under carefully regulated conditions. The moral justification rests less on metaphysical claims about life's sacredness and more on procedural safeguards ensuring voluntariness, competence, and informed consent. Yet the autonomy paradigm rests upon particular metaphysical assumptions. It presumes that the self is fundamentally independent, self-originating, and morally authoritative over its own existence. The individual is conceived as an isolated moral unit whose primary obligations concern personal well-being and chosen values. Social or cosmic dimensions of existence may inform decisions, but they do not ultimately override individual choice. Death, within this framework, becomes an option that

[6] Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 8th ed., Oxford UP, 2019. 101.
[7] Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. 1859. Hackett Publishing, 1978. 10.

may be legitimately selected when continued existence no longer aligns with one's conception of dignity.

For comparative purposes, it is important not to overstate the uniformity of Western bioethics. Even within liberal societies, debates persist about the limits of autonomy, the protection of vulnerable populations, and the symbolic meaning of legalized assisted dying. Nevertheless, autonomy remains the dominant moral language through which euthanasia is defended. The ethical question is framed as: does the individual have the right to decide when and how to die? This framing becomes philosophically unstable when placed alongside worldviews that do not conceive the self as metaphysically autonomous. If personhood is not self-grounding but cosmically situated, if life is not owned but entrusted, then the moral authority to terminate life may not rest solely with the individual. The autonomy paradigm assumes that destiny, if it exists at all, is subordinate to choice. But what happens when destiny precedes and structures choice itself? The tension thus emerges sharply: what becomes of euthanasia if the self is not sovereign but destiny-bound? If life is embedded within a pre-existing cosmic order, then assisted dying may represent not merely a personal decision but an interruption of a larger metaphysical trajectory. To assess this tension, we must turn to a framework in which the self is not defined primarily by autonomy but by destiny namely, the concept of Ori within Yoruba cosmology.

Ori in Yoruba Cosmology

To understand how euthanasia appears from within Yoruba thought, one must first grasp the metaphysical structure that underpins Yoruba conceptions of personhood, destiny, and moral responsibility. Unlike the liberal individualism that grounds the autonomy paradigm, Yoruba cosmology situates the human person within a layered and relational universe ordered by divine reality, ancestral continuity, and metaphysical interdependence. Personhood is not merely an individual attribute but a moral and communal status shaped by relationships, social roles, and ethical responsibility within the community.[8] Furthermore, the concept of *ori* (inner head/destiny) reveals that human existence is deeply embedded in a cosmological framework in which destiny, agency, and moral conduct are interconnected, requiring individuals to align their actions with a pre-existing metaphysical order.[9] Thus, the Yoruba worldview resists purely individualistic interpretations of life and death, instead framing human existence as part of a broader cosmic and moral continuum.

Yoruba metaphysics conceives reality as composed of interrelated realms: the visible world (*ayé*) and the invisible or spiritual realm (*òrun*). These are not radically separate domains but interpenetrating dimensions of a single cosmic order. At the apex of existence stands Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being, source of all *àṣẹ*, the vital force or power that makes action and existence possible. Beneath *Olódùmarè* are the *òrìṣà*, divinities who mediate between the transcendent and human spheres. Human beings participate in both realms simultaneously; they are embodied in *ayé* yet spiritually rooted in *òrun*.[10] This ontological structure is neither dualistic in the Cartesian sense nor materialistic in the modern Western sense. Rather, it is relational and hierarchical. Existence is purposive, and each being

[8] Fasiku, Gbenga Cornelius, and Mark Adejoh. "Artificial Intelligence and the Concept of Personhood in Yoruba Culture: Exploring the Future of Social Roles in Yoruba Society." *Journal of Philosophy, Policy and Strategic Studies*, vol. 3, 2025, pp. 5.

[9] Onifade, Abayomi Temitayo. "Revisiting Ori: Human Destiny and Human Agency in Yoruba Thought System." *International Journal of African Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2025, pp. 41–42.

[10] Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. Longman, 1962. 34.

occupies a role within the cosmic harmony sustained by *àṣẹ*. Human life, therefore, is not an isolated biological phenomenon but part of a divinely structured moral universe.

The Meaning of Ori

Within this metaphysical framework, the concept of *Ori* occupies a central place. Literally translated as "head," Ori has both physical and metaphysical dimensions. The visible head (*ori òde*) represents individuality and consciousness, but the deeper significance lies in the invisible head (*ori inú*), the inner spiritual essence that bears destiny. As articulated by Bolaji Idowu, *Ori* is "the personal divinity" of the individual, the locus of destiny and moral direction.[11] *Ori* is not merely psychological identity or rational agency. It is the metaphysical principle that defines who a person is meant to become. In this sense, *Ori* functions as both ontological blueprint and existential guide. A person's success or failure in life is often interpreted as alignment or misalignment with one's *Ori*. Hence the Yoruba proverb: "*Ori la bá bò, a kò bò òrìṣà*" it is one's *Ori* that must be propitiated before the deities. Importantly, *Ori* confers individuality without severing the individual from cosmic order. It is deeply personal yet cosmically grounded. Thus, Yoruba personhood cannot be reduced to biological life or autonomous will; it is the unfolding of a destiny chosen and sanctioned within the spiritual realm.

A defining feature of Yoruba cosmology is the belief that individuals pre-exist in *òrun* before entering the earthly realm. During this pre-earthly state, the person chooses or receives a destiny (*ayanmọ*). As Wande Abimbola explains, the individual kneels before *Olódùmarè* to select a life course prior to birth.[12] This selection is sealed through *Ori*. Scholars debate whether this "choice" is literal or symbolic, but its philosophical significance is clear: destiny precedes earthly autonomy. Life in *ayé* is not self-originating; it is a continuation of a metaphysical commitment made before embodiment. The existential task of the human being is therefore not self-creation but destiny-fulfillment. This belief reframes the meaning of suffering and limitation. Hardship may not signify absurdity or cosmic indifference; it may represent elements intrinsic to one's chosen destiny. While Yoruba thought does not romanticize suffering, it integrates it into a larger teleological narrative. One's life is meaningful insofar as it actualizes the path inscribed in *Ori*. The doctrine of *Ori* does not negate moral responsibility. On the contrary, it intensifies it. Destiny provides a framework, but human action determines how that destiny unfolds. As Segun Gbadegesin argues, Yoruba thought balances destiny (*ayanmọ*) with character (*ìwà*).[13] While Ori establishes potential and direction, moral virtue determines its realization. Thus, destiny is neither rigid fatalism nor absolute freedom. It is structured openness. Individuals are accountable for cultivating good character, aligning with communal values, and sustaining cosmic harmony. Misalignment may require ritual correction or spiritual recalibration, but it does not imply that destiny is wholly mutable at will.

A crucial philosophical question concerns whether destiny is fixed or dynamic. Some interpretations suggest a largely predetermined life course; others argue for flexibility within broad metaphysical boundaries. Gbadegesin maintains that destiny establishes parameters rather than detailed scripts.[14] Within these parameters, agency operates meaningfully. This

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[11] Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. Longman, 1962. 173.

[12] Abimbola, Wande. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Oxford UP, 1976. 102.

[13] Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. Peter Lang, 1991. 54.

[14] Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. Peter Lang, 1991.58.

dynamic understanding prevents Yoruba cosmology from collapsing into determinism. Destiny provides teleology without eliminating deliberation. However, even in its most flexible interpretation, *Ori* does not confer ownership of life in the liberal sense. Life is not property but vocation. It is entrusted to the individual as a sacred assignment within a divinely ordered cosmos. Accordingly, biological existence cannot be separated from metaphysical purpose. To live is to pursue the fulfillment of one's *Ori* within the moral architecture of *ayé* and *òrun*. Death, therefore, cannot be reduced to a private decision without metaphysical consequence. The question becomes unavoidable: if life is the unfolding of a pre-chosen destiny, what moral authority does one possess to terminate that unfolding?

Destiny, Suffering, and the Moral Limits of Self-Determination

Having established that life in Yoruba cosmology is destiny-oriented and cosmically situated, we now confront the central ethical issue: can euthanasia be reconciled with a worldview in which life is divinely entrusted and teleologically structured?

Is Suffering Part of Destiny?

Within the autonomy paradigm, suffering is often treated as the primary moral justification for assisted dying, especially when pain diminishes dignity or undermines personal agency. However, this view becomes more complex when examined through Yoruba metaphysics, particularly the concept of *ayanmọ* (destiny). In this framework, suffering is not inherently meaningless but may serve as a process of spiritual testing, moral refinement, or the unfolding of one's existential purpose. The human person, understood as *ẹniyan* (a being composed of both physical and spiritual dimensions), exists within a broader cosmic order in which life experiences including hardship are interconnected with divine intention. Thus, suffering may carry a deeper significance that transcends immediate perception.[15] This perspective does not advocate passive endurance of pain, as Yoruba culture actively seeks healing through medicine, ritual, and communal care. Nevertheless, the assumption remains that suffering may hold metaphysical value within the structure of *ayanmọ* (destiny). Consequently, the deliberate termination of life to escape suffering risks prematurely interrupting a process that may be spiritually or morally significant. In this sense, the ethical framework shifts from prioritizing individual autonomy and comfort to maintaining alignment with cosmic order and communal values, positioning assisted dying as not merely a personal choice but an act with broader metaphysical implications.[16]

Can One Morally Terminate a Destiny?

Euthanasia presupposes that individuals possess ultimate authority over the continuation of their existence. In Yoruba metaphysics, however, existence originates not from the self but from *Olódùmarè* and is structured through *Ori*. The individual participates in destiny but does not author it independently. To terminate one's life voluntarily would therefore not simply be an act of self-regarding autonomy; it would constitute an interruption of a metaphysical covenant established before birth. Since Ori embodies that covenant, suicide or assisted dying could be interpreted as a rupture in the individual's relationship with cosmic order. This does not mean that Yoruba societies historically developed systematic

[15] Amzat, Jimoh, et al. "Euthanasia in Africa: A Scoping Review of Empirical Evidence." *Developing World Bioethics*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–12.

[16] Lougheed, Kirk. "African Vital Force and the Permissibility of Euthanasia." *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2025, pp. 233–240.

bioethical prohibitions in modern legal terms. Rather, the metaphysical logic itself generates a strong presumption against self-inflicted death. Life is entrusted, not owned.

Cosmic Harmony and Disruption

Yoruba ethics is deeply communitarian. The individual exists within networks of family, ancestors, divinities, and unborn generations. Actions reverberate across these networks. Gbadegesin notes that moral wrongdoing disrupts communal equilibrium[17]. If euthanasia represents a disruption of destiny, it also threatens cosmic harmony. The metaphysical consequences extend beyond the individual. Because the person is relationally constituted, self-termination may affect ancestral continuity and spiritual balance. In such a framework, the permissibility of euthanasia cannot be evaluated solely through consent or relief of suffering; it must account for cosmic repercussions.

Ownership or Entrustment?

The decisive philosophical divergence between the autonomy paradigm and Yoruba cosmology lies in the concept of ownership. Liberal bioethics assumes self-ownership: my life belongs to me. Yoruba metaphysics suggests divine entrustment: life belongs ultimately to *Olódùmarè*, mediated through Ori. Entrustment implies stewardship rather than sovereignty. One may care for, nurture, and protect life but not unilaterally dispose of it. The moral authority to end life, therefore, cannot rest exclusively with the individual.

The Moral Limits of Self-Determination

Does this entail an absolute prohibition of euthanasia? At minimum, it establishes strong moral limits on self-determination. Agency operates within destiny's framework. To will against destiny is not simply to exercise freedom but to misalign oneself with cosmic order.

However, Yoruba thought also recognizes complexity. If destiny is dynamic within boundaries, one might ask whether extreme medical circumstances could be interpreted as signaling the natural completion of one's *ayanmọ*. The key distinction lies between allowing destiny to unfold and actively terminating it. Thus, withdrawing disproportionate medical intervention might be philosophically distinguishable from actively inducing death, though such distinctions require careful contextual analysis. The burden of proof would remain heavy, given the metaphysical weight assigned to life's purpose.

Critical Evaluation and Contemporary Relevance

The foregoing analysis has argued that the Yoruba concept of *Ori* destabilizes autonomy-based justifications for euthanasia by reframing life as destiny-bearing and divinely entrusted. However, rigorous philosophical engagement requires attention to possible objections, internal tensions, and contemporary implications. It is important not to present Yoruba cosmology as static or immune to reinterpretation. African philosophical traditions are dynamic intellectual systems capable of critical reconstruction. Kwasi Wiredu argues that African thought must be subjected to conceptual analysis rather than preserved as unexamined heritage.[18] Thus, invoking *Ori* in bioethical discourse does not entail rejecting modern medicine or democratic deliberation. Rather, it demands interrogation of the metaphysical assumptions underlying autonomy-centered ethics. Furthermore, Olusegun Oladipo cautions against treating African philosophy as merely ethnographic description

[17] Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. Peter Lang, 1991. 61.

[18] Wiredu, Kwasi. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. Print. 12-15

rather than normative theory.[19] By articulating the ethical implications of *Ori*, this study affirms Yoruba metaphysics as philosophically generative rather than culturally ornamental.

A common objection is that grounding ethics in destiny risks fatalism. If life unfolds according to pre-chosen *ayanmọ*, does this not undermine moral agency? Segun Gbadegesin clarifies that Yoruba destiny is neither mechanical determinism nor rigid predestination. Rather, destiny establishes existential parameters within which character (*ìwà*) plays a decisive role.[20] Thus, while *Ori* provides teleological orientation, moral responsibility remains intact. The rejection of euthanasia within this framework does not arise from passive resignation to suffering but from recognition that suffering may be integrated into a larger metaphysical trajectory. As Wande Abimbola explains, destiny does not eliminate human striving; it situates it within divine structure.[21]

Contemporary bioethics often presents autonomy as morally universal. However, H. Tristram Engelhardt argues that moral consensus in pluralistic societies is frequently procedural rather than metaphysical.[22] What appears neutral may in fact reflect liberal individualist premises. The autonomy principle, as articulated by Beauchamp and Childress, defines respect for persons primarily in terms of self-rule.[23] Yet this presupposes a conception of the self as self-owning and morally sovereign. In contrast, Yoruba metaphysics frames the self as destiny-bound and cosmically embedded. Communitarian African philosophers further complicate liberal anthropology. Ifeanyi Menkiti contends that personhood in African thought is achieved through community rather than presupposed in isolated individuality.[24] Similarly, Kwame Gyekye emphasizes that while individuality exists, it is inseparable from communal identity.[25] When placed within this broader African philosophical landscape, euthanasia becomes not simply a private medical decision but a moral act with communal and spiritual ramifications. Ending life disrupts not only biological continuity but relational and metaphysical equilibrium.

In modern healthcare systems, euthanasia debates concern assisted dying legislation, withdrawal of life support, and terminal sedation. John Stuart Mill's harm principle grounds much contemporary defense of assisted dying in individual sovereignty.[26] However, this sovereignty assumes ownership of life. Yoruba cosmology offers an alternative moral vocabulary: stewardship rather than ownership. As Idowu explains, human existence is grounded in *Olódùmarè*, the source of all being.[27] Life is therefore derivative, not self-originating. Within such a framework, compassion is expressed through accompaniment, communal care, and spiritual alignment rather than intentional life termination. Withdrawal of disproportionate medical intervention may be morally distinguishable from active euthanasia, but the deliberate causation of death would remain deeply problematic given

[19] Oladipo, Olusegun. *Philosophy and the African Experience*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1993. Print. 24.
[20] Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. New York: Peter Lang, 1991. Print. 54-60.
[21] Abimbola, Wande. *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976. Print. 17.
[22] Engelhardt, H. Tristram. *The Foundations of Bioethics*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print. 7-10.
[23] Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 8th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2019. Print. 101.
[24] Menkiti, Ifeanyi A. "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. Ed. Richard A. Wright. 3rd ed. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984. 171–181. Print. 172.
[25] Gyekye, Kwame. *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print. 37-40.
[26] Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. 1859. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978. Print. 9-11.
[27] Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longman, 1962. Print. 110.

the metaphysical gravity of destiny. This comparative analysis demonstrates that euthanasia debates cannot be separated from metaphysical anthropology. The autonomy paradigm and the destiny paradigm yield divergent moral conclusions because they presuppose fundamentally different accounts of the self. Yoruba cosmology reveals the cultural contingency of liberal self-sovereignty. By situating life within *Ori* and divine entrustment, it reframes ethical deliberation around cosmic harmony rather than individual preference. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to the decolonization of bioethical discourse.

Conclusion

This study has examined euthanasia through the lens of Yoruba cosmology, focusing on *Ori* as the metaphysical bearer of destiny. While contemporary Western bioethics grounds the permissibility of euthanasia in individual autonomy and self-ownership, Yoruba thought situates human life within a divinely structured and destiny-oriented cosmos. Through *Ori*, life is understood not as absolute personal property but as a sacred trust mediated by *Olódùmarè* and embedded in communal and cosmic order. Although moral agency remains significant, it operates within the framework of destiny rather than sovereign self-determination. Consequently, autonomy-based justifications for euthanasia are philosophically destabilized within Yoruba metaphysics. By bringing this indigenous framework into dialogue with contemporary bioethics, the paper demonstrates that African philosophical traditions offer substantive normative resources capable of reshaping global ethical debates on life and death.

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