

God Don't Give a Damn!

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I first must start off and say that Yes, the title of this paper was consciously formulated to entice you to read the article. I wouldn't go so far as to say that it was utilized for its shock-value as we will come to discover that the title may be more appropriate than you think given the context of the subject under discussion.

This article is focused on providing an answer as to why indigenous cultures appeal to the forces of nature or ancestors instead of God *directly*. Contrary to popular belief, in Africa there has never been a concept of polytheism. Africans have always recognized one Supreme Being. What confuses anthropologists and theologians is that to the African sage, God isn't directly involved in the lives of man and employs other agents to tend to the issues of creation. These "agents" are commonly called Njora (Netcherw), Orishas, Mimbos, Niombos, Abosom, gods, etc. There have been numerous works written to correct this misconception in the academic literature, so I will not rehash them here. What I would like to discuss is the philosophy behind the paradigm.

Although there is much literature about the characteristics and the role of the forces of nature and the ancestors, they all pretty much lack the logic behind the practice of

appealing to these forces instead of the ultimate Creator directly in many cases. I hope to bring about a unique perspective that could possibly bring about a better understanding of this process based on indigenous teachings. I will also provide evidence to suggest that in the mind of the African sage “God” at its core is none other than the laws of the universe (which will simply be referenced as the *LAW* in the text).

The following is a rough draft excerpt from an upcoming publication titled *OSIRIS DECODED: Tracing an Egyptian God through the Yoruba spiritual system of Ifa* due out at the end of 2010 (MOCHA-Versity Press). This particular section (slightly modified from the original) is part of a greater discussion on the various roles of *Wsir* (Asar, Osiris) in the Egyptian pantheon and how he relates to the Papyrus of Ani’s *Book of Coming Forth by Day* in regards to how this book relates to the building of the self (*ena -double*) in African ontology;¹ and how *Wsir*, as the higher self of man (human choice) is the true judge: not God (Nu). To fully address this topic with full citations would result in a small book, or a very long article. With that said, I’m just going to give you the bare bones of the discussion and from here we can build.

<begin excerpt>

Many people often wonder why African people tend to honor, address and present their problems to the forces of nature and the ancestors instead of God directly. Although the so-called monotheistic religion of Christianity views these practices as “pagan” and backward, they are in fact involved in the same practice: for is not Jesus the “middle man” between man and the Creator? Where did this practice come from? What are the reasons for this practice? We will come to see that ultimately the question of freewill comes into play in regards to these questions. We have to ask ourselves, if we have freewill, how can God intervene in my life given the fact that what I do now affects millions of lives and thousands of years of history?

According to various African teachings, God cannot interfere directly in a person’s life. God’s intervention would violate the *LAW* (*Umthetho* in Zulu).² The *LAW* is fixed and cannot be violated by any means. Good and evil operates according to the *LAW*. If you want to stave off evil, you have to know what aspects of the *LAW*s of the universe would help you in your situation, otherwise evil, operating under the *LAW*, would have the upper hand.

¹ For a full discussion on the role of the Ena in African cosmology see Credo Mutwa’s *Indaba My Children* (1964) and also Dr. Kykosa Kajangu’s unpublished PhD dissertation titled *Beyond the Colonial Gaze: Reconstructing African wisdom traditions* (2005).

² I highly recommend for the reader the book *Conflict of Minds* by Jordan Ngubane, a Zulu of South Africa. He goes into detail about the Zulu understanding of the dynamics of the *LAW*.

Many people do not understand this concept because they are not aware of every minute detail of history or the processes that affect their lives. The human mind is a macro-thinking device. The conscious aspect of the mind can only deal with so many bits of information at a time. It is unaware of the billions upon billions of processes going on, or processes that took place that lead them to their current location in time and space. The human being thinks that they are where they are currently because of random actions, but this is not the case. There is nothing random in the universe. Everything operates by the LAW. *A* happens which causes *B* which then causes *C*. That's the macro mind's interpretation. It is more like *A* happens, then *A.0000000001* happens then *A.0000000002*, happens and so on. There are hundreds of thousands of processes that we are unaware of that happen at every microsecond of our lives that can alter our futures at any given time.

Here is a somewhat crude example to make this point clearer. If I am located five feet from you, the reader, with a 9mm pointed at your chest and I fire in a direction that, from a certain angle, will guarantee that the bullet hits the heart at a certain speed, penetrating the body and exiting through the back, the LAW states that you must die. If one cannot repair the wound in *X*-amount of time, with this type of medicine, and if this amount of blood has been lost, and this vein had been severed, and this amount of oxygen has been lost, etc, etc, by LAW you must die because you have met all of the criteria in that circumstance to die. Nothing can save you at this point. However, if you had on a bullet proof vest that could withstand 12-gauge bullets, then by the LAW of the universe, if that 9mm round, from that angle, at that speed were to hit the chest area protected by the vest, the LAW states that you must live (given nothing else happened after that). This is to demonstrate that our reality is affected by many variables; some we are conscious of, even more that we are not.

For African sages, the key to maneuvering through life is in knowing the LAW because the LAW is fixed. It does not change; it cannot be violated under any circumstance what-so-ever. We understand the mind of God by observing the LAW in nature. A few Egyptian proverbs should help us to understand the ancient mindset.

- Knowledge is consciousness of reality. Reality is the sum of the laws that govern nature and of the causes from which they flow
- If you search for the laws of harmony, you will find knowledge
- Judge by cause, not effect
- Always watch and follow nature
- Man must learn to increase his sense of responsibility and of the fact that everything he does will have its consequences (law of cause and effect)
- The best and shortest road towards knowledge of truth is Nature
- God never changes his mind (Sotho-Bantu)

Even Albert Einstein understood these principles in the context of trying to understand the Creator's mindset: the LAW. He is quoted saying:

I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know his thoughts, the rest are details.³

With this understanding, we can better appreciate why African people do not appeal to God directly because God is the LAW and God is the same "yesterday, today and forever." If you cannot change God's mind (the LAW), your only recourse is to appeal to the forces that would act like our bullet proof vest in the example above. Janheinz Jahn in his work *Muntu* (1990:115) reaffirms this philosophy present in the African cultural framework when he states:

Complaints and wishes are not directed to the world order itself [God]; a woman who pleads to have a child *does not want any change in the fundamental laws of the cosmos*. With one's personal cares and wishes one turns to the ancestors... (emphasis mine)

It should be understood that the term God in pre-western African centers of wisdom is not a concrete entity as perceived in the Abrahamic traditions: with God over there and creation over here. For the African sage, what we call God is an abstract, transcendental relational category that presides over all of the functions of existence. The LAW (God) created creation from within itself and administers the functioning of creation through agents we commonly call the forces of nature (gravity, electromagnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces, etc.). The LAW will never change. Only the flow and direction of energy can be manipulated. It is like diverting the course of a river to irrigate land far away from the banks of the river side. African spirituality is essentially a metaphysical practice of irrigation: the art of reverting or channeling energy to the much needed (arid) areas of our lives. This goal is realized by knowing the LAWS that govern the flow of energy (light) and what forces are necessary to divert the "river" to much needed areas.

Divination in African traditions is not something that predicts a fixed future. Divination is a tool sages use to look into the past up to the point of the divination session, and then assesses the LAW to see what is possible in the future if this series of events continue to happen (cause and effect). The client at this point is given

³ R.W. Clark (1971). *Einstein: The Life and Times*. World Publishing. New York, NY

information concerning the LAW that will divert any foreseen tragedies. They are then provided instructions on how to get and properly wear the “bullet proof vest.” The client is informed of what *causes* are necessary to get the desired *effects* that they seek. In other words, divination is a tool that has direct access to the LAW (Orunmila – witness of fate) and is used to inform the person of what is possible given the circumstances.

Therefore, the ancient people studied nature and the forces that govern change (the gods) to better understand the LAW. There are physical laws, social laws, quantum laws, chemical laws, etc. If we are able to fully understand the LAW, then our lot on earth will be easier. With that said, it is human choice that allows us to change our circumstances. As Neo realized in *Matrix Reloaded*, the “systemic anomaly” is choice. Choice is a power that human beings haven’t fully grasped; they do not know how important it is to our lives.

The choices we make, the actions (*iri* in Egyptian) we do are all subject to the LAW. What ever we do, ONLY this, this or this can happen according to the LAW of the universe. In various African theological discourses, God cannot “judge” in the way that many modern religious officials have espoused. In the mind of the African sage, “judgment” was already established since before anything was created (if there ever was a time *before* anything was created). The LAW dictates what is possible and impossible. The LAW dictates the appropriate response to ANY choice a human being makes. To take an example from the Christian religion, if I have accepted Jesus Christ as my lord and savior and I have not sinned since the day I was saved, when I die, it should be guaranteed that I go to heaven according to the teachings of the Bible. God cannot decide at last minute to send me to hell because he feels like it. God has to follow the LAW. If I met the criteria, then by LAW I am heaven bound.

This is an interesting revelation, because if my getting into heaven or hell is dependent on what I have done, and if I truly have freewill, then it is impossible for God to judge me based on how it feels at the moment; my actions dictate the direction I will go. I decide if I want to go to heaven or hell based on my actions. God cannot violate the LAW and “decide” to send me to hell if my actions guarantee my entry into heaven.

This is the deeper meaning of the African teachings that state God “left” the earth after its creation and why a lot of African societies do not pray to God directly. It is stating that once the LAW was in place, from that point on, the universe is on autopilot. All phenomena are just responding to the LAW. The LAW is fixed to the point where God doesn’t do anything; the FORCES OF NATURE does everything for it according to the LAW. This is why African people go through the “gods” which are the forces of nature to change their circumstances. The forces of nature are the only things that are changeable that we can use to our advantage to meet the one thousand and one

challenges of our lives. As the Shona people of South Africa say, “God does not change his mind.”

The ancient Egyptians understood these concepts fully and used the knowledge of the LAW to build and maintain their societies. An elder Egyptian priest, describing the pharaonic system to the Greek Solon, informed him of the holistic approach to how the Egyptian society was created and its foundational model in the LAW. The Egyptian priest explains:

As for the intellectual life, you observe, no doubt, what care **the law**, among us (Egyptians) devotes to it. Beginning with the **first principles touching upon the Universe**, our law has organized all discovers down to divination and medicine, whose concern is health. From speculation about divinities, it has derived human applications and supervised the acquisition of all other knowledge generated therefrom.⁴ (emphasis mine)

So to guarantee that one’s life on earth is harmonious, it is incumbent that the person unites his personal consciousness (*ori*) with the universal consciousness (*Ori* – the LAW)⁵ and that his actions (*iri*) are governed (crowned) by good character (*iwa*). This is what I believe to be the true meaning of the word religion, derived from the word “relegare” which means “to bind back, to yoke.” If our personal, limited understanding is in alignment with the expansive, universal understanding, then life is easier to bear and we can be more productive. Negative actions will only bring negative consequences. Positive actions guarantee positive results. It’s the LAW of causality.

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Hopefully now we can see in what respects, according to African teachings, why the title of this article in many ways is appropriate. According to the general African consensus, God doesn’t directly interfere in the lives of man because frankly, “God don’t give a damn.” The Supreme Being has set-up everything needed for the universe to work in balance. It is up to us to take the time out to study the universal laws (God’s mind) and adjust our lives accordingly so that we know the rules of a harmonious and balanced life. Now one should be able to understand why the Egyptian deity MAAT who represents balance, harmony, justice, reciprocity, equality, and truth is represented by the scales in the judgment scenes of Egypt. She represents the LAWS of the universe and your actions can only be weighted against the LAW to determine your fate.

⁴ Plato, *Timaeus*, 24-c

⁵ The true meaning of the unification of Upper and Lower KMT (the source of character and consciousness)

Nothing can violate the law of causality. With this said, we are our own judges. Our actions dictate what type of future we will have. Sometimes we have to sit back and think about all of the billions of minor processes that affect our lives in each incremental moment and just how one intervention directly from the Creator would alter the lives of hundreds of thousands of millions of people in the near and distant future. You have to ask yourself, "Who gets God's favor?" If you believe in the Biblical teachings then you understand that God "is no respecter of persons." Imagine if God was on the side of the Germans during European War II (formally known as World War II)?

Again, this is only a small snippet of a larger discussion. I would love to hear your feedback and criticisms. If you have received this article from my website, please leave a comment under the article.

Ancestrally,

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