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**ARTICLES, ESSAYS AND E-BOOKS ON DANIEL
OLORUNFEMI FAGUNWA**



Symbolism in D.O.Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand*

Daemons

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Introduction

In this short paper, we would like to propose an interpretation of the symbolism employed in D.O.Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. (D.O.Fagunwa, *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, trans. Wole Soyinka, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., London (et al.) 1968. All the quotations in the essay marked by only the page number in brackets are from this book.) This interpretation takes its parting point in a model of understanding a system of knowledge put forward by Willard Van Orman Quine. We will apply this model to the symbolic realm which Fagunwa develops in *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. This application will show how the narration of *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* can carry a symbolic meaning. Being a symbolic representation has, namely, certain presuppositions. These will be explained in the paper. The results of this investigation might provide a key to interpret and to understand the message communicated to us in *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

Quine's Model of a System of Knowledge

Quine's article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (Willard Van Orman Quine: "Two dogmas of Empiricism", in: *From a Logical Point of View. Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (et al.) 1980 (1953¹), pp. 20-46. The paper appeared for the first time in the *Philosophical Review* in January 1951.) is an important contribution to the philosophical discussion about the distinction of synthetic and analytic judgements. In the philosophical tradition, analytic judgements are such as are necessarily true, synthetic judgements are statements about the contingent state of the world. The discussion reaches a peak

in the work of Immanuel Kant, who divides synthetic judgements into synthetic judgements *a priori* and synthetic judgements *a posteriori* (analytic judgements are always *a priori* and are the mere explication of a concept). Only the latter are casual statements reflecting the actual state of the world. The former lie at the base of human reason and convey *a priori* necessity to various deductive sciences (arithmetic, geometry and others). In this century, the discussion continues mostly in the Anglo-Saxon philosophy. Analytic judgements are usually reduced to truths of language, the existence of synthetic judgements *a posteriori* is rejected.

Quine is very original in his denial of the very possibility of the distinction on the basis of his understanding of the way a system of beliefs (such as science) refers to reality. Quine considers our knowledge of the world to be a coherent system of mutually interconnected opinions. "The totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs, from the most casual matters of geography and history to the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even of pure mathematics and logic, is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges." (Quine, p. 42) For this system he offers us the picture of "a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience".

Let us quote at length his development of this picture:

A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field. Truth values have to be redistributed over some of our statements. Reevaluation of some statements entails reevaluation of others, because of their logical interconnections - the logical laws being in turn simply certain further statements of the system, certain further elements of the field. Having reevaluated one statement we must reevaluate some others, which may be statements logically connected with the first or may be the statements of logical connections themselves. But the total field is so underdetermined by its boundary conditions, experience, that there is much latitude of choice as to what statements to reevaluate in the light of any single contrary experience.

No particular experiences are linked with any particular statements in the interior of the field, except indirectly through considerations of equilibrium affecting the field as a whole.

If this view is right, it is misleading to speak of the empirical content of an individual statement - especially if it is a statement at all remote from the experiential periphery of the field. Furthermore it becomes folly to seek a boundary between synthetic statements, which hold contingently on experience, and analytic statements, which hold come what may. Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system. Even a statement very close to the periphery can be held true in the face of recalcitrant experience by pleading hallucination or by amending certain statements of the kind called logical laws. Conversely, by the same token, no statement is immune to revision. Revision even of the logical law of the excluded middle has been proposed as a means of simplifying quantum mechanics; and what difference is there in principle between such a shift and the shift whereby Kepler superseded Ptolemy, or Einstein Newton, or Darwin Aristotle? (Quine, p. 42f.)

An element which we introduce into the system, such as a new rule, a new object etc., effects an adjustment of the entirety of the representation of reality. This element can be literally anything and it is only our conservatism (our "natural tendency", as Quine rather mysteriously says (Quine, p. 44)) that leads us to try to keep the system stable by holding on to its central axioms and explaining away the experiences that threaten to disturb the equilibrium of the system rather than incorporating them into the system at the cost of far-reaching adjustments of the whole of the structure.

But such adjustments are in principle not impossible, and if we follow the consideration a little further, we can see the rise of a plurality of interpretations of experience, all consistent in themselves but operating with different objects and following different rules. By reaching thus beyond Quine, we are opening a way to interpret the realm of symbolic representation in

Fagunwa's novel. We will restrict ourselves to Fagunwa's first novel here, out of our (still) insufficient knowledge of the Yoruba language, but it is evident that a similar interpretation could be provided for his other novels as well, simply by applying the same principle.

Fagunwa's Forest of *Irunmale*

The basis of our interpretation is the application of Quine's model to the peculiar world which we encounter in Fagunwa's novels. The shift to the "Forest of a Thousand Daemons" is itself a symbol for entering this world, to which we shall refer as the "world of *Irunmale*" in the following, for the sake of brevity. (We would like to use the word "world" in this connection (the "world of *Irunmale*") in the meaning of "a consistent whole", not referring thereby to the totality of all objects, to the planet Earth, to "the reality" etc. A consistent representation of "the world" in this latter meaning is a "world" in the former meaning. We use the word "realm" synonymically with the word "world" to signify this.) This term, however, is intended to comprise other places of this same peculiarity that appear in the novel, such as the city of Mount Langbodo or the Great Forest, which is the place where Kako lives before he joins the main hero's, Akara-ogun's, expedition. This world is, as we shall see later, a symbolic representation of human life. On the hero's journey through the Forest *Irunmale*, he encounters various characters which are themselves symbols of human qualities and troubles and who incorporate various human patterns of behaviour.

The first impression we get from reading *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* is that we are faced with a world which is incomprehensible and unpredictable. The characters have strange shapes

and behave in a way that we fail to understand. So does the hero, although we can feel a certain desorientation in this weird world on his part as well. On a second thought, however, we find the world of the Forest of a Thousand Daemons somehow intuitively comprehensible, although it is still hard for us to explain what message we actually get from reading the novel.

On a third thought, perhaps, we are able to abstract certain morals from the novel by interpreting its symbolism. This is, according to Bamgbose, also a key to explaining the weirdness of the actions and appearance of some of the characters in the novel: "One important aspect of the weird element in the novels is its use as a representation of a symbolic meaning. This is true of several characters in the novels who superficially appear to be weird fictional characters but are really symbolic representations of certain abstract entities." (Ayo Bamgbose, *The Novels of D.O.Fagunwa*, Ethiope Publishing Corporation, Benin City (Nigeria) 1974, p. 90.)

Concerning the symbolism in the novels, Bamgbose writes: "(...) Fagunwa's novels are to be interpreted at more than one level. On the superficial level, they are stories of adventure: A hero sets out on a journey to a forest or in quest of an object. At the deeper level, the journey is an allegory of life's journey with its attendant problems and difficulties. It is only through an understanding of this deeper level that we can attain the full meaning of the novels." (Bamgbose, p. 91.) He then goes on to distinguish the symbolism of characters, places and objects, and of plot and gives numerous examples from all of Fagunwa's novels for illustration.

By applying Quine's model of understanding a system of beliefs, we would like to show the creation of the "world of *Irunmale*" as a consistent realm of symbolic representations.

The first step is to prove that it is a coherent whole comprising, if we make a rough list, 1. ontological conditions, that is, conditions defining the possibility of being; 2. rules and laws governing the existence of objects as well as the behaviour of characters and including laws corresponding (for example, in the "scientific" world view) to physical laws as well as moral laws.

These both may be very different from the way they are established in our current understanding of the world, yet it will become apparent that the "world of *Irunmale*" is in no way a haphazard accumulation of accidents and events, but rather that there are fairly strict rules and restrictions which govern its functioning and that even the seemingly most fortuitous incident must in fact fall in form into certain presuppositions and that it, in its turn, has a sequence of effects according to firm rules (a form of "causality") which are foreseeable and comprehensible as the outcome of the chain of events that has led to it. This holds true even though we may be to some extent ignorant of these rules or rather are in the process of learning about them and learning to "find our way round" in a world governed by them.

The second step is to try to determine if there are connections between the "world of *Irunmale*" and our normal world view, and if so, what is the nature of these connections. Symbolically speaking, what are the ways to and back from the Forest of *Irunmale* which we have to tread each time we desire to transform some of the knowledge acquired in the Forest of *Irunmale* into knowledge applicable for our "normal" world?

A third step will be to demonstrate that it is the very nature of the "world of *Irunmale*" as a systematic whole of orientation and of understanding reality that enables it to carry the symbolic

function, that is, that these connections are only possible between two systems, of which each is consistent in itself.

The Hero

If we observe the hero, we can see that we are ourselves in a similar situation like himself. His world view, richer than ours perhaps by the belief in magic and witchcraft, is different from the "world of *Irunmale*", because on entering it, he is taken by surprise. It is only by a process of experience and of instruction that he gradually learns how to behave in the environment of the Forest *Irunmale* and how to deal with the weird creatures he encounters there. We can thus join the hero. His task - and now ours as well - is to work out the laws, rules and restrictions of the Forest of *Irunmale*. The successful accomplishment of this enables in due course the fulfilment of the hero's mission in Mount Langbodo.

The hero must rely on the fact that the "world of *Irunmale*" has certain regularities. Otherwise, no orientation in it would be possible. Let us try to find these regularities as well as the ways the hero (and we with him) learns about them. The hero's first orientation scheme is naturally that of his everyday experience, that of his society, and reflects the world view of the Yorubas. This world view involves certain thought patterns which differ from ours. The most conspicuous difference is perhaps his belief in magic and witchcraft. Indeed, he knows how to put to good use various charms and spells. These spells fit into the causal chain as its regular components.

But the hero's way of understanding the world which he faces in the Forest of *Irunmale* leaves him at a loss many times and he has to substantially modify his orientation scheme in order to

come to terms with it. We will inquire into the ways this takes place in more detail later. We will start by investigating the structure of the world of *Irunmale*, as it shows to the naive eye of the reader, that is, we will follow the first clues in reading the novel that give us the impression we are not dealing with only a chaotic imagery sprung out of Fagunwa's profuse imagination.

First Approach to the World of *Irunmale*

At first sight, the world of *Irunmale* appears to be incomprehensible and disordered. We never know what to expect in it. But this is not quite so. By observing it closely, we can discover elements which show that the world of *Irunmale* does in fact have its principles and rules.

The regularity of the functioning of the world of *Irunmale* is visible in many ways.

- We see that the behaviour of the inhabitants of the Forest of *Irunmale* **follows rules**. The hero usually knows the principles guiding the behaviour of the beings or someone explains them to him. The same holds true for various physical objects as well as for the charms. These laws often digress from the "laws of nature" as defined by today's physics.

Thus the hero seems able to classify the creatures he finds in the Forest of *Irunmale*, he refers to the "usual run of ghommids" (p. 43), for example, and the like.

- There are very foreseeable **moral laws**. We often find the moral behaviour of the beings weird, but it nevertheless fits into a scheme of moral actions, good brings good in effect and evil is punished. Kako kills his wife in a very cruel and unintelligible way, but his deed brings misfortune to the whole group, and it must be redressed by the sacrifice of a bird (p. 75ff.).

- There is a regularity shown in the **symbolic usage of numbers**. This makes future events foreseeable. The examples are numerous. Symbolic numbers are, for example, the number of three: there are usually three tasks that the hero and his companions have to perform, the third being the most difficult. The number of six is also very important (it is six times that Ajantala abuses his surroundings; the gifts from the king of Mount Langbodo to the king of Akara-ogun's town are always in six), as is the number of seven (the seven days in the house of Iragbeje).

- The **repetition of actions** makes future events foreseeable, too. We find several examples. During the fight with Agbako, Agbako mends the hero's cutlass, then his arm. Another instance of this is the repetition during the above-mentioned number symbolism.

- And finally, the inhabitants of *Irunmale* behave partly **like humans**. They have human feelings (pride, sorrow etc.), they respect many moral laws that humans have, and their motivation is mostly understandable from the human perspective.

These are the main sources from which we can deduce the essential structure of the world of *Irunmale*. Now let us look at the cognitive side of it: how does the hero learn about the regularities in the world of *Irunmale*?

The Hero's Apprenticeship in the Forest of *Irunmale*

The hero's initial state is a state of ignorance. He does not know the appropriate rules and he has to learn them on his way through the Forest of *Irunmale*. That he does learn is clear from his later reactions. One example is his later fear of Agbako: in the beginning, he boldly faces the

monster and nearly perishes during the fight with him. When he meets Agbako later, he is wiser and reacts by taking to his heels. There are many more instances where it is apparent that the behaviour of the hero has changed in accordance with his newly-acquired knowledge of the regularities of the world of *Irunmale*.

The acquisition of the knowledge of *Irunmale* is realized in several ways.

- One of the most important ones is **instruction**. The hero is instructed by several characters on what the Forest of *Irunmale* is like. We find very often women in the role of these instructors. The first instructor to the hero is Helpmeet, who explains her own character to the hero and who instructs him on his further travels (p. 29f.). Later on, the hero calls his own mother to help him out of his precarious situation and the mother eventually comes and teaches her child about what to do next. She also reminds him of his task in life and urges him to "try, try to benefit this world before you die and leave it better than you entered it" (p. 59). The hero is also instructed by his wife and by other characters in the Forest of *Irunmale* as well.

- There are many figures in the novel who are in fact **allegorical representations** of abstract qualities, such as Dirt, Fear or Help. There are also plenty of other **personal names** which in an abbreviation characterize those who have them. This is unfortunately mostly lost in the English translation and with many characters it is no longer clear that they really represent a feature of human nature, for example, the brother of Olohun-iyó, whose name is Oto (in Yoruba, "difference"), and who resolves to accompany the extremely repulsive character Egbin ("Dirt") on his ways, that is, something a "normal" person would never do.

These characterizing names make the orientation in the world of *Irunmale* easier, because one can often guess what one can expect from the otherwise unknown creatures as soon as one learns their names.

- The creatures very often **describe themselves**, as it were in a brief introduction. We find a number instances of this, such as the Crown Prince of Forests (p. 20f.) and others. The introduction provides a key to the behaviour of the beings and enables the hero to adjust his behaviour to the creature in question appropriately.

- Besides, the hero relies, of course, on his own **observation and experience** and learns from it.

The Structure of the World of *Irunmale*

We can now attempt a description of the structure of the Forest of *Irunmale*.

We will start by defining the ontological preconditions of being. We have seen that the kinds of beings that we can encounter in the Forest of *Irunmale* are, indeed, different from what we would expect in our everyday life. This difference shows mainly in:

- the existence of **invisible** beings and elements (witches, charms). These can fulfil quite regularly functions we normally ascribe only to physical beings, such as being parts in a chain of causal interaction.

- the possibility of **metamorphoses** of beings, that is, of the shift from one category of being to another (eg. the changing of Akara-ogun's mother into antelope or the changing of Akara-ogun's

future wife successively into a tree, into an antelope, into fire, into a bird, into water, and into a snake). The changed being then resumes more or less the characteristics typical of the new category of being while at the same time preserving some of the old ones (mostly the capacity to speak and think like a human).

- the **blending** of different categories of being (the king of the City of Birds is an ostrich with a human head, Efoiye grows feathers etc.).

- the existence of **other categories** of beings than in our own world (gnoms, dewilds, various monsters etc.).

In all the strangeness that we perceive in these differences, we still can see that each being that appears in *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* must respect some preliminary conditions of being. Without striving at a complete inventory of these prerequisites of being, we can name a few: mortality (if it is a "live" being), morality, identity, capacity to be a part of a causal chain etc. The completion of the list is not possible, because the observations we deduce the conditions from are only fragments of the experience of *Irunmale*. But it is not our intention to give an exhaustive description of the world of *Irunmale*. Rather, it is important to demonstrate that such description of its regularities and "logical" structure *is* possible.

As far as the principles (rules, laws) are concerned according to which the beings in *Irunmale* behave, we can give the following generalizations.

- In all of the ontological transformations, the **personal identity** remains unharmed. Thus in the two above-mentioned examples, Akara-ogun's father does not recognize his wife in the form of an antelope, but he kills her all the same, the woman has preserved her identity throughout the

transformation; Akara-ogun identifies his fiancée in all of her metamorphoses and clings to her whatever shape she might assume.

- There are **rules and restrictions** to the behaviour of all the creatures. Thus the ghommids have their habits ("it is only at night that they [the ghommids] conduct their business", p. 15, Akara-ogun's wife later on abandons her husband, because "[a] spirit like the ghommid cannot join with human beings to live together, for evil are their thoughts every day of their lives", p. 66f.). Sometimes these rules are in accordance with the rules we are used to from our life, sometimes they are different, but nonetheless they are firm and provide for the regularity in the Forest *Irunmale*.

The Journeys to the Forest of a Thousand Daemons

The hero travels to the Forest of *Irunmale*, but the forest is a metaphor of a different world. The return from this world to the normal world of the hero's life happens often by means of the metaphor of a house: the hero is mysteriously transported to his room at the end of his first journey to the Forest of *Irunmale* (p. 34), his second journey is finished by finding a hut (p. 66), where his cousin resides. This hut is the abode of the normal - of the hero's family, of his connections to the world of humans. Significantly, the house is no longer needed when the hero has acquired such dexterity in travelling to the Forest of *Irunmale* that he can reach and leave it at will, i.e. during his last expedition.

The question we would like to pose here is whether there are connections between these two worlds. Or does the hero, on entering the Forest of *Irunmale*, enter a completely different world

that has no connection to the world of his normal life? What is the nature of these connections, provided there are some?

The connection lies in that the hero in fact finds elements from his normal life even in the Forest of *Irunmale*. These elements start off his understanding of and orientation in the world of *Irunmale* which then spreads to its other regions. The hero then moves about in the world of *Irunmale*, but his experience in the Forest of *Irunmale* shows regularities that he can transfer back into his normal life in the form of examples of model behaviour and as symbols and allegories. The behaviour of various creatures from the Forest of *Irunmale* serves in fact as an abstraction, a picture, devoid of further characterization other than that which is part of its constitution as a symbol, which illustrates well diverse aspects of human life. These are the journeys to and from the world of *Irunmale*, these are the connections between the two. But we still have not found out what it is that makes it possible for one world to bear the symbolic function, for one world to be a representation of another or to enable parts of itself to refer to parts of another world. This is the subject of the following chapter, but first we must mention another connection between the two worlds, in fact, one that is between them without symbolism.

One very important bridge between the two worlds, which provides an immediate connection and a source of understanding, indeed, the source of all the rules that there are in our world as well as in that of *Irunmale*, is God and his reason. God is the source of all logical and moral laws and principles, he created all beings and endowed them with inherent principles of their existence. God is the real *a priori* that all beings must be in accordance with, the law of all laws, the source of laws and beings that might come up in all possible worlds. God is the most

immediate connection between the two worlds, and whenever the hero resorts to the contemplation of God, he is able to understand well whatever is happening around him.

The Symbolic Function of the Forest of *Irunmale*

Our thesis is that it is the very regularity of the world of *Irunmale* that enables the interpretation of the world of *Irunmale* as a symbolic representation. The hero has to find regularity in the world of *Irunmale*, he must see *Irunmale* as a consistent whole, because consistence, which in itself is an interconnected regularity, is a precondition of comprehensibility. For individual events only make sense and can be understood on the background of a systematic whole of orientation and of understanding reality. Comprehensibility, in turn, is the essence of symbolic representation: a thing is comprehensible to us not as being another thing, but as a symbol for another thing. But for this to take place, we must be able to intuit both the worlds in order to transform the relations in the one into appropriate relations in the other, that is, we must *already* have an understanding of the events in the world we consider as symbolical (a slightly different matter is the *prima facie* allegorical representation: here a character is simply a personification of an abstract quality, and thus an appropriation of the "moral of the story" is possible by means of a simple depersonalization of the entity).

It is not the hero's picture of this world that must be consistent, i.e. not his knowledge, but rather the world in itself must be consistent: it must make the discovery of regular relations possible. The hero's knowledge certainly is not perfect, but the world he has knowledge of must be such as

enables this knowledge to be perfectible, that is, by learning, an increase and improvement of the hero's picture of this world need be possible. This does in fact happen.

The hero works out the rules governing the world of *Irunmale* in order that he can find his way round in the Forest of *Irunmale*. He approaches the world of the Forest as a consistent whole which makes learning possible, he learns, he applies the acquired knowledge in his next adventures, and it proves to be working. This means the hero has acquired *adequate knowledge* of the Forest of *Irunmale*. This adequate knowledge need not be complete or "correct", just as we do not know completely or (assuredly) correctly the current world of our everyday experience. *Adequate knowledge* means here knowledge that *works*, that helps in the everyday dealing with the world around. So the hero, without posing himself questions concerning the "origin" or the "essence" of what he encounters in the Forest of *Irunmale*, begins to understand its regularities and learns to deal appropriately with this weird world.

The ultimate guarantee of the regularity of the world of *Irunmale* is God. Thus we find the following assurance given to the hero by Helpmeet: "(...) even if it came to pass that the world turned topsy-turvy, that fowls grew teeth and the oil palm grew coconuts, God will not fail to reward every man according to his deeds." (p. 29)

The hero has understood the world of *Irunmale* as a consistent, law-governed whole, and it is this very understanding that makes it possible for him to draw a lesson from his adventures in it and transpose them onto the plane of his everyday life. That this happens is sufficiently clear from the frequent didactic remarks with which the narrator (who speaks in the first person as the hero) intersperses his story. Having discovered the regularities of the bizarre world of the Forest of *Irunmale*, the hero can understand them as pictorial, i.e. symbolic representations of things in the

normal world. The understanding the hero has acquired of the world of *Irunmale* need not be without gaps. There is still room enough for "wonder" and "amazement". Sometimes beings behave according to rules that are incomprehensible to the hero and thus appear as chaotic. What matters, however, is that the most of the hero's experience in the world of *Irunmale* does make sense and can be subsumed under general rules. In fact, there must be a fairly solid background of regular occurrences for anything to appear "amazing" and calling forth "wonder". In a world whose structure would be insufficiently consistent, whose chaos would be so great that no systematical subsumption under a set of laws would be possible, all learning or symbolical understanding would be impossible, because such a world simply *makes no sense*.

Conclusion

Here we can recall Quine's model. We have seen that although the "input" data of the world of *Irunmale* were different from those we accept in our everyday life, they still led to the creation of a consistent world which consists of beings and laws and which can be made the object of knowledge and the source of learning. The variation of experience (of the "input" data) leads to the adjustment of the general laws that have been abstracted from it. Quine rejects the possibility of separate treatment of individual statements. They cannot be said to be true or false except on the background of the whole system of knowledge. In Quine's terse formulation: "The unit of empirical significance is the whole of science." (Quine, p. 42)

Our suggestion is that the same, *mutatis mutandis*, holds good for the world of the Forest of *Irunmale*, that namely the (intuitive or reflexive) cognition of the structure of the whole is a necessary condition for the understanding of individual events.

The question that remains to be answered is whether the understanding of the whole provides a key to an interpretation of the symbols contained in the book *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. We know that it is a necessary condition for the understanding of the individual to somehow understand the whole; but is it in any way helpful to try to reflect on this world? Could we not do with the fragmentary interpretation of the individual symbols without bringing reflectedly to consciousness

We would like to leave the question open, at least partly, but the answer lies with all likelihood in the measure of bizarreness we encounter in Fagunwa's writing. The world he describes is so distinct from the experience of our everyday life that it makes a more comprising, holistic interpretation necessary, provided we do not want to plunge into the superficial flow of scenes for mere amusement at the sight of the picturesque and the fantastic.

Besides, there is a highly practical side to the interpretation of the world of *Irunmale* as a systematic representation of reality comparable (or even parallel) to our current world view. Reading Fagunwa's novels, we are present at the creation of a meaningful "world" and the corresponding "world view", which differs substantially from ours, yet cannot be called "wrong", and which, through its genesis and continuous discovery before our eyes, makes observable how world views that are different from ours "work" and function, how they house meaning and how they refer to the reality. This might make us more sensitive to real-life world views that are incomprehensible to us at first sight, such as the systems of beliefs of various religions and the

like. For the world of *Irunmale* is quite simple, yet it is highly demanding for comprehension, thus it can serve as a good model for other alternative systems of explaining the reality than that of our own.

Besides the ethical dimension of rehabilitating the dignity of these alternative belief systems, a more accurate insight into the functioning of a different system of beliefs would be very useful in today's study of indigenous African thought systems, where one often has the feeling that the scholars, philosophers trained in the tradition of the analytical philosophy, simply use the wrong tools to explain the belief systems of their respective nations, that they apply wrong rules to operate with the given mental entities. For example, it is hardly more than conceptual acrobatics to analyze whether there is or there is not "free will" in play during the choosing of one's destiny before birth, as in the [Yoruba world view](#). This is empty application of logical rules from one system on the concepts of another and does not bring us much farther than to acknowledge that there are, indeed, some bizarre ideas in the system whose concepts we are investigating. It is quite obvious that the imported ideas will not fit just so, at first hand, into our own conceptual scheme. Rather, it is much more becoming to investigate the system of beliefs as a whole that has its own inherent regularities and laws, along the Quinean lines, and analyze its appropriation of the physical and cultural reality of its bearers as a meaningful and immanently understandable interconnection of beliefs.

The description of the world of *Irunmale* could be made more accurate than it has been sketched in this paper. But we hope that the principal ideas have been made sufficiently clear and that the paper as a first approach has served its purpose.