

Indeterminacy of Translation in Theological Spaces:

The Èṣù-Satan/Devil Example

Sunday Layi OLADIPUPO, *PhD*

Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria

layi.oladipupo@aaua.edu.ng

Abstract

The problem of linguistic interpretation continues to militate against intercultural philosophical discourse, with tendencies to create translatory confusions that take only critical analysis to detect. One of such confusions is the translation of Èṣù in Yoruba theology as Satan/Devil in the Abrahamic monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam. Using the critical method of philosophy, this paper argues that the two entities are not the same, because rather than being antagonistic to Olodumare, the Supreme Being in Yoruba religious belief, as Satan is to God in Christianity and Islam, Èṣù is one of the well-respected deities that run errands for Olodumare.. The study maintains that the ontologically dual nature of Èṣù in Yoruba ontology does not in any way bear semblance with the attributes of Satan/Devil in Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies where Satan/Devil is conceived as a monolithic being.

Keywords: Èṣù, Stan/Devil, Yoruba, Christianity, Islam

Introduction

One of the major crises that rock religious identity is the cross linguistic interpretation of some concepts that are central to different religions of the world. This is common with the adoption of two concepts with different attributes as if they are the same entity. It seems a common phenomenon in African cultures to accept ‘the given’ interpretation of concepts as done by the earlier interpreters of religious texts to African languages as the real thing. The uncritical acceptance of such belief appears to be more fallacious than compelling. It is rather the question of unavailability of a match for some words of which equivalent are sought for in other cultures and/or religions. The necessity of such representation has pushed early scholars and/or interpreters of one language to the other to form within their thoughts, concepts that share striking similarities for one another without critical recourse to the ontological processes that translate the actual postures of such concepts. One of such concepts is the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Satan/Devil in Christian and Islamic theologies to equate Èṣù in Yoruba theology.

This current engagement would not be the first in the field of African studies that re-examine the erroneous misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Èṣù in Yoruba theology to mean same as the Satan/Devil in Euro-Arab Religions of Christianity and Islam. However, the motivation for this essay is drawn from a critical evaluation of the two concepts (Satan/Devil and Èṣù) where different opinions were expressed on the differences and similarities alluded to Satan/Devil and Èṣù among scholars of diverse orientations who seem to have their thoughts been guided either by their religious beliefs or their indigenous tradition on the *WhatsApp Platform* of the Academic Staff Cooperative Multi-Purpose Society of the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Nigeria. Howbeit, it is important to mention that the opinions expressed by the

contributors could not be dissociated from what I termed “Clash of Culture.” Despite the counter positions as articulated by the individuals, it is the contention of this essay that Èṣù in Yoruba belief is not the same as the Satan/Devil in either Christian or Islamic religion, because Satan/Devil as an entity either real or actual does not exist in Yoruba theology.

In order to achieve the thrust of this essay, the meaning and nature of Satan/Devil in the Euro-Arab centric theologies as exemplified in Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions/theologies is examined. This is, because, evil that is taken to be the by-product of Satan/Devil in my view is a mere figment of human imagination that reflects human dissatisfaction of what goes on around them. This is followed by a critical exposition of Èṣù in Yoruba theology, then we demonstrate beyond linguistic interpretation that Èṣù in Yoruba belief is not a replacement for the Euro-Arab narrative of Satan/Devil as entrenched in Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions. In place of such misrepresentation, the word *Olubi* or *Asebi* is projected as the equivalent of the Euro-Arab description of Satan/Devil. This, is the objective of this essay.

An Exposition of Satan/Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic Theologies

Of the many world religions, Christianity and Islam, have striking similarities in their understanding of the universe as that which was created by a Supreme Being. This Supreme Being in the Judeo-Christian sacred books, the Bible, is referred to as God (Yahweh), while in the sacred book of Islam, is called Allah. Both religions believe that the Supreme Being created all that exist in the universe. They also agree that there is an entity that is constantly antagonistic to the Supreme Being. This entity is known in both the Bible and Quran as the Satan/Devil. However, while the Supreme Being (God/Allah) is seeing as the almighty, who is all good, all merciful and all knowing, Satan/Devil is reputed for having attributes quite the opposite of the Supreme Being. He is particularly painted as the one who introduced evil into the world by deceiving the first set of human beings into disobeying God’s instructions. The similarities

between Christianity and Islam on issues of Satan/devil can be put within historical context. For instance, the two religions are products of the same region of the world and both, along with Judaism, recognise Abraham as their father-figure.

Who then is the Satan/Devil in Christianity and Islam? Explaining who Satan/Devil is, Corte (1958:7) posits that the Devil is the “Commander-in-chief of the fallen angels.” The presence of evil and wanton destruction leading to undeniable suffering seems to have made the adherents of the two religions to personify the Satan/Devil as the one responsible for the existence of evil and suffering that confronts the world. Izak Spangenberg (2013:213) argues that “Believers consequently resort to belief in Satan (Belial/Lucifer/Devil) as a way of making sense of their world.” It is also the case that “If one wishes to understand the origin of belief in Satan, one has to study the history of Israel’s religion” (Spangenberg 2013:213). Hence, the origin of the belief in the existence of the Satan/Devil commenced with the religion of the Israelites. The question that come to bear from this perspective is could it be the case that Satan/Devil was invented because there are evil in the world? If yes, then Satan/Devil would cease to exist and have meaning in the absence of evil. By implication, one could talk of personal and non-personal conceptions of Satan/Devil.

Although the belief in the existence of the Devil as an adversary of a good God has its root in Persia *Mazdaism*, it is to the credit of Christianity that the Devil became personified in several measures and historical circumstances. Christians identify themselves with the one true God and Jesus while they consider those opposed to the Gospel in communion with and under the Devil’s influence (Pagels 1995). This is not unconnected with the fact that at first the idea of a creature who is an adversary to a good God was foreign to the Jews (Ofuasia, 2022).

Tokarev (1988:237) revealed that the Jews encountered “Mazdaism when they were ruled by the Persian Kings (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.). Probably this influence explains the concept of the evil spirit – Satan, God’s antagonist. At first this idea was alien to the Jews, and it is nearly absent from the Bible.” It is from the interaction between the Jews and the Persians that several popular doctrines that dovetailed into Christianity emerged. Central to the doctrines which Christianity adopted through the Persian-Judaic interaction are:

The Judean idea of the Messiah-Saviour that had been transformed into a spiritual saviour and merged with the images of agricultural dying and resurrecting gods; the Gnostic teaching of the opposition between spirit and matter and the divine medium between them – Logos; the Mazdaist notion of the evil spirit, the Devil; the ancient worship of the goddess mother (the Mother of God). (Tokarev 1988:352)

The first recorded earthly adventure of the Devil in the Judeo-Christian revelations is represented as a serpent at the mythical Garden of Eden where Eve and Adam were deceived to disobey God’s instruction of not eating the fruit of life. This marks the beginning of human suffering on earth as contained in God’s pronouncement on them and the subsequent ban placed on them from accessing Garden of Eden. This story may actually be metaphorical, since there are *only* three books of the Old Testament where the word Satan/Devil refers essentially to a celestial being. In the events recorded in the Old Testament, not a single one passes Satan/Devil as *Yahweh*’s adversary, but a member of what Spangenberg (2013:216) calls “the heavenly court.” What this means is that originally, Satan was not conceived as an opponent to *Yahweh*. The First Temple period (950-586 B.C.E); the Babylonian Exile (586-539 B.C.E) disclose an idea of Satan that is not necessarily opposed to *Yahweh*. However, from the Second Temple

period (539-70 C.E), which commenced with the Persian period (539-333 B.C.E.), the idea of Devil being an antagonist of God seems to precipitate the evolution of Judaism into a deeply monotheistic religion. This is the stage at which the Devil assumed an antagonistic role against God (see Spangenberg 2013). Hence, it is arguable to suggest as Riley (1999) observes that, after this era three fundamental stories concerning the Devil become pronounced in Judeo-Christian religion.

One, the story of how the sons of God were said to have had illicit sexual affairs with the daughters of men leading to the procreation of giants (Riley 1999). These giants are said to have been going down during the Great Flood while “their disembodied souls eventually became demons. The leader of the demons, Asazel, was none other than the Devil... He was also called Baalzebub, the prince of the demons, and had once been the prime angel in heaven” (Spangenberg 2013:222). This account suggests that the idea of Devil was not known before the flood that was used to destroy the world as accounted in Noah’s narrative.

Two, the origin of the Devil is seen in the story of the creation of Adam by God (see Riley 1999). The story has it that after God had created Adam, He commanded the angels to pay homage to him (Adam). However, “one angel rebelled and refused to do so. He motivated his act by arguing that he had existed long before Adam, who should rather pay homage to him. Some other angels joined in the rebellion and the rebellious angels under the command of the Devil were then expelled from heaven” (Spangenberg, 2013:232). This description also manifests in Islamic religion where the Devil is personified as *Iblis* refused to bow to **Adam**. As Charles Mathewes (2021) notes, “Some Islamic thinkers call Iblis an angel, some call Iblis a genie; Iblis is the one who becomes *ash-Shaitan*, the primordial rebel against God.” The consequence of the refusal to bow to Adam is banishment into the terrestrial world and this is what accounts for the origin of evil in the world, according to Islamic theology. Mathewes

(2021) further explains that “In the Islamic tradition, Satan himself is only ambiguously a personal agent. Sometimes Iblis appears as an agent, a person, with desires and designs on humanity...”

Sufi Islam has, however, put up a spirited defence of Satan’s refusal to bow to Adam. The refusal of the Devil to bow to Adam, they insist, is an act that upholds the Islamic position that the only person worthy of being worshipped/bowed to is Allah. This reasoning is linked to the conviction that Allah would not want the angels to worship anything other than Allah, especially something younger and even inferior (HOYT 2008 cf. Ofuasia, 2022). This position is held by one of the foremost Islamic Sufi scholar, Al-Ghazali, who recounts that “Encountering Eblis on the slopes of Sinai, Moses hailed him and asked, “O Eblis, why did you not prostrate before Adam? Eblis replied, “Heaven forbid that anyone worshipped anything but the One...This command was a test” (cf. Ofuasia, 2022). What this means is that for the Devil, the entire affair was a test and this is why Sufi adherents such as Abdul Karim Jili maintain that “after the Day of Judgement, Satan will be back to the service of God as one of his cherished angels. But one wonders why God has to wait till after the judgement day before rewarding Satan’s act of loyalty. And, also is the problem of what happens to those that the devil has deceived into doing things that God does not approve of. Despite these observable incongruities, it is important to mention that besides the personified notion of Satan, Islam views Satan as temptations in the mind described as whisperings and desire to do evil. *Iblis* is accordingly also a cosmic force, leading humans (and jinn) astray from good” (see Ndubisi 2019:27).

Upon critical evaluation, one is poised to argue that this second account of the Devil, as portrayed in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions may have come before the biblical account of creation in the book of Genesis. Howbeit, while the Bible only provides the record of

Moses going up Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, there was no mention of Moses encountering any creature on the way up and down Mount Sinai. This means that an exploration of the nature of Satan can get better through a patient exploration of the revelations of the Abrahamic monotheisms. Empirically speaking, it may be argued that no human was there to witness the events that led to Satan's banishment from heaven, and the anthropocentric descriptions continue to make one wonder if the Devil is a reality or metaphor. In one hand, the Devil is perceived as one of God's rebelled creatures that constantly leads human astray in the actual world. On the other hand, the Devil is conceived as an incorporeal entity in the minds of humans which entices them into evil thoughts and actions. If the latter position is held strongly, then only moral, but not natural, evil can be accounted for by the existence of the devil. Clearly, an incomplete picture of the nature of evil enters the discursive fray. More so, the ground upon which the masculine pronoun is used to refer to the Devil is also circumspect and in the end compromises any fair and reliable efforts at understanding the true nature of the Devil (Ofuasia, 2022).

The last and third account which Riley (1999) presents as the origin of the Devil is in tandem with what was recorded in the books of Isaiah 14: 4-20 and Ezekiel 28: 11-19. These "chapters concern the King of Babylon and King of Tyrus respectively...the prophecies served as base texts for a story about the origin of the Devil" (Spangenberg 2013:223-224). Fundamental to this account, is the argument that one of the archangels desired equal worship and adoration with God. This archangel, along with those who supported him were driven out of the celestial realm. This account is well chronicled by Riley (1999:246), when he writes that the archangel "later on received the name Lucifer, that is often referred to as the "morning star" used in Isaiah 14: 12." This description seems to be in tandem with the account of *Surah 7* in *Al-Qur'an*, concerning the refusal to bow. Further study and interpretation of the refusal of

the Satan/Devil to bow is a demonstration of the Satan/Devil agitation for equal status with God, which exacerbates his dethronement as recorded in the book of Isaiah.

It is instructive to note that no empirical evidence exists to justify the claim that Satan/Devil lures human beings to act contrary to God's expectation. This is sufficiently clear from the three accounts of the belief in the Devil in Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions. This is more pronounced in Elaine Pagels' (1995:39) submission that, the Hebrew term Satan suggests an "adversarial role. It does not describe a particular character." It was when Christianity attained widespread control and recognition that the evolution of the Devil took another shift into full real-life personifications. The New Testament seems to have another version of the Devil/Satan which is in stark contrast with what obtains in the Old Testament (see Ofuasia, 2022). Then we ask again, what came first? Devil or Satan? Bible ascribes different meanings for the two. Were they the same entity in the old Hebrew tradition? This could help unravel how other later religion interpreted it.

The Gospels seem to dictate that Jesus was on the side of the good and all other entities that are opposed to his ministry symbolise the Devil. Specifically, the Book of Mathew, discloses how Judaism and Christianity started to part ways. Since the Jews were resistant to the message of Christ, their plots to kill their own Messiah signifies how misguided they were as they were playing the role of the Devil. Corroborating the foregoing, Pagels (1995:65) writes that "If Jesus is the Son of God, then, it implies that his opponents, the Jews are the agents of "Satan." The Gospel of John portrays the Devil working in the form of Judas, Jewish authorities, and the Jewish people in general. In the long run, Christians possessed the knowledge that all factions waging war against them were agents or instruments of the Devil. The idea of Satan/Devil becomes a burden to understanding the Yoruba idea of Èṣù in Yoruba theology with their encounter of western culture which seems to have blotted out the uniqueness

of Yoruba traditional and/or indigenous religious culture to embrace Christ (Christianity), thereby rendering indigenous deities as agents or manifestations of the Satan/Devil. It is within this misconception and misinterpretation of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies of Satan/Devil as that which connotes Èṣù in Yoruba culture that the idea of Èṣù in Yoruba belief forms the fulcrum of the next section of this engagement.

The Idea of Èṣù in Yoruba Belief

The phenomenon of Èṣù in Yoruba belief has received fairly wide intellectual attentions/engagements in religious and philosophical scholarship. Scholars of different disciplinary orientations and backgrounds have interrogated the concept and personality of the entity called Èṣù in Yoruba culture. Some of the scholars that have contributed to the Esu debate include Sophie Oluwole (1995), John Bewaji (1998), Oladele Balogun (2009), Toyin Falola (2013), Olubayo Oladimeji Adekola (2013), Segun Ogungbemi (2013), Danoye Oguntola-Laguda (2013), Benson O. Igboin (2013), Kazeem Fayemi (2013) among others in an edited volume by Toyin Falola entitled *Èṣù: Yoruba God, Power, and the Imaginative Frontiers*. Others are Emmanuel Ofuasia and Babajide Dasaolu (2017); Emmanuel Ofuasia (2021, 2022). The arguments of these scholars which revolve round the misrepresentation and/or misinterpretation of Èṣù as Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Biblical traditions as well as the Al-Satan in Islam and Quran, could not be taken dogmatically. The onus of their contentions is not unconnected with the claim that the personification of Abrahamic nature of Èṣù as Devil has no place in Yoruba ontology and theology. For them, the evils in the world cannot be traced to the handiwork of Èṣù. According to Oladele Balogun (2009:31) “The Yoruba do not postulate an all-evil being that is solely responsible for the occurrence of evil as we have in the West or in Judeo-Christian thought. Rather, the Yoruba conceive both evil and good as arising from the activities of Olodumare (God,) his ministers (divinities) and other terrestrial entities.” Balogun’s

position amplifies Sophie Oluwolé's (1995:20) claim that "The Yoruba thinker recognizes evil as real, but he does not regard its existence as proof of God's incompetence or His limited goodness, since He is not conceived as absolute in any of these sense in the first instance."

Etymologically, the word Èṣù is a combination of a prefix 'È' (i.e. you) and a verb 'ṣù' (i.e. to harmonize or bring together). Hence, Èṣù may be seen as "one who brings people or issues together for harmonious existence" (Adekola 2013:58). This descriptive analysis of Èṣù may be subsumed or presented as a derivative of 'È' (i.e act of) and 'ṣù' (i.e harmonize or bring together), therefore Èṣù could be seen as the deity that harmonizes or bring people/thing together. But, can this derivation of Èṣù be taken as a representation of the coinage? This, if subjected to critical analysis may not be acceptable because; how the prefix È denotes 'you' seems illogical. And, if 'ṣù' means 'to harmonize or bring together' could same apply to other words that have same suffix? For instance, could we argue that 'ṣù' in Oṣù has the same meaning as what it denotes in Èṣù? It is however incumbent to note that the presumption that 'ṣù' in the etymology of the word Èṣù as that which 'brings together or harmonizes' could not be substantiated within the belief that Èṣù is a trickster. As logical as this could sound, it cannot be said to be the truth because the description of Èṣù as trickster does not reflect the traditional understanding of Èṣù in Yoruba theology as echoed by the trio of Mama Atoke-Ala Atitebi, Omoboye Ifalola and Baba-Awo Aremu Olatunde Ifasola.¹⁴ The view of these informants in an oral interaction at different location and time corroborate the view of Abimbola (1976) that the attribute of Èṣù as a trickster god could not be validated anywhere in *Ifa* corpus.

Èṣù is one of the major deities of the Yoruba pantheon. . He is considered to be one of the first deities existing with some primordial *Orisas* in Yoruba traditions. These other deities include but

¹⁴ Mama Atoke-Ala Atitebi is a traditional worshipper and the *Atokun* of *Abilere* and *Arosoju* Masquerades before old age sets in. She is the Matriarch of Atitebi Compund, Okeloko, Igboho, Orelope Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria, Omoboye Ifalola, an Ifa Priest in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria and Baba-Awo Aremu Olatunde Ifasola is an Ifa Priest in Obatule Area of Igboho, Orelope Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria.

not limited to Obatala, Sango, among others (Sellers & Tishken, 2013). Èṣù as a deity is a complex figure with a multifaceted personality and wide array of divine responsibilities. He is personified as a mediator between the good and evil forces of the world; checking wickedness with his trickery, and bringing the blessings of gods to humans. No wonder, he is referred to as trickster by scholars. This to an extent informed an aspect of his fabricated panegyric as *Oseburuku se rere* - the doer of evil and good. Hence, Èṣù is projected as an inconsistent deity. This however is not unconnected with the clash of culture occasioned by the influence of foreign religions as exemplified in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. This is because Èṣù in Yoruba tradition and theology is not seen as the doer of evil and good but rather a deity that is out to mediate between human beings and the gods.

In addition, Èṣù is projected in Yoruba belief as an intermediary and/or arbiter between *Babalawo* and *Olodumare* as well as between human beings and the gods. He is a defender of victims of any calamity. This in a way justifies the claim that perceiving Èṣù as *Oseburuke se rere* - the doer of evil and good is alien to his attributes in Yoruba ontology where he is described as a mediator between all the entities and forces on both sides of the divide. It should then be further reiterated that Orunmila did not tell us that Èṣù is *Oseburuke se rere* - the doer of evil and good. Thus, his action as being evil is a product of his mediatory role of intervening in human affairs, and as a rewarder of human actions.¹⁵ Hence, it is suggestive to contend that Èṣù is a ‘balancer,’ ‘an equalizer,’ and ‘a succour’ to those who are still looking up to the Supreme Being (*Olodumare*). This enthralling attribute of Èṣù is built around its place in human life. In an oral

¹⁵ For instance, when an individual is confronted with any form of calamity which is conceived not to be ordinary and sacrifice is made for atonement, it is Èṣù that would be sent to present the sacrifice to *olodumare* through the deity that is involved and through him prayers are offered for atonement. If at the end, the individual is delivered of the calamity and the initiator, that is, who is responsible for the calamity is being punished, then the individual that is positively affected will praise Èṣù while the one who is rewarded in the negative would see Èṣù as evil deity. This analysis and explanation of Èṣù is given in an oral interview with Omoboye Ifalola, an Ifa Priest in Akure, Ondo State on Tuesday 26/04/2022.

interview with Mama Atoke-Ala Atitebi,¹⁶ Èṣù is revealed as an emissary of Olodumare who lives and abides with individuals such that each person has his/her own Èṣù. Thus, it is Èṣù, as the arbiter that holds individual accountable for the scrupulous observance of the act of consciousness required by each step in the dance of existence, how one plays out one's lot (Oyelaran, 2020). He contends further:

The Èṣù of the Yorùbá pantheon is not a prevaricator, or a dissembler who denies or overlooks individual accountability for one's acts or omissions to act. On the contrary, the Èṣù of the Yorùbá tradition operates on the premise that every sentient being is endowed with *àṣẹ* and the will to deploy it; the individual is not helpless in life, and may not externalize responsibility for his or her unfolding existential reality (2020:402).

Oyelaran's view above is a critical manifestation of the inevitability of individual roles in ensuring Èṣù disposition to one's action.

Èṣù in Yoruba theology/tradition is typified into two. This type is brought to bear by Baba-Awo Aremu Olatunde Ifasola¹⁷ who revealed that there exist two types of Èṣù (*Ako Èṣù* and *Abo Èṣù*). He explained that every human affair either good or bad is being piloted by the individual Èṣù. For him Èṣù, is an obedient personal deity who followed the dictates of his/her owner, though, he contends that the *Abo Èṣù* is far better to *Ako Èṣù* because the latter is known for being high-handedness while the former is to be mild in character. Hence, the *Abo Èṣù* is traditionally known as *Èṣù Odara* while the *Ako Èṣù* is called *Èṣù-Bita*.

¹⁶ Mama Atoke-Ala Atitebi is a traditional worshipper and the *Atokun* of *Abilere* and *Arosoju* Masquerades before old age sets in. She is the Matriarch of Atitebi Compound, Okeloko, Igboho, Orelope Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria on Saturday 16/04/2022.

¹⁷ Baba-Awo Aremu Olatunde Ifasola is an Ifa Priest in Obatule Area of Igboho, Orelope Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria on Sunday 17/02/2022.

This dual attribute of Èṣù is often a subject of contention such that his existence is considered inconsistent to reality, forgetting that to every good side there is always a bad side that could be attached to any reality. Thus, it is fundamental to add that, the dual attributes may not necessarily connote two Èṣù in personality, but a derivation of his actions and inactions like two face in one person. Not minding what could be transmuted from the distortion of the personality of Èṣù. Awolalu seemed to have deconstruct the contradiction when he stated “Èṣù is not the personal embodiment of evil standing in opposition to goodness.... Rather Èṣù is one of the ministers of Olodumare who is seen as that part of the divine which tests and tries out people” (Awolalu, 1979:28). Hence, Ogungbemi (2013:77) argues “Èṣù, apart from being an agent of the Supreme Being, plays the role of espionage in the cosmos of humans. The belief that Èṣù manifests as different and dynamic characters causes people to think of him as an unpredictable divinity whose ambivalent attitudes cannot be denied.” This is more pronounced in the act of Èṣù adherents naming their children after Èṣù. Such name includes but not limited to Èṣùbiyi - Èṣù give this, Èṣùyemi - Èṣù favour me, Èṣùdunsin - Èṣù is pleasant to worship, Èṣùwande - Èṣù finds me, Esuwemimo - Èṣù vindicate me, Esudara - Èṣù is good among others.

N. A. Fadipe (2012:287) construes Èṣù among the Yoruba as one of the earliest *òrìṣà* in Yoruba land. He states:

Èṣù, alias Elegbára, is undoubtedly the most ubiquitous of all *òrìṣà* and also one of the most universally worshipped. A Yoruba proverb says that every head of a compound must have an Èṣù outside his compound and the baálé who does not have one will have to give account to Èṣù ... nearly every *òrìṣà* to which a priest or priestess is attached has an Èṣù or Elegbera linked with it.

In addition, Èṣù is arguably, one of the most misrepresented of the òrìṣàs (divinities) in Yorùbá ontology. He is known by different names to different people (Akande & Ofuasia 2021:102).

This is why it has been documented that:

The Yoruba call him Èṣù, Èḷẹgbára, Lanroye and Èḷẹgbà, but he has many names from different tribal groups. To the Fon, he is Legba; in African America, he is Papa Joe; in the Caribbean he is Papa Labas and Loa Legba; in Brazil he is Exu. He is the god of duality, multiplicity, duplicity, confusion and evolution. Èḷẹgbà is one of the most significant divinities, and his origin texts, manifestations and contributions are innumerable” (Washington 2013:315).

One of the early and prominent scholars of Yorùbá studies, Wande Abimbola (1976:9) is of the view that Èṣù is “the servant or messenger of God and other deities but Èṣù is closer to Orúnmìlà than any other divinity.” Abimbola’s (1976) avowal is right as Èṣù is usually depicted at the top of the divining trays (Ọpon Ifá) of the Ifá diviners. In the same vein, Shitta-Bey (2013:79) writes that “Èṣù is primarily a special relations officer of Olódùmarè and a messenger of the gods.” This make Èṣù a profound deity that is privy to all information in the store house of Orunmila. And, as a matter of responsibility Èṣù that the spirit and letter of the directive through *Odu* to the individuals are carried out with the needed dexterity (Olasope O. Oyelaran, 2020).

It is fundamental to mention that the personality and identity crises of Èṣù among all the Yorùbá divinities is not unconnected with the linguistic misinterpretation and misrepresentation. The account of Samuel Johnson (1921:28), like Ajayi Crowther before him, deludes one into believing the assumption that Èṣù is the same as the Biblical Satan/Devil, the Evil One, the

author of all the evil experienced in the world. It is however expedient to argue that it might not be the case that Ajayi and Johnson were ignorant of what they were doing. Rather, the possibility of sustaining the strategy of the missionaries to discourage the indigenous people from their belief in primordial gods and a deliberate act of deceit to discourage people from worshipping Èṣù.

Despite, the established literature that demystified the nature of Èṣù in Yoruba culture as that which is different from the Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies, it is still clear, even from the interaction of scholars on *ASCMS WhatsApp Platform* that motivates this engagement that in the understanding of average modern-day Yorùbá scholars and elites, especially those informed with the clash of culture found it difficult to come to terms that all religions of the world are product of culture codified in literature. One of such instances is the uncritical acceptance of Èṣù as an agent that directly or indirectly accounts for the sufferings and evils in the world. The uncritical acceptance of the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Èṣù in Yoruba culture and theology remains a herculean task in scholarship. And, it is observed that there is the need for further disquisition to emplace a discussion on the meaning and nature of Satan/Devil as not being the Yoruba Èṣù beyond linguistic interpretation without which the polemics would continue. Thus, an attempt is made in the next section to re-evaluate the misrepresentation and misinterpretation attached to Satan/Devil as Èṣù in Yoruba belief beyond linguistic interpretation within an understanding of the Indeterminacy thesis of translation.

Satan/Devil and Èṣù beyond Linguistic Interpretation

This section focuses on a critical analysis of the Yoruba idea of Èṣù with a view to showing that Èṣù in Yoruba theology/religion is not an equivalent of the Satan/Devil in Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies/religions. It is important to mention from the outset that Satan/Devil is a European idea. Hence, the controversy that shrouds the contradiction on the semblance of Èṣù as

the Satan/Devil in Christian and Islamic religions is entangled in the general problem associated with translation in African philosophy and other areas of scholarship. The problem is not limited to African philosophy. For instance, Ludwig Wittgenstein according to Specht (1969:2) posits “philosophical problem arises because different spheres of language are brought into parallel relationship with each other and because it is supposed that what is valid for one sphere must also be valid for the other. Similar to Wittgenstein contention is the argument of Olusegun Oladipo (1995:396) who avers:

By taking translation for granted and assuming that sameness of meaning between two linguistic expressions can be established in terms of sameness of referent, scholars who promote this orientation in the study of African traditional thought system fall into a linguistic trap. This linguistic trap make them superimpose alien conceptual categories on these thought systems thereby distorting them.

In the same vein, W. V. O. Quine (1960:77) contends:

In translating a foreign language to our own, there is the possibility of reading our own provincial needs into the aliens’ speech. In fact, this is natural. Some philosophers have argued that deep differences of language carry with them ultimate differences in the way one thinks or look upon the world.

Inferable from the above submissions as articulated by Wittgenstein, Oladipo and Quine is paramount in suggesting the inevitability of the possibility of misrepresentation and misinterpretation of concepts and ideas from one language/culture to the other. At best what could be said of any linguistic interpretation in different culture/language is to see every of such

attempt as ‘guess work’ (Ogundare, 2003). Thus, one tends to subscribe to the indeterminacy thesis of translation of Quine in relation to the problem of translation.

Quine’s indeterminacy thesis of translation is the claim that given the truth of linguistic relativity and behaviourism, the use of abstract term in one language may not be the same as that of the term taken to translate it in another. This, however, does not imply that translation is not possible at all. Assuming this position would render any attempt at expressing one word in another language a futile exercise. Hence, it would be more logical to accept the underlying principle that undergirds Quine’s thesis of indeterminacy of translation in resolving the problem of translation by sustaining the fact that “in translating other language to ours and vice-versa, we must not, pretend that the original meanings are conveyed (Aigbodioh and Igbafen, 2004:95). Therefore, it would be wrong for any scholar or interpreter to insist that a certain concept in a culture has its direct equivalence in another culture as the translator(s) of the Abrahamic monotheism would want us to believe. Thus, each concept is to be understood from its ontology. It is within this understanding that the common belief of Èṣù in Yoruba theology/tradition as same as the Satan/Devil in the Abrahamic monotheism entered the discursive fray.

What Yoruba ontology recognises is Èṣù, there is nothing like Satan/Devil in Yoruba ontology. Unfortunately, Ajayi Crowther fell for the colonial trick, and error of translation that made him translate Devil as Èṣù. This is a grave error, and it misled us. For instance, the Èṣù in Yoruba *cosmos-tology* is not an antagonist of Olodumare as the devil is to the European God. Hence, no thanks to Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Samuel Johnson for the misinterpretation. While it is possible to forgive Ajayi Crowther for his misinterpretation, for maybe he did that out of utter ignorance, it would be difficult if not impossible to forgive Samuel Johnson because, it appeared he was actually sponsored to distort the history and thought system of the Yorubas. Johnson’s interpretation can also be captured as part of those ‘colonial ideologies of legitimization’ as

theorised by Peter Ekeh (1975). Writers, historians, artist were purportedly sponsored to down-write the richness in African history and perhaps tag us ‘ahistorical.’ Johnson would have really taught we do not have history before forwarding the idea of Devil - Èṣù. This is nothing short of racial slap or a sincere ignorance. Meanwhile, the Abrahamic monotheism is a craze in itself that might blindfold us from pure reasoning that Yoruba knew nothing about the Devil, *oyinbo* - the westerners brought, of which we believed to have antagonised God (Yahweh, Jehovah). How could that have meant Èṣù already known for centuries, perhaps millenniums, as a god of freewill, mediator and arbiter among the Yorubas?

The Satan/Devil as described by the Europeans is antagonistic to God while Èṣù is not antagonistic to Olodumare. In a more lucid manner, it is an undeniable fact that Bible was not written in Yoruba. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The word ‘Devil’ existed there, as a powerful spirit personality that is antagonistic to God. Before then, the Yoruba did not know anything like Devil. They only knew Èṣù and the other gods. Ajayi Crowther translated Devil to Èṣù simply because he knows a character that shares few attributes with the Biblical Devil, and he translated same as Èṣù. This is a misconception, for the Biblical Devil and the Yoruba Èṣù are not exactly the same in personalities.

The Yoruba Èṣù was not antagonistic to Olodumare (the Biblical equivalent of God). He was just a stubborn deity, he grants freewill to whoever appease him. He was the conveyancer of the gods/deities. The Yoruba believe that, Èṣù is loyal to Olodumare. But the devil is not. The Devil in the Bible and *Alsatian* in the Quran share the same attributes. He is the arch-enemy of God. He has nothing good to offer, and he is never part of God’s arrangements in any form. Meanwhile, among Christian adherents, and those who had interpreted the Bible, there is a confusion to the role of the Devil. While in its nominal manuscript does not in any place ascribe any role for the Devil in God’s arrangement, other than God’s Arch-enemy, some Bible teachers

and preachers had alluded that the devil is the Lord of the ‘hell fire’ where God punishes disobedient human beings after death . The question is, if God had created ‘Hell fire’ - though controversial, to punish sinners, would he had made Devil, his enemy the Head and/or Director of that same ‘Hell fire,’ knowing that it was this same Devil that misled them? You do not let your child be punished by a chief miscreant in your street, who has influenced your son badly. That would have meant that Devil has a role in God’s arrangement, even when Bible does not really say that.

It is fundamental to mention that the source of the sacred text of the Abrahamic monotheism could not be subsumed as the same with the source of *Ifa* literary corpus. This is, because while the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Islamic Quran were believed to be inspired/revealed and given by God, *Ifa* literary corpus is said not to be directly from Olodumare (the Supreme Being). Mama Atoke - Ala Atitebi while refuting the sameness of Èṣù and Satan/Devil restated the difference in the process. In her narration, *Odu Ifa* is a product of Orunmila wisdom. She explains that Orunmila being a wise deity endowed with wisdom by Olodumare was only instructed by Olodumare to use his endowed wisdom to organise the world - (Olodumare *so fun* Orunmila Agbomiregun - *Baba Ifa pe ki o lo ogbon inu re lati se akoso ile aye. Eyi yato gedegede si ohun ti a gbo nipa Bibeli ati Kurani eyi ti awon elesin ajeji n lo lati fi se akawe Èṣù gegebi eni buruku. Ko jo ara won rara*)¹⁸ – Olodumare instruct Orunmila Agbomiregun - the owner of *Ifa* to use his wisdom to govern the universe. This is extremely different from what we heard of the Bible and Quran of which the adherents of foreign religions used in conceiving Èṣù in Yoruba tradition as the doer of good and evil. They are not the same at all. Given this oral engagement with Mama Atoke - Ala Atitebi’s one is poised to argue that her view is a reflection of Ayo Salami’s (2008:11) perspective on what *Ifa* is when he contends that “*Ifa* is not a human

¹⁸ This analysis was given in an oral interview with Mama Atoke-Ala Atitebi, a traditional worshipper and the *Atokun* of *Abilere* and *Arosoju* Masquerades before old age sets in. She is the Matriarch of Atitebi Compund, Okeloko, Igboho, Orelupe Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria on Saturday 16/04/2022

nor spirit. It is the divine message from Olodumare for the Universe, of which Orunmila is its custodian.”

In short, a diligent study of the Bible would show that the Devil only makes mockery of the idea of hell. Most Christians and Muslims believe that the Devil is in charge of hell, where God punishes sinners when they die. This for us is a scam! God would not have appointed his arch-enemy as the Comptroller-General of his prison or punishment system. So if the Biblical Devil does not have the same character with Yoruba Èṣù that we have known for centuries even before original scriptures were translated to English, how did Ajayi Crowther translate Devil to Èṣù in his imagination? There is a scam somewhere! For instance, of all the Biblical names that were translated to English, it was only Devil that Ajayi Crowther named after an existing deity. The question that comes to mind is, did he do that out of utter ignorance or he just wanted to paint Èṣù all black? We do not know. Come to think of it, David was translated as *Dafidi*, John as *Johanu*, Solomon as *Solomoni*, etc. Why is the Devil different? Why did he failed to translate Satan as *Satani* and the Devil as *Defulu* or *Defu*? At least Jesus appeared as *Jesu*. And, while did he fails to interpret God as *Godu* instead of *Olorun/Olu-orun* (the Boss of the heaven). Jesus and Solomon for instance share similar characters with *Orunmila* - they are extremely wise and knowledgeable. Why did Ajayi Crowther fail to translate Jesus as Orunmila, or Ela¹⁹ and/or Solomon? While did he have to translate Devil as Èṣù instead of *Olubi* or *Asabi*? There is a lot of misrepresentations in the earlier version of the Bible, but the fact is Èṣù is not Devil.

¹⁹ It is fundamental to mention that one of the *Ifa* Literary Corpus *Odu Otua-tuta* presents the explanation of the birth of *Ela* as a son of *Ela Oyigi* who could not bear a child through sexual intercourse. However, upon her visit to, and consultation with Orunmila an herbal concoction was made for her and after using the concoction she conceived. She was later delivered of a baby without any assistant from any midwife in the farmland. When the baby was to be given name, it was said that the baby was a product of concoction therefore, it should be named *Omo ti a je ewe su*. This is shorten as *Jewesu*. This in the analysis of Baba-Awo Aremu Olatunde Ifasola is an *Ifa* Priest in Obatule Area of Igboho, Orelope Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria on Sunday 17/02/2022 is equivalent of *Jesu*.

The ingenuity of the above is well articulated in P. A. Dopamu's (2000) masterpiece entitled *Èṣù: The Invisible Foe of Man* where he contends that there is so much to discuss when it comes to the EVIL that these Europeans and Arabs did to our culture in Africa. Here we are today celebrating what they handed over to us as religions, and reconfigured our thinking to accept their (G)god as the saving one; the only way. Thus, one is poised to ask which of the two perspectives, the European or that of the Arabs that is the saving one. At the end of the day, it is evident that they seem to have succeeded in reconfiguring our thinking, and most times in Africa, we all appear *More Catholic than the Pope*, and *More Spiritual than the Holy Spirit*. Hence, relying on the epistemological mind-set of European and Arab if not check would continue to rob us of our essence as Africans.

The much reference to empirical evidences and/or premises for the entity of Èṣù does not in any way reduce it to non-existent, mystical or fallacious as may be argued from some quarters. This is indicative of the fact that vast majority of what goes under culture, tradition and/theology in any religion of the world is a product of myth. However, each cultural perspective in explaining their realities is best known to them. Furthering the dichotomy between Èṣù and Satan/Devil in Yoruba and the Abrahamic monotheism, one may identify a fundamental cleavage hinged on mythological accounts of the two personalities in their respective religions. This has to do with lack of record in both the Bible and Quran on the marital status of Satan/Devil whereas, it was specifically pointed out in the Yoruba *Ifa* literary corpus that Èṣù had a wife named Agberu (Abimbola 1976: 36). Like in other cases, critics may question the appropriateness of myths as a methodological devise of validating this sort of claim. That, however, will be insensitive to the fact that all religions in the world feed on myths for the propagation of their ideals and truths. Hence, if *Ifa* is dismissed on the ground that it is a bundle of myths that have no way of being

verified, then a similar point can be raised against both the holy bible of the Christians and the holy Koran of the Muslims, a case of what is sauce for the goose being sauce for the gander! .

Thus, if the Biblical and the Quranic stories could be justified as reality, same could be said of the *Ifa* Literary Corpus which is the book of enlightenment of the Yoruba and the foundation of their belief system and religion through which they explain how the cosmos come into being. The idea, therefore is very simple. If you refute the reality of Èṣù as a deity, same argument can be used to refute the God of Christian and the Allah of the Muslim. Other than the content of the Bible and Quran or Torah, the God/Allah exists nowhere in the material world. Whoever believes in them doing that as an article of faith, same applies to Yoruba indigenous religious worshippers. This is fundamental because the assumed empirical evidences/premises that could percolate the idea of causation in establishing the existence of Èṣù in Yoruba culture is not the same with what it is in the western scientific lens through which the argument was based. Thus, it is a possibility to contend that the perception of the Yoruba ontological explanation of Èṣù as mystical and non-empirical might end up grappling with the epistemological question of the relationship between mythical beliefs, thoughts, conceptions and reality. But as this could be used to attempt a refutation of the reality of Èṣù as a deity in Yoruba belief and theology by the scientific minds, especially of the logical positivist bent, the claim that mythical thought is ancestral to scientific thought seems to negate its validity for if this is correct, we have *prima facie* reason for the view that there is no unbridgeable gulf between the world of myths and the world of science (Fashina, 1981:32). Fashina's position is considered apposite in agreement with Quine claim that mythical world is language-dependent, mythical language simplifies the myth believer's reports of the world and make mythical action intelligible (in some sense), as conceptual schemes in science contribute to the success of scientific practice (see Fasina, 1981).

This presupposes the fact that the meaning and nature of Èṣù in Yoruba theology might not be known to empirically minded scientists with their understanding of empirical evidences/premises which differ from the Yoruba understanding of causation. Therefore, the question of the empirical evidences to understanding Èṣù in Yoruba theology as may be raised by the logical positivists is beyond what could be established with object. This account for the endeavour of the philosophers to spell out what differentiates the real from unreal, it follows that all that could be done to relate the reality of the potency of Èṣù in Yoruba theology is to bring out the important features of reality. Using Oluwole's (1978:22) illustration in this light will help to unload the burden of the required causal connection. She writes:

When something is described as real, the first distinction that is commonly drawn is between the 'real' as physical and the 'unreal' as abstract. Hence quality (e.g., redness) will be unreal in this sense while a chair will be real. Next, we speak of different level of reality. Redness, for instance, is real because there are instances of red things in the world. Hence, although there is no tangible object which we can refer to as redness, philosophers still regard it as real in its own way, though having no objective independent existence.

It is apt here to contend that just as redness has no tangible object that qualify it to be real and yet linked with red, so is the essence of Yoruba view in their belief system of who Èṣù is. Though, this cannot be empirically demonstrated, it is however tenable within the belief of the Yorubá and the preponderance of metaphysics as that field of philosophical discourse that presupposes that a theory does not *necessarily* have to refer to physical insatiable entities. That is, metaphysical speculations do not usually refer to anything empirically insatiable (Oluwole,

1978:22). The implication of this metaphysical postulation is that denying the status of Yoruba ontology on the personality of Èṣù in sustaining its place in Yorùbá traditional belief because it does not designate something tangible or observable nor does it refer to something that has an independent existence either in the sense of being actual or true is unfounded and metaphysically illogical. This, of course, is essential because Èṣù in Yorùbá belief has a metaphysical reality, which is hallmark of African philosophy. Thus, I, leave the logical positivists with the puzzle whether metaphysical and ethical issues are not philosophy, or whether a worldview, belief, ontology and/or theology must be scientific in order to be properly called philosophical worldview?

The assumption that perceives the ontological status of Èṣù, from Yoruba belief as fallacious with reference to scientific and empirical paradigm, if any, could not be sustained. This is not unconnected with the fact that the assumed infallible expression of empirical premises/evidences can be refuted with a single query of whether the Satan/Devil could be empirically verified? It is important to mention that fallacious status could be adduced to thought unknowingly. This is more imperative as some of the claim to reality are product of the unknown as characterised the fallacy of *ignotum per ignotius*²⁰ - that is, claiming the unknown from the more unknown. The implication of this possibility reveals the profundity of the claim that we cannot continue to justify our worldviews within the lens of Eurocentric paradigm. This is fundamental as the argument of this discourse is not against the existence of devil in other epistemologies but that devil is not an equivalent of Èṣù in Yoruba *cosmos-tology*. A brief study of the *Socialised Epistemology* would reveal this.

²⁰ *Ignotum per ignotius* is the *Latin* translation of the “unknown from the more unknown.” It is committed when one is ascertaining a position one is ignorant of based on one’s worse ignorance of the premises(s) upon which ignorant conclusion is drawn.

More so, how do we determine common knowledge? How do we determine its source and veracity? Is it common because it is the ‘given’ or because it is in sync with the intellectual heritage of a culture? These questions are imperative because knowledge needed not to be made consistent with an ideological method originating from a section of humanity as the scientist may want us to believe. Such attempt, if possible would amount to indirectly saying other segments of humanity lacks the ability for epistemic rationality. Given the onus of this discourse that is about ideating Èṣù via the lens of Yoruba cosmology vis-à-vis the translation of Devil from the European or Arabian conception of Èṣù distorts the Yoruba’s epistemic grasp of Èṣù. Nonetheless, this line of thought, could not and should not be taken as that which cancels the ontological reality of Devil’s being in the order of spirituality as subscribed to by the European and Arabian culture. Fundamentally, the ontic characterisation of Èṣù by Crowther is the problem here. If the Yoruba’s epistemic reality of the being of Èṣù as explained earlier is anything to go by, ascribing only one character to the same being in the work of Crowther distorts the truth about being of Èṣù. One entity cannot have dual ontic description.

In addition, the word Èṣù has been in existence before Ajayi Crowther’s translation of the Bible. And, it is not the case that Yoruba ontology whether factual or mystical never existed before Ajayi Crowther was born; therefore that Èṣù supports good and bad intentions does not necessarily make it an equivalent of Satan/Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies. The implication of this is that Èṣù in contemporary age could be equated to the characteristics of the ‘street urchins’ - *omo buruku l’ojo ti e*. Though, critics may want to ask if area boy exist or not; and if his character is consistent with logical knowledge or not. This is because ‘Area boy’ is a strain to social tranquility in every society. They are often perceived as ‘folk devils’ to borrow from Sociology of Mass Communication. They are nuisance and strains to social peace.

Nevertheless, the negativity attached to the menace of ‘area boys’ could not be taken as their all in all as they also have their good sides such that they are at times life savers.

Whichever way it is construed, Èṣù, in Yoruba belief is not the same as the Biblical Satan/Devil. Geoffrey Parrinder (1973) captured this when he ripostes that Eshu is believed to be a deity that can be invoked in favour of his adherents and with this it could not be equated with the Jewish-Christian Devil who, in traditional theology, is a purely evil force, that is only known for evil activities and while Èṣù in Yoruba theology is often charged with protection that cannot be said of the Satan/Devil. Kola Abimbola (2006) seems to corroborate Parrinder’s position when he argues that Èṣù is not the Biblical Satan or the Devil. For him, Èṣù is not the cause of human predicaments. This is linked with the differences between the Christian and Yoruba understanding of what evil is. While it is preponderant that Satan/Devil has the ability to confuse and overcome humans to act immorally, evil is not a product of one entity in Yoruba theology. Rather there are various means through which evil could befall an individual through the *Ajoguns*. In Abimbola’s view there exists more than two hundred of these forces in the cosmos with each having its specific evil attached to it. However, the *Ajoguns* are made up of eight warlords, namely; *Iku* (death); *Arun* (Diseases); *Ofo* (Loss); *Egba* (Paralysis); *Oran* (Big Trouble); *Epe* (Course); *Ewon* (Imprisonment); *Ese* (Affliction). Tacitly, it is arguable that while the Christian theology has a mono-demonic conception of evil, Yoruba religion has a poly-demonic conception of evil.

One of the simple implication that could be inferred from Abimbola’s ascription as obtained in the above is the fact that Èṣù is not solely responsible for the evils in human society as the Satan/Devil is believed to be in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies. Even the ascription of the Satan/Devil being solely responsible for evil could be questioned especially, Christian religion. This, is, because some evil occurrences in the Bible are linked to God. For instance, several

times, it was God Himself that was punishing the Israelites. It was God that sent flood upon the earth; it was God that sent strong wind to the co-travelers with Jonah; it was God that sent evil spirit to torment Saul, the blind man from birth that Jesus healed was made blind that the glory of God be made manifest. In fact, there was no major evil in the bible that was caused by the devil. Thus, an attempt by Idowu to correspond Èṣù with Satan/Devil in the Bible with reference to Job's case could not passed the test of comparative analysis. Idowu (1962:80) had somewhat contends that though, Èṣù in Yoruba religion is not the same as the Devil or Satan in Christian theology. He, however, posits that "On the whole, it would be near truth to parallel him with Satan in the book of Job, where the Satan is one of the ministers of God and has the office of trying men's sincerity and putting their religion to the proof." This assumption of Idowu is still not compelling because liberal theologians do not consider the drama of trying a righteous man like Job a true event because it is absurd for God to cause an innocent man to suffer (Ogungbemi 2013). More so, this is not in tandem with the activities of Èṣù in Yoruba theology. Èṣù in Yoruba theology and/or belief is not saddled with the responsibility of tempting human beings with the intention for them to become miserable, as it is the case in the biblical story of Job. If this characterization is taken to equate the act and art of Èṣù, then Èṣù would have failed in performing his duty as a minister of *Olodumare*/Supreme Being whose duty is to ensure there is justice and good rewards for those who have sincerely worshipped the Deity (Ogungbemi, 2013:81), as it is in the case of Job.

Even the idea of God as the sole creator of the universe has been re-evaluated in the emerging 'African Philosophy of Religion' in which God is seen as a limited being by ascribing him the status of co-authorship. This is in tandem with the position of the process philosopher who sees God as a limited being. Not this alone, the inability of the theologians to accept God as the creator of evil in the world is onerous. To wit, the creation story as chronicled in the Biblical

book of Genesis demonstrates that the universe is not wholly made by God as echoed in his voice “*come let made man in our own image.*”

Conclusion

This discourse revisited the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Èṣù in Yoruba theology/religion with the idea of Satan/Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies/religions. The argument of the paper hinged on the fact that Èṣù in Yoruba theology/religion is not an equivalent of Satan/Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies/religions, because Èṣù in Yoruba theology/religion is not an antagonist of Olodumare - the Supreme Being as Satan/Devil who is antagonistic to God/Allah - the Supreme Being in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies/religions. Hence, in keeping faith with the inevitability of cross-linguistic interpretation, it is suggested that instead of equating Satan/Devil in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies/religions with Èṣù in Yoruba theology/tradition, words such as *olubi* and *asebi* would be a better and more appropriate words.

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