

KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH AND CERTAINTY IN RELATION TO OJU INU (INNER EYE) AND OJU ITA (OUTER EYE) IN YORUBA PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Yorùbá Philosophy introduces a unique perspective on knowledge through the ideas of Ojú Inú (inner eye) and Ojú Ìta (outer eye), providing a culturally rich approach to understanding knowledge, truth, and certainty. Traditionally, African thought has often been viewed through the lens of Western philosophy, which can overshadow indigenous viewpoints and their deep intellectual traditions. This paper tackles that issue by delving into how the dual aspects of Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta create a well-rounded framework for grasping epistemology in Yorùbá thought. It specifically looks at how we acquire knowledge through both external observation (Ojú Ìta) and internal insight (Ojú Inú), highlighting that truth and certainty arise not just from aligning with reality but also through ethical and relational validation within the community. Using a critical-analytic and hermeneutic approach, the study draws from Yorùbá oral traditions, proverbs, Ifá divination texts, and relevant philosophical writings, interpreting these materials through careful textual analysis and comparative reasoning. The findings suggest that Ojú Ìta grounds knowledge in what can be observed, while Ojú Inú offers moral and intuitive understanding, striking a balance between what we perceive externally and what we reflect on internally. By reconstructing a Yorùbá epistemology, this paper adds to the conversation in decolonial philosophy and modern epistemology, presenting a framework that challenges Eurocentric models and enriches current discussions about knowledge, truth, and certainty.

Keywords: Yorùbá philosophy, epistemic dualism, Ojú Inú, Ojú Ìta, knowledge, truth, certainty, decolonial epistemology

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy, in all its forms, is fundamentally about grappling with questions of knowledge, truth, and certainty. From the early dialogues of Plato in Greece to the thoughtful reflections of sages in Ifẹ̀, Ìbàdàn, and Ìjẹ̀bú in Yorùbáland, humans have always been on a quest to uncover what can be known, to differentiate truth from falsehood, and to establish a sense of certainty that can guide their lives. In Western epistemology, these topics often get tangled up in abstract debates, like whether knowledge can be defined as justified true belief or if certainty is even something we can truly achieve. In contrast, the Yorùbá perspective on knowledge leans less towards abstract theorizing and more towards practical wisdom, sound decision-making, and living in harmony with both the community and the universe. At the core of Yorùbá epistemology lies a rich dualism captured in the concepts of Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta. Translated as the “inner eye” and the “outer eye,” these terms go beyond mere anatomical

references; they serve as metaphors for two distinct paths to knowledge. Ojú Ìta pertains to what we perceive through our senses, what we can see, touch, hear, or observe. It roots knowledge in the tangible and the verifiable. In contrast, Ojú Inú refers to our intuitive, inward perception, which allows us to grasp meanings, values, and deeper truths that aren't accessible through our senses alone (Hallén & Sodipo, 1997; Gbadegesin, 1991).

Together, these concepts embody a holistic view of human understanding, one that integrates the empirical with the intuitive, and the rational with the spiritual. This dualism is key to how the Yorùbá define ìmò (knowledge), òtító (truth), and ìdánílójú (certainty). In Yorùbá thought, knowledge isn't just about piling up observable facts; it's also about interpreting meanings and making judgments that can enrich life. Truth isn't simply about a statement matching reality; it also involves being in tune with moral integrity and ethical values. Certainty isn't just about the Cartesian search for unshakeable foundations; it's more about the practical confidence that arises when our outer and inner perceptions align and support each other. A simple proverb captures this idea beautifully: “Ojú inú ni a fí í rí ohun tí ó sọ̀nù; ojú òde kì í rí i” (it's the inner eye that sees what the outer eye misses). Another saying goes, “Ojú l'ójú ni a fí í rí ọ̀nà; ojú inú l'ójú ọ̀kàn” (the outer eye may spot the physical path, but the inner eye understands the journey of the heart).

These expressions above show that for the Yorùbá, seeing involves both external and internal dimensions, and true certainty comes when both perspectives work in harmony. This dual approach to knowledge is still very much alive in contemporary Yorùbá life. Farmers depend on Ojú Ìta to interpret weather signs, but they also lean on Ojú Inú for insights into omens and ancestral wisdom. In health, while visible symptoms can be seen through Ojú Ìta, deeper understanding often comes from divination or intuitive insights via Ojú Inú. Even in politics, people assess leaders not just by what they can see but also by the inner sense of integrity and purpose that Ojú Inú reveals. Thus, the Yorùbá view of knowledge, truth, and certainty remains vibrant, practical, and holistic, offering guidance that transcends mere academic theory.

This work aims to delve deeply into how knowledge, truth, and certainty are perceived in Yorùbá thought, focusing on the interplay between Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta. It will explore how these faculties shape Yorùbá understandings of knowing, inform the community's quest for truth, and collaborate to create certainty. Additionally, the work will showcase how this indigenous epistemology enriches broader philosophical discussions, providing new perspectives on how we understand knowledge and what it truly means.

IMO (KNOWLEDGE)

In Yorùbá culture, the idea of knowledge (ìmò) is deeply intertwined with daily life. Unlike many Western philosophies that often treat knowledge as a complex puzzle of defining “justified true belief,” the Yorùbá focus more on the practical side of knowledge, how it can guide behavior, protect life, and foster harmony within the community. For them, knowledge

isn't just about what you know; it's about how you come to know it and what you do with that knowledge. For the Yorùbá, knowledge isn't flat or one-dimensional. It arises from the interplay between Ojú Ìta (the outward or physical eye) and Ojú Inú (the inward or intuitive eye). The outer eye is linked to our senses, what we see, hear, touch, or experience in the world around us. It's what helps us notice when clouds are rolling in, when a drum is beating, or when a friend is smiling. On the other hand, the inner eye digs deeper than just appearances. It's where intuition, reflection, and wisdom reside. With Ojú Inú, we grasp meanings that our senses might miss: the significance of an omen, the genuine warmth of a friend's smile, or the spiritual weight of an event (Gbadegesin, 1991; Hallén & Sodipo, 1997).

In this way, ìmò is always the result of a dual engagement with knowledge, seeing with both the body and the mind. The Yorùbá resist the urge to favor either empiricism (knowledge gained through observation) or rationalism (knowledge derived from reasoning), as is common in Western thought. Instead, they embrace a more holistic perspective where both perception and intuition are essential.

Ojú Ìta, or the outward eye, is all about sense perception. Through Ojú Ìta, the Yorùbá collect empirical knowledge, the kind that's visible, measurable, and testable. For instance, a hunter might track the footprints of an animal in the forest, a healer carefully observing the visible signs of illness, and a farmer attentively checking the color of the soil to assess its fertility. These types of knowledge stem from keen observation and verification. However, Yorùbá thought acknowledges that while this knowledge is valuable, it has its limitations. What we see can sometimes mislead us; appearances can be deceiving. As the saying goes, "Ojú lomo ònà, àyà ló ñ mò èrò inu eniyan" (the eyes may perceive the path, but only the heart truly understands what lies within a person's thoughts). Therefore, Ojú Ìta lays a crucial groundwork for knowledge, but it's not enough on its own.

On the other hand, Ojú Inú represents the inner faculty of perception, the "mind's eye" or "eye of the heart." It's through Ojú Inú that the Yorùbá grasp hidden, spiritual, or interpretive realities. For instance, diviners (babaláwo) tap into Ojú Inú to interpret the meanings behind Ifá verses, going beyond the literal words to reveal deeper truths that resonate with a client's circumstances. Likewise, elders utilize Ojú Inú to resolve conflicts by uncovering unspoken motives and underlying tensions. Ojú Inú isn't about being irrational. Instead, it embodies a form of advanced reasoning that weaves together intuition, experience, and moral insight. It allows the Yorùbá to transition from mere sensory data to a richer understanding that is both meaningful and actionable. In this sense, Ojú Inú aligns with what some Western philosophers might refer to as "practical wisdom" (phronesis), though it encompasses a broader perspective by incorporating spiritual and moral dimensions (Oladipo, 1992).

One of the standout aspects of Yorùbá epistemology is its practical approach to knowledge. Here, knowledge isn't just something to be collected for the sake of it; it's all about how it can help solve real-world problems and keep things in balance. As Hallén and Sodipo (1997) point out in their analysis of Yorùbá thought, knowledge (ìmò) is closely linked to evidence (ẹ̀rì) and

justification (ìdí). However, the Yorùbá community goes beyond just wanting facts to be correct; they believe that knowledge should have a purpose in life. For instance, a healer's expertise is valued not just for its theoretical accuracy but for its ability to bring about healing. Similarly, a leader's knowledge is significant not because it shows off intelligence, but because it helps uphold justice and harmony within the community. This practical approach also emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge. It's not just something that individuals possess in isolation; it's deeply woven into the fabric of communal life. The Yorùbá often say, "Agbajọ ọwọ la fí ń sọyà; a ajoji owo kan kogberu dori", meaning, it's with collective hands that we beat chest, one hand cannot put loads on the head. So, knowledge is both a personal journey and a communal experience, rooted in shared experiences and validated through collective reasoning.

In Yorùbá life, let's look at a few everyday scenarios: Farming: A farmer relies on Ojú Ìta to assess the land, observing the soil, the sky, and the behavior of insects. But he also taps into Ojú Inú when he reflects on ancestral wisdom regarding planting seasons or when he senses intuitively that it's the right moment to sow. Healing: A traditional healer uses Ojú Ìta to notice visible symptoms. However, the healing process isn't complete without Ojú Inú, which helps determine whether the illness stems from physical or spiritual causes. In interpersonal relationship, a friend might laugh and smile, you view it through Ojú Ìta but Ojú Inú can uncover hidden feelings of sorrow or betrayal. True understanding of the situation goes beyond surface appearances.

TRUTH (ÒTÍTÓ) IN YORÙBÁ PHILOSOPHY

Truth, or òtító, holds a vital spot in Yorùbá philosophy. But here's the thing: the Yorùbá view of truth goes beyond just abstract ideas or logical statements, which you might find in Western thought. For the Yorùbá, truth is a complete package: it's factual, moral, and relational all at once. In simpler terms, truth needs to reflect reality (òtító ojú òde), resonate with personal integrity (òtító ọkàn), and foster community harmony (òtító àwùjọ). This holistic approach to truth is deeply influenced by the duality of Ojú Ìta (outer eye) and Ojú Inú (inner eye). Ojú Ìta gives us the empirical basis to determine if something is factually correct, while Ojú Inú dives into the deeper layers of meaning, honesty, and ethics. Together, they create a view of truth that is practical, balanced, and focused on helping humanity thrive. Yorùbá see truth as aligning with what we can observe in the world. When someone says, "the yam is cooked," we can verify that claim through Ojú Ìta, by looking, touching, or tasting it. This aligns with the classical Western idea of the "correspondence theory of truth," where a statement is deemed true if it reflects reality. Proverbs back this perspective up. Take, for instance, "Ojú l'á fí ń mọ òtító; ẹrí ni ìdí" (we recognize truth through our eyes, and evidence is what justifies it). This highlights the importance of Ojú Ìta as the tool for verifying truth. It shows that the Yorùbá value empirical evidence as a key component of truth claims (Hallén & Sodipo, 1997).

In Yorùbá culture, truth isn't just about what you can see or measure. They have a deeper understanding of truth, known as òtító ọkàn, which translates to the truth of the heart. This concept emphasizes qualities like sincerity, honesty, and integrity. If someone speaks the truth but has a hidden agenda, they aren't considered truthful. Real truth demands that what you express on the outside matches your true intentions on the inside. This belief is why, in Yorùbá society, telling the truth is seen as a moral duty. The saying “Òtító kì í tán nílẹ̀ ayé”, meaning truth never fades from the world. This highlights the idea that truth is everlasting, while deceit will ultimately fall apart. Similarly, the phrase “Òtító l’ẹ̀ṣin òrìṣà” that is, truth is the horse of the deity. It connects truth with divine favor and spiritual authenticity. Being truthful means aligning yourself with both moral principles and the will of the divine. This is where Ojú Inú comes into play. It’s the inner eye that helps us see whether someone's words are genuine or tainted by dishonesty. So, truth isn't just about the words spoken; it's also about the way they're delivered and whether they come from a place of integrity.

Another important aspect of truth in Yorùbá philosophy is its connection to the community (Oluwole, 1995). For the Yorùbá, truth isn't just a personal matter; it's a collective one. A statement is deemed true if it contributes to peace, justice, and social unity. When resolving conflicts, elders often emphasize not just the factual correctness of a situation but also whether the resolution encourages healing and reconciliation.

Let’s take a moment to reflect on the proverb: “Òtító òrò, ìwà pèlẹ̀ nì í mú ayé dára” (truthful words and good character make the world thrive). Here, truth is deeply intertwined with social ethics. Even when external evidence (Ojú Ìta) backs up a fact, if sharing it disrupts community harmony, Yorùbá elders might choose to express it with wisdom and diplomacy, guided by Ojú Inú. In this light, truth becomes both a factual reality and a relational practice, something that should ultimately benefit the community as a whole (Gbadegesin, 1991; Bewaji, 2004).

Yorùbá oral traditions are rich with sayings that capture the nuanced essence of truth. Here are a few: “Òtító kì í ṣìnkú, irọ̀ nì í pa nì” (truth never buries, but lies can destroy a person). “Àìmò òtító kì í jẹ́ kí a mọ̀ òdodo” (not knowing the truth keeps us from recognizing justice). “Òtító kì í ṣubú, irọ̀ ló ń ṣubú” (truth does not fall; it is lies that crumble). These proverbs show us that truth is not just about knowledge; it’s also about ethics and existence. Living truthfully means aligning with reality, maintaining moral integrity, and being in harmony with the community.

Imagine a scenario where two families are at odds over a piece of land. Ojú Ìta offers evidence: survey maps, testimonies, and clear boundaries. However, Ojú Inú is essential to determine if the claims are genuine, if there are hidden agendas, and how to make a judgment that restores peace. If the elders base their decision solely on Ojú Ìta, they might settle the factual dispute but create deeper resentment. On the other hand, if they rely only on Ojú Inú, they could overlook vital evidence and seek mutual understanding. True certainty and justice come when both aspects of truth are considered together.

In Western philosophy, truth has been defined in various ways: as correspondence (Aristotle, Russell), coherence (Hegel), or pragmatic usefulness (William James). The Yorùbá perspective weaves together elements from various sources. It emphasizes the importance of correspondence (through Ojú Ìta), coherence with integrity (through Ojú Inú), and practical usefulness in nurturing community ties. In this way, Yorùbá epistemology presents a holistic view of truth that steers clear of oversimplification. By rooting truth in both individual experiences and communal values, as well as the empirical and the intuitive, the factual and the moral, Yorùbá philosophy underscores the interconnectedness of different aspects of reality. Truth isn't just an abstract concept; it's something we live and breathe, infused with ethical significance rather than being merely cold facts.

CERTAINTY (ÌDÁNILÓJÚ) IN YORÙBÁ EPISTEMOLOGY

When we talk about certainty, or ìdánilójú, in Yorùbá thought, we're diving into a concept that holds significant weight. It embodies the confidence that knowledge (ìmò) and truth (òtító) are dependable enough to steer our lives. In Western philosophy, certainty often comes with rigid definitions, think of Cartesian doubt, which insists on an unquestionable foundation. But the Yorùbá perspective is refreshingly different; it's more about practicality, relationships, and a holistic view. For them, certainty isn't about reaching some absolute, abstract truth; it's about finding a level of confidence that empowers action, decision-making, and peace of mind. This hands-on approach ties closely to the idea of epistemic dualism represented by Ojú Ìta (outer eye) and Ojú Inú (inner eye). Certainty emerges when these two faculties are in alignment, when what we see on the outside aligns with what we feel on the inside. The Yorùbá emphasize that neither perception nor intuition alone can provide complete certainty. Instead, it's the intersection of both that gives knowledge its reliability.

In the realm of Yorùbá philosophy, certainty leans more towards trustworthiness than logical absolutes (Fayemi and Azeez, 2019). A person feels certain when they can confidently rely on their judgment or decision. Take a farmer, for instance; they don't need mathematical proof to believe it will rain. Instead, they find certainty when both Ojú Ìta (like observing clouds, winds, and insect behavior) and Ojú Inú (drawing on ancestral wisdom and inner conviction) point to the same conclusion. This understanding helps sidestep the trap of overthinking. While Cartesian philosophy often starts with deep skepticism, Yorùbá thought is rooted in lived experiences. Certainty isn't about eliminating all doubt; it's about harmonizing what we perceive with our intuition in ways that make life manageable. Ojú Ìta serves as the empirical foundation for certainty. Without tangible evidence, claims remain just mere speculative. A healer, for example, relies on observable signs to validate their practices.

A judge can't really be sure about a case without hearing testimonies or examining evidence. That's where Ojú Ìta comes in, grounding certainty in what we can observe and verify. Yet, Yoruba philosophy acknowledges that our eyes can sometimes mislead us. Just because someone is smiling doesn't mean they aren't hiding sadness, and a robust-looking tree might

be decaying inside. So, while Ojú Ìta is essential, it's not the whole picture. True certainty goes beyond what our senses can pick up. In Certainty, Ojú Inú adds a layer of intuition and interpretation to our understanding of certainty. It helps people look beyond the surface and uncover deeper meanings. For instance, a babaláwo interprets divination signs not just by observing them (Ojú Ìta) but by tapping into Ojú Inú to understand their significance for a client's future. Similarly, an elder assessing the honesty of a testimony in a conflict relies on Ojú Inú to see past the words and into the underlying motives. With Ojú Inú, certainty becomes more than just empirical; it also touches on existential and moral aspects. It embodies a sense of inner conviction, what the Yorùbá refer to as *ìdánilójú ọkàn* (assurance of the heart). Here, certainty isn't solely about external proof; it's about the inner calm that comes when one feels in tune with truth and wisdom.

A healer might observe physical symptoms (Ojú Ìta) but also rely on divination or intuition (Ojú Inú) to uncover spiritual causes. Certainty about the right treatment only emerges when both signs align. In land disputes, elders examine documents and boundaries (Ojú Ìta), but true certainty about their judgment comes when they also assess sincerity, fairness, and the path to reconciliation (Ojú Inú). A person might dream of impending danger (Ojú Inú), but certainty isn't reached until external signs, like unusual animal behavior or recurring events (Ojú Ìta), validate the warning. Daily Decisions: Before setting off on a journey, a person checks the weather (Ojú Ìta) and tunes into their inner sense of timing (Ojú Inú). True certainty emerges when both of these align. These examples illustrate that in Yorùbá thought, certainty is a delicate balance between what we can verify externally and what we feel internally. Yorùbá philosophy also acknowledges that certainty has its boundaries. We, as humans, can't know everything with complete confidence. Only Olódùmarè (the Supreme Being) holds that ultimate certainty. Because of this, the Yorùbá embrace a mindset of epistemic humility. This humility is beautifully captured in the saying, "*Àìmò ní ń jẹ kí a má mọ ohun gbogbo*", meaning; it's our ignorance that makes think we know everything. Recognizing our limitations doesn't stop us from taking action; instead, it encourages us to lean on communal wisdom, seek spiritual guidance, and approach judgment with humility. This stands in contrast to the Western Cartesian tradition, which strives for absolute certainty as the bedrock of knowledge. Yorùbá epistemology understands that human certainty will always be partial, contextual, and practical. What truly matters isn't the elimination of all doubt but rather achieving enough confidence to act wisely and responsibly.

ìdánilójú arises when Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta come together in harmony. Certainty isn't found solely in perception or intuition; it's in the blend of both. This is why Yorùbá decisions are often made collectively, drawing from various perspectives and faculties (Hallen and Sodipo, 1998). A proverb beautifully illustrates this: "*Ọmọ ènìyàn ní ojú kan ọso, oju gbogbo wa lo fi ń di ojú méjì*" (an individual has just one eye, but together we create two). Certainty is thus reinforced when personal insights and intuitions are affirmed by the community. When you look at it through the lens of Western epistemology, the Yorùbá perspective really stands out. While Cartesian philosophy ties certainty to unshakeable foundations, and pragmatists like William James link it to what's useful, the Yorùbá approach finds a sweet spot between the

two. For them, certainty isn't just about matching up with reality (which they call *Ojú Ìta*) or having a strong inner belief (*Ojú Inú*); it also needs to be practical enough to guide our actions and keep social harmony intact. This makes Yorùbá epistemology particularly significant in our modern world, where many of us grapple with balancing scientific facts and our spiritual or moral beliefs. The Yorùbá teach us that true certainty shines brightest when it brings both aspects together.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH AND CERTAINTY IN YORUBA THOUGHT

In Yorùbá thought, knowledge (*ìmò*), truth (*òtító*), and certainty (*ìdánilójú*) are deeply interconnected, forming a cohesive framework rather than existing as separate ideas. Each of these concepts gains its significance and power from its ties to the others. For instance, knowledge that lacks truth can lead to misunderstandings; truth that isn't backed by certainty can feel shaky; and certainty without knowledge can lead to mistakes. Together, they create a vibrant triad that underpins the Yorùbá way of understanding and engaging with the world. To truly grasp this interdependence, we can look at the epistemic dualism of *Ojú Ìta* (outer eye) and *Ojú Inú* (inner eye). This duality illustrates how the Yorùbá people perceive, interpret, and affirm their reality. Unlike Western philosophy, which often breaks down epistemic categories into separate discussions, like justification, correspondence, coherence, or skepticism, the Yorùbá perspective blends these elements into a lived experience of reality.

The Yorùbá understand that knowledge (*ìmò*) on its own isn't enough if it's devoid of truth and certainty. Someone might assert they "know" something based on rumors or misconceptions, but if it's not rooted in *òtító* (truth), it's just an opinion (*èrò*). Likewise, if knowledge doesn't lead to *ìdánilójú* (assurance), it can't effectively guide actions that are trustworthy. Imagine someone who believes a road is safe to travel, perhaps based on hearsay or a gut feeling. But if that belief turns out to be wrong, the consequences can be quite serious. In Yorùbá culture, this highlights the importance of testing *ìmò* against *òtító* and reinforcing it with *ìdánilójú*.

In Yorùbá philosophy, truth isn't just a simple match between statements and reality; it's deeply relational, moral, and functional. However, truth (*òtító*) can't exist in isolation from knowledge and certainty. If a truth remains unknown, it's like a hidden treasure, and if it doesn't inspire conviction, it loses its power. Take, for instance, a divination verse (*odù Ifá*) that holds timeless truths. Unless it's translated into practical knowledge and validated with certainty by both *Ojú Inú* and *Ojú Ìta*, that truth stays out of reach for the community. For truth to truly guide our lives, it needs to be unveiled, understood, and confirmed. This brings to mind the Yorùbá saying: "*Òtító kì í sèni tíí, bí kò bá ní ìtàn.*" (Truth doesn't stand alone without a story). Here, truth needs to be contextualized within knowledge and backed by certainty.

Having certainty (ìdánìlójú) without the foundation of knowledge and truth can be quite perilous. A person might feel utterly convinced about something that's actually false, and that misplaced confidence can lead to mistakes and harm. That's why Yorùbá epistemology emphasizes that certainty must always be anchored in both knowledge and truth. Imagine a trader who feels "certain" that a specific market day will bring in profits simply because they're feeling optimistic. However, if neither Ojú Ìta (the observation of market trends) nor Ojú Inú (the wisdom and intuition passed down from ancestors) backs this up, that certainty is likely misplaced. This illustrates that just having conviction isn't enough, conviction needs to be grounded in reality through knowledge and truth.

In Yorùbá culture, ìmò, òtító, and ìdánìlójú are seen as a harmonious trio. Knowledge brings awareness, truth aligns us with reality, and certainty gives us the confidence to take action. Each of these elements relies on the combined efforts of Ojú Ìta and Ojú Inú: Ojú Ìta checks that knowledge aligns with external facts. Ojú Inú explores the deeper moral and spiritual aspects of truth. Together, they create ìdánìlójú, the assurance that both knowledge and truth can be trusted. This dynamic illustrates a holistic perspective where understanding isn't just theoretical but is also lived, relational, and practical.

A healer starts by gathering knowledge about symptoms (ìmò), then determines whether the illness is of natural or spiritual origin to establish truth (òtító), and finally seeks confirmation through divination or community agreement to achieve certainty (ìdánìlójú). In conflict Resolution, elders listen to both sides of a conflict (knowledge), assess sincerity and fairness (truth), and only deliver their judgment when they feel assured both internally and externally (certainty). A wise leader in Yorùbá tradition doesn't act solely on personal belief. His decisions are based on verified knowledge, align with community values, and foster a shared certainty that justice has been served. Before planting crops, farmers depend on weather observations (knowledge), ancestral insights about the seasons (truth), and the alignment of signs and intuition (certainty) before they take action. These examples show that in practical Yorùbá life, knowledge, truth, and certainty are deeply intertwined.

This connection challenges some of the assumptions found in Western epistemology. For example, Descartes sought certainty as the bedrock of knowledge, while pragmatists like John Dewey and William James linked truth to practical results. In contrast, Yorùbá epistemology views knowledge, truth, and certainty as mutually supportive and inseparable. Each element needs to bolster the others for true wisdom to arise. Additionally, this comprehensive approach highlights the communal aspect of Yorùbá thought. Knowledge is validated not just on an individual level but also collectively; truth encompasses not only factual accuracy but also moral considerations; certainty extends beyond personal conviction to include social dimensions. This integrated perspective adds depth to modern discussions surrounding indigenous knowledge, decolonial philosophy, which is rooted epistemic pluralism.

A significant contribution of Yorùbá thought is its refusal to compartmentalize the rational, empirical, and spiritual realms. In Western modernity, these aspects often get separated, with

spirituality dismissed as irrational. However, the Yorùbá framework illustrates that intuition (Ojú Inú), sensory perception (Ojú Ìta), and rational thought can work together harmoniously. This holistic approach serves as a strong counter to the fragmentation seen in modern epistemology.

In the global conversation about decolonizing knowledge, Yorùbá epistemology stands out as a vibrant example of an indigenous system that challenges the dominance of Western thought. By grounding knowledge, truth, and certainty in lived African experiences, Yorùbá philosophy resists being simplified into Western categories. It champions the validity of alternative ways of knowing and underscores the importance of diverse epistemologies in tackling contemporary challenges. While Western science gives us solid empirical data (Ojú Ìta), indigenous knowledge systems, such as Yorùbá wisdom, provide us with deep, intuitive insights (Ojú Inú). When combined, they offer a more comprehensive understanding of how to take action for the environment.

Modern medicine often leans on empirical testing, but many patients still turn to traditional healers for spiritual guidance. By blending Ojú Ìta and Ojú Inú, we can achieve a more complete understanding of healing practices. Leadership Ethics: In the realm of global politics, there's often a gap between what's factual and what's morally right. The Yorùbá model suggests that true certainty in leadership comes from merging evidence-based policies (Ojú Ìta) with moral insight (Ojú Inú). These examples highlight how Yorùbá epistemology holds significant comparative and practical value that extends beyond its cultural roots. Exploring Yorùbá thought emphasizes the need for epistemic pluralism. Just as one eye can't see the whole picture, no single epistemic tradition can fully encompass the essence of knowledge, truth, and certainty. The Yorùbá saying “Ojú kan ò ṣ’ómọde d’ágba” (one eye does not make a child an elder) beautifully illustrates that wisdom is born from diverse viewpoints. Global philosophy thrives when Western and African epistemologies engage in meaningful dialogue. The Yorùbá framework of knowledge, truth, and certainty as interconnected elements enriches this pluralism, providing a balanced perspective that is both grounded in empirical evidence and attuned to spiritual insights, reflecting individual experiences while also being validated by the community.

CONCLUSION

Delving into the concepts of ìmò (knowledge), òtító (truth), and ìdánílójú (certainty) through the lenses of Ojú Ìta (outer eye) and Ojú Inú (inner eye) really highlights the unique depth of Yorùbá epistemology. Unlike many Western philosophies that often treat these ideas separately or confine them to rigid theoretical boxes, Yorùbá thought emphasizes their interconnectedness. Knowledge without truth feels empty, truth without certainty can be shaky, and certainty without knowledge is prone to mistakes. Together, they create a holistic triad that forms the foundation of the Yorùbá understanding of reality and shapes everyday life. At the core of this framework lies the epistemic dualism of Ojú Ìta and Ojú Inú. The outer eye brings

in empirical verification, observable signs, and tangible evidence, while the inner eye provides intuition, moral insight, and spiritual richness. True certainty arises only when these two faculties come together, ensuring that knowledge is not just factually sound but also ethically significant. This dualism skillfully sidesteps the traps of one-dimensional ways of knowing—whether purely empirical, overly rational, or excessively mystical—by integrating them into a well-rounded system of understanding.

The triadic framework of knowledge, truth, and certainty isn't just theoretical; it's woven into the very fabric of Yorùbá life. Farmers depend on both observation and intuition when making decisions about their crops. Healers blend empirical diagnosis with spiritual insight. Elders who mediate disputes consider evidence alongside sincerity and fairness. Leaders strive for legitimacy not just through factual accuracy but also by aligning with the values of the community. In all these scenarios, knowledge, truth, and certainty work hand in hand, guided by the dual faculties of Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta. This makes Yorùbá epistemology incredibly practical, focused on survival, harmony, and the well-being of the community.

The Yorùbá perspective offers meaningful insights for contemporary discussions on knowledge and understanding, encouraging a more integrated approach that values both empirical evidence and spiritual wisdom. This work critiques the narrow views of truth that focus solely on correspondence theories by emphasizing the relational and moral aspects of òtítọ́. It goes beyond the traditional divide between empiricism and rationalism, illustrating how perception and intuition can actually work together instead of being at odds. In a global context, this way of thinking contributes to decolonial perspectives by validating indigenous African knowledge systems. It also enhances the idea of epistemic pluralism, serving as a remedy for the fragmentation often seen in modern epistemology. By demonstrating how knowledge, truth, and certainty are experienced within a community, Yorùbá thought encourages us to rethink what wisdom truly means in a world that frequently separates science from spirituality, facts from values, and personal judgment from collective responsibility.

This triadic model is still very much applicable today. When tackling complex issues like climate change, medical uncertainties, or political leadership, the world needs both empirical evidence (Ojú Ìta) and moral insight (Ojú Inú). Relying solely on scientific data without an ethical framework can lead to harmful outcomes, just as intuition without validation can lead us astray. The Yorùbá wisdom that true certainty arises from the balance of our faculties provides a valuable guide for navigating the crises we face today.

In summary, the Yorùbá understanding of knowledge, truth, and certainty, mediated through Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta, offers a comprehensive, practical, and relational approach to epistemology. It resists being simplified into Western categories while maintaining philosophical depth and global relevance. For the Yorùbá, knowing isn't just about collecting facts; it's about living wisely, acting justly, and fostering harmony between the visible and invisible, the external and internal, the individual and the community. This work illustrates that Yorùbá epistemology should not be dismissed as a “pre-scientific worldview.” Instead, it is a sophisticated

philosophical framework that continues to provide deep insights into the essence of knowledge. This highlights how the concept of epistemic dualism in Ojú Inú and Ojú Ìta is fundamental to Yorùbá philosophy, influencing the way knowledge is understood, validated, and experienced. It serves as both a glimpse into indigenous African thought and a valuable addition to global discussions on knowledge and understanding.

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