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Duty and Death Motifs: A Kantian Exploration of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

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Abstract

When the Yoruba world and mythopoesis (or mythopoeia) are considered in the arena of literature, one writer that readily comes to mind is Wole Soyinka. Several aspects of the Yoruba society have received various forms of exposures through his penmanship. His *Death and the King's Horseman* counts among the lot. As would be expected, this piece of drama has received a lot of interpretations as a literary archetype of African nay Yoruba tragedy, mythology, rituals, tradition and custom, et cetera. Even the playwright's stance against reading the work as a treatise on culture conflicts has been neglected by critics, who simply insist on exercising their reader-response authority in viewing the text as a masterpiece on the clash between tradition and modernity as well as between the West and African cultures. But then, this present work is tailored towards exploring the motifs of duty and death in the text in the light of Kant's Deontology. Even though some scholars have attempted to delineate on the themes of duty and death as unique themes in the text, none has been seen to take on the nexus between the two, particularly through the prism of Kant's deontological theory. This is exactly what this work sets out to do through the method of textual analysis with a view to deciphering to what extent the motifs of duty and death either adhere to or contravene the Categorical Imperative of Kant's Duty Ethics. The goal is to seek any moral justification for the ritual duty of death that controls the entire dramaturgy and controversies of the play. In the end, it finds that while this pivotal ritual duty of death is partially justified in some respects, it is largely

condemnable in many other respects in accordance with the theoretical framework of Kant's Deontology.

Keywords: Duty, Death, Motif, Deontology, Ethics.

Introduction

The irreversible cessation of all biological functions that sustain an organism, which is commonly known as death, is one phenomenon that remains roundly inevitable for every living thing. Yet, it remains one topic that usually evokes some eerie feelings when raised. It also represents a phenomenon that is both obscure and complicated in its delineation, even though there abound so many claims as to its actual imports. As the great anthropologist, Battista Mondin, opines in his *Philosophical Anthropology* published in 1985, it remains enshrouded in such obscurity because no one who can talk about it has ever experienced it, neither can anyone who has ever experienced it be able to talk about it anymore (Mondin 12). Hence, it represents various things to various groups of people depending on each group's unique religious, epistemological or cultural orientation.

For many religions, Christianity and others alike, the meaning of life goes beyond the physical plane. While many cultures and religions uphold the belief of life after death, yet belief in the procedure or process or channel or pathway to this life differ from one cultural and religious spectrum to another. The focus of this paper is on the Yoruba mythology about death, with particular reference to the historical event that is said to have taken place in 1946 in the colonial state of Oyo and which motivated Soyinka's drafting of *Death and the King's Horseman.* In the true-life story, a certain royal horseman named Olori Elesin was prevented by the British authorities of the time from fulfilling his traditional responsibility of committing ritual suicide in honour of his dead king and in the service of his people. But Soyinka skews the historical facts to place the failure of the Elesin Oba squarely on

his (Elesin) shoulders in order to emphasize the theme of duty other than that of culture conflict.

It is only under this framework of duty and responsibility within the worldview of the Yoruba cosmology that the obligatory ritual suicide of the Elesin Oba acquires some sense. Otherwise, it makes no material sense that another man should die and even 'enthusiastically' too, as is apparent in the opening lines of the text, just to accompany another man (the late king) to the underworld in order to remain at his service. It makes a folly of the mystery of death as something that defies all logical and foolproof explanations. Within the Christian circle, faithful Christians are promised some sort of eternal bliss after this earthy existence. In short, for Christians, they believe that *vita mutatur non tolitur* – life is not destroyed but changed. And so, it is hoped that at the end of one's earthly sojourn, the righteous ones will experience "the transcendent, eschatological fulfillment of human existence in a life freed from sin, finitude, and mortality and united with the triune God" (Kyongsuk 79). This is what is called "The Beatific Vision" (Rahner 78 - 80).

But even this hope of the Beatific Vision with all its promised glories (cf. Rom. 8:18) does not make Christians enthusiastic about death. Not even Jesus Christ was eager to die. Even His earlier Apostles, like Peter, at some point, tried to flee from the face of death. This goes to show that dying is never usually a pleasurable thing. It, therefore, becomes seemingly ridiculous that one has to go gleefully to his death while his people await joyfully his completion of the dying as we see in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman.* At its face level, it defies all understanding how a man will be so passionate and eager to embrace his own death, as the opening scenes of the text depict. The dancing and chattering of the market women as they performed the farewell ceremonies for the Elesin Oba amplifies this concern. No wonder the British

authorities found it extremely difficult to comprehend the scenario and as such, became hell-bent on stopping it.

In an attempt to make sense of this perplexing scenario, this paper recourses to Immanuel Kant's Deontological Theory or Duty Ethics, which is anchored on the Categorical Imperative. Since the picture Soyinka paints of Elesin Oba is that of a man on a mission to fulfil his ritual duty, our effort herein will be to evaluate this duty motif that demands the death of Elesin Oba in the light of the maxims of Kant's Categorical Imperative, with a view to ascertaining whether the duty expected of Elesin Oba to commit ritual suicide can be morally justified. We shall, thus, determine whether his expected duty was supposed to be an obligation out of duty or from a sense of duty in accord with the Kantian model. In the same vein, we shall also explore the actions and statements of other figures in the drama whose actions revolved around the Elesin Oba's duty motif to equally determine which of them acted out of duty or from duty, and then also decide which of their actions was morally justifiable as well, still following the template of Kant's Duty Ethics.

Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* in other scholarships

As already admitted, Soyinka's archetypal stature in Africa's literary history and circle has attracted a plethora of scholarly interpretations on his writings. The creative aptitude of readership has enabled mammoth critical inroads into his literary pieces with a view to recreating them in fashions not even earlier conceived by him as the original creator. Such critical inroads have navigated across several themes and have weighed his texts along the canons of many great theories.

Bhupendra Nandlal Kesur, in his essay, "Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*: A Resistance to Cultural Hegemony of the West", views the text as a resistance to the cultural hegemony of the West. He argues that "The Western Nations have been

dominating the third world nations and their culture through cultural hegemony and superiority" (44). In their negative and exotic outlook and approach to Third World Countries, the West ridiculously assumes the superiority of their culture over the culture of Third World countries. Hence, he views literature as one means to resist such cultural hegemony of the West. And, therefore, he considers Soyinka's *Horseman* as a perfect masterpiece that projects the Yoruba's defiance to the subjugation of their culture in the face of the cultural difference between the British and the Yoruba. So, for Kesur, despite Soyinka's stance against such a view, the text is on culture conflict; a clash between tradition and modernity, between the West and Africa.

In his "Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*: A Cultural Revolution Quelled", Amechi Akwanya did not just observe the culture conflict that existed between tradition and modernity, as have been over flogged by many a scholar. He rather went a step further to observe that the cultural revolution that was intended by the British powers represented by Pilkings, was almost actualized in the text, despite the burgeoning antagonism of Iyaloja – the 'mother' of the market; the "mother of multitudes". He, thus, noted that "the community had come to a threshold that would have led to a cultural revolution – as elaborated by Fredric Jameson – an abrupt and disorientating transition from one mode of production, one social practice to another" (Akwanya 38). What remained to achieve this was the successful withholding of Elesin Oba's death by Pilkings, save for the almost magical appearance of Olunde, who became the metonymical replacement for the king's faithful horseman, by committing the suicide that was supposed to be committed by his father. As Akwanya rightly observes, it was this singular act that quelled the cultural revolution that would have changed the cosmic balance of the Yoruba community in the text.

An earlier article than the two already reviewed written by Olagoke Olorunleke Ifatimehin under the title "Contrapuntal Significations in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*", prides itself as a direct affront with the playwright's stance against reading the piece as a work on the "clash of cultures". While acknowledging the reductionist orientation such a reading would imply as the playwright suggests, Ifatimehin still opts to engage the text from the purview of culture clash with a view to apprehending the very catalyst that sparks the tragic concerns in it. He, thus, went ahead to apply a deconstructionist reading to the text by plying on the horizon of "contrapuntality" and "alterity" to reveal significations which hint at the difference in cultural worldviews as the essence of the tragedy that is *Death and the King's Horseman*. In his view, such a reading rather enriches than reduces the textuality and significations of the play beyond pseudo-scientific taxonomies.

The Indian scholar, Shivani Duggal, shifts her gaze to the mythological bend of the text. Her concern is with how Soyinka constructs "the myth of a 'carrier' who becomes a scape goat and sacrifices his life for the betterment of the community" (1). She then went ahead to depict how Soyinka constructs and problematizes myth and archetypes in his writings. Interestingly, another Indian scholar, T. Gnanasekaran, seems to have come very close to the thrust of this present study through his 2018 essay titled, "Western Cultural Beliefs in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*". Therein, he applied Franz Fanon's theories in challenging the universal assumptions of right and wrong, which may have different connotations for black and white cultures. Just like this present paper, he quests into the standards for evaluating right and wrong, especially as seen in the text. But the approach of this present piece to this quest differs from his; first of all, in his choice of Franz Fanon's theoretical ideal as against this researcher's choice of Immanuel Kant's model. And then, as we postulate that Kant's models demand a universal application of the

moral judgment value of rightness or wrongness, his own work projects that rightness and wrongness could be relative depending on context and people.

Having said these, this present work acknowledges that the scholarships above reviewed are not exhaustive of all that have been written on Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. Yet, crystal observations can be drawn therefrom. Most significant is that this study reiterates the stand that no study has so far been made of the text in the light of Kant's Duty Ethics. Hence, it now remains to be seen how this present work shall make this reading of Kant into our selected text with a view to providing a moral justification or not of the duty and death motifs contained therein. It is this unique quest that drives the thrust of this piece.

Besides filling this gap, as is well known, literature is about life. One of the major primal functions of literature is to provide an explanation into happenings in the society. As Anzar Ahmed puts it:

> Literature and life of a society reflect upon each other. Life moulds literature of a society and literature reflects the real pattern of any society. So after the sequential elapse of time, it is proved that, literature definitely has profound sway upon life to a large extent. Literature influences us and makes us understand every walk of life…. Literature grows out of life, reacts upon life and fed by life. (2)

Writers, therefore, through their writings try to add their voices to shed more light to societal phenomena. This was, perhaps, Soyinka's drive in retelling through our text herein, the historical facts that took place in the ancient city of Oyo in 1946. To better appreciate this Yoruba phenomenon, this present study seeks to cast a critical glance at the motivation behind the ritual duty of dying by the Elesin Oba and other significantly related duties in the text using the Kantian duty paradigm. By so doing, we shall ascertain to what extent such duties conform or deviate from the moral maxims of Kant's deontological Categorical Imperatives and

as such, either approbate them or reprobate them as social ideals or anomalies, respectively. In other words, this discourse bears the relevance or significance of making a meaning out of the duty and death motifs in the text using Kant's duty ethics in order to be well placed to understand other such related traditional practices of various typical African societies, both present and past. It will, thus, contribute to and expand the body of knowledge already available on this Soyinka's text about the African nay the Yoruba traditional worldview and mythopoeia.

Kant's Deontology: The Duty Ethics and Categorical Imperative

The term deontology comes from the Greek word, *deon*, which means "duty". The theory of deontology generally states that we are morally obligated to act in accordance with certain sets of principles and rules regardless of the outcome or consequence. There are various forms of deontology such as religious deontology, philosophical deontology, etc. In religious deontology, the obligation we have to act according to various principles derive from the divine commandments of God. But in philosophical deontology, as championed by the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, the principles we are obligated to act in accordance with derive from human reason. The theory of deontology is better understood when placed side by side with the opposing theory of utilitarianism as championed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, which states that we ought to take the course of action that achieves the highest positive result or consequence.

As already hinted, Immanuel Kant, the 18th century Prussian born German philosopher, is known to be the greatest proponent of philosophical deontological theory. His most significant works on Ethics were contained in his works: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reasoning* (1788) and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1798). For Kant, man's capacity for moral actions is anchored on his belief in human beings as the only beings with the capacity for rationality, since no

other faculty or inclination in man, such as emotions, needs, desires and consequences can ever lead man to act morally. Based on this, he concludes that the moral worth of any action is determined by the human good will, which is the only thing that can be good without qualification. As he puts it, "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will" (1785). To further expatiate this stance, Kant's duty ethics states that an action can only be moral if:

i. it is motivated by a sense of duty and,
ii. if its maxim may be rationally willed as universal, objective law.

In order to ensure that human beings act only according to the goodwill, he develops certain maxims, known as the "Categorical Imperative" according to which any human action can be adjudged as either morally right or wrong. It is, therefore, only duties or responsibilities that adhere to the principles of these Categorical Imperative that qualify, in Kant's estimation, as good. To what extent do the duties in *Death and the King's Horseman* adhere to those maxims? This is the thrust of this piece.

There are three formulations or maxims of Kant's Categorical Imperative as enunciated in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, viz:

1. "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction."
2. "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end."
3. "Therefore, every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends."

Going by these maxims, Kant distinguishes between what he called perfect duty and imperfect duty. Perfect duty is such a duty that corresponds to all the tenets of these maxims, while imperfect duties do not correspond to the maxims since they are usually circumstantial, conditional and contextual, even though their completion maybe praiseworthy. It is, therefore, seen that for Kant, the only perfect duty is the duty that respects the Categorical Imperatives. This is what he regards as acting out of duty or from duty – that is, in accordance with the universal moral law, irrespective of motive or any underlying interests. Although there have been criticisms against these Kantian maxims on duty and moral actions, especially the criticism about its complete neglect of outcome or consequence, it is with these maxims that we shall weigh the duty and death motifs of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, since it still serves as one of the most important moral principles available. Its second maxim places it almost at par with the "Golden Rule" – treat others as you would want them to treat you – which is arguably the greatest of all moral principles.

The Categorical Imperative and Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

First Maxim: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.

The question that immediately comes to mind based on this first formulation is: can the Elesin Oba's act of ritual suicide be made a universal law that applies to every human being without contradiction? The answer is obviously in the negative. If it could be made a universal law, perhaps there would not have been any sort of culture conflict that was very evident in the text. The opposing position of the British authorities against the practice clearly represents a dissenting voice against the universal applicability of such ritual practice. For the British, the act was "savagery" and "barbaric", just like they branded almost every African custom they could not understand. This was Olunde's

particular fuse as he fumes: "…. I saw nothing, finally, that gave you the right to pass judgment on other peoples and their ways. Nothing at all" (Soyinka 54). Olunde's position actually raises the question: Is there any duty or responsibility that was executed by any of the major characters in the text that could actually be universalized?

Can it be made a universal law without any logical contradiction that a king's right-hand man should be made to commit suicide just in order to accompany the king to the spirit world after he dies? It certainly makes no sense beyond the local Yoruba community where it is upheld. This is the position represented by the British authorities as we see in the ensuing conversation between the Resident Commissioner and the District Officer in reaction to a letter brought by Amusa during the ball party organized in honour of the Prince of England that came visiting:

> RESIDENT: As you see it says 'emergency' on the outside. I took the liberty of opening it because His Highness was obviously enjoying the entertainment. I didn't want to interrupt unless really necessary.
> PILKINGS: Yes, yes of course sir.
> RESIDENT: Is it really as bad as it says? What's it all about?
> PILKINGS: Some strange custom they have sir. It seems because the king is dead some important chief has to commit suicide. (Soyinka 46)

So, from the foregoing, we see that the intended ritual suicide of the Elesin Oba was only meaningful within the context of the local community in question. Beyond that community, it was considered as "strange". But even far more beyond that, its strangeness is not just about the normal differences in the culture and manners of doing things by different people; after all, different people will always do things differently. At the level of the general humanity of the human race, the natural law forbids the killing of another human being or of oneself. Various civil and religious laws

prescribe conditions under which one loses his or her inalienable right to life, such as in situations of war and in the case of heinous crimes. Yet, the universal natural law still says: "Do not kill". Even the so-called "Castle Doctrine" law of self-defense against an aggressor is not accommodated within the precepts of natural law. As Robert Longley rightly affirms:

> Under natural law, however, self-defense has no place. Taking another life is forbidden under natural law, no matter the circumstances involved. Even in the case of an armed person breaking into another person's home, natural law still forbids the homeowner from killing that person in self-defense. In this way, natural law differs from government-enacted self-defense laws like so-called "Castle Doctrine" laws. (5)

As the natural law is against homicide, it is also against suicide. This is where the position of this paper meets the position of the playwright on not viewing the text as one on culture conflict. The British authorities were not just trying to foist their own culture upon the natives. They were, rather, trying to uphold a universal moral principle, even if it was clashing with the cultural norms of Elesin's local community. Therefore, it was not a case of tradition versus modernity or Western culture versus African nay Yoruba culture, but instead, a clash between universal morality and cultural or ethno morality. Hence, whereas the duty of the British authorities in attempting to prevent a possible death can be universalized, the duty of the ritual suicide demanded of the Elesin Oba cannot be universalized without logical contradiction as prescribed by Kant's first formulation of the Categorical Imperative. Iyaloja's attempt to make it wear a universal appeal still hits the rock as we see in the lines that follow thus:

> IYALOJA: …. (Passionately). But this is one oath he cannot shirk. White one, you have a king here, a visitor from your land. We know of his presence here. Tell me, were he to die would you leave his

> spirit roaming restlessly on the surface of earth? Would you bury him here among those you consider less than human? In your land have you no ceremonies of the dead?
>
> PILKINGS: Yes. But we don't make our chiefs commit suicide to keep him company. (Soyinka 70)

Pilkings' position above makes a more universal appeal than that of Iyaloja going by the precepts of the natural law against suicide and that of Kant about the universality of moral principles. It, therefore, follows that while Elesin Oba's intended ritual suicide is not morally justifiable using Kant's model; that of the British authorities in attempting to prevent the suicide is. Even though Pilkings' duty eventually led to two deaths that could have been one, yet this paper is inclined to view his attempt at preventing any death at all as essentially human and natural other than merely imperialistic. Therefore, his actions are still considered praiseworthy using the Kantian lenses, at least, for the goodwill that motivated it – the good will to prevent an avoidable death. Iyaloja attempted to ridicule this good will when she sarcastically asked Pilkings: "To prevent one death you will actually make other deaths?" (Soyinka 73). This ridicule does not hold water, because following Kant's model, the only good that remains good without equivocation and no matter the condition is the "Good Will". We see that good will demonstrated vividly in the British authorities' frantic attempt to prevent an avoidable death, even if Pilkings was more jolted to act because of the presence of the English Prince in town at that time.

Second Maxim: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end.

This second maxim appears to stand at polar opposites to the position of the 16th century Italian diplomat and political theorist, Niccolo Machiavelli, which enjoins new princes and royals to

accept that the aims of princes – such as glory survival – can justify the use of immoral means to justify those ends (Leo Strauss 297). Put simply, the Machiavellian principle simply holds that "the end (no matter the end) justifies the means (no matter the means)". Kant's second maxim roundly contradicts this stance. It rather aligns more to the Golden Rule of the Holy Book that prescribes that we should do unto others as we would want them to do unto us (cf. Luke 6:31). It only differs from the Golden Rule by its accommodation of the agent of the action itself as also being worthy of consideration such that it says, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your person or in the person of any other…." In other words, while the Golden Rule apparently focuses on not treating others as a means to an end, Kant's second maxim appears more comprehensive as it stipulates that we should also not treat ourselves (just as it stipulates for others) merely as a means to other end(s). Hence, every human being must be considered as an end in themselves and must be treated as such.

What then was the end that was intended by Elesin Oba's ritual suicide? Elesin himself answers thus: "I go to keep my friend and master company" (Soyinka 14). And when he is held back from going on that 'ill-fated' spiritual journey, he laments that, "The night is not at peace ghostly one. The world is not at peace. You have shattered the peace of the world forever. There is no sleep in the world tonight" (Soyinka 62). In all of these, it becomes palpable that the Elesin's death was simply to serve two interconnected purposes: (a) to keep the late king company in the spirit world and continue to serve him there and (b) to maintain a perceived cosmic balance in the community. Hence, none of these was meant for Elesin's own good. He was merely to be used as a means to achieve some other ends. This starkly contradicts Kant's second maxim and again fails its moral test.

Pilkings' own duty of preventing the suicide again stands morally justifiable to the extent it was intended to prevent the use of Elesin

as a means to other ends. But then to the extent it was intended as one means to merely maintain peace and harmony in the colony, especially during the Prince's visit, it appears to fail the moral test. This is where critics on the grounds of culture conflict find problematic. Pilkings and his cohorts appear to care more about maintaining a stranglehold on their colony, even to the detriment of the 'peace and harmony' of another community; thereby caring more about protecting their colony from native 'rebels' than about bringing more harm on the natives – what Olunde and Iyaloja described as a "calamity" as seen in Elesin's lament aforementioned. To this extent, the British authorities' 'good will' becomes punctured and questionable. And to that extent too, it ceases to be good will and no longer morally justifiable.

So, it follows that while Elesin Oba's intended ritual suicide wholly fails the test of the second maxim again, the British authorities' duty partially fulfils and partially fails the test.

Third Maxim: Therefore, every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends.

This third maxim prescribes that for any action to be considered as morally just, it must be autonomous and not be subject to any special interest or be a result of coercion. Such an action must serve both the person positing it and others, who may be affected by the action, since all belong to the universal kingdom of ends – with each person being an end in him or herself. Was Elesin Oba's apparent 'eagerness' to die an autonomous one without any special interest underlying it? At its surface level, it would appear so, as he himself also professed thus: "My soul is eager and I shall not turn aside" (Soyinka 14). But in the fullness of time, we see a very clear case of the soul willing while the body is weak. The manifestation of this weakness is played out vividly in his quick readiness to delay his dying in his lust for a beautiful bride. It is not a known part of the custom that the Elesin Oba was to marry a bride on the night of his death. No wonder the Iyaloja forewarns him that "….

The fruit of such union is rare, it will be neither of this world nor of the next. Nor of the one behind us. As if timelessness of the ancestor world and the unborn have joined spirits to wrong an issue of the elusive being of passage…." (Soyinka 22).

She went further to warn him saying, "You wish to travel light. Well, the earth is yours. But be sure the seed you leave in it attracts no curse" (Soyinka 23). As if hers were the words of a prophetess, it is this singular act of tallying to take a wife that bought Elesin the time to be 'rescued' by Pilkings, even if he (Elesin) did not directly intend it so. In any case, the point of interest is that this singular act also betrays the fact that Elesin was more or less being 'coerced' to perform this singular act. Some critics have interpreted this hesitant body language of the Elesin as selfishness on his part in that he needed not to be coerced or cajoled to perform the ritual task, since he knew that failure to do so could spell a dreaded 'calamity' for the community. But this paper is inclined to interpret his hesitation as an attempt on self-defence by applying some sort of delay tactics. To this extent, it is the view of this researcher that Elesin's earlier expressed eagerness was not a genuine one because it was not an autonomous one. To this extent too, we hold that Elesin's duty again fails the morality test as prescribed by Kant.

On the other hand, the duty of the British authorities represented by Pilkings and co, again, partially fulfils this third maxim's morality test and partially fails it as well. It fulfils it to the extent it can be considered as autonomously geared towards saving a life. But then, it also fails to the extent this saving of life is seen to be geared towards the special interest of protecting and safeguarding their colonial territory. Moreover, it is in their failure to regard the natives as equal legislating members in the universal kingdom of ends that their failure of this particular morality test is grossly manifested. Through their colonial high-handedness, they fail to recognize that the natives also reserve their own rights to decide

how they want to live according to what works for them. Pilkings had this to say to the Iyaloja: "I hope you understand that if anything goes wrong, it will be in your head. My men have orders to shoot at the first sign of trouble" (Soyinka 73). Such tyranny! Soyinka expresses his aversion to such colonial czarism through Olunde's voice thus: "No, I am not shocked Mrs. Pilkings. You forgot that I have now spent four years among your people. I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand…. I saw nothing, finally, that gave you the right to pass judgment on other peoples and their ways. Nothing at all" (Soyinka 54). And so, it is my view herein that the colonialists were being draconian in their attempt to wantonly legislate on the lives of the natives by not regarding them as equal legislating members in the universal kingdom of ends, even in a matter that squarely concerns them and even on their own soils. For this reason and to this extent, their duty also partially fails the morality test prescribed by this third maxim.

Conclusion

Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is obviously a very cerebral work fraught with esoteric representations of the metaphysical and the sublime, especially using the techniques of music and dance that speak to the other-worldly. This employment of the music and dance techniques requires further readings in the appreciation of this seminal text. But beyond that, the text is clearly a drama on death and dying. A community is placed on the precipice of collapse except at the mercy of one significant and timely ritual death. The British interlopers do not help matters at all. In fact, it is exactly such situations as created by Soyinka in the text that actually brands them as interlopers. How else can one, for example, explain Sergeant Amusa's attempt in the text to interrupt the proceedings of the ritual ceremony? What has been done, therefore, is to seek a moral justification of that 'interloping ministry' and the duty of ritual death it sought to prevent using the categories of Kant's duty ethics. The conclusion remains that

going by Kant's deontological theory, that duty of ritual death expected from the Elesin Oba cannot be justified by any of the maxims of Kant's Categorical Imperative. Instead, it is the British authorities' attempt to prevent such a bizarre death that receives some approbation by certain maxims of the Categorical Imperative.

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