

# Introduction

## Destiny, Temporality, and Economic Development

The order of destiny is the destiny of order in economic development. To be precise, the order of destiny in Kalabari can inform the destiny of order in Africa's economic development. This is the order of destiny in Kalabari: creative beginning . . . disruption . . . new beginning.<sup>5</sup> This homologizes with the creation . . . destruction . . . creation cycle of economic development (capitalist transformation) that economists, including Joseph Schumpeter, taught us. The order in either the "order of destiny" or in the "destiny of order" is split. Time traverses it and prevents it from being self-identical. Time decenters or destabilizes it and thus its coherency is supported by or intertwined with fantasy. Economic development, like destiny in African (Kalabari) religion, is a mixture of reality and fantasy. Destiny and economic development (human flourishing, human good living) are bound up with our basic "investment in survival" or the temporal dynamics of survival.<sup>6</sup> And our finitude—what can be lost or gained in our time-bound lives—is the foundation of the order we desire or the disorder we fear. Time (this is always split in its sense as a movement of successions—an unstable present that is penetrated by the memory of the past and driven by the anticipation of the future) impinges on the experience of destiny or development not from an outside, but rather from within. Split time constitutes the experience of either form of order from within.

The goal of this book is to introduce readers to the economic philosophic dimensions inherent in ideas, notions, terms, theories, and practices associated with African (traditional) religions (ATR).<sup>7</sup> Once we are able properly to articulate such dimensions, we will proceed to investigate their potential contributions to the crafting of an endogenous

paradigm of development for African nations. In particular, this book asks this question: Can indigenous notions in African religion make a contribution to current economic philosophy? And it answers “Yes.” It argues that there are notions in African religion that may not only make contributions to economic philosophy but may also inform the processes of enacting a paradigm of economic development in Africa that is oriented toward human flourishing. We explore the possibility of these contributions through the lens of the notion of destiny in the traditional religion of the Kalabari people of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. The notion of destiny in Kalabari is concerned with the prenatal wishes of an unborn soul that will guide its life course on earth. The wishes not only represent the “first decision” of a subject, but also (supposedly) condition her decision and contingent actions. There is an (often) immanent split between the first decision and subsequent ones or actions. The split is caused by time (temporal successions) that attends all forms of subjectivity. Temporal successions also transform destiny from a pre-given state of conditions (opportunities) into an unstable project.

At the very core of the transformation of traditional or modern society stand some mechanisms that structure destiny and economic development (or capitalist transformation of an economy). These are the production of value and the logic of fantasy. Karl Marx himself argues that human needs have two sides: bodily needs (“use-value”) and fantasmatic needs.<sup>8</sup> There is a psychic investment of consumers in the appeal of commodities. This is an investment that is undergirded by the feeling that one’s satisfaction is always incomplete; no one specific commodity will ever fulfill desire. Desire becomes drive in the Lacanian sense of the word. There is *jouissance* obtained from circling around the fantasmatic object or dimension of the object. Destiny also has a “use-value” and a fantasmatic supplement. Destiny functions in two ways. First, destiny as a prearranged path of life (ostensibly) generates “use-value” (purpose) for a life as a lived experience. Second, when people in the traditional community are dealing with hard reality, they use destiny as a “real” prop to support their fantasizing about their nonexistent Reality. Life in the traditional Kalabari world—at least, its symbolic representation—is framed and sustained by destiny as its fantasmatic supplement. Time as a negativity in the heart of life or existence forces it to generate its own supplement, spectral double. Both destiny and economic development are sustained by (or need) fantasy—but not odd fancies.

Every induction of citizens into the processes and promises of economic development involves some sort of “seduction” whereby their commitment to a nation’s push for the (capitalist) transformation is always, in part, sustained by a fantasmatic supplement, a future enjoyment of possibilities undergirded by fantasy.<sup>9</sup> The fantasmatic supplement is needed because economic development is decentering, traumatic, or lacking—the lack of satisfaction of desire, the absence of the ultimate guarantee of eudaimonia, the lack of its completion in a community’s lifetime. Time always renders economic development incomplete. Time as pure difference ensures the nonidentity of every destiny with itself. Destiny is an attempt to fixate logical, conceptual, or fantasmatic objects on an empirical life “and to conceal the gap that separates the two realities,” to hide the gap between eternity (heaven) and temporality (earth), transcendence and immanence, to bridge essence (the ideal) and existence (the real).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, economic development is an endeavor to bridge the gap between empirical conditions of poverty (underdevelopment, inadequate prosperity) and an envisioned site of a higher level of human flourishing. The gap that separates destiny from itself is the same gap that renders economic development always incomplete: time. Time is not even identical with itself. It also has a double character. The presence is always wracked by the traces of the past and the anticipations of the future.

Destiny is structured as economic development. Destiny in Kalabari is an unconscious. The unconscious is economics. This does not mean that economics is unconscious or that we can reduce economic development to unconscious complexes. It means three things. First, the notion of destiny informs us about how to think of the complexes of information and decision-making in the task of economic development. Second, the subjects (citizen-believers) of destiny (the unconscious) are formally included in the labor of economic development. Third, destiny is a logic of fantasy (imagination). It is fantasy that undergirds the perceived conjunction of prenatal wishes and their earthly value. The two are, in reality, separated by temporality, and each of them is undermined by the same. Prenatal wishes point to a relationship between heaven and actualization of human potentialities on earth, making heavenly sanction (approval) both the sign of human flourishing and a subject to whom the sign can be attributed. Existential (earth-bound) value, however, concerns the actualization of the subjects’ potentialities, which is subject to temporality that is without heavenly sanction. Time (temporality) is the sign under which both the

human subject and her flourishing happens. The logic of time and its movement does not take orders from words “spoken” before birth. As I will demonstrate throughout this book, time works to split destiny, to make it non-self-identical once it reaches earth. The conjunction of prenatal wishes (pre-spoken words without temporality) and its existential value (temporality without pre-spoken words) is sutured by fantasy.

This book attempts to ground an African philosophy of economic development in the African notion of destiny that is always destabilized, disrupted, and transformed from a state into a movement. Drawing from the Kalabari notion of destiny that can be changed, that can be renegotiated with God (deity, heaven)—making destiny as not ahistorical—it offers a notion of human flourishing that is driven by immanent desires. Not to put a fine point on it, this is to say that this book examines the production of destiny by time and not by eternity or divinity. It thereby proposes a conception of human flourishing in terms of the immanent movement of disruptions that constitutes economic development. Though the belief of destiny was developed in a religious setting, it is quite amenable as a philosophical notion to enable us to understand the logic of value and the logic of fantasy that undergird the capitalist transformation of economies or the economic development process.

Among other contributions, this book demonstrates the importance of the economic significance of African religious concepts and the critical roles they can play in forging an African economic philosophy of development. I engage the terms and practices on a philosophic register while seeking economic and social solutions to the impediments confronting Africa’s economic development. I also raise a call for a more engaged study of the religious underpinnings of Africa’s economic development at a time when economic policy-making is dominated by a “technical mindset” that disdains indigenous knowledge systems.

Our efforts to bring the indigenous religious notion of destiny into the modernist discourse of economic development contribute to the demythologization of destiny in African religion. The interpretation of destiny undertaken in this book amounts to a rejection or a downplaying of the cosmological division of two-tiered world, eternal and temporal—at least when it comes to the analysis of human flourishing in the purview of the economic transformation of nations. Our interpretation also moves the focus from souls to subjects when trying to understand the economic philosophical implications of the notion of destiny. Subjects (interpreted under the aegis of materialist theory) rather than souls (agents in pre-

modern cosmologies) are the key agent in our phenomenological world of modern economies. In this very move we also hope to demystify neoclassical development economic thinking.<sup>11</sup> ATR's notion of destiny next to development economic thinking questions the tendency of most economic experts to ignore how indigenous notions can inform the ethos of economic development in Africa. As we shall demonstrate throughout this book, the Kalabari notion of destiny is a veritable tool to deciphering a people's perceptions of their world or decision-making orientation. This notion at its heart shows how human beings generate information about their environment when there is uncertainty and things are not going as normally expected, and how they proceed to make decisions or take concrete actions based on the changing perceptions of their dynamic world.

Economic development is an outcome of decisions and unplanned human actions. The notion of (or belief about) destiny in Kalabari traditional religion embeds in itself a theory of how perceptions of the world inform how human beings (agents) act or make decisions. If properly harnessed, this theory can enrich our understanding of economic development. Decisions or human actions are a process that extends over time and depends on three main types of orientation toward information or assumptions about how economic actors perceive the world. First, we can postulate that though we cannot absolutely know the future we can today predict the form it would take tomorrow. It is believed that we can know the set of random variables and the range of values they can take tomorrow. Decision makers start with a range of probability distributions that they continually update in the light of experience. The world is perceived as a world of risk (uncertainty). Second, others perceive the world not as that of risk and uncertainty. Decision makers are ignorant of the future. The agent may know some of the variables and not others. She believes some variables can suddenly emerge, and thus probability judgment based on the updating of information in the light of experience is not useful. The key orientation that drives decision-making is not risk or uncertainty, but ignorance. This calls for alertness. Finally, the third approach holds that the question is not about whether the future can be known, estimated, or discovered. The agent is bent toward searching for and discovering opportunities that might aid his or her flourishing. It is about creating the future, starting from the assumption that it does not exist and is indeterminate at any moment of decision-making. "The agent's task is not to estimate or discover, but to create. He must therefore exercise imagination. The agent is aware of the flimsiness of his conjectures

about the future and the vulnerability of his plans to the independent imagination of other agents.”<sup>12</sup> These three perceptions of the world or decision-making orientation are discernible in the notion of destiny in Kalabari traditional religion, which projects human beings as uncertain about their environments and posits that their perceptions of it change over time. Hence, it is expected that their decisions will change over time. This is not the usual way scholars interpret the notion of destiny; it is usually presented as a static concept. The Kalabari notion of destiny has three types of process that “focus attention on quite different devices that might be used by agents as a means of increasing their information about their environment or reducing their exposure to uncertainty.”<sup>13</sup> Of course, this articulation of the three processes is based on my interpretation.

There are three types of process in the Kalabari notion of destiny. First there is *fiyeteboye*. Before a soul is born it goes before God to decide what its life course on earth will be—the vicissitudes of her particular life. This is the stock interpretation of destiny. But there is a difference here. The soul, on reaching earth, cannot remember its prenatal wishes. Thus, her conscious self does not know what she wished. Destiny is a form of unconscious. The problem is that of ignorance, and over time the person learns to know some components of her life course and not others. She discovers things about herself that she did not know before. Assuming things are not working well for her, she can go to a diviner to renegotiate with God and revoke her prenatal destiny. (This is a key difference between the Kalabari notion of destiny and those of many other communities in Africa. Destinies are revocable!<sup>14</sup>) The process of the revocation of destiny is called *bibibari*. The person chooses a new destiny, and thus the form that her future will take is known in advance. There is risk and uncertainty in the sense that the variables that condition her life and the range of their values operate by means of probability distribution. The process of *bibibari* might not deliver the level of human flourishing the agent needs. There is the third process of *after-bibibari*. The person uses her imaginative vision to create the future she wants. In processes of *fiyeteboye* and *bibibari*, the agent assumes that a determinate future exists, and it could be known or unknown. Yet, in the process of *bibibari*, the agent has started to use her imaginative vision to craft an alternative world or plan of well-being for herself, believing that the future is indeterminable or nonexistent. *After-bibibari* is just one more device of managing her exposure to uncertainty and supplementing the information she has about her environment by her imagination. There is a crucial difference between *after-bibibari* and

*bibibari*. *Bibibari* is beholden to the imaginary of transformation as in moving from an old fixed order to a new fixed order, from one determinate future to a new and improved determinate future. *After-bibibari* seems to usher in a new interpretation of destiny. Rather than basing the expectation of her life on her past prenatal wishes or the renegotiation of them as a transformation of the past into a site for a new and improved fixed formation, she now bases it on her imagination. She puts forward an account of destiny that is constantly changing, that has a fluid character. Destiny as a “solid” has entered into a liquid phase. Destiny is now something that stimulates her own imagination of her flourishing.

What is discernible in the notion and practice of destiny in Kalabari are three approaches to the world: *fiyeteboye* is characterized by ignorance and alertness, *bibibari* by risk and estimation, and *after-bibibari* by indeterminacy and creativity.<sup>15</sup> In this book, I will deploy the Kalabari notion of destiny to articulate a vision of economic development and human flourishing. Our study will focus on the approach of *after-bibibari* to think of economic development as a disruptive process that creates something new. What kind of theo-economic and social-ethical influences should be brought to bear on citizens, Nigerians, as they exercise their imagination? We are not going to assume that economic development is a thing, a well-defined optimal or pre-given state that exists out there, and that reaching it is ultimately what economic advancement or human flourishing is all about (*fiyeteboye* information-decision process). It is also not about following the *bibibari*-type. This model assumes that the information about Nigeria’s logic and dynamic of economic development is either known or unknown and what citizens need to do is to discover and react to new economic and technological opportunities over time. The *after-bibibari* approach holds that all actions and decisions must be taken in the “light of imagined future conditions and hence emphasizes creativity and uncertainty.”<sup>16</sup> The task before us now is to show how the creativity and imagination in the Kalabari dynamic notion of destiny can be harnessed as the fundamental framework of economic development in Africa. The notion—as I am interpreting it here—is an acknowledgment of structural uncertainty and complexities in the lived world and how best to cope with them rather than downplaying them. Earlier interpretations of the Kalabari notion of destiny have tended to downplay its dynamism and emphasized its false fixity as unchanging fate. With this approach, they missed the potential contributions it can make to our understanding of how a people should orient themselves to the uncertainty concerning

economic development. The flawed line of reasoning also missed the important insight that the Kalabari notion of destiny is about individual innate potentialities that can only be actualized in a relationship with a person's community. To think of destiny in relation to economic development is to think of how a society can create the social imagination and capabilities that can enable persons to be all that they can be and contribute to the betterment of their community. This is a dynamic process and never a done deal.

It is always about the continuous production of subjectivity that is the primary step in the pursuit of economic development. This is the production that goes into every other production of economic transformations. What is the connection between belief in destiny and *bibibari* and the constitution of subjects for economic development? *Fiyeteboye-bibibari* speaks to four key components of economic subjectivity: desire, change, choice, and fantasy. The *fiyeteboye-bibibari* syntagma speaks to the constitution of subjectivity by producing a *desire* that plays off on the gap between the ideal good (consumption, human flourishing) and the real one. As a procedure of subjectivation the gap moves a person to subject herself to practices and virtues that will enable her to attain her ideal (pre-given) level of human flourishing. When the pre-given is not attainable, she *changes* the course of her patterned actions (after a period of self-probing and self-interpretation) and makes a new *choice* of an ideal level of flourishing, satisfaction of desire. Desire, change, and choice are all supported by fantasy. This fantasy is never a metastatic vision whereby a person denies reality and believes that mundane conditions will be divinely transfigured to create a new world for her. Fantasy is an imaginary that articulates the other three key components (desire, change, and choice) to forge an (new) order of meaning. Indeed, economic development requires the human capability that Mr. Thomas Gradgrind deprecates in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* as "fancy." But according to Martha Nussbaum, such fancy leads to certain postures of mind, creating the "ability to imagine nonexistent possibilities, to see one thing as another and one thing in another, to endow a perceived form with a complex life."<sup>17</sup> By enabling citizens to imagine possibilities, thinking about worlds that do not yet exist, the public policymakers become an aid to acknowledging the present economic condition and its limitations and to making choices in it more reflectively.

The human being is never passive before destiny and is not belittled because of its operation in her; instead, her subjectivity is forged and enhanced. She plays an integral part in the process of her destiny, a life



course that cannot be brought to completion without her intervention. Her destiny's operation and its alteration require her contribution. Since she (that is, her life course) was created in the image of her prenatal words, her first duty on earth is to create, to sculpt her life. Her unique capacity as a creator is not abolished here on earth—she is to perfect her life and her worlds through her creative acts. Her life course requires her contributions for its completion. She is a true partner in the act and course of her destiny. This, in my opinion, is the primary and most important philosophical import of the *fiyeteboye-bibibari-after-bibibari* syntagma.

To grasp the import of this syntagma is to realize that for the Kalabari “life is painting a picture not doing a sum.”<sup>18</sup> Kalabari approach destiny not content to show what has happened or what is fixed to happen, but to show themselves, as Aristotle might say, “things such as might happen.” Destiny is directed at human possibilities. So is economic development, properly or broadly conceived.

Destiny—the *fiyeteboye-bibibari-after-bibibari* triumvirate—is a form of life: a person recognizes that her life is under a transimmanent word (telos) and she periodically evaluates her actions to know whether they conform to or deviate from the telos. This orientation to create an order that bestows meaning on her existence can exercise a constitutive function in the performance of economic development. The “inner form” of this orientation as creativity is conducive to the creative-destructive impulse of economic transformation. The subject of this orientation is a divided subject—the Kalabari person is split from her unconscious prenatal wishes. In this sense, the person does not know what she “wanted” and her prenatal phenomenal “I” does (may) not want what she desires in her post-natal phenomenal “I.”

### Destiny and Split Subjectivity: “I Propose Where I Am Not”

Destiny is about an unborn soul in the eternal realm working out its life course before coming into the world. The life course is the undergirding power and driver of the purpose of the soul's earthly sojourn. Destiny is about the purpose of life and is the great qualifier or conditioner of human existence. A person's existence is about standing out and standing in pre-defined purpose. Destiny could be regarded as “I propose, therefore I am.” The coming of the soul to earth splits the “I propose” from the “I

am.” Thought and being are disconnected by time, by temporality. Destiny becomes “I proposed where I am not, therefore I am where I did not propose. I am not whenever the ontological ‘I propose’ is not self-identical with me.”<sup>19</sup> The “I” that proposed is not identical with the “I” that is; the “therefore I am” is not the content of the “I propose.” The “I” is split, non-identical with itself. This is the repressed truth of the African (Kala-bari) notion of destiny that tries to conceal the non-identity of thinking (enunciation in heaven) and being (subject of the enunciated on earth). It posits identity as harmonious when it is actually split.<sup>20</sup> Where the person is *is* not what the person proposed to “purpose” his life and where he is *is* not what he purposed to propose. The split is between the frozen image of the self that was proposed before earthly existence, to pursue as the telos of existence, and the real self in existence, which is at odds with this frozen image. The identity between being and thinking (the metaphysical image of the self as thought, that which precedes subjectivity) is split. The thought or destiny as the signifier is unable to fully signify itself on earth, and therefore all earthly existence or subjectivity is ontologically cracked. Or thought cannot fully support substantial being. We (propose) purpose where we are not and are not where we propose (purpose). The subject is not located where the thought originated in reference to the gaze of the other, the divine other. It is elsewhere, in the phenomenal self. The split is even inherent in the original proposition: “I propose therefore I am.” The “I” that proposed in the eternal realm is not equivalent to the “I” that exists. The “I” that proposed constituted the symbolic “I” through its agency. As per meaning of destiny the substantive, positive contents of the symbolic “I” come from the metaphysical “I.” This split is masked by the illusion that there is one “I,” a single (instead of double-natured), harmonious “I” in both of them. But the “I” is traversed, cut by time. It is cut by time not only in the sense of temporality being an external relation between the two “I’s,” but also by the internal inconsistency of time, which constitutes the unstable, decentering, and groundless link between them.<sup>21</sup> Time is a cut. It makes a difference between two components, the “I’s.” It is also the foundation of differentiation in each of the components. Time makes each one of them—whether signifier or signified—as difference in itself. This is to say, time makes each component not to be self-identical.

In the scholarly discussion of destiny in African religion, the role of time is often ignored. At the minimum, intellectuals ignore or downplay how temporality corrupts, disrupts, or changes destiny and even leads to the forgetting of destiny. In this book we want to ensure that time is

integral to our understanding of destiny. As we shall demonstrate later, the split in the subject is a function of the split in time. In order properly to understand destiny and its place in the conceptualization of human flourishing we must make time the prime mover and distinctive feature of our analysis in this book. The book examines the production of destiny by time (that is, split time) and not by eternity or divinity. The method of this book is a unification of African religious thought, continental philosophy, and economic theory for an understanding of the relations between destiny, desire, temporality, and human flourishing.

### Organization of Chapters

The goal of this section of any book's introduction is twofold. First, to address each of the particular chapters of the book. Second, to relate each of them to the unifying structure (process) of the book. In this organizing structure each preceding chapter should seamlessly call forth its subsequent chapter. This is to say, each chapter should flow into the next in a logical manner of either how the subject is unfolding or some questions, issues, and unexplored paths of the underlying argument in a chapter demand to be treated in the one following it. When all these are done well the reader can see (sense) the overarching plan for the book. If the parts of the introduction before "organization of chapters" have adequately laid out the main arguments of the book in their outline form, explained their structural integrity, carefully aided the reader to avoid any misunderstanding, and informed the reader about the methodology of the book, then this last section is likely to imprint the overarching plan for the book in the reader's mind. This is what I intend to do here.<sup>22</sup>

Chapter 1 ("Religion, Temporality and Desire") presents the whole book's arguments *in nuce*. For in this chapter all of the fullness of the book is exemplified or dwells in the form of a swatch to its cloth. This chapter foreshadows key arguments of the chapters that come after it. In it we find the basic arguments of the book that relate to the human creative act, ontological principle, destiny, desire, human flourishing, and temporality. It begins with an analysis of the temporal structure of the process of economic growth, a condition necessary for raising the levels of human flourishing. It investigates what holds together the three temporal modes of any economy. I name this "thing" as the *human creative act*. The creative act is the ultimate reality of the economy. It is the context

in which creative things, the creativity of the various sectors, and the temporal modes of the overall economy are relevant to one another. I ground this conception of temporality of economy in African religious notions of God, divine creativity, and personhood (subjectivity). Desire, temporality, and human flourishing are rooted in one ontological principle: the *togetherness* of the three temporal modes of the human creative act that is itself undergirded by an *ontological creative act*.

This chapter moves on to demonstrate the connection or interface between economic development and destiny. Economic development not only elevates the order of human flourishing, but also is a transformation of humanity itself. Broadly and properly understood, economic development is a magnificent unfolding of human potentialities—a continuous actualization of human flourishing—in a particular context. This perspective on economic development easily fits the Kalabari notion of destiny. Destiny is not the truth of one's existence on which one can settle down forever, but a short-run series of completeness in the long run of incompleteness of actualization of human potentialities. The truth of destiny and the truth of economic development, as this chapter demonstrates, are connected by the forces of desire and temporality. The chapter offers an analysis of human flourishing in the tensions between temporality and desire, between destiny and economic development.

On the whole, this chapter sets out the logic and experience of the Kalabari people in the movements and counter-movements of destiny, desire, temporality, and economic development. This is all about their participation in their ongoing drama of actualization of potentialities, the increase and transformation of the order of human flourishing. This participation is always broken, penetrated, or decentered by the finitude that attend all human existence. And the participation is bound up with or animated by their primary “investment in survival.”

The chapters that follow move from the broad, panoramic perspective of the drama to individual scenes, so to speak. Thus, chapter 2 takes up destiny and desire, chapter 3 looks at temporality and desire, chapter 4 dwells on economy and destiny in the light of a theory of agonistic communalism, and chapter 5 addresses economic development in the light of actualization of human potentialities. The lines of meaning in chapter 1 wind their way throughout the other chapters. The entire argument of the book is prefigured in chapter 1. The soul of the book is chapter 1 and the other chapters constitute its body. The nature and excellence of the soul is gradually grasped as we comprehend the excellence of the body. At the

end, the soul emerges or re-emerges as the culmination, compactness, or community substance of the advances of the other chapters. Thus, there is an integral relation between the first chapter and the rest of the chapters. It is only in the glare or shelter of the soul of the first chapter that the other chapters unfold the potentialities of their arguments; and without the ordering and deepening of the whole book by the truths of the other chapters the soul loses its courage to be.

Chapter 2 (“Destiny and Desire: An Ontology of Human Flourishing”) formulates a theory of destiny in Kalabari as a preparatory step toward demonstrating what insights it can possibly shed on economic development or to inform the economist’s search for standards of evaluating development policies. Destiny is neither a fixed course that must be inexorably followed nor an iron cage that confines or constricts human life. Rather, destiny is a sermon on the prenatal sentence (*fiyeteboye*) as its text.<sup>23</sup> This text is not something that is out there to be discovered or read. It is unknown and forgotten.<sup>24</sup> The text, indeed, is the Kalabari person’s engagement with the whole of her existence. It is her participation in being and human culture, community. The text is the experiencing of herself as a consciousness striving for human flourishing in the tension of existence. *Fiyeteboye* (a metonymic sentence) seen as a text that precludes the person, its writer, from essentially knowing it is a term that speaks to human beings “falling” into existence, the innocence of essence, potentiality falling into existence, which it cannot leave alone—as Paul Tillich might put it. To put it differently, for *fiyeteboye* as text, existence is its own essence. The text—rather, the substance of the text—is the subject. Its truth is the real only as the deeds of the subject.<sup>25</sup> Kalabari people say “*tombo tombo so*,” meaning “let a person (human being) become a person (human being).” A person is both her own subject and predicate. A person is a person as she actualizes her potentiality. This is given as an imperative. The indicative of being a human demands the imperative of personhood. Destiny is practically a notion of subjectivation that carries the idea that a person becomes what actually he or she is essentially and therefore potentially in the contingency of time. Becoming a true person is thus a moral imperative. It is deemed immoral not to do and actualize what one is essentially and potentially capable of doing. This idea also applies to groups and communities, as each of them has its *fiyeteboye*. Ethics of development or societal transformation is in a sense internal to the subjectivation process founded on Kalabari philosophic notion of destiny.

Let me now give a few insights into the arguments of chapters 2 to 5 as they relate to economic development. The insight of chapter 2 is that if we want to comprehend the destiny of economic development we must understand the destiny of the human beings that work for its actualization. This is to say, we must investigate how they interpret their anthropology and its weightiness in stimulating and sustaining increasing levels of human flourishing, which is always unfinishable. And if we have a notion of the highest actualization of human destiny or potentiality, as understood by the people, we must craft the standards for evaluating the effectiveness of economic policies (paradigms) for maximum actualization of human potentiality.

I seek to draw out the standards or principles of interpretation from the Kalabari materials available to me. I do not approach this study with *a priori* methodological tools or categories of thought. Rather, I have approached the doctrines and practices in Kalabari religion and the experiences of the people not only as “documents” that show how Kalabari make sense of their encounters with reality, but also as “texts” that offer their *secrets* in an open-ended inquiry. What I mean by *secrets* here is not some esoteric or hidden patterns that can only be seen by a select few, but the evocative centers of their materials. I believe that there are some sites of concentration of meanings in these materials that give coherence to Kalabari people’s existence and self-interpretation.<sup>26</sup> In this way, the theoretical formulations of this chapter—and, indeed, of the whole book—were born and borne by the materials.

Chapter 3 (“Temporality and Desire”) makes the argument that time, temporality, crafts a lack, a gap within the human being, a shocking space around which desire circulates. Time does this by virtue of the fact that it simultaneously gives us and withdraws experience; it renders and protects human beings from surprises, always playing on experience and novelty. “It is experience that best affords us protection from surprises, and the production of shock always implies a gap in experience. To experience something means divesting it of novelty, neutralizing its shock potential.”<sup>27</sup> Time as the fragile, fleeting, and slippery para-site of event and structure simultaneously situates the human being in the past place of experience and withdraws her in the non-place that promises the new, novelty of the future. Time is always approaching and withdrawing approach. This tango of the experienceable and the unexperienceable places a gap, a shocking split, an abiding lack at the center of existence that desire “longs” to suture. The interplay of the experienceable and the unexperienceable engenders

lost and hope and our investments of converting them to reasons for survival are our primary engagement with temporal dynamics.

Time is disjoined within itself. Its being (the present or its presence) is always what it is not (past) and what it is yet to become (the future). This is time's basic split or essential negativity. It never grasps itself as a harmonious whole, as an entirety, or even as self-identical. This is all so because it has gaps within it. This negative character structures human existence; striving for survival is about inhabiting these gaps, making provision for the gaps, putting themselves between the past and the future. Human beings are always struggling not only to relate to the world as it *is*, but also *as it can be* given a particular vision of unexplored possibilities. In this venture of mediating the worlds of "is" and "as," they insert themselves between the past and future of the time spectrum. From here they push toward a new horizon of possibilities. Suspended between (or subtracted from) the "no more" (or no longer acceptable) and the "not-yet," they face two antagonists like Franz Kafka's parable of the *He*.<sup>28</sup>

Kafka's *He* has the dream of jumping out of the struggle. But this is not possible for any group of human beings or nation. The "place of time" is their unavoidable site of struggle against the dark forces of past and future. No nation can afford to elude this battle if it wants to create a flourishing economy. At a deeper level the parable is about human beings stepping into the continuum of time to create a gap between the past and future where they can change the meaning of the past and stop or redirect its perceived evil trajectory in order to help life better flourish.

Making provision for the future is what an economy is all about. Indeed, the key character of the economy is the provision for the future.<sup>29</sup> What kind of ethical, philosophical framework should guide the making of provision for the future for the purpose of human flourishing? The task here is to think of economic development as a *praxis*, in which society posits human potentiality—destiny—as the point of departure and character of the economy. In economic development as praxis, economic growth is not merely a means to the end of fattening the stock market or posing with a big gross domestic product, but a social process in which means and end coincide. Economic development is a communal process (common-good project), a means that contains its proprietary end within itself. The people are both the means and end of their economic development; economic development is doing what is right and just for the community. This is about the actualization of human potentiality as the concrete activity and essence of making provision for the future, so

every member of the community can be the best that he or she can be given their gifts, endowment, and communal support.

At the minimum, economic development should involve the creation of possibilities for community and participation by all its members so that their potentialities can be drawn out for the common good. An economic development paradigm should be adjudged good because it allows citizens to develop their potentialities in the pursuit of ever-greater common good. How well an economy does this will depend on how it allows individuals to develop their unique traits, capabilities, and potentialities and on how well these individual endowments are related to each other in the pursuit of the common good. A properly, ethically organized economy is the one that is adept at combining these two opposite tendencies or processes: a movement toward uniqueness counterbalanced by movement toward union. We will craft a notion of agonistic communitarianism to articulate this delicate balance. This will enable us to explore the emancipatory possibilities of communitarianism. The concept of agonistic communitarianism is developed in chapter 4 (“Economy and Destiny: A Theory of Agonistic Communitarianism”) in relation to the basic questions concerning human flourishing, economic development, and temporality. Chapter 5 (“Pursuit of Excellence and Economic Development”) interprets the notion of excellence (*arete*) as the actualization of human potentialities, which is one form of overcoming obstacles to economic development, a way of removing “unfreedoms” that thwart human flourishing, as Amartya Sen might argue.<sup>30</sup>

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute the part of the book where I discuss the vision of the economy that is informed by our study of split time, destiny, desire, and human flourishing. Specifically, these two chapters examine the relationship between economic ethics and the principal concepts that organize this study. In these chapters I argue that for economic ethics to adequately recognize the place of desire and the temporal structure of desire in any community’s account of human flourishing, it must work to “privilege a path” for every member of the community. The notion of “privileging a path” speaks to the logic of differentiation and differential gearing that every individual need in order to drive toward self-fulfillment and human flourishing at their own preference and pace within the context of a community that puts a premium on human dignity and equality.

The study concludes by articulating the philosophical theory that undergirds, informs, and impels the socioethical model we have developed for Africa’s economic development in chapter 6 (“Naija-Dialectics: Theory and Methodology”). In this chapter I unconceal the core, fundamental theory of this book that not only informs the development paradigm I



recommended in the preceding chapters, but also crafts a logic of reality, offers a hermeneutic of hope, and undergirds the methodology of this study. The methodology of this book performs a form of philosophy of economic development and reflects a certain logic and dynamic of reality that undergird social existence. My philosophical method is not just about reasoning and production of knowledge, but rather it is also a reflection of the structural core and rational movement of all reality as comprehended from the Kalabari worldview. The structure of reality is informed and shaped by hope. The underlying structure of all reality is hope, the possibility of continuance of human coexistence amid all that thwarts human flourishing. Thus, any socio-philosophical analysis that draws from this worldview is better served if it works from a knowledge platform where method meets content and cultivates a hermeneutic of hopeful human coexistence. Economic philosophy connects directly to foundational methodological logic and it is normed by hope-driven hermeneutics of reality (Being).

The Kalabari logic of reality could be cast in this way: thesis ➡ antithesis ➡ *transthesis* (*nuvothesis*). Four quick notes about this dialectic: First, unlike the commonplace understanding of Hegelian dialectics, the movement ends not in a synthesis, but in a new (*novo*) thesis, something new that explodes an inherited order of being. The *nuvothesis* is a thesis, an event, an (“terrifying”) excess beyond the coordinates of the thesis and antithesis, and yet is inherent to the potentiality and im-potentiality of the order of being. Indeed, neither our past nor our present or future is closed.

Second, the *nuvothesis* posits that the system, order of being, is not structurally determined and closed and is not moving toward transcendence and totalization. *Novothesis* is the non-constructible set. A core belief of the Kalabari people is *Ngei konte*: there remains one more. There is always an unfinished business, one more thing to do. People in the culture are always reminded of this fact, and in Kalabari Ekine Society (an arts and dancing, and governing club) this belief is constantly broadcast via drum lore at the times of masquerade displays. According to the religion historian G. O. M. Tasié, amid drumming for the masked dancers, the chief drummer will punctuate “his messages with the conventional *Ngei konte* of the *Ekine*, meaning ‘one more.’ This is to indicate to the masquerade that there is always an unfinished business in the *Ekine* requiring the *Sekibo* member [dancer] to be on the guard all the time.”<sup>31</sup>

Third, the site of new coexistence or possibility follows not from the trajectory of the thesis and antithesis, or the past and the present, but from an emergent site, a new way of being that is to come. The vision

of this possible new site is always powered by hope and alternative logic. The movement from thesis-antithesis to novothesis is not accomplished by a parallax shift wherein we realize that the antithesis is already in the thesis and this recognition is the (basis of the) synthesis. The movement is by what I will call a *transfinite shift*. By this I mean the freeing of reality or ontology from a single structure or movement as we view it through the lens of the infinite.

The transfinite thesis implies, posits, holds that there is at least a thesis, a “site” whose possibilities, features, numbering, or *modus operandi* exceeds every configuration, order, or sequence of relations constructed or embedded in the thesis or antithesis. The transfinite thesis signifies the unreachable end of human flourishing going by the logic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis or counting motion one by one. Even this unreachable end can be exceeded by generating ever larger vision of what already appears “infinite,” *ad infinitum*. This means there is no notion of the biggest vision or most powerful thesis to attain. If we have one transfinite thesis we can always construct another that exceeds it. In itself, the transfinite thesis is an infinite sequence.

The infinite sequence does not imply that the motion or dynamic of the transfinite thesis goes beyond history or nature. There is no thing more than the common movement of and apposition to the finite in a life-world alone. The theory is that all order of existence, order of things, is transfinite, which implies that the usual motion of *thesis and antithesis to synthesis* is not the normal state of social existence, but rather an exceptional case forced upon an order of things, forced on the transfinite thesis, by limiting circumstances.

Finally, those of us from Africa to whom the world has said there is no hope owe it to ourselves, and the rest of the world, to pursue the un-foreclosed and un-foreclosable options of existence. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to imagine what is beyond the current horizon in our current phase of life and economic development. We have to think in terms of possibility—in possibilities only!