

## Review

# “Peeping into the World Beyond”: Metaphysical Speculations on the Nature of Life in Disembodied Bodies

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Accepted 20 November, 2010

The question about the belief in ‘life in disembodied bodies’ and the ‘world beyond’ is as old as human kind. Due to its philosophical nature, the question has invited and incited serious debates among scientists, metaphysicians and philosophers of religion, but with little progress. In Africa, the complexity of establishing the concrete existence of life in disembodied bodies and the world beyond is predicated by hegemonic Western science’s preoccupation with empiricism and evidence (through laboratory experiments) that render indigenous African beliefs and value systems inexplicable through the standards of expert science. This is further compounded by the attempts by logical positivists of the 1920s that for decades outlawed metaphysics and relegated as nonsense the existence of metaphysical statements, entities and all knowledge systems that cannot be verified through expert science. It is curious however to note that though expert science has failed to resolve this central question, in Africa and in particular Mozambique and Zimbabwe, there are numerous metaphysical belief systems and ‘epistemological thinkings’ pointing to the existence of life in disembodied bodies and the ‘world beyond’. The paper draws on these points of reference, with a view to recast the debate on life in disembodied bodies and the world beyond not necessarily in terms of deliberating their existence, but rather exploring their possible metaphysical nature of existence. In this light, the paper quests to expose in this twilight zone the different angles from which the world beyond and lives in disembodied forms could be understood on the basis of African metaphysics and ‘mystical ways of knowing’. The paper thus contends that the question of disembodied lives and the world beyond can only be best addressed by metaphysics and not expert science.

**Keywords:** Speculation, life, disembodied bodies, world beyond, metaphysics, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

Raising metaphysical questions especially those concerning the nature and experiences of lives in disembodied forms is both astounding and a mindless business to natural scientists and philosophers of positivistic nature. For both (natural scientists and positivists) the belief in the ‘world beyond’ and ‘life in disembodied body’ is a myth or rather a mindless business that brings no bread home. A. J. Ayer who is a positivist philosopher, for example, sees metaphysical statements as “unverifiable, fanciful, imaginary and therefore meaningless” (Ayer in Furman and Avila, 2000:266). For him, metaphysical statements and other such beliefs are nonsensical and worth castigating into the dustbin of oblivion. However, it is curious to note that in spite of the positivists and natural scientists’ criticism of metaphysics, African traditionalists and Christians

continue holding metaphysical beliefs such as the existence of ‘life in disembodied forms’ and the ‘world beyond’. These belief systems seem to increase believers’ happiness, peace of mind and hope of leading a better life especially after their bodily lives. However, both seem to be inconclusive and uncertain as to what exactly the experiences of lives in disembodied forms and the nature of the world in which they reside look like. Critical questions have been raised: Do disembodied bodies eat, bathe, bear children, grow and die? And what is the nature of the world beyond?

The above raised questions and others of that nature are those that this paper seeks to address. I am intrigued by these questions to delve deep into African and biblical metaphysics and draw anecdotal evidence through cases from Africa that shed light on the questions of the world

beyond and life in disembodied body. The paper, therefore, is a contribution towards efforts by African traditionalists and some Christian spiritualists who believe that life in disembodied body exists somewhere in the world beyond. It is my contention that whilst expert science has no sufficient and proper tools to examine issues to do with the world beyond and life in disembodied forms- issues of metaphysical nature – Christian and African metaphysics can handle the questions with a bit of some ease. Though the paper is speculative, it is important in that it contributes to the full understanding of human person; it does not only move beyond expert science that relies heavily on experience, but attempts to wholly explore the person's physical (biological form) and metaphysical (spiritual/disembodied form) nature.

### **Disembodied bodies as metaphysical entities in the world beyond**

Debate on what constitutes disembodied bodies and the world beyond has been futile because it has been riddled by confusion activated by the context driven nature of disembodied bodies and the 'world beyond'. For purposes of this work, disembodied bodies are defined as "bodiless 'persons' recognized as human beings who once lived as physical human beings/biological human beings" (Mawere, 2005: 9). As conceded by African traditionalists, the Shona of Mozambique and Zimbabwe in particular, these bodiless persons reside in the 'world beyond'-a metaphysical/spiritual world (*nyikadzimu*) where only lives in disembodied forms and not otherwise can reside. The bodiless however constantly interact with those in the physical world through mediums such as traditional healers (*n'angas*), among others. Though the idea of life in disembodied form is very old in Africa and elsewhere, its main historical thrust for us today comes from one of Plato's dialogues, the *Phaedo*. In the dialogue, Socrates' defense of the belief in life after death begins with the question: "Does a man's soul exist when he has died?" (Rouse, 1956:473) Here, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates is presented as having been condemned to death by Melotos, Anytos and Lycon, accused of impiety and of corrupting the youth. Though there was room for him to escape bodily death, Socrates assured his lifelong friends, Criton, Semmias the Theban and Cebes, among others who were grief-stricken that he was perfectly capable of surviving death for his death was simply a transition from this world to some happier state of the blessed. In his words, "death (of the physical body) will be a wonderful blessing, a migration of soul from this world to another place" (Ibid, p.445). In this passage, Socrates rightly distinguished between himself (soul) and his body. He thought of his real self as something distinct from his body- something that survives the death of the physical/biological body. It is clear

therefore that the 'self' which in this work shall be used interchangeably with disembodied body is a metaphysical entity capable of surviving independent of the human physical body. Socrates however does not tell us where exactly this 'self' would transmigrate to after escaping death of the physical body. Also, Socrates does not tell us what the exact experiences of the self would be like after transmigration to 'another place'-a different world. However, for African traditionalists, the Shona included, the 'another place' mentioned by Socrates is the 'world beyond'.

In the modern era, Socrates' view has gained wide acceptance and veneration through the works of Rene Descartes and Richard Swinburne. In his *Meditations on first Philosophy*, for example, Descartes rightly contends that he is a thinking thing. Of course, he can doubt that he has a body but he cannot doubt that he exists for nothing can doubt unless it is something. For this reason, Descartes is pretty certain that his 'self' is distinct from his body and can surely exist without it. He says in the *second Meditation*, "I can doubt that my body exists but not that I exist, ergo I am not my body" (Descartes, 1986:312). It can be deduced from Descartes' words that since death can be thought of as the end of human beings' bodily lives and not the end of lives of the 'selves', then the fact that bodies die does not entail that their 'selves' die too. The 'self' that is also known as the 'I' or the 'disembodied body' is immortal and eternal, and so can live as a non-bodily being.

Similarly, Swinburne has correctly observed that "it is coherent to suppose that a human being can exist without a body in disembodied form" (Davies, 1984: 218). His argument can be presented logically as follows:

1. If A can be without B (where A is the 'I' and 'B' is the body), then A and B are distinct.
2. A can be without B. Therefore A is not B.

In view of the logic above, I contend with the Shona that Swinburne's argument is clear and cogent. It is arguably true that "we often naturally talk as if our real selves are distinct from our bodies as when we agree that we can be the same human beings over a number of years despite mereological changes in our bodily constitution. The talk about "the distinction between mind and body and our access to many thoughts such as imagination and thinking without displaying the fact by any bodily behavior also demonstrates that we are distinct from our bodies"(Ibid).

### **Skepticism about the existence of 'life in disembodied form' and the 'world beyond'**

Accepting a basic premise of Western academic thought expressed in many scientific, sociological and anthropological studies, many people of scientific nature have taken the view that life in disembodied bodies and the world beyond in which the aforementioned lives are

said to reside is a myth. On one hand there are scientists who do not believe or disbelieve in life in disembodied bodies and the world beyond. They are not sure whether the world beyond and life in disembodied form are a reality. Lewis (1976, p.68), for example, declares: "we do not need to share other people's beliefs in order to understand them sympathetically: we can see the sense in beliefs even when we are convinced they are based on false premises". Thus for Lewis, the study of metaphysical issues is almost exclusively the study of the beliefs which people have about the capabilities and activities of others and the actions which they take to avoid attack or to counter attack. This view seems to concur with the perceptions of some African lawyers on issues of metaphysical nature. In an interview on witchcraft with *Freep.com/news*, Welshman Ncube, a Zimbabwean Constitutional Law scholar commends that "I have never seen a goblin (*tokoloshi*), I have never had a *tokoloshi* attack me, but I have heard all the stories like everyone. I don't believe or disbelieve. It's difficult for outsiders to understand, but African daily life relies heavily on the spirit world for good or evil" (*freep.com/news/14/11/2002*).

On the other hand there are philosophers of scientific nature who assert that beliefs in disembodied bodies and the world beyond are based on a mistaken view of the world; that life in disembodied form and the world beyond are products of imagination. They do not exist except in the minds of certain people. Geach, for example, reasons that apart from the possibility of the resurrection of the body, it seems a mere illusion to have any hope for life after bodily death-life in disembodied form. He is of the mind of Judas Maccabeus that, "if there is no resurrection, it is superfluous and vain to pray for the dead" (Davies, 1984: 219). The point has to be made, however, that while Geach's argument seems philosophically convincing and his observation on resurrection correct, he misses the point. He merely focuses on the impossibility of life after bodily death in bodily/physical form. He fails to note that life per se does not necessarily need bodily existence. There seem to be some entities such as 'disembodied bodies'-spiritual/metaphysical beings (in both African and Western cultures) which do not necessarily have physical bodies yet they are believed to have life and abilities to execute actions. Angels (*ngirozi*), avenging spirit (*ngozi*), demons (*madhimoni*) and ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*), among others are cases in point.

Russell is not an exception to the error that Geach makes. He argues that:

*It is not rational arguments but emotions that cause belief in a future life of which the most important of the emotions is fear of death which is instinctive and biologically useful. If we genuinely and wholeheartedly believe in the future life, we should cease completely to fear death (p.52).*

It is curious to note that Russell thinks that when human beings die, they disintegrate into oblivion. He completely rebuts the entire idea of life after bodily death-life in disembodied form and accuses believers for being self-contradictory by believing in life after bodily death and fear bodily death at the same time. Russell goes on to draw an analogy of atoms in a physical body which he says just like human beings are no longer supposed to have continuous existence. He says: "There is no sense in saying this is the same atom as the one that existed a few minutes ago. So is the continuity of human body which is a matter of appearance and behavior and not of substance" (Ibid). But if atom and human bodies are a matter of appearance and not of substance or both, why is it that atoms and human bodies remain the same over time, of course, besides undergoing various mereological changes? It is, therefore, my contention that Russell's argument has far reaching consequences. He seems to be obsessed with science and thinks that science is the only gateway to our knowledge of reality. He seems to have never thought of human beings in metaphysical terms thereby failing to recognize that a human body remains the same human body over time because of the substance, the 'humanness', that inheres in it and so does an atom. Thus, his observation that there is no sense in saying this is the same atom as the one that existed a few minutes ago is wrong and misleading. The same applies to his belief that there is no life after bodily death-life in disembodied form. The belief is based enormously on the 'findings' of science and not metaphysics. Yet, the issue of life in disembodied form is a metaphysical one which requires little or no science in exploring it.

As said earlier in this work, debate on life in disembodied form and the belief in the nature of the world beyond has been highly contentious because of its complex scientific, cultural and social ramifications. From a scientific-historical perspective, philosophers of positivistic nature perplexed by failure to establish and provide proof about existence of life in disembodied form and other such metaphysical statements waged scientific battles to outlaw metaphysics for scientific and administrative convenience. Unsurprisingly, the post Independent Zimbabwean and Mozambican governments haunted by the same dilemma retained the status quo as it was under obligation not to recognize issues of metaphysical nature like life in disembodied form and the world beyond, among others, unless one provided substantial evidence on existence of such entities. However, besides resistance by science to recognize the existence of metaphysical entities such as lives in disembodied form and the world beyond, significant increasing incidences of people being affected in one way or another by such entities as avenging spirits (*ngozi*), ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*), wondering spirits (*mashavi*) and ghosts (*zvidhoma*), among others, in Zimbabwe have challenged the views of the aforesaid

governments, scientists and other metaphysics entities denialists alike. The ensuing paragraphs of this work shall look in detail the aforementioned metaphysical entities in an attempt to establish their existence and experiences in the world beyond.

As has been seen, skepticism on metaphysical issues is chiefly a result of the influence of “scientisation”. Yet arguments by those who are against the issue of life in disembodied form and the world beyond are unsustainable. On the other hand, those by pro-life in disembodied form and the world beyond partisans, as shall be seen, need either refinement or reconstitution or both. Otherwise they cannot be accepted as well on philosophical grounds.

### **Barriers to unraveling the world beyond and lives in disembodied forms**

Attempts by scholars to unravel the world beyond and other such metaphysical issues have been downplayed by ‘the fallacy of science’. The fallacy of science is “expert science’s inability to provide scientific explanations to issues of a metaphysical nature and to present alternative convincing explanations outside the canonical frameworks of scientific inquiry” (Mawere, 2010:5). While science seeks to offer powerful, convincing explanations about diverse issues of nature notwithstanding its limitations, some civil unrest in Western world contexts have been instigated by the same scientific studies that have proven to be faulty, or inconclusive, and the public has instigated independent inquiries to invalidate scientific findings of experts. Durant (2008) cites Beck (1992) who suggests that the “scientisation” of protest against science means that even to dispute the scientific position of an opponent one usually relies upon science to make a persuasive challenge. This has been the dilemma of science when confronted with issues of metaphysical nature like ‘life in disembodied form and the world beyond’ where recourse to scientific laws and methods has proven to offer limited results. The providence of science in explaining phenomena owes itself to its internal logic, perceived objectivity and power of prediction that may not immediately apply to metaphysical beliefs like life in disembodied form and world beyond. As Harding (1994) suggests, most of the greatest successes of science owe to its ‘internal logic’ be it as inductivism, crucial experiments, the hypothetico-deductive method, or a cycle of normal science-revolution-normal science. I infer from Harding that the authority of science rest upon its objective claims and its ability to render scientific proof that is perceivably immune to personal biases, preferences and values. Given the complexity of establishing scientific proof about the existence of life in disembodied bodies and the world beyond, it is surprising how the subject of disembodied bodies has not attracted

the much needed curiosity amongst scientists, but rather left to Christians, African traditionalists and metaphysicians.

A complementary view is that beliefs in life in disembodied bodies and in the world beyond rest on internalism, and as such can not be subjected to scientific rigor. As Ikuenobe (2000) suggests, internalism suggests that rationality is a function of the properties of beliefs such as coherence to which one has internal access. The belief in disembodied bodies and in the world beyond is internalist in orientation-it invokes some internally coherent claims about explanation of the functioning of the cosmology to which scientific investigation is less privileged to infer from or draw on. The existences of life in disembodied form and in the world beyond are such metaphysical beliefs whose functioning defies recourse to scientific explanation, or prediction to sufficiently substantiate their existence. Yet the challenge is that the authority of science and its hegemonic influence on metaphysics, epistemology and knowledge production has undermined possibilities for other epistemological alternatives for explicating social reality/nature in ways that fall outside the frameworks of science- particularly how life in disembodied form can illuminate your knowledge of cosmology and what new insights about the world beyond could be gained from exploration of this metaphysical reality.

The dominance of science and perceptions about its opaqueness to the public have “led to a focus on ‘back-end’ consequences such as risk, in effect protecting the broader trajectory of scientific and technological development from accountability ” (Davies et al 2009, p. 340). This raises critical questions about whether different forms of knowledge can not be developed outside the terms and parameters defined by science. What is lost in the process of moving from conventional scientific inquiry towards the unorthodox processes of searching for other forms of knowing like examining life in disembodied form and making speculations on the world beyond? These questions can not be adequately addressed without challenging the monopoly of science as the predominant way of accessing, communicating and transmitting knowledge. The rise in ‘citizen science-’ participatory processes of public understanding and even challenging of science research is the direct consequence of public frustration with the limitations of science. This work can not necessarily be conceived as citizen science, but rather seeks to contribute to the metaphysics debate on life in disembodied form and the world beyond by arguing that life in disembodied form and the world beyond are metaphysical realities that can help people still in their biological/physical bodies to behave themselves in an altruistic manner that could contribute easing the tapestry of African’s human development and promotion of unity, peace and order. That is to say, life in disembodied form and the world beyond embody a hidden genre of epistemology or

different form of metaphysical knowledge that could contribute in multiple ways to resolving Africa's development dilemmas, if it cast in the open for debate, and integrated into mainstream expert science. I argue that the exploration of the world beyond and of life in disembodied form are a potentially beneficial indigenous metaphysical knowledge system that for long, has been conceived as nonsensical and mythical by Western civilisation and whose developmental essence remains shrouded in mystery.

As such, African traditional culture, in general, and the Shona traditional culture of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, in particular is often overlooked by Western scholars yet it is one such 'rich culture' which can provide an answer to the metaphysical problem of life in disembodied form and on the world beyond which trouble us today. So is Christianity. In the ensuing paragraphs the paper shall invite a number of cases from the Mozambican and Zimbabwean cultures and Christianity which substantiate and concretizes the beliefs in life in disembodied bodies and their experiences in the world beyond.

### **The nexus between lives in disembodied forms and the world beyond: A closer look at the Shona culture and Christian belief**

#### **The Shona people: A linguistic analysis**

The term *Shona* refers to various linguistic dialect groups who occupy the greater part of Zimbabwe and central western part of Mozambique (Mawere, 2010). In Mozambique, a number of dialect groups are generally referred to as *Shona* but under the dialect *Ndau*. These include the *Dondo* in the districts of *Dondo* and *Beira* in *Sofala* province; the *Danda* in the districts of *Chibabava* (*Sofala*) and *Machaze* (*Manica* province); the *Vauteve* in the district of *Chimoo* in *Manica* and the *Manyika* who occupy the largest part of *Manica* province (Ibid: 272). In Zimbabwe, the Shona constitute one of the largest communal-cultural groups. This group is an aggregate of small ethnic groups who are all classified under the armpit of Shona because they each speak a dialect of what the linguists call the Shona language (Gelfand, 1973). The distinction in the dialects was made more prominent and pronounced by the early missionaries and settlers working in different parts of the country- the reason why Ranger (1985) argues that these language differences are actually a colonial invention. Though in different geographical locations, there is so much horizontal similarity across the spectrum of the small ethnic groups that are classified as the Shona in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe as they share a common culture, language and philosophy of life.

### **Selected cases of lives in disembodied forms from the Shona culture**

To the Shona people, as with Africans in general, the concept of life in disembodied form and the belief in the world beyond are central to their Metaphysical world view. The puzzle of how the immaterial spiritual entities come to interact and continue to influence the activities of the living does not arise for the Africans as it does for those who subscribe to the mechanistic view of the world. The idea of lives in disembodied forms and the belief in the world beyond are not difficult to understand once one has understood the fact that the Africans in general, and the Shona included believe in immortality of the spiritual being. Spiritual beings are very much counted among the living as important participants in shaping everything that may happen and by their very nature they now occupy a better position in determining events and influencing them, as they are no longer subject to the limitations of space and time. These entities are many yet for purposes of this study only a few of these entities shall be examined in detail in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### **Ancestral spirits (*Vadzimu*)**

In the Shona metaphysical understanding, a human being does not die forever (*munhu haafi zvachose kana kurova*). This means that the Shona people believe in the metaphysical realm of life after death. They believe that the end of bodily life marks the beginning of spiritual life- 'life in disembodied body'. For this reason even the morality of the Shona people is endorsed by the spiritual world - 'the world beyond' where 'the departed forebears' in their disembodied forms (*vadzimu*) reside. It is the elders who make moral rules and principles and the spiritual world endorses them through various sanctions that include misfortunes, deaths and illnesses to moral deviants.

Traditionalists in the Shona culture claim that they communicate with their *vadzimu*, in the spiritual world. John Mbiti (1999) and S.J Bourdillon (1993) refer to the *vadzimu* as 'the living dead' and 'ancestor spirits' respectively. Both correctly observe that there is more to human beings in the African culture than the physical body we see. They admit that *vadzimu* are still living in spite of the fact that their bodies were buried and decomposed. This contention possibly springs from the understanding of personhood by the Shona people and Africans at large. Africans define a person by reference to the enviroing community. This idea has been captured by several African writers. Mbiti (1999: 145), for example, noted that the Africans' traditional view of the person can be summed up in the statement, "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am": One obvious

conclusion to be drawn from this dictum is that personhood in the African context is defined by reference to other members of the same community both the living and the 'living dead'. The 'living dead' remains an integral part of the community and can still influence the activities of the community directly or otherwise. Death of the body in the Shona traditional culture, therefore, is just a transition from this physical world to the spiritual world where 'persons' would live eternally in non-bodily form. In the light of this metaphysical understanding, the *vadzimu* are conceived as more powerful, knowledgeable and supreme to the physical human beings to the extent that even the medical field is no match to them. By virtue of having experience of both physical and spiritual lives, with the later being more influential in that it is closer to the creator god who is believed to be the reservoir of knowledge and power, *vadzimu* can communicate with him and at times get insights concerning causes of various occurrences in the world that have a bearing to humanity. For this reason, the *vadzimu* are believed to have more power to influence events in this mundane compared to ordinary medical practitioner. They can bring fortunes and protect members of the family from witches and all kinds of troubles, and do vice-versa if the family members are deviant or disobedient. This is to say the 'living dead' is capable of executing action(s). Thus, if we proceed with these investigations, one would observe that there is life after bodily death but in non-bodily form- 'life in disembodied form' and not otherwise. And, to allege that there is no life after bodily death in disembodied form would be a gross misunderstanding, a total failure to understand wholly both the physical and metaphysical nature of human beings.

### Avenging spirits (*Ngozi*)

The concept of *ngozi* is common among the Shona. Technically, *ngozi* is the spirit of a person who has been murdered and then comes back to seek revenge in the family of the murderer by causing unfathomable sorrow through illnesses, misfortunes or a series of deaths until the perpetrator pays reparations to the offended family (Mawere, 2005). *Ngozi* is premised on the idea of 'tit for tat'.

In the Shona culture, when the guilty family has failed, deliberately or otherwise, to pay restitution, *ngozi* strikes viciously and harshly by not only targeting the perpetrator of the crime but his kinsmen as well. As Bourdillon (1976:233) remarks, "*ngozi* is fearsome and terrifying because it attacks suddenly and very harshly". It is important to note that, among the Shona people, it is not always the case that the wrongdoer is the one who gets killed or cursed by *ngozi* but any person who is a blood relative of the wrongdoer is subject to the anger of *ngozi*. The victim of murder needs to be replaced by compensation in the form of a head of cattle and a virgin

girl if the murdered person was a man, and in the form of a head of cattle and a small boy if the murdered person was a woman. The guilty family thus is given the option to either pay reparations or suffers the consequences through wreaking havoc, for example, causing a series of misfortunes, deaths and illnesses. Due to these atrocities caused by *ngozi*, the threat posed by the latter is feared by everyone in the Shona culture.

In the light of actions that can be initiated by the *ngozi*, the notion of the latter in the traditional Shona culture can also help demonstrate the possibility of life in disembodied forms and authenticate the existence of the 'world beyond'. This is so owing to the fact that nothing can cause any form of action unless it is living. And because the spirit of the murdered human being is capable of causing unfathomable sorrow on the murderer and the family unlike the murdered body itself, it is still living and can act accordingly. Those in the physical world can even communicate with the avenging spirit but through spirit mediums or through mediums such as diviners. When the avenging spirit is appeased it stops its attack on the family of the murderer (Mawere, 2005). Hence, the ability by the avenging spirit to execute action(s) and to communicate with those in the physical world shows that life after bodily death in disembodied form is a metaphysical reality and not a myth. Yet one may still wonder where the *ngozi* lives.

For the Shona, the *ngozi* as with the *vadzimu* lives in the 'world beyond'. However, it sometimes comes back to the physical world and interacts with the physical human beings as has been demonstrated in the prior discussion.

### Traditional healers (*N'anga*)

The heated debate on what constitutes a traditional healer (*n'anga*) has been futile because it has been riddled by confusion activated by dearth of precision in definition of terminology and the context driven nature of the practice. The complexity of this distinction is premised on the striking similarity between the rituals and practices of witchcraft and traditional healing. The apparent similarities, between these two practices are:

1. Both practices depend on charm with medicinal properties.
2. Both perform rituals that invoke the spirits of the dead. For *un'anga* (the practice of a traditional healer), the traditional healer is connected to the universe through the spirit of the dead (either an ancestor or a foreign spirit) that speaks through him or her. For *uroyi* (the practice of witchcraft), the witch is normally possessed by a spirit that is either inherited from a dead ancestor or elderly living relative or enemy.
3. The practices can be conceived as hereditary. Just as a traditional leader can be possessed by their ancestral spirit, so does a witch- who can inherit the charm and spirit of witchcraft from a relative.

4. Both can be marshaled to cause grievous harm, misfortune and even death to a victim.

5. Both practices are dreaded by people (weak and strong, educated and uneducated) and are attributed to fairly older, wicked people (Mawere, 2010).

It should be noted however that in the context of the Shona culture, the consequences of witchcraft are always conceived to be catastrophic-severe sickness, bad luck, miscarriages, hemorrhage, and death (Mbuy, 1992; Igwe, 2004). On the other hand, those of *un'anga* are often not. Yet, there is an increasing outcry that even traditional healers become traditional 'killers' who are hired by aggrieved parties to instigate commotion and despondency in the perpetrator's life to avenge the crimes committed by the perpetrator. As such, the complexity of this distinction rests on the fact that both practices are feared as they can be marshaled as conflict resolution mechanisms.

That said, I contend that *uroyi* and *un'nanga* are different in the most unimportant respects. For example, it is generally believed that a traditional healer appropriates herbs and charm with medicinal properties to heal and not to harm, while the aesthetic and spiritual works of a witch are usually devious, manipulative (cause misfortune and ostracism) and meant to harm or kill.

In the light of the above, I shall define *un'anga* as a practice that involves the use of potentially curative medicines, charms, magic and any other supernatural means or devices to cause some positive effects (such as healing, wealth accumulation, social power) or negative consequences (such as psychological or physical harm, illness, misfortune or death of other people, animals or property). Traditional healers (those involved in the practice of traditional healing) are thought to possess extraordinary powers that enable them to perform ritual practices and act beyond the capabilities of ordinary human beings. They are deemed capable of access to the spiritual world- 'the world beyond' to inquire about the wrongs done by the living except a *n'anga* who is endowed with some exceptional skills to expose the cause one's death. The *n'anga* acts as the medium of communication between two totally different worlds, that is, the world of spiritual existence- 'the world beyond' and this mundane world- 'the physical world'. He is a point man between supernatural and natural realms of existence. So when a disaster strikes the society or community it is the responsibility of the elderly within that institution to respond to this misfortune by seeking the services of the *n'anga* (Asante, 2000:21) for explanations and possible remedies. The *n'anga* is believed to have esoteric powers to detect other possible consequences to follow to the concerned family if precautionary measures as he has recommended are not taken timeously. Hence, such an adventure will result in them fortification of the victims' family to avert mishaps from recurring. Using his rare skills, he is able to tell whether the misfortunes that are troubling a given family are a result of the anger of

those in the world of spiritual realm or whether it is a result of nefarious works of witches. This belief in the spiritual world by those who are still living supports the claim that the dead have a dominant influence over the living.

It is from this understanding that if one dies under mysterious circumstances and sometimes even where scientific explanations furnish a clear history, the Shona are quick to suspect the hand of an enemy hence they visit a *n'anga* who in turn consults the supernatural world for expert explanation. Suspicions of the work of an enemy or retribution of the angered *vadzimu* (ancestors) (Bourdillon, 1993) as the causative factors in cases of life threatening illnesses and deaths are quite common. Even when the cause of a person's death appears quite obvious, the Shona people enquire beyond this obviousness to establish what could have caused this obviousness until they establish a convincing cause with the assistance of a *n'anga*. For instance, a person may have died because of a road accident. Even though the kinsmen are convinced that the death was natural or that they know the cause of the death, they are still likely to arrange a consultation with a diviner in order to confirm their opinions thereby making the *n'anga* the final arbiter in the quest to establish the cause of death.

This is indicative of the fact that in view of the Shona people one cannot ignore those in the 'world beyond'- 'the lives in disembodied forms' who furnish the traditional healer with extraordinary powers to heal/cure diseases, foresee, foretell and solve and restore disturbed social relations. Given the esoteric powers traditional healers have-powers that are given by those in the 'world beyond', one cannot doubt the existence of a 'world beyond' and the 'lives in disembodied forms' that reside in it. It is the contention of this paper, therefore, that the concepts of 'the world beyond' and 'life in disembodied forms' is a metaphysical reality not only in the Shona culture, but in other culture in Africa and beyond.

### Parallels in Biblical Metaphysics

Fundamentally, the Shona traditional customs and practices emphasize the close connections between the empirical world and the cosmos. Parallels can be drawn between the consequences of good and bad, given that the cosmological world (ancestors and *musikavanhu* (God, the creator)) govern the empirical world, and in consequence, judges humanity according to the virtue of their deeds. Gonese (1999) observes that the cosmivision of the Shona people is based on three worlds: the human world, the spiritual world and the natural world. He further suggests that spirit mediums act as intermediaries between mortal beings and the living dead or ancestral spirits.

Transcending Gonese's view, I argue that lives in disembodied bodies are the adhesive vice grips that bind and connects the natural/physical human worlds with the 'world beyond' via spirit mediums such as prophets (in the case of Christians) and *n'angas* (in the case of Shona traditionalists), among others by setting the ground rules in terms of cultural practices and customs observance in their communities. In the light of this lives in disembodied forms manifest themselves through various metaphysical entities mentioned in the prior discussion.

### God (*Musikavanhu/Mwari*) and the Angels (*Ngirozi*)

The biblical text of Genesis (1 verse 26) states that God created Man through his own image that he has dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth including his own life. The same conception is prevalent among the Shona people. In *Shona* cosmology *Musikavanhu* (Human creator) whom the Bible calls God created Mankind, earth, the 'world beyond' and everything in it. Some of the metaphysical entities God created in the 'world beyond' long before He created the earth are angels (*ngirozi*) (Job 38 verse 4-7) who served as His servants. Angels are believed to have no physical bodies although they can assume human bodies in some cases (Genesis 18 verse 2; 19 verse 1). Daniel the prophet had a vision where he saw one hundred million angels (Daniel 7 verse 10; Hebrews 1 verse 7) -a clear testimony that lives in disembodied bodies/metaphysical entities exists in the 'world beyond'. It should be noted, however, that God is the greatest of all spiritual entities (John 4 verse 24; 2 Corinthians 3 verse 17; 18). God, thus, is clearly more powerful than *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits). It is clear from this stream of thought that the ancestors and God are the rallying point for traditional African in times of crisis and joy. This affirms that in both the Biblical and African perspectives, human beings were created by God (Mawere, 2010). Man was also endowed with a divine spark that animates him with intelligence and a basic striving for goodness, perfection and understanding (Davies, 1984) right from creation. The Biblico-African theory, thus, have initiated what, fortunately, will be a growing trend of promoting the belief in the 'world beyond' and 'life in disembodied bodies'; the idea that human life was "efficiently" (Dean, 1951:70) caused and not accidentally caused. This denotes that for Shonas and indeed other African traditional religions, nothing would come into existence without an efficient cause. I will not pursue this argument in this paper as I have done so in a previous publication. I will hasten to argue that "the talk about the distinction between mind and body and our access to many thoughts such as imagination and thinking without displaying the fact by any bodily behavior also demonstrates that there is some greater 'Being"

(Davies,1984) who exist by himself and created everything on earth - physical and otherwise. This is one reason the *Shona* people believe the efficient cause of life on earth, *Musikavanhu* who is spiritual- 'in disembodied form' existed necessarily by Himself and through Himself. For both the Shona and Christians in general, God is the creator of the physical world and the world beyond as well as all that exist in these two worlds. Though there is no agreement between Shona traditionalists and Christians on what really constitutes the 'world beyond', there is general agreement that the latter world exists and in it exist lives in disembodied forms.

It is this light and evidence provided throughout this study that the paper contents life in disembodied form and the world beyond are a metaphysical reality. It is this understanding and the controversies surrounding the beliefs in the 'world beyond' and 'life in disembodied bodies' that paradoxically make them possible green fields for intellectual inquiry.

### CONCLUSION

In this study, I have challenged the view that there is no possibility of the existence of the world beyond and lives in disembodied forms which are the natives of the said world. I argued that there are several metaphysical lenses through which life in disembodied form and the world beyond could be conceived as real and not mythical. In this view I contend that the 'mythic' stance adopted in literature concerning the world beyond and the derogatory connotations about the life in disembodied form stem from an acoustic understanding of the nature of human life from both the scientific and metaphysical perspectives. This is compounded by the limitations of hegemonic expert science to explicate the cosmology of the 'world beyond', and the conflation of the 'world beyond' with the sky. This study has demonstrated that the mounting incidences of activities of lives in disembodied forms through the activities of *ngozi*, *n'angas*, *vadzimu*, and *vaporofita* among traditionalists and Christians respectively in Mozambique and Zimbabwe challenge the established discourses that are framed along scientific accounts, that prize struggle over resources and hierarchies of power as explanatory frameworks for beliefs in the world beyond and life in disembodied forms over spiritual motivations for engaging in the belief. These incidences have proven beyond reasonable doubt that life in disembodied form and the world beyond are an undeniable reality and I identify with Zimbabwean and Mozambican traditional courts who have for long challenged civil courts' practices that are bordered by western principles of science that value proof and predictability.

Most importantly, I argued that the knowledge about life in disembodied forms and the world beyond helps

people to achieve a full understanding of human nature and paves the way towards restoration of the 'stolen hope', certainty, and peace of mind in humanity. I underscored that Western science has gained credence and authority in explaining causality not necessarily because it is hinged on the cannons of empirical proof but rather because of its transparent and logical process of data construction, documentation and reporting. I argue that the reason why belief in the world beyond and life in disembodied forms have not gained similar status because it has been shrouded in mystery, given the limitations of exploring it scientifically for documentation. This work has advanced the argument that governments, researchers and scientists need to unravel life in disembodied form and the world beyond through engaging traditional spiritual mediums (*n'angas*, *masvikiro*, *vasutswi*) and prophets (in the case of Christians) in ways that illuminate understanding of the 'world beyond' and life in disembodied form. This could be a bold step towards understanding human nature from the positive aspects of Christian belief and African metaphysics.

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