



Research Paper

## The Problematic of Divination and Witchcraft Vis-à-vis Certitude and Skepticism in African Philosophy

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### ABSTRACT

Generally, trending deliberations on divination and witchcraft cut across several domains in African Philosophy. Conceptually, however, it remains a jigsaw puzzle and problematic vis-à-vis certitude and skepticism in relation to truth claims. The reality of these concepts in traditional African societies is perennial; with tendencies in certain quarters being to dismiss charges connected to them as disprovable allegations, neither improving nor changing common beliefs and adherence to them. Circumstantially, isolated instances apropos divination and witchcraft go beyond metaphysical realms, elucidating tangible and intangible effects of this craft and attacks; despite the fact that it is wrapped in mystery. Notwithstanding, some proof of its existence can be ascertained; yet, the overriding challenge of certitude and sceptical rudiments remain an epistemological problem. Obviously, in citing instances or dimensions of divination and witchcraft in African societies, with some real and pernicious traceable effects on the physical faculties of victims and observers, this paper explores the philosophical import; taxing possible amelioration of tenets of belief and truth warranting certainty while evading skepticism. As a supernatural source of knowledge, divination and witchcraft are inseparable epistemological apprehensions. Implicitly, African epistemology as founded on defined basic tenets, endorsed concepts like knowledge; truth, validity, and rationality are inevitable. Hence, the problematic of divination and witchcraft is pertinent vis-a-vis certitude and Skepticism; it is challenging by embracing varied forms of knowledge: perceptual knowledge, common sense knowledge, advanced age knowledge, inferential knowledge, mystical knowledge, oral tradition, and holistic knowledge. This paper consents to an extent with some truth and belief claims of these practices; but raise objections apropos certitude and scepticism in epistemological spheres of influence, engaging some systematic scientific fine-tuning.

**KEY TERMS:** Divination, Witchcraft, Certainty/Certitude, Skepticism, Epistemology, Truth, Belief, Justification, Prospects, Perspectives

Received 28 Oct., 2024; Revised 06 Nov., 2024; Accepted 08 Nov., 2024 © The author(s) 2024.  
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### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Although there has been broad-spectrum consensus to the problematic of African philosophy as a unique science with specified disciplines, a striking twist in African studies since the late 1980's unveils some degree of exploration of fundamental concepts. The case at hand are epistemological concerns; with renewed attention on divination and witchcraft conceptualization apropos modern science and its transformation. This is neither a "new," a departure, nor rupture from traditional epistemological or gnoseological considerations.

Accordingly, divination in African world-view as elsewhere is based upon belief in some supernatural influence. In this connection, diviners are viewed as encompassing knowledge or the power/ability to know from three principle sources: God, ancestors, and evil spirits. In most African traditions and culture, God is envisioned as the creator spirit or supernatural being capable of controlling supernatural forces. In addition, as commonly held, scores of diviners possess the power or capacity to know things and events through some degree of inspiration from God. Consequently, it is believed that God endows such persons as agents for detecting and solving problems; regardless of the source of their knowledge. Thus, through inspiration, diviners in relation to witchcraft are assumed to know with certainty series of truth claims; using specified means during divination processes to obtain required information or results connecting to witchcraft allegations and practices. Therefore, wrapped around divination and witchcraft systems, is the instrumentality of diviners who invoke cultural gods/goddesses to endow them with divinatory insight.

In another dimension, philosophical assessment of views concerning witchcraft in African cultures portray witches as acting unconsciously, unaware of the ill they cause in most cases, and being driven by irrepensible urges. Therefore, although they act malevolently, recurrently those accused, but who are not cognisant of their evil acts, readily assume responsibility; vindicating accusations attributed to them. Bartholomew Abanuka, similarly contends that belief in evil spirits as a source of knowledge to wicked – minded diviners, is very common and most dreaded in societies; being attributed aspects of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic. In his consideration, witchcraft and divination claims (a common phenomena), cannot adequately be communicated in words for an outsider to judge (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 73).

As a superhuman or supernatural source of knowledge, divination and witchcraft are inseparable as epistemological apprehensions. Implicitly, since the idea of African epistemology is also founded on defined basic tenets, approval of concepts like knowledge, truth, validity, and rationality are inevitable. Therefore, the problematic of divination and witchcraft is pertinent vis-a-vis certitude and Skepticism. This is challenging for they embrace varied forms of knowledge: perceptual knowledge, common sense knowledge, advanced age knowledge, inferential knowledge, mystical knowledge, oral tradition, and holistic knowledge. This paper consents with the universal paradigm that: “skills take a while to perfect themselves; so as with any craft, practice makes perfect.” Hence, divination and witchcraft like every other art or craft, embodies skills that take time to be perfected. However, apropos certitude and scepticism in the epistemological domain, adherents or defenders of these phenomena, have a stretched path to state their case and bring proofs. Thus, the confronts of divination and witchcraft in relation to certitude and Skepticism, connecting beliefs consequent of sense experience, reason, testimony, and memory, warrant triple efforts to be entirely epistemologically accommodated.

Interestingly, this research justifies the fact that although divination and witchcraft are relevant to epistemological views, they hoist series of challenges apropos certitude and Skepticism. Therefore, while acknowledging the ramifications of claimed knowledge from divination and contrasting scenarios of witchcraft, we aim at demonstrating the fact that justification of divination and witchcraft become problematic in the face of certitude and scepticism; despite their belief and truth claims. Accordingly, knowledge in divination and witchcraft is an empirical concern raising several questions concerning validity claims and rationality. Hence, the dispute lies in the problem of validity claims on divination and witchcraft; since they cannot be scientifically or authoritatively verified. Yet, there is some credibility pointing to the direction that the nature of both can be grasped or contain numerous descriptions, gleaned from visible and unquestionable effects of the art and attacks of witches. Consequently, this research intends to suspend quick and rash conclusions, biases, or prejudices surrounding divination and witchcraft in African epistemological contentions; sticking strictly to certitude and sceptical challenges that compose our problematic.

Equally, in elucidating dimensions of African divination and witchcraft as practiced culturally, attempts are made to form, possess, and understand reality in the present; additionally predicting events and reality of the immediate future with stretched effects of the past. Arguably, anthropological approaches to African divination and witchcraft as knowledge elements are characterized by a certain epistemological twist; creating specific problems of certainty and scepticism in relation to truth claims. Subsequently, it is envisaged that various reasons are highlighted for awarding African divination and witchcraft various systematic attention; circumventing at the same time, common epistemological prejudice that enables a naissance of positive values for emergence.

A proper exploration of this research compels imploration of analytic methods alongside three epistemological tools: belief, truth, and justification. This enables the partitioning of the work into five constituent parts. First, is an exploration of the ramifications or dimensions of knowledge in divination; second, dimensions of witchcraft and contrasting scenarios; third, the convergence of divination and witchcraft; fourth, divination/witchcraft vis-a-vis certitude and Skepticism; and lastly prospects and perspectives of divination in relation to witchcraft. Exceptionally, various cultural strands or features of divination and witchcraft in a cross-section of African countries, but largely the Cameroonian spectrum are examined. Also interestingly, there is presumption of the reader’s pre-knowledge of issues on divination and witchcraft in African Traditional Religion; reason why only selected few instances and kinds are mentioned. The work ends with a general conclusion that constitutes a synthesis, availing unsullied grounds for another thesis, and a bibliography for further investigation or research.

## **II. RAMIFICATIONS OR DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE IN DIVINATION**

Here, we commence the real nub of the debate; considering ramifications or dimensions of knowledge in divination. The practice of divination is founded upon belief in some supernatural influence. In this connection, many diviners are alleged to have knowledge or the power/ability to know from three principle sources: God, ancestors and evil spirits. In most African traditions, God is conceived as the creator spirit or supernatural being controlling all supernatural forces. As commonly believed, diviners possess powers of

knowing things and events through divine inspiration; such powers entrusted to know and determine people's destiny. That is, God avails men as agents for solving problems; being the source of their knowledge. Thus, through inspiration diviners are attributed knowing objects used during the process of divination to obtain required information. Overwhelmingly and on parallel terms, Emmanuel C. Eze highlights aspects of Yoruba divination, commencing with the diviner (*babalawo*) "the father of ancient wisdom;" to whom clients approach to help solve specific problems: personal, medical, social, political, and religious. He equally intimates that the diviner seeks information from god (*Ifa*) who assists in divination. (EZE C. Emmanuel, 1998: 40) Outrightly, divination revolves around the practice of interpreting omens, leading to discovery of the will of the gods in natural phenomena. Although exceptionally thought of as a social phenomenon, divination is central to people's lives in African societies. However, this paper limits us only to the following dimensions of knowledge in divination: casting of lots, cowries related objects, spider divination, divination and oath taking, and geographical/natural divination phenomenon.

## **2.1 CASTING OF LOTS**

Casting of lots is one of the commonest forms of divination in African communities; utilizing kola nut peelings, often cut into five pieces corresponding to the external senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. In African thought patterns, especially with Bantu cultures, the classical Western five senses are summarized to two: "to see" and "to hear." This explains why diviners upon interpreting casted lots, express indirectly aspects of smelling, feeling, and tasting. In this connection, John S. Mbiti underscores the capacity of seers (diviners) as people with natural powers aiding them to "see" or perceive certain things not known ordinarily by other human beings. According to him, these sometimes foresee events before they take place, without any special training. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 157) In this light, Abanuka asserts that seers are often people with a sharp capacity for both foresight and insight into things, with some of them receiving revelations in visions and dreams, in addition to their intuitions. For example, African societies are cited to have famous seers (diviners) predicting events that were realizable: the coming of Europeans, building of railways, the flying of airplanes, and so on. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 130) Effortlessly, although some predictable occurrences doubtlessly happened at close range of time, the use of common sense clearly indicate they were deduced from logical sequence of events. Notwithstanding, since "to see" and "to hear" are interchangeable in African thought, there is an intellectual grasp of whatever either of the senses provides through given data of the arranged lots; corroborating the significance of intuition, wisdom, and premonition in the entire divination process.

Similarly, Paul Mzeka subscribes to this epistemological view concerning superhuman ways of knowing and objects of divination among the *Nso'*. According to him, the objects of divination and the art itself among the *Nso' njoh se tangin* (castings lots), is quite revealing. (MZEKA Paul, 1998: 40) Eze in another dimension and in conformity with aforementioned opinions about casting of lots validates divination as a technique of knowing with certainty:

A divination system is a standardized process deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge. This knowledge may or may not be literally expressed during the interpretation of the oracular message. The diviner may utilize a fixed corpus... or a more diffuse body of esoteric knowledge. (EZE C. Emmanuel, 1998: 171)

It is clear from the above that although variations ensue, confirming diversity in divining processes, all follow defined routines through which otherwise inaccessible information or knowledge is supposedly obtainable.

## **2.2 COWRIES AND RELATED OBJECTS**

Next to the dimension of casting lots, is the imploration of cowries and related objects. Diviners as seers and mediums, utilize cowries, bones of the dead, sharp objects, divination gourd, pebbles, snail shells, and stones to seek hidden secrets or knowledge to pass onto their clients. Mbiti sums up the role of diviners and significance of objects used in detecting reserved information and knowledge as follows:

Diviners normally work also as medicine men... finding out why something has gone wrong. They tell who may have worked evil, magic, sorcery or witchcraft against the sick or the barren. They find out [using cowries and related objects], which spirit may be troubling a possessed person, what it wants, and what should be done to stop the trouble. Diviners use divination; a method of finding out the unknown, by means of pebbles, numbers, water, animal entrails, reading the palms, throwing dice, and many other methods. It takes a long time to train in the different methods. Diviners like other religious leaders, often have their own language... getting in touch with spirits directly or through mediums. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 156)

Outrightly, Mbiti's view above attesting to the importance of various objects used to obtain reserved knowledge, use of coded language, and the fact that as a craft the duration of training is long, suggests the possibility of diviners possessing certain knowledge of manipulating unseen forces of the universe. Nevertheless, the benchmark rests on the fact that many of them rather frequently use common sense and

imagination to arrive at desired results, than claimed truth from the invisible world. Thus, these objects assist in forethought; the myriad symbolic objects shaken by diviners through simple sliding, regarded as performing the same functions remote controls or car sensors (alarm systems) would do in modern technology.

Occasionally, diviner's body through spirit possession are viewed as vehicles of communication. In addition, in operating self-explanatory mechanisms unveiling requested information, they are required in other instances to interpret "cryptic metaphoric messages" according to Eze's findings. (EZE C. Emmanuel, 1998: 172) Incidentally, it is common belief, that diviners manipulate the intelligence of their clients during diagnosis to obtain desired results. Nonetheless, diviners justify the source for obtaining superhuman knowledge in ancestral spirits; believed to be supernatural beings next to God in the hierarchy of spiritual beings. Mbiti vindicates this as common belief in African thought, considered as possessing supernatural powers with which they assist diviners. These are claimed as revealed in experiences sometimes via dreams or other forms of supernatural communication. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 170) In this way, diviners are believed to have the capacity of obtaining esoteric knowledge of how to go about divination processes using particular objects. Abanuka in connection highlights claims of Kaka diviners:

Some diviners claim that during the period of quiet following the client's statement of his case, they hear within themselves, the voice of an ancestor giving direction. Some are seen to retire alone to the sacred grove or inside the tent to consult with the spirit of the ancestors who reveal much to them. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1999: 30)

Accordingly, Abanuka regards this source of knowledge for diviners as linked to evil spirits; claiming that most diviners hardly acknowledge it. He insinuates that the precise origin of such evil spirits is not known; but are generally believed to be spirits of those who failed to become ancestors due to lives of wickedness here on earth, and have been abandoned by God as a form of punishment. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 75) Likewise, in most Bantu and Semi-Bantu cultures of Africa, evil spirits of this category are also believed to access supernatural powers for use by soliciting diviners; but unlike ancestral spirits, these evil spirits use their powers for evil purposes. For instance, diviners commonly considered as collaborating with such spirits may have true knowledge of mysterious events, later causing more harm to society.

### **2.3 SPIDER DIVINATION**

Following suit after cowries and other related objects of divination is the common practice of spider divination; a reserve and unique feature of divination practiced in most tribes of Cameroon's North West Region. For practical reasons, given the fact that the researcher hails from Nso' (a tribe of the North West Region), spider divination in this tribe is definitely the case study for our reflection in this paper; backed up by the ontological background of neighbouring Nigeria. Spider divination (*ngam woo Schwengin*) in Nso', also known as scorpion studies or consultation is accompanied by telepathy activities (*sho'ngang*). This is often held as executed prior to clients setting-out for any journey; with varied objects, especially shaped pieces of bamboo blades displayed the previous night at the entrance of spider holes. The following day, the diviner alongside clients visit the scene to study and interpret the positioning of the bamboo blade sticks; facing particular directions and how they relate to each other, enable diviners with second spiritual senses and reserved knowledge, to prescribe if the journey would be successful. Ancestral assistance in some cases, according to some diviners may at times be direct, revealing certain knowledge about required information transmitted to clients.

In relation to the predominant spider divination (*ngam wo schwengnin*) of the Nso' as aforementioned, Chukwudi Eze in reflecting on the problem of knowledge in divination avers:

*Ashe*, is understood as the principle of intelligibility in the universe and in humans, or as rationality itself. It is creative power, the word, reason, the logos which 'holds' reality. More specifically, *ashe* is that principle which accounts for the uniqueness of humans; it is a rational and spiritual principle which confers upon humans their identity and destiny. It endows individuals with *ori or akara-aka*, the Yoruba or Igbo word for destiny. (EZE Chukwudi, 1998: 173)

As Eze illustrates above and associated to the Nso', divination, chiefly spider divination is what facilitates diviners' assistance to clients' perception of individual destiny via predictions equally defining characters and fortunes. This sense of being and source of knowledge is an existential epistemological reality and challenge in African thought, resulting from the spiritual and rational personality of human beings. Consequently, as a process of pursuit of knowledge in African thought, spider divination in African cultures is all about destiny; since life is considered as always being on a course. Initially, and from random and frequent testimony, spider divination is seemingly the most reliably used; but the challenges of certainty/certitude and sceptical features remain affixed to it.

Exceptionally, some diviners double as counsellors and medicine men; acting as doctors, nevertheless, also listening to clients' problems that span through various domains of life. Strikingly, the Latin adage "*repetitio et mater studiorum*" (repetition is the mother of studies) holds here. By implication, a diviner who

doubles as a medicine man for instance with the Nso' (*ngashiv*), due to several consultations, becomes perfect and relied upon in the practice. Thus, they are proficient in providing desired information or knowledge to their clients; since from a series of counselling sessions and interrogation of interlocutors, they effortlessly deduce requisite facts. Equally, there is common belief of the existence of a web of diviners, crisscrossing clients and exploring extracted details or knowledge. Mbiti captures this asserting:

When cattle die, their owners go to him [diviners/medicine men] for help; when children disobey parents, the parents go to him for advice; when someone is going on a long journey, he consults the medicine man to know whether the journey will be a success or to obtain protective medicines, and so on. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 153)

What is retained here is the fact that common belief gives ascent to acknowledgment of supremacy of medicines or charms; said to not only cure sicknesses, but also drives away or repels witches, exorcizes spirits, attract success, detecting thieves and potential enemies, eliminating curses, and ward off/protect dangers of all sorts. Notwithstanding, and remarkably, spider divination in relation to other forms of divination is made more evident when viewed alongside oath taking as a binding force to clients.

## **2.4 DIVINATION AND OATH TAKING**

Largely, diviners exert pressure on their clients committing them to oath taking, presuming desired results are non-obtainable if the concerned fail to respect their part of the deal in honesty and sincerity. For instance, the Nso' upon resumption of community driven interest activities, see individuals expected to guarantee non-betrayal; swearing by the throne of the paramount Fon (*dzev kava/ka-an kava Fon*). Equally, individuals suspected of committing crimes are summoned to justify innocence by swearing on the Fon's throne. Misfortune conceivably ensues if culprits are guilty, followed by series of curses and damaging physical effects; in some cases, the consequence is physical death. The case in hand is that of two football players of Kumbo Strikers football team, who prior to the Cameroon cup finals, due to the fact that they hailed from the Western region, the town of their opponents, were brought to swear on the throne prior to the match. (CAMEROON football cup finals of 2000) Many believe players protected the team's interest; fighting hard to ensure victory, dreading possible consequences if held guilty for not honouring pronouncements on the Fon's throne.

Overtly, the force of the "word" as evoking creative impact on users in oaths is revealing in African thought generally, and Nso' particularly. The force of the word (*jii*) in Nso' apropos oath taking and pronouncements, invoke future curses or blessings if honoured or otherwise not kept. This explains why in circumstances of random or sudden deaths, dreadful sicknesses, the concerned upon reference to diviners are investigated if previously they bridged or defaulted an oath or pronouncement. Obviously, whether out of mere suspicion or not, this leads to circumstances largely leading to some degree of certainty in relation to past oaths incurred from previously uttered words. Eze in quoting Professor Gates elucidates this contending that: "We can translate *ase* in many ways as creating the universe... Translated as *logos* [the word is understood] as the audible, and later the visible, sign of reason." (EZE Chukwudi, 1998: 173)

On the strength of the exceeding allusion to the centrality of language conveyed by emphasis on the "word," despite the fact that African thought does not assign high priority to critical thinking or reason, notwithstanding there is to an extent some logical coherence. Barry Hallen in an erudite manner contends that African epistemological concerns equally involve "clarification of the meaning(s) of individual concepts" of particular philosophical interests; involving dimensions of knowledge, belief, and truth. (HALLEN Barry, 2000: 297) However, upon application to divination practices, the problematic of justification in relation to certitude about certain piece of information being described as certain knowledge is obvious. Thus, the certainty of truth of diviners is inseparable from their moral characters (honesty, reliability as starting place of information, and consistency). As later underscored in this paper, the problem arises when it is fundamentally impossible to ascertain a criterion for appraising the reliability of second-hand information gotten from some diviners. Kwasi Wiredu highlights this stating:

Knowledge of another person's moral character is seen as obtainable, most reliably, from observing (firsthand) their behaviour (*isesi*). Moreover, in Yoruba discourse behaviour conventionally extends to 'what they say' and 'what they do,' which also pretty much corresponds to the standard western notions of verbal and non-verbal behaviour. But what is again in evidence here is the priority the Yoruba place upon hard evidence, upon only being able to 'know' what you witness in a firsthand manner. For the point is that a person's verbal and non-verbal behaviour are construed as firsthand evidence (*imo*) of their moral character. (WIREDU Kwasi, 2002: 301)

Relying on the previously mentioned stance, most diviners are caught off-guard as their clients rarely can ascertain the reliability of their testimony, based on the criteria of moral epistemological principles. Equally, since oath taking is in the sanctum or precincts of diviners, and other divination forms do not oblige

the pronouncement of informative statements void of recounting precise circumstances in which they came across, skepticism and lack of certainty are apparent.

Furthermore, coupling circumstances of oath taking and divination compels alluding to Abimbola's account; who Olufemi Taiwo unveils as identifying *ifa* divination among Yoruba gods as sent by the supreme God (*Olodumare*), and being charged with all processes. He insinuates that diviners are accorded the responsibility of imploring God-given "wisdom and capacity for omniscience" to order the world. Additionally, and in concordance with a plethora of cultural divination contentions in North West Region of Cameroon, Olufemi also opines that *ifa* is "endowed with unsurpassable knowledge." (OLUFEMI Taiwo, 2002: 305) This raises dust about divination systems and some concluding epistemological questions (linked to certitude and skepticism); challenging the attribution of divine omniscience to imperfect and infinite beings. A further intimation from Olufemi, that highlights the possibility of the supreme being endowing diviners with omniscience to determine validity of oaths, compounds and complicates matters. According to him:

*Ifa* is omniscience: it is a repository of unsurpassable knowledge and wisdom. This means that *Ifa* transcends the limits of human cognitive capacities, [having] the capacity to know from several perspectives at the same time; and is not bound by the time-space constraints of human knowing. (cf. *ibid.*)

However, and unfortunately, this is only possible from the religious standpoint; that is, identifying *Ifa* as a god with immeasurable capacity. This may only offer a minimal solution or easy way out of the perennial certitude and sceptical problems of epistemology. In agreement with Wiredu, this position and those of several African cultures limits the appeal of *Ifa* "to only those who are religiously inclined." That being the case, Wiredu is vindicated for holding that "even a slight familiarity with *Ifa* in its many aspects implies its religious dimension is only one among several other characteristics." (WIREDU Kwasi, 2002: 304) Consequently, divination and oath taking in African world view is uprightly challenged for not taking into consideration the fact that diviners or their priests seldom ask clients to affirm a faith or belief: before, during, or after consultation. Furthermore, the diviner's capacity to know a client's fate is unaffected concerning non-membership in the religious organization. Spontaneously and insightfully, the most difficult and perhaps intriguing epistemological problem of "how chance and probability, on the one hand, and any supposed extra-empirical cognitive mechanisms, on the other," according to Wiredu, plays out in manipulations involved in divination objects/instruments. (WIREDU Kwasi, 1998: 311) These and other epistemological issues wrapped around certitude and skepticism, challenge further sustained examination in the critique of this paper.

## 2.5 GEOGRAPHICAL AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

Subsequent to the challenges involved in divination and oath taking, is the cosmological axis of divination dealing with the natural world; the practical locus wherein most divination takes place. This involves natural divination that deals with the physical world; frequently at the heart or core of African divination. Interestingly, evidenced in ancient roots as well as indigenous contemporary divination, it is enveloped in metaphors or metaphoric natural phenomena: water, stones, wood, rustling, and other relief features. Despite their reliability and engrossed acknowledgment as trusted sources of knowledge, the dispute remains that of probing how validly, inanimate natural phenomena alleged to communicate knowledge or truth-values with certainty is justifiable. Now, the book of the Psalms in Sacred scripture provides empirical tools to confront claimed knowledge or information from natural phenomena by diviners; raising dust to further skepticism and certitude deficiency in their random declarations:

They [natural features as gods] have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell. They have hands but cannot feel, and feet but cannot walk, and throats but cannot make a sound. Moreover, those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them. (PSALMS: 115:5-8)

The Psalmist in this excerpt employs the inevitable role of the external senses in detecting the truth from natural phenomena, often implored by diviners themselves. Therefore, the challenge remains the incapacity of justifying how communication is attributed to inanimate objects. How convincing or reliable does claimed knowledge or information deduced by diviners become justified as certain, eliminating skepticism?

An isolated example of natural phenomena is the case of rainmakers; believed to interpret natural features and solicit through rituals and invocations assistance of the gods for rain in circumstances of prolonged drought or withholding rain to enable people carry out festivals or harvesting. The office of rainmakers is hereditary from parents as a form of divination; and if not inherited, it is believed divine inspiration through dreams, messages from the spirits or a natural interest in the work bestows such powers. Accordingly, Mbiti intimates that Africans largely declare obtaining information/knowledge from rainmakers for their livelihood with certainty:

Training in rainmaking is long. It involves learning to perform the rainmaking rituals, to observe changes in the sky both at night and in the daytime, and the movements and habits of insects, birds, and certain

animals, as well as the changes in plants and trees. All these things are connected to the weather, and nobody can become a rainmaker without knowing fundamentals of his [her] profession. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 158)

Implicitly, diviners involved in rainmaking or withholding do not differ largely from weather forecasters in conventional science or geographical predictions. Thus, in spite of the fact that coincidentally rainmakers often credited for causing rain to fall or withholding it for people to carry out important events: festivals, weddings, and funeral celebrations, philosophically, it is challenged that they simply interpret weather conditions properly. Equally, since rains descend from the sky, people should know that rainmakers do not produce rain, nor withhold it from falling; simply if the very African thought is vindicated, considering God as rain-giver or giver of water; diviners must not be accorded access to reserved knowledge. Additionally, other divination techniques linked to natural phenomena is counting of stars at night-sky by diviners; generally equated as corresponding to western astrological numerology.

Obviously, the dimension of divination in African thought dealing with geographical or natural phenomena is hard writing-off the shelves of epistemic certitude and skepticism. The fact that some truth-value is obtainable through reading of signs of time, imploring wisdom and intuition, avails possibility of reliable/dependable information. Although there is incomplete systematic demonstration of truth-values in these processes in African thought, semblance to Greek and Chinese divination methods, similarly plunging into interconnections to naturalistic features (seen as foundational epistemic justification), stares in the face. Consequently, as perceived, there is compatibility with naturalistic inquiry that largely is reliable; providing sparks of certainty. Hence, since divination in African thought like elsewhere is a deliberate search for answers and puzzling circumstances (doubts), it is relevant; but lacks certainty, resulting to the production of artificial signs. The problematic tackled later in this paper, arises from the fact that reality from natural phenomena as aforementioned is visible to all but significant to demand explanation. Everything is inherent in nature, but needs the interpretation of specialists (diviners), who frequently are manipulative; causing issues apropos certitude and skepticism.

## **2.1. DIMENSIONS OF WITCHCRAFT AND CONTRASTING SCENARIOS**

Divination and witchcraft are entwined; the former in African worldview remaining an art determining or pre-empting the latter. Witchcraft from broad-spectrum knowledge is a compound word made-up of two English words: “witch” and “craft.” As a practiced craft, and due to its evil association, pinning down the meaning of “witch” is complicated; but traceable to “sorcery and casting a spell. (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION, 2019: 2020) In relation to African cultures and thought system, Innocent Chijindu Ngangah contends that witchcraft incorporates the exploit of supernatural and magical powers to manipulate nature, people, and social occurrences; to achieve selfish or self-serving ends for witches/wizards or their clients. (CHIJINDU N. Innocent, 2020: 33) Furthermore, Chijindu highlights the fact that the philosophical view of witchcraft in Africa presents witches as those believed to act unconsciously, are unaware of ills caused, and constantly driven by “irrepressible urges to act malevolently.” (Cf. Ibid.) Interestingly, the Nso’ entertain similar views about witchcraft (*soem*) and witches/wizards (*angaa soem*); those accused of witchcraft in several instances are unconscious of their malevolent acts. Thus, by implication, circumstances crop up in which witchcraft adherents claim they unknowingly did what is ascribed to them. Equally, from an anthropological as well as cosmological point of view, witchcraft in the African context nurse magical powers within, exposed by tools of diviners; with beliefs grounded largely on causation conception. This vindicates why as a steering principle in African circles, it is implored to elucidate causes of misfortunes. Expressions in most African cultures point to beliefs suggesting that misfortunes are caused by invisible powers.

The strength of witchcraft apropos divination vis-à-vis certitude and skepticism in African thought become comprehensible if the following dimensions and contrasting scenarios are explored; viz: conceptualization of witchcraft, various societal sectors of witchcraft, social anthropology and witchcraft allegations, local contexts of witchcraft and sorcery, Ethico-epistemological features and relation to magic, witchcraft and the occult.

## **2.1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WITCHCRAFT**

Accordingly, the concept of witchcraft is indissoluble from divination modern changes in African contexts. Diane Ciekawy opines that perhaps the initial neglect of this relationship, particularly by social scientists is so striking, with increasing discourse on witchcraft manifestation. (CIEKAWY Diane, 1998: 1) Generally, belief in witchcraft common to all African societies, is built on the fact that once a person believes some evil powers has been utilized against him, there is quick consultation of diviners to establish the identity of the suspect. Mbiti claims that in most cases, suspects are often family members, a neighbour, relative, and associate at job sides. (MBITI S. John, 1978: 165) Inevitably, this is linked to the African views of the universe; with common belief that invisible and mystical forces exist. Some individuals are believed to possess

knowledge and abilities of tapping, controlling, and exploiting forces against designated enemies or targets of their clients. Mbiti gives a neat summary of this interpretation:

Some have greater knowledge and skill than others; some possess the ability without knowing it, and find later that through word or ritual they can release these forces for particular use. Magic [sorcery, witchcraft] is believed to be these forces in the hands of certain individuals. They may use for harmful ends and then people experience it as bad or evil magic. Alternatively, they may use it for ends, which are helpful to society, and it is considered as good magic or medicine. (Ibid.)

On this interpretation, witchcraft is regarded as a manifestation of mystical forces, which as equally believed by the Nso', could be inborn in persons (*soem ye bvem*), inherited (*soem ye kfee/vitsoe ve yi-in*), and acquired variously. J. C. Woodfork explores Mbiti's intimations about Witchcraft in African epistemology to extend its conceptualization as follows:

A witch uses incantations, words, rituals, and magic objects to inflict harm on the victim. To this, she may use nails, hair, clothes, or other possessions of the victim, which she burns, pricks, or wishes evil to. The belief is that inflicting harm on what once belonged to a person; the said person is automatically harmed. (WOODFORK J. C., 2006: 31)

The problematic here is that of causal connection which underscores challenges in relation to certainty and truth. How possible or what positive grounds of proofs are there to justify the belief that a witch has caused harm on an enemy; or as is commonly held, vindication of the available evidence that a witch looked at a particular person, spoke some words and they affected the victim?

In another dimension, Abanuka concerning the conceptualization of witchcraft intimates that belief in evil spirits, as a source of knowledge to wicked – minded diviners is very common and the most dreaded in societies; being attributed aspects of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic. In his mind, witchcraft claims though a common phenomenon is inadequately communicated for an outsider to judge. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 73) In other words, it is an inexplicable experience in simple terms; accounting for the main apprehension addressed by this research paper.

## **2.2. WITCHCRAFT AND VARIOUS SOCIETAL SECTORS**

Peter Geschiere recounts quickly that after exploring the conceptualization of witchcraft in postcolonial Africa, modern sectors of society including politics, sports, new forms of entrepreneurship, and institutions of formal education visualized as the most affected of this conflicting phenomenon. Accordingly, neglecting to contain scenarios of witchcraft in named sectors in his estimation jeopardizes progress and compromise epistemological values. (GESCHIERE Peter, 1998: 21) As aforementioned, individuals transform into animate beings or objects to cause harm to enemies; some cases regarded as unconscious exhibitions. Justifiably, being and intelligence are strictly human characteristics; thus, sharing same properties with animals as knowing beings is problematic. Abanuka highlights this on the level of *igicucu* (Igbo for being with knowing capacity); but human beings and animals are separated by the former's possession of *amagara* (intelligence). (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 76) The very fact that this implies possession of life with the principle of intelligence, automatically rules out possibilities of said "inhibited invisible spirits" of humans in animals, to target with intelligence their enemies.

Furthermore, since human nature in the African world view is the vital union of body and the principle of intelligence, it can only be through guess work that the two elements are separated; except in circumstances of physical death; introduction of immortality. Since this pertains to sensitive beings (humans as such), intelligence is strictly a quality of human beings. In correlation, Abanuka references the Bantu of Rwanda, emphasizing existence differences of human beings as distinguished from other beings. The Bantu of Rwanda for him, establish in their philosophy, a marked difference between "sensitive being" in general, and the "sensitive that has intelligence." The two possess faculties and operations characterizing the "sensitive." These faculties and operations found in man according to Abanuka's estimation, bear some particularities apropos intelligence; the power to reflect, compare, and invent. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1997: 90) Implicitly, intelligence as attributed to man is not similar to that of animals; hence, there are no justifiable grounds of certainty, regarding the possibility of a witch assuming animal form to harm others as commonly believed. Therefore, since animals can only exercise sensation properties of intelligence, they lack the capacity of coordinating, as humans would do.

## **2.3. SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND WITCHCRAFT ALLEGATIONS**

At this point, it is incumbent to investigate some witchcraft allegations enclosing anthropological implications, ensuing from various societal sectors. The concept of witchcraft in African philosophy from the socio-anthropological viewpoint, highlights the fact that among most scholars of social science (social anthropologists in particular), this art is inseparable from magic; resulting to harming persons or aspects of the material world on which they depend. Certainly, the greatest challenge of witchcraft at this stage revolves



around mysticism, science, philosophy, and rationality. Unfortunately, consensus is that cognitive skills of Western science are superior to traditional skills of knowledge. This suggests as D. A. Masolo upholds “that the West was a highly rational place, while traditional societies lived a more poetic, mystical, less rational and more restricted world of thought.” (MASOLO, D. A., 1995: 125) However, there are some aspects of consistency in witchcraft allegations as demonstrated in Masolo’s referencing of Evans Pritchard:

Evans Pritchard’s argument is that although the Zande method and process of corroboration by means of the poison oracle [*benge* poison oracle] are rational from the point of view of consistency, they are, however, mistaken from the point of view of the scientific [context independent] notion of reality. (Ibid.)

Established on the above representation, descriptions of personal knowledge vindicating victims of witchcraft accusations suggest that deeply ingrained convictions determining interpretation of experiences are yet relevant. The problematic arises in relation to scientific objectivity (truth-value and power over the physical world) as playing a major part; something frequently deficient in witchcraft allegations. Consequently, the long-standing preoccupation is the hair-splitting differentiation of sorcery from witchcraft; with late 1980’s reluctance of confronting this with modern occultism. Coherency in beliefs, truth-values, and certainty encircle knowledge claims in witchcraft allegations. This avails the opportunity for exploring local contexts of witchcraft.

#### **2.4. LOCAL CONTEXTS OF WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY**

African cultures in their epistemological heterogeneity, unveil common trends of quest for greater individual social self-understanding in order to verify right course of actions in life. As Chukwudi intimates: “Because destiny is the sense of becoming endowed, the individual by human, spiritual, and rational nature, *ifa* [divination in relation to witchcraft], is, in fact, a process of attempting to understand reality.” (CHUKWUDI E. Emmanuel, 1988: 174) Local beliefs surrounding witchcraft steer and prompt philosophical inquiry of the extent of human understanding in relation to truth-value. Inquiring into witchcraft allegations opens up investigations into how individuals through divination establish witchcraft by distinguishing between the true and false, right and wrong course of such phenomena.

As a form of communal knowledge, witchcraft in African worldview is a manifestation of mystical forces, frequently alleged to be inborn in persons, inherited, or acquired in various ways. For some people, it functions without individual consciousness or control over it. However, it is mostly believed that witchcraft and bad magic upon combination, result to evil; whether deliberately or involuntarily on the part of the witch or magician. Witchcraft and evil magic as essential elements in communal knowledge are to be examined in unison with the problem of evil. Intrinsically, malignant actions are often represented by the concept of witchcraft. For instance, the Nso’ concept of *virim vee shuy* (witchcraft of the sun or day) derives from man, and depends on him as their source or origin. In conjunction, Christian Mofor asserts:

The use of the term *virim* merely dramatises the gravity of malicious actions. This includes incestuous relationships, the killing of fellow men, poisoning of alcohol or food, pollution of a spring or other communal water-supply, arson (setting fire to the homes or the compounds of fellow men), and the deliberate damage of crops in other people’s farms, killing of their goats, sheep and other livestock (MOFOR Christian, 2008: 192-193) to one’s evil delight.

Imploring the Nso’ expression *virim* (witchcraft) in the above context implies knowledge and potentials of exerting negative forces on others. It also focuses attention on grave consequences, following transgression of the world’s conduct for both individuals and entire communities.

Although more of a metaphysical contagion, witchcraft in African world-views lacks full exploration; upheld in most circles as “an imaginary offence or impossibility.” Many opine that knowledge about such a reality is remote; with witches not having actual existence or capacitated to act as often claimed. However, African investigators attest to the fact that actual belief of Africans in this context is primordial. Investigations in this domain have severally been astonishing apropos encountering believers in witchcraft and descriptions of encounters with witches (*arim*) for the Nso’ and their night activities (*virim vee vitsoe*). This makes belief in the existence of this urgent reality indisputable. Mofor demonstrates the capacity or possession of knowledge and mystical power in Nso’ to will evil in witchcraft:

*Soem* which, in the world of the Nso’, refers to *virim* in the strict sense signifies the evil use of supernatural powers against family members (*afir*) and neighbours (*wir vee nte’ or wir vee gwanee*). These powers are thought to be possessed by malicious spirits or forces (*vibay ve bi vi* (evil spirits), *viyoy ve bi vi* (evil souls or spirits) or *anyuy* (evil gods) and their malevolent human agents. A number of reasons commonly account for this. The association of mysterious powers and actions in the night (*vitsoe’*), contained in the expression (*virim vee vitsoe’* (witchcraft of the night), this highlights ‘mystical’ or ‘hidden’ nature and operations of pernicious spirits or powers; than the time usually associated with activities of a *rim* (witch) or *arim* (witches). This implies that *rim woo vitsoe’* or *arim vee vitsoe’*, that is, ‘witch’ or ‘witches of the night’

can 'carry out' *virim vee vitsoe* (witchcraft of the night) even during the day (*e shuy*) (MOFOR Christian, 2008: 197-198) unperturbed.

Here, it is essential to avoid vague and generalized statements; attention should focus on implications of claimed knowledge and possibility of recognizing such occurrences. This does not only relate to the Nso' but African worldviews as a whole; acknowledging modes or ways of thinking which determine links between concepts and associated individual or communal experiences. Consequently, the predominant ethico-epistemological features alongside occult overtones cannot be minimized about witchcraft allegations. Thus, apart from African traditional religious influences, ferocious witchcraft effects experienced by victims cannot be waved aside; since spiritual forces are believed to exert or influence daily living. Therefore, aforementioned or unmentioned segments pointing to testimonies of practical manifestations, whether recorded by trust-worthy or unreliable researchers, demonstrate indicators of credible insights. The challenge of this current research is to highlight the problematic of certitude and skepticism in this "metaphorical" divination and witchcraft epistemological claims.

### III. CONVERGENCE OF DIVINATION AND WITCHCRAFT

Intrinsically, it is unjust to examine divination and witchcraft as separate concepts or entities. Equally, their comprehension must be alongside exploits of knowledge and causality, knowledge and belief, being and knowing. It is within this context that the following make some sense: divination as an art to determine witchcraft, diviners as fortune/destiny determiners or influencers, divination methods combating witchcraft, inherited divination art and unconscious witchcraft initiation, and personages involved in these arts. Another element of the convergence of divination and witchcraft in African thought connects to traditional sources of epistemology on which beliefs are formed: testimony, sense experience, reason, and memory. From this standpoint, it is uncomplicated specifying the sense implored in a particular circumstance(s), authenticating the testimony and person involved, reason for utilization, and how current the relevant memory is.

An additional phase of the convergence of divination and witchcraft vis-à-vis certitude and skepticism obliges an assessment of knowledge and causality, knowledge and belief, being and knowing, as aforementioned. Firstly, pertaining to knowledge and causality, in metaphysical terms, knowledge acquisition involves a transition from potency to act. Abanuka concurs, pointing out that human beings would be unable to learn or possess certain knowledge, if the capacity and potential to do so are non-existent. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1988: 45) This being the case, possibly acquired knowledge is conceived of as already existing potentially; justifying divination and witchcraft by inheritance or inborn. It is common knowledge that nothing in potency later reduces itself to act; self-actualization is impossible. External assistance is an imperative; introducing the need for efficient causality. Diviners and witches or wizards therefore become in this instance efficient causes for knowledge actualization. Furthermore, two fundamental questions coincide with Abanuka's contentions: firstly, what is the efficient cause of human knowledge; secondly, what brings it about? (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1988: 46) The response to these questions indicates two essential causes of human knowledge: one external and another internal to the subject. The external cause of knowledge in the context of this research is the object of knowledge (known practices), and the internal cause (unconscious witchcraft acts and divination art) aiding individuals in the knowing process.

In concrete terms, demonstrating the above in relation to knowledge and belief, are testimonies for instance of which witches in most African cultures believed to use incantations, words, rituals, and magic objects to inflict harm on victims. This highlights the power of the spoken word and language in African epistemological contentions and philosophy of language; highlighted by Mbiti:

Another belief is that the spirit of the witches leaves them at night and goes to eat away the victim, thus causing him to weaken and eventually die. It is believed too, that a witch can cause harm by looking at a person, wishing him harm or speaking to him words intended to inflict harm on him. (MBITI S. John, 1977: 166)

These constitute most ways in which evil magic and witchcraft regularly function, and held as transmitted. Although without visible justification, these and similar beliefs evoke sentiments in persons as central features of communal knowledge. Quite often, the consequence is recourse to false accusations, leading to scores settling among persons; epistemologically warranting systematic parameters addressing routine problems of certitude and skepticism surrounding this.

While being critical of aforementioned prevalent features, it is worth noting that African worldviews cleave to beliefs in these and other mystical powers as assisting the populace find explanations when in anxiety. They are not satisfied with solely knowing misfortunes occurrences or causes of diseases; but severally, intention is in knowing with certainty instigator(s) for their occurrences, when, and to whom such was done. Knowledge of the person(s) responsible enables the community to identify where to apportion blames and cautions, even without certainty. Answers flowing from these also harmonize with the view of the universe, recognizing the many invisible forces at work, some imbedded in human beings. Therefore, Africans frequently attribute positive aspects to belief in witchcraft as well; upholding the view that it is deterring and causes refrain

from certain offences like stealing, rudeness, committing heinous crimes, or deliberately offending neighbours or relatives, for fear of application of magic and witchcraft against them. Equally, suspects of witchcraft allegations are hardly spared in life. Scapegoats are frequently isolated; causing the entire problem to be vicious, with almost everyone becoming a suspect when unexplainable occurrences crop up.

Secondly, the crux of the matter shifts to distinguishing “knowledge and belief;” more sophisticated epistemologically, and quickly empirical than has generally been supposed. Knowledge in African thought refers to first-hand experience; acquired via sensory experience, particularly visual perception. Thus, statements uttered of this category of knowledge are observations or empirical in nature; subject to verification and belonging to first-order knowledge. For example, the Nso’ would intimate: “I was there when the bird turned into a house” (*mo’ dze fo’ shiinen shi binkir e lav*). However, certainty in ascertaining or making such claims is often defective; creating a series of sceptical thoughts especially when not backed-up by an authority figure or testimony from someone else. On the other hand, “belief” refers to second order knowledge individuals may or may not accept depending on the degree of the reasonableness of syllogisms used. An example is form of the Nso’ proposition: “I believe that P” (*mbiimi jii*); not considered objective nor an empirical statement. This perceptive shapes a theoretical system and its component elements. Therefore, the “knowing process” precedes “belief,” given that verification is crucial; such is the appeal of this research, to investigate into the extent of certitude and skepticism in divination and witchcraft accusations.

Severally and uncontested, divination and witchcraft indictments or information are quickly erected on minimally verified beliefs and practices, rather than demonstrated truth-values. Evidence of this is in the overriding belief in spirit possession; a strong tenet of divination techniques. Often, spirits are implored by divinely inspired diviners to accomplish healing from succession of afflictions. Ronald A. Reminick’s account of North Africa captures this in rendition of the *zar* healing, applied on “women feeling neglect in men’s world; in which they serve as hewers of wood and haulers of water,” as a practical example. He further intimates that cults are etymologically linked to the devil (*ti shatana*); leading to many people being condemned and banished with little investigation. (REMINICK A. Ronald, 1974: 289-291)

Thirdly, we slam the gate to convergence of divination and witchcraft and the problematic of certitude and skepticism by exploring aspects of “being and knowing;” directly linked to being and intelligence. In connection, Abanuka claims that human beings share the same properties with animals; but human beings and animals are isolated by the former’s extra possession of intelligence. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 90) By this token, intelligence is strictly a quality of human beings; challenging common beliefs in African thought about humans transforming into animals to perform witchcraft and divination acts. Abanuka also explicates further that the Bantu conceive human beings as “possessing” intelligence, while animals minimally enjoy only “knowing” intelligence. Therefore, animals in his estimation exercise limited properties of intelligence, solely via sensations; whereas humans simultaneously accommodate not only sensations as animals, but also have explanations: having the coordinating principle. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 91) Consequently, this explanation inevitably invalidates claims of certainty in divination and witchcraft; given the fact that deprivation of intelligence from animals prevents humans from transforming into them as commonly claimed, in order to accomplish witchcraft or divination acts.

#### **IV. DIVINATION AND WITCHCRAFT VIS-À-VIS CERTITUDE AND SKEPTICISM**

Strikingly, the instruments of truth, belief, and justification unavoidably weigh at this point, challenging the validity of divination and witchcraft declarations. Difficulties establishing objectivity employed in criteria as Chukwudi contends impede common predicaments apropos reason and truth. (CHUKWUDI E. Emmanuel, 1988: 173) Seemingly, there is abandonment to conjecture, probability, and chance, rather than certitude and elimination of skepticism. For instance, rainmakers depend on weather forecast just as their western meteorologist- counterparts; often their guess or predictions are mere coincidence and recourse to chance. Moreover, because diviners and witchcraft conductors severally invoke gods for intervention, invalidates truth and certitude facts; since religious beliefs connect to mystical allegations, provoking epistemic doubts. Equally, aforementioned contentions of divination and witchcraft suggest greater reliance or acceptance of relativistic theories concerning truth and knowledge. Masolo while citing Hollis annuls divination and witchcraft claims as culpable and inconsistent:

In imputing consistency [says Hollis], the enquirer is also imputing the intuition needed to grasp logical relation. For knowing, that P implies Q is not solely a matter of being able to follow a rigmarole, which starts with P and ends with Q. The point of the rigmarole is to lead the mind’s eye to see that [if P, then Q] is a necessary truth... In general, necessary truths are not true because they are provable, but provable because they are true. (MASOLO D. A., 1995: 126)

Applying this criterion to rational explanation arrived at analytically, verifiable propositions such as those in divination/witchcraft become problematic; causes hardly related to their effects. Consequently, based on consistency and reason, divination and witchcraft declarations lack scientific evidence and epistemic

certainty. Evidently, the problematic of certitude and skepticism in relation to divination and witchcraft accentuate absence of coherency/ consistency.

#### **4.1 DIVINATION: CERTITUDE AND SKEPTICISM**

Several tenets of divination in African epistemology hook up to the following concepts: knowledge, truth, validity, and rationality; interpreted by entreating African categories in traditional experiences, not necessarily applying Western conceptions. In connection to divination and witchcraft, this embraces varied forms: perceptual knowledge, old age knowledge (wisdom), common sense knowledge, mystical knowledge, inferential knowledge, oral tradition, and holistic knowledge. Generally, this incorporates two facets: scope of individual knowledge by intuition and aspects of belief, truth, and justification.

##### **4.1.1 Scope of Individual Knowledge by Intuition**

In African traditional thought, knowledge of reality is not detachable from individuals; rationale why individual knowledge by intuition is considered obtainable right from childhood. At this stage, the supremacy of the mind capacitated for immediate perception of truth without reason or analysis is borne; perceived truth of immediate knowledge contrasting mediate knowledge. Development of this knowledge brand is in adulthood; exerting environmental and cultural influences. Abanuka highlights the basic insight of this:

Knowledge, therefore, comes from the cooperation of all human faculties and experiences. Man sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and senses all at the same time. Only through this method does he claim to have the knowledge of the other. Intuition thus, has a central role in the theory of knowledge. (ABANUKA Bartholomew, 1994: 71)

Hence, Africans disembark on trustworthy knowledge of reality (God, man, spirit, society, social facts), from intuitive and personal experience, commencing in childhood. Divination and witchcraft display these characteristics; witnessing early initiation of teenagers, even when simply pressurized to entertain unjustified beliefs in such phenomena. Personal experience in this context should be divorced from subjective/individualistic experience; insistence on availing collective opportunities and shared experiences about divination and witchcraft allegations are paramount. Consequently, examining truth-values in divination and witchcraft in African epistemological views necessitate use of concepts of inspection, imagination, and intuition. An explanation of such tendency trunk from deriving certitude in personal and immediate experiences, coupled with social and communal historical experience.

##### **4.1.2 Truth, Belief, and Justification: Divination and Certitude**

After acknowledging the significance of intuition above, relating to divination and witchcraft, fundamental deliberation of truth-values, belief, and justification of arguments allied to them is an imperative. Distinguishing “knowing that from knowing how” is essential; raising the question whether knowledge (particularly from divination and witchcraft), is a subset of that which is both “true” and “believed.” The rationality of this doubt results from plethora of divination and witchcraft allegations widely believed in without proof as justified truth. Epistemologically, strict application of propositional knowledge principles to divination and witchcraft chiefly fall short of meeting basic requirements of certitude; given the fact that claims in this domain in African thought hardly contain the exactitude of Mathematics: “ $2 + 2 = 4$ .”

Nonetheless, African epistemological views apropos certitude in divination and witchcraft exceptionally enjoy some uniqueness or peculiarity. Exploring foundations of knowledge, being and knowing, and the process of knowing as implied in divination and witchcraft, demonstrate features of “knowing that;” but that of “knowing how” is tricky, raising issues of certainty. For example, a child exposed to myths, symbols, folktales, and proverbs, would readily believe in divination and witchcraft allegations founded on others’ experience; not necessarily justifying manifested truth claims. This is complex; unconvincing in the manner of presentation and overwhelmingly confusing. Nevertheless, even with claims of divinely revealed knowledge from the spirit world by diviners, how can one with certainty prove the main source of human knowledge as superhuman or divine? Ultimately, the process of knowing surrounding most divination and witchcraft cases becomes a matter of chance, probability, and conjecture; certitude strictly in this instance is deficient and not so obvious.

Notwithstanding recent epistemological claims, vindicating knowledge in African thought, could be evaluated on grounds of people’s properties (intellectual virtues) instead of properties of propositions; since challenges rise in relation to divination and witchcraft. However, degrees of conviction are also entertained, since higher forms of cognitive success (understanding) involve invaluable features from “justified true beliefs” of knowledge. African epistemological claims (particularly about divination and witchcraft) deserve similar consideration; in order not to over-expect justification of beliefs and their truth-value. Inevitably, this accommodates an examination of the epistemological tools of belief, truth, and justification in relation to divination/witchcraft vis-à-vis certitude and skepticism.

First, we tackle belief; differentiating knowledge from it, the case of the Nso' *Biime* (belief) aforementioned, referring to second order knowledge individuals may or may not admit, relying on degree of syllogisms' reasonableness implored is of great interest. For example, what is initially *Biime* (belief) can become *kiy* (knowledge) after verification or testing; thus the knowing process here, precedes belief. In this understanding, *biime* statements on their own form theoretical systems as well as component elements, and testing them does not occur in isolation. In circumstances of controversial information claim, they occur as an entity; availing possibility of professing belief in divination/witchcraft without knowledge or experience of the truth.

In agreement and according to D. M. Armstrong, very often statements of "belief" imply the speaker predicts something that eventually proves valuable or successful in some sense. Perhaps, for him, the speaker might "believe in" his or her favourite football team; the sort of belief not addressed by epistemology. Notwithstanding, contextually, it is only when "to believe something" implies cognitive contents and conceived as true. For example, to believe that the sky is blue is to think that the proposition "the sky is blue is true." (ARMSTRONG D.M., 1973: 177-178) If in accord with Armstrong, upholding that knowledge entails belief, the statement: "I know that divination investigations are true, but I do not believe in them," is contradictory. Albeit this, it must be borne in mind that knowledge about a belief does not entail endorsing its truth; that has been the case with divination and witchcraft claims.

Applying aforementioned considerations to features of divination, myths, magic, witchcraft, folktales, and dependence on ancestors in African epistemological explorations, suggest seeming conflict in the application of the term "I believe." For instance, folktales narrate the community experiences (divination/witchcraft inclusive) of time and change, leading to aspirations; African worldview generally regarding "believe" as supportive of the thought systems. Similarly, as with astrology, many "know" of listed sources of communal knowledge, but not everyone believes in them or their effectiveness. Belief is thus subjective, with personal basis for individual behaviour; while truth is an objective state is independent of individuals. Thus, although "belief" commonly reveals fundamental parallels to universal concepts, upon application to divination and witchcraft, subjective experiences generate doubts.

Secondly, truth's instrument compels an assessment of divination practices, normally based in African thought upon belief in supernatural influences. Many diviners as aforementioned self-declare themselves or acclaimed as possessing knowing capacities apropos things and events; inspired God, and conceiving such persons as problem-solving agents. Hence, via inspiration, diviners are believed to discern definite objects used during divination processes to obtain required information. These agents, by obtaining positive results in several occasions, allegedly acquire truth elements from God or the gods. However, Armstrong's objection pertaining to epistemological truth elucidates what must comprise justified aspects of "truth known and the knower." In his estimation, whether someone's belief is true or false, does not compel acknowledgment. (ARMSTRONG D.M., 1973: 179) On the other hand, something actually known (as in divination or witchcraft), cannot be false. For example, believing that a particular bridge is safe to support persons, and upon crossing it unfortunately collapses under the weight of its occupants is relevant. Obviously, the initially ascertained belief of the bridge's safety was erroneous; thus, it is not accurate to assert that in apriority, the bridge's safety was known but mistaken.

The preceding distinction is applicable to divination processes in African epistemology. If a client consults a diviner prior to a journey, and later features are altered, generating different results, upon return, he would not seize the diviner by throat for inaccuracy or faulty forecast and assertions. Consequently, any rationality in considering truth as commanding belief is a coherent and consistent thought. In relation to African epistemology, this highlights the problem rightly; especially that of certitude and skepticism.

Additionally, the problematic of destiny and choice in relation to responsibility clouds certainty and expands grounds for skepticism. Since destiny as the preordained outcome of life sees human beings believed to have allotments determining their future status, divination predictions seldom alters instances or outcomes. Hence, establishing individuals' process of destiny acquisition (choice or imposition), is challenging. Conflicting accounts surrounding interpretation Wiredu thinks, underscore the perception of divination in relation to witchcraft as "that which is chosen and affixed to one;" implying that destiny is chosen and affixed. However, determining the choice maker (either deity or human being) is possible (WIREDU Kwasi, 1981: 315). Thus, if destiny is truly not a product of genuine choice ensuing from African cultural declarations, and unconditionally received on "bended knees," then appropriateness of praise or blame in divination is obvious. Persons may not be responsible for what they did not choose apropos divination and witchcraft accusations.

#### **4.2 WITCHCRAFT: CERTITUDE AND SKEPTICISM**

Community knowledge in African epistemological views (folklores, sacred symbols established by ancestors, and past events of divination and witchcraft) attracts testimony of past generations. Although cases require particular attention to divergent minor details, substantial agreement reporting events command

sufficient reason. Unfortunately, sufficient reason in witchcraft cases necessary for granting independence of various testimonies, often lack truth facts apropos certitude and skepticism. Accordingly, witnesses' role guaranteeing truth progress and tenability become so cumbersome in ascertaining certitude; with the manner of interpreting witchcraft allegations frequently varying, depending on sentiments/dispositions of diviners or interpreters. Circumstances projecting happy interpreters or diviners lead to positive witchcraft accusation results, and vice versa when sad. Therefore, variations and swing moods of remote events chronology obstructs the obtaining of certitude.

Obviously, aforementioned circumstances alongside witnessing necessitate doctrinal testimony for witchcraft cynicism, doubt, and skepticism regarding individual belief; upsetting truthful communicating of facts. In connection, F. V. Steenberghen avers of such testimony:

Some teaching or doctrine proposed is easily established. The person proposing it must be competent, and having certain personal knowledge of it; it may not always be easy to verify, but at times known through knowledge of the position held. In respect of rank in his field, there is need of competence, modesty of character, dedication to truth, importance of what is proposed, and coherence of what is taught with other truths already known. Finally, truthfulness may be known directly or knowledge of dedication to work; or from knowing his good reputation in his field and the fact that any lying would be ruinous to his authority (STEENBERGHEN F.V., 1984: 21-22).

In spite of seeming vindication of aforementioned conditions fulfilled by diviners/magic men, and community leaders regarding witchcraft cases, human testimony lacks certainty and presupposes truth. This causes philosophical views of witchcraft to be problematic; given the fact that witches in many African cultures are believed to act unconsciously. The bad situation becomes worse, when some accused claim unawareness of the ill caused; regarded as driven by irrepressible urges to act malevolently. Thus, accused witches/wizards severally claim unconsciousness of their acts; exonerating many from imputed acts.

Furthermore, another dimension challenging witchcraft and certitude involves aspects of fantasy and memory predicaments. Individual knowledge by hereditary, presents features determining acquisition of knowledge right from childhood. According to this, children directly/indirectly inherit features from parents; citing the common proverb "like father, like son." Unconsciously, certain unrealistic characteristics, mental images, and unobtainable desires can be inherited them, leading to future difficulties in distinguishing sentiments from right judgment. By implication, culpability in witchcraft allegations is complex separating from unconscious acts posited due to inherited traits.

Additionally, within the framework of activities characterizing individual knowledge by experience, the soul is inseparable from memory; constituting elements animating the body, especially the faculty of knowledge. Memory's capacity largely depends on the length of experiences and intensity of impressions from intelligible objects through perception. Accordingly, Ayer outlines two kinds of memory: habit memory and memory of events. These have features re-proposing consciousness; with obtained past data conserving their temporal connotation. As a faculty dealing with the past, it grasps things and events in as much as they are in the past, suggesting possibilities of difficulties imputing blame of witchcraft accusations. In Ayer's estimation: Philosophers who write about memory are generally inclined to treat it as though it were analogous to perception. Though what is remembered is past, remembering takes place in the present; assumed that there must be some present content, which gives its flavour to a memory – experience (Ayer Jules, 1936: 486). Sustained argument is that remembering or not, how to do things without conscious recollection of having done them before (witchcraft allegations cases), or of having learned to do them, there must be at least an unconscious recollection. Certainly, the causes of one's proficiency including past experiences, make it difficult to ascertain conscious and unconscious witchcraft accusations.

Equally, African epistemological contentions linked especially to divination and witchcraft as processes of knowledge acquisition lacks some degree of certitude regarding elucidation. For instance, when analyzing divination/witchcraft cases, diviners are conceived of having sharp capacities for both foresight and insight, capable of predicting events. Most of them are perceived of imploring common sense; deducing outcome of situations from events logical sequences, sparingly certain themselves of their predictions. Hence, interpretation of indirect sacred symbols varies, portraying different observable results; depending on each interpreter.

D. Q. McInerney enumerates three elements determining true certainty: firm assent of the knowing subject, no rational fear of doubt, and an objective motive; substantiating the firm assent and absence of rational fear of doubt (MCINERNEY D. Q., 2007: 293). He equally divides certainty into subjective and objective certainty; stating that subjective certainty is a mental state in which a knowing subject possesses knowledge, giving firm assent, and not worried of possibilities being wrong or not. Knowledge is securely beyond doubt; not simply opinion knowledge. Conversely, objective certainty is rooted in certain knowledge; when something is clearly and immutably true, regardless of the thought of the knowing subject. McInerney demonstrates this fact

with the example of the mathematical statement  $2 + 2 = 4$ , read as objectively certain (cf. *ibid*); the contrary being false, suspicious of step omission.

In contrast, divination/witchcraft and their interpretation of indirect sacred symbols, lacks majority elements constituting real certainty. Assessing contentions on the grounds of McInerney's classical epistemological constituents, demonstrate lack of an objective motive substantiating firm assent and absence of any rational fear of doubt. This is noticeable in diviners' frequent reliance on logical sequence of events and subjective interpretation of sacred symbols; leading to variations in facts following interpreters' moods. Wiredu introduces the concept of destiny apropos divination and witchcraft, further complicating the case of certitude:

The very idea of destiny suggests that there must be some connection between destinies of various peoples: mother and child; spouses, friends and relations. For the child whose destiny is to die in infancy [bewitched or not], is born to a family whose destiny it is to mourn its child. Therefore, one can assume that each of the parents must also have chosen [or received) a related destiny (WIREDU Kwasi, 1981: 317-318).

By extension, it implies witchcraft allegations could be apportioned destinies more than choice; with members of a given community conditioned by related destinies. This is to the extent that significant events in the lives of relatives influence the others and create avenues for skepticism, to the detriment of certitude.

## **V. PROSPECTS AND PERSPECTIVES OF DIVINATION IN RELATION TO WITCHCRAFT**

The dilemma or puzzle enveloping the problematic of divination and witchcraft in the face of certitude and skepticism demands stringent attention; symptomatic of possible prospects and perspectives. Consequently, this section comprises an amelioration of tenets; aimed at limiting certitude challenges and eliminating skepticism. This grants a broader spectrum of the relevance of these processes of knowledge acquisition, void of epistemic prejudices or bias. A thorough examination of processes and techniques in divination reveals rich elements for knowledge acquisition. This is essential for progress of epistemological contentions in African thought; connecting to B. Blanchard's proposal of "coherence theory" as test for truth facts as appropriate (BLANCHARD B. R., 1965: 139). A strict application of this interpreting divination would lead to the elimination of prejudices and misgivings about divination as a process of knowledge acquisition. Rather than concentrating on limitations, the exploration of the following, gives credence to African epistemological views: quest for explanatory theory and unity in diversity, causal context and common sense, complementary role of common sense, abstraction and analytic implications, puzzling observations and familiar phenomena, theoretical models and foundational belief patterns, cognition and para-psychological concerns.

### **5.1 QUEST FOR EXPLANATORY THEORY AND UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

African traditional thought apropos divination methods and witchcraft highlights significant features of unity underlying apparent diversity evoking careful study, not quick derogatory and bias conclusions. Hence, challenges of lack of certitude and sceptical conceptions surrounding divination and witchcraft demand a quest involving the elaboration of schemes/entities/forces operating "behind or within" the world of common sense observations as estimated by Robin Horton. Because of limitation in number, he justifiably thinks, "such a theoretical scheme is linked to the world of everyday experience by statements identifying happenings with everyday world" (HORTON Robin, 1998: 181). Perhaps in conjunction, instead of rushing to castigate divination and witchcraft practices as falling short of certainty, the most up-to-date line is that guided common sense gives good reasons for conceding such realities. Therefore, divination/witchcraft conceptions and beliefs, simply request a unity-in-duality uniquely characteristic of relations between the world of common sense and that of theory.

In another measurement, divination and witchcraft conceptualization and methodology need careful consideration of African cosmologies tending towards proliferation; a common tendency in Western cosmology as well, not fast condemnation. Horton reassures:

The same body of modern work gives the lie to the old stereotype of the gods as capricious and irregular in their behaviour. For, it shows that each category of beings has its appointed functions in relation to the world of observable happenings. The gods may sometimes appear capricious to unreflective ordinary man. Nevertheless, for the religious expert charged with the diagnosis of spiritual agencies at work behind observed events, a basic modicum of regularity in their behaviour is the major premise on which his work depends. (HORTON Robin, 1998: 182)

Once clutched, the above-mentioned intellectual functions' application to divination and witchcraft as "puzzles formerly posed by mystical thinking," disappear and objective truth-facts surface. Subsequently, African traditional mystical theories would effortlessly be contextualized; bearing in mind the fact that western epistemic thoughts face comparable sceptical and certainty challenges. This reality unavoidably enables the exploration of causal context and common sense features that could free divination and witchcraft from uncertainty and sceptical accusations.

## **5.2 CAUSAL CONTEXT AND COMMON SENSE**

The bonding between cause and effect are rich grounds for comprehending perspectives and prospects of divination and witchcraft as enveloping aspects of certitude and minimizing scepticism. Following common sense and the reality of causal nexus, it is possible to exonerate divination and witchcraft from uncertainty and ancient sceptics' labels. Despite the fact that causation incorporates discrete joined events, making it highly problematic, there is a justifiable relationship between the first event, the link, and later events. Aforementioned divination and witchcraft contentions in African thought do not vary from other metaphysical causation considerations; basing argument on the fact that this involves relation between two events holding when, given that one occurs, producing or determining and necessitating the second. Thus, in application to divination and witchcraft allegations, facts vindicate certainty stance; given the fact that diviners easily ascertain reserved knowledge in causes and effects, from first second events' occurrences. Simon Blackburn corroborates stating that:

Particular examples of puzzles with causation, quite apart from the general problem of forming any conception of what it is, include how are we to understand the causal interaction between mind and body [a common phenomenon with divination/witchcraft allegations]. How can the present, existing, owe its existence to a past that no longer exists? How is causal order's stability come to be understood here? Is backward causation possible? (BLACKBURN Simon, 2008: 57)

In this connection, causation in divination/witchcraft contexts is wider than common sense suggestions. Diligent study shows common sense avails opportunities relating principal tools of induction and deduction; inference locus in considering antecedents of happenings amongst events adjacent in space and time. Therefore, the root of the hard-dying dictum "like cause, like effects," when carefully applied would justify epistemic certitude of divination.

Granted, this perspective and prospects of divination and witchcraft, preoccupations about natural causes, involving causal link between social relations and occurrences or misfortune postulated, need contextual interpretation. Frequent imploration of western parameters limits possibilities, leading to misjudgements as Horton intimates:

If life in modern industrial society contains sources of mental stress adequate to causing or exacerbating a wide range of sickness, so too does life in traditional village communities. Hence, the need to approach traditional religious theories of the social causation of sickness [divination and witchcraft concerns] with respect and readiness to learn, I suggest; particularly appropriate with regard to intentionally known caused mishaps. (HORTON Robin, 1998: 184)

Thus, divination and witchcraft notions are unique in context; not to be considered in like manner as grand theories of Western epistemologies with notoriously insecure empirical base. It is obvious that contrasting traditional African thought with western scientific thought is misleading; resulting from the fact that traditional thought is no more or less interested in natural causes of things than is the theoretical thought of western sciences. Hence, the complementary role of common sense assists in comprehending prospects and perspectives of divination and witchcraft that enables an overriding of the problematic of certitude and scepticism.

## **5.3 COMPLEMENTARY ROLE OF COMMON SENSE**

Although divination and witchcraft entail numerous certitude challenges and scepticism, hope ensues on grounds of the complementary role of common sense that lends it credence. Daily life for both traditional African and Western conceptualization, have complementary roles in relation to common sense. Definitely, while theories develop and face-out, common sense, such as the reality of divination and witchcraft remains very little changed. Since most theories arise from the world of things and people, ideally, the process of deduction portrays the richness of common sense.

Notwithstanding unreasonable "jump from common sense to mystical thinking," in aspects of divination and witchcraft, discussions on common sense as certitude mediums in Western as well as African thought, are relevant to understanding epistemic concepts. Fieldwork experience in African thought, Horton contends, is convincing to most reporters that certainty especially in relation to the spirit world is attainable. This pilots him to assert:

Sometimes, however, sickness does not respond to treatment, and it becomes evident that specific herbs used do not provide desired results. The native doctor may re-diagnose and try another specific mode. Nevertheless, if this produces no result, suspicion arises that 'there is something else in this sickness.' In other words, the perspective provided by common sense is too limited [needing augmentation]. It is at this stage that a diviner is likely to be called in [may be the native doctor who started the treatment]. (HORTON Robin, 1998: 187)

Deduced from above, common sense attracts the application of ideas pertaining to various spiritual agencies; relating sickness to a wider range of circumstances linked to individual's general social life. Consequently, traditional African relations of common sense and theory apropos divination and witchcraft are



essentially the same as those of Western thought. Therefore, ameliorating drawbacks and careful imploration of common sense as an economic tool, necessitates coping with a range of divination/witchcraft circumstances of daily life. However, evading circumstances leading to “theoretical thinking jump,” circumstances of divination/witchcraft largely become accommodative to causal vision than common sense.

#### **5.4 ABSTRACTION AND ANALYTIC IMPLICATIONS**

Regarding divination and witchcraft, it must be borne in mind that all theory breaks up the unitary objects of common sense into various aspects; placing resulting elements in a wider causal context. Thus, divination and witchcraft allegations initially, must be abstracted, analysed, and re-integrated. Therefore, the uniqueness of methodology in African thought, particularly in relation to divination/witchcraft is considered; since familiarized theoretical schemas of sciences, breaking up the world of common sense things to achieve causal comprehension varies. Recent studies demonstrate the contrary with African cosmologies; Horton and other scholars contending that religious beliefs (divination/witchcraft inclusive), are contextualized in various daily contingencies, that when evoked, bear testimony of similar processes of abstraction, analysis, and reintegration. (HORTON Robin, 1998: 188)

Eze references Fortes’ Web of Kinship defining the manner abstraction and analytic implications are applicable to divination and witchcraft conceptualizations in African thought:

A good example provided by Fortes is his recent work on West African [also most of African worldview] theories of the individual and his relation to society. Old-fashioned West African ethnographers showed the wide distribution of beliefs in what they called ‘multiple souls.’ They found that many West African belief-systems invested the individual with a multiplicity of spiritual agencies. The general impression they gave was one of an unruly fantasy at work [possibly lack of certitude]. (EZE Emmanuel, 1998: 188)

Evidently, the “multiple souls” beliefs of African thought particularly of West Africa are in context when linked to divination and witchcraft, as sources of knowledge acquisition and certainty. This must be placed in context of daily thought and behaviour; dispelling the aura and misconception of fantasy and scepticism. Therefore, most significantly is pronouncement of criticism about elimination of mystical identification of divination/witchcraft practices, blurring or preventing access to certainty, promoting scepticism. Rather than quickly doubting certitude realities, due to previous objections, careful study of puzzling observations and familiar phenomena equally enhances the relevance of divination and witchcraft exploration.

#### **5.5 PUZZLING OBSERVATIONS AND FAMILIAR PHENOMENA**

The human mind becomes constrained in drawing inspiration from analogies between puzzling observations explained in relation to familiar phenomena. Both modern Western and traditional African thought-products demonstrate the commencement of typical theories or conceptions often drawn analogy between the unfamiliar and familiar; next to construction of a model that familiar thought on reality is postulated. Alongside Horton contention, looking at atoms, electrons, and waves (for the west); gods, spirits, and enteleshies (amongst Africans) are relevant, both taking roots in relatively homely everyday experience (HORTON Robin, 1998: 189), so too are divination and witchcraft seen as familiar phenomena.

Consequently, in order that divination and witchcraft gain certitude codification, their familiar phenomena feature should be strongly associated with order and regularity in observers’ minds. This is justified by the fact that theories and concepts should depend on analogy of familiar things followed by the very nature of explanation. Hence, despite the challenges or problematic of certitude and sceptical overview entrenching divination and witchcraft, the circumstances attributing such conceptions of African thought as lacking intrinsic elaboration is to an extent unfounded. Although undocumented, ancient thoughts encompass discursive spirit; for, coherent thought is not necessarily scientific thought. Traditional African thought about divination and witchcraft, if stringently explored, equally displays a high degree of coherence; yet needing further development to evade certitude/sceptical accusations.

Therefore, in its raw and initial state, divination and witchcraft akin to modern concepts or models suffer criticism from inability providing explanatory coverage and certitude, inviting invested diligent study. Rather than scrap them off as lacking in certitude, users and researchers should give it successive modifications that enlarge its scope and coverage. Such modifications surrounding divination and witchcraft conceptions, should rather involve the drawing up of further analogies with phenomena. The scarcity of historical depth available to western researchers in comparison to African counterparts obliges thorough exploitation of direct observations. Thus, careful exploit of divination/witchcraft narratives from ancestors and heroes, and spirit forces, minimizes the problematic of certitude and scepticism.

#### **5.6 PRECOGNITION AND PARA-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

Lastly, prospects and perspectives enhancing divination and witchcraft are deficient without pulling on board precognition and para-psychological concerns. Cognisant of the fact that precognition violates the

principle of causality; effects not preceding causes, its impact in circumstances of divination and witchcraft in African thought deserve due attention, clearing clouds of uncertainty and scepticism. Evidently, occurrences of various supernormal cognition of phenomena as being strange, needing philosophical clarification as Gabbard Praeger contends (PRAEGER Gabbard, 2002: 50), are relevant to divination and witchcraft considerations. Divination and witchcraft allegations are not be warded off as 16<sup>th</sup> century philosophers did, regarding physics as not “fit subject” for philosophical analysis; rejecting Galileo’s telescope as not reliable. Therefore, ameliorating challenges in divination and witchcraft require consideration of two factors: acquaintance with existing images and retrospective reference (existential exponents of the fact that one event in experienced past life is representative). Equally, divination and witchcraft as epistemological concerns necessitate exploration of apprehensive analysis of memory; conscious those past life experiences, related to current images resemble and contain exactness if carefully studied. Thus, connecting sense datum to divination and witchcraft is significant; but attention is essential to eliminate sheer hallucination.

In another axis, considering the import of past sense datum on current realities, abstraction and representation are reliable in crediting and guaranteeing certainty in divination and witchcraft conceptualization. In this regard, awareness of individual experiences of future events void of irrational inferences (dreaming or unconscious), eliminate paranormal experiences, of persons having vague premonition to specific detailed images. Significantly, alertness of the possibility of paranormal experiences is common; attracting the expertise of psychiatrists in evaluating circumstances of divination and witchcraft allegations. Thus, studying divination and witchcraft demand careful attention about supposed psychic phenomena and other claims related to near-death experiences and synchronic issues. Also, lack of robust evidence and discredit to divination and witchcraft, is problematic, with paranormal phenomena accompanying realities needing diligence; transcending boundaries of time, space, and force.

Furthermore, significant altering of divination and witchcraft conceptions to include extra-sensory perception (study of communications without known sensory organs), and psycho-kinesis (study of physical events occurring without involvement of recognized motor organs), for Eze, is mandatory. (EZE Emmanuel, 2022: 43) Indirectly, this improves divination and witchcraft conceptions, which alongside paranormal experiences constitutes the bulk of challenges in African thought. Accordingly, Eze once more highlights the fact that phenomenological parallels (divination and witchcraft experiences inclusive) between parapsychological experiences and psychiatric conditions exist. (EZE Emmanuel, 2022: 44) However, adequate knowledge and training, and detailed evaluation of divination/witchcraft situations both exhibit entirely different conditions; requiring separate management strategies. Careful investigation among independent investigators and scientific research leads to authentication of major divination and witchcraft claims. It suffices mentioning that enough evidence justifies authenticity of phenomena in comprehending the relevance of psychiatry apropos divination and witchcraft epistemic constituents. Reported communications of persons not in contact with, and perception of occurrences of visual or auditory modalities in altered state of consciousness (daydreaming or sleeping off) mostly of close relatives is common in stressful-crisis situations, needing diligent consideration in relation to divination and witchcraft, found in life-threatening circumstances.

## **VI. GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In setting out attesting that divination and witchcraft in African epistemology are problematic vis-à-vis certitude and scepticism, we took into consideration exploration of ramifications or dimensions of knowledge in divination, dimensions of witchcraft and contrasting scenarios, and the convergence of divination and witchcraft. Our research establishes an unquestionable thesis that divination and witchcraft largely, constitute a problem, involving certitude and skepticism challenges. However, hope is not lost as prospects and perspectives of divination and witchcraft highlighted avail the opportunities for further augmentation.

A very pertinent point in the ensuing discussions on the problematic of divination and witchcraft vis-à-vis certitude and scepticism leads to the idea that African epistemology based on accommodation of such concepts, contributes positively to the development of thought. Notwithstanding their limitations, they reveal knowledge, truth, validity, and rationality features, fittingly interpreted by imploring categories/concepts that are more African, provided by Cultural and traditional experiences. However, some minimal recourse to Western conceptual framework is relevant as well.

Finally, it can be asserted without fear of contradiction, that although divination and witchcraft are problematic vis-à-vis certitude and scepticism, they contribute enormously in the process of knowledge acquisition, how and when we know things; and in the field of epistemology, answer the questions requiring relationships between knowledge, truth, belief, reason, evidence, and reliability. A further exploration of highlighted prospects and perspectives of divination and witchcraft enhances the elimination of immediate challenges. However, the problematic of divination and witchcraft vis-à-vis certitude and scepticism in African as well as Western thought need constant attention and study, because of implicit ramifications and indirect connection to other disciplines.

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