

Destiny Unraveled: The Conflict of Fate and Free Will in “Things Fall Apart”

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Chinua Achebe carefully examines the thin philosophical boundary between inevitability and free will in "Things Fall Apart." Indeed, from Okonkwo's perspective, several aspects of his existence appear to have been predetermined by his Gods. Achebe skillfully contradicts this assertion by offering logical justifications for the events of Okonkwo's unfortunate life. Many examples of Igbo ideas on free choice and fate may be found in Chinua Achebe's tragic story of Okonkwo in "Things Fall Apart."

Many examples of Igbo ideas on free choice and fate may be found in Chinua Achebe's tragic story of Okonkwo in "Things Fall Apart." Where, the Igbo's secular and religious lives are intricately entwined.

The Igbo believed in fate and that everything that happened was the result of Chukwu, or God's will; nothing was accidental. The Igbo, however, also held that ancestors, lesser deities, and their own chi, or individual god, also had an impact on people's present-day life. As a result, if a person lived in harmony with his ancestors, minor gods, and finally Chukwu, they would be granted good wealth, good health, and a profusion of offspring. However, if a person lived in discord with the gods, bad luck and an early death would follow. An individual's life was also impacted by free will. This duality of fate versus free will may seem paradoxical to outsiders, but it holds true for these individuals.

Achebe was a result of both the colonising British civilization and the traditional Igbo society. He is thus influenced by two very different philosophies. Okonkwo, the tragic hero, is designed to convey not only the Igbo philosophy of harmony but also an apparently contradictory set of values. The clash between these two opposing ideologies may be symbolised through Achebe's depiction of Okonkwo. One can contend that Okonkwo's experience was caused by his own arrogance and failure to follow social rules. On the other hand, Okonkwo's situation can be viewed as the product of ill fortune and the British's insatiable exploitation. The paradox of human existence is naturally driven by the simultaneous push-pull dynamics of fate and free agency. The novel by Achebe is full of probable motives and interpretations.

As vital as harmony with the spirits was harmony among society's citizens. It's probable that Achebe was outlining one possible Igbo view of how the destructive British colonization "fell apart" their civilization. What portion of their demise was caused by the Igbo's spiritual and secular discord and what portion by fate? Okonkwo's own battle with fate and free will may serve as a metaphor for this issue.

At first, Okonkwo is portrayed as aproud, hardworking, successful warrior. He is described as "clearly cut out for great things". However, despite being friendly and non-offensive, Unoka must have been viewed as a failure because he is the son of a failure. He is a slacker who neglects his family. This is not only shameful, but also potentially fatal. He is reliant on other clan members and must be regarded as failed.

Okonkwo resents being in such humiliation, and his success is a result of his ambition to be everything his father is not—the ideal citizen, in society's eyes. In Umuofia society, social standing and relative wealth are important factors in determining a person's fate. But occasionally, a person can alter their destiny via sheer willpower, perseverance, and a little bit of luck.

One of the major confrontations in "Things Fall Apart" is the fight between Okonkwo's persistence to achieve and fate, who seems to have less tempting things in mind. Okonkwo's will, however, does have a significant impact on how things turn out for him; he decides to kill Ikemefuna with his own hands, a government official, and ultimately, himself.

It is arguable whether or not the unfortunate circumstances in his life are connected to these crimes or if they are merely the outcome of luck or fate. Even before the coming of the European colonizers, Okonkwo seemed headed for self-destruction due to his rigid personality. Okonkwo's tragic end is only hastened by the introduction of a new culture.

Mr. Brown, the first missionary, and Obierika, Okonkwo's close friend, stand in contrast to Okonkwo in this way. The other two are more flexible and open-minded men of intellect, in contrast to Okonkwo, who is a

firm man of action. By first honouring the customs and beliefs of the Igbo and then providing some flexibility in the conversion process, Mr. Brown is able to win over converts.

Obierika is an intelligent, reasonable person like Mr. Brown. In order to defeat the colonizers and the opposition, he opposes using force. Instead, he approaches changing cultural norms and values with an open mind: "Who knows what may happen tomorrow?" he asks in reference to the arrival of outsiders. It's possible that Obierika's openness and adaptability more accurately conveys the essence of Umuofia than Okonkwo's unwavering rigidity.

Readers are repeatedly reminded of this subject throughout the narrative through references to the character's personal god, chi, as well as his ultimate potential and destiny. In his prime, Okonkwo believed that his chi backed up his goals: "When a man says yes, his chi says yes also" (Chapter 4). When things are at their worst, Okonkwo believes his chi has failed him down since it "was not made for great things. Here was a man whose chi said nay despite his own affirmation. A man could not overcome the destiny of his chi." (Chapter 14). At the societal level, the Igbos' lack of a unified self-image and centralised leadership, as well as their weakness in the way they treated parts of their own people — both of which have already been mentioned — signal the inevitable fate of being a target of colonisation by a force keen to exploit its riches.

The moral code of Ani is repeatedly violated by Okonkwo during the course of the book, whether on purpose or not. As a result, the book tends to imply that Okonkwo's ultimate failure was the result of the earth goddess' intentional judgement against him rather than being random or accidental. Okonkwo's destruction should be understood not as terrible disaster but as gracious punishment for persistent moral and religious violation, according to the Igbo theological narrative in which no suffering comes without a reason.

His clansmen also kill his animals and damage his possessions, but not out of hatred, but rather because, and this is important, "it was the justice of the earth goddess" (87). However, Okonkwo should understand that this punishment is only a taste of the far worse fate the goddess has in store for him. He is brutally forced to admit that the clan has actually disintegrated when he kills the court messenger at the second great assembly and discovers that no one will stand by him.

Okonkwo kills himself out of utter, crushing misery. The District Commissioner is informed by a villager that this is the worst possible crime committed against Ani since it is "an abomination for a man to take his own life." An individual who does it will not be buried by the members of his clan since it is an affront against the Earth. Only strangers should touch his body since it is bad.

It's crucial to note that Okonkwo's "annihilation" in the novel brings to an end a complex and nuanced series of ironies. Okonkwo's punishment in the two main episodes brings to mind prior deeds that Ani found objectionable. Ironically, Okonkwo's gun explosion at Ezeudu's funeral (the guy who specifically warned him not to take part in Ikemefuna's murder) reminds us of his failed attempt to kill his second wife with the same weapon.

Similar to how he killed Ikemefuna out of fear of appearing weak when the youngster went to him for assistance, his impetuous killing of the court messenger with his machet, mirrored that act. Furthermore, Okonkwo's suicide and subsequent castration into the Evil Forest appear to be an ironic reenactment of his hated father's demise, which he has spent his entire life attempting to avoid. Furthermore, it appears that Okonkwo's steadfast animosity against everything related with women is ironically coming back to haunt him. He exhibits pathological self-suppression of any traditionally feminine traits, dislikes what he sees as the weakness of men like his father and his son, and expresses absolute contempt for womankind in general.

However, it must also be acknowledged that the idea of Okonkwo's fate being deserved does not hold up completely under careful critical scrutiny. In the instance of his exile, the severity of Okonkwo's sentence for a wholly unintentional action certainly seems to Obierika at least to be supererogatory, just as he finds the Earth's condemnation of twins to be irrational.

Obierika was a man who gave matters some thought. He sat in his obi and wept over the misfortune of his companion after the goddess' will had been carried out. Why should a man endure such agonising suffering for a mistake he didn't mean to make? Though he gave it much thinking, he was unable to come up with a solution. He was simply led into more complicated situations.

However, other elements in the narrative seem to work against seeing Okonkwo's fate in terms of such a planned and deliberate outlook. One could argue that Okonkwo's death had nothing to do with justice or morality at all and was instead the result of random circumstances that happened in an absurd and meaningless universe.

From a purely material standpoint, he can be seen as an accidental casualty of history or as a statistical footnote in the huge transcultural drama of colonization. Alternatively, his demise could be attributed to a chance causal mix of social conditioning and psychological rigidity. But from all of these narratives, Okonkwo's fate seems to have more in common with the random events of human existence than with the administration of divine justice.

Therefore, it may be required to draw the conclusion that the narrative does not favour one worldview over another, but that there are at least two theoretically valid cosmological orientations that are simultaneously present in the text.

That is, the novel simultaneously provides a traditional Igbo religio-cultural viewpoint that claims the universe is fundamentally just and meaningful, as well as a contemporary, scientific outlook that sees the universe as ultimately immaterial in things relating to the specific human destiny.

The conventional and modern worldviews must therefore be seen as equally reasonable and necessary within the setting of the story, since this conflict of viewpoints is, in fact, central to understanding the novel's overall meaning.

Things Fall Apart emerges, as this article hopes to have shown, as an extremely captivating piece of art whose meaning remains fascinatingly complicated and singularly elusive.

This is true regardless of how the topic of the novel's worldview is treated. Achebe's own fairly off-topic remark may include a hint as to the nature of the novel's significance, though it is by no means the final word on the matter. In an article titled "The nature of the individual and his fulfilment," he makes the claim that the fate of not only characters like Okonkwo but also of all people may never be fully understood because we are all, in the end, "subject to non-human forces in the universe - call them God, chance, or what you will; I don't know; I don't know; I don't know; I don't know".

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