

WAR, EVIL AND HUMAN NATURE IN AUGUSTINE: IMPLICATION FOR AFRICA

Barnabas Obiora Idoko, Ph.D

Goka Muele Mpigi, Ph.D

Abstract

From the beginning of time, the history of humankind has been the history of wars and preparation for wars. While Europe, the theater of the two World Wars, had borne the greatest devastation arising from human wars, in recent years, Africa has been the scene of horrendous experiences arising from wars. From inter-tribal wars to civil wars, Africa has borne the brunt of wars and economic cost that go with them. Thus, African wars have been of particular interest to social scientists. However, while scholars explore the political causes, consequences and remedies for war in Africa, less attention is given to African ontology of war and how this maybe fueling wars in the continent. Applying the method of hermeneutics, this paper investigates the implication of St. Augustine's concept of war, evil and human nature to the endless wars in Africa. The study discovered that ontologically, Africans see war as noble and engage in it for bravery and patriotism. This is why in Africa warriors are the bravest and most patriotic citizens. Contrary to this glorified view of war, Augustine sees war as evil and the result of the fallen nature of man. For Augustine, war whenever it is chosen as a last resort and the lesser of two evils, it must be wagged with melancholy, as a burden which the wise man must bear for greater good. The paper recommended that if applied, this Augustinian view of war as evil and contrary to human nature will help mitigate the frequency of war in Africa and its attendant economic retardation.

Keywords: African, war, just war, communalism, hospitable, community, gods, concept, human nature, warrior.

Introduction

From 1957 when the first independent country emerged in Africa till date, Africa has fought over a hundred wars. Thus, in modern history, the African continent has arguably witnessed more wars in the world than other parts of the world (*Ugwuanyi, 2020, 51, 55*). These wars which have been both inter-state and intra-state wars, sometimes called civil wars, because of the human cost and unmitigated suffering they imposed on the African society, have provoked a lot of scholarly efforts, basically aimed at unraveling their causes and finding the cures.

However, while scholars explore the political causes, consequences and remedies for war in Africa, less attention is given to African ontology of war and how this maybe fueling wars in the continent. In other words, literature that addresses the question of war in Africa has

largely ignored the need to investigate the connection between war, human nature and evil. Indeed, according to Ugwuanyi (2020, 51), apart from recent efforts to address the subject of war in Africa through philosophical research such as Okeja (2019) and Metz (2019) and Lucius Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2018), the majority of the literature is done by historians and not philosophers.

For the historians do not provide alternative to philosophical study on war in African thought as their researches favour their discipline majorly. While Uzoigwe (1974, 1975), Ukpabi (1972, 1974), Crowder (1971), Smaldone (1975) dwell on issues that relate to or derive from war, such as prevention of war, conflict resolution and mediation, Ogot (1972), Ajayi & Smith (1971), and Awe (1973) dwell on the sociological aspects of war in Africa by discussing the nature and type of military organization, the nature of execution of wars, the economy of warfare, the nature of military technology and the goal of warfare in Africa. Similarly, Ukpabi discusses the “types of military organizations” (p. 200, “ effects of the military on traditional societies (p. 294) and “the role of women, slaves and mercenaries in traditional armies” (p. 206).

Therefore, the engagements of these scholars create a gap for a philosophical interrogation which this study sets out to fill. Their efforts favour the application of few ethical principles in relation to war in African thought without paying attention to the metaphysical and epistemological dimensions and how these must have directly or indirectly being influencing both the ethical and the political dimensions.

The paper working within an Augustinian framework, investigates the implication of St. Augustine’s concept of war, evil and human nature to the endless wars in Africa. Particularly, it focuses on how Augustine’s ontology of war and human nature can enable scholars understand what is missing in African scholarship of war and how valuable this contribution can be in the effort to mitigate war in Africa. To realize this objective, the work is structured into three major parts. The first part discusses Augustine’s concepts of human nature, evil and war; African notion of human nature, evil and war is examined in the second part and the third part is an Augustinian critique of African concept of war, the conclusion and recommendations.

Augustinian Concept of Human Nature, Evil and War

Augustine has a glorious view of human nature. He writes that “human nature itself, which is complete in both sexes, has been made in the image of God.” (Augustine, pp350). That man is the image of God has two implications for Augustine. First, Augustine wants to show that beside being a part of the good world created by God human nature is innately good in such a way that radically differentiates man from other creatures. Man shares though in a lesser degree in the innate and absolute goodness of God. Second, in arguing that man is the image of God Augustine is making a point that will make his anthropology radically different not just from that of earlier patristic fathers but also from mainstream Greek philosophy.

In a radical departure from earlier Patristic Fathers who thought that *Imago Dei* should only apply to the Son, Augustine (1992, pp. 351-52) maintains that human soul is a direct image of the Holy Trinity, manifesting a threefold structure in memory, understanding, and will. He dismissed the reference to the Son as subordinate. Furthermore; contrary to mainstream Greek philosophy which identifies reason as the defining essence of man Augustine (2004, pp. 102-103) holds that what is singularly human about human nature is the free will.

It is not so much understanding which constitutes the distinction of man among the animals as it is his being a free agent. Nature commands every animal and the beast obeys. Man feels the same impetus but he realizes that he is free to acquiesce or resist. And it is above all in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is shown.

A little after Augustine provides further evidence on this: “To prevent man from being wicked was it necessary to limit him to the instinct and make him a beast? No God of my soul, I shall never reproach You for having made him in Your image so that I can be free and good and happy like You.” Subsequently he tells us that the free will is that aspect of the human being that makes each one of us akin to God so that “I can sense him in me in part through the sentiment of freedom.”

Besides the intellectual and volitional elements of the soul Augustine identifies the third element which he calls desire or *caritas* (love). *Caritas* is the part of the soul that moves man to love or desire other things. Two ways of loving are especially important for Augustine: what he calls “use,” and “enjoyment.” To enjoy something is to love it for its own sake; he contrasts this with regarding things as useful for securing something else (2006, p. 235.) Something that is worthy of being loved entirely for its own sake is the sort of thing that is

capable of conferring true happiness (1972, 235). Its secure possession brings about the quiescence of desire. Only God is worthy of being loved in this way and, as Augustine famously says to God in the first paragraph of his *Confessions*, “our hearts find no peace until they rest in you” (1979, 235).

On the other hand, no creature, whether animate or inanimate, ought to be loved entirely for its own sake; no created good can completely quiet the appetites and confer the happiness and peace that the enjoyment of God can bring. Perfect justice, Augustine thinks, would consist in an enduring disposition to love objects, including God, according to their worth. This would mean the subordination of the body to the soul, the irrational part of the soul to the rational part and the overall subordination of man to God. This perfect harmony of loving things according to their merit was the condition God created man. In this state man will only to love God absolutely and loves other things to the extent that they help him to love God. Evil, the condition of humanity since the fall of Adam and Eve, is a willful turning away from God. Here Augustine took great pain to prove that man through the abuse of his free will is solely responsible for the evil in the world.

According to him “what is equal or superior does not make a mind the slave of passion on account of its justice, while what is inferior cannot do this on account of its weakness...nothing makes a mind give way to desire except its own will and free choice” (1955, 22). **To the question on why God should make man free knowing that he would abuse his freedom**, Augustine responded: The proper and intended use of free will is to choose the good. To use free will in any other manner is a perversion... since God had good intentions (which Adam spoiled) God is not to be blamed even for giving humans a will, despite the fact that it may be used for evil.

Now how is all this related to the issue of war? Augustine tells us that the sin of Adam and Eve has caused permanent psychological disarray in the will of man. It introduces disorder into our love so that we give ourselves and the satisfaction of our own desires undue importance, a disorder Augustine associates with the sin of pride. Because of this prideful exaltation of self, the way we love things is at odds with what their nature merits. We are prone to enjoy objects which ought to be used and to use goods which ought to be enjoyed. We are also prone to seek happiness in the possession of things that cannot confer it,

including pleasures of the flesh, transient glory, enduring reputation, and especially, power over others.

Augustine identifies three chief forms of psychological perversion resulting from the sin of Adam: *cupidity*, the lust for possessions; *libido dominandi*, the lust for power; and sexual lust, the abuse of the gift of procreation. While these three can singly or contributively bring about war, the main cause of war is *libido dominandi* which Augustine often identifies simply as *cupidity*. It is that part of the disordered soul that would not rest until it has brought everything to its subjection.

The worst part of the story according to Augustine is that despite the disordered loves that sin causes, man still retains some desire to do what is right. This puts human beings at odds with themselves. It explains why Augustine was so impressed with St. Paul's famous lament "the good that I will to do I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I do." As a consequence of our turning away from God, even the best human lives are beset by inner conflict and conflicts with other people, conflicts evident in even the most intimate human relationships.

In *De civitate Dei* Augustine (1972, 237) seizes on the lust for domination which he says characterizes the Earthly City. There he poses a question which seems an obvious counterpoint to his remark in the *Confessions* that the human heart finds true rest only in God. "But, once established in the minds of the powerful, how," he asks, "can that lust for mastery rest until, by the usual succession of offices, it has reached the highest power?" The answer is that the arrogant do not rest until they have achieved dominion. This restless love for power explains the sway of history's great empires and Rome's hegemony over Augustine's own world. Indeed love and conflicts are central to Augustine's discussions of politics. Augustine's identification of self-love which defines one of the cities with one of the driving forces in political history suggests that history unfolds as a result of a contest between the warring desires in man.

Augustine (1972, 239) still believes that human beings never lose their desire for peace. Indeed, he implies, we crave for peace. But the psychological disorder which is symptomatic of our sinfulness makes it difficult for us to live in peace with ourselves and others. We are so beset and torn apart by our divided will that conflict cannot be entirely avoided. In fact Augustine sees war as lamentable but inevitable consequence of sin. He thinks the human condition has become so terrible after the fall that man has lost the capacity to live in peace

with others without the aid of divine providence. He rebuked Pelagius who thought that unaided free will gives man the power to start over arguing that “Since man could fall by free choice he could not arise again by exercise of the will alone. No man can be freed from evil except by the grace of God” (Augustine, 2006).

War and Evil

The relationship between Augustine’s idea on war and his notion of evil has been an issue among scholars. Scholars such as T. Johnson (Johnson, 2013, 176) and G. Weigel (2013) are sure that Augustine did not see war as evil. War for Augustine on their account, is an intrinsic part of our fallen world which could be used for good or evil depending on the circumstances. On this Johnson writes:

The assumption that war is evil] differs significantly from how the use of force is regarded in the classical just war tradition, where it is morally neutral in itself but may be good or evil depending on circumstances. When used by someone in a position of sovereign authority to protect the common good by restoring or establishing justice with the end of creating peace, armed force was understood as an instrument of positive good; when it was understood as evil, it was because one or more of these necessary factors was lacking.

Similarly Weigel argues:

Since St. Augustine of Hippo, just-war thinking has been based on the classic moral judgment that legitimate public authorities have the moral obligation to pursue justice, even at risk to themselves and those for whom they are responsible. Therefore, contrary to modern sensibilities, which often assume that all uses of force are wrong, a just-war can be, in principle — despite its obvious horrors, from which we should recoil — an act of *charity* in pursuit of justice.

Some scholars (Herling, L. 2006; Long, A. 2014; & Shepherd, V. 2014) however have refused to endorse this position. Augustine in their own view sees war as evil but insists that injustice and oppression cannot be allowed to roam unchecked. Thus war when used to maintain peace and restore justice is for Augustine according to these theorists the lesser of evils. Herling (2006) captures the point:

For Augustine War can be justified within a broader providential order according to the logic of "antithesis": it is a negative force that can be justified if it responds to injustice, promoting the right kind of concord among human beings drawing them towards the ultimate peace promoted by Christianity.

The import of resolving this debate in our quest for nonviolent understanding of Augustine's just war theory can hardly be overstated. Basically, it will help us to determine whether the claim that peace can be restored through war is possible within Augustine's ontology of peace. Meanwhile, we shall for the mean time concentrate on rebutting the claim that Augustine sees war as morally neutral. The counter-claim—that war is the lesser of evils will be addressed cumulatively as the remaining section of this article unfold.

In approaching Augustine's (1997, 338) account of evil, one ought not to begin with his thoughts on the perversion of created being, but rather with his insistence on created being's intrinsic dignity. "We should recognize", writes Augustine in a typical formulation, "that everything is good which in any degree has being, because it derives from him who has being in no degree at all, but is simply He Is." "Anything that exists is good insofar as it exists" is axiomatic for Augustine after his conversion to Platonism, yet we must not miss how he adapts this Platonist ontology to the Christian doctrine, specifically the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*: "God supremely exists, and therefore he is the author of every existence; nothing could exist in any way, if it had not been created by him" (1972, 477).

Augustine knows that this entails a rejection of a whole host of rival accounts of creation. The anti-Manichean implications are most relevant here, for if everything that has being is good insofar as it has being, then there can be no substantiality, no nature, to evil. Whatever the defect of evil, it cannot be a created defect. Augustine (1997, 132) says: "Everything that exists is good and so evil, the source of which I was seeking, cannot be a substance, because if it were, it would be good." The logic here is quite simple: God is the creator of everything that exists; He did not create evil because He is absolutely good, evil therefore does not exist.

However, Augustine is aware that denying existence to evil does not provide satisfactory explanation. Man knows from experience that evil is real. So the first question is not

whether evil is created but what it really is. It is this awareness that led him to offer what has become his basic solution to the problem. He submits that “There is no efficient cause for evil, it is a deficiency, a falling away from what is: seeking the cause is like trying to see darkness or to hear silence” (Idoko,2021). The text just cited comes from one of the most difficult passages in *The City of God*. To make sense of it we need to go to Plato whose notion of evil actually inspired the text.

Recall that Plato has a mechanistic view of the universe according to which every created being has a space or a role assigned to it by nature. Plato (1997, *Laws*, 713c/d) writes:

Everything has its assigned place within the structure of things; everybody has his place within the whole social structure; everyone feels that his place is the proper, the ‘natural’ place, assigned to him by the forces which rule the world; everyone knows his place.

Thus in their natural state according to Plato, created beings enjoy a high degree of order and regularity. In the *Republic* he tells us about the Golden Age of the Greek State when things were still as they were made by the gods. “Men of the time had no need for laws or rules, everyone did the right thing and immorality was absent” (*Plato, Republic*, 544c). Subsequently he intimates us that “...the gods are patriarchs and men are descendants of the gods and shared originally in their perfection” (*Plato, Laws*, 713c/d). In many ways Plato views the history of the Greek States as a progressive decline from this original perfection of the Golden Age of Cronos the father of Zeus. What Plato is driving at here is that order is divine, while disorder is evil. That is why he spent his entire life searching for the perfect forms.

Evil for Plato therefore is not a thing but the abandonment of the roles that nature assigned to creatures. His position on this is made clearer in the *Republic* where he sees justice as doing what one is best suited for by nature. Conversely injustice means heedlessness. The fall of man and the decline of the ideal state from the rule of the philosopher king to tyranny are both explained by Plato as a refusal to live according to nature:

Hence rulers will be appointed who are not altogether fit for their task as guardians; namely to watch, and to test, the metals in the races: gold and silver and bronze and iron. So iron will mingle with silver and bronze with gold and from this mixture, Variation will be born and absurd Irregularity; and whenever these are born they will beget Strife and Hostility. And this is how we must describe the ancestry and birth of Dissension, wherever she

arises. For racial degeneration explains the origin of disunion in the ruling class, and with it the origin of all historical development. The internal disunion of human nature the schism of the soul leads to the schism of the ruling class. And class war, is the father and promoter of all change, and of the history of man, which is nothing but the history of the breakdown of society (Plato, Republic, 591a).

What we are laboring to communicate here is that Plato sees evil as disorder, a conscious and voluntary motion of rational beings away from created order; a kind of rebellion against the order and regularity in nature.

Augustine shares this Platonic mechanistic conception of the world. He believes that God in creation ordered created beings to exist in a predetermined just concord within themselves, with one another and above all with God who is the beginning and the end of all beings. Here Augustine's metaphor of creation is that of a divine 'governor' who infused creation with perfect order and regularity just as does a mechanical or electronic governor, to maintain homeostasis.

Thus like Plato, Augustine's vision of justice is that of perfect natural concord. The tranquility of just harmony exhibited by beings when they function as God ordered them. For Augustine then, evil is not a thing, it is a disorder; a deliberate act aimed at undermining the order established by divine intelligence.

As we noted in the introduction of this article, the created order of the universe according to Augustine is peace. It then follows that war which is disorder or the negation of peace cannot be anything but evil. The mistake of Johnson and others who insist that war is not evil is that they usually focus on violence. So that if the violence of war can be controlled as they think it can, then war is no longer evil. But this is hardly the case. War is evil not because it is a form of violence. It is evil because it is a disorder; a deviation from peace which Augustine insists is the order of the universe.

As cogent as our present attempt to show that war is evil might appear there is still the need to investigate the root of the claim that war is morally neutral in Augustine. This claim is usually anchored on the following assertion of Augustine (1972, 6) in the *City of God*

God's providence constantly uses war to correct and chasten the corrupt morals of mankind, as it also uses such afflictions to train men in a

righteous and laudable way of life, removing to a better state those whose life is approved, or else keeping them in this world for further service.

This quotation at first sight appears to mean that warfare is both a learning experience and a divine control mechanism. Subsequent statements by Augustine (1972, 216-217) would seem to confirm this reading:

War simultaneously chastens and teaches, and thus operates positively and negatively. If one dies in battle, that bestows the reward of instant access to a better world; survival on the other hand means that one is retained by God for further training and service.... Since it rests with the decision of God in his just judgment and mercy either to afflict or console mankind, so that some wars come to an end more speedily, others more slowly.

Now to argue as the texts under consideration seem to assume that God uses war to chastise or correct human mistake would imply that war is neutral and therefore created by God. However, this line of reasoning is not Augustinian. God for Augustine does not create what is neutral. Augustine (1972, 473) calls him "Goodness Himself." As such His creatures are good since they flow directly from his being. War from this consideration is either good or evil but it cannot be good because it is already a negation, it is therefore evil.

A better reading of the passage will be realized if we appreciate the difficulty Augustine found himself as he tries to navigate the dilemma of exonerating God from responsibility for evil and at the same time maintain his supremacy over creatures. Thus if war though evil occurs in a world where God controls everything, war cannot but come under the providence of God. Augustine says: "It is God ultimately who controls and guides the outcome of all wars according to his pleasure. God also determines the duration of wars; some are quickly over while others are prolonged." Apparent in this quotation is the age long Augustinian problem of predestination. For if God knows and predetermines every event before it happens how can we say that man is free and therefore responsible for his actions? More importantly, how do we even exonerate God from evil since he knows and determines every event?

An Augustinian response to these questions would be that God's foreknowledge does not preclude human freedom. "When you remember past events you do not compel them to have happened, and in the same way God does not compel future events to happen by His foreknowledge of them" (1955, 11) To be consistently Augustinian, the same reply should go for the dichotomy between war and evil. God may guide the outcome of wars and even

determine their duration but war is still evil because God's providence and foreknowledge does not coerce the free will of men.

This line of reasoning also leads Augustine (1972, 515) to insist that even poison, has its purposes and death itself though evil, has its place when seen in the light of divine providence.

Thus death, the violent sundering of the soul in the body, is not good for anyone. And yet within a wider frame, death finds its justification: it becomes the glory of those who are reborn and sometimes, if the death is pious and righteous one ensures that there is no sin to be recompensed.

In other words, though Augustine sees war as evil, his overriding interest in maintaining the supremacy of God would not allow him to grant that war can occur without God's foreknowledge and control. To reason otherwise would be to make God abdicate his supremacy; a thing unthinkable for Augustine.

In sum, the most important point we can take from Augustine here is that contrary to the assumption of most modern just war theorists God does not positively use evil (war) to actualize good. To do that will make him either directly responsible for evil or to violate human free will which will also make him indirectly responsible for evil. Rather what Augustine argues with regards to war and evil is that God actualizes his purpose in spite of evil. He does not allow evil to compromise his plans for the world.

African Concept of Human Nature, Evil and War

Generally, African worldview sees human nature as decidedly communalistic. In his "*Bantu Philosophy*" Placide Tempels (1959, p. 100) expound this teaching contending that for the Bantu unlike in West, *muntu* (man) is not divided into body and soul but is defined in terms of relationships. Tempels adds that "the living *muntu* is in relation of being with God, with his clan brethren, with his family and with his descendants." According to him "Bantu Psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationships with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate force around it." This shows that Africans do not live individualistic life like the Westerners.

Elaborating on the moral dimension of this communalistic understanding of human nature, Tempels claims that for the Bantu one becomes a person by performing worthy acts in the community or by fulfilling social obligations. He writes:

It is always to accord with the conception of force that the Baluba speak of *Muntu mutupu* to indicate a man of middling importance devoid of real force: while the *Muntu mukulumpe* indicates the powerful man who has his part to take in the community. The word *muntu* inherently includes an idea of excellence or plenitude. And thus the Baluba will speak of '*ke muntu po*' "this is not a *muntu*" of a man who behaves unworthily (p. 101).

Mbiti (1997, p. 106) also expounds the view that it is within the community that the African finds meaning:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society. These rites continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. The final stage is reached when he dies and even then he is ritually incorporated into the wider family of both the dead and the living.

Thus, Mbiti thinks the individual's links to the community are of such an enduring nature that they can't be separated from her own existence. The community also has a role in ensuring that the individual is indeed transformed into a real person. For Mbiti, biological birth alone is not enough. There has to be some induction into all the stages that he calls 'corporate existence', and an individual cannot do that induction on her own, she requires the assistance of her fellow human beings in her community to attain that existence. "It is a deeply religious transaction. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people." (1997,107).

The emphasis that Mbiti frequently points out is that the individual is never alone. She is a communal being who finds herself in a community of people who share with her agonies and joys. Mbiti said when the individual suffers she will not be alone, and when she marries her

kinsmen are there to celebrate with her, even the children that she bears are never just hers alone but belong to the whole community. The place of the individual in the community is a strong membership of that community which is constitutive of her identity and governs the way she leads her life. One cannot think of the individual without thinking of the community. The symbiotic relationship that exists between the individual and the community is inseparable and neither can do without the other. It appears as if it would actually become incoherent to speak of either without speaking of the other as this quote from Mbiti will show: “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.” The underlining point here is that Africans understand human nature as communally oriented and man as a being-with-others whose humanity is judged incrementally according to the way he relates to his community.

If man is communally oriented by nature and actualizes himself within the context of the community, evil for the African, in this context, entails anything that works against the community (Ugwuanyi, 2020, 56). Obviously, African understanding of human nature which is hospitable and which has the highest regard for human life, is diametrically opposed to war, especially when war is understood as the destruction of human life and the sources of his livelihood. Based on this, scholars such as (Ugwuanyi, 2020, 56) have erroneously argued that African ontology is opposed to war. According to him:

In relation to this work, the crucial issue is to explore the extent to which a worldview that harbours these principles and values has a strong disposition towards the principle of war; that is, the extent to which it can be argued that the worldview of Africans has some basic inducements that could promote war. I submit that a worldview that harbours these principles would largely seek for principles that would lead to peace rather than those that would lead to war in the sense that war negates the moral and social demands of these principles. Indeed, none of these outlined values and principles can be promoted by war or can be held to be pro-war.

The error here is that Ugwuanyi and others who subscribe that African ontology is opposed to war have failed to make reference to African lived experience while interpreting its ontology of war. Basically, Africans fight wars to protect and promote these values which Ugwuanyi feels should ordinarily be an incentive against going to war. In other words, because of

Africa's high regard for community and brotherhood, Africans easily resort to wars to safeguard and protect these values.

That African ontology promotes war can easily be in the imageries which Africans attach to the gods and warriors who execute wars in Africa. For instance, speaking about the gods and the roles they play in wars, (Ali Mazrui 1979: 52 cited in *Ugwuanyi, 2020, 56*) the renowned African scholar submits that "the gods of Africans were majorly gods of war hence the ruthlessness of war in Africa." Thus, the imageries of the gods of wars in Africa are presented in glorious terms. They are the most feared and the most invoked. The place of reverence of *Amadioha* in Igbo land and *Sango* in Yoruba land as gods of wars speaks volumes on how these two African cultures understood and approach wars. Though these two gods are not the highest deities in these lands, the frequency of their invocation and their popularities in the two cultures shows that Africa traditionally almost worshiped war.

The same type of reverence and hero worship given to the gods of war are also accorded to warriors. This is why in typical traditional African societies, these warriors are giving the highest of titles and in most societies the warriors are also kings because they are regarded with the highest esteem based on their achievements in wars. In some societies, like the Igbo traditional societies for example, the priests of the gods of wars also assumes the positions of leadership and the deities themselves are seen as the highest arbiters in the land. In Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1956), *Ulu* the God of war in *Umunaro* was the highest deity in spite of the many deities in the land and the priest of *Ulu, Ezeulu*, though not pronounced stands as the highest human authority in the land.

The point we are trying to make here is that contrary to mainstream scholarship, African ontology, doesn't only promote, but it also celebrates wars. Apparently, this is not the same thing as saying that African ontology is evil or an attempt to refute the claim that Africans are communal, hospitable and celebrate brotherhood. On the contrary, the nucleus of our claim here, is that African hospitality and its celebration of brotherhood is the very reason it promotes wars because these wars are waged to protect the community and its values.

An Augustinian Critique of African Concept of War

Though Augustine did not see war as being outside the reach of morality, he presented war as a lamentable evil which can only be justified by appeal to a greater good. According to him:

The wise man will wage only just wars; as if, mindful that he is human, he would rather lament that he is subject to the necessity of waging just wars. If they were not just, he would not be required to wage them, and thus he would be free of the necessity of war. It is the injustice on the part of the adversary that forces a just war upon the wise man (1972, 862).

Thus, for Augustine, war is not part of God's scheme of things. It is totally opposed to what God wants for humanity, as such fighting any war should do that as though he is under a divine order. Most importantly, the warrior who wages just wars as the last resort is not to be adorned with accolades and titles. He is simply a melancholic soldier who should lament the dirty obligation imposed on him by the evil of the immoral man whose injustice imposes the duty of waging just wars on the wise man.

Contrary to this Augustinian view, the African view glorifies and celebrates wars. In the African view, the gods do not only approve of war but march into battles with their devotees. These gods are the most fearsome, most popular and celebrated of all the gods in Africa. The warriors themselves are celebrated as the wisest and bravest of men. They are given the highest titles in their communities and played the tripartite roles of priests, warriors and kings in some communities. No wonder, Africa has been the land of coups and a land ruled by generals.

Contrasting these two world views, the African view needs to be demythologized or more properly detoxified by the Augustinian view. First of all, Africans need to know that though war may be necessary sometimes because of human perversion and injustice, it is not something to be celebrated and not approved or supported by any 'god'. Second, the celebration and hero worship given to soldiers in Africa is diametrically opposed to an ontology that wants to mitigate the impact of war. Soldiers are doing and making great sacrifices for their communities but by the hero worship they receive, glorifies the dirty job they do. This directly and indirectly promotes violence and war.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work set out to investigate the Augustinian concepts of human nature, evil and war and to see what implication the outcome of such investigation can have for the endless wars in

Africa. In this regard, the work discovered that Augustine has a glorious concept of human nature and sees man as a being created in the image of God. Therefore, for Augustine, war is a consequence of the 'fall' which perverts human nature and imposes on it the desire to harm others. War in this context becomes an obligation imposed on the wise man and must be waged not just with tears but as the last resort.

Opposed to this Augustinian position, the African view celebrates and glorifies wars. The gods of wars are the most feared, revered and celebrated; and warriors receive the highest honour and titles in their countries and communities. The study identifies this African ontology of war as the major incentive that promotes war in the continent. It is therefore, from this background that the work is recommending both a change in mind-set and attitude towards war in Africa. African, both as individuals and collectively should see war as evil that should be rejected and condemned by men of goodwill. There should also be a change of attitude, especially towards warriors (soldiers). Instead of worshiping them as they are worshiped today, they should be treated as bus drivers, teachers, and fishermen; just as any other persons who do their job in the community.

References

- Achebe, C. (1964). *The Arrow of God*. Heinemann: London
- Ajayi, J. F. A. and Smith R. (1964) *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century Ibadan*, Cambridge Press.
- Awe B. (1973) "Militarism and economic Development in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Warfare", *Journal of African History*, 14, 1, pp. 65-77.
- Augustine, (2004). "De Natura et gratia contra Pelagium, XIII". In Joshua Karant, *A Peculiar Faith*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland.
- Augustine. (1972). *The Trinity*. Catholic University of America Press, 1992.
- Augustine. (1972). *City of God*, Trans, Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin Books.
- Augustine. (1997). *Confessions*, Trans, Maria Boulding. New York: Vintage, 1997.
- Augustine. (1955). *De Libero Arbitrio*, 3.4., Trans, Dom Mark Pontifex, (Westminster: Newman Press.
- Augustine. (2006). *Retractationum libri duo*, p. 6, cited in James Miller, "The Abyss of Philosophy: Rousseau's Concept of Freedom" in *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cordeiro-Rodrigues, L. & Singh, D. (2019). *Comparative Just War Theory. An Introduction to International Perspectives*, London, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Crowder, M. Ed. (1971). *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation*, London, Hutchinson.
- Herling, L. (2013). "Machedicy, Or Just War Theory in an Age of Terror", *International Journal on Philosophy, Religion, Politics and Arts*, Vol. 1, Nos 1-2, (Marymount Manhattan College, Fall; Long, A. (2014) "Just War: Augustine, Aquinas, & Today", in A. Walters (ed.) *Augustine's Altruism* (New York: Scout cot; Shepherd, V. (2013). "Prince of Peace, God <http://video.google.com/videoplay?>
- Idoko, B.O. (2021). *The Silence of God perspectives on evil and human suffering*. Doone press Awka, Anambra State.
- Johnson, J. J. (2013). "The Just War Idea: The State of the Question", *Social Philosophy & Policy Foundation*. pp. 15-35.
- Mbiti, J. (1969) *African Religions and Philosophy*, Oxford, Heinemann Educational Books.
- Metz, T. (2019) "An African Theory of Just Causes for War", in Luís Cordeiro- "Rodrigues and Danny Singh (eds.), *Comparative Just War Theory. An Introduction to International Perspectives*, London, Rowman and Littlefield, pp.131-155.
- Ogbo, L. (2020) "Towards an African theory of just war", *Revista de Estudios Africanos*, Número 1, páginas 51-65. <https://doi.org/10.15366/reauam2020.1.003>
- Ogot, B.A. (1972, ed.) *War and Society in Africa. Ten Studies*, London, Frank Cass
- Okeja, Uchenna (2019) "War by Agreement", *Journal of Military Ethics*, 18, 3, pp. 189-203.
- Smaldone, J. P. (1975) *Warfare in Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Tempels, T. (1959). *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine.
- Ukpabi, S. C. (1972) *Military Involvement in African Politics: An Historical Background* New York, Conch Magazine Ltd.
- Ukpabi, S. C. (1974) "The Military in Traditional African Society", *Africa Spectrum*, 9, 2, pp. 200-217.
- Uzoigwe, G. N. (1974) "The Military in Politics in Pre-colonial Africa: A Case Study of the Interlacustrine States of Bunyoro Kitara and Buganda", *Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association*, Chicago, 28-30 December 1974.

Uzoigwe, G. N. (1975) “Pre-colonial Military Studies in Africa”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*”, 13, 3, pp. 469-481.

Weigel, G. (2013). “The Catholic Difference: Getting Just War Straight”,
http://www.zenit.org/english/war/index_archive_war.phtml.