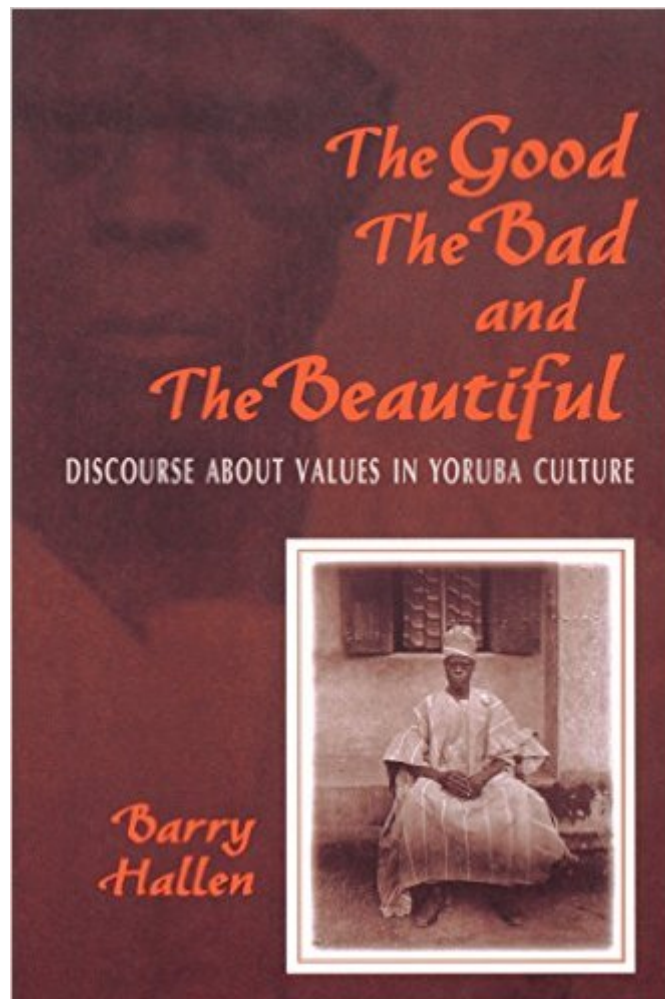


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The Good, The Bad, And The Beautiful: Discourse About Values In Yoruba Culture



Synopsis

The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful
Discourse about Values in Yoruba Culture
Barry Hallen
Reveals everyday language as the key to understanding morals and ethics in Yoruba culture. "This contrasts with any suggestion that in Yoruba or, more generally, African society, moral thinking manifests nothing much more than a supine acquiescence in long established communal values.... Hallen renders a great service to African philosophy." — Kwasi Wiredu
In Yoruba culture, morality and moral values are intimately linked to aesthetics. The purest expression of beauty, at least for human beings, is to possess good moral character. But how is moral character judged? How do actions, and especially words, reveal good moral character in a culture that is still significantly based on oral tradition? In this original and intimate look at Yoruba culture, Barry Hallen asks the Yoruba *onisegun* — the wisest and most accomplished herbalists or traditional healers, individuals justly reputed to be well versed in Yoruba thought and expression — what it means to be good and beautiful. Posed as an outsider wanting to gain understanding of how to speak Yoruba correctly, Hallen engages the *onisegun* and has them explain the subtleties and intricacies of Yoruba language use and the philosophy behind particular word choices. Their instructions reveal a striking and profound depiction of Yoruba aesthetic and ethical thought. The detailed interpretations of everyday language that Hallen supplies challenge prevailing Western views that African thought is nothing more than acquiescence to long-established religious or communal values. The philosophy of ordinary language reveals that moral reflection is indeed individual and that evaluations of action and character take place on the basis of clearly and logically delineated criteria. With the *onisegun* as his guides, Hallen identifies the priorities of Yoruba philosophy and culture through everyday expression and shows that there are rational pathways to both truth and beauty.
Barry Hallen has taught philosophy at the Obafemi Awolowo University (formerly University of Ife) in Nigeria. He is a Fellow at the W. E. B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University and Visiting Professor of Philosophy at Morehouse College. He is coauthor (with J. Olubi Sodipo) of *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*.
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Customer Reviews

This book shares a candid dialogue with some of the spiritual leaders in different Yoruba communities. It does a good job of contextualizing the Yoruba's beliefs as being something other than mere superstition. Good starting point for African philosophy studies.

After having read Mr. Hallen's other work (Knowledge and Belief of Witchcraft) I was interested to read his newest work. I had been eagerly awaiting the release for months and it was worth the wait! Mr. Hallen expertly presents the values of the Yoruba culture as they relate to beauty and goodness. As a student and priest of Yoruba religious system, this book is a valuable addition to my library - an important step forward in my studies and the studies of anyone interested in this profound and sophisticated culture. I think this book is much better than his former volume and would HIGHLY recommend it to anyone who has an interest in learning more about the values and perspectives of the Yoruba people. I extend my thanks to Mr. Hallen, wish him much success and hope that he continues to study and share the world of the Yoruba with the rest of the world.

This book examines the knowledge of the Yoruba people from their own way of expressing it. In order to know a people I think it's important to understand them from their own point of view. First rate scholarship.

I really learnt a lot more about the Yorubas.. Informativeinteresting However what happened to the his co-author (Sodipo) there was no mention of him as he (Hallen) would have learnt a lot from his friend (Sodipo) - a Yoruba man. Could they both write a follow up as it would be even better. Keep it up guys.....

Very insightful. Difficult read for a science person but I learned a lot.

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