

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## The Dialectic between Individuality and Society in Dagnachewu Worku's Novel *Adefirs*: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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### Abstract

This study used a phenomenological approach to examine the dialectic between individuality and society in the Amharic novel, *Adefirs*. The selection criterion for the novel is its inclusion of individuality as its main theme. *Adefirs*, the titular protagonist, as an individual is from the metropolis with advanced education. This later aspect, especially, was the epicenter for his presentation of himself that in the meantime goes astray. His low level of intersubjectivity resulting from his less involvement in the practical world follows a one sided exploration of reality that finally rested in his overused concept; the sub-conscious. *Adefirs*'s sub-world had a dialectical reflexivity when he met with some individuals who are educated and advanced in experience. They can be regarded as occupying an intermediary sub-world between the world *Adefirs* joined and his sub-world. They lived a life mediated by both western education and practical experience. As a result of their relentless debates with *Adefirs*, he began to see beyond his academic horizon. He started to challenge practical impositions from foreigners. It is a sign that *Adefirs* remained antagonistic towards the sub-world of the rural and yet reexamined himself and adopted the view that propagates the value of Ethiopians.

**Keywords:** individuality, society, phenomenology, typification, sub-world

### Background

The study of Amharic Literature went back to the history of the literature itself (Taye & Shiferaw, 2000). Taye's remarkable survey on Amharic literature published since Afework Gebreyesus's prose fiction, *LbbWallad Tarik* can be a good example (Taye, 2000). He considered them as didactic that put them aloof from the dialectical relation between individuality and society. Gerard (1968) also saw a spark of indigenous societal discourses at the center of literary production. However, his scope did not incorporate the

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modernist literatures and the basic themes inherent in them—individuality and society. This tendency is more lagged behind in the study of Amharic literature, despite efforts exerted, for instance, by Fekade (1988), Yonas (1995), and Tewodros (2013).

In order for one to delve into the realms of society and individuality, the modernist novel is very important. More than other art forms, it vividly raises issues in the social context (Noble, 1976). Modernist novel is defined as that of combining the “type” with the “individual”, showing the type in the individual and/or the individual in the type (Wellek, 1956). In approaching the concept of individuality, on the other hand, a selective process is at work. Carlin (2010) considered this processes to be a twofold: one is identifying which works are to be selected, and the second is which characters passages or events are singled out as relevant. This leads the sociologist to adopt a justification to deem a non-sociological text sociologically relevant. Accordingly, in this study, a novel is selected based on the emphasis it gives for individuality and society. As a means to explore the lives of individuals and overall characters, phenomenology helps in providing the basic concepts, method and approach. As a result, phenomenology is used as philosophical and methodological underpinnings.

The characters of individuality in Ethiopian novels began to emerge after the middle of the nineteenth century (Taye, 2009). Dagnachewu Worku's novel, *Adefirs*, is among them and selected purposely for this study as it is rich for phenomenological analysis. Studies has been conducted on *Adefirs*; Fekade (1988), Tewodros (2013), Elizabeth (2022) are the major ones, and these studies have employed a macro level analysis despite their selection of microscopic stances. This, in turn, led them for a sweep generalization about the individual life by regarding it as passive. In order to fill this gap, this study analyzes the form of inter-subjectivity experienced in the individuals' finite province. To this end, it examines the type of sub-universes demonstrated in the individual's typification process, assesses the implication of acting in accord with one's individual life, and identifies the possible and actual 'in order to' and 'because' motives of individual social actions.

## Methods

### Study design and approach

The study design of this study is phenomenology. Understanding lived experiences distinguishes phenomenology as both a philosophy and a method, and the procedure entails examining a small number of subjects over time in order to discover patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Among the types of phenomenology, interpretive phenomenology is employed as it helps to understand and interpret individual's lived experience. As the major proponent of this later tradition Heidegger's (1962) work is crucial for it elevates phenomenology from description which was championed by Husserl to interpretation (hermeneutics). Heidegger's concept of being in the world, fore-structure and the overall circle of hermeneutics are the pillars of interpretive phenomenology. Heidegger even goes in stating phenomenology as not only as a method but as a fundamental form of human existence. This notion of interpretive phenomenology is further developed by Gadamer (2004) who develops Heidegger's notion that provide a philosophical ground for why one's perspective as a researcher is not a bias. He argued that it is rather a necessary instrument to comprehend the 'horizon' of human experience. Data analysis is done inductively, starting with specifics and progressing to larger concepts and the researcher interprets the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2007).

## **Method of data collection**

This study used the novel, Adefirs, as a primary source of data to analyze the dialectic between individuality and society. The method of data collection in this study is document analysis. More specifically, textual analysis is employed as it helps to discern how characters experience phenomena. As the main goal of textual analysis is to organize texts to a meaningful format, targeted text has been selected and organized into themes. Then, the researchers examined words, statements, paragraphs and events selected from the novel.

## **Data analysis strategy**

The primary method of analysis in this study is textual analysis, which is defined as a method centered on the interpretation of textual data or conceptualization processes through texts. As a result, data offered in the novels are evaluated through close reading using the phenomenological framework developed for this study. In the process, the literary materials undergo a sociological reconstruction. The reconstruction is based on familiarization procedures, which present the selected information in considering the study objectives (Carlin, 2010).

## **Ethical considerations**

The investigators are aware of the historical, cultural, and social settings where the novel was produced and read, in order to avoid perpetuating detrimental prejudices or biases in the course of the study. To avoid plagiarism, the researchers carefully distinguish their own analysis and conclusions from those of earlier scholars, with every source properly credited and referenced.

## **Results**

The world of Adefirs – When the theoretical individuality meets the pragmatic society Adefirs (1970) is a well acclaimed novel by Dagnachewu worku. The story revolves around the titular protagonist, Adefirs. The story occurred after Asegash invited Tiso to stay at her home in a rural village, Armania, while doing his business. Tiso is accompanied by his daughter Firewa, his nephew Adefirs, Adefirs's friend Kibret, the brother of Asegash, Woldu and his son. As the name Adefirs (literally translated as 'destabilizer') itself indicated, is meant to go out for a journey to question and consequently change the existing order. Adefirs's life was dominantly given theoretical underpinnings. This state led him to view the world in its idealistic and typical manners. This fact, as his name dictated, enforces him to destabilize the real in search of the ideal, or better to say, detached the real life of individuals in search of something unknown. The following section attempts to depict in detail about how individuality is emerged, its essence, the various sub-worlds appeared as a 'mini' society that affect the emerging individuality.

Parallel sub-worlds as a source of contrasting typification processes

The novel begins with a comparison of two worlds. It shows the stark differences between the setting of the story and other foreign countries—the former being tranquil while the latter's life swiftly trending. Especially, its depiction of Armania laid the foundation that there persists intricate, yet, stable system in the countryside. This system contains the ever co-existence of nature, religion and culture. In the words of the author; 'life flows

and overflows like a brook in a trodden field' (p.6). This overflow is calm as compared to other countries which have a 'fleeting wave of fervor' (p.6). The story soon turned into the world of individuals which also shows their belonging to differing sub-worlds. Whenever any reference appeared for a specific individual, he/she did not come as a blank slate. They revealed themselves as an embodiment of their culture. One hardly distinguishes their voice; which is from their individual whim? And which one is from the society? This is an indication that their typification process is highly sprung from a common ground—the cultural system.

Asegash appeared as the first instance to reflect on the cultural life. Her expression excessively depends on parables that help her as a scheme to vanquish the opponent without losing the cultural ground. It is a means to legitimize the old, no matter how vain it might appear. The manner of a serf upset her as it only shows a simple obedience than a sense of humiliation and subservient. Driven by this fact, she brought God's punishment as a means to instill a sense of guilt in him and argued the serf's sense of pride as the source of his poverty that is seen in his 'torn hand and feet, low standard cloth' (p.8). She considered herself blessed by God and respected by the king because of her humiliation in their face, despite the fact that this sense of humiliation is a way of subjugating him. She supports her argument as 'fear of God as the first wisdom and respecting others above; royals, property owners' (p. 8).

These two worlds are the building blocks for the typification process of the society. This story laid the foundation for later stories in the novel to unfold. Other life worlds emerge on the compound of Asegash. Wordofa and his daughter being servants of Asegash, have their typification process. Her daughter Tsionie and Gorfu, despite sharing the same life world, finally found themselves at odds. Tsionie tested the life of a town and found Gorfu barely changed to fit into the kind of sensibilities she has developed. Tsionie repeatedly showed their difference by stating her stay 'in a city for too long' (p.20) also emphasizes his 'rare movement from the countryside' (p.20).

The story began to hold a different shape when a group of individuals, most of whom are family members, came to Debre Sina village, for court service. It is a clear 'collusion of different altars', urban and rural life, literacy and illiteracy. Asegash sought to use Tsionie as a mediator of the two opposing worlds. She explicitly believes 'men from Addis Ababa like those who act in civilized manner' (p.24). She did not also like the label that 'the daughter of Asegash as a country girl'. (p.24). She sought to 'speak with them in a foreign language' (p.25). Even within each sub-world, one finds the amalgamation of contradictions. Nearby the church, one finds believers of different religions paying homage for a tree overpassing the rules of their religions. The intermingling of the opposing views can be found in many believers. Moreover, as Tiso also stated that the country in general is a manifestation of the unity of worldly and other worldly authorities. That is why it would not appear strange to hear a priest made his entire preaching about unity in its worldly sense. As a result, Adefirs joined a world not as simplistic as what rural areas commonly regarded.

Adefirs's friend, Kibret, being a painter also had a different project other than already known about him (being a realist) and art, in general. This latter aspect was highly acclaimed for church painting. While he was a realist before going to France, he has emerged as a painter that tries to express as he stated the 'emotions captured than a mere physical reality' (p.52). Despite their differences with Adefirs in matters of view, they are in the same realm in their flight from reality.

## The protagonist and his Inter-subjectivity

Adefirs came up with two backgrounds, urbanism which commonly suffices 'civilization' and intellectuality. These aspects of the life world stood in contrast to the rural and the 'illiterate'. Adefirs with urgency to change this later aspect reduced all the problems of the society with his analysis of Lebuse Tela (sub-conscious). He had a chance to know about them as they needed him as a gateway to approach Tiso. The peasants are forced to listen to his rhetoric for the simple reason that he is the relative of the judge. He did not attempt to explore a common frame of reference between him and his audiences. The ones, who came miles to defend themselves, are forced to listen to his 'elevated' speech. He never gave himself the simple privilege for a preliminary assessment of the society he has just joined. His reflexivity lies in his intellectualized memory than understanding of his surroundings. It is a mere recollection of academic writing than a pragmatic assessment of the real. He concealed practical problem by telling them 'not to bother about personal matters' (p.44). He affirms if they have the truth, and 'the truth will liberate them' (p.44). Without giving answers to his former questions and giving any further schedules and concluding remarks, he left his audience in oblivion.

Adefirs's preoccupation with the concept of subconscious was so great that he was not willing to discuss questions and concerns raised by Belay and his friend Kibret. He seemed to long for unconsciously access their sub-conscious. His detachment from reality vividly showed when one sees how his thought pattern unfolds. It is a thought reflected based on his reading than actual experiences. It was by no means a pragmatic search for truth. Belay uttered his despair stating what 'troubled' him and what he talks is 'unmatched' (p.55). Kibret wanted to know 'where would the source of this confused interpretation of life' be? (p.56). His overreliance on intellectuality is also criticized by Tiso, who explicitly underscored the less fruitful attempt that without knowing one's country meaningfully, to forecast based on university education and office orientation. It is a clear warranty that Adefirs's typification process is based on an ideal-typical approach, leaving the practical world aside. Even if one approaches reality based on an ideal approach, they serve as a benchmark to compare it with the real world phenomena and attempt to find if there are deviations. His approach, on the contrary, is a one sided exaggeration; putting his ideal-type as a representation, better to say a misrepresentation of reality.

In a prolonged discussion with Tiso, Adefirs showed a determination to change the society without adequate diagnosis. While both agree on the problems the country faced at different occasions, their solutions are so diverse. While Tiso stood in favor of the old order by giving the king a place as prominent as the country, Adefirs's solution goes to the individual actors and their role in illuminating the country and the king. In this sense, individuals could appear as a potent force for change, yet, their source of energy is the basic dividing line between the two. For Adefirs, they, by no means, identify with the morale of their country for the ultimate change. One can sense here that the inter-subjectivity at play is much better as a result of the fact that these two passed through the same sub-world. Inter-subjectivity, on the other hand, is the basis for a realistic typification process to occur. Their interpretation of the life-world is different as Tiso is now advanced in age and experience.

In the next phase of the story, Adefris encountered someone who is considered the embodiment of culture and religion of the community. He is a priest, and his name is Abba Addisie. Throughout their conversation, one witnesses an utter rejection of each other's position. Especially, Abba Addisie seemed to misrepresent Adefirs's speech as if he represents the atheists. He did not stand against the religious teaching propagated

by the followers. But he was against the establishment that is led by culture laden religious practice than proper teaching. At times, he even seemed more religious when he championed the equality of men, while the priest opposed this notion by giving a simple example that his servants could not stand equal with him and acclaimed some men are more equal than others. Adefirs contested as 'God created men in his image' (p. 100), on the other hand, appeared forgetful of the role culture played in religious practices. These two forces—culture and religion—are the two basic sources for a typification process of an individual.

At one moment he told Tsione without looking at her, 'of all the words I loved, it is refusal that captivates me; they seemed to me soulful' (p.106). He did not explain what kind of refusal are these nor did he mean the rejection of all obedience. But one can be sure from his overall conversation; he opts to bring issues that are contesting and persisted in his negation. Whenever he talks, he brings tradition at the front and attacks it mercilessly. He, even, showed support for the movements of that time because they center their argument based on their antagonistic view of classes. It seems his individuality get an outlet when he speaks of ideas that differ from the existing one.

Adefirs naturally delves into an elevated form of conversation ignoring the pre-communication setting. What happens to Tsionie is to listen to his words without understanding their meaning. Of all the issues that recurrently came was the issue of sub-consciousness and its relation with marriage in its divisive line between urban and rural. He put his trust much upon the rural and claimed the rural dwellers being the 'hope of Ethiopia' (p.108); however, he worried about the migration of the young to urban centers as it reduces the fertility rate of the rural area. While he avowedly speaks the prime importance of the rural, his continual dismissal of its life-world brings doubt that he meant what he said.

Adefirs, for the first time, began to converse intimately with Roman. She, even, told him her secret about her plan to disappear amidst a wedding preparation. But soon, it turned out his attempt for a mere joke by touching her changed into a wild uproar on her part. This made all those who heard the shout shocked. But he began to talk as if it was a kind of music that suddenly broke out. He did not understand what a girl's shout mean while approached by a man. Asegash, listening to him, was sure that he needs some intervention for his mental well-being. His spontaneity in his actions posed doubt on his mental health. Even though this suspicion did not go far, it was a sign that he was classified as a stranger for their cultural world.

While going for hunting, Adefirs spoke with Tsionie and justified why he held a gun. He said it helps him know whether it was he who successfully tamed his wild instinct, or it was the education that did as it is supposed to. Yet, he soon revealed himself by passionately talking about the good feeling accompanied in killing a wild animal. Tsionie, however, contested that he did not have the heart as cold as that. Forgetting the context, he soon explained it away; even back in the city they considered him selfish. He tried to prove to her that he was not that selfish by taking his conversation with Abba Yohannes as an instance. While he persisted in the argument and believed he had won it, he felt that Abba Yohannes considered him selfish. If selfishness includes this, he showed every possible tendency to win any debate. His first typification process rested on how he exercised his intellectuality despite his circumstances. It, soon, is affected by their label. He had a great tendency to win people's mind than their heart. This propensity to win responded in fierce resistance on the other side that wrongly dubbed him selfish. In spite of his abhorrence to be labeled as selfish, he is much more repulsive to the label 'man of the time, man of the world' (p.129). It is a sign that these terms are misrepresented, for instance, by Abba

Addisie and Abba Yohannes. Otherwise, he expressed the time much better than the old ones, ripe for equality and should not be offended. It is, therefore, the connotation that he despised than the real classification. Both terms, selfishness and man of the time, are wrongly taken by Adefirs, as he directly took the definition from his surrounding which is the outgrowth of the priests detest for his argument. His definition of himself, as a result, stemmed from his flight from others definition. His defiance against others action let his lebuse tela' (the sub-conscious)—to be influenced unwittingly, as the subconscious plays involuntarily.

Tsionie appeared as a test for Adefris's self-conception. She intrigued him with an innocence of a child which could force every sane person to subdue. She touched the core of his sentiment by mentioning his failure to hit his target in his hunting; this in turn, affected both of them and redirected the conversation in a different stream. Her sentimentality emerged as a way to soothe him. But it also exposed another part of him which appeared vulnerable. It results from Tsionie's mentioning of the drops of his tears while he was listening to her playing the music. Till then they were labeled each other proud, but it soon began to melt on the face of an impulsive conversation they endured. Especially, Adefris with all his self-presentation began to crumble in the trying situation Tsionie put him. She explained his situation as:

You men are ridiculous. You try to hide the languages of your heart. I don't know what embarrasses you. You should, rather, be ashamed of relentlessly philosophizing about religion, church and the king. You men have a weird pride (p. 138).

All the 'philosophizing' stopped for a moment in the mind of Adefirs when he totally immersed in a different kind of desire toward Tsionie. His self-identification held a different stream when touched by a peculiar sentiment. It has a tendency to break away from his old ways.

Adefirs had two sub-worlds □ the real and the fantastic. The reality like world of him is attacked by his ideal world, and the fantasy becomes ruined by the reality. One of the instances when this dream like scenario turned into a brute reality is when he found himself beaten and tightened fast by Wordofa, the father of Roman. He responded in such violence because Roman was engaged and expected to be married soon, and Adefirs also knew this fact. In spite of the advice he gave him for the betterment of his life, Wordofa 'emerged as a beast' (p.150), Adefirs exclaimed, referring to Wordofa. But Woldu reminded Adefirs that his thoughts are nothing for them. It is actually a reminder of the different life worlds they inhabit and their conflicting views of life in general. Conflicts between two views are inevitable, yet, to be resolved in their course of interaction, and it is a common dialectical process. However, Adefirs's way magnifies these conflicts and put him on the face of an enormous force □ the society.

In spite of the 'real' trouble he is in, Adefirs continues to discuss issues which have a 'hyper real' value for a society. Woldu, French educated, brings practical example regarding the pitfalls of the conception of 'égalité, liberté, and fraternité'. Ethiopians, according to him, choose stability and security than liberty in its imposing characteristics. He extends his view that liberty, if tempered according to the established values of the people, is tolerable. What he is against is the tendency to overpower these concepts at the expense of domestic, yet, more viable values. In contrast to Woldu, Adefirs's approach to these concepts is more aggressive imposition of them than a progressive inculcation. He, further, champions the need for sacrifice as a means for a stronghold of a value. The parliament, according to him,

is not effective because of the lack of sacrifices on the side of the people to institute it and its consequent recklessness to account the members of the parliament. In short, Adefirs's affiliation to these principles seemed not pragmatic as it propagates the annihilation of the old. What is more important here is how his individuality was formed. As the external environment played its role in the formation of individuality, Adefirs's external reality is much external than Woldu's. The first's unwavering support goes for the three corner stones of the French revolution *égalité*, *liberté*, and *fraternité*. Woldu framed equivalent value systems for Ethiopians as 'marriage, property and religion'. The conversation in the later section also revealed that Woldu saw Adefirs in a more skeptical way by generalizing the generation itself. He stated:

Even during our youth, we were labeled as arrogant, especially when we were engaged in any argument, we tended to object others ideas, no matter how palatable it was, but yours is much worse (p. 212).

Even in later conversation with Kiberet, Adefirs denied the existence of Ethiopian beauty saying 'there are no such things as Ethiopian beauty. Beauty is simply beauty. It is not determined by place or color; it transcends time' (p.181). As meaning is formed through interaction, Adefirs's interaction with the external environment was at odds. Let alone the local community, Kiberet was also in conflict in finding a common sub-world. His problem in identifying himself with the locals stemmed partly from his typical-ideal approach to local realities. His constant conflict with the value system led him to live in solitary, failing to find congruence in thoughts. His dominant reality is obtained from his journey into the world of books. This detachment becomes more pronounced in the conversation undergone by Asegash and Gorfu. Gorfu even had a bad sentiment towards university students and raised the issue of a father killed his son because of his avowed commitment not to be obedient to the king. This fact also upset Asegash and deemed the action legitimate. It is with this pre-sentiment that they labeled Adefirs. Their later reaction is the extension of this already formed classification. It blurred the real with the unreal. Especially Gorfu's later actions are the result of his unwillingness to see Adefirs as an individual and prefer to grossly put him into that category.

Adefirs, in the meantime, met with Gorfu and spoke with him. While Adefirs posed his questions straight, Gorfu answered discreetly. His overall manner affirmed his prior suppositions. A vivid strain began to develop when the issue of education holds the center of their discussion. While Adefirs expected Gorfu to be regretful of lagging behind in his education, his response surprised Adefirs. He said he pitied those educated men. He began to explain by depicting a scenario where these educated men forced to leave the urban area and started to live in the rural setting. Here, he has listed the difficulty in the life style and also he mentioned the inability of them to shoot a target which seemed too mean considering the context of their discussion. They, soon, compete, and they both excel in hitting the target by their own guns than by the other.

The conflict in values soon emerges when Asegash joined them and greeted by different individuals. Adefirs understated this situation saying 'How on earth this kissing perpetuates till these days?' and explained what he means by this; 'the kissing of the feet, cheeks, stones, crosses, of papers, hands...' (p. 206). His identification process denies a culturally rooted action and prevents him for any proper inter-subjectivity to occur. These actions are a means that enable one for further communication. The denial of these means the closing of any possibility to get into their world.

Adefirs's conversation with Firewa and Abba Yohannes entails his skeptical view of history and religion. On the one hand, he denied the past through his renouncement of historical

figures. On the other hand, saints are questioned based on their nationality as most of them are foreign in origin. He is also against miracles done by these saints. One can see the battle between other worldly explanation and inner worldly denial of miracles. While the first need no proof, the second is hard to prove. Even so, these are the corner stones for any belief system to perpetuate.

Later in his discussion with Tiso, they raised the issue of civilization. Tiso brought a typical example of bees and mosquitos. While they extract from the same flowers, they produce very different products: the first honey while the second poison. Tiso considered the kind of civilization Ethiopia undergoing 'follow the path of mosquitos... the 'search' for what one did not have without knowing what one has 'at stake' (p.227). Western civilization, according to him, is solely focused on impractical education and leaves one into fantasy. This condition, he considers, is pronounced in urban areas. Tiso considered the rural areas are blessed as they are immune from this. Tiso and Woldu appraise the value of the old Ethiopians in protecting various intrusions. Adefirs, on the other hand, singled out what he considered as the benefits of western civilization in expanding public health, education, economy, the ratification of constitution etc. While Tiso and Woldu did not deny the enormous contribution of civilization, they prefer to emphasize on self-analysis and the cultural realms that give an overview of what really lacks and what should be kept intact. In contrast to Adefirs, Woldu gave emphasis on the selective breeding of some aspects. Adefirs soon appeared curious to know what others consider the characteristics of his generation. Woldu gave him his answer:

They say you disrespect your parents, stand against religion, despise authority, detach yourself from family affairs, prone to emotional instability, and propagate an educational system which confuses virtue with vice (p.231).

That said by others, Adefirs asked Woldu what his views are. Woldu despite the negative attitude he developed against the generation, gave himself a relief that they cannot do anything significant as they would become insignificant in number and thought. He thought the borrowed values like 'equality, liberty, and fraternity' dissipates into the air following their real involvement in the actual life. For him, as far as they kept their thoughts within their campus, it would be less harmful, no matter how foreign the values appeared. Here, Woldu is showing the separate sub-universes and the power of one over the other. It seems Adefirs's world is prominent as it has a mouthpiece, but it lack the real influence as it is colliding with a cultural sub-world so deep that incorporate old established institutions and life worlds.

## **Individuality in various sub-worlds**

As one can see from the intricate dialogue between Adefirs and Woldu, there are different sub-worlds Adefirs tended to affiliate with. The first, being included under his generation, can be referred to as university life. It has a contrasting position as compared with the outer world. It is a wider world characterized by its struggle for the perpetuation of the old, the narrower world being the sub-world of Woldu and Tiso. These are educated individuals whose stand can be stated as quasi-change seekers. They are critical of western ideals, if allowed their full encroachment, has the capability to destroy the old established value systems. They are much more driven by the danger western education posed on the spiritual realm of the country. Whenever a desire for change arises, their reference is the overall cultural values of the country. That made them to stand against unexamined inculcation of foreign values. The influence of these individuals on Adefirs

is as enormous as shown in their persistent and long argument and the clear change he starts to develop. They try to drag him into that world of theirs where individuality does not stand in opposition of the existing system. He, on the other hand, tried to prove his individuality by championing new ideals. These are the attributes of modernity directly adopted from western civilization: equality, fraternity and liberty. What was more difficult is these ideals are much more general terms that require a thorough analysis of the society one wants to inculcate into. Besides, it is hard for them to be a measure of one's individual characteristics. Individuality required a real endeavor as the world he joined is predominantly pragmatic. He, as a result, does not have a 'laboratory' to prove the kind of individuality he was looking for. Even if he ever succeeds in doing so, whose ideas are these is the question that put him in constant argument with the world of Tiso and Woldu. In discussing about crime and punishment, for example, Adefirs's preference goes to western criminal code. But Tiso gave much emphasis on nurturing fear of God.

Adefirs's world also emerges as a world of intersection between Tsionie and Gorfu. Their relationship was governed by what George Simmel called dyad (Simmel, 1950). They showed every emotion including conflict to finally resolve by them. But the coming of Adefirs changed this pattern. Tsionie began to compare the two and started to develop a different test which was not there in the world they build with Adefirs. Moreover, Tsionie's avowed admiration and trust for Adefirs instigate a different desire on the part of Gorfu. This pushed Gorfu to seek another role to win back Tsionie. As if the next natural step of her admiration of Adefirs is marriage, Gorfu asked her to marry him. One can be sure that Adefirs's presence accelerated albeit not created the momentum of the two. Their condition afterwards seems delirious. This condition let Gorfu to quickly decide to abduct her, and he did that without hesitation.

While Adefirs met with Woldu and Tiso in their progressive views, the contrasting sub-world lies on the rural sub-world he lately joined. In terms of the idea systems, he had a single idea he appreciated, and so did the inhabitants understand his single rhetoric. As a result, if ever there is a kind of discussion between them, it lasts with a miscommunication. At one time, Adefirs and Firewa went to the house of Woldu. They met with Woldu's wife, Malefia. Adefirs saw some 'fetish' object tied in her body. As if he could erase from her mind what he considered a superstition, he started to interrogate her. Following his consecutive questions against her, the discussion turned to Firewa. She seriously questioned his approach in objecting people's beliefs. In spite of his rudeness, Malefia begged him to have some food. Her manner tells the dear meaning of one having food in one's home. But he did not want to see this and dismissed her invitation immediately to leave her with an utter discontent. He never imagined the kind of hurt he could cause because of this single, yet, significant repulse. It was hard for Malefia to see a man sending derogatory terms towards her belief, and it was even harder to see him refuse to eat anything.

## **Transformation of individuality**

Adefirs's last serious talk regarding Ethiopia, its leaders, and her future was with Tiso. As always, Adefirs started with a skeptical view of what really constitutes Ethiopia itself and considered the new Ethiopia is not the continuation of the old. Tiso, on the other hand, firmly argued the new Ethiopia could claim its former attributes. Adefirs for the first time gave way for others ideas stating 'As you gave me hope, it seems you won me' (p.291). One meets a different Adefirs after this incident. There comes a setting that he talked about his encounter with an expatriate. A grade eight student asked Adefirs to correct his English to be published at the 'Ethiopian herald', and he did the language editing but the student went to a native speaker and asked him the same. But this time the foreigner erased the

whole idea of the student and replaced it with his own. Adefirs thought to himself 'They (the white) always give no credit for our ideas and force us to accept their own' (p.295).

Adefirs's overall speech is changed as if it is Tiso or Woldu is speaking. He, even, in his speech recited them as an affirmation to his ideas. He explained the danger in imitating foreigners to the level enslaving one's whole being. Towards the end of the novel, he suddenly changed to champion the value of his country and the bravery of his forefathers. The imagined values of the west faced an imminent challenge when he met the real destabilizers. His longing for the external world ended seeing the arrogance of a foreigner, and he extended himself in protecting the internal values. It is a journey that dictates from self-delusion to self-discovery.

This incident sends a clear message that whatever our recollection of ideas from different angles of the world, they remain aloof and always give way for the practical aspect of life. In this regard, the contribution of Woldu and Tiso stood tall. As both have already seen the external world, they were very conscious to take things for granted. An instance for this is their determination to defend the value system of their origin which is represented by marriage, property, and home land on the face of a well acclaimed motto of the French revolution 'equality, fraternity and liberty'.

At the end of the story, episodic events controlled the overall scene. Adefirs (destabilizer) has affected the individual life world and the communal one. He, in turn, was affected by it to the level of costing his own life. At first sight, he appeared to be the reason for the failure of two marriages. It was against his belief that the rural people should sustain their lives in their place and should not migrate to the urban areas. Not only Tsionie and Roman migrated, but also Gorfu shifted his life path as a result of the enmity he developed against Adefirs. The life of Tsionie, particularly, was left in oblivion, forsaken by her love and haunted by Gorfu. Despite this unbearable and unexplainable trauma, her condition appeared more prone to misrepresentation. Two individuals, Woldu and Abba Yohannes, try to impose their own ideals disregarding her longing.

## **The implications of following one's life path**

Adefirs throughout his stay at Armania, was intensely involved in the lives of each individual he came across. At first, he appeared to be someone who listens only his own voice and wanted to see his reflection in others too. In actual sense, he was also a reflection of his learning. But as time went by and his argument with such figures as Tiso and Woldu augmented, his sense of imposition became moderate and the search for meaning in their real, practical sense became salient. Had these individuals not been there, his first appearance would have lasted. In short, with their tireless argument, he was transformed from his idealistic orientation to a more pragmatic one.

As the story advances towards its end, one yearns for the real causes of Adefirs's tragic end. Did real incidents lead to his death? After all, what is real in this sense? Adefirs and Gorfu had a different and, at times, conflicting sub-worlds. Gorfu, from the outset, felt there was something wrong with the world of Adefirs, his life world. This thought has remained captivating the likes of Gorfu even after the death of Adefirs. A solider repeatedly said 'one cannot detach life and death... nonsense preaching of knowledge...' (p.327). Adefirs, on the other hand did not know this attitude and consequently did nothing to neutralize it. If a sheer attempt was undertaken to know the real condition, he could have avoided the extraordinary incidence he finally faced. Not only that, he would have reduced the possibility that both Roman and Tsionie's indulgence. His unrealistic approach to real individuals and real community manifested itself in pseudo-real and pseudo-ideal

reactions of Tsionie and Roman. They abandoned their homes, hardly understanding the life path of Adefirs.

One could conclude Adefirs's journey as follows. His entire life was dictated by his theoretical orientation. One barely finds either in flash back or technical appropriation by the author about his background life-world except something about his mother. In either case, Adefirs's life was dominantly given theoretical underpinnings. This state led him to view the world in its idealistic and typical manners. This fact as his name implies enabled him to destabilize the real in search of the ideal or better to say detached the real life of individuals in search of something unknown. An instance can be drawn when Tsionie told him that Gorfu did not match with her sub-conscious. This has happened at the end of the story, and Adefirs sensed his wrong preaching, denied this presupposition that it is not for her to know given her immaturity. It is against his continual attempt to instill in her this ideal. While the theoretical Adefirs did that the practical Adefirs prevented her from delving into oblivion. While the individual's life has multifaceted actions and encounters, one can still generally classify these based on the basic attributes of the individual involved.

### **The possible and actual 'in order' to and 'because' motives**

The graphic description below takes the main attributes of Adefirs; being an educated, urban and change seeker to envision his possible and actual motives. In doing so, the background information of Adefirs, no matter how scanty, helps a lot. He is a university student who is supposed to be rational. As a result, his action would be motivated by intentionality, that is to say, he would redirect his consciousness into the world he encounters both in their appearance and essence. His attitude is expected to form based on the thorough understanding of the overall interaction process. This process involves bracketing as a strategy whereby suspending of the prior assumptions would be the natural course.

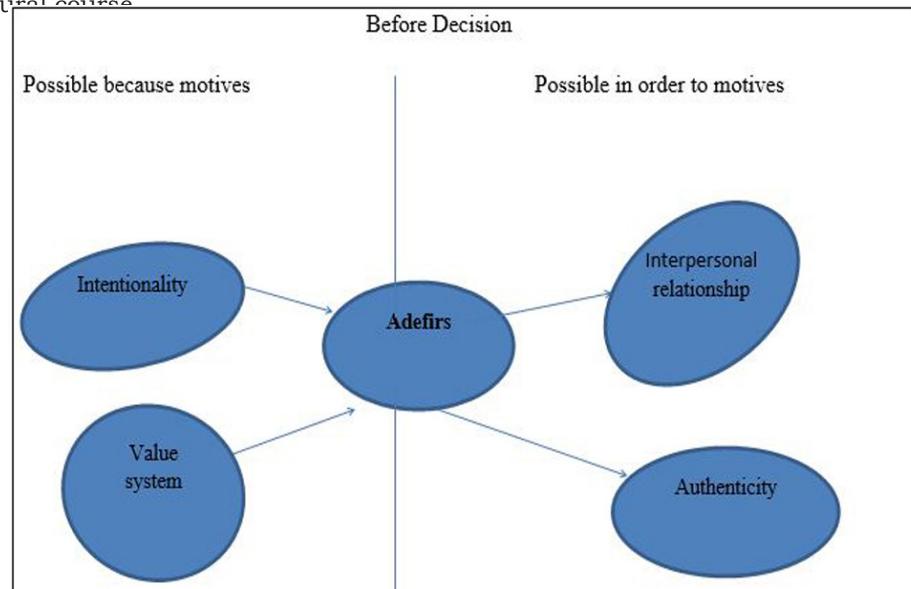


Figure 1. Possible motives

As it is seen above the overall appearance of Adefirs and his deeds, the possible motives of Adefirs is in conflict with his actual motives. Below is depicted the actual motives of Adefirs.

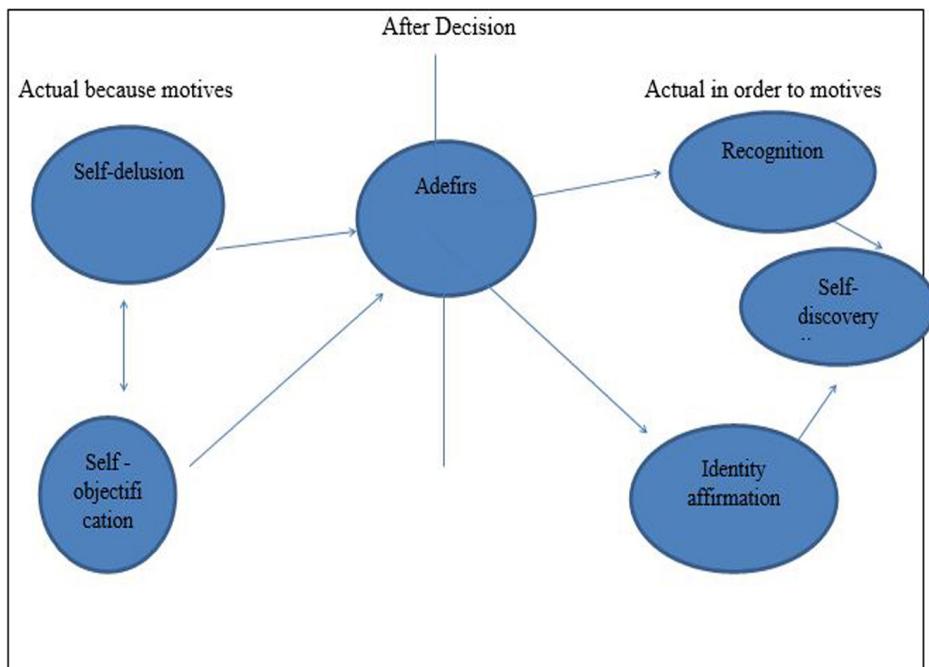


Figure 2. Actual motives

Looking at the progresses and the final culmination of Adefirs's action, one can draw the above diagram. It illustrates how Adefirs underwent a massive transformation in his thought and action. It occurred after a long theoretical journey that detaches him from the community. He was finally transformed by the continual debate with Tiso and Woldu. His self- reflexivity finally led him to long for affirmation of his identity, and emerge from self-delusion to self-discovery.

## Discussion

Adefirs reflected his internal world without finding a space in the new sub-world he joined. Adefirs rarely chose the road of inter-subjectivity as a means to enter into the world of the peasants. His stability is not shared by both ego and alter (Schutz, 1962). It is also beyond what is expected in his homestead. It is simply an abstract approach to the real world without even knowing what this real world contains. A grain of inter-subjectivity appeared whenever he encounters Tiso and Woldu. This ultimately changed both his manners and his conception.

Adefirs, as an individual, used theoretical concepts as a means to instill the conception of change and to throw tradition without warranty. More specifically, a far-fetched concept

for the peasants, the sub-conscious, appeared as his prime apparatus. It is a sign that the urban individual intellectualizes her/his relationship with reality, which is now more than ever dependent on the calculability of effects rather than emotional engagement in events and relationships (Simmel, 1971). Teshale (2008) attributed the movement during the mentioned period both to Marxist orientation and the intelligentsia whose source is the tradition of the country. Adefirs, not a Marxist per se, is, however, belonged to the first group who contrarily knew Ethiopia less yet they have the radical thinking to liberate Ethiopia from its 'backwardness' (Teshale, 2008).

Longo (2016) assessed Durkheim and Simmel and considered the former explain modernity as hunting for causal linkages which is not true for Adefirs. But on the other hand, Simmel's detect of the subjective experiences, fragments of the social actor's vision of his own reality coincides what Adefirs longs for. Following Simmel's path in seeing the social actor, his relationship with his group, and the transformation of the individual's experience in response to increased social complexity (Simmel, 2020), we can identify Adefirs living and meeting in two sub-worlds, the rural and urban. But as a reflection of his fragmentation, he is nowhere in his intent and practice. Even his desired end for the society he is preaching is entirely inspired by his western education. However, modernity can only be developed in the metropolis (Simmel, 1971) which is opposite to the setting where Adefirs attempted to instill change.

Fekade's (1988) study focused an elevated form of individuality, the intellectual. This led him to see attributes that are claimed to be the territory of the intellectual. Their personal lives get a second order so as to magnify their 'mental lives'. The current study also proved Adefirs was initially represented by his 'mental life' as his overall manner dictates his confinement in the intellectual world. As a result, the individual in the intellectual remained obscured. Fekade (1988) saw this part of the individual. But one may then ask: can intellectuality become the extension of individuality? At least, is it not one attribute of the intellectual? Despite these intriguing questions, Fekade prefers to treat the intellectual devoid of individual forms. As a result, against the lived experience of the 'intellectual' and the meanings he attached to his life, only ideas which may not have a direct relationship with his life has been given prominence. Is not the life of the individual much to do with his intellectuality and vice versa? The current study proved so.

Tewodros's (2013) study highly relied on the analysis of individual characters especially their state of being at the climax of the story. Their personal encounters and the escalation of conflict throughout their lives has been given little emphasis. As this study attested, they are both created and creating beings that one cannot oversimplify the one by exaggerating the other. That is why Adefirs was able to impact the community and, in turn, affected by the community.

## Conclusion

Modernist Amharic literature has made their prime concern the emergence of individuality as a force to challenge the existing system. The novel, Adefirs, is a good instance to see; a kind of individuality that began to bloom, the basis of its emergence and finally the contradiction it has undergone with the society. As the above finding revealed, Adefirs (the titular protagonist) as an individual, was inclined to state everything he encounters based on his theoretical sub-world which he failed to see in the community. His urgency to change the society based on this theoretical orientation did not show a glimpse of hope as it was very far even for him to put it into practice. Besides, it also has less pragmatic essence and more theoretical wrestling. That results a contradiction that finally

led to his death. But one thing must be clear. While Adefirs wanted western values as a leading crusade for change, he continually faced Tiso and Woldu as an intermediary sub-world that saved him from his complete flight. This occurred when his bloomy picture of the western ideals encountered a practical test that undermines the internal value. He desperately protested as it mean a complete annihilation of one's value. Adefirs's journey, despite being short, was an attempt to a different route to fare ☐ individuality. It was an individuality at first appeared with the embodiment of western ideals, but he, soon, reexamined himself with a constant inter-subjectivity with Tiso and Woldu.

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