

Review Article

The Root and the Branch: Eguale Gebre Yohannes's Philosophy of 'Tewahido' in Ethiopian Higher Education

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of the seminal work of the 20th-century Ethiopian philosopher Eguale Gebre Yohannes, የከፍተኛ ትምህርት ዘይቤ (The Style of Higher Education). Published at a critical juncture during the establishment of Ethiopia's modern university system, the book confronts the profound cultural crisis arising from the encounter between indigenous Ethiopian civilization and modern Western thought. The article examines Eguale's central thesis, which rejects both the uncritical imitation of the West and a retreat into stagnant traditionalism. In their place, he proposes a sophisticated philosophy of "Tewahido" (synthesis), an organic and authentic integration that preserves the integrity of both traditions. We explore Eguale's diagnostic framework, particularly his use of potent archetypes, the restless, knowledge-seeking "Faustian" West versus the spiritually-grounded "Yaredic" Ethiopia, to articulate the cultural dilemma. The core of the analysis focuses on his powerful metaphor of grafting a "wild" branch of Western science and methodology onto the "cultivated" rootstock of Ethiopian heritage. This study demonstrates how Eguale argues that the root (Ethiopian tradition) is the primary, life-sustaining element, a radical reversal of the colonial educational model. Furthermore, the article delves into Eguale's humanistic educational aims, which stand in stark opposition to purely utilitarian models of education. He prioritizes the cultivation of a virtuous and self-aware "whole person" over the mere production of skilled technocrats, advocating for a curriculum that fosters self-knowledge and ethical responsibility. The study concludes that Eguale's work offers more than just a historical perspective; it provides a timeless and coherent philosophical blueprint for post-colonial education, presenting a model for authentically integrating local identity with global knowledge.

Keywords

Ethiopian Philosophy, Eguale Gebre Yohannes, Tewahido, Post colonial Education, Humanism, Higher Education, Cultural Synthesis, Modernization

1. Introduction

In the mid 20th century, Ethiopia stood at a historical and cultural crossroads. The era, defined by Emperor Haile Selassie I's ambitious modernization projects, was one of immense national aspiration and deep seated anxiety [1]. The capstone of this modernizing endeavor was the establishment

of Ethiopia's first national university in 1950, chartered as Haile Selassie I University in 1961 [2]. This was far more than an educational milestone; it was an existential project aimed at forging the very soul of the modern Ethiopian. The nation faced a monumental challenge: how to embrace the

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undeniable power of Western science, technology, and pedagogy without sacrificing the ancient, deep rooted civilization that had defined its identity for millennia [3]. This tension created a palpable cultural crisis, a moment of decision that would shape the country's intellectual and spiritual trajectory for generations to come.

It was into this charged intellectual environment that Eguale Gebre Yohannes (1909-1976) emerged as a pivotal philosophical voice. A distinguished intellectual and philosopher, Eguale was uniquely positioned to mediate this critical cultural dialogue [4]. Educated in both the rich traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the secular philosophical academies of Europe, he possessed the rare ability to think and articulate the national dilemma from within both worlds. His seminal work, *የከፍተኛ ትምህርት ዘይቤ* (The Style of Higher Education), was not a detached academic treatise but a direct, passionate intervention into this national debate [5]. Born from a series of radio addresses, the book is a masterclass in public philosophy, a deliberate attempt to guide the nation through its complex transition by grounding its future in a coherent and authentic philosophical framework.

The intellectual climate into which Eguale intervened was deeply polarized. On one side were the traditionalists, primarily scholars from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, who viewed the influx of Western education with suspicion. For them, this new pedagogy, rooted in secularism and empiricism, threatened to erode the nation's ancient faith, which they saw as the very bedrock of its identity and moral order. On the other side was a burgeoning class of Western-educated Ethiopians, often referred to as the "Japanizers," who were fervent advocates for rapid modernization. Many in this group saw tradition as an obstacle, a relic of a bygone era that needed to be cleared away to make room for progress. This created a stark binary: a choice between a past perceived as sacred but static, and a future perceived as prosperous but foreign. Eguale's unique intellectual formation made him the ideal mediator for this conflict. His grounding in the rigorous exegetical and philosophical traditions of the Ethiopian church gave him deep respect for the nation's heritage, while his European education provided him with the philosophical language and critical tools to engage with and deconstruct Western thought on its own terms. He was not merely a synthesizer; he was a bridge, uniquely capable of holding both worlds in a single, coherent vision.

The central problem that Eguale diagnoses with striking clarity is what he terms a "kultur-krise", a crisis of culture and the very "flavor of life" (*የጣዕም ሕይወት ችግር*). He saw his contemporaries being pulled between two perilous extremes, a dilemma common in post-colonial contexts [6]. On one side was the path of uncritical imitation, a wholesale adoption of Western educational models that threatened to turn Ethiopia into a mere cultural appendage of Europe [7]. On the other was the danger of a stagnant,

reactionary traditionalism, a retreat into a glorified past that was no longer equipped to address the complexities of

the modern world. For Eguale, neither path was tenable. The challenge was not to choose between tradition and modernity, but to forge a third way, a path of creative synthesis [5].

This article argues that Eguale Gebre Yohannes, in *የከፍተኛ ትምህርት ዘይቤ*, rejects both blind imitation of the West and stagnant traditionalism, proposing instead a philosophy of 'Tewahido' (synthesis) where modern education is grafted onto the deep rooted stock of Ethiopian civilization to create a new, vibrant, and authentic intellectual tradition. He does not advocate for a simple mixing of disparate elements, but for an organic, symbiotic relationship where the ancient roots of Ethiopian identity provide the essential nourishment for the new branches of modern knowledge. This vision is not merely about curriculum design; it is a philosophical statement about national identity, cultural continuity, and the ultimate purpose of education [8].

Eguale's solution of "Tewahido" is most powerfully articulated through an adaptation of the Pauline metaphor from the Epistle to the Romans: the grafting of a wild olive branch onto a cultivated olive tree. In this analogy, the ancient, cultivated, and life-giving tree is Ethiopian civilization. The "wild branch" represents the potent knowledge of the West.

the potent knowledge of the West. In the chapter "በተዋናዶ ከበረ" ("It is Honored Through Synthesis"), he makes this relationship explicit:

ወለእመ: ተሰብሩ አዕጸቂሃ ኪያክ አውልዓ ገዳም ተክሉ መካኖሙ |
ወጎበርክ ሥርወ ምስሊሆሙ፤ ወኮንክ ዘይተ ከማሆሙ ፤ ፍሩሐክ ንበር ፤
ወኢትዜግር ላዕለ አዕፁቅ ፤ እስመ እኮ አንተ ዘትፀውሮ ለሥርወ አለ ሥርወ-
ይፀውረከ።

(And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place... remain in reverence; and do not be haughty... for it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you.) [5]

This assertion, that the root supports the branch, is the cornerstone of Eguale's educational philosophy. It is a powerful rebuke to those who believed that Ethiopia's past was a liability [1]. For Eguale, this heritage was the very source of life upon which any sustainable modernity could be built. The following sections will examine this thesis in detail, analyzing the cultural dichotomy Eguale establishes between the "Faustian" West and the "Yaredic" Ethiopia, his philosophy of "Tewahido," and his vision for a humanistic curriculum modeled on the Platonic Academy [9]. Ultimately, this article will argue for the enduring relevance of Eguale's work as a philosophical blueprint for navigating the complex relationship between local identity and global knowledge.

2. The Philosophical Conflict: "Faustian" West vs. "Yaredic" Ethiopia

Before offering a prescription, Eguale undertakes a deep philosophical diagnosis of the two civilizations at Ethiopia's gates. He understood the encounter with the West was a collision of two distinct *Weltanschauungen*, or worldviews [3]. To articulate their essence, he employs potent archetypes.

For the West, he chooses Faust, the insatiable scholar of German legend [10]. For Ethiopia, he elevates Saint Yared, the divinely inspired father of its sacred intellectual tradition [11].

2.1. The “Faustian” Spirit: An Insatiable Quest for Human Mastery

In the chapter “የአውሮፓ መንፈስ” (“The European Spirit”), Egale characterizes modern Western civilization as “Faustian” (ፋውስታዊ). Dr. Faustus, who sells his soul for infinite power and experience, becomes a metaphor for the West’s post-Renaissance intellectual orientation [10]. This spirit is defined by a relentless, unquenchable thirst for knowledge that recognizes no sacred boundaries and an ambition that seeks to place humanity at the center of its own universe. The Faustian journey begins with a dissatisfaction, which Egale captures by paraphrasing Goethe’s famous monologue:

እዬ ፍልስፍና ሕግ ወይም ሕክምና ፤ ያሳዝናል ከቴ ደግሞ ታላሎጊም... ተማርኩ በሚያቃጥል ድካም ፤ እንዲህ ሆኜ ቀረሁ አንድ ምስኪን ደንቆሮ... ጥልቅ ዕውቀት ለማግኘት ሲሳኝ ማየቴ ምንም አልተረፈ ተቃጠለ አንጀቴ።

(Alas, I have studied philosophy, law, medicine, and sadly, theology... with arduous toil; and here I am, a poor fool... Seeing my failure to attain deep knowledge, nothing remains for me but a burning gut.) [5]

This burning dissatisfaction is the engine of the Faustian spirit. Its drive is inherently anthropocentric. Knowledge is not sought to understand a divine plan, but to empower humanity, to make man the master of his own destiny [12]. The ultimate aim of this spirit was “እስካሁን የነበረውን የሰው ሕሊና ድንበር አልፎ ለመሔድ ነበር” (“to go beyond the existing border of the human mind”) [5]. This relentless drive yielded extraordinary results, from the scientific revolution to the industrial age [13]. However, Egale recognizes the inherent peril. By placing man as the sole “measure of all things,” echoing Protagoras, it creates a world of immense material achievement but potential spiritual desolation. This relentless forward momentum is both the glory and the tragedy of the West in Egale’s analysis.

This Faustian drive, as Egale understands it, is intimately linked to the historical development of the Enlightenment and the concept of linear progress. It is a spirit that seeks to “disenchant the world,” to borrow Max Weber’s term, by replacing mystery with methodology and faith with reason. Its ambition is not merely to understand the world as it is, but to remake it in humanity’s own image, to bend the forces of nature to the human will. Egale, however, demonstrates a nuanced understanding, recognizing that this spirit is not purely destructive. He acknowledges its immense creative power and its role in liberating humanity from the arbitrary cruelties of nature and superstition. For instance, he notes the West’s achievements in medicine and law as triumphs of this spirit. His critique is therefore not a wholesale condemnation but a cautionary analysis. The danger of the Faustian spirit

lies in its potential for overreach, its tendency to believe that all problems are, at their core, technical problems that can be solved with enough knowledge and power. This leaves little room for the sacred, the transcendent, or for the kind of wisdom that recognizes the limits of human reason.

2.2. The “Yaredic” Spirit: Knowledge as Divine Revelation

As a counterpoint, Egale presents the “Yaredic” (ያራዳዊ) spirit of Ethiopian civilization, embodied in Saint Yared. This worldview is fundamentally theocentric [14]. Saint Yared, the 6th century composer, traditionally received his wisdom not through human struggle but as a divine gift [11]. This origin story is key to understanding the Ethiopian intellectual tradition. Yaredic knowledge is received through humility and faith, a sacred inheritance. In the chapter “ያራዳ ወይም ስለኢትዮጵያ ሥልጣኔ” (“Yared or On the Civilization of Ethiopia”), he establishes this difference:

በአውሮፓ ሥልጣኔ መካከል ላይ የሚገኘው ሰው ነው።... በዚህ አንጻር የሀገራችንን ሥልጣኔ theocentric ብሎ ለመጥራት ይቻላል። የማናቸውም ነገር ማዕከል... እግዚአብሔር ነው።

(At the center of European civilization is man... In contrast, it is possible to call our country’s civilization theocentric. The center of everything... is God.) [5]

In the Yaredic worldview, all facets of life are integrated under a single spiritual framework. Knowledge is not compartmentalized. The sacred music of Saint Yared is the ultimate expression of this integration, aligning human life with the rhythms of creation and celestial worship [11]. Under this theocentric framework, the purpose of knowledge is not to control nature, but to cultivate wisdom and virtue in the human soul, a concept central to classical philosophy as well [9]. The ultimate measure of all things is not man, but God. This worldview provided Ethiopia with its enduring strength: a sense of unity and cultural cohesion [3]. By establishing these archetypes, Egale masterfully frames the central dilemma. The Faustian drive is world-shaping; the Yaredic foundation is soul-preserving. The critical question is how these spirits can be brought into a productive synthesis.

The Yaredic concept of knowledge as divine revelation fundamentally shapes the methods of learning and intellectual inquiry within the tradition. Unlike the Faustian method, which prioritizes empirical discovery and the creation of new knowledge, the Yaredic tradition emphasizes the mastery, interpretation, and preservation of a sacred, received wisdom. The role of the scholar is not to invent but to examine into the meaning of the revealed text, to uncover the layers of wisdom embedded within it. This is evident in the traditional Ethiopian educational system, particularly in the practice of andemta (commentary), where generations of scholars have built upon one another’s interpretations of sacred scriptures. Knowledge in this context is inseparable from piety, and the intellectual journey is simultaneously a spiritual one. The

ultimate goal is not mastery over the external world, but the correct ordering of the internal world, the alignment of the human soul with the divine order. Egale captures this all encompassing nature of faith when he states:

የነገሩ ሁሉ ጥንት ተፋጻሚነት አምላክ ነው።... የማናቸውም የሰው ጥረት ከፍሬ የሚደርሰው በአምላክ ረድኤት ነው።

(The beginning and the end of all things is God... Every human effort bears fruit only with the help of God.) [5]

This worldview develops a sense of stability and meaning. However, Egale implicitly recognizes its limitations in a modern context. A system built entirely on the interpretation of received texts can struggle to develop the kind of critical, innovative, and empirical thinking necessary to address new and unforeseen challenges, which is precisely why he argues for a synthesis rather than a simple preservation of the past.

3. The Proposed Solution: The Philosophy of “Tewahido” (Synthesis)

Having framed the central conflict, Egale moves from diagnosis to prescription. He proposes a sophisticated “third way,” a philosophy of creative and organic synthesis encapsulated in the term “Tewahido” (ተዋሕዶ).

By invoking “Tewahido,” Egale is deliberately tapping into one of the deepest and most sophisticated concepts in Ethiopian thought. The theological doctrine of Tewahido, which defines the union of Christ’s two natures, was forged through centuries of intense philosophical and theological debate [15]. It posits a union that is perfect and inseparable, yet which preserves the distinct integrity of each nature “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” This is the key to Egale’s cultural philosophy. He is not advocating for a syncretic “mishmash” where both Ethiopian and Western traditions are watered down into a bland, indistinct hybrid. Rather, he is calling for a synthesis where both retain their essential character. Modern science should remain rigorously scientific; Ethiopian ethical and spiritual values should remain themselves. The “union” occurs within the mind and soul of the educated Ethiopian, who learns to think with the critical tools of the West while seeing and judging the world through the ethical lens of their own heritage. This is a far more demanding and sophisticated task than simply adding a few Ethiopian history courses to a Western curriculum; it is a call for a fundamental reimagining of how knowledge is integrated and given meaning.

To illustrate this, Egale employs the Pauline analogy of grafting from the Epistle to the Romans [16]. The cultivated olive tree is Ethiopian civilization, its roots deep in millennia of history and faith. It possesses the essential “sap,” the spiritual vitality and ethical framework, that has nourished the nation. The wild olive branch represents modern Western knowledge, science, and methodology. Egale acknowledges its immense potency but notes its “wildness” implies it lacks a deep, cultivated root system. The act of grafting, therefore,

becomes the central task of the new Ethiopian university. The goal is for the branch to “take,” to draw life from the ancient roots and, in turn, produce a new kind of fruit, imbued with the character of the old tree.

The most crucial aspect of this analogy lies in the relationship of dependency. In an era when the West seemed dominant, Egale makes a radical argument: it is the ancient Ethiopian heritage that is the primary, life sustaining element. He drives this point home with his quotation from the Ge’ez scripture, culminating in the phrase, “እስመ አኮ አንተ ዘትፀውሮ ለሥርው አለ ሥርው ይፀውረክ” (“for it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you”) [5].

The significance of this is threefold. First, it is a powerful reversal of the colonial and post colonial power dynamic [7]. It challenges the notion that Western civilization is the “civilizing” force. Second, this principle serves as a charter for cultural authenticity in education. It dictates that the purpose of the university is not to replace the Ethiopian mind, but to provide it with new tools and horizons. The curriculum must be a “Tewahido” curriculum, where modern physics is taught in dialogue with Ethiopian philosophy, such as that of Zera Yacob [17]. Finally, the quote contains a crucial ethical warning against intellectual arrogance. The admonition to the newly grafted branch to “remain in reverence”

(ፍሩሐክ ንብር) is a message to the new Western educated elite not to look down upon their own heritage as “backward.” True intellectual strength comes from understanding one’s origins so deeply that one can confidently engage with the wider world [8].

4. The True Aim of Education: Humanism over Utilitarianism

Having established the “Tewahido” principle, Egale asks the most fundamental question: What is the ultimate purpose of this educational system? In “የትምህርት ዓላማ” (“The Aim of Education”), he articulates a humanistic vision, rooted in classical Socratic and Platonic traditions [18], which stands in stark opposition to a purely utilitarian approach. The primary aim is not to produce skilled technocrats, but to cultivate a “whole person” (ሙሉ ሰው).

To frame this debate, Egale draws upon the ancient conflict between the Platonists and the Sophists. The Sophists offered instruction for a fee, promising the practical skills necessary for success. Knowledge was a tool, its value measured by utility. Egale fears Ethiopia might embrace this model, reducing learning to mere job training. He critiques this utilitarian view with a powerful analogy:

ዕውቀት ለአንዱ ሁሉንም የሚያከብራት ወደላይ ወደ አርያም የምትመራው ሰማያዊት ነቢይት ናት

። ለሌላው ግን በወተትና በቅቤ የምታገለግለው አንድ ወፍራም ላም ናት ።

(For one, knowledge is a heavenly prophetess who always ennobles and leads one upward... For the other, however, she is a fat cow that serves with milk and butter.) [5]

The utilitarian sees education as the “fat cow”, a resource

to be milked for material benefits. In contrast, the humanist, following Socrates and Plato, views knowledge as the “heavenly prophethood”, a sacred guide whose purpose is to elevate the soul [9]. An education system built around the “fat cow” model will ultimately fail the nation.

For Egale, the long term dangers of a purely utilitarian education, the “fat cow” model, extend far beyond the individual to threaten the very fabric of the nation. An educational system that exclusively prioritizes technical skills and economic productivity risks creating a class of elites who are, in a sense, culturally and ethically unmoored. While they may be highly effective at their specific jobs, they may lack the historical consciousness, civic virtue, and deep sense of shared identity necessary to lead a nation. Such an education produces specialists, not citizens. It develops a mindset where the nation is seen as an economic project to be managed, rather than a cultural and spiritual inheritance to be stewarded. This, in Egale’s view, leads to social fragmentation, as this technocratic elite becomes increasingly disconnected from the values and worldview of the broader population they are meant to serve. Without the grounding of a humanistic education, the “Faustian” drive for efficiency and power, unguided by a moral compass, can easily become a destructive force.

In place of this utilitarian model, Egale proposes a holistic framework built on three interconnected aims:

1. The Humanistic Aim (ሰብአዊነት): The Foundation of Self Knowledge. At the heart of his philosophy, this aim echoes the Socratic imperative “Know thyself.” Egale argues that the primary subject of study must be humanity itself. He aligns his thought with classical humanism, affirming the sentiment, “The proper study of mankind is man.”

When Egale speaks of the Humanistic aim, he is not merely advocating for the importation of the Western classical canon. In line with his philosophy of “Tewahido,” the “study of mankind” in an Ethiopian university must begin with the study of the Ethiopian human experience itself. A truly humanistic curriculum would place the foundational texts of Ethiopian civilization, from the epic Kebra Nagast to the philosophical treatises of Zera Yacob, from the rich body of Ge’ez literature to the vast collections of oral traditions, at the center of intellectual life. It would be through a deep and critical engagement with their own heritage that Ethiopian students would first learn to grapple with the universal questions of justice, truth, beauty, and the meaning of a good life. Only after being firmly grounded in their own intellectual tradition would they then engage with the works of Plato, Shakespeare, and Kant, not as passive recipients, but as critical interlocutors, capable of placing these works in a comparative dialogue with their own. This approach ensures that the humanistic aim is not an act of cultural alienation, but one of self discovery and cultural affirmation.

2. The Professional Aim (መከሊታዊነት): Cultivating Innate Talents. The second aim is derived from the Ge’ez word “መከሊት,” referring to an innate gift or talent. Egale rejects a

one size fits all approach, arguing that the educational system must help each student discover and cultivate their unique “meklit.” This aim integrates the individual with the collective; developing one’s talent is a duty to society.

3. The Scientific Aim (ሳይንሳዊነት): The Creative Pursuit of New Knowledge. The third aim ensures his vision is not static but dynamic. A university cannot be a mere museum of past knowledge; it must be a vibrant engine for its creation. This is where Egale incorporates the positive aspects of the “Faustian” spirit. He insists that education must develop a spirit driven “የእስካሁኑን የዕውቀት ድንበር አልፎ ለመሄድ” (“to push beyond the existing border of knowledge”) [5]. Crucially, this drive is tempered and guided by the other two aims, providing an ethical compass for scientific inquiry.

5. The Ideal Educator and Institution: The Teacher as Lover of Wisdom

A philosophy remains abstract without the right agents and environment. In “ትምህርትና ፍቅር” (“Education and Love”) and “ፕላቶናዊት አካደሚ” (“The Platonic Academy”), Egale argues that the ideal educator is a true philosopher, a “lover of wisdom”, and the ideal university is a sacred community.

5.1. The Teacher as Zarathustra: The Overflowing Soul

Egale rejects any model that reduces the teacher to a mere functionary. The true teacher is a trans-formative figure. He draws a powerful analogy to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, the prophet philosopher who retreats to a mountain for a decade of solitary contemplation before descending to share his wisdom [12]. This represents the dual life of the educator: the ascent for solitary accumulation of wisdom and the descent to teach as an act of overflowing love. This descent is not motivated by duty, but by an abundance that must be shared. This act of sharing is synonymous with love (ፍቅር). He states:

እውነተኛው መምህር በፍቅር ስሜት የተጥለቀለቀ በመንፈሱዋም የሰከረ ነው።

(The true teacher is one who is inundated with the feeling of love and intoxicated by its spirit.) [5]

This love is twofold: a passionate love for wisdom itself, and a genuine love for the student, seeing in them a potential soul to be guided out of the Platonic cave of ignorance [9].

5.2. The University as the Academy: A Sacred Community

If the ideal teacher is a philosopher, the ideal institution must be where this love for wisdom can be collectively pursued. For this, Egale turns to Plato’s Academy. He argues that the modern university has a sacred duty to live up to the spirit of its namesake. For Egale, the Platonic Academy

represents the pinnacle of what a university can be. It was a community, not a bureaucracy, bound by a shared quest for truth, goodness, and beauty. Its purpose was holistic, not specialized. He describes this ideal institution as a sacred space for building the human spirit:

በውስጥ ረቂቅ ሕሊና ወይም ዕውቀት ፤ ንጹሕ ልብና ወይም ሠናይት ፤... ትክክለኛ የሰው መንፈስ የሚታነጽበት የተከበረ ቦታ ስለሆነ...

(Because it is a revered place where the subtle mind or knowledge, the pure heart or virtue... the authentic human spirit is built...) [5]

This vision of the university as a “revered place” is the institutional embodiment of his entire philosophy. It is the environment where the “Tewahido” synthesis can occur and the humanistic aims of education can be realized.

Egualé’s vision of the university as a modern Platonic Academy stands in stark contrast to the modern concept of the “multiversity,” a term later popularized to describe the large, bureaucratic, and often fragmented institutions of higher learning in the West. The multiversity is a collection of disparate and often competing interests, a research grant seeking enterprise, a vocational training center, a social sorting mechanism, held together by a common administrative structure but lacking a unified soul or purpose. Egualé’s Platonic ideal is a direct rebuke to this model. He argues for a university with a clear, unifying telos: the cultivation of the human spirit. This requires the institution itself to be a community, a place where dialogue is prized over dogma, and where the pursuit of wisdom is seen as a collective, rather than a solitary, endeavor. The architecture of the campus, the structure of the curriculum, and the culture of its intellectual life should all be designed to develop this sense of shared purpose. In such an environment, the teacher is not an isolated specialist in a departmental silo, but a full member of a community of scholars dedicated to the holistic education of their students and the pursuit of a common good.

6. Conclusion

Egualé Gebre Yohannes’s philosophical project was an act of intellectual mediation. We began by dissecting his diagnosis of the collision between the “Faustian” West and the “Yaredic” Ethiopia. Faced with this encounter, he rejected imitation and isolation, proposing instead the principle of “Tewahido.” He argued that modern knowledge could only thrive if grafted onto the ancient roots of Ethiopian civilization. Finally, we explored how this principle shaped his humanistic vision for education, designed to cultivate a “whole person” rather than a mere utilitarian.

የክፍተኛ ትምህርት ዘዴ stands as a comprehensive philosophical blueprint for an authentic Ethiopian modernity. Egualé’s work is a masterful act of intellectual mediation, a “third way” that seeks to build a future that is neither a replica of the West nor a museum of the past. The philosophy of “Tewahido” is a bold call for a modernity that is chosen, shaped, and owned.

The enduring power of Egualé’s work lies in its prescient diagnosis of a challenge that has only intensified. His ideas remain relevant for the wider post-colonial world. In an age dominated by a globalized, technocratic model of education, his defense of a humanistic ideal is a vital corrective. His analogy of knowledge as a “heavenly prophethood” versus a “fat cow” is more poignant than ever. An education that neglects the soul in its haste to train the hand is, in his view, a catastrophic failure.

Egualé’s model of “Tewahido” offers a powerful paradigm for navigating the challenge of how to modernize without sacrificing identity. It provides a philosophical basis for critical engagement rather than passive assimilation, arguing that indigenous traditions are the essential roots upon which any sustainable modernity must be built. Ultimately, Egualé’s vision is not a retreat from the world but a radical re-engagement with it, grounded in self-knowledge and cultural confidence. He understood that progress required striving and excellence. In “ውድድርና ሽልማት” (“Competition and Reward”), he celebrates achievement. However, this modern drive must be framed within his overarching humanistic vision. The competition he envisions is not a ruthless struggle, but a noble striving for the common good. Egualé leaves us with a vision where the Faustian drive for achievement is harmonized with the Yaredic quest for wisdom, creating a future that is not only prosperous, but also just, humane, and whole.

Author Contributions

Mohammed Zeinu Hassen is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



Mohammed Zeinu Hassen is a Researcher in the Department of Social Sciences at Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU). His work is situated at the critical intersection of philosophy of education, epistemology, and indigenous knowledge systems. He holds a Master of Arts in Philosophy from Addis Ababa University, where his research explored the connection between thought, action, and the social nature of knowledge. Hassen's scholarship is deeply engaged with the unique challenges and opportunities facing Ethiopian higher education. His research directly confronts the imperative to balance modernization with cultural authenticity, a central theme in the work of seminal Ethiopian thinkers. This focus makes him a qualified voice to analyze the philosophical contributions of Eguale Gebre Yohannes. His work consistently explores how Ethiopia can forge an educational and intellectual future that is both globally engaged and firmly rooted in its own rich civilizational heritage, carrying forward the very questions that animated the philosopher he examines in this piece.

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Research Field

Mohammed Zeinu Hassen: Philosophy of Education, Epistemology, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, AI and Ethics, Post-colonial Philosophy and Modernity, Philosophy of science, Intercultural dialogue, Philosophy of education, AI and Public policy, Social and political philosophy.