

CATMOCK DAILY CAPSULE

March 27, 2026

KAKURO

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SUDOKU

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Autonomy at the End of Life: The Case for a Living Will



Birth and death mark the boundaries of human existence, yet societal attention to these two events is strikingly asymmetrical. While the former is meticulously planned and medically supervised, the latter is often relegated to uncertainty, discomfort and, frequently, avoidable suffering. This disparity reflects a deeper reluctance to confront the ethical and practical complexities associated with end-of-life care. In this context, the concept of a living will emerges as a critical, though underutilised, instrument for safeguarding individual autonomy when decision-making capacity is lost.

A living will, or advance directive, is a legal document that records an individual's preferences regarding medical treatment in situations where they are no longer able to communicate informed consent. Its relevance becomes particularly pronounced in cases involving terminal or irreversible conditions, where aggressive medical interventions may prolong biological existence without necessarily preserving dignity or quality of life. By articulating preferences in advance, individuals can exert a degree of control over circumstances that would otherwise be governed by medical protocols or surrogate decision-makers.

The absence of such directives often results in default clinical pathways that prioritise life-sustaining interventions. These may include mechanical ventilation, artificial nutrition and hydration, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation. While medically justified in many contexts, their application in cases with negligible prospects of recovery can lead to prolonged hospitalisation, invasive procedures and considerable emotional and financial strain on families. In such scenarios, the distinction between extending life and prolonging the process of dying becomes ethically salient.

Moreover, decision-making in the absence of a living will frequently shifts to family members and physicians, who may be compelled to act under conditions of uncertainty and emotional

distress. Divergent interpretations of the patient's wishes can generate conflict, while clinicians may default to maximal intervention in order to avoid legal or professional liability. This dynamic not only complicates care but also risks outcomes that may be misaligned with the patient's values.

A living will mitigate these challenges by providing clarity and direction. It typically delineates specific circumstances under which life-sustaining treatments may be withheld or withdrawn, thereby reducing ambiguity in clinical decision-making. Importantly, such directives do not imply a rejection of medical care; rather, they represent a calibrated approach that distinguishes between curative, palliative and futile interventions. For instance, an individual may consent to pain management and supportive care while declining invasive procedures that offer limited therapeutic benefit.

The ethical foundation of a living will rests on the principle of respect for autonomy, a cornerstone of modern bioethics. This principle asserts that individuals have the right to make informed decisions about their own bodies, including the refusal of treatment. When autonomy cannot be exercised contemporaneously, advance directives serve as its proxy, ensuring that prior preferences continue to guide medical care. In this sense, a living will functions as an extension of personal agency into a phase of life characterised by diminished capacity.

Legal recognition of living wills has evolved in response to these ethical considerations. Judicial pronouncements have affirmed the right to refuse treatment under specific conditions, thereby legitimising advance directives within the broader framework of constitutional rights. However, procedural complexities and limited public awareness have constrained their widespread adoption. Standardised guidelines, simplified documentation processes and institutional support are necessary to translate legal permissibility into practical accessibility.

It is also pertinent to note that living wills are not confined to the elderly or terminally ill. Sudden medical events such as accidents or acute neurological conditions can render individuals incapable of expressing their wishes at any stage of life. In such cases, the absence of prior directives can precipitate decisions that may not reflect the individual's values or preferences. Consequently, the relevance of living wills extends across age groups and health profiles.

Despite their evident utility, misconceptions persist. Some view living wills as instruments that hasten death or diminish the obligation of care. In reality, they aim to align medical interventions with the patient's conception of dignity and well-being. Far from undermining care, they facilitate a more nuanced and humane approach to treatment, one that acknowledges the limits of medical intervention and the primacy of individual choice.

In sum, the adoption of living wills represents a shift towards a more patient-centred paradigm of healthcare, wherein autonomy, dignity and informed consent are preserved even in the face of incapacity. As medical technology continues to extend the boundaries of life, the imperative to define the terms of its conclusion becomes increasingly urgent. A living will, in this regard, is not

merely a legal document but a considered articulation of how one wishes to be treated when one can no longer speak for oneself.

Reclaiming Thought: The Trajectory of African Philosophical Practice



Though less widely recognised than the civil rights struggles of the mid-20th century, the effort to construct an African philosophical tradition has been a sustained and intellectually rigorous enterprise spanning over a century. This project has entailed more than the recovery of indigenous thought; it has required the articulation of Africa as a legitimate and universal site of philosophical inquiry. In the wake of colonial subjugation, early thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and proponents of the Négritude movement including Léon-Gontran Damas, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire sought to initiate a process of intellectual decolonisation. For Fanon, decolonisation was not merely political but also psychological, involving a restructuring of consciousness and, at times, a violent rupture with the colonial order.

Subsequent philosophical developments have built upon these foundations. Contemporary decolonial discourse, influenced by theorists such as Walter D. Mignolo and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, has amplified critiques of epistemic domination. Within this milieu, Kwasi Wiredu's notion of conceptual decolonisation has emerged as particularly influential. Wiredu's work addresses both the philosophical inadequacies inherited from colonial frameworks and the limitations of precolonial epistemologies, advocating instead for a reorientation that equips postcolonial societies to engage meaningfully with modernity.

Parallel contributions have been made by V Y Mudimbe, who interrogates the construction of African subjectivity within what he terms the "Colonial Library" a repository of Western anthropological and archaeological knowledge that systematically silences Black agency. Similarly, Paulin Hountondji's critique of ethnophilosophy challenges attempts to essentialise African thought as collective or uncritical, insisting instead on rigorous, individual philosophical

inquiry. Henry Odera Oruka's Sage philosophy, meanwhile, attempts to recuperate indigenous intellectual traditions by documenting the reflections of non-literate thinkers, thereby expanding the scope of philosophical legitimacy.

These thinkers operated within a historical context marked by the repudiation of African humanity in Western philosophical traditions. Enlightenment figures such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume explicitly denied the intellectual and moral capacities of Black people, relegating them to the margins of philosophical consideration. Such assertions had profound consequences, undermining both the incentive and the institutional space for African philosophical development. Consequently, the earliest task of African philosophy was not the pursuit of abstract metaphysical questions but the reclamation of humanity itself, a prerequisite for any subsequent inquiry into meaning or value.

The divergence between Anglophone and Francophone African philosophical traditions further illustrates the enduring impact of colonial legacies. Anglophone philosophers, including Wiredu and Oruka, have tended to emphasise conceptual clarity and analytic precision, often aligning with British philosophical traditions. In contrast, Francophone thinkers such as Mudimbe and Hountondji have embraced interdisciplinary methodologies, drawing on continental philosophy and the human sciences to develop more holistic frameworks.

Within this intellectual landscape, the contributions of Lansana Keita are particularly noteworthy. Keita advances a comprehensive critique of development paradigms that equate progress solely with technological and scientific advancement. Instead, he argues for an expanded conception of development that incorporates ideological, cultural and economic dimensions. His work underscores the continued relevance of philosophy as a meta-disciplinary enterprise capable of synthesising insights across diverse fields of knowledge.

Keita also challenges the perceived dichotomy between philosophy and science, suggesting that this division is historically contingent rather than conceptually necessary. Both disciplines, he contends, share a common origin in the pursuit of knowledge, whether understood as *philo-sophia* or *scientia*. The subsequent differentiation into specialised domains has obscured their underlying unity, privileging empirical methodologies at the expense of metaphysical inquiry. For African philosophy, this has particular implications, as knowledge systems rooted in oral traditions and sensory experience have often been dismissed as unscientific or animistic.

Indeed, European anthropologists such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and E E Evans-Pritchard have characterised African epistemologies in reductive terms, reinforcing colonial hierarchies of knowledge. Keita counters this by tracing the philosophical lineage of animistic and monistic thought to ancient African traditions, including those of Kemet (ancient Egypt). He argues that such traditions informed not only African but also Greek philosophical developments, thereby situating Africa within a broader, interconnected history of ideas.

The rupture introduced by European colonialism disrupted these intellectual continuities, leading to the marginalisation of African philosophical traditions in formal education. Figures such as

Hegel perpetuated the notion that Africa lacked historical and philosophical significance, a claim that has had enduring pedagogical consequences. As a result, contemporary African philosophers often remain more conversant with European traditions than with their own intellectual heritage.

To address this imbalance, Keita advocates a transdisciplinary approach to philosophical inquiry, wherein scholars engage with the social and natural sciences to produce more robust and contextually relevant analyses. This perspective aligns with broader calls for epistemic pluralism and methodological integration, recognising that complex social realities cannot be adequately understood through disciplinary silos.

In sum, the evolution of African philosophical practice reflects an ongoing struggle to reconcile historical marginalisation with contemporary aspirations for intellectual autonomy. It is a project that continues to interrogate the conditions of knowledge production while seeking to establish Africa as an indispensable locus of philosophical thought.

De-dollarising Trade: India's Strategic Turn to Local Currency Oil Payments



India's recent exploration of conducting oil trade with West Asian countries in local currencies marks a significant recalibration in its external economic strategy. At its core, this initiative seeks to mitigate the dual fiscal pressures arising from persistently elevated global crude oil prices and the depreciation of the Indian rupee against the U.S. dollar. By reducing dependence on dollar-denominated transactions, policymakers aim to achieve both immediate cost efficiencies and longer-term strategic autonomy in energy procurement.

The proposal emerges against the backdrop of heightened volatility in global energy markets, where crude prices have remained elevated due to geopolitical disruptions and supply-side uncertainties. Simultaneously, the rupee's depreciation has amplified the import bill, given that oil—India's largest import—is predominantly invoiced in dollars. This combination has exerted pressure on the current account deficit and contributed to imported inflation. In this context, transitioning to local currency settlements is envisaged as a mechanism to partially insulate the economy from exchange rate fluctuations.

A key operational advantage of such a system lies in the elimination of intermediary currency conversions. Typically, international oil transactions involve multiple stages of conversion, each incurring costs estimated at 1–2% of the transaction value. Over large volumes, these costs accumulate significantly. Officials suggest that direct settlement in local currencies could yield savings of approximately 5–6% per transaction, a non-trivial margin in high-value energy trade. This cost rationalisation is particularly relevant given the scale of India's oil imports from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which collectively account for a substantial share of its energy basket.

India's prior experience with non-dollar oil trade, particularly with Russia, provides a functional precedent. In those arrangements, payments have been executed through a combination of local currencies and third-country currencies such as the UAE dirham. These mechanisms, while operationally complex, demonstrate the feasibility of bypassing the dollar in bilateral trade under specific geopolitical and financial conditions. Extending similar frameworks to West Asian suppliers, however, entails additional diplomatic and financial coordination, given the entrenched role of the dollar in global oil markets.

The Indian basket of crude oil—a weighted average of prices from Oman, Dubai, and Brent—has seen a marked increase in recent months, reinforcing the urgency of cost-containment measures. Concurrently, exchange rate movements have exacerbated the effective price paid by Indian importers. Even marginal efficiencies in transaction costs, therefore, translate into meaningful fiscal relief when aggregated across the country's import volume.

Nevertheless, the transition is not without its constraints. The global oil trade remains deeply embedded in the petrodollar system, and any deviation from this norm carries potential geopolitical ramifications. The United States has historically resisted efforts to undermine dollar primacy in international trade, at times employing tariff threats or financial sanctions as instruments of pressure. While recent judicial developments in the U.S. may have moderated some of these risks, the broader strategic calculus remains complex.

From a financial systems perspective, implementing local currency trade requires robust clearing and settlement mechanisms, currency swap arrangements, and sufficient liquidity in partner currencies. It also necessitates mutual confidence among trading partners regarding exchange rate stability and convertibility. For Gulf economies, whose currencies are often

pegged to the dollar, the incentives to shift away from dollar invoicing may be limited unless accompanied by broader economic or geopolitical considerations.

Despite these challenges, the move aligns with a broader global trend towards currency diversification in trade. Several emerging economies have begun exploring alternatives to dollar-based settlements, motivated by similar concerns over exchange rate volatility, sanctions risk, and transaction costs. For India, the initiative also complements its aspiration to internationalise the rupee and enhance its role in global trade finance.

In essence, the proposed shift to local currency oil payments represents a pragmatic response to immediate economic pressures, while simultaneously signalling a more assertive posture in reshaping the architecture of international trade. Its success will depend not only on technical execution but also on the evolving geopolitical landscape and the willingness of partner countries to participate in a gradual reconfiguration of established monetary conventions.

KAKURO & SUDOKU

SOLUTIONS:

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SUDOKU

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