

**FILOSOFIA THEORETICA
JOURNAL OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY,
CULTURE AND RELIGIONS**

A Publication of

**The Calabar School of Philosophy (CSP)
Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar**

www.csp.unical.edu.ng



VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1 JANUARY-JUNE, 2015

ISSN: 2276-8386 (Print)

E-ISSN: 2408-5987 (Online)

<http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ft/index>

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Manuscripts are to be submitted electronically to

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Indexing Information:

Filosofia Theoretica is abstracted/indexed in AJOL, Google Scholar, OCLC Worldcat, Archive.org, Scribd, SABINET, Academia.edu, AfricaBib, Stanford.edu, EBSCO Database, Black Studies Center Index, JournalTOCs, etc.

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Editorial

One of the most intrusive mistakes of classical philosophy is the supposition that philosophy of any color and taste that is worth the honor of philosophy must be done through the eye and vantage point of Western philosophy. This systemic idea-funneling has to a very large extent silenced the African voice and where there is a little succor, it has led to transliteration, copycatism and philosophy of commentary. Members of the Universalist school in particular are guilty of spreading this Western agenda for some decades now. They police other African philosophers and cajole them to the path they must follow without as little as producing a specimen of what they recommend. We nonetheless acknowledge their contributions to the debate but insist at the same time that the moment has arrived when we must summon courage to say that “A” has not been good enough hence, “B”. We, therefore, present Volume 4 Number 1 of *Filosofia Theoretica*, a journal dedicated to the promotion of conversational orientation in African philosophy. Conversational philosophizing breaks away from the perverse orientation introduced by the Universalist school in African philosophy. Papers published in the journal have phenomenological basis and thrive on productive conversations among actors. We believe that conversational philosophy represents one of the modes through which the episteme of African philosophy could grow.

To this end, Prof. Fainos Mangena writing from University of Zimbabwe, outlines and discusses the idea of deep ecology as defended by Arne Næss (1973) as well as Bill Devall and George Sessions (1985). He looks at how deep ecology has responded to the dominant view in ecological ethics, especially its attendant theory – anthropocentrism or homo-centrism or simply the reason-based account – which he outlines and explains in the first section of his paper. At the end, he looks at the feasibility (or lack thereof) of applying deep ecology in Sub-Saharan African ecological contexts focusing particularly on the Shona ecological matrix of Zimbabwe. He answers the question: How applicable is the idea of deep ecology in the African context? Having reviewed Zimbabwean literature, he comes to the conclusion that the Shona environment has a different form of deep ecology that is not only anchored on spirituality but that it also interprets cosmology and ecology from a communitarian viewpoint. This conversational essay is rich on a number of interesting fronts to wit; ecology, African philosophy and Zimbabwean thought, by far a veritable research resource in African environmental thought.

Dr. Idom Inyabri of the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Calabar holds a critical conversation with Joseph Ushie. He responds to Joseph Ushie’s argument for Neo-colonialism rather than Postcolonialism as the most appropriate theory for the criticism of what the latter calls Current African Literature. He posits that Ushie’s proposition is based on the premise that Postcolonialism as a theory runs counter to the neo-colonial situation of Africa since the attainment of flag independence by different African nations. Hence, neo-colonialism answers directly to the socio-political and economic condition of most African countries and should be utilised in the appreciation of most literatures from

the continent. In this meta-criticism Dr. Inyabri proceeds by making bare the crux of Ushie's argument, then he identifies obvious contradictions in Ushie's logic and critically presents the merit of Postcolonialism as a cultural theory fit enough for the critical engagement of Current African Literature. Those interested in African literature would find this piece intrusive and academically exciting.

Writing from the University of Calabar, Dr. Jonathan Chimakonam converses with a number of actors and Uduma O. Uduma in particular who have in the last three to four decades dwelt on the criteria question in African philosophy. He observed that old campaigners like Paulin Hountondji, Odera Oruka, Peter Bodunrin, Kwasi Wiredu, Sophie Oluwole, Innocent Onyewuenyi, etc., have all dwelt on the question with some going more in-depth than others. His aim in the work was to attempt to settle what he calls the metaphilosophical vicious circle of the criteria question once and for all by recommending the logic criterion. On the basis of this, he attempted to orchestrate a shift from the vicious circle of metaphilosophical engagements to a more fruitful conversational engagement in contemporary African philosophy. Those who follow Chimakonam in his efforts to develop conversational thinking know exactly what to expect in this excitingly original piece.

And from Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, David Oyedola Converses with African philosophers on the subject of African philosophy and the search for an African philosopher. A deeply engaging piece, this essay appropriates the tools of critical conversationalism in investigating the yardstick for doing African philosophy and the qualification for being an African philosopher. Anyone wishing to have a clearer view of the project of African philosophy in this contemporary time should read this essay.

In the conversations section, we feature three conversational essays. The first comes from Aribiah David Attoe who engages J. O. Chimakonam on his work entitled "Mental Surgery: Another Look at the Identity Problem". In this piece, Attoe disagrees with Chimakonam on his physicalist/sociological location of identity. For him, Chimakonam's thesis fails to recognize that the sociological influence on the concept of personal identity is based both on a false premise and on an invalid argument, it fails to recognize the role of the "self" in the concept of personal identity and finally, it fails to recognize the fact that the concept of personal identity is nothing more than a necessary illusion. He submits that our idea of the "self" or personal identity is nothing more than illusion which we cannot help but have. Like the mirage of water on the road which we cannot help but have because of the sun's intensity, the illusion of personal identity is due to our brains interpretation of its ability to understand reality. In understanding consciousness (the foundation of our understanding of the self) we discover that consciousness is nothing more than the ability to perceive, understand and give meaning to that which is perceived as well as our emotional states, etc., (CHURCHLAND 2002, p133). In a bid to give meaning to this process of consciousness – a sort of meta interpretation – the brain gives us the illusion of a self distinct from itself and it is to this illusory self that most individuals feel their personal identity resides.

Also Victor Nweke engages with Augustine Atabor on the latter's paper entitled "The Question of Objectivity, its Implications for the Social Sciences in the Era of Postmodernism: Africa in Perspective". Nweke argues that Atabor's position that postmodernism attempts to deny the possibility of objective truth in the social sciences might not be correct. Nweke submits that: first, postmodernism is the *vindicator* not the *vituperator* of the social sciences. Second, the claim of Atabor that "the attack of postmodernism on positivism is an attack aimed at the possible claims of the objectivity by the social sciences" (2014, 55) is inaccurate. Third, while "Modernism encourages the universalization of Western values" (2014, 58) postmodernism encourages the relativization of all values, extols cross-cultural borrowing and challenges intellectuals in all cultures, including Africa, to seek and devise solutions to the diverse problems affecting human beings in the contemporary world using any fruitful method. Fourth, postmodernism sees objectivity in the social sciences and indeed in all the sciences as a matter of "compatibility" or "solidarity" with the "consensus" reached by the works of leading authorities in a given intellectual community at a given point in time. Last, globalization today is more or less the universalization of Western values because it is riding on the wheels of modernism, and an ideal global ideology will only be possible if it emerge as a product of consensus reached by the views of leading authorities in all regional intellectual and social communities that make up the globe.

On his part, Segun Samuel holds a critical conversation with Chimakonam on his essay on Interrogatory Theory. Interrogatory Theory (IT) according to Chimakonam is a social philosophy that seeks a revitalization of institutions in modern Africa. Its purpose is a "reflective assessment or interrogation of social structures (tradition and modernity) in order to deconstruct, construct/reconstruct or synthesize where necessary. Samuel criticizes Chimakonam's interrogation of the institutions of Education, Religion and Democracy in which he concludes that religion was a problem for Africa's development; and that some aspects of human freedom must necessarily be repressed for Africa to make progress. For Samuel, it is rather capitalism that plays a pivotal role in remanding African in poverty. In his submission, Samuel insists that all three institutions studied by interrogatory theory have a basal and common characteristic which has led to their defect in postcolonial Africa. This is the unbridled human selfishness that has been endorsed by the wave of capitalism; these have undoubtedly exploited all institutions in postcolonial Africa. Indeed, those who have longed to see the growth of African philosophy would definitely enjoy reading this section on conversations.

Finally, Irem Moses Ogah produces a fine review of the book [Arguments and Clarifications: A Philosophical Encounter between J. O. Chimakonam and M. I. Edet on the Ibuanyidandaness of Complementary Ontology], 2014. 3RD Logic Option: Calabar. Paperback. Pp147, written by Mesembe I. Edet and Jonathan O. Chimakonam. He presents the arguments of the three parts of the work taking care to expose and examine the value of the tool of conversationalism as employed in the work. He identifies some weaknesses and highlights the gains of the new system.

On the whole, the Volume 4 Number 1 offers interesting articles for the reading pleasure of all. We are once again proud to bring to our readers this exciting issue. We announce that *Filosofia Theoretica* has now been added to the index databases of EBSCO and SABINET. We announce also that from this issue, every article published on *Filosofia Theoretica* receives a Digital Object Identifier (DOIs) assigned by AJOL, South Africa who simultaneously publishes the Online edition of the *Filosofia Theoretica*.

An anonymous African thinker once said that an old woman never grows too old for the dance steps she is adept in. We savor our growing experience in publications in African thought. But above all, we praise our contributors who are the real heroes ceaselessly penning down essays that promote and sustain conversational African philosophy. *Hakuna Matata!*

Editor -in- Chief

CORRIGENDUM

In Volume 3 Number 2, we referred to Augustine Atabor of the University of Nigeria Nsukka as Dr. Augustine Atabor. Augustine Atabor is yet to obtain a PhD. The management and Editorial Board of *Filosofia Theoretica* regret this mistake.

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HOW APPLICABLE IS THE IDEA OF DEEP ECOLOGY IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT?

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.1>

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Abstract

In this paper, I outlined and discussed the idea of deep ecology as defended by Arne Næss (1973) as well as Bill Devall and George Sessions (1985). I especially looked at how deep ecology has responded to the dominant view in ecological ethics, especially its attendant theory – anthropocentrism or homo-centrism or simply the reason-based account – which I outlined and explained in the first section of this paper. In the final analysis, I looked at the feasibility (or lack thereof) of applying deep ecology in Sub-Saharan African ecological contexts focusing particularly on the Shona ecological matrix of Zimbabwe. My intention was to answer the question: How applicable is the idea of deep ecology in the African context? Having reviewed Zimbabwean literature, I came to the conclusion that the Shona environment had a different form of deep ecology that was not only anchored on spirituality but that it also interpreted cosmology and ecology from a communitarian viewpoint.

Keywords: Deep ecology, the dominant view, anthropocentrism, spirituality, the human world, the non-human world.

Introduction

This paper looks at the feasibility (or lack thereof) of applying the idea of deep ecology in non-Western ecological contexts such as the ecological context of the Shona people of Zimbabwe¹. It begins by highlighting the major assumptions of the dominant worldview as well as its major weaknesses. The dominant view states that nature exists to serve humanity and that ecology must be preserved solely for the benefit of present and future generations of human beings. What this amounts to is that human beings have intrinsic value compared to non-human beings which have only instrumental value. Defenders of the dominant view are called anthropocentrists or homo-centrists. The major weakness of the dominant view is that it does not consider human beings to be part of nature, a position which is problematic.

The paper then proceeds to discuss the idea of deep ecology as a response to the dominant worldview. To this end, Arne Næss, the one who coined the term *deep ecology*, defines deep ecology as that deeper questioning about human life, society and nature which goes beyond the so-called factual scientific level to the level of self and earth wisdom (NÆSS cited in MACKINNON 1998, 358). For Næss, the

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¹The Shona people constitute the largest tribal grouping in Zimbabwe and their language is quite widespread since it has six dialects namely, Karanga, Korekore, Kalanga, Zezuru, Manyika and Ndau.

foundations of deep ecology are the basic intuitions and experiencing of ourselves and nature which comprise ecological consciousness (1998, 358). Deep ecology differs from the dominant view in that it considers nature to be at par with human beings and best summed up in eight basic principles which shall be outlined and explained later in the paper (DEVALL and SESSIONS cited in MACKINNON 1998, 359). Having identified the problems associated with Næss and Sessions' deep ecology, the paper argues that this version of deep ecology cannot be applied in contexts that are non-Western particularly the ecological context of the Shona people of Zimbabwe where the idea of ecology has both cultural and spiritual connotations.

Besides, Næss and Sessions' deep ecology appeal more to cultures that are individualistic and yet the Shona culture is communitarian. I conclude my paper with a summative table on the dissimilarities between Næss and Sessions' deep ecology and the Shona ecological version of deep ecology, I begin my account by discussing the major assumptions of the dominant worldview, focusing particularly on this view as defended by members of the anthropocentric or homocentric or reason based school.

The Dominant Worldview

Briefly put, the dominant worldview² in ecological ethics holds that nature exists for the service of humanity. It maintains that the environment³ and its content have instrumental value and must be utilized for the benefit of both present and future generations of human beings. Defenders of the dominant worldview believe that only human beings have intrinsic value because they have the faculty of reason which sets them apart from other beings. According to the anthropocentric or homocentric school, human beings because of their ability to use reason, have intrinsic worth because they confront choices that are purely moral; they lay down moral laws for others and for themselves (COHEN 1986, 94-95). From this viewpoint, reason is used as a criterion to confer moral status to human beings while at the same time denying the same to non-human beings.

As a result of this thinking, defenders of the dominant worldview, especially members of the anthropocentric school, see nothing wrong with the cruel treatment of non-human animals unless such treatment would lead to bad consequences for

² To the question: Why is it called the dominant view? I would say, it is called the dominant view probably because it has many defenders dating from Socrates to the present generation of environmental philosophers. The other reason is that it is a position defended by human beings and it is about human beings superior place in the environment.

³ When defining ecological ethics and environmental ethics, it is important to begin by distinguishing between *ecology* and the *environment*. Thus, while *ecology* deals with the relationship between organisms and their environment, the *environment* is basically the organisms' surroundings (Rudeen, 2009). Given this background, the paper would therefore define *ecological ethics* as the ethics that guide organisms in their everyday encounter with the environment and men while *environmental ethics* are defined simply as the ethics that guide men as he relates with the environment.

human beings (MAPPEs and ZEMBATY 1997, 459). Kant puts it aptly when he observes thus: “cruelty towards a dog might encourage a person to develop a character which would be desensitized to cruelty towards human beings” (KANT cited in INFIELD 1963, 241). J. B Callicot (1980, 325), one of the avid defenders of the anthropocentric school, remarks that “only human beings are able to give values to the eco-system and this means that all intrinsic value is grounded in human beings and projected onto the natural object that excites the value.” While this thinking is popular among anthropocentrists in the West and has found an audience there, it also has influenced the thinking of some African people especially some Zimbabweans.

This is so because Zimbabwe’s new constitution is anthropocentric when it comes to the issue of environmental rights and privileges (cf. MANGENA 2014, 225-226). For instance, Chapter 4 of Zimbabwe’s new constitution entitled: *Declaration of Rights*, section 73, page 46 categorically states that: Every person has the right:

- (a) To an environment that is not harmful to their health or well being and
- (b) To have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that,
 - (i) Prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
 - (ii) Promote conservation and,
 - (iii) Secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting economic and social development (MANGENA 2014, 226).

Although item b (iii) does seem to be silent about the need to have the environment protected for the benefit of human beings, the presence of the words; *sustainable, economic* and *social* development, point to some deeply entrenched anthropocentrism. These are not the kind of words used to describe activities in the non-human world.

Elsewhere, I have argued that African attitudes to the environment are different from those of the Westerners in that the former regard human beings as part of nature while the latter view the same as separated from nature. Thus, the former consider human beings to be related to non-human beings through the ideas of totemism and spiritualism (MANGENA 2013, 33). Other Zimbabwean scholars, whose works I have reviewed, have also provided a corpus of literature that reflects on the positive cultural attitudes to nature by the Shona people (MASAKA and CHEMHURU 2010; MUROVE 2007 and TARINGA 2014). The question now is; if this is generally what Zimbabweans think about the relationship between human beings and the environment, then what explains the anthropocentric traits found in the country’s new constitution? Isn’t there too much romanticization of culture here?

Probably, part of the answer to these two questions would be to say that there is a difference between what is ideal and what is obtaining in any given society and at any given time. My point is that although the Zimbabwean constitution is anthropocentric, it may not necessarily be a reflection of how most Zimbabweans view nature. That Zimbabweans revere nature is not a matter of ideation; it is a

matter of fact. This is expressed in Zimbabwe's folk tales, proverbs and riddles. For instance, in Zimbabwean folk tales, animals like the hare and the baboon are personified, with the hare being given the designation *muzukuru* (nephew) and the baboon being given the designation *sekuru* (uncle). While the former is portrayed as clever or intelligent; the latter as portrayed is foolish. This personification, no doubt, shows the cordial relationship between men and nature.

Even the idea of totemism that motivates human beings to want to appropriate animal traits like courage, humility and cunningness shows that Zimbabweans are generally not anthropocentric in character. *Vaera Shumba* (Those who belong to the Lion totem), for instance, feel respected when called by their totems: *Makadiiko Shumba?* (How are you Lion?) or *Makadiiko Nzou?* (How are you Elephant?) Having said that, one can argue that Zimbabwe's new constitution could be a product of the legacy of colonialism where some people tend to think that what is European is more civilized than what is African.⁴ In the next section, I define, outline and discuss the major assumptions of deep ecology as it responds to the dominant view in environmental ethics.

The Assumptions of Deep Ecology

To begin with, the term *deep ecology* was coined by Arne Næss in his 1973 article entitled: *The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements* (in MACKINNON 1998, 358). In this article, Næss defines deep ecology as that deeper questioning about human life, society and nature which goes beyond the so-called factual scientific level to the level of self and earth wisdom (1998, 358). For Næss, the foundations of deep ecology were the basic intuitions and experiencing of ourselves and nature which comprise ecological consciousness (1998, 358). What Næss is probably suggesting here is that human beings will only be in a position to understand and appreciate nature if they can avoid seeing it as something that is there to solve their problems.

Thus, deep ecology as a form of ecological consciousness differs greatly from the dominant worldview that considers nature to be at a lower level than the human being. Such a world view sees men as the measure of all things (to borrow Protogoras' words). As Bill Devall and George Sessions (in MACKINNON 1998, 358) put it in agreement with the above submission:

Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant world view...which regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation.

Devall and Sessions maintain that “for thousands of years Western culture has been too intoxicated with the idea of dominance: with dominance of humans over nature, masculine over feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor, with the dominance of the West over non-Western cultures” (1998, 358). For Devall and Sessions, deep ecology allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions (1998, 358). Devall and Sessions maintain that for deep ecology, the study of our place in the earth household includes the study of ourselves as part of the organic whole (1998: 359). The point that Devall and Sessions are making is that human beings do not lie outside of nature they are part of it. They present the following as the eight basic principles of deep ecology:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes (1998: 359).

Næss’ and Sessions’ Explanation of the Basic Principles

For Næss and Sessions, *basic principle 1* refers to the biosphere or more accurately to the ecosphere as a whole and this includes individuals, species, populations, habitat as well as human and non-human cultures (1998, 361). Their point is that there is need for a deep concern and respect about the ecosphere as a whole. They use the term *life* in a non-technical sense to refer also to inanimate objects like rivers, landscapes and ecosystems (1998, 361). By *inherent value*, they mean that something has worth even if conscious beings have no awareness, interests and appreciation of it (1998, 361). Commenting on *basic principle 2*, Næss and Sessions argue that the so called simple, lower or primitive species of plants and animals contribute

essentially to the richness and diversity of life. Næss and Sessions notes that these have value in themselves and are not only steps toward the so-called higher or rational life forms (1998, 361).

Coming to *basic principle 3*, Næss and Sessions postulate that the term *vital need* is left deliberately *unclarified* to allow for considerable latitude in judgment (1998, 362). For Næss and Sessions when defining *vital needs*, it is important to consider differences in weather patterns as well as differences in societal structures especially as they exist at present. They give the example of Eskimos who, according to them, still need snowmobiles to satisfy their vital needs (1998, 362). For them, people in the materially richest countries cannot be expected to reduce their excessive interference with the nonhuman world to a moderate level overnight. If ever this will happen, it will take time (1998, 362).

In their explanation of *basic principle 4* Næss and Sessions quoted from the report by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities which said that high human population growth rates in many developing countries were diminishing the quality of life for many millions of people in the 1970s and 80s. They used this to justify their claim that the quality of both human and non-human life had a correlation with population growth, meaning that an increase in population had a negative impact on the quality of life while the reverse was equally true. On *basic principle 5*, Næss and Sessions observe that the slogan “non-interference” does not imply that humans should not modify some ecosystems as do other species. Humans have modified the earth and will probably continue to do so. At issue is the nature and extent of such interference (1998, 362).

Næss and Sessions explain *basic principle 6* by observing the detrimental effects of the idea of economic growth especially its incompatibility with basic principles 1-5 (1998, 362). Their point is that there is only “a faint resemblance between ideal sustainable forms of economic growth and present policies of the industrial societies and to them “sustainable” still means “sustainable in relation to humans” (1998, 362). It would seem, as Næss and Sessions argue, that governments are not interested in deep ecological issues that ensure the protection of the non-human world, all they are interested in seeing is the growth of their economies. Næss and Sessions therefore urge governments to think globally, and to act locally with regard to ecological issues (1998, 362).

Coming to *basic principles 7 and 8*, Næss and Sessions believe that the idea of life quality cannot only be restricted to human life; it must also be extended to other life forms as both the human world and the non-human world have inherent value. In fact, they argue that while for some economists, the idea of life quality is vague; For Næss and Sessions, it is the non quantitative nature of the term that is vague as it is difficult to quantify adequately what is important for the quality of life as discussed here (1998, 363). On *basic principle 8*, although Næss and Sessions argue that those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to try and implement these changes, they do admit that people can have different opinions about priorities (1998, 363).

My Analysis of the Eight Basic Principles of Deep Ecology

In *basic principle 1*, Næss and Sessions argue that both human beings and non-human beings have intrinsic value in themselves. I have no problem with this argument but my problem comes when they argue *these values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes*. This second part of the principle, to me, takes away the intrinsic or inherent value of the non-human world thereby giving it instrumental value. Thus, the principle seems to contradict itself. Besides, there is no force that ensures that the human world will not violate this principle, something like a law, or an invisible agent.

With regard to *basic principle 2*, which states that “richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves,” Næss and Sessions have not clearly demonstrated how richness and diversity of life forms can give intrinsic or inherent value to both human beings and non-human beings. Besides, this principle seems, to me, to contradict the second part of the first principle which considers the non-human world to have instrumental value. As I have observed earlier, there does not seem to be a closer relationship between the human world and the non-human world, that is, nothing brings the two together. But whichever way one may want to look at it, deep ecologists are committed to seeing human beings treating the environment with utmost respect.

The *third basic principle*, just like the first, treats the non-human world as world that has instrumental value to the human world. This is notwithstanding the caution that Næss and Sessions make to the effect that human beings should not reduce the richness and diversity of nature. Besides, there is no attempt to define “vital needs” and to explain why it is important to have these needs satisfied at the expense of the non-human world. Even if these “vital needs” were to be explained, I also believe that the non-human world has vital needs which the human world should satisfy. It cannot be a one way traffic. While there is an element of commitment to seeing a society that respects the interests and needs of other life forms, this basic principle sounds anthropocentric.

Coming to the *fourth and fifth basic principles* combined, I do not know what Næss and Sessions mean when they say, “the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.” This statement, to me, contradicts the first and third principles where part of the emphasis is on having other life forms existing for the benefit of humanity. The questions that I have for them are: How is the human population to be reduced if everything should work to its advantage? How is this flourishing compatible with a decrease in population? Fine, I hear their argument when they point out that an increase in both the human and non-human population has a negative impact on the quality of life of both but this needs to be further explained to show how best the human populations can be reduced, especially given the fact that countries in Africa and other third world zones have cultures that promote polygamy which, in turn, results in the increase in human populations.

In regard to the fifth principle, it is true that the human world is interfering a lot with the non-human world and it is true that the situation is worsening. But part of the reason why the situation is worsening is because deep ecologists like Næss and Sessions – other than calling for the revision of the dominant view – have not really taken a position. They stand on the fence. My point is that we need to take a stand. If I were to take a Christian position, I would argue that human beings are only there to look after God's creatures; there are only Stewards and not Owners. If I were to take the position of African Religions, I would argue that *Mwari* (Creator God) through his *Midzimu* (ancestors) own both the human and non-human world and no human being has the right to ill-treat that which he does not own.

In regard to the sixth, seventh and eighth principles, I agree with Næss and Sessions that policies must be changed to ensure that the relationship between the human world and the non-human world should not be a horse and a rider relationship. The human world must appreciate the fact that its existence is to a larger extent dependent on the existence of the non-human world. The question: Who should initiate this change of policies? How represented will the non-human world be? Assuming that deep ecologists are very sincere and that they are committed to seeing this change of policy, my position is that they can initiate the change through advocacy, and that way the interests of the non-human world will be safeguarded. In order to have these policies implemented, there is need for some kind of force (law or some invisible agent) that will ensure that people have an obligation to be bound by them. Without this force, the efficacy of deep ecology will remain questionable. With this suggestion, I am not blind to the fact that deep ecologists may not have the power to enforce these laws; my point is that they can put more pressure to governments to implement these laws.

But can we say that the same kind of deep ecology that Næss, Devall and Sessions are talking about is the same kind of deep ecology that obtains in the Shona environment? While there can be no doubt that the idea of deep ecology exists in the Shona environment, there is doubt that it exists in the form that Næss, Devall and Sessions have explained above. Below, I explore the idea of deep ecology in the Shona environment.

Another Corpus of Literature, another version of Deep Ecology

The subject of ecology has been approached from different academic viewpoints in Zimbabwe but while none of the literature that I have reviewed has mentioned the phrase *deep ecology*, my research findings show that there has been a lot of reflection on this subject especially in the Shona environment.⁵ The literature that is key to this

⁵ Elsewhere, I have distinguished between the Western environment and the African environment by arguing that while the former is anthropocentric and non spiritual, the latter is non-anthropocentric and spiritual (Mangena, 2013, 29-31). At this juncture, I wish to point out that the Shona environment, which I will explore in this section, is a sub-category of the African environment.

debate was produced by, chief among others, Munamato Chemhuru and Dennis Masaka (2010), Zvakanyorwa Wilbert Sadomba (2014), Nisbert Taringa and Fainos Mangena (2015). Below, I review this literature, beginning with Chemhuru and Masaka (2010) who look at the place of taboos in the ecological matrix of the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

Chemhuru and Masaka (2010) provide some important insights into the Shona conceptualization of deep ecology. They argue that in order to protect the environment, the Shona make use of *zviera* (taboos) which fall in the category of avoidance rules. Taboos for Chemhuru and Masaka forbid members of the human community from performing certain actions such as eating some kinds of food, walking on or visiting sacred sites, cruelty to non-human animals and using nature's resources in an unsustainable manner (2010, 122). Chemhuru and Masaka give examples of these taboos in their argument. For instance, they pick the Shona taboo: *Ukawetera mumvura unorwara nechirwere chehozhwe* (If you urinate in water, you will catch Bilharzia) which is meant to dissuade people from abusing water sources, a behaviour which may lead to diseases (2010, 123). Besides, water is a habitat for other aquatic creatures, like fish, that must also be protected. Urine contains some components of nitrates that can cause the accumulation of algae, which is dangerous to aquatic life (2010: 127). Taboos are also used to promote the existence of plant life in water sources that may also be affected by unbecoming human behaviour.

Anyone who breaks this taboo becomes a threat to the health and wellbeing of other people and yet to fail to appreciate and respect the interests of other people is the worst thing that can ever happen to a Shona man or woman whose understanding of existence is communitarian (cf. MENKITI, 2006). Thus, whatever the individual does will not only affect others but it will also affect him. Ramose (1999, 50) argues that individuals can only meaningfully define their existence if they recognise that they need each other. Thus, the appropriation of taboo wisdom in Shona society is meant to promote harmony between individuals and their communities as well as between human communities and non-human communities.

Violators of these taboos are believed to invite the wrath of the spirit world and so every person would not want to be in a situation where he or she has to be punished severely for failing to observe certain rules. The punishments usually range from bad luck, disease, drought and even death (2010, 123). Thus, the observance of taboos promotes...life that fosters a desirable environmental ethic, while the breaking of taboos leads the moral agent to a vicious life that disregards not only the moral standing of the environment but also its sustainability (2010, 123). It is also important to note that in their appeal to the use of taboos, Chemhuru and Masaka (2010, 131) are also interested in the preservation of endangered species.

The following taboo helps to put this point into proper perspective: *Ukauraya Shato mvura hainayi* (If you kill a Python, there will be no rainfall). Their point is that the Python is among those animals that are slowly becoming extinct and

so they need to be protected and so the taboo will help in protecting this endangered species. Human beings need rainfall for survival, without it they will die. Given two choices, one that requires that they kill Pythons and experience droughts and another one that requires that they do not kill pythons and have enough rainfalls to sustain their livelihoods; they will choose the latter. So, the efficacy of this taboo is quite evident here. There are many other taboos that I could cite from Chemhuru and Masaka's study, but because of limited space and time, I will not be able to do just to that; instead, I will now look at the prospects of deriving deep ecology in Chemhuru and Masaka's submissions.

While Chemhuru and Masaka have not described this kind of ethic – in their own words – as deep ecology, there is a sense in which one can argue that theirs is a work of deep ecology that is spiritually anchored, for in their environmental ethic, Chemhuru and Masaka are not only appealing to taboos so as to have non-human animals protected but also to protect sacred sites as well as plants and vegetation. Although Masaka and Chemhuru have not really mentioned, by name, some of the sacred sites that need protection, I have no doubt in my mind that they refer to sacred sites like mountains (Buchwa and Inyangani), rivers (Chirorodziva) and rocks (Matonjeni/Zame) whose role and importance, I will explain shortly.

The idea of *deep ecology* also runs through Sadomba's 2014 essay which is published in a volume edited by CG Mararike entitled: *Land: An Empowerment Asset for Africa: The Human Factor Perspective*, published by the University of Zimbabwe Publications. In this essay, Sadomba (2014, 352) observes that indigenous Zimbabweans have a cosmology that is different from that of the Europeans. This cosmology, for Sadomba, is based on a philosophy that recognises the harmonious trinity of nature, society and the spirit world (2014, 352). These three, for Sadomba, have a symbiotic relationship, that is, they are interdependent (2014, 352). The spirit world, for Sadomba, comprises of animal spirits, human spirits, clan spirits as well as territorial spirits. These lesser spirits according to Sadomba report to *Mwari* who is the supreme spirit (2014, 352). While some of the spirits protect human beings and others are harmful to them, they all act in a variety of ways to guide and control human and societal behaviour (2014, 352).

Sadomba maintains that communication between the material and spiritual worlds is through mediums that include people, flora and fauna (2014, 353). What this suggests is that since the non-human world also participates in the sustenance of nature, it follows that this world has intrinsic value. For Sadomba, the spirit world and nature are more superior to human societies (2014, 353). Although Sadomba does not say it explicitly in this chapter, what I can discern from his argument is that the superiority of the spirit world to the human world gives the former the authority to reward good behaviour and punish errant behaviour.

Coming to the issue of land, Sadomba argues that land is strongly connected to the spirit world as it harbours infinite secrets and so it demands caution in interacting with it, as lack of due care may invite vengeance from the spirit world (SADOMBA 1998). By arguing that land is connected to the spirit world and by

virtue of the fact that land provide food, shelter, clothes and life to all forms of existence; Sadomba, no doubt, acknowledges that this important asset has intrinsic value, just like the human being and the non-human being that is sustained by it as well as the sacred or ancestral sites that sit on land.

What gives sacred sites or ancestral sites intrinsic worth is that they are social spaces that link the dead with the living (2014, 355). In fact, the Shona believe that sacred sites like rocks, caves, mountains and rivers are places where territorial spirits stay as they do their job of protecting the environment through the enforcement of moral codes of behaviour. Certain sanctions will befall those people who fail to revere these sacred sites. Many parents have had their children disappear as a result of failing to observe moral codes that guide and regulate behaviour during tours at these sites and recently a whiteman also disappeared after visiting mount Inyangani as a tourist.

Taringa and Mangena (2015) have looked at the importance of Shona Religion in defining the African environment focusing particularly on the behaviour of veterans of the armed struggle during the *Second Chimurenga* and also the behaviour of Zimbabweans during and after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). This period is also known as the *Third Chimurenga* phase of Zimbabwe's struggle for total independence. Taringa and Mangena (2015, 42) argue that although Zimbabwe's liberation war was fought in the bush, veterans of the armed struggle respected both animal life and plant life. These veterans of the armed struggle respected the socio-religious rules and boundaries that were there in order to protect the interests of other species in the environment. In return, these species also respected these veterans of the armed struggle and they worked together to defeat the common enemy, the white coloniser (TARINGA and MANGENA 2015, 42).

Note of course, that Taringa and Mangena (2015, 43) did not only talk about animals and human beings' role in the consummation of the liberation struggle, they also talked about the importance of land itself as having given life to animals and vegetation as well as hiding places to these veterans of the armed struggle (2015, 43). Most importantly, for Taringa and Mangena, land was the abode of the ancestor spirits to whom people would pour libations from time to time in order to ask for spiritual guidance (2015, 43). While Taringa and Mangena did not directly make reference to the idea of deep ecology, their argument point to a different version of deep ecology that has a cultural and spiritual dimension.

Fast forward to the year 2001 when the FTLRP begins in earnest, one notices a paradigm shift in the attitudes of Zimbabweans who had benefitted from land re-distribution. Unlike the veterans of the armed struggle who respected land, animals and vegetation; beneficiaries of the FTLRP destroyed the environment with reckless abandon. As Taringa and Mangena aver, the Third Chimurenga witnessed one of the worst chaotic periods on the environmental scene. Some lands and forests that had been reserved as sacred in some communities fell victim to these land hungry Zimbabweans (2015, 43). Many conservancies were intruded and animals were slaughtered at will as the powers of traditional leaders such as chiefs had been

usurped by these land hungry elements (2015, 43). Shona Religion was used to justify this haphazard, chaotic and destructive approach to land re-distribution which left many animals and vegetation dead (2015, 43). Thus, all life forms and non-life forms were affected by these violent land invasions.

But what could explain this paradigm shift? Why were veterans of the armed struggle so respectful of the environment and its contents? Why were the beneficiaries of the FTLRP disrespectful of nature? These three questions have no easy answers. What is, however, probable is that this paradigm shift could have been a result of the colonial individual mentality that had been sown, among natives, as a result of the cross pollination of cultures, an attitude which was absent during the Second Chimurenga war. Thus, everyone wanted to have a piece of the cake and so the idea of collective and communal ownership of the land that had seen veterans of the armed struggle respecting land as the abode of the ancestors just disappeared. Colonialism had also resulted in the Christianization of the natives who no longer revered their ancestors as owners of the land.

Whichever way one may want to look at it and based on Taringa and Mangena's findings, the Shona environment has a different form of deep ecology which is onto-triadic as it involves the participation of the living, the living timeless and *Mwari/Musikavanhu/Unkulunkulu* (Creator God). This is totally different from the deep ecology that is enunciated by Næss, Devall and Sessions which is based on the idea of personal ethics and it only involves the participation of the living and has no invisible agent that ensures the implementation of policies required to build a sound and deep ecological ethic.

Having reviewed the above literature, what we can all see is that many forces are involved in ensuring that both the human world and the non-human world have intrinsic worth. It is not just left to human beings to decide whether or not the non-human world is worth respecting, the spirit world has a say as well. Most, importantly, the relationship between the human world and the non-human world is that of mutual interdependence. Below, I give a tabular summary of the dissimilarities between the idea of deep ecology in the West and the idea of deep ecology in African thought specifically in the Shona environment.

Table 1: Deep Ecology in the West and Deep Ecology in the Shona Environment

A Summative Table

Deep Ecology in the West	Deep Ecology in the Shona Environment
All life Forms have intrinsic value but sometimes the non-human world has instrumental value.	All life forms have intrinsic value
The non-human world should satisfy the vital needs of the human world	The non-human world and the human world are mutually dependent
Policy changes that ensure that the interests and needs of all life forms are safeguarded are not accompanied by external forces that ensure the implementation of the policies	The spirit world ensures that policy changes with regard to safeguarding the interests and needs of the non-human world are implemented.
Deep ecology is understood in the sense of individual values	Deep ecology is understood in the sense of communal values
Only the human world has vital needs that must be satisfied by the non-human world	Both the human world and the non-human world have vital needs
Individual violations of the rights of other life forms usually go unpunished.	Violations of the rights of other life forms are punishable by death, misfortunes, droughts and bad luck.
The non-human world does not talk or communicate and human beings act on its behalf when certain moral codes are violated	The non-human world talks or communicates and it acts without the input of human beings when certain moral codes are violated.

Conclusion

In this paper, I looked at the idea of deep ecology in terms of how it has responded to the dominant view in environmental ethics which considers nature or the environment to exist for the service of humanity. Proponents of deep ecology such as Næss, Devall and Sessions demonstrated the efficacy of deep ecology in challenging this somewhat dangerous position especially in the West. One of their chief arguments was that both the human world and the non-human world had intrinsic worth irrespective of the usefulness of the non-human world to the human world. I, however, heavily criticized Næss, Devall and Sessions for vacillating in their argument and for failing to take a clear position. At one point they seem committed in seeing an environment based on equality; at another time they still feel that the human world is more superior to the non-human world. In my attempt to answer the question: How applicable is the idea of deep ecology in the African context? I made the important observation that the idea of deep ecology in the West is different from the idea of deep ecology in Africa which is anchored on communitarian values and spirituality.

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NEO-COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE BANE OF NEO-ESSENTIALIST THEORISING IN CURRENT AFRICAN LITERATURE

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.2>

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Abstract

This paper is a response to Joseph Ushie's argument for Neo-colonialism rather than Postcolonialism as the most appropriate theory for the criticism of what he calls Current African Literature. His proposition is based on the premise that Postcolonialism as a theory runs counter to the neo-colonial situation of Africa since the attainment of flag independence by different African nations. Hence, neo-colonialism answers directly to the socio-political and economic condition of most African countries and should be utilised in the appreciation of most literatures from the continent. In this meta-criticism we proceed by making bare the crux of Ushie's argument, then identify obvious contradictions in his logic and critically present the merit of Postcolonialism as a cultural theory fit enough for the critical engagement of Current African Literature.

Keywords: Neo-colonialism, Postcolonialism, African Literature, Critical Theory, Meta-criticism, Joseph Ushie

Introduction

In *The Sun Literary Review* of Saturday August 4, 2012, Joseph Ushie published an essay entitled "A Neo-colonialist, Linguistic and Stylistic Study of Current African Literature" in which he argues for Neo-colonialism as the most appropriate theory for the interrogation of what he identifies as Current African Literature. His reason for this is premised on the fact that since after "flag independence" (32), African countries, in all spheres of life, namely: political, economic and socio-cultural, have been thriving under the neo-colonial condition. This neo-colonial status of the continent, especially in Nigeria, is seriously inscribed in her post-independent literature(s) or "current literature" as he prefers to identify it. However, Ushie laments that in spite of the apparent neo-colonial condition of the continent, which is manifest in her peoples' consumption pattern, aspirations, power politics and inter-group relations, African literature has continually been interrogated through the prism of what he, derogatively, calls "the imposter post-colonial" literary theory (32). To prove this "ignorant[t]" (33) mis-application of reading strategy, Ushie takes us through an expose of the two concepts in contention: Neo-colonialism and Post-colonialism.

Although Ushie has done much to define and give depth to his take on the two theories, it is expedient for a meta-critical endeavour, such as this, to briefly re-state his perspective of the theories for the reader's appreciation of the matter hereafter. Leaning on C. L. Innes, Ushie acknowledges that there are two senses of

the term Post-colonialism – the “hyphenated and the non-hyphenated ‘post-colonialism/postcolonialism’ ” (32). The hyphenated is a historical index for the period in a nation’s life after it has gained independence and taken full charge of her political, economic and cultural destiny. However, the non-hyphenated “Postcolonialism” is a cultural concept “within postcolonial studies” that “...is more often used to refer to the consequence of colonialism from the time the area was first colonized” (33). Ushie gives specific examples of post-colonial nations, deriving from socio-economic, technological and political indices as India, Malaysia and America who have demonstrated enough will to successfully extricate themselves from the moorings of their erstwhile colonial masters, and indeed any external control. “Ghana appears to...” be the only country in Africa, by Ushie’s logic in that essay, which seems “...poised to turn from her hitherto neo-colonialist status to that of a post-colonial country” (33). Although, we must note at this point, that the exceptional example of Ghana stands to be considered weak due to its obvious lack of factual support by Ushie!

On the contrary, Ushie sees “a neo-colonial society [as] one which was once dominated, but whose economy is still in the predatory grip of foreign interests” (33). To further problematise the neo-colonial condition of such countries, Ushie adds that “such polity also re-introduces internal re-colonization of the weaker elements of the society by the stronger, following independence” (33). Quoting Kwame Nkrumah, to whom the term “Neo-colonialism” is most often associated, Ushie asserts that “the essence of neocolonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus political policy is directed from outside.” (33). In summary, Ushie illustrates the basic difference between post-colonial and neo-colonial nations with an iconic explication:

a post-colonial country is one which was once colonized but now has only the scars to show for the domination, while a neo-colonial society is one which was once colonized, but which still has reeking wounds to show for the domination even under the leadership of its own people. (2012, 33)

It is important to note that Ushie also applies the tools of Literary Stylistics to show the depth of neo-colonialism in African Literature with Nigeria as a case in point. This point will become important when we will use the same analytic instrument to aptly characterize Ushie’s logic in our own response.

We have attempted to present the core of Ushie’s arguments as briefly and faithfully as we can, but it must be stated at this point that his hermeneutics leaves much to be desired. On the whole there is much in his theorizing that is so discomfiting and critically awkward. To be unequivocal, this awkwardness lies in some half “truths,” misrepresentations, conceptual errors and stereotypic configuration of the “African” imagination. Although no (African) critic would want to be tagged essentialist, the nuances and attitude of Ushie’s theorizing glaringly

characterize his theory in that mould. It is that extremity that we confront in this paper.

Neo-Colonialist Theorising, Half Truths and some *Non Sequiturs*

To be fair, we agree with some of Ushie's definitions and elaborations. His distinction between the two types of Post-colonialism is a standard acknowledgement of the nuances of that powerful theory even among postcolonial scholars. However, his definition of the term is simplistic, if one considers the theory's origin, intellectual/philosophical kinship and development as a reading practice in a *Postmodern* era (another term which, unfortunately, the neo-colonialist may be uncomfortable with). On the other hand, his choice to proceed with his adumbrations on one side of the discursive divide, by declaring that in his study "... we settle for the hyphenated 'post-colonial' because we are discussing *specifically* what has been happening to a continent after when it was supposed to become free from foreign domination" (33) is even more simplistic and theoretically misleading! The misleading nature of Ushie's discourse is decipherable from his purposeful misreading and refusal to resolve some matters arising before proceeding with his theorizing.

Once "we settle with the hyphenated 'post-colonialism'" as Ushie would insist, we are inadvertently blind to some intricate issues in postcolonialism as a *cultural theory* in the first place and would therefore proceed on a faulty footing. While one would agree that postcolonialism "is more often used to refer to the consequences of colonialism from the time [an] area was first colonized," we must note that colonialism as a cultural phenomenon transcends the politics of countries, nations or states. At the micro level, it is implicated in the individual imagination and even in the politics of inter-personal relationship among sub-cultures within nations. From its early proponents like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, Postcolonialism has become more of an endogenous cultural reading strategy that interrogates how individuals appropriate systems of thoughts and signs to assert their personality not necessarily to live the life of another superior force or to subsist in the hegemony of a subject. Postcolonialism has become descriptive of a disposition to rise from the suffocation, even, of one's kind not necessarily from foreign political, economic and technological power. Giving us a general definition of Postcolonialism, Homi Bhabha says "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representations involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (245). He goes further to state that postcolonial perspectives

..intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and

ambivalent moments within the ‘rationalizations’ of modernity. (USHIE 2012, 246)

As C. L. Innes, who Ushie relies on for his major definition, tells us, Spivak has utilised the concept of the subaltern to analyse the situation of women under patriarchal codes (11). In fact, women’s literature in Africa helps us to understand the peculiar slant to Postcolonialism articulated by Bhabha and Spivak, but which unfortunately still defies some people’s comprehension. The silenced, depersonalized woman in the attic of Charlot Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* did not have to be of a colonized race or from a Third World before being suppressed by a chauvinistic English elite character of the 19th century. In the Diaspora, the works of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Terry Macmillan articulate very clearly that we have to be aware of another form of colonialism beyond country or nationality. Of course, these African American women writers were continuing a counter-hegemonic narrative that their rhetorical/creative fore-mothers such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neal Hurston, among many others, had established years before them. It is in this context that Postcolonialism accounts for more subtle but palpable forms of colonialism than Ushie would reveal to his readers.

The Subtleness of Postcolonialism in “Current African Literature”

We shall soon come to why Ushie, probably, ignores these levels of oppression and the resistance of the characters implicated in them as victims. But let us first illustrate how this dimension of postcolonialism that we are advancing works in current African Literature. In Africa also, women writers especially have been instrumental in redefining colonialism. From Flora Nwapa and Nawal el Saadawe to Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the postcolonial perspective equips us to uncouple another sinister form of subjugation beyond Western national colonialism. In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga negotiates the delicate tension and mental kinship that are implicit in Western colonialism and gendered subjugation. The young radicalized female character, Nyasha, in *Nervous Conditions*, who feels dominated and brutalized by her father (a patriarch of a large Zimbabwean family) articulates this tension in a very apt but schizophrenic manner. In a moment of crisis, after a faceoff with her father she indexes the subtle dimensions of oppression within which she and other characters, even her father thrive

They’ve done it to me... . They did it to them too... .They’ve deprived you of you, him of him, ourselves of each other. We’re grovelling. Lucia for a job, Jeremiah for money. Daddy grovels to them. We grovel to him.... (DANGAREMBGA 1988, 200)

Page 20 From the above introspection, we would see that at the height of her schizophrenia, Nyasha specifies the subtleness of the Western colonial project, “their history. ... [and] [t]heir bloody lies” (201) that have made her, like every other African, a split personality: “I’m not one of them but I’m not one of you” (201).

The *masculinist* logic which rules Zimbabwean traditional and contemporary society is very palpable in that novel but even more tangible is the fact that the women in *Nervous Conditions* seem to band or to use a feminist jargon *bond* together as subordinates to the male principle in their culture. We find an interesting inter-textual conversation, in this regard, between Dangarembga and the Nigerian novelist Adichie. Beyond the feminist thematic in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, there is an instructive dimension to gender in the novels, which challenges the simplistic application of neo-colonialism to all "current African Literatures." The father-figures in both novels represent another tensioned site. Dangarembga's domineering father, Baba Mukuuru and Adichie's "Papa" (Mr. Eugene) are both curious postcolonial types. Both men index the crisis of masculinity in postcolonial cultures. Here we have two male characters from two different parts of Africa who are struggling hard to negotiate the gender responsibilities expected of them by "... deep and clashing cultures" as Dennis Chukude Osadebay (15), one of Africa's pioneer poets would have it.

Thus for Dangarembga's Baba Mukuuru, to be a real man, he has to maintain a large compound of women and children, some of whom are not of his nuclear family. On him lies the responsibility to custody and perpetuate a patriarchal ethos in a modern Zimbabwean society, even as member of the middle class. Like Baba Mukuuru, Adichie's Mr Eugene is burdened by two cultural codes (Western and Igbo) to which he feels heavily indebted. His own strategies of mediating the tensions between Western civilization and his Igbo ethos become very fatal. As a thorough-bred Catholic, groomed by strict doctrines, Mr Eugene stretches his Christian piety and devotion to God to the limits. Thus, he would superintend his children's sacrament of reconciliation and their entire worship in church; he burns his daughter's, Kambili's feet with hot water from a kettle to teach her a lesson on avoiding sin – "that is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet" (194). Yet Mr. Eugene is seen as a benevolent man, a benefactor to his Umunna (his extended family), and in fact, his entire village. He maintains a big house and gives handouts to the needy around him.

In spite of all the *vicious* things that Mr. Eugene does to his family, it would be misleading to see him in the frame of a villain. His character delineation calls for a more critical empathy. His types are the distorted African progenies made so by the pressures of Western colonialism and the expectations of indigenous traditions. This, to us, is the point that Adichie is making in that novel. Although this is not the space to give the psychoanalytic dimension to such interesting breed of postcolonial characters, it would do us well to notice that Mr Eugene, in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, is always helpless whenever his Unconscious takes over him. As he burns his daughter's feet the child narrator, who is the victim herself, tells us that "[h]is voice quavered now, like someone speaking at [a] funeral, choked with emotions" (194). All through the novel Adichie portrays a male character that is pitiable and striving to come to terms with his own mental crisis. For strange reasons, he would beat his wife even into miscarriage; he suspects his son's quiet moments as

times for masturbation and insists that he (his son Jaja) confesses the sin at the confessional.

In view of the foregoing, it would be uncritical for one to exclude other reading strategies to the text. Rather, we would say that postcolonialism affords readers the most appropriate critical and inter-textual grammar with which to understand the core of texts such as *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus*. As good as neo-colonialism is, on its own, it cannot account for the dynamics of power politics, cultural tensions, psychosis and their implication on gender and the strategies of survival by different characters as “colonial” others in the above texts. The tensioned masculinity which is the issue in the above “current African” texts cannot be properly excised by neo-colonialism as defined by Ushie. This is because masculinity, at least, in Africa, is a consequence of both indigenous and foreign cultural expectations. These expectations are definitely not only economic or even solely political.

Testing the Logic of Neo-colonialist Theorizing in Nigerian Literature

This then brings us to another inconsistency in Ushie’s advancement of neo-colonialism as a literary theory. His materialist reading of the African imagination, especially in the superlative terms that he articulates it, is a fundamental error-in-judgment. One suspects an obsessed Marxist impetus to this materialist posture, and the point must be made that there is nothing wrong if Ushie is fed by a Marxist impulse. But an obsession with a particular ideology blinds one from alternative discourses that literatures like “current African Literature” really need. If we may apply the instrument of stylistics which Ushie ably utilizes in interrogating the depth of the consequences of neo-colonialism on the literature of his generation of poets, one would appreciate better the fountain of his own mis-judgment and misapplication of neo-colonialism. In literary theorizing and indeed in any postulation in the humanities, we must be cautious not to speak in extremities and finalities; not even in the exact sciences is that done. In fact, in the latter we often hear of “plus (+) or minus (-) this and that,” which gives allowance for other variables. In fact, when the economists say “everything being equal,” it is said in the consciousness that everything may never be equal! But in his advocacy of neo-colonialism, Ushie sees the African imagination as deriving *solely* from political/economic variables as if to say this is *all* that determines human existence and human imagination there from. It is the *totalising* code with which he concludes on creativity on the continent that discomferts one a bit.

In his prognosis, the word “essentially” recurs not less than six (6) times as a qualifier for African Literature(s), African literary arts/artist and African society. With it is another modifier – “material” – which appears with its collocate “condition” (material condition) appearing not less than eight (8) times in describing African society, which, for instance, “has remained *essentially* a neo-colonialist rather than a post-colonial continent...” (32), because of the *material conditions* of the continent (emphasis added, 34). Or in describing African literature which is neo-

colonial deriving from “...the *material realities of most* ‘independent’ African countries” (emphasis added, 32). Where the word “essentially” is not used in typifying Africa or its literature/artist, it is varied in that essay with “most” (33), “truly” (32, 33), “generally” (32, 33), “especially” (34), or “typical[ly]” (33). To my mind these words are not mere modifiers/qualifiers. They function grammatically as intensifiers of an ideological position. But this position is nothing but a stasis. For it configures African literature(s) as a product of not just a fixated society but of a static imagination. It is therefore easy for us to see *all* African literatures, even those that recreate the environment from the neo-colonialist prism – “Neo-colonial Ecocriticism” (35). After all, the entire continent is *essentially* neo-colonialist and *most* of her literatures are *truly typical* reflections of the African *material condition generally*. Once we accept and imbibe this Ushiean paradigm we probably have finally arrived at the “magic fountain” (WA THIONG’O, 2000) of the criticism of Current African Literature because, perhaps, neo-colonialism from this paradigm becomes society-specific or “particular-society-sensitive” (33) and by extension indigenous. But we know that the complex that gave birth to Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* or even the entire poetry of Ushie’s own generation of poets is not simply neo-colonialist.

The “Abiku” child of Okri’s *The Famished Road* is a true creation of a postcolonial world and a postcolonial imagination. That spirit child utilizes the powers of an African ‘magic’ world to transcend the boundaries of his local space into becoming a transnational being even as he still carries with him his local “Abiku” nature. With its roots in the Derridan conception of signs, which is in turn empowered by the multi-valence of poststructuralism, the postcolonial perspective equips us with the insights to appreciate the *consilience* of African cosmology and the tensions of contemporary experiences that have bequeathed us the “Abiku” character. That character is not just a phantasmagoria but a metaphor of the *hybridity* that has become the identity of Africans, and if one may generalize, the identity of other postcolonial peoples - Malaysians, Indians, Pakistanis, American Indian etc.

On the other hand, we would be missing the point if we conclude that the poetry of the third generation of modern Nigerian poets, Ushie’s own generation, is “essentially” a product of the neo-colonial condition and should be analysed mainly from that perspective. We may want to consider some facts about poetic beginnings before we run into the Ushiean fallacy. Here again, we should not be shy about using foreign models to interpret phenomenon in our cultural industry. Consider that “foreign” medicine like indigenous medicines have helped in diagnosing and curing African diseases and you will not be scared of being labelled “imposter.” The context within which this third “generation” of modern Nigerian poets under discussion emerged is not just socio-politically and economically hostile. It is also artistically hegemonic. Many critics pay witness to the fact that given the brain drain of the early 80s through the 90s and the subsequent flight of quality cultural scholarship abroad this generation of poets were bequeathed a heritage of lack and dispossession, the depth of which Ushie captures in his present essay under discussion.

Given this generally poor intellectual/educational background, this generation of poets was not expected to produce any art of quality and thus, to further the horizon of Nigerian poetry. This situation prepared the ground for a psycho-aesthetic battle of survival which Harold Bloom's theory of poetic beginning – "The Anxiety of Influence" – can only help us explain and understand. The intellectual exchange between this young embattled generation and their immediate poetic precursors – the Ofeimuns, Ojaides and Osundares – relieved rich critical insights to the development of Nigerian poetry up to date. In fact, Inyabri (2012) has developed a theory which sees Humour as a defining quality of this generation's poetry and indeed an existential strategy which has bequeathed us some of the most beautiful poetry of our time. Ogaga Ifowodo, "one of the shining stars" (ADESANMI 2002, 124) of this generation seems to write the poetic manifesto of his time when his persona says: "For art sake/ we shall shun pain/ and write lyrics of the ear. .../ We shall roam the full earth/ and see no pain on our paths/ and see no pain on our paths" (11). This motif is prevalent in the best of poetries in this generation. We have it in Remi Raji's "Black Laughther" (19-20) where the poet persona also dares to laugh in the face of pain:

even though I grope

in the morning mist of harmattan

and blind lanterns lead my weary legs

limpid vehicle of visible fate

Wide and deep, wide and deep

I will laugh; beyond the chills

beyond the thrills and threats

of conditioning yoke

Wide and deep I will laugh. (19)

We also have this quality of poetry, observed in Ifowodo and Raji, running through Rotimi Fasan's poetry especially in "Caravan of life" (59-60) where the "Conductout" (60) provides us the humour with which to confront the collective tragedy of city life in post-independent Nigeria. In fact, Fasan's "conductout" is a poetic kin of the late Adolphous II Amasiatu's city scum, the area boy in "The Fiery Eyed Hawk" (29).

From the foregoing, it would be observed that the impulse which fired this generation of poets in the first place cannot simply be explained off by neo-colonialism. It runs deeper than that. In fact, it goes beyond the paradigm of that simplistic explication. The general pain, dispossession and desperation characteristic of the environment against which this generation of poets wrote cannot also be justified by the neo-colonial model. Perhaps we should pause to ask ourselves when African scholars would restrain from seeing our problems as deriving predominantly from external machinations. One is not positing that neo-colonialism does not exist or could not be used to interrogate African conditions completely. But as critics of cultural factors, we have to be cautious else solutions elude us and the understanding of our own angst gets lost in a diversionary chase.

It is stunning that half a century after Nkrumah we still insist on a model that is externally fixated to decipher our predicament. We know that some Africans would insist on a remote Euro-American hand in all the coups and counter coups in Africa. But since after the cold war, with what level of propriety can we blame the ethnic/tribal wars and electioneering crisis in East Africa to neo-colonialism? Can we simply explain the monumental plunder of the oil wind fall of the '90s in Nigeria, a largess of the gulf war, to neo-colonialism? Perhaps the blight of the system and the state terrorism that defined the Abacha dictatorship is also a neo-colonialist machination! To our mind the poetry that arose in the mid-80s did not do so by looking outward. It was looking, squarely, at vicious principalities at home apart from coming to terms with some internal private longings. Critics of this poetry would do well to adopt theories that would analyse that poetry in its aesthetic complexities rather than going in search of "particular society-sensitive" (USHIE 2012, 33) models that would not address the merit of the text.

In fact, any theory which helps to bring out the essence of a text is valid as far as it answers basic questions relevant to the text and its society. What is important is discovering what Pius Adesanmi would refer to as "the un-mistakable African genius" (131) in any current African text. That genius can be discovered and appreciated through any appropriate model. Perhaps, some other study needs to elaborate for us what the third generation of Nigerian writers, especially poets, has gained for this country in the publishing industry. One wonders how the neo-colonialist model would explain the fact that a literature which emerged and thrived essentially in a neo-colonial condition has evolved a robust *home grown* publishing industry which in turn has given voice to a new generation of writers who held the fort through the perilous reign of dictatorship in Nigeria and brain drain. We do not have to look far for the gains of that period: Kraft books, Book Kraft, Oracle Books, Malthouse and many other publishing houses remain monumental testimonies to the postcolonial forces that gave birth to them.

However, it must be observed that Ushie's form of cultural materialism is not new in African literary discourse. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o had even articulated it better in many ways and keeps going back to the issue through several guises in his theorizing. In fact, Ushie's essentialism with regards to neo-colonialism, reminds us

of wa Thiong'o's own humanist, reductionist delineation of the locus of "literature and politics" as far back as the 70s. As he (wa Thiong'o) would have it, "... literature and politics are *about* living humans, that is to say, actual men and women and children, breathing, eating, crying, laughing, creating, dying, growing, struggling, organizing, people in history of which they are its products, its producers and its analysts" (WA THIONG'O 1981, 68, emphasis added).

With some sense of intellectual humility we think that wa Thiong'o's *about-ness* of literature and politics in the context of the emergence of environmental studies, Literature and the Environment, Ecocriticism, etc., is fundamentally challenged. But without belabouring the point it would suffice to mention the example of wa Thiong'o's argument in his "Europhonism, Universities and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship" (1). In that essay, an Ashby Lecture given at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in May 1999, wa Thiong'o asserts that all African literatures written in European languages are serving the grand plan of the Horton-Asquith Euro-colonialist plan of culturally defacing Africa through education, articulated and inculcated primarily, in European languages. Of course we know that wa Thiong'o's theories and creative writings always build up on his age-old Marxist/Hegelian dialectics, in which as Adesanmi would have it, wa Thiong'o "... persistently attempts at inducing a feeling of guilt in African writers and scholars who continue to work in European languages ..." (109). In our case, Ushie wishes to induce the same guilt of neo-colonialism in all African scholars/critic who use "foreign" theoretical models in the explication of the African text. But as we had observed of Ushie's rhetoric above, Adesanmi re-enforces our opinion when he states that: "the picture that one gets from Ngugi's essay is that of a static, unchanging institution (in our case *a nation*), fossilized as it were in an uncritical legitimization of the imperialist ideologies that gave birth to it" (111).

It is interesting to note that fifty years after Nkrumah talked of neo-colonialism the frontier of African literary arts has fundamentally changed. Perhaps, given his aversion for *foreign imposter* theories, Ushie would not agree that other forms of African literary textualities have emerged, even in popular music. The unfortunate division between "popular" and "serious" art has gone a long way to further circumscribe and hegemonise various types of youth artistry which articulate some of the most outstanding impulses of our time. Here also we encounter a subtle form of "colonialism" which the youth as artistes engage and subvert in order to articulate their subjectivity. Through the Postcolonial perspective, popular Nigerian music could be seen as art forms that weave African orality and transnational afro-diasporic art motifs to produce a mosaic of postcolonial/postmodern art. This art breaks through all conservative nativist boundaries to assert itself. It is because of its postmodern, "transnational" and "translational" (BHABHA 1994, 303) character that contemporary Nigerian pop music is thriving. Nigerian video, which Ushie acknowledges as a thriving art form shares the same cultural industry with popular Nigerian pop music. In fact, both forms share in the same cultural project and agency as have been argued somewhere else (INYABRI 2013).

Hence, if we are looking out for what Nigerians would export to the world – in order to free them from the jinx of neo-colonialism as Ushie would suggest – these popular forms are already doing that and offer us much more possibilities. Indeed, Nigerian popular music and videos are breaking through international boundaries and seriously engaging music critics and event managers in Europe and North America. It is beyond this study to quantify the commercial potentials of these art forms, but one knows that herein lies a genre that holds tremendous promise for our GDP. While the GDP may not be our primary concern here, suffice it to say that the Postcolonial perspective enriches our insight into popular art forms across the continent. With the Postcolonial perspective these art forms are interrogated for what they are and not what they are not. Instead of stereotyping them with some society-specific models, the Postcolonial perspective releases them from further hegemonies and moves them from the fringe to serious scholarly inquiry.

Reading Ushie's *advocacy* for Neo-colonialism, one has the feeling that African critics have not done much, if anything, to evolve Africa-centred literary theories. The issue of that "guilt inducing" tendency in his adumbration comes more to the fore again. But if literary theories "...offer us various ways of defining literature..." or if it "... provides us with a range of criteria for identifying literature in the first place [and]... make us aware of the methods and procedure which we employ in the practice of literary criticism..." (WEBSTER, 5, 8), African critics and literary scholars have been developing different society-specific theories in dealing with African literatures. From the first generation of modern Nigerian writers to Ushie's own generation, we have continued to witness these different attempts at systematizing literary hermeneutics in Africa. Nigerian literary scholars have been at the fore of this engagement in Africa. We shall take note of few examples in order to help us appreciate the issue. Wole Soyinka, for instance, theorizes myth as the centre of the African imagination in his "Myth, Literature and the African Imagination," Chinua Achebe configures the literary writer as teacher in his response to colonial narratives and the responsibility of the African writer to his people. In the 70s, the great debates over African drama relived interesting postulations about the nature and status of traditional and modern African drama. Worthy of mention here is Ossie Enekwe's location of mimesis as the validation of traditional African performances as drama in his "Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igbo-land" (149). It is instructive to note that Enekwe's theory and others like his have conditioned and defined our reception and teaching of modern African Drama in African schools and colleges to date.

Furthermore, in his reading of the trajectory of Nigerian poetry, Funso Aiyejina theorizes the public slant in Nigerian poetry in what he topically calls "The Alter/native Tradition." Recently, he (Aiyejina) has also applied the same exquisite poststructuralist reading in reasoning out of Yoruba (African) orality a "multiple options" (10) revolutionary approach to the reading of African and African diasporic literatures. Esu, that catalytic mythic character – "...the mythic ancestor of Che Guevara, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Amil Cabral, Nelson Mandela, Hugo Chavez, Wole Soyinka, Adaka Boro, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Gani Fawehinmi, Femi

Falana, Fela Anikolapo-Kuti, etc.” (6-7) remains the hermeneutic site of this theorising. We can go on to mention D. S. Izebaye’s revisionism which states that “...the beginning of a new literature is linked with the end of an existing culture: one makes the other possible” (70). Izebaye’s theory is encapsulated in a very iconic title “The Fired Image: Literary Beginnings from Cultural Ends” (69). In feminist literary theorising, Mary Modupe Kolawole’s “womanism” galvanises indigenous African and African diasporic feminist values to validate feminism in Africa. Before her, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie came up with “stiwanism,” a theory which engages gender hegemony within the peculiar socio-cultural/political circumstance of Africa.

We have particularly mentioned theoretical activities in Nigerian Literature but it must be noted that they sign-post sundry theoretical perspectives all over Africa. However, none of these theories, perhaps except Ushie’s neo-colonialism and Ngugi’s Hegelian/Marxist theorizing, seems to be so exclusionary and extreme in tone. But the irony of looking for more society-specific paradigms is that we end up with the precedence. In his attempt at suggesting alternative/indigenous names to the Nigerian movie industry – so that it frees itself from the moorings of Western, neo-colonial hegemony – Ushie is himself intriguingly strapped to Western models and thought patterns. Thus, for Hollywood, he proposes “Enugu Hills, Obudu Hills, Yankari Reserves, etc.” (34). One wonders if we are not back to the beginning. If we are to decolonize our minds or *de-neo-colonize* our condition (perhaps as Ushie would prefer), must we even think of our movie industry in terms of landscapes? Are we not trapped in the ideational/ideological topographies of Western models? The point here is that (literary) theories should be seen, in many regards, as dialogues, conversations or rhetorical exchanges which offer perspectives to texts/discourses. This is the robust way in which African literature should be engaged. This is the perspective that current African literature in the 21st century needs!

Conclusion

Ours has been, primarily, a cautionary response to what seems to be a fixated view of a theory and its approach to current African literature. We have reacted specifically to Ushie’s proposal of neo-colonialism as the most appropriate theory for the interpretation of current African literatures. Our effort has been to address the extremity of his opinion, the inconsistencies in his paradigm and the exclusionism that is implicit in his proposal. To our mind, Ushie proceeds from a perspective that is not only faulty but, perhaps, also purposefully ignores fundamental intricacies of the impulses which gave rise to and have continually fed the dynamics of postcolonialism as a cultural theory. This is in spite of the acknowledgements of such intricacies by canonical critics of the theory who Ushie himself makes references to. For instance, C. L. Innes advises his reader that “*it is important to be aware of the development of postcolonial studies and the peculiarities of the discipline*, in order not to be confined by its present boundaries and terms, but to question and modify them” (emphasis added, 3). Ushie’s theorizing has completely ignored this caution.

He does not display or, should we say, he denies his reader an awareness of “the development” and “the peculiarities” of a theory he chooses to tag [an] “imposter.”

We have already noted Ushie’s tendency to think of postcolonialism as a foreign theory and implicit in his opinion also is the tendency to see the theory as not being radical enough to engage what he thinks is the neo-colonial condition of African societies. This of course will be the conclusion if we ignore the rise and development of the postcolonial theory. But Robert Young whose [Postcolonialism: An Introduction] remains one of the most authoritative insights to the theory informs us that:

postcolonial critique incorporates the legacy of the syncretic traditions of Marxisms that developed outside the west in the course of anti-colonial struggles, and subsequently in the development of the further forms of emancipation, of gender, ethnicity and class, necessary for the liberation from bourgeois nationalism. (2001, 10)

Furthermore, Ushie ignores the dynamic definition of colonialism which has evolved with the Postcolonial perspective and which we have attempted to make obvious in this paper. More so, Ushie has not made his reader to understand the subtle and complex nature of Postcolonialism which enables it to cater for the same ideological issues that neo-colonialism partially engages. Again, Young accounts for this complexity when he states that “[P]ostcolonial critique focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world: the politics of anti-colonialism and neo-colonialism, race, gender, nationalisms, class and ethnicities define its terrain” (11). It seems to us, therefore, that Ushie’s theorizing is tantamount to treating symptoms rather than the sickness, prescribing a single drug rather than a broad spectrum therapy for “social pathologies” (BHABHA 1994, 246) in Africa. It becomes easy therefore, to suggest that internal colonialism or what he calls “internal re-colonization” (33) is a feature of neo-colonialism without noting the problematic of internal colonialism as a theoretical model on its own. But we know that the problematic of internal colonialism is not as simplistic as Ushie has laboured to present it.

In fact, “domestic colonialism” (73) as Ken Saro-Wiwa would refer to it has also been traced to tendencies outside neo-colonialism. Michael Hechter who applies the theory of internal colonialism to the interrogation of the Celtic condition under British hegemony did not see the concept as a subset of neo-colonial. Rather Hechter interprets internal colonialism in the socio-political and cultural terms of core/periphery discourses which are the main fort of Postcolonialism. Thus, while we agree with Ushie that internal colonialism could thrive in neo-colonial spaces, it should also be understood that there are contexts in which internal colonialism thrives outside neo-colonialism. In any case, internal colonialism or “internal re-colonialism,” to use Ushie’s term, is traceable to Lenin, Gramsci and Fanon (HECHTER 1975, xvii & 9). If we are to test its indigeneness or specific-ness, we should be reminded of its origin. The point one makes here is that we should be

cautious of the tags we give to theoretical models in the study of African literary texts.

It must have been noticed that in some contexts we use the plural case to refer to African literature(s). This of course is in keeping with the overall scepticism of our postmodern condition and the subtle nuances that mark literary creations in the continent. We acknowledge the basics that unite African textualities but we must also know that there is a limit to thinking of creativity in a holistic model lest we fall into the same fallacies we are addressing.

Finally, while we differ with Ushie in many ways, we must emphasize that the value of his proposition is that it sets us rethinking the bases upon which we are to comprehend African literature(s) in the Twenty-First Century. More so, his hermeneutics brings to the fore what Bhabha has topically called “the commitment to theory” (28) which will help us to understand the institution of literature itself and “...the tensions within critical theory... and its revisionary forces” (BHABHA 1994, 47). The African student of literature needs this understanding and a reasoned engagement with it. As it is today, many of us and our students display a frightening lack of this knowledge that is a key currency in global intellectual/cultural politics.

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**ADDRESSING UDUMA’S AFRICANNESS OF A PHILOSOPHY QUESTION
AND SHIFTING THE PARADIGM FROM METAPHILOSOPHY TO
CONVERSATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.3>

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Abstract

This conversation is inspired by Uduma O. Uduma’s essay entitled “The Question of the ‘African’ in African Philosophy: In search of a Criterion for the Africanness of a Philosophy”. In this essay, Uduma coined what he calls “the Africanness of a Philosophy Question which consists in the ultimate criterion for African philosophy. He was not the first to dwell on the Africanness issue in African philosophy but he was the first, to my knowledge, to christen it as such. Before Uduma framed the question into a proper metaphilosophical concern in African philosophy, old campaigners like Paulin Hountondji, Odera Oruka, Peter Bodunrin, Kwasi Wiredu, Sophie Oluwole, Innocent Onyewuenyi, etc., have all dwelt on it with some going more in-depth than others. I have also dwelt partly on this question before in an essay entitled “The Criteria Question in African Philosophy: Escape from the Horns of Jingoism and Afrocentrism”. Incidentally, my treatment of the issue was not digressive enough as I did not mention the likes of Bodunrin, Wiredu, Oluwole and even Uduma himself—a terrible short-sightedness—one that I wish to correct in this discussion. My first aim in this work is to attempt to settle this metaphilosophical vicious circle once and for all. On the basis of this, I wish also to orchestrate a shift from the vicious circle of metaphilosophical engagements to a more fruitful conversational engagement in contemporary African philosophy. Our method shall consist in critical conversationalism.¹

Keywords: Africanness question, African philosophy, criteria question, metaphilosophy, conversational philosophy

¹ Conversationalism and philosophical conversationalism should both be considered cognates to critical conversationalism. This is a method of philosophizing in which critical rigour combines with dialectical reasoning to decompose old thoughts and shade them of their structural encumbrances; to create and wherever necessary compose new thoughts and possibly obtain a synthetic blend. My use of the concept of “blend” is adopted from Mark Turner’s [The Origin of Ideas], 2014. Oxford University Press: New York. Paperback. In blending, conversationalism highlights the possibility of blending two variables to identity and to uniqueness. Cf. J. O. Chimakonam. “Some Emerging Methods in African Philosophy.” Forthcoming

Introduction

This encounter with some notable actors on the issue of the Africanness of a philosophy question is scheduled here not for the sake of argument but because it is necessary to the project of contemporary African philosophy. Like I stated in the abstract, I had elsewhere taken up this concern but not as the central concern of that work. Although I do not intend to change my line of argument in the essay referred to, I shall have to deepen and strengthen it in the light of the theses of the thinkers mentioned above. I shall employ the method of conversationalism in analyzing the thoughts of thinkers relevant to the Africanness of a philosophy concern. The goal shall be to demonstrate the inherent inadequacy of their thoughts. And on the basis of that project a better criterion for African philosophy.

On another hand, I shall make advocacy for African philosophers to channel more attention to phenomenological concerns. For as Bruce Janz enthused, the question of African philosophy needs to be re-asked, not from an essentialist/metaphilosophical but from a phenomenological point of view in order for African philosophy to properly attend to the conditions in which its questions arise (JANZ 2009, 7 & 2). This advocacy it must be noted is for a shift and not for an outright abandonment of metaphilosophy.

We shall in this essay begin with the conversation on the Africanness of a philosophy and end with the advocacy for a paradigm shift. This conversation therefore is with the views of the actors already listed and in particular, with that of Uduma O. Uduma. I shall like to begin with Paulin Hountondji.

HOUNTONDJI, Paulin. [African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, Rev. Second ed.], 1996. Indiana University Press: Bloomington Indianapolis. Paperback.

In the first edition of his monumental work *African philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1983), Paulin Hountondji declared: “By ‘African philosophy’ I mean a set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their authors themselves (HOUNTONDJI 1996, 33).” This can be called the “geographic origin” criterion and which has persisted in some of Hountondji’s earlier writings. Following scathing criticisms from different quarters especially from Yai, O. Babalola a man he describes as one of his harshest critics (HOUNTONDJI 1996, xi) Hountondji amended his position in the preface to the second edition of his book (1996). The new position reads: “By ‘African philosophy’ I mean the set of philosophical texts produced (whether orally or in writing) by Africans (HOUNTONDJI 1996, xii).” Thus, the ultimate criterion and justification for African philosophy as far as Hountondji is concerned is that it be a written or oral production by an African which has the characteristics of universal philosophy. The ‘African’ from his usage merely refers to the geographical origin of the author (to give a work the stain of African authenticity) whose production must be analytic, and reflect the pattern of critical individual discourse to qualify a work as philosophy (HOUNTONDJI 1996, 62-70). Evidently, Hountondji’s criterion was primarily posited to answer the dicey question that members of his school (Universalist) faced,

to wit: how can a work be philosophy and African at the same time? But even as he ties up the bag from one end, it bursts from another.

This geographic origin (criterion) presented by Hountondji stands on a quick sand. If any philosophical discourse produced by an African whether it has anything to do with Africa or not (HOUNTONDJI 1996, 65) qualifies as African philosophy; would Hountondji wish this to be a universal standard by which different philosophical traditions are identified? If yes, then different philosophical traditions such as the Western, the Oriental, the African, etc., would simply be racial philosophies. Even this queer proposal is against the position of the Universalists. This proposal which is a direct implication of Hountondji's criterion would not only be abstruse but more seriously would eclipse the universality of thought. The talk of philosophical reason being the crest on which philosophy as a common human heritage rides, would become nonsensical. This is because; every philosophical tradition would become essentially culture-bound, strictly unique and substantially different from others for the implication of Hountondji's position to hold. The thesis that philosophical reason in its particular manifestations in philosophical places is continuously in motion striving for the universal would crumble. But we know, even if intuitively, that philosophical reason is at the centre of the philosophical endeavour which means that Hountondji could not have been more in error.

Hountondji may have laid out his arguments with good intentions but my position is that the geographic origin criterion false-started and is not ready-witted to support his probably other well-argued thoughts. Hountondji spent a great deal of time arguing that why ethnophilosophy must be replaced with a rigorous individual discourse that is in tune with universal appurtenances of philosophy is because it unwittingly commits Africans to the hands of the Europeans who taunt them as pre-logical. However, his criterion that African philosophy can only be produced by Africans directly commits Hountondji to the same position he tries to flee from. I have elsewhere referred to this as Hountondji's dilemma.² Thus we establish the inadequacy of Hountondji's geographic origin criterion.

ORUKA, Odera. "The Fundamental Principles in the Question of African Philosophy". [Second Order], Vol 4. No 1. (Jan. 1975), pp. 44-65

Odera Oruka the illustrious Kenyan philosopher did better than Hountondji by my own estimation in what constitutes the criteria for African philosophy. He started by distinguishing two senses of philosophy as a universal discipline. While one makes reference to topics discussed by all the philosophers in the world regardless of their background, the other refers to the body of knowledge whose truth can be proved by methods which are independent of any personal, national or racial values and feelings (ORUKA 1975, 45). Thus for him philosophy must be a discipline which

² I have technically called this the Hountondji's dilemma. Cf. Jonathan O. Chimakonam. "Dating and Periodization Questions in African Philosophy". [Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions in Contemporary African Philosophy], p. xiii, 2015. University Press of America: Lanham.

employs principles that are objectively granted, or else that are rationally (logically) warrantable. And these principles, he maintains, if true, are true regardless of the person or place from which they originate (ORUKA 1975, 46). Adopting the second sense, Oruka went ahead to argue that though, this being the universal idea of philosophy; it is consistent with the idea of African philosophy as with other traditions in philosophy. This is due to the fact that every tradition in philosophy is philosophy primarily, because it has the universal characteristics.

However, Oruka had to distinguish between African philosophy in a unique sense which he says is debased and mythical and African philosophy in a simple sense which is the authentic African philosophy (ORUKA 1975, 47). He therefore presented the criteria of authentic African philosophy as follows:

Now it is possible and necessary that the concern for African philosophy is a demand for African philosophy not in the unique sense, but only in the simple sense. Here a piece of African philosophy would deserve to be described as ‘African philosophy’ simply in the sense that either (i) it is a work of an African thinker or philosopher (regardless of its subject-matter); or (ii) that it is a work dealing with a specific African issue, formulated by an indigenous African thinker, or by a thinker versed in African cultural and intellectual life. (ORUKA 1975, 50)

This may be called “the many-option criteria,” since Oruka presented them as disjuncts in which any could suffice. Thus Oruka added one other criterion to the one provided by Hountondji to make his two although with more options. But had Oruka married them with a conjunction, it would have made his postulation a lot stronger than that of Hountondji rather; he carefully chose a disjunction probably not to discredit a fellow Universalist. So, by implication, either Hountondji’s or his criterion would suffice in making a discourse African philosophy. What however places Oruka’s criterion on a higher pedestal is the admission that any such discourse that treats African issue or even non-African issues whether produced by an African or a non-African would qualify as African philosophy.

Consider the sense of Oruka’s definition of universal philosophy which gives him the leverage to agree that African philosophy is consistent with it. This definition consists of two clauses namely: (i) “the truth of philosophy can be proved by methods which are independent of any personal, national or racial values and feelings” (ii) that “philosophy is a discipline which employs principles that are objectively granted or else that are rationally (logically) warrantable (ORUKA 1975, 46).”

Then two paragraphs down the same page where he tries to show that this universalist thesis is consistent with African philosophy he states:

That philosophy is universal does not mean that all the philosophers must have similar interests and employ similar *methods* in philosophy. Neither does it mean that all the rationally warrantable or objectively granted principles or

methods must be identical or that they must establish similar truth. (ORUKA 1975, 46)

What was Oruka thinking when he penned down the words in the second disjunct? He referred to it (possible logical nuances), we all do so, although unconsciously. In this situation, it is hardly the case that Oruka did not at least, have the feeling that he was referring to different logic traditions. He seems to be aware because in the universal definition he offered earlier the word “logically” was enclosed in a parenthesis between “rationally” and “warrantable”. So he must have intentionally omitted it when he evoked the same definition later to justify African philosophy. Obviously, he must have been shy to imply that a logic system that can be described as African must exist to undergird and shape inquiries in African philosophy.

But he boldly acknowledged immediately that “Two separate philosophical methods, both being rational, can be opposed to one another, similarly two methods of philosophical inquiry, both using rationally granted or warrantable principles, can come to dissimilar truth (ORUKA 1975, 46).” Any logician understands the logical implications of these statements.

On the whole, Oruka’s criteria which describe African philosophy as that discourse produced by an African or a non-African versed in African intellectual life whether on African or non-African topic is still not adequate. The inadequacy becomes obvious when one engages Oruka in a conversation. To start with, Oruka’s criteria are captured in a number of disjuncts: (a) That African philosophy is that discourse produced by an African (b) or that it is that discourse produced by a non-African who is versed in the African cultural and intellectual life (c) or that African philosophy is any discourse on any choice African issue (d) or that African philosophy is any discourse on any choice non-African issue. Granted the above, here is the shocker: When a non-African versed in the African intellectual life produces any philosophical discourse whose theme falls on non-African issue, at least, one of Oruka’s criteria says that such a discourse qualifies as African philosophy. But we know this to be ridiculous as for example, when Edwin W. Smith who was versed in African cultural and intellectual life produced a work say on theology, Oruka’s criterion says such qualifies as African philosophy simply because the producer Edwin W. Smith, though a non-African; though, his subject was not on a specific African issue, was nonetheless versed in Africa’s cultural and intellectual life. The question therefore is: what is the connection between his proficiency in African culture and his work on theology that should confer on the latter the status of African philosophy? In this therefore consists the weakness and inadequacy of Oruka’s criteria for African philosophy as discussed above.

Evidently, what makes a discourse African philosophy transcends geography and authorship of a thought. Until the actors in African philosophy project are able to put their house in order concerning the standard of their philosophical practice, we may not have a clear vision of the philosophy we profess as African.

OLUWOLE, B. Sophie. Ed. [Readings in African Philosophy], 1989. Masstech Publications: Lagos. Paperback. & NWALA. T. Uzodinma. [Igbo Philosophy], 1985. Lantern books: Lagos. Paperback.

Some have argued that what makes a discourse African philosophy is that it has a stamp of African authenticity. Put differently, any work that is called African philosophy must carry African identity. This identity is to be found in African culture or world view. As such a work of African philosophy is expected to project this world view irrespective of how it is structured. T. Uzodinma Nwala and Sophie Oluwole are the major exponents of this African authenticity criterion. As Nwala explains African philosophy refers to the collection of basic beliefs or world view about the universe and man which a society holds in the light of the existing social environment (NWALA 1985, 4-6). Nwala suggests that it is the world view of the African that gives any thought espoused as African philosophy its authenticity or identity. Oluwole was more poignant when she states:

This task appears at first sight simple and straightforward. A literary piece from Africa is naturally African by the very token that it originated from Africa. But even if this were so, there is still the need to identify, characterize and if possible, rationally justify such works as constituting a literary tradition with specific features which make the group a distinctive cultural phenomenon probably different from some other well known cultural types. (1991, 209)

What Oluwole tries to highlight in the above is the important place of cultural identity of any discourse to be regarded as African philosophy which alone gives it the African authenticity. The problem with the African authenticity criterion is that it easily leads to ethnographic studies and descriptive works. Above all, it leaves a very broad and disorganized scope for African philosophy. Virtually any work in African sociology, anthropology, literature, religion, etc., would by dint of this criterion establish themselves as works in African philosophy.

BODUNRIN, Peter. “The Question of African Philosophy,” [African Philosophy: The Essential Readings, Tsenay Serequeberhan Ed.], Pp63-86, 1991. Paragon House: New York. Paperback.

Peter Bodunrin in a sense framed his criteria in form of questions. He believes the answers to the questions shall constitute the criteria for African philosophy. He was not completely satisfied with the out-of-the-blue prescription Hountondji had given. He felt it was too simplistic. There should be clearer reasons and deeper suggestions as to why a piece of literature qualifies as African philosophy. That it has to be an oral or written production of an African as Hountondji states was not very informative and convincing. In Bodunrin’s words therefore:

Recent discussions and further reflections on the matter have convinced me that the different positions as to the nature of African philosophy held by various contemporary Africans reflect different understanding of the meaning of philosophy itself. I now think that our not wholly terminological dispute as to what is and what is not to count as African philosophy cannot be settled without answering some important questions. Some of these questions are: what exactly are African philosophers trying to do, namely, what challenges are they trying to meet? What is the proper answer to these challenges? In other words, what would constitute an appropriate answer to the problems African philosophers are trying to solve? What is the difference between a piece of philosophical discourse and discourse in some other discipline? What is it for a given idea or philosophy to be correctly definable as African philosophy? I shall attempt in this paper to answer these and related questions. (Bodunrin 1991, 65-66)

The problem is that Bodunrin never really answered these questions in ways that will bring out his views as to the criteria a discourse would have to meet before it qualifies as African philosophy. But in analyzing the position of the philosophic sagacity later on Bodunrin stated what some like Uduma (2014, 138) have taken to be a statement of his criterion thus: any group of philosophers engaged with some philosophical exercise are doing African philosophy only because the participants are Africans or are working in Africa and are interested in a philosophical problem (howbeit universal) from an African point of view (BODUNRIN 1991, 72).

From the foregoing and according to Uduma O. Uduma, Bodunrin in the above made a minor adjustment to Hountondji's criterion. He was able to split the geographic criterion into two components to wit; origin and location. While Hountondji's criterion was that of geographical origin in which an actor is required to be an African that of Bodunrin is geographical location in which an actor is merely required to be working within the African context. This was an improvement if you like on Hountondji's criterion thought to be too strict by some. By Bodunrin's criterion, a non-African may now be able to produce African philosophy. This was not so different from one of Oruka's criteria already discussed and just as Oruka's criterion; it has its own flaw. According to Uduma O. Uduma:

The major merit of Bodunrin's position lies in his recognition that non-African philosophers can do African philosophy but his insistence that such non-African philosophers must be working in Africa is illegitimate and not persuasive. (UDUMA 2014, 138)

Page 39 I am inclined to agreeing with Uduma on that point. Additionally, I shall like to state that in no definite terms would the questions raised by Bodunrin lead to a clear articulation of the criteria for African philosophy little wonder his answers failed to lay to rest the criteria puzzle. A probing conversation would readily unfold the impotency of those questions. To begin with, we may have to sum up his questions in two simple ones: what is the problem that an African philosopher/philosophy aims to

solve? And what is the correct answer to this question? So in the main, there is only one question namely; what is the correct answer to the question about the problem that an African philosopher/philosophy aims to solve? Essentially, I think this question is incorrectly framed by Bodunrin and as such is potentially misleading.

The idea of a correct answer or in his words a proper answer is misleading. It is difficult if not outrightly impossible to conceive one proper answer to that question. Would you say that African philosophy is one that aims to solve African problems? Or the one that aims to demonstrate the manifestation of philosophical reason from the African place whether or not it grapples with any specific African issue? Or the one that aims to enthrone the native African as its producer? Or the one that aims to locate any producer within Africa? These four answers representing many more that could be articulated are without doubt proper to Bodunrin's question depending on the inclination of the African philosopher. But are these answers sufficient to the question about what makes a given philosophical tradition different from another, (by far the truly proper question to be asked)? The answer is no! To locate the criteria of African philosophy, correct questions are not those framed at the micro level because the criteria question is not a micro question; it is rather a macro question. It is macro because it seeks to draw a line between various philosophical traditions. One cannot find this thin membrane within a designate philosophical place which is what most actors like Bodunrin have been doing but at a comparative philosophical space. It should therefore be noted that the value of philosophy as a questioning discipline lies not just on the importance of questions but more accurately, on the importance of "correct" questions. Incorrect questions are likely going to lead to incorrect answers at which behest the tools of philosophy would be vanquished.

WIREDU, Kwasi. "On Defining African Philosophy", [African Philosophy: The Essential Readings, Tsenay Serequeberhan Ed.], pp.87-110, 1991. Paragon House: New York. Paperback.

Kwasi Wredu in this essay was primarily concerned with understanding the nature of African philosophy through its definition. Definition he seems to suggest holds the key to the discovery of the criteria for what counts as African philosophy. He set off analyzing and exposing the weaknesses inherent in the articulations of his contemporaries notably Paulin Hountondji. His submission afterwards is that a proper definition of African philosophy must take into consideration process and issues such as (a) universal philosophical tools, because those are what make a discourse philosophy (b) African cultures and languages, because philosophy is culture relative (c) and exchanges among individual African philosophers, because those are the proper modes of philosophical engagement (WIREDU 1991, 105). It is the stern warning of Wiredu that:

Any attempt on the part of a contemporary African philosopher to define African philosophy that does not take account of this process is out of touch

with reality. But for him to take account of it is not just to take notice of it; it is for him to take a position with respect to it. For in this matter, he would not be merely trying to describe a phenomenon existing entirely independently of himself, but, rather, seeking to define the principles of his own practice. (WIREDU 1991, 105)

The above quote places emphasis on prescriptive individual discourse and their universal orientation as the veritable mode African philosophy must take. With this mode at the foreground, Wiredu identifies three criteria in ascending order each of which would be adequate for a discourse to be called African philosophy. The first 'option' as he calls it is collecting, interpreting, and retelling those of our traditional proverbs, maxims, conceptions, folktales, etc., that bear on the fundamental issues of human existence. But he says that this option would be chiefly reactionary and backward looking incapable of leading to modernity. The second option is to learn and disseminate and even possibly make original contributions to the philosophies of the Westerners. Again, he says that this would lead to the African ignoring his culture and committing himself to colonial mentality. This option which he describes as 'uncritical Westernism' for him would be unintelligent. The third option and which is the option he favors is captured in the following words:

For a body of thought to be legitimately associated with a given race, people, region or nation, it is sufficient that it should be, or should become, a living tradition therein. It is indifferent whether it is home brewed or borrowed wholly or partially from other peoples. Since we are, as has been repeatedly pointed out, still trying to develop a tradition of modern philosophy, our most important task is not to describe, but to construct and reconstruct. And the real issue regarding African philosophy is how best this may be done. (WIREDU 1991, 106-107)

I shall like to fault Wiredu's third criterion. The proper tradition of African philosophy necessarily has to be home brewed or at worst borrowed partly, on no justification would it be wholly borrowed and still remain African philosophy. In fact, the clause that allows African philosophical tradition to be wholly borrowed from any other tradition leads directly to what he criticized as colonial mentality or uncritical Westernism (WIREDU 1991, 106). However, of the three criteria given by Wiredu, it is in the third option that he placed greater credibility so I shall converse with him on that. This criterion literally states that for a discourse to qualify as African philosophy, it has to be constructed from ground up. We know from his earlier discussion that this process necessarily includes rigorous individual-based exercise that is universally applicable; which takes cognizance of African culture since for him philosophy is culture relative (WIREDU 1991, 106). What Wiredu fails to clarify however, is the model of this construction. He fails to observe that model is very important in constructing philosophical traditions. If not, Hegel's *Lectures on*

the Philosophy of World History or Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic point of view* or Levy Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality* where the trio did some constructions about Africa would qualify as African philosophy. It is not just construction or reconstruction that settles the matter, model is central. Wiredu probably noticed this lacuna in his criterion which is why he ended it by saying, "And the real issue regarding African philosophy is how best this may be done" (WIREDU 1991, 106-107). It is his inability to supply an answer to that question that vitiates his criteria for African philosophy.

ONYEWUENYI, Innocent. "Is There an African Philosophy", [African Philosophy: The Essential Readings, Tsenay Serequeberhan Ed.], pp29-46, 1991. Paragon House: New York. Paperback.

Innocent Onyewuenyi represents a group of African philosophers who hold fast to what they think is a model of thought common to all Africans south of the Sahara. They are convinced that the communitarian ontology is the bastion of African thought. Onyewuenyi is not alone in this view. William Abraham, John Mbiti, Olusegun Oladipo, T. Uzodinma Nwala, are some other actors who share this view which Kwasi Wiredu ridiculed as an exercise in "community thought" (WIREDU 1980, 14). Paulin Hountondji also lambasted them for been naïve in their inclination toward consensus or what he calls 'the myth of unanimity' (HOUNTONDI 1996, 60-61).

Notwithstanding the harsh criticisms, most members of this school remain unrepentant. They variously defend their position and insist that any discourse that is not constructed on top of this communitarian ontology cannot be said to be African philosophy. For them therefore, the communitarian ontology is the insignia of African thought. It differentiates African philosophy from say, Western philosophy which rides on the crest of individualistic ontology. It is in connection with this that Onyewuenyi articulates the communitarian criterion as follows:

The discovery of African philosophy has influenced African scholars in writing about African personality or what the French speaking Africans call Negritude. Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Chinua Achebe have written prose and verse to celebrate this philosophy—a philosophy of unity and complete encounter of all things and beings, which by reason of the dynamic character of African ontology, has surfaced on the communal structure of our society based on the division of labour and rights; in which man attains growth and recognition by how well he fulfils a function for the over-all well-being of the community. (ONYEWUENYI 1991, 44-45)

Thus from the above, a discourse is African philosophy if and only if, it has the communitarian model of thought as its background. The shortcoming of this criterion lies not in its logical vision but in its theoretic framing. The communitarian criterion

is articulated to reflect some form of ontological prostitution where every variable is determined to serve the center and for the good of the center without the justification of critical reasoning. Hence, Wiredu says of this model that it gives the “impression that African philosophy is a monolithic body of argumentative communal beliefs, and nothing else” (WIREDU 1991, 95). Wiredu goes on to suggest that it is a “descriptive, theoretically unreconstructive model” (WIREDU 1991, 103). We shall in this work seek to transcend this level of explication (ontology) in our quest to fathom the true criteria for African philosophy.

UDUMA, O. Uduma. “The Question of the “African” in African Philosophy: In Search of a Criterion for the Africanness of a Philosophy,” [Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions], Vol 3. No 1. Pp.127-146, 2014. Paperback.

Uduma has recently articulated the criterion question as the Africanness of a philosophy question (UDUMA 2014, 135). Besides my work of 2015 where I conceptualized the same problem as the criteria question (CHIMAKONAM 2015, 102), Uduma’s attempt is next in line as the most recent. From the foregoing, the equivalence of the Africanness question and the criteria question can here be established. I have decided to revisit this metaphysical exercise because as I explained earlier my former attempt was not digressive. In his essay, Uduma criticized Hountondji, Bodunrin and Oluwole insisting that their criteria are not adequate. He went on to adopt Theophilus Okere’s and C. B. Okolo’s suggestions which he transformed into a criterion. For Okolo, what makes a philosophy African is its identification with the cultural, historical or existential experience of Africa/ns (OKOLO 1993, 33-4). On the other hand, Okere explains that African philosophy refers to a critical reflection either on a given universal phenomenon or a unique problem in Africa through the glasses of an African culture (OKERE 1976, 5). It is on the inspiration of these two that Uduma resolved that:

[w]hat makes a philosophy Western, African or Oriental is neither the geographical origin nor location of the author; rather it is the cultural and geographical content. It is, therefore, the cultural/geographical background/content of a philosophy that makes it African. For any philosophical work, system, theory or idea to be African, whether it is written by an African or non-African, it must have an African flavor. It must be a product of wonder from or on the African experience and the African world. (UDUMA 2014, 143)

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Thus I shall like to call Uduma’s criterion, “culture-dependent” criterion for the Africanness of a philosophy. There are two points Uduma makes in the above. First, he posits that philosophy is a child of wonder and second, he concludes based on the first that when this wonder resonates from an African cultural background which provides the material object for philosophizing, African philosophy is produced. In his words again; “philosophy is a product of human wonder...on their immediate environment. This is what is meant when we say that philosophy is a child of

circumstance” (UDUMA 2014, 142). To unfold the limitations in Uduma’s criterion, we shall hold a brief conversation with him.

Even though, it is yet to be settled, when and where the history of systematic African philosophy began, recent researches tend to agree on the when even if not yet on the where. Both C. M. Okoro (2004, 77-102) and J. O. Chimakonam (2015, 12) date it back to the 1920’s following the return of Africa’s first eleven intellectuals who began their philosophizing with what is now called nationalist/ideological thinking. Chimakonam (2015, 4) goes on to posit that if this nationalist/ideological thinking targeted at colonialism and racialism was the first systematic attempt and correctly so, then, African philosophy or that philosophizing could not have begun in wonder. His conviction was that African philosophy, at least in its very first manifestation, began in frustration with the repressive colonial business. On this count, one of Uduma’s Siamese criteria is *slayed*. It can be argued successfully, that latter developments in African philosophy may have had their source in wonder, but if Uduma’s Siamese criteria were to be accepted, at least, one of its main implications would be that the nationalist/ideological discourses would be chopped off from the tree of African philosophy. This is not only unacceptable, but utterly ridiculous. The point made here is the gaping hole that exists in Uduma’s culture-dependent criterion. It simply is not adequate.

Again, if cultural background is the Alchemist’s stone that transforms any discourse into philosophy and draws a line between one philosophy tradition and another, Uduma was unable to identify those cultural elements that perform this magic. These cultural elements, if they exist, must be in the form of institutions, ceremonies, rituals, belief systems, and perhaps incantations; would Uduma grant for instance, that a discourse that would qualify as African philosophy must be done through incantations? Yet, this is the far-reaching implication of Uduma’s criterion of cultural basis.

As interesting as his criterion sounds, we must note that in philosophy, things are not usually what they seem. It is by the analy-synthetic power of our method of conversationalism that cumbrous theses like Uduma’s can be compelled to bear witness against itself. That cultural coloration of discourse is what characterizes different philosophical traditions sounds too simplistic for comfort. It is not just enough to make this type of big statement which do not have any concrete signification and simply go to sleep believing that the job has been done. Uduma should have been able to tell us exactly which cultural elements colors a discourse into Western, Oriental, and African philosophies, and how? Anyways, his failure to decide this and the weaknesses of other criteria articulated by others before him, form the justification for the criteria we shall offer in this work.

CHIMAKONAM, O. Jonathan. “The Criteria Question in African Philosophy: Escape from the Horns of Jingoism and Afrocentrism”, [Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions in Contemporary African Philosophy, Jonathan O. Chimakonam Ed.], Pp101-123, 2015. University Press of America: Lanham. Paperback.

In this essay, we rejected as unnecessary and irrelevant the Hountondji’s criterion that a discourse has to be produced by an African before it would qualify as African philosophy, but we retained Oruka’s clause that any discourse can qualify as African philosophy whether it is by an African or non-African; whether it is on African or on non-African issue and on it erected an important and essential “logic criterion”. We can therefore state the “logic criterion” thus:

- (i) Any discourse that treats African or non-African issues whether produced by an African or non-African but is capable of universal application can qualify as African philosophy insofar as it is produced with the background logic of African ontology or the instrument of logic tradition in Africa which is dialectical in structure.

In suggesting a logic tradition for Africa, I probably have in the words of the dogged Nigerian philosopher Udo Etuk stirred the hornet’s nest (ETUK 2002, 99). Some of the Universalists would regard this position as unapt and the idea of universal instrument of logic to be inconsistent with African logic or less horrifying, logic tradition in Africa. But my evocation of “African logic” is no different from similarly accepted evocations such as “Indian logic”, “Chinese logic”, “Arabic logic” to name a few which as far back as 1967 Paul Edwards proudly allocated esteem places to in the history of logic as treated in his [Encyclopedia of Philosophy Volume iv] (EDWARDS 1967, 520-528). My idea of logic tradition in Africa or simply African logic is perfectly consistent with the idea of universal logic any less than the ideas of universal philosophy and philosophy tradition in Africa. It is intellectual cowardice or colonialist stereotype that makes one assume that any time the predicate “African” is evoked in philosophy, a red flag is at once raised to signal the intrusion of ethnocentrism. The preponderance of this sort of thinking has become sickening in our time. It is therefore, arguable that some architects of African philosophy project—Universalists included (whilst not denying them their credits) in the time of the debate and soon after, are in the habit of overlooking the definitional or foundational role of logic in any discourse called philosophy. So, it is apt to expect them reject the idea of an African logic at one hand and at another demonstrate it in their argumentation. This is however, not unconnected with the terrifying predicate “African” placed in front of “logic”. Indeed, Kwasi Wiredu in criticizing Victor Ocaya’s work on [Logic within the Acholi Language] even suggested that this should never be considered a reasonable project. He describes the idea of African logic as precipitous and blanket speculation (WIREDU 1991, 101). My own project however which has been called Ezumezu system is not exactly as those of Ocaya, Etuk,

Ijiomah, etc., who attempt to describe what they feel is the structure of logic in their various cultures; Ezumezu does not describe how Africans reason that is different from how the rest of humanity reason; it takes inspiration from the dialectical model of thought common to all humanity Africa inclusive (specifically undergirding the well known communitarian ontology of the African tradition) to devise an alternative system of logic that could drive philosophizing in Africa. To drive philosophizing in African philosophy, one that would be absolved from the blame of transliteration of Western philosophy, an alternative model of thought is imperative. The concept of the “alternate” has no direct implication to “difference in substance” which is the erroneous basis of the assumptions associated with the concept of “African logic”.

From the foregoing, the Ezumezu system is therefore called African logic because it is developed within the African philosophical tradition and with generous African ontological paraphernalia, to shape and undergird philosophical inquiries in Africa not as polemics suppose, it points to a unique African way of thinking. Again, this latter attribute of driving philosophical inquiries in Africa does not in any way vitiate its universal applicability. The fear then, that the evocation of “African” reawakens the idea of ethnophilosophy or any sort of unique, pure, culture-bound excavations is therefore unfounded. Thus devising a system of alternative logic model to direct the development of African philosophy is not merely ceremonial but acutely imperative. Godfrey Ozumba in this connection admonishes that “understanding the underlying African logic is sine qua non to understanding the latent philosophic wisdom which is embedded in African philosophic systems” (OZUMBA 2015, 184). This is what is required all along to jolt African philosophy out of the vicious circle of metaphilosophical dialogues and onto a path of architectonic growth and progress. Hence, the future direction of African philosophy can successfully be charted only on the wheels of an alternative thought model. In the absence of this alternative thought model, African philosophy can hardly wash itself clean from the blame of transliteration. Already, some Western philosophers like Heinz Kimmerle and Jurgen Hengelbrock according to Ozumba accuse the architects of African philosophy of transliteration of Western thought (OZUMBA 2015, 181-184). Ozumba may have doggedly answered the charge of transliteration wherein he described his Western opponents as narrow-minded (2015, 174), the fact however remains, as Ozumba agrees and appears to suggest (2015, 184), that an alternative system of logic is necessary to drive inquiries in African philosophy project. C. S. Momoh observed long ago that this was the last piece of the African philosophy jigsaw and challenged African logicians to pick up the gauntlet of developing a system of logic that would drive African philosophy (MOMOH 2002,187). Ezumezu represents the accomplishment of this requirement.

Page 46 Conclusion: Shifting the Paradigm from Metaphilosophy to Conversational Philosophy

A prospective critic may ask: what is wrong with metaphilosophy? The answer is nothing! It has been and remains a veritable philosophical paradigm. Our echo here is

not to scrap it from the workshop of African philosophy but to sway more attention to other phenomenological paradigms. It should not be difficult for anyone to acknowledge that one thing which the post debate disillusionment leaves on the table is the urgent need for architectonic development of African philosophy. The resources required for this great (re)construction can hardly be supplied by metaphilosophy hence, our agitation for a paradigm shift.

To begin with, there are a few points it is apt for me to highlight here: (1) it should never be assumed that conversational philosophy is the only possible future-oriented paradigm for African philosophy. It is just but one of many other possibilities (2) that conversational philosophy comes fitted with a method of thought called conversationalism wherein key concepts such as nwa-nju, nwa-nsa, protestation, contestation, relational equilibrium, dialogical equilibrium, blend and blending to name a few play crucial roles in the composition and decomposition of thought (3) that philosophical conversation here has a stipulative meaning different from the lexical meaning in which a conversation could refer to an informal dialogue between two interlocutors (4) that philosophical conversation when employed in the discussion of phenomenological issues force a thought into a rack of reasoning and compel it to bear witness against itself in the form of new thoughts (5) that it is this ability to decompose and compose thoughts; synthesize and blend thoughts that presents conversational philosophy as a viable paradigm contemporary African philosophy should move to.

From the foregoing, to converse or hold a conversation literally means to have an informal exchange of ideas or information (SMITH 2004, 285). Here, we employ the term in a slightly more technical sense. Philosophical conversation for us is not a mere informal exchange of ideas or a simple informal dialogue between two interlocutors; it is rather a strictly formal intellectual exercise upheld by philosophical reasoning in which critical and rigorous questioning (in a dialectical process) creatively unveils new concepts from old ones making use of the tools of decomposition and blending. By conversational philosophy we mean that sort of philosophical engagement between individual thinkers with one another; on phenomenological issues of concern; or on one another's thoughts where thoughts are unfolded from the bowels of concepts or from concept of concepts. Conversational philosophy thus is more than a dialogue; it is an encounter between proponents and opponents or a proponent and an opponent engaged in contestations and protestations of ideas and thoughts. A conversational school therefore would be any circle of philosophical like minds who adopt this approach in their practice of philosophy. For me, this should now define not only the new era of African philosophy but the practice of philosophy generally in our age. This is because, more than ever before, the world of philosophy requires conversations both in place and in space.

On the contrary, metaphilosophy is a philosophy-questioning-philosophy activity. In the African philosophy project, it has raised questions such as does African philosophy exist? This question alone took actors more than three decades to

decide in that historic debate in African philosophy. The great debate was an era saturated with perverse dialogue centered on the justification of African philosophy by African philosophy. More than two decades have since passed since the debate was said to have ended; yet, the perverse orientation of the metaphilosophical kind persists to sustain a lingering vicious circle. If it is not about the identity of African philosophy or its practitioner; then, it is about its geography or its periodization, or its history, or as we delved into in this paper, its criterion. Actors continue to whirl within this vicious circle hoping for a break that increasingly appears difficult to obtain. Conversational philosophy therefore represents a midwifery machine that can help African philosophers deliver of their long overdue ideas and thoughts on phenomenological concerns.

Evidently, why we thought it appropriate to delve into the metaphilosophical concern of the criterion or the Africanness question is because, it is pertinent to settle the crisis on what constitutes African philosophy and what does not. We cannot possibly move forward without this having been resolved. It is on the basis of a generally accepted criterion or criteria for African philosophy that actors can erect a viable episteme of African philosophy. Our attempt in this essay to resolve the lingering crisis about a criterion or criteria for the Africanness of a philosophy, it is hoped, would attract that general acceptance. We therefore, feel compelled on the basis of that, to make an advocacy for a shift of concentration from metaphilosophy to phenomenological concerns through the eyeballs of what we call conversational thinking. I have laid out the map of conversational philosophy and of conversationalism in other essays³ and as such would not be dwelling on them here. Besides this advocacy for a shift from the paradigm of metaphilosophical concerns to that of conversational thinking, we earlier engaged in a metaphilosophical concern as already stated, wherein we attempted to resolve the crisis of criteria that continues to stall the progress of African philosophy in the contemporary time. Engaging some vocal actors (by no means all) in critical conversations, we were able to identify loopholes in their various criteria which account for their inadequacy and hence, posit the “logic criterion” which we hope would suffice. The expectation is that the architects of African philosophy would begin not only to weigh in their productions but to also turn away much of their attentions from metaphilosophy.

³ Cf. Jonathan O. Chimakonam. “Dating and Periodization Questions in African Philosophy”. *Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions in Contemporary African Philosophy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2015; “History of African Philosophy”. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Nov. 22, 2014. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden Ed. Retrieved, March 1, 2015. Par. 1; “Conversational Philosophy as a New School of Thought in African Philosophy: A Conversation with Bruce Janz on the Concept of ‘Philosophical Space’ [Confluence: Journal of World Philosophies, forthcoming]; “Transforming the African Philosophical Place through Conversations: An Inquiry into the Global Expansion of Thought (Get)”, forthcoming.

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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE SEARCH FOR AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHER: THE DEMISE OF A CONFLICTUAL DISCOURSE

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.4>

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Abstract

There are contending reasons why the rationale, qualification and justification for becoming an African philosopher are still facing the problem of ontology. One reason, as Didier Kaphagawani posits, is premised on the challenges by anthropology and colonialism (1986, 86). Given Oruka, Makinde, Oladipo, Oke, and Hallen's perception of these challenges, they concede that these challenges gave birth to the postcolonial search for a distinct African identity. On the one hand, D. A. Masolo's submission that because "Africa cannot be re-subjectivised; hence, an identity which is peculiarly African is impossible" (1997, 283-285) downplays the concession of Kaphagawani, Oruka, et al. Moreover, there tends to be agreement among certain philosophers who have devoted their time promoting Africana philosophy and culture-oriented discourse in Africa like Outlaw, Cabral, Fanon, Makinde, Oladipo, Oke, Hallen, Horton, etc., that "the Western discourse on Africa and the response to such discourse" (MASOLO 1994, 1) led many African philosophers like Nazombe, Okpewho, Tempels, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Senghor, Cesaire, Awolowo, Mandela, etc., to react using socio-political and academic means to establish a distinct African philosophical paradigm which craves for the re-subjectivisation of Africa. By implication, the response to the Western discourse on Africa, as Outlaw, et al, opine, lend credence to (a) the rationale for the qualification and justification to be an African philosopher; (b) the existence of African philosophy, and (c) the modality of doing philosophy in Africa. Nevertheless, the problem with Outlaw, et al, on one hand, and D. A. Masolo, on the other, is the failure to recognize that any philosopher need not be of African descent or blood before he can make a meaningful contribution to address the problems facing the development of Africa in all spheres of life. This is possible in as much as there is an adequate understanding of the subject under discussion or what it means to do African philosophy. It is this failure or weakness that we shall explore in this essay.

Keywords: Africa, African Paradigm, African Philosophy, African Philosopher, Identity

51 Introduction

If acknowledging Paulin Hountondji's concession that "what is needed in Africa is to help the people and their lives to master and capitalize on the existing knowledge, which the local users do not have or know" (2006, 535) would aid culture-oriented discourse in Africa, then, this study sees ethnophilosophy (which is the study of the

most general ideas and views in the African philosophy) as mistaken and misdirected. Part of what this study attempts to explicate are; (i) why the late twentieth century appears to be marked by a deep intellectual discomfort about the ways in which the Western thought has succeeded in framing an understanding of the world of the Africans (or ‘Others’)? By this framing, Africa was wrongly categorized into a disease continent. This disease was premised on the religious, savagery, perceptual, unscientific, pre-logical and oral perception of the African worldview, culture, language and philosophy. This disease has further nullified the African reality in terms of cultural expression and representation. This paved way for the notion that the African understanding of their world was not in existence prior to the Western invasion. This invasion, as the Western thought conceives, brought various positives to Africa. For the Western anthropologists, this invasion opened the mind/eyes of Africa and the Africans to socio-political emancipation and development in arts, literature, science and philosophy. One symptom revolves around the current philosophical debates which see either a dramatic end to, or a winding down from the Western concept of modernity and discovery of what the Western thought calls ‘others’. Another symptom of this disease is the view that there was no ‘modernity’ in the ‘others’ as the Western thought seems to have explained and it was their contact with Africa, they think that actually brought modernity to the ‘others’.

As a derivative of the Western conceptual characterization of the ‘Others’, African philosophy, according to Bruce Janz could become misconstrued as the “philosophy produced by African people: philosophy which presents African worldviews or philosophy that uses distinct African philosophical methods” (JANZ 2009, 74-75) to respond to the Western insult or negative characterization of Africa. Thus, this philosophical model differs from American pragmatism which emphasizes the sufficient working of any view/belief which one holds; European continental philosophy which emphasizes phenomenology ; British empiricism which places importance on analyticity where knowledge is ultimately sensed; and Paulin Hountondji’s characterization of what “knowledge and development” (2006, 535) should be. In view of the above, Olúfemi Táíwò’s assertion that “the production of academic studies of the political philosophies of Africa’s post-independence leaders due to the pressure of direct problems of governance” (2006, 243) should not be ignored. Because of Appiah’s nullification of the idea of race and Masolo’s opposition to identity which Olúfemi Táíwò criticizes. This study will afford us the opportunity to delineate the foundation for the search of African philosophy and an African philosopher. It will further afford us the opportunity to have the understanding of who, in the perspective of this study may qualify as an African philosopher as different from Hountondji, Appiah, and Masolo’s presentations. Hence, certain conditions will be emphasized as the grounds for the rejection of a peculiar African philosophical paradigm; the common human family, common race, cosmopolitanism, globalization, etc., are examples of concepts used to reduce the idea of an African philosophy to absurdity. However, it is expected that the notion

that anyone concerned with truth and accuracy about African philosophy should ordinarily avoid using the term “African”, “tribe” or “race” should be addressed. Such individuals should endeavor to use a formidable characterizing factor to establish the qualification for an African philosopher. An African philosopher should be expected to enhance the development of a distinct African philosophical paradigm by any means possible. It is insufficient to conclude that anyone who desires to write on topical and problematic issues in African philosophy does not need to be an ‘African’ by blood or race. Any view that draws such a conclusion without asserting the importance of African origin of an African philosopher is an attempt to deny the importance of a peculiar cultural identity of Africa or various cultural identities within Africa and African people. It is noteworthy that the denial of the writings of those who are Africans on issues pertaining to the development of philosophy in Africa may not aid the development of Africa. Admittedly, to deny anyone of the ability to contribute to African philosophy and development will be accepted if and only if the writings fail to represent the political, cultural and philosophical conditions of the Africans.

Second, (ii) what is it that disqualifies ethno-philosophy from being a representation of the totality of African philosophy? That is, why is it impossible to simply take or regard ethno-philosophy as a contribution to philosophy – a discipline which accommodates the first-order and second-order levels of discourses? It is simply because ethno-philosophy lacks the generally accepted ingredients of philosophy such as critical rigor, argumentation and analysis. The supposition therefore is that any discourse and any philosopher that shall qualify as philosophy/philosopher, in addition, must have these philosophical ingredients. Granted that philosophical rigor qualifies a discourse as philosophy and a discussant as a philosopher, what then makes philosophy African, and a discussant African philosopher? This issue which Uduma (2014, 135) refers to as the Africanness of a philosophy criterion seems to remain unsettled among African philosophers. We shall give it attention in this paper.

The Quest for African Philosophy and for African Philosopher

The various attempts to explicate the emergence of African philosophy and to affirm the peculiar nature of a distinct African philosophical paradigm has pervaded the socio-political and cultural discourse in Africa starting from the latter part of the twentieth century. Similarly, the various attempts to redefine and justify who qualifies as an African philosopher have endeared the analytical skills of many philosophers in Africa and in the Diaspora. The reason why these attempts have ensued and the purpose they are meant to achieve are still under rigorous discussion today. Some African scholars starting from Kwasi Wiredu to Odera Oruka, Nazombe to V.Y. Mudimbe, Paulin Hountondji to Didier Kaphagawani, Peter Bodunrin, to Moses Makinde Olubi Sodipo to Innocent Onyewuenyi, Kwame Nkrumah to Kwame Gyekye, Julius Nyerere to Leopold Senghor, Niyi Osundare to Moses Oke, Barry Hallen to Segun Oladipo, Placid Tempels to Alexis Kagame, Frantz Fanon to

Amilcar Cabral, Nelson Mandela to Sékou Touré, etc, have found the position that it was the description of Africa and Africans by Levy Bruhl, that they lack ratiocination (logic) which presented African philosophy as nonsensical. Similarly, Robin Horton's rejection of the Bruhlian negative disposition cannot be ignored. The reason is because "the African condition or mentality is not essentially or fundamentally symbolic or ritualistic (not religious, oral-dependent, perceptual, etc.) in character" (HALLEN 2002:18), and that "those who rejected the theoretical thinking of African philosophy (or, its distinct philosophical paradigm) have failed to see the correlatives in other cultures because they are blinded by a difference of idiom" (HORTON 1998, 181). Furthermore, he (Hallen) believes that "it was the quest to have an autochthonous, independently minded analytic tradition" (2002, 19) that gave birth to the debate about the existence of African philosophy and a paradigm to enhance the development of African socio-political discourse. Moreover, Barry Hallen's position has gained credence from some scholars that African philosophy started as (i) a cultural and an academic response to the proposition that Africans lack ratiocination, and (ii) a reactionary medium to undermine or relegate the views that African philosophy and African philosophical paradigm contains pre-logical, savagery, religious, perceptual, oral (un-writing) traits, etc.

In this respect, some of the things which many philosophers in Africa and the Diaspora have not denied, are as follows; (i) the role which anthropology played in waking African socio-political, cultural and philosophical discourse from their slumbers: where the lack of ratiocination was seen or categorized as "insult" to the African destiny prior to, during and after the European incursion into Africa; and (ii) the role which colonialism played in the socio-political, cultural/traditional and economic life of Africa and Africans. It is not surprising that the effects, impacts and influence of anthropology led by Levy Bruhl, etc., and colonialism led Africa and Africans to the search for a post-colonial identity—a distinct transformation from the first-order level to second-order level of cultural/philosophical analysis. This is with a view of rescuing Africa from the economic, academic, and mental steriotype or stamp placed on Africans. This attempt, to an extent, is responsible for Kwasi Wiredu's thought that African philosophical worldviews employ personal rather than impersonal models of causal explanation of human community and the world in order to argue out the view that "Western anthropologists have apparently been unfamiliar with the folk thought of the African culture" (WIREDU 1998, 193). It, therefore, seems that Wiredu's criticism of Robin Horton's problematic comparison of Africa with the West as lacking legitimacy is appealing, but Wiredu's view appears to stand against Hountondji's pluralism where African thought must be seen to be attending to the issues of universal significance rather than folk philosophy. However, Wiredu's, Horton's and Hountondji's views cannot make this study to deny Barry Hallen's submission that "African philosophy still has an important role to play insofar as such elements that pervades African philosophical discourse or inquiry should be subject to critical analysis and reflective evaluation of the evidence

underlying their development” (HALLEN 2002, 21). This is an outright albeit indirect rejection of ethno-philosophy.

Here again, it is important we find Marlene Van Niekerk’s contention that “in the light of the history of anthropology and its mode of othering—which constitute a rationalization for the phases of colonial oppression—it ought not to be surprising that the debate about the term “African Philosophy” as an ongoing affair,” (1998, 73) is very interesting and encouraging. Though African philosophy is an ongoing affair, as Marlene Van Niekerk, reiterates, it is also considered as an unending affair with the West’s negative conceptualization or categorization of Africa as oral, savagery, religious, and pre-logical.

On the one hand, the basis for such contention, as Marlene Niekerk opine, is that “it is debated precisely because the term “African philosophical paradigm” also denotes an instance of essentialist or typological othering: it is a term that assumes that “there is a way of thinking or a conceptual framework that is uniquely African and which is at the same time radically unEuropean” (1998, 73). Niekerk’s conclusion is that the term “others” which continues to be fiercely criticized is a sign that the time is long past and that the “Other” and “their thinking” could be “arrested” and “held up” by the West as objects of study (1998,73). For him, the terms “African Thinking” and “African Philosophy” would certainly not have had such a negative resonance if they did not have a history (1998, 53). It is from this historical basis that some other radical African scholars like Fanon etc, thought that “African philosophy” started or began.

On the other hand, Emevwo Biakolo’s view that “the relations between the knowing *subject* and its *object*, in any account of the epistemological process, have occupied the Western philosophy from the time of Plato, and most especially with the advent of both Cartesian and Lockean empiricism” (1998, 1), represent how the West saw their incursion into Africa as help and not a means of destruction. In a different light, to be an object of study is, in most cases, denigrating. Although in the field of philosophy, Biakolo asserts that “the central concerns have been with the individual subject as such, it was not long before the influences of these interpretations of subject/object relations began to make themselves felt in the much younger discipline of anthropology” (1998, 1). Biakolo’s view/assertion has a damaging implication; anthropology has endeared some anthropologists like Levy Bruhl, Stanislaw Andreski, and C. G. Jung to view Africa and Africans as lacking ratiocination: that is, pre-logical, savages, primitives, mystical, unscientific, perceptual, oral and religious. The perception/view of Levy Bruhl, as an anthropologist, is that “the primitive (African) mind does not differentiate the supernatural from reality but rather uses “mystical participation” to manipulate the world: the primitive (African) mind does not address contradictions” (BRUHL 1965, 43). However, in consonance with the pattern of growth and development of the new episcience of culture, which has its historical basis in epistemology until anthropology emerged, Biakolo says, “the determining factor here is always about “race”” (1998, 1). If Biakolo’s analysis is correct, then, it suffices to say that the fundamental

dichotomy between the West and the Africans given the nature and introduction of anthropology on the subject/object relations was used to carry out a study on the Africans, making Africans and Africa objects of study. This, to a great extent, affected the identity of the Africans. According to Biakolo, “this anthropological attitude reveals ingenuity; but this (ingenuity) goes further to confirm the political project behind the Western construction of the cultural and philosophical paradigms of the “Other”” (1998:1).

If it is the case that the anthropological attitude reveals ingenuity (which seem to deny the existential status of a distinct African philosophical paradigm), as Biakolo reveals, then, Kwame Appiah’s concession that *there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us* (ILLUSIONS OF RACES, 1992, 45) should not be surprising. He (Appiah) advanced this submission in his other works like [Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race] (1996), [The Ethics of Identity] (2005), [Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers] (2006), and gain credence/support from D. A. Masolo’s concession that *identity is impossible* in “African Philosophy and the Postcolonial: Some Misleading Abstractions about Identity” (1997). There are a host of reasons why Appiah’s and Masolo’s concessions should not be surprising to many who care to advance African philosophy and believe in a distinct African philosophical paradigm. These reasons are as follows: (i) by virtue of their (Appiah’s and Masolo’s) denials, they have jettisoned the distinctiveness of African philosophical paradigm; (ii) as a derivative of (i), there are certain Africans of African descent who do not see anything worthwhile in a distinct African philosophical, literary and cultural paradigms; (iii) it will not be the case that it was only non-Africans (anthropologist like Levy Bruhl) who denied Africans of their distinct philosophical, literary (or, language) and cultural paradigms; therefore, (iv) a distinct African philosophical paradigm (call it ethno-philosophy) cannot be seen as effective or worthy to exist outside a distinct/common human philosophy, family or race. As it appears, Appiah’s and Masolo’s submissions out rightly deny the existence of African philosophy as a distinct field of philosophical inquiry.

Appiah’s and Masolo’s views, though, appear to be disturbing and discouraging; D.N. Kaphagawani’s examination of the way in which African philosophy started brews fresh air and brings encouragement. Following Wiredu, Oruka, Nazombe, and V.Y. Mudimbe, Kaphagawani maintains that “though “gathering momentum”, African Philosophy is, as accepted by philosophers in Africa, still in its embryonic stage” (1998, 85). Kaphagawani’s understanding is that African philosophy should be allowed to thrive as many flowers should be allowed to bloom. In allowing many flowers to bloom, in Kaphagawani’s view, we would only be promoting debates, critical analyses and self-criticisms when grappling with the numerous issues in contemporary Africa which are amenable to philosophic traditions and not just to create traditions. One implication/interpretation of this framework is that, the 21st century African philosophy is meant to cohere with the second-order level of philosophic activity which entails rigour, analyticity and

criticism. He (Kaphagawani) pointed out three evils which must be eschewed in order for constructive analyses, possible debates and critical analysis to come out of Africa in the 21st century. These evils, Kaphagawani calls them the names, *authoritarianism* (permanent control of all aspects of life, politics included, the things which compel people to do things against their will); *anachronism* (systems or principles outliving their suitability and utility); *supernaturalism* (the tendency to establish supernatural foundations for a natural code of conduct) (1998, 86).

On the question, why African philosophy? Kaphagawani highlighted the conditions that gave rise to its emergence. His position is that the question “What is African Philosophy?” has preoccupied scholars in Africa for several decades, basically two reasons: One, the attempt to falsify certain anthropological thesis by Levy Bruhl, which denied Africans south of Sahara properties of ratiocination and its cognates due to the apparent primitiveness of these people’s mentality. That is, anthropologists of a Levy Bruhlian persuasion presented Africans as incapable of evolving a scientific, logical and reason-oriented culture. Two, the role which colonialism played in Africa coupled with the post-colonial quest/search for a distinct African identity. And three, given the perception that the Europeans colonized Africa, this has led to the view that African metal culture was long destroyed; and this has led Africans into searching for post-colonial identity. For Kaphagawani, the anthropological challenge and the colonial challenge are the factors which resuscitated or motivated, for good or ill, philosophers in Africa to ask the question, “What is African Philosophy?” (1998, 86)

As acknowledged by some African philosophers, the history of African philosophy can be traced to the evils that colonial dispensation brought on Africa. For some other philosophers like Cabral, Fanon, Horton and Serequeberhan, the post-colonial quest for a distinct African identity played a significant role in the emergence of a distinct African philosophy or African philosophical paradigm. But, as Didier Kaphagawani opined, the quest for the post-colonial African identity is solely responsible for this protracted dispute on the question of “Why African Philosophy”. The second reason for the debate or the dispute on the question of “Why African Philosophy”, has been traced to the very nature of the discipline of philosophy itself (KAPHAGAWANI 1986, 86-87).

Some scholars have acknowledged the types of philosophical frameworks which are used in identifying the different ways of doing African philosophy. These types of philosophical frameworks may also qualify as the theories of remaking Africa. These frameworks, they refer to, as ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. In other words, these are the approaches of doing African philosophy. Furthermore, philosophers like Wiredu, Oruka, Kaphagawani, Makinde, Bodunrin, etc, identified the classification of African philosophy into two different schemata. These classifications represent the following; one, the four-rung Orukan framework which Okpewho and Nazombe serve as the founding philosophers. The classifications are “tradition-preserved”, “tradition-observed”, “tradition refined” and “tradition revised”. And, two, there are

two fundamental notions which underlie the knowledge of how to do African philosophy. These two ways, Segun Oladipo (2008) calls the *traditionalist* and the *modernist* understanding of African philosophy and African philosophical paradigm, while Barry Hallen (2002) calls these two ways, the *culturalist* and *universalist* distinctions to doing African philosophy and understanding African philosophical paradigm. The traditionalist (Oladipo 2008) or the culturalists (Hallen 2002) account to doing African philosophy is an encounter which Africa should not forget, given the colonial experience. This form of experience, according to the traditionalists or culturalists, inflicted two things on Africa; political subjugation and economic exploitation. Similarly, according to the ‘traditionalists’ or ‘culturalists’ account, colonialism had its ideology of legitimation. This is embedded in the denigration of African beliefs, cultural practices, especially religion, and social institutions. However, traditionalist/culturalist, as trends using the same methodology, see African philosophy as the collective world view of Africans concerning man, nature and society. The modernists (Oladipo 2008) or the universalists (Hallen 2002) account to doing African philosophy and understanding African philosophical paradigm refers to a form of intellectual inquiry which is ratiocinative, critical and individualistic, using modern logical and conceptual techniques. The traditionalist/culturalist, as factors using the same modality, has close affinity with ethno-philosophy while the modernist/universalist, as factors using the same modality are close affinity with critical, analytical or professional philosophy.

In order to address the four trends to doing African philosophy as different from Oladipo and Hallen’s two ways of doing African philosophy, D.N. Kaphagawani acknowledges ethno-philosophy as a conception that sees African philosophy as communal thought ... as opposed to seeing it as a body of logically argued thought of individuals. Ethno-philosophy is premised on the assumption that “there is a metaphysical system, and an ideology, embodied in the traditional wisdom, the institutions and the language of Africa” (1998, 89). For him, many anthropologists are attracted to this approach because of the conceptual problems that are embedded in it. They are the problems of authenticity and the problem of differences, which are attracted to ethno-philosophy. Philosophic sagacity, for Kaphagawani, is different from the ethno-philosophical approach. It underscores the thoughts of individuals in a community. It is a second-order philosopher, as conceived by Odera Oruka. Nationalistic-ideological approach is a method which tries to evolve a new and, if possible, unique political theory based on the traditional African socialism and familyhood. Professional philosophy, on the other hand, sees what passes as African philosophy as that which is “engrained with argument and criticism” (1998, 95).

The quest to reveal what may actually be the original historical basis/condition of African philosophy, for some philosophers like Kaphagawani should aid our concession that the presentation of the nature of this historicity is exactly how colonialism, anthropology, and the post-colonial quest for identity has allowed us to perceive and interpret ideas and things. Thus, (i) we cannot

subscribe to the fact that there were no traces of philosophical tendencies in Africa before the Western anthropological study of Africa; and (ii) there were genuine representations of the distinctiveness of African philosophy from Western philosophical discourse. By implication, if we subscribe to the fact that the West invented the African orientation concerning philosophical discourse, it will suggest that there was no philosophical discourse in Africa prior to the European invasion, and that the anthropological study paved way for the discovery of Africa out of nowhere. Africa does not need to dwell on the post-colonial quest for an identity despite the fact that there are many cultures evolving in Africa.

The fundamental issue of the lack of ratiocination raised by Levy Bruhl in his skepticism about African philosophy and the responses by Hountondji and others have been addressed in the following works, African Philosophy: The Demise of a Controversy (MAKINDE 2010); Is There an African Philosophy, (RUCH 1974), and On Delimiting African Philosophy and the Equalization Scheme (IBOUT 2011). Makinde's, Ruch's and Ibout's aim is not to reignite the tendencies of starting African philosophy all over again but to start doing African philosophy because it genuinely exists. One implication of Makinde's, Ruch's and Ibout's claims is that, since the satisfaction of the logic of *modus ponens* and other philosophical tendencies are already embedded in certain African languages (i.e., Yoruba language), this signifies the presence of philosophical climate. We should no longer dwell on the question whether there is African philosophy, as Makinde and Ibout put it, we should start doing it.

The Conflicting Positions on who qualifies as an African Philosopher

Varying discussions have ensued about two respective views; how to do African philosophy and how to arrive at the qualification for becoming an African philosopher. It is pertinent we say that different or opposing answers are warranted since there have been varying discussions in different respects. However, certain problems arise based on this contending answers: (i) which of the contending views with respect to qualification would sufficiently lead us to the authentic representation of African philosophy; (ii) how do we get a paradigm with which we can arrive at how an African philosopher can be/should be/ought to be known; and (iii) do we, in actual fact, need an African philosopher to be able to carry out a discourse on any subject in Africa? The response to problem (i) gains credence from Appiah, Masolo and Samuel T. Segun. Problem (ii) has been answered by Uduma O. Uduma, Hountondji, and Oke. The response to problem (iii) lay in the attempt to be made by this study to give an answer which would not beg the question. It is important we admit, in the case at hand, that a sufficient answer might be difficult to arrive at. The reason is precise: the provision of qualification for being an African philosopher has been placed on certain restrictions. To begin with, any opinion which tends to present a concise understanding of who should qualify or ought to qualify as an African philosopher from the African perspective may be termed Africanism or relativistic. Another perspective may suffice to place a fundamental difference on, who under a

genuine guise should become an African philosopher, and who, based on the possession of required philosophical skills, articulation and having no destructive tendencies toward Africa, should become an African philosopher. Admittedly, the genuineness of purpose is the only problem to this perspective. This is because there is a consistent restriction on who an African is, which is first and foremost, by blood or ancestral lineage. The dire implication of the above perception is that, whoever is not African by blood or ancestry, should not/cannot qualify as African philosophy from (i) the holistic; (ii) the cultural; and (iii) the traditional points of view, thereby forsaking or neglecting the professional aspect of doing philosophy in any region of the world. The central problem to the above issues and implications is presented by Samuel T. Segun: “the concerns of philosophy all transcend geographical boundaries” (2014, 106).

In his work “Knowledge and Development Issue”, Hountondji asserts that “not so long ago, there was a widespread belief that the only way for Africans to do African philosophy was to philosophize about Africa” (2006, 529). For Hountondji, “what he accepted least, however, was the way African scholars themselves took up this project uncritically as handed down to them by this tradition” (2006, 529). His problem is the failure of many African scholars to ask whether such investigation were suitable for anything other than feeding the curiosity and other intellectual and even non-intellectual needs of the Western readership. Thus, to philosophize as an African for African sake in an uncritical and un-universal way, or in an ethno-philosophical manner, as Hountondji says, was not the standard one (2006, 530). As Hountondji mildly put it:

I wanted to make it clear that this kind of investigation amounted to creating a new standard of philosophical practice specific to Africa and such other areas as are traditionally considered research fields for ethnographers and anthropologists. This new standard was one that was bound to hinder the African philosopher or, for that matter, the so-called primitive or semi-primitive philosopher from tackling issues of a universal meaning and significance. (2006, 529-530)

If we are to accept whether tentatively or sufficiently, what Hountondji has said as valid and sound, African philosophy and African philosophical paradigm will be considered as null and void. Why? Africans will be dwelling on a set of assumptions systematic enough to be considered, as it often is, as a “system of thought” without a pluralistic significance but premised on a problematic view of unanimism.

Unanimism, as Hountondji sees it, is the original problem of anthropology. It makes people, individuals or societies studied by anthropology to want to respond, attack, and create their own identity. For him, unanimism, which refers to the oversimplification of non-Western societies or cultures (2006, 530-531) is the problem with Africans erecting a distinct philosophical paradigm. In More’s explication, “to deny that “race” (or African philosophy) exists, is to create a

problem, and it cannot be ignored or simply wished away by declaring its non-existence: it needs to be confronted as part of the African and world reality” (MORE 1998, 371).

However, forasmuch as we may not want to take ethno-philosophy as the philosophy representing Africa and the Africans, it is inconclusive and incoherent to assert that Africa and African scholars should not erect or display a distinct philosophical paradigm given that there is every reason to employ a universal, global, pluralistic, or relativistic approach in philosophical study. Thus, no restriction can be adequate or sufficient to help situate the African contextual problems by certain people. How do we make being an African philosopher paramount than doing African philosophy? Hountondji, Appiah and Masolo’s failures are irredeemable. This is because they may have forgotten that there are European Continental philosophers, American pragmatists, European analytic philosophers, British empiricists, Oriental philosophers, Chinese philosophers, etc. Since Hountondji’s pluralism “acknowledges the fact of diversity, including diversity of opinion and belief in every human society” (KNOWLEDGE 2006, 530-531), and Appiah asserts that “if the eight million people of Negro blood in the United States of America – must soon come to realize that if they are to take their place in the van of Pan-Negroism, then their destiny is not absorption by the white Americans” (ILLUSIONS 1992, 29), then, having African philosophers searching for a distinct African philosophical paradigm is possible, permissible and welcomed. What we may take from Hountondji’s idea of pluralism is the view that certain individuals will be identified as genuinely or typically identity propagators and defenders while some others will be identity deniers. However, race and identity may have been rejected by Kwame Appiah in the [Illusions of Race] (1992), [Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race] (1996), [The Ethics of Identity] (2005), [Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers] (2006) and Dismas A. Masolo in “African Philosophy and The Postcolonial: Some Misleading Abstractions about Identity” (1997), but we may not be sufficiently disposed to accept Hountondji’s, Appiah’s and Masolo’s views because the independent status of African philosophy coupled with a distinct African philosophical paradigm cannot be sufficiently removed by the ‘common’ human race or philosophy given the differences in people’s orientations, beliefs, practices, and modality for relationship. If a distinct African philosophy is rejected, the credence for African philosophy and a distinct African philosophical paradigm gained by philosophers like Moses Makinde, Odera Oruka, Ibout Emmanuel, Kwasi Wiredu, Didier Kaphagawani, etc., and radicals like Fanon, Cabral, Awolowo, Cesaire, Senghor, Nyerere, Mandela, Sékou Touré, etc., would amount to nothing. As literal as these philosophers may have defended the idea of a distinct African philosophy, it may still appear that doing African philosophy can be different from being an African philosopher: the reason is because what an African philosopher will be doing can be categorized as philosophy but may sometimes not be philosophy within the Africa socio-political and cultural studies.

Given the attempt to redefine what qualifies one as an African philosopher, Appiah, while following Hountondji, contends that “by ‘African philosophy’ I mean a set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans themselves and described as philosophical by their authors themselves” (APPIAH 1998, 109). This description, I think, knowingly withdraws the cruxes of philosophical debate in post-colonial black Africa. Appiah maintains that “as we have puzzled over whether philosophers who happen to share a continent should for that reason be classified together, we have wondered, too, what sorts of intellectual activity should be called ‘philosophy’” (APPIAH 1998, 110). Appiah’s claim has helped in streamlining the qualification for doing African philosophy. However, Appiah’s analysis renders Barry Hallen, Peter Amato, Robin Horton, M. P. More, Marlene Van Niekerk, and their likes, as aliens (unAfrican) because they are not of African descent or blood. Moreover, Barry Hallen, Robin Horton, Peter Amato, etc., have enormous written works on African philosophy. Fortunately, Appiah’s analysis would render Segun Oladipo, Moses Makinde, Abiola Irele, Wande Abimbola, Segun Gbadegesin, Julius Nyerere, Bolaji Idowu, Kwasi Wiredu, Peter Bodunrin, Moses Oke, and some other African philosophers of African descent as African philosophers. In any way that one may decide to look at it, it may be impossible to run away from tribalizing issues which ought to be tribalized or detribalized, if or when we consider or admit/accept what Appiah has said.

While trying to interrogate or re-interrogate Appiah’s concession on “who is an African philosopher, or to redefine what qualifies one as an African philosopher”, we are left with no choice than to start by seeking to clarify the following questions/issues: “who is an African?”, “what is philosophy?” and “who ought to participate or write on contentious issues in African philosophy?” Perhaps, if we are able to understand the gravity of these questions or issues, we may conclude, in a way, that we have a clear understanding into the nature of how to do African philosophy, and what qualifies one to become an African philosopher. We must be careful in making sure that we are not employing the European paradigm to get a definition for philosophy, Africa, and an African philosopher. Similarly, there is the need to be careful that we do not get a European definition for who is an African. If John Stuart Mill had lived in Africa and wrote his work [On Liberty] in Africa, by implication, this work would by a social condition and academic criterion qualify as a work in African political philosophy. Perhaps, we may not want to provide an answer to this problem in that way. If we are to answer this question that way, it will suggest the following; would thousands of books published every day in Africa qualify as African philosophy? What ought to be the answer to the question who qualifies to become an African philosopher? No response or answer is devoid of some flaws.

It would be difficult to give an exhaustive or sufficient analysis of how we are to redefine what qualifies one as an African philosopher? What, to a great extent, may be required in setting out who becomes an African philosopher (which is not really about the exhaustive study of the historical facts of the past or the attribution of

people with “African-ness in them”), may be a critical discourse in which reason and argument play a significant role. We cannot, however, characterize philosophy simply as the discourse that applies to our folk beliefs based on the techniques of specific logic and contextualized reason. If this is the case, academic philosophy, therefore, has done two things: (i) it has come to be defined by a canon of subjects as well as by its argumentative method, and (ii) it has turned out to be premised on how specific regions ought or should contribute to philosophy, as a universal discipline. This study may not be trying to assert that every culture does not have their views about what it is to have something so peculiar to that culture alone. Nor is it saying that no culture has specific social norms as different from the other. Every culture has had views about what ‘it is’ to have something different from others. Thus, ‘there is’ in every culture a folk philosophy (which may involve having folk scientific-empirical orientation and facts), and implicit in that folk philosophy are all (or many) of the concepts that academic philosophers have made central to their study in the West, America, Africa, Asian, etc. Of course, there might not be in every society people who pursued a systematic critical conceptual inquiry, but at least in every culture, there is work for a critical philosopher, should he/she come or decide to do it.

Many factors could help in making a supposition that the task of knowing who is an African philosopher or who should be seen as African philosopher, very difficult. Many would, without exogenous intervention, take up the project of telling us who qualify to be called African philosopher. The exogenous intervention, in this regard, has left people with Western philosophical training to dabble into issues using the Western paradigm. That is, this exogenous intervention, through training, has unconsciously propelled the definition of an African philosopher using the Western paradigm. Because we have some Africans rooted, in at least, some degree of traditional cultures, and at the same time, we have some intellectuals trained in the traditions of the West, the latter makes African philosophy to face a special attention and problem. While some may choose to borrow the tools of Western philosophy to help define who an African philosopher should be, some others fails to borrow any leaf to define African philosopher. In any way that it may take, criteria according to Jonathan Chimakonam are needed to establish this purpose (2015, 102-110). But if traditional African scholars wish to pursue some conceptual inquiries in their own traditions, they are bound to do so with a highly developed awareness or consciousness of the challenges of Western training and ideas. The reason for this is because the Western paradigm has done a lot to redefine, re-structure, attack, propel, and address various concerns about the culture and beliefs of the “Others”. But the acceptance of the definition of African philosophy and who becomes an African philosopher with such Western mindset, paves way for different problems to arise. Similarly, such help or acceptance of the definition of African philosopher using the Western paradigm is not devoid of problems for the perceiver (Western anthropologists) and the perceived (Africa and Africans). To a great extent, the only difference between philosophy in Africa and in other parts of Europe or America,

should be the practice which philosophy entails, but the theory and practice of the works done in Africa and elsewhere is conceived as closer to the traditions that remain strong in those regions, countries or continents.

It is likely to concede, precisely, that whoever is to qualify as an African philosopher should remember to share, of course, a vocabulary of key words that belongs to the language of the philosophical tradition – truth and meaning, and such a vocabulary should become a referent and a tradition to follow in Africa or in any part of Africa that the author centers upon. Does this mean or suggest that African philosophy should not or ought not to be done using a foreign language? He re again, sufficiency or conclusiveness is difficult to establish or attain. This is because almost, except few African countries, were colonized and a particular foreign language has turned out to become part of their representative/respective identity. For a person living outside Africa (e.g. a non-African) to become an African philosopher, this fuss may seem preposterous: what may be at stake, after all, may only be the right to label “philosophy”. The claim to philosophy is the claim to what is most important, most difficult, and most fundamental anywhere in the world. And the enduring power of that claim is reflected in the commonest response from any inquisitive philosopher, be it French, or a German, or an Anglophone, a Portuguese, or a pure African in his/her nativity.

Another view is Appiah’s. He asserts that, “orality is inconsistent with the philosophical tradition of writing, and it is also inconsistent with the demands of what Althusser calls “science”: writing liberates the individual mind; “to make innovations that may shake the existing established ideas and even overthrow them completely” (APPIAH 1998, 129). As this study maintains, Appiah’s position would help in identifying a logical, an epistemological, and a normative/moral framework which will make a meaningful addition to existing body of knowledge. African philosophy, therefore, is expected to transcend the level of orality and become literal. This helps in situating who qualifies to do African philosophy and who should become an African philosopher, as different (but not necessarily opposing) to/from who is to do African philosophy or who is an African. The ability to contemplate, write, the provision of logical basis for the idea to be asserted, argue coherently, and be scientific, Appiah implies, are the factors that makes an African philosopher.

However, in addressing the universal nature of the terms and concepts that are to be used and analyzed in philosophical discourse, the term 'African' may sometimes create an avenue for incoherence. In this respect, to associate “African” with philosophical or certain dispositions may not make any good for philosophical disposition. On the other hand, an individual (non-African by birth) who fails to show his expository, logical, critical, analytical and rigorous prowess cannot be said to be doing philosophy. An African who has virtually no clue about philosophical dispositions should not do African philosophy, either. And, an African philosopher who is dogmatic about whatever he/she portends to be discussing as African philosophy should not be read or revered. To be able to qualify as an African philosopher, such scholar or individual should promote the myth of primitive African

timelessness, obscuring history and change (which is the most common thing around in the world) with the zeal of transmitting them without dogma.

From the critical point of view, if we make an attempt to justify the positions of different philosophers concerning the rationale for the conflicting positions on who qualify as an African philosopher, such could be problematic. This may result to the notion that if we attribute “African” to whoever will or may qualify to become an African philosopher, then, we tend toward creating the notion of primitive savagery. How? If we use “African” to distinguish philosophers instead of the possession of the ability for philosophical disposition, having the philosophical tools and critical analysis, we will be creating an image of ethnicism in philosophy: where ethnicism makes philosophy to be carried out through an individual who is religious, dogmatic, and sentimental.

The Interrogation of the Rationale for Different Conflicting Positions and the Justification of what qualifies One as an African philosopher

The problem of who is meant to become an African philosopher and whether or not Africans by birth or blood have the sole right to do African philosophy may not have been conclusively resolved in this study. The reason is simple: the open-ended nature of philosophical disputes would be dealt with if the rationale, qualification and justification of who is an African philosopher is sufficiently resolved. Similarly, this study may not have sufficiently resolved who qualifies to be a philosopher, in order to make any issue in African discourse to qualify as universal. It has only attempted some reasons that are to be considered in knowing the nature of African philosophy and the justification of what qualifies one as an African philosopher.

For instance, Olubi Sodipo’s and Barry Hallen’s work entitled [Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy] and Barry Hallen’s work entitled [A Short History of African Philosophy] are works done within the context of African philosophy. The former is a critical explication and philosophical interrogation of the Yoruba analysis of *imò* (knowledge), *igbàgbó* (belief) *àti* (and) *àjé* (witchcraft) in the African epistemological study: while the latter is an explication of the subject-matter of African philosophy arising from the historical foundation of African philosophy, the specific factors that help one to do African philosophy, and theories of remaking Africa. Hence, it is preposterous to say that Barry Hallen is not an African philosopher. Furthermore, Olubi Sodipo’s and Barry Hallen’s work [Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy] represents a classic example of a joint work done by an African and an American that both lectured at the department of Philosophy, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria). The reference that Sodipo’s and Hallen’s paper has made to the Yoruba philosophy cannot be over-emphasized because of the nature of such collaboration between two prominent African philosophers to create or attempt to resolve some pertinent issues/problems in Yoruba discourse on knowledge.

The genuineness of what philosophy preaches should entail the will, knowledge and the technical ability to unravel certain problems within the framework of philosophy as an African would carry it out. The meaning of this lies in two things: the lived-experience; that is, the living experience of a philosopher on African soil and the content of what a philosopher writes concerning the African condition. Atimes, these two things may be done by whoever possesses the philosophical skill without recourse to racial essentialism, regionalism and tribalism. Doing philosophy in Africa may not be necessarily dependent on being an African. A non-African may possess the merit above an African to carry out a discourse or research in African philosophy on a certain problem, where his/her research may help in resolving a philosophical dispute, or provide relevant analysis into certain developmental problems facing Africa. It may follow that African philosophy ought not to be done entirely by Africans. By implication, the person who should qualify to do African philosophy may need to possess the required skills and relevant knowledge to be able to identify which aspect of African philosophical paradigm he/she is defending. It is noteworthy that a non-African who fails to understand the culture, language and philosophy of a particular part of Africa upon which he/she intends to carry out research should not do African philosophy. What will he/she write about when Africa remains unknown to begin with. Those who care to write on African philosophy should understand the nitty-gritty of the language to be used which is African, or the work should be understood from the African perspective.

As it is expected, a philosopher should be able to transcend the dogmatization of issues, but it does not mean that a philosopher cannot be influenced by culture. By provisional means, a philosopher need not be an offspring of a particular region to be able to participate in resolving philosophical disputes and issues. What is needed is the ability to use philosophical skills and analytic tools to discuss problems and provide the general solutions or recommendations that may aid the development of philosophy. This is provided that common ground knowledge in such discourse is evident. But to define African philosophy is to situate our definition within the African condition, articulate contextual relevance, gain currency and possess adequate information on any subject under consideration which only affects Africa. A philosopher in any part is expected to discuss issues and problems using the tools of philosophy (like logic, epistemology, meta-ethics, etc.) to analyze discourses, problems, prospects and mortality.

The position of this study seems to differ from what Appiah, Masolo, and Hountondji have asserted. However, Kwame Appiah's assertion that "Africa's intellectuals have long been engaged in a conversation with each other and with Europeans and Americans, about what it means to be an African," is an indication that at the heart of these debates on African identity and a distinct African paradigm, Appiah says, "are the seminal works of politicians, creative writers, and philosophers from Africa and her Diaspora" (1992, x). One implication of this view is the recognition of Africa's distinct philosophical paradigm. However, part of the writers in the Diaspora, as Appiah maintains, is W. E. B. Du Bois. His discussion of Du Bois

is a derivative of the notion that “the idea of an African race, is an unavoidable element in the discourse of the idea of Negro, and this racialist notion is grounded in bad biological, and worse ethical ideas, inherited from the increasingly racialized thought of nineteenth-century Europe and America” (1992, x). It is not that easy to highlight or understand Appiah’s mind concerning who should participate in doing African philosophy. It can be derived from his thoughts that only Africans living within the continent or outside of African (Diaspora) should participate in doing African philosophy. Similarly, it is only an African who has the patent qualification to become an African philosopher. This is a result of the European invasion of the world of the Africans and the continent of Africa. Appiah’s concession is that “being African is, for its bearers, one among other salient modes of being, all of which have to be constantly fought for and rethought” (1992, 177).

Appiah’s view may be interpreted to mean that, central to contemporary life and the discourse on Africa, African philosophy and African philosopher, it is only Africans that recognize what African identity is all about. This claim can be further discussed using Ibut Emmanuel’s view that “the question is whether African thought as it exists in Africa is the same sort of thing with thought as understood by the Western philosopher and we Europeans or educated Africans who share this culture” (IBOUT 2011, 211). The implication of both Appiah’s and Ibut’s frameworks is that, in doing African philosophy, it is only African intellectuals that can understand the nature of their defence for the identity that is solely African. Another implication is the way in which the African definition or view of thought may appear different from what others (say, Europeans or Americans) would see the identity and culture of the Africans. Thus, the ‘identity’ of Africa can only receive intervention or support from Africans and some others who only deem it worthy to lend a helping hand, since it will be difficult for a non-African to understand the emotional and the cultural struggles behind the need for an African Identity. However, while expressing his fear about Appiah’s view because of his American background, Robin Horton asserts that “many social anthropologists or Europeans have been unfamiliar with the theoretical thinking of their own culture,” while admitting that “even those familiar with theoretical thinking in their own culture have failed to recognize its African equivalents” (HORTON 1998, 181). His (Appiah’s) response to Horton’s fear makes him to posit that African unity and African identity through African philosophical discourse need securer foundation than race (1992, 176). Going by what Appiah opines, philosophy has nothing to do with a contextual discipline or a compartmentalized discourse; rather, it has to be seen using the general outlook or that its tools is meant for general analysis rather than the compartmentalized form of identity that Africa has reduced philosophy, identity and race to. In Wiredu, Oruka, Kaphagawani, etc., views, this contextual compartmentalization of philosophical discourse can only help in asserting the independence of African philosophy and who an African philosopher should be.

In a way that is different (but not essentially opposing) to Appiah, Chukwudi Eze (1997, 3) asserts using Lucius Outlaw’s analysis that “to identify the features

that make certain practices and legacies of persons who are situated in geographically and historically-socially diverse societies ‘philosophy,’ those features must be characteristic of though not necessarily unique to the persons as members of a dispersed race. This, Eze says, should be exemplified. The issue of race, as Eze contends, cannot be discounted, despite the fact that he (Eze) has not come to understand whether the notion of “geographic race” is the most pertinent of productive to be used in showing who to partake in African philosophy, and who ought to become African philosopher (1997, 3). Also, Eze points out in favor of Lucius Outlaw that he (Outlaw) explicitly insists that he will not subscribe to “biological or racial essentialism” (1997, 3). It is from this point of view that this study concedes in the following; for the fact it is only Africans (born within the geographical location of Africa, or the ones in the Diaspora) are the only eligible ones to partake in doing African philosophy and who are qualified to become African philosophers does not mean the creation of “racial essentialism”. Though, this may represent an attempt to create, what Chukwudi Eze calls “Africa’s distinct gene pool” (1997, 3), but as it appears, this study takes its departure from Barry Hallen’s view, when he says that “philosophy in any cultural context is not likely to be the easiest subject in the world” (HALLEN 2002, 1). Through his discourse, Hallen may not, in any way, regard philosophy as essentially contextualized but that philosophy, when studied in different contexts is not an easy task. This is because of the nature of its essential characters which are rigor, analyticity, skepticism and criticism. However, as philosophy is done in Africa, which is to be done by both African intellectuals and foreigners who live on African soil, it may be the case that philosophy would be seen from the African standpoints though with little, minimal, more, or no regard to how philosophy is done in Europe (with the empiricist and Continental traditions), America (pragmatist tradition), Asia (Oriental tradition), etc. In his footnote analysis, he posits that “I use the term “African” to refer to scholarship that is specifically concerned with the African continent and its cultures” (HALLEN, 2002, 4).

In this respect, the content and the aim of the views expressed by Horton, Hallen, and Eze can easily be antagonized or relegated using the interpretation of E. A. Ruch’s concession. Given the existentialist analysis of the nature of African philosophy, E. A. Ruch posits that there is African philosophy (i.e., it exist); but what defines it is not the location or racial origin of its creators, but its concern with the way in which African peoples of the past and present make sense of their existence (1981, 17). How do we resolve the problem of the non-reliance on location or racial origin of the creators of philosophy, as explicated by Ruch? In his work “The Prefix “African” and its Implications for Philosophy in Africa”, Samuel T. Segun’s response or attempt is simple: “the laws of logic, the burden of axiology, the questions of metaphysics and the concerns of epistemology all transcend geographical boundaries”: hence, “philosophy in Africa must not be seen as regionalized philosophy but rather a contribution to the subject matter and quest of philosophy – the search for truth” (2014, 106 & 118). The implications of Segun’s assertions seem dire and severe. His assertions foreclose every avenue of regional

participation in philosophy which has universal character and where ethnophilosophy is doomed to be purely African and lacking the essential ingredients because it is regarded as first-order level of discourse. This is reminiscent of Hountondji. It makes many thinkers to qualify as universal participants in philosophy without acknowledging their locational influence on the development of African discourse. It fails to see the influence of anthropological studies by Levy Bruhl having any influence on African studies whether cultural, traditional, sage, or ethno-philosophical. It sees colonialism as event which did not take place in Africa and which did not influence the characterization of philosophical studies and development in Africa. And five, it fails to see anything worthwhile in the post-colonial search for a distinct African identity and the various impacts and influences which globalization, common human family and the idea of a common race have had and are still having on Africa. However, to a great extent, Uduma's response seems to differ from the views of Ruch and Segun. In his work "The Question of the "African" in African Philosophy: In Search of a Criterion for the Africanness of a Philosophy", Uduma posits that "African philosophy should be concerned with only a part of the African historical experience" (2014, 127), which by implication will have to cover centuries rather than the mere acknowledgement of the colonial and the anthropological necessities for the emergence of African philosophy. For him, "given the comprehensive nature of philosophy, we are inclined to the persuasion that a criterion for the Africanness of a philosophy ought to be derived from the totality of the African experience" (2014, 127). Uduma's claim, though appears appealing, it is not devoid of flaws. One, Uduma's claim attempts to ignore the fundamental problem of orality, which was fundamental to African thought prior to the Levy Bruhlian disposition. The problem of orality or oral literature has been pre-existing before the European missionary invasion of Africa. And two, Uduma's view pretend to ignore the cultural anti-revivalists like Hountondji, Masolo and others that an appeal to the cultural past in re-making Africa given the contemporary realities in science, technology, biotechnology, analytic philosophy, and various developments in logic (e.g., set theory, Binary theory, etc.,) should not even suffice because it will not lead Africa to anywhere.

A problem arises: if we use "African" to justify the rationale for qualification as an African philosopher, it may lead to substituting general analysis in philosophy for a detailed analysis of particular/contextual situations. This does not represent an avenue to conclude that Igbo metaphysics is the same as the Yoruba metaphysics or with Swahili or Bantu parts of Southern African, but in as much as we desire to deal with complexities, recognizing the tools of philosophical tradition helps in advancing philosophy at any level or region. To use the term "African" to/for/on whoever may desire to write meaningfully and argue coherently (not anthropologically) in African philosophy, is to primitively recognize the usage of the word 'tribe'. This may not help in formalizing what ought to become part of the issues to be addressed in philosophy, be it from the African, European (British or Continental), American, or

Asian point of view. On the other hand, the continuous development of African philosophy may not be aided.

However, it is not sufficient to disclaim the views of some skeptics like Bruhl, Hountondji, Appiah and Masolo with respect to the unreality of distinct philosophical tradition in Africa, but it is pertinent we assume that a philosopher need not necessarily be of African descent or race before he/she can participate in the discussion of relevant issues in African philosophy. The view that an African philosopher need not be an African by geographical origin has particularly been stressed by Chimakonam in suggesting ‘logic’ as the grand criterion a discourse has to meet before it could qualify as African philosophy (2015, 104-105). Chimakonam describes what he calls Hountondji’s dilemma as any suggestion (such as implied by Hountondji) that recommends that a true African philosophy must be universally applicable and concedes again that it can only be done by a native African (2015, 104). Amato appears to think in this direction when he says that “the development of African philosophy is moving the discussion well beyond the potential danger of confinement within improper conceptions of raciality, not simply attacking racialized thought, but via constitutive activities of different contributions” (AMATO 1997, 72-5). To admit it, this is also true, because some African scholars have participated in the discussion of some issues in the Western (British, Continental or pragmatic) philosophy, while some are still participating.

Conclusion

Becoming an African philosopher and being able to do African philosophy, for some philosophers may be as a result of the following; namely, “biologism or essentialism” and “distinct gene pool”. These terms may have been recently developed to aid philosophical orientation in Africa but the consequence of how these terms will help the genuine development of African philosophical disposition appear debatable. Since the philosophers’ laboratory is their thought, it suffices to say that philosophers whether of African descent or race, or not, they should be able to use the tools of philosophy to discuss problems, prospects, issues and mortality of African philosophy provided that they understand how to go about it. The reality of entertaining the existential status of African philosopher in the way that most African countries are French speakers, Anglo-phone or Portuguese speaking nations, may portend problem from a genuine philosophical development. On the one hand, it is expected that a philosopher who is not of African descent or race but could write, speak or use any African language, should be able to discuss whatever lies within the African philosophical discourse using the native African languages or the language given to them as a result of colonization. However, in order to elude the problems of an author’s cultural lineage or descent of being “African” and the content of a work discussing “African” issues, we have to look for a synthesis of which the author and the issues discussed in a work must reflect the discussion of problems relating to African conditions. To a great extent, arguments whether in support or against the ontology and the subject-matter of African philosophy and the qualification to be an

African philosopher remain inconclusive and not time lapsing. The reason may be that whenever a person is writing and the tools of philosophy (analysis, criticism, rigor, skepticism, etc..) are applied, the issue of ethnic sentiments is taken for granted.

However, Makinde's opinion that "the teaching of African philosophy is generally poor when compared to the teaching of Western philosophy" cannot be discarded. This is so because many of the African philosophers who write on African philosophy as a controversial subject do not teach or know anything about it. They just talk about it, or write on the talks about it as a refreshing exercise using their Western philosophical understanding" (1987, 229). What he (Makinde) attempts to assert is that, inasmuch as the growth of philosophy is becoming poorer and weaker every time in Africa, to foresee the growth of philosophy as we would have wanted it in Africa will be impossible. How can philosophy grow in Africa? Its growth may sometimes be as a result of allowing others (not of African race, tribe or descent) to participate in developing it, just as Barry Hallen, Robin Horton, George Chartalian, M. P. Moore, Bruce Janz etc., have done in the past. Allowing the exercise, participation, growth and development of philosophy to be limited to Africans in African philosophy may not allow the following to be enhanced: African philosophy, Africa's quest for development, and a distinct African philosophical paradigm. However, the contingent nature of the above view may not be able to absorb or relish the concession of this study. That is, anyone who cares to write on African philosophy should understand the nitty-gritty of something greater than the language to be used, the individual have to become an African after the philosophical study, or the work should be solely representing the African perspective in the universal/global enterprise called body-philosophy.

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CONVERSATIONS IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.5>

Conversational philosophy is articulated by Jonathan O. Chimakonam as the new wave of philosophical practice both in “place” and in “space”. This journal adopts and promotes this approach to philosophizing for African philosophy. Readers are encouraged to submit their conversational piece (maximum of 2000 words) on any essay previously published in this journal or on any controversial topics, thoughts or authors for publication. It is recommended that conversations be on substantive issues in African philosophy rather than on metaphilosophical issues. The aim is to enhance the evolution of new epistemes in African philosophy. The subject column for the email submissions should read “Manuscript for Conversations”.

Conceptualization:

To converse or hold a conversation literally means to have an informal exchange of ideas or information. Here, we employ the term in a slightly more technical sense. Philosophical conversation for us is not a mere informal exchange of ideas or a simple informal dialogue between two interlocutors; it is rather a strictly formal intellectual exercise propelled by philosophical reasoning in which critical and rigorous questioning creatively unveils new concepts from old ones. By conversational philosophy we mean that sort of philosophical engagement between individual thinkers with one another; on phenomenological issues of concern; or on one another’s thoughts where thoughts are unfolded from concepts, or from concept of concepts. By concept of concepts, I mean further interesting ideas or notions inspired by the discussion of particular concepts. Conversational philosophy thus is more than a dialogue; it is an encounter between proponents and opponents, or a proponent and an opponent engaged in contestations and protestations of thoughts in place and in space. A conversational school therefore would be any circle of like-minded philosophers who adopt this approach in their practice of philosophy. For me, this should now define not only the new era of African philosophy but the practice of philosophy generally in our age.

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MENTAL SURGERY: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE IDENTITY PROBLEM: A CONVERSATION WITH JONATHAN CHIMAKONAM

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The question of what constitutes the personal identity of an individual has been pondered upon by many philosophers and Jonathan Chimakonam is one of such philosophers. His paper entitled “Mental Surgery: Another look at the Identity Problem” addresses this issue headlong and his conclusions are fascinating to say the least. Chimakonam in his essay adopts a *sociological* approach to the identity problem. For him, personal identity is basically a social property and a sociological concept (2011, 201). He also goes on to suggest that personal identity lies in the physical body and not in any metaphysical entity, soul or mind. Indeed, Chimakonam goes further to deny the existence of an independent spiritual mind or soul, which is the basis of the Cartesian mind-body dualism. What is implied here is that without the body, personal identity is inconceivable. It also implies that although personal identity is resident in the physical body of an individual, it must also be perceived and recognised by other individuals within the society such a body finds itself. To fortify this line of thought, Chimakonam articulates a thought experiment which describes a mental surgery in which the “minds” of two individuals (a dying Professor C. S. Momoh and Jonathan Chimakonam) are interchanged and with no short term memory, the mind of the professor, now inhabiting the body of Chimakonam, though bemused by the change in his bodily appearance, begins to gradually accept a new identity (that of Chimakonam) based on the insistence of those around him, which invariably alludes to the view that personal identity is determined by the opinions of others and thus, a sociological property (2011, 197-200). Peter Bisong, in a response to Chimakonam’s paper, argues that the spiritual soul/consciousness is the primary criterion of personal identity. He disputes Chimakonam’s sociological stance by making us aware of the fact that a change of society by a subject may present differing views on the personal identity of that subject and as such, the individual’s identity becomes contradictory (2014, 60-63).

Chimakonam’s view point may be agreeable to some but as I shall argue, it misses the mark on certain points. It fails to recognise that the sociological influence on the concept of personal identity is based both on a false premise and on an invalid argument, it fails to recognise the role of the “self” in the concept of personal identity and finally, it fails to recognise the fact that the concept of personal identity is nothing more than a necessary illusion.

The diachronic nature of the human body as well as the human psyche cannot be overlooked and from a strictly logical standpoint, the idea of “continuity” of the human body is doubtful. From the law of identity ($A=A$), for a person (Mr. A) to be considered the same as the person that existed yesterday, he must possess the

same properties with the individual that lived a day before. This is however impossible because a single change in cell development, body mass, or even a change in thinking patterns suggest a change in property and a change in property implies a change in identity and as such to claim sameness or continuity is logically absurd.

Individual	= A
Individual with future changes	= ~ A
Concept of continuity:	A = ~A (Logical Absurdity)

Though this is true, the difficulty in keeping track of constant bodily changes and giving new identity as these changes occur is not lost on the brain. In order to bypass this near-impossible task, the brain assumes sameness of the body and based on this false but necessary premise attaches an “identity” to a human body. Thus the exclamatory phrase “I cannot believe this is you...!” is uttered when our brains encounter changes in an individual, which are too drastic to ignore because the brain assumes a false representation of sameness as reality.

A common (mis)conception Chimakonam also falls prey to is the view that the existence of a thing resides in the perception of that thing by others which was brought about by the Berkeley’s maxim “to be is to be perceived”. This view is at best sensational, with no logical connection behind it. To be is simply to exist and to exist does not depend on another being. If I exist as the only being in the world, I do not need another human being to perceive my body, because whether that individual perceives me or not, insofar as I exist, my body would exist regardless. If this is true, then it would be odd to suggest, as Chimakonam submits, that without the society, there is no person and that for the “self” to be meaningful, it must make sense to others (2011, 201). The awareness one has of his existence directly correlates with his feelings of identity i.e. his recognition of his “self” and such feelings are independent of societal influences as well as communal existence. If this is true, then the idea of personal identity as a social property would seem far-fetched.

To sum up this conversation, this paper argues that our idea of the “self” or personal identity, is nothing more than illusion which we cannot help but have. Like the mirage of water on the road which we cannot help but have because of the sun’s intensity, the illusion of personal identity is due to our brains interpretation of its ability to understand reality. In understanding consciousness (the foundation of our understanding of the self) we discover that consciousness is nothing more than the ability to perceive, understand and give meaning to that which is perceived as well as our emotional states, etc., (CHURCHLAND 2002, 133). In a bid to give meaning to this process of consciousness – a sort of meta-interpretation – the brain gives us the illusion of a self distinct from itself and it is to this illusory self that most individuals feel their personal identity resides.

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POSTMODERNISM AND THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: AN INTERROGATIVE CONVERSATION WITH AUGUSTINE ATABOR

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This very short piece is a succinct interrogative conversation of a thesis canvassed by Augustine A. Atabor in his article, “The Question of Objectivity, its Implications for the Social Sciences in the Era of Postmodernism: Africa in Perspective”, published in the *Special Issue* of this journal on *Postmodernism and African Philosophy* (Volume 3, Number 2, July-December 2014, pp.50-61).

The article argues that postmodernism repudiates the objectivity of the social sciences or to use the author’s words: “The paper accentuates the difficulty with postmodernism which tries to deny the possibility of objective truth in the social sciences” (2014, 50). By objectivity or objective truth, the author refers to “the state or quality of being true even outside of a subject’s individual feelings, imaginations or interpretations... the ability to judge fairly without bias or external influence that occurs in a phenomenological way” (2014, 53). Necessarily, postmodernism has a lot to do with objectivity. As Atabor rightly underscores, postmodernism ultimately calls for “a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is non-dogmatic, tentative, and non-ideological” (2014, 54) and as such subjects all standpoints and conceptual schemes that claim to be the *sole universal standard, validator or possessor of objectivity/objective truth* to incessant questioning.

Given the fact that objectivity is very crucial to all forms of human inquiries and the attention postmodernism has attracted over the years, the article is no doubt an interesting and thought-provoking philosophical piece. The author was able to establish that there is a necessary link between postmodernism and the question of objectivity; and that postmodernism’s attack on objectivity has implications for the social sciences as well as Africa. However, the crucial question I have for the author is whether the rejection of the possibility of objective truth by postmodernism is an attack on the social sciences? Is postmodernism a vituperator or vindicator of the social sciences? Atabor’s position in his article is likely to mislead an uninformed reader to conclude that postmodernism is a vituperator of the social sciences but the converse is *more* correct. A good grasp of *when* the objectivity of the social sciences came under attack, *who* attacked it and *why* will make this point vivid.

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The question and quest for objective truth is perhaps as old as the human person. Probably, the quest arose as a result of apparent disagreements/conflicting opinions of people about the same phenomenon. Traditionally, different cultures and different areas of human endeavor do have a conventional method for discovering the truth about a given issue. No tradition, culture, or field of study proclaims its own conventional method as the *sole legitimate* method for the discovery of truth.

Everything was initially studied under the umbrella of philosophy. The humanities were held in high esteem. Then came the modern period and everything changed!

The trail blazing scientific discoveries and successes of Natural Philosophy (now Natural Sciences) during the renaissance-enlightenment-modern period led to the proclamation of the method of the natural sciences as the sole legitimate method for the discovery of objective truth anywhere and everywhere. In other words, whatever is objective must be scientific. And for anything to be scientific it must be positivistic; it must be a product of empirical observation, verification, experimentation, prediction and logico-mathematical explanation. Humbled by the achievements of the natural sciences, all disciplines surrendered their methods and bowed to the draconic rules of positivism. Hence, the emergence of the “logy” disciplines: Sociology, the scientific study of society; Anthropology, the scientific study of man; Psychology...! It was therefore in the *modern period* (the *when*) that the *scientific community* (the *who*) deny the possibility of the objectivity of the social sciences because they do not strictly employ the final arbiter of objectivity, the *scientific method* (the *how*) in their investigation of social phenomenon. Despite forcing the social sciences to *scientize*, the scientific community still insists that *objectivity* is outside the reach of the social sciences because it is by nature a value-laden discipline.

From a philosophical perspective, it is more accurate to describe postmodernism as “against modernism” and not “after modernism”. Historically, the period after the modern period of philosophy is treated as the contemporary period. Postmodernism is therefore not a historical period of philosophy but a philosophical mode of thinking that seeks to deconstruct the intolerant, imperialistic and arrogant god of the modern period, *The Scientific Method!* The ultimate aim of postmodernism is to liberate all disciplines and cultures from the strangulating hold and suffocating cage of Eurocentric conception of *Science/Reason*. Postmodernism denies the existence of an objective truth that is universal, cross-cultural and eternal. It argues that there is no objective truth that is insulated from internal influences, even in the natural sciences. And the philosophical apostles of postmodernism – Quine, Kuhn, Feyerabend, Rorty – have variously shown that every truth, including *scientific truth* is relative to a given social or intellectual community, at a given point in time. Thus the quest for objective truth that is insulated from all influences (cultural, social, ideological, psychological) is a scam. Everything is relative to a standpoint and objectivity is a product of “Solidarity” or “Consensus” reached by the leading authorities in a given intellectual or social community at a given point in time. These authorities are individuals whose idiosyncrasies inevitable have bearing on their thoughts.

Sequel to the foregoing, I posit that: first, postmodernism is the *vindicator* not the *vituperator* of the social sciences. Second, the claim of Atabor that “the attack of postmodernism on positivism is an attack aimed at the possible claims of the objectivity by the social sciences” (2014, 55) is inaccurate. Third, while “Modernism encourages the universalization of Western values” (2014, 58) postmodernism

encourages the relativization of all values, extols cross-cultural borrowing and challenges intellectuals in all cultures, including Africa, to seek and devise solutions to the diverse problems affecting human beings in the contemporary world using any fruitful method. Fourth, postmodernism sees objectivity in the social sciences and indeed in all the sciences as a matter of “compatibility” or “solidarity” with the “consensus” reached by the works of leading authorities in a given intellectual community at a given point in time. Last, globalization today is more or less the universalization of Western values because it is riding on the wheels of modernism, and an ideal global ideology will only be possible if it emerge as a product of consensus reached by the views of leading authorities in all regional intellectual and social communities that make up the globe.

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**FINDING A PLACE FOR INTERROGATORY THEORY: A CRITIQUE OF
CHIMAKONAM'S PATTERNS OF SOCIAL DECONSTRUCTION,
RECONSTRUCTION AND THE CONVERSATIONAL ORDER IN AFRICAN
PHILOSOPHY**

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Chimakonam's brilliantly pieced article on Interrogatory Theory is his idea of a viable social philosophy for postcolonial Africa. The article is structured into two broad aspects namely: (i) Interrogatory Theory and (ii) Conversational order in African philosophy. Our attention in this critique will be on the first.

Interrogatory Theory (IT) is a social philosophy that seeks a revitalization of institutions in modern Africa. Its purpose is a "reflective assessment or interrogation of social structures (tradition and modernity) in order to deconstruct, construct/reconstruct or synthesize where necessary in pursuit of the future which contains the ideal" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 2). In its introduction, Interrogatory theory makes what I think is a specious and audacious claim that "No society would ever develop if its inhabitants are free to live the way they please" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 3). Ideas such as this are unmistakably dangerous for any society and a danger to civilization. Chimakonam believes that as a developing continent, Africa needs to hobble, the freedom of citizens to a certain extent, in what he calls "positive repression of treacherous human freedom in Africa" (3). It appears that he mistook the true philosophical import of what liberty or freedom entails, which is a knowledge that "where my freedom stops, another's begins". Furthermore, insisting that the purpose of the constitution is to dominate and repress human freedom is a limpid example of a misconstrued notion of the principles of "reward and sanctions". Laws are put in place to reward the diligent compliant and punish or sanction the rebellious. Thereupon, it is not done with the intention to shackle freedom but rather as an attempt to secure it.

Chimakonam applies the tool of interrogation on three (3) of Africa's postcolonial institutions viz; Education, Religion and Democracy. Education in postcolonial Africa is a system in retro-gradation. It is in this pathetic state that the meaning of education has been replaced with schooling where "curriculum lay emphasis on certification rather than learning" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 7). The root cause of this predicament unlike Chimakonam's claim is not a faulty colonially influenced structure or a succession of bad postcolonial leadership; but the importation of a capitalist system. Capitalist system in more than one way seeks to commercialize everything possible and this has devalued the quality of Africa's educational institutions. Consequently, primary, secondary and tertiary schools are more profit oriented than value driven; which in turn has placed Africa in such morbid condition as we find ourselves. Again, because capitalism has gained

unbridled root in modern Africa, and the African's inability to see the big picture, make it compelling for him to trade a thing of substance such as knowledge for a piece of paper (certificate).

In deconstructing the institution of religion in Africa, Chimakonam appears to vent his personal dissatisfaction against Islam and Christianity. He insists that the "ultimate trouble with the postcolonial Africa is "religion". The colonial religions are the root of all the evil that plague Africa" (2014, 10). This claim is inaccurate and in no way can colonial religion wield that much influence. In modern Africa, it will be noticed that, adherents of both aforementioned religions spend just a little fraction of their time in religious activities which will at best be less than fifteen percent (15%). For those who go for prayers and religious engagements, they barely spend up to ten hours (10 hours) in a week doing religious activities. A great portion of time, in fact the other eighty five percent (80%) is spent in the pursuit of wealth and a better life. Howbeit, there are some abuse of religion in Africa which must be acknowledged such as a few cases of extortion by religious leaders and the extreme stands by some radical groups. But these abuses are not sufficient to be the causes of the catastrophe of postcolonial Africa. Rather, the African's inability to put the society first, the rise in humanistic doctrine, his natural selfish proclivity and a capitalist mind-set make him put his needs above all else. This selfish tendency and the enabling environment of capitalism have given little room for the adherent to seek morality, largely because the system does not favor the honest, the upright and the moral.

Lastly, Chimakonam's critiques the institution of democracy. Notwithstanding a few structural problems with democracy, it remains a plausible system of government for developing societies. Chimakonam points out that precolonial Africanized democracy was suitable for Africa since it operated a communitarian and consensus form of governance and decision making. Furthermore, he believes that colonially influenced democracy has come to replace this. Well, this paper disagrees considering the fact that apart from a change in nomenclature, the principles are very much the same in practice. In modern parlance, negotiation and dialogue are terms used in the place of communitarian and consensus.

Conclusively, we insist that all three institutions studied by interrogatory theory have a basal and common characteristic which has led to their defect in postcolonial Africa. This is the unbridled human selfishness that has been endorsed by the wave of capitalism; these have undoubtedly exploited all institutions in postcolonial Africa.

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BOOK REVIEW:

CONVERSATIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v4i1.9>

A review of [Arguments and Clarifications: A Philosophical Encounter between J. O. Chimakonam and M. I. Edet on the Ibuanyidandaness of Complementary Ontology], 2014. 3RD Logic Option: Calabar. Paperback. Pp147

Authors: Mesembe I. Edet and Jonathan O. Chimakonam

Discipline: African philosophy

Category: Ibuanyidanda Philosophy

ISBN:978-978-52850-2-4

Available online

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This piece is a review of [Arguments and Clarifications: A Philosophical Encounter between J. O. Chimakonam and M. I. Edet on the Ibuanyidandaness of Complementary Ontology] by Mesembe I. Edet and Jonathan O. Chimakonam both members of the fast rising Calabar School of Philosophy (CSP). One of the main goals of the CSP we are told is to promote what is called conversational philosophy in African thought. My focus in this review shall be to assess the academic merit of the work and analyze the nature and strength of the new conversational tool as appropriated in the work.

The book is structured into three parts; the first essay entitled “Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence (Philosophy, the Science of Missing Links of Reality)” is Innocent Asouzu’s articulation of his theory of Ibuanyidanda philosophy. Some of the key concepts include: missing links, noetic propaedeutic, ima-onwe-onye, etc. His argument can be summed up as saying that every entity exists for others to exist. No being in its particularity is dispensable. Everything has its place in the web of nature. The life-wire of Asouzu’s theory thus seems to rest on the idea of complementarity of beings. *Wholism* therefore is possible only because the complementarity of the parts is obtained. One subtle idea in classical philosophy suggested by Asouzu’s theory is that of dialectic which emerged in the 16th century European thought. Before the German Idealist philosopher Georg Hegel is thought to have given a modern triad presentation of dialectic (EDWARDS 1967, 387-388), the Aristotelian classical logic in the words of Godwin Sogolo had no rival (1993, 68). Apparently riding on the framework of dialectic reasoning, Asouzu weaved his theory of complementary reflection.

It is exactly from this logical premise that his nemesis J. O. Chimakonam takes a swipe at his thought in the second essay entitled “Dissecting the Character of *Danda* the Ant and Neutralizing the Philosophy of Missing Links: An *Egbe N’ugo* Conundrum”. Granted the well known intrusive credentials of dialectic reasoning as developed by Hegel, its weaknesses are not less known either. Writing in his contribution to the [Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol 2.], Roland Hall remarks that the Hegelian dialectic involves the passing over of thoughts or concepts into their opposites and the achievement of a higher unity but that it is a process that arrives at a higher truth through contradictions (EDWARDS 1967, 388). Chimakonam’s conversation with Asouzu capitalizes on this to raise the following objections: Philosophy of Essence and Us: From a Logical Point of View, Inconsistency of a Single-valued (Monistic) Logic Deduced, Complementation Paradox Deduced, Dissecting the Character of *Danda* the Ant, The Complementary Anarchy or the Mob Effect of Missing Links Principle and Neutralizing the Philosophy of Missing Links: An *Egbe n’Ugo* Conundrum. In all, the sum of Chimakonam’s critical conversations with Asouzu is that the latter had culpably neglected that in no way could he have appropriated the gains of the framework of dialectic without inheriting its flaws, and I think he is correct. However, the problem associated with dialectic producing truth through contradiction may not be as ontologically committed as some may suspect, it could simply be a technical burden. For example, that we are yet to reach an epistemological understanding on how a machine could function without a ghost or soul does not vitiate the validity of the machine process and I think this is the focus of the thoughts Mesembe Edet brought to the conversation.

Mesembe in the third essay entitled “Ibuanyidanda as ‘Ezi Okwu’ and the Resolution of Chimakonam’s *Egbe N’ugo* Conundrum: A Response to J. O. Chimakonam’s ‘Dissecting the Character of *Danda* the Ant and Neutralizing the Philosophy of Missing Links” appears to be a promoter of complementary reflection. His critical conversation was with Chimakonam. He attempts to fault Chimakonam’s objections in a point-by-point reaction. I would like to think he did this credibly but for his occasional slope into non sequitur and ad hominem as par his references to Chimakonam’s religious creed (2014, 114-115) and his invocation of a proverb to ridicule Chimakonam as a cat that chases a dog thinking himself a tiger (2014, 121). African philosophers must learn the virtue of avoiding especially *ad hominem* in their criticisms. The presence of fallacies of this nature vitiates the nature of the new tool of philosophical conversations promoted by The Calabar School of Philosophy. On the whole, Mesembe was able to respond to the objections raised by Chimakonam but perhaps, the importance of his conversation with Chimakonam could be highlighted in how much clarity he supplied to Asouzu’s thoughts than in how successful he was in dispelling Chimakonam’s studded criticisms.

The tool of conversational philosophy developed by Chimakonam (2014, 17-22) and promoted by The Calabar School of Philosophy (CSP) as its philosophical beacon is amazing and quite exciting to think about. There is no gainsaying the fact that it promises to be a veritable model of doing African

philosophy and philosophy generally. One can only hope that the promoters increase effort in popularizing this philosophical innovation from Africa. But measures must be taken to clearly differentiate it from say philosophical analysis.

I find the book under review quite interesting to read and above all else, truly original. One is filled with the impression that he is reading African philosophy not some talk about African philosophy. It was the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu who having observed much of the debate on African philosophy felt a wave of dismay and in that feat admonished African philosophers to stop talking and begin doing African philosophy (WIREDU 1980, xi). In this conversational encounter among three prominent members of The Calabar School of Philosophy, I find an example of the actual task of African philosophy.

In conclusion, I would like to single out on objection by Chimakonam which I think deserves a closer attention of the promoters of complementary reflection. It has to do with the suggestion of what Chimakonam calls complementary anarchy or the mob effect of the application of the missing links principle. As he puts it:

The idea of “missing link” which every being necessarily serves in the web of reality is problematic—by this principle, every missing link must have to count in any synthetic process. The question however is, should everything that counts be counted in the dynamic process of synthetic transformation of variables? Is it not rather the case that yes, many may be called but only the few required units would have to be chosen for each dialectical process? This inevitably suggests that some missing links must necessarily be left out in any transformational dialectical process involving requisite variables at least, for logistical reasons. Asouzu probably did not foresee the crisis that would result from blind admission of all missing links of reality in any transformational scheme. Obviously, if every relevant missing link is allowed to participate in a given dialectical complementary process, there would inexorably arise what could be called a “complementary anarchy” or “mob-effect” of the application of missing link principle. What is suggested here is that there has to be some form of “control” in the application of the missing link principle and control, to say the least, implies some form of guided “discrimination”. (2014, 68-69)

I think the advocates of Ibuanyidanda philosophy should take this seriously. It appears quite subtle to be ignored or glossed over with a few shining comments. The possibility of applying the missing links principle (to bring about unity of seemingly opposed ideas/variables within a specific context) in the face of no censorship appears quite challenging even as an abstract idea, let alone in concrete experience.

Perhaps more explanations are required; perhaps a tool of censorship is required as Chimakonam suggests. Promoters must contend with this objection. On the whole, the book is inspiring and the print outlay is excellent. Those searching for a thorough-bred African philosophy should read it.

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