

## RE-CONCEPTUALISING AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AS DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION.

Akinpelu A. OYEKUNLE, Ph.D

### **Abstract:**

*This paper problematizes the definition challenge for African philosophy and attempts an analytical reconceptualization of African Philosophy. Attempts will thus be made to examine some of the approaches bothering on the ideation and definition of African Philosophy. The aim of such examination is to show that these approaches or discernible senses of African Philosophy are influenced by the tripartite factors of identity, method, and relevance. The view of this paper is that an exposition of the various senses of African Philosophy vis-à-vis the tripartite factors is essential for the conceptualization of a working definition of African Philosophy based on the complementary interplay of the subjective and objective dimension of philosophy. This analytical reconceptualization enhances the frontiers of African philosophy to be more opens in meeting the contemporary demand for Africa's development in the age globalization.*

**Keywords:** African Philosophy, Tripartite Challenges, Objective dimensions, Subjective Dimensions,

### **Introduction**

Conceptualizing African philosophy is apt for any philosophical discourse on African existential challenges, i.e., Poverty, human depravity, political instability, environmental degradation, civil unrest, illegal migration, and many more. This is in lieu of the fact that such discourse will be a genre of an applied philosophy from an African parlance to solving the lived challenges of the continent. It is therefore imperative that the discussion concerning the quest for panacea to contemporary challenges in Africa be situated within the broader perspectives of African Philosophy. Hence, its conceptualization. A caveat to note, however, is that the attempt at conceptualizing African Philosophy is not an apologia of the existence of African philosophy. Rather, it gives a justification for explaining the part-whole relationship between applied philosophy and philosophy from an African perspective. In other words, conceptualizing African philosophy would lend us an intellectual framework to explore an African lens through which to evaluate contemporary existential challenges. This paper thus embarks on an analytical reconceptualization of African philosophy to reposition it towards being more enhanced in handling perennial challenges.

The first part of the paper considers the background to define African Philosophy and identifies the three main discernible senses or approaches on the field. Afterwards, effort will be made to highlight the tripartite challenges to defining African philosophy. It must

be noted that these three challenges of identity, method and relevance form the fulcrum of guides that undergird the various approaches towards defining African philosophy. The paper aims to argue that to conceptualize African Philosophy in a manner that it will be fit to address practical issues of reality in the continent is to see the effort in the light of the tripartite factors. Doing so is to see African philosophy as a veritable tool in the critical exploration of the social constructions of answers to the existential questions of the continent. To this end, the section that follows will be considering defining African Philosophy as a tool for answering the contemporary existential questions, albeit in a manner that recognizes the participatory stance of the continent in the global arena. This informs the consideration of the subjective dimensions of philosophy. The paper concludes that, African Philosophy in the attempt to grapple with the nuances of the tripartite factors of definition can be conceptualize on a part-whole relationship between operating in a particular context-oriented form (subjective) and grounding such operations on a general dimension of life realities (objective).

### **An Overview of Some 'Approaches'**

While the paper, may not go into the old debate of the existence or otherwise of African Philosophy, however, attempt will be made to explore some attempts at ideating 'African Philosophy'. I elect not to enter this debate based on the varying understanding of renowned African scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu, ; Paul O. Bodunrin , ; Odera Oruka ; Kwame Gyekye , ; Sophie B. Oluwole , , ; Mogobe Ramose ; Moses A. Makinde ; Olusegun Oladipo ; Doyo Guyo ; Emmanuel Chukwudo-Eze Pascah Mungwini who have held that African Philosophy exists. In fact, Samuel Imbo highlighted three discernible senses of extant African Philosophy as “ethnophilosophical, universalist and hermeneutical approaches”, which will now be considered.

It should be note at this juncture that this paper is not oblivious of the many trends in African philosophy as opined by Oruka : Ethnophilosophy; Philosophic Sagacity; Nationalist-Ideological Philosophy; Professional African Philosophy; Literary-artistic Philosophy and Hermeneutical theory in African Philosophy and later by Wiredu : Traditional African Philosophy and Contemporary African Philosophy. One of the significant authors in terms of giving a commentary and interpretation of these trends is Imbo. The position of Imbo, though summative, is found for our discussion here to be apt and comprehensive. Imbo's scheme is adopted because his three discernible senses of African philosophy cover all the trends identified by both Oruka and Wiredu; although with modification that appears fitting for this paper. It is thus more rational to think that within the class of the universalist, for instance, it is not unlikely to have some Nationalist ideologists as well as Professional philosophers. Also, ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy would well feature in the hermeneutical sense of African philosophy. Imbo recognizing the possibility of the interplays and overlapping nature of these individual trends thus aptly represented the various trends of African philosophy with the three discernible senses: 'ethnophilosophical', 'universalist' and 'hermeneutical' approaches. These three discernible senses will now be considered.

Ethnophilosophical approach refers to philosophical opinions that are entrenched in mythical, religious, linguistic, anthropological as well as poetical worldviews of different African cultures. With this view, African Philosophy is to be known by the nuances of the unique belief system and ethnocentric concepts such as language, mysticism, magic, fables and myths. The ethnophilosophical approach is best seen in the works of Alexis Kagame , Leopold Senghor , Placide Tempels , John Mbiti among others. While one would understand the attempts of the ethnophilosophical scholars in situating African Philosophy in culturally specific views. Their attempt is owing essentially to the urgency of proving wrong, the Eurocentric denial of rationality in Africa. Chief of such Western-centric thoughts is the Hegelian description of Africa as a continent of savages whose thought and life hinges on primitivity, and as such, without history or proper philosophy. For Hegel, Africa as a continent. “is unhistorical, undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of nature” . The intellectual reactions against such views like that of Hegel culminated into the great debate. However, efforts like the great debate, according to Isaac Kapila, only present the continent's cultural homogeneity in a bad light as it shows African Philosophy as being incapable “of its own unique and consistent logic” . In other words, the great debate presupposes that without the need for the intellectual reactions to Eurocentric denial of African rationality, African philosophy may not have been developed.

The “Universalist Worldview” begins with the definition of philosophy as an objective and universal, principle-laden enterprise. This means that the universalist worldview or approach is a stance opposed to the culture-specific method. To the pioneer proponents of this view: Innocent Onyewuenyi ; Kwasi Wiredu , ; Peter Bodunrin and Paulin Hountondji . Philosophy is not expected to be culture-dependent. Rather, philosophy is considered to be a “systemic and methodological inquiry that should not be altered by its geographical application” . For the universalists therefore, intellectual skepticism should be cast upon any philosophy that is not written down . As noted by Imbo, to the universalist, the ability to develop a “tradition of debate and sustained inquiry” of such non-written philosophy would be of great minimal effect. Although there are universalists who give room for oral philosophy—e.g. Henry Odera Oruka, who developed the idea of Sagacity—the idea was to present a Socratic-alike person he refers to as African Sages in the African parlance . In Kwasi Wiredu (1998b, pp. 19-21), the Universalist ideation of African Philosophy is that of a “proper” philosophy of the African orientation that includes a critical reconstruction of African traditional thoughts, to reveal philosophical elements thereof.

Philosophers in the hermeneutical approach is out to challenge both ethnophilosophical and universalist perspectives. As argued by , the hermeneutical philosophers take African traditions as their starting point, as they seek to escape the enslavement to the past by critically using that past to open up the future. It is the understanding of these scholars that philosophy—suitably construed—must move beyond a preoccupation with ethnological considerations and universalist abstraction, by calling into question actual relations of power in Africa . The works of Theophilus Okere , , ; Tsenay Serequeberhan , ; Marcien

Towa ; and Okonda Okolo exemplify this hermeneutical orientation in African Philosophy. The hermeneutic approach inheres in the application of tools of philosophy to issues regarding the existential realities of the continents, even in the face of globalization. This is in contrast to the ethnophilosophical worldview, which subsists in holding “culture specific views” .

### **A Tripartite Challenge for Defining African Philosophy**

The three challenges that will be discussed in this section are: Identity; Method and Relevance. One thing that is to be shown in the consideration of these tripartite challenges is that the varying approaches or trends in African philosophy are informed or necessitated by the tripartite factors. That is, the tripartite factors provide a unifying ground of operation to the varying approaches. In other words, the tripartite challenges are factors that inform or necessitate the conception of these approaches. It will thus be held here that the characterization of trends for African Philosophy can be identified by the attempt at dealing with the intellectual challenges of identity, methodology and relevance. To put in another form, the quantum of efforts by philosophers to opine for a philosophy that is classified as “African”, could be captioned under their various attempts to deal with this tripartite challenge of intellectualism.

***On Identity:*** Much of the debate that starts the discussion about African Philosophy is wired around the quest for African identity, that was set at countering the deniability of African philosophy. The quest for identity is given preference more in the need to deal with the challenge of refuting the colonial cultural denigration of Africans and African societies. Such colonial induced denigration of colonized culture came with the establishment of Western-centric evaluative parameters for engaging with the African belief systems. In the face of such Eurocentric engagements, the crisis of identity ensued. Thus, the factor of identity became germane in the canonization of various trends of African Philosophy.

***On Method:*** The factor of designating a functional method that would be employable for the discipline of African Philosophy is another deciding factor for defining African Philosophy. Method sets at answering the question of what to include as the subject of discussion; what process of enquiry would be adjudged to be suitable for an intellectual engagement; and what research questions would be essential for determining discourse that could pass for African Philosophy.

***On Relevance:*** The quest for relevance is also another deciding factor for characterizing philosophy as an authentic African Philosophy. How relevant is the idea put forward in addressing the existential challenges of Africa? How relevant is the philosophic postulations to the socio-cultural experience of the Africans even in the quest for sustainable development and in the face of globalization? The African continent is not only peculiar because of its predicaments, since there is no segment of humanity without its own predicaments. However, the African predicament generates conceptual dynamisms which ensure that any concepts and ideas to be applied to the continent

must have a unique trajectory that facilitates the twin task of self-definition and development. This informs, to a large extent, the imperativeness of the relevance factor. The relevance of an idea, theory or concept towards addressing the existential challenges of Africa is not only essential for defining African philosophy, but also informs the positions of the varying trends or approaches to African Philosophy.

The position of this paper here is that the discipline and practice of African Philosophy is better advocated by the engendering factors of identity, methodology, and relevance. This position is in the lieu of the fact that, defining African philosophy based on the oral/written contention between the ethnophilosophical and universalist approaches appears to be a disservice to the discipline of African Philosophy. Such disservice is noted by Bruce Janz when he argues that:

While philosophers maybe willing to admit that philosophy happens in social contexts, it still about ideas; while it may happen predominantly through texts, it is not reducible to literary theory; while ideas may have been used to justify the power of some over others, it is not simply politics. (Janz, 2009, p. 4)

Although Janz employed this quotation in the quest for the “place” for philosophy, what is instructive thereof, is the inherent demystification of the contentious African philosophic debates to the effect of oral against written for of philosophy. One could, thus, hold that while it may not necessarily be the social context or the written text that confers the label “philosophy”, it is not out of place to argue that the three factors of identity, method and relevance appears to be essential in the quest for an authentic philosophy of any segment of humanity, i.e. Western, Southern, Northern or Eastern.

Furthermore, the tripartite factors discussed above could be seen as serving as rallying-point for the various positions argued for by the different discernible senses of categorizing African Philosophy. Be it through the forward-looking and the backward-looking approach to the conception of African Philosophy as noted by Safro Kwame –, or through the particularist/universalist distinction of Adeshina Afolayan –; African Philosophy could be explained, aptly guided by these three factors. Indeed, a clearer understanding is achievable in the conception of African Philosophy via the exploration of the intellectual quest inherent in the three factors. One important thing that could also be obtained from the consideration of the three factors of identity, method, and relevance in the conceptualization of African philosophy is that, the tripartite factor informs the interjections ensued in the opinions and postulations of each of the various philosophic schools in African Philosophy. It is the observation here, that the quest for identity, method and relevance permeates through each of the African philosophic school in their varying attempts to argue for what is, or otherwise should count as, 'authentic' African Philosophy. Hence it would be out-of-tune to define African Philosophy in the distinctive line of ethnophilosophy/universalism, particularist/universalist, or forward-looking/backward-looking. Nonetheless, such distinctive approaches should be seen as vehicles for carrying home the philosophic message along the line of the tripartite factors of identity, method and relevance.

Conceptualizing African Philosophy in the light of the tripartite factors, is to see it as a critical exploration of the social constructions of answers to the existential questions of the continent. It is however expected that, answers to the existential questions must be proffered in a manner that recognizes the participatory stance of the continent in the global arena. In other words, in this age of globalization with global challenges of crime; political instability; scientific and technological advancement; epidemics; environmental crisis; to mention a few, it is expected that solutions from any front would have the ability to transcend geographical peculiarities. Such ability for ideas to transcend geographical particularity is the quest for 'abstraction' and is essential for objectivity . Since all abstraction, as argued by Janz is “derivative on the conditions in which ideas form” , the factors of identity, methods and relevance conveys the condition of meaningfulness to the intellectual efforts set at dealing with the existential questions of everyday life of Africans. Answering such questions objectively requires a reflection that transcends social or cultural boundaries and still being able to hold ties to cultural orientations.

Engaging existential questions, as experienced in Africa, especially along the line of the three factors of identity, method and relevance also shows forth the continental consciousness required for the birthing of philosophy. This is against the background of Eurocentric worldviews of scholars of the late enlightenment and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, who proposed that Africans and Africa lacks the required quality for philosophizing, namely reasoning: Hume ; Kant , and Hegel , . This deniability and the response thereof holds sway in the philosophical discourse for Africa. However, the legitimacy or quality of African Philosophy should not be consequent upon the denial of its existence. Nor should responses to such deniability be the preoccupation of the practitioners thereof. This is because, to argue for the non-justification of an African oriented reflective and critical thoughts due to the phenomenon of colonialism and the deniability of rationality, is to beg the question of the rational ability of the people of the Continent.

Another fact obtainable from the consideration of the tripartite factors is that African Philosophy cannot be divorced from the experience of the continent's interactions, be it forced or willed, with the outside world. To do that is to put forward an African philosophical worldview that is devoid of its existential realities. The question that would arise at this juncture would be that: should the raw materials for the development of African ideas be necessarily carried over from the outside world? I presume not. Neither do I opine that African philosophical stance must not sufficiently be without some form of the resultant effect of inter-cultural conversations. This latter point is imperative for the development of an authentic African Philosophy, particularly if we consider the importance of oral tradition in African indigenous ideas and the relatively late commencement of written culture in the continent. There was really no form of written African Philosophy before the 1940s, when Father Placide Tempels developed his understanding of the Bantu People . The absence of writing draws out the importance of oral tradition in African Philosophy, which “contains important elements of critique and abstraction which are as philosophical as anything else” . There is, therefore, a need to go

beyond the deniability challenge as the crux of the discourse, and to begin to examine the interesting and useful ideas that might come from oral traditions, sage individuals, and from the academy. While cultural worldviews may be the raw material for intellectual or philosophical engagements, they remain at best a particularist cultural orientation, until they are made to pass through the crucible of rational enquiry and critical reflection. This attitude is open to humanity in general by virtue of the ability to reason, holding for any set of persons or culture. Thus, African Philosophy in the attempt to grapple with the nuances of the three factors can be definable on a part-whole relationship between operating in a particular context-oriented form (subjective), and grounding such operations on a general dimension of life realities (objective).

### **The Objective and Subjective Dimension of Philosophy**

It is the position of this research paper that there is a part-whole relationship entrenching on the subjective and objective dimension of philosophy. By the subjective dimension, I mean the contextual components of intellectual resources that informs one's particular philosophic view and is based on one's cultural lived experiences. While the objective dimension holds for the basic components of life realities that is not peculiar to a particular section of humanity but is of general experience of all human creatures and cultures. As I would present below, a full grasp of the subjective-objective relationship holds a sound enlightenment towards a proper definition of African Philosophy.

In his *'To be is to be Known'*, Kwasi Wiredu has been able to note the perplexity involved in the bid to define "philosophy" (2004). For him, "there is hardly a single question to which there can be said to be an established answer. Here not even on the question what philosophy is" (2004, p. 139). To this end it is pertinent to note that philosophy has been defined from diverse points of view. One thing derivable from various definitions of 'philosophy', which would also be instructive to note in my conceptualization of African Philosophy, is the relationship between the objective nature of philosophical questions and our subjective approach to them.

The question here should be that: is the subjective approach to defining philosophy or addressing any philosophical issue be enough to address such questions? Or would it water-down/play down the merit and authenticity of such activities? To hold a positive answer to such a quest will be to give in to extreme relativism, which often informs the popular view that nobody has said the last word in philosophy. Why this study will not give in to such idea is that philosophy can become more than just a subjective opining if clear grounds are given for such personal views. On the significance of putting forward one's thoughts with clarity, Peter Bodunrin argues:

When one is putting forward a philosophical thesis, we expect him to state the issues at stake as clearly as possible so that we know what we are being invited to accept. **We** expect him to argue for **his case** – [to] show us why **we must accept his case**.

What is deducible hence is that whatever the various positions and opinions from personal points of view are and whatever importance such views may carry, philosophy

remains a field of study where rationality and critical analysis remains the core criteria.

One could thus opine that; it is essential that there should be the interplay of a creative analysis of the system of thoughts employs in canonizing any view. Thus, despite the open-ended nature of philosophy, we could identify some ideas that inform what philosophy is. I would be considering two ideas of some of the foremost African Philosophers. The first is Odera Oruka's conception of philosophy. For him, "Philosophy is an art of reasoning and provides a critical intellectual weapon and methodology for analyzing and synthesizing the basic problems of man, society and nature". In other words, philosophy is a critical intellectual engagement with the conditions in which people live. For him, therefore, philosophy cannot exist *ex-nihilo*, but it would be the creative efforts of thought processes in response to the social conditions (Oruka, 1997, p. 143). By the understanding of Oruka, all that is needed in defining philosophy is to note it as the "intellectual effort to apply concepts and theoretical tools to the benefit of the community"

The other definition of philosophy to be considered, is that of Kwasi Wiredu. For him, philosophy is a systematic reflective thinking on life (Wiredu, 2004, p. 1). Earlier, in his *Philosophy and an African Culture*, he had noted that "philosophy is a rational and critical reflection on the most fundamental ideas and principles underlying our thought about human life and its environment, natural and supernatural". This, for him, is the intellectual orientation that any activity must pass to be regarded as philosophy. Wiredu (1980, p. 32) also believes that philosophy thrives on criticism, and hence the evaluative aspect of the discipline. He claims that without argument and clarification, there is strictly no philosophy, thus, the philosopher argues for his thesis, clarifying his meaning and answering objections, known and anticipated (Wiredu, 1980, p. 47)

One thing that could be deduced from the consideration of the two scholars presented above is that philosophy is an activity that is based on reasoning. As a rational discourse, philosophy thrives on the practitioners' ability to critically engage with issues, making such engagements worthwhile. Another fact deducible from the definitions above is that philosophy could as well thrive on the two dimensions, i.e., objectivity and subjectivity. While the two authors' views harmonize on the idea of philosophy being a rational engagement, their views could however be categorized further on the dimensions of objectivity and subjectivity identified above. Oruka's view on philosophy could be seen from the subjective stance. In the sense that the reflective thinking on a particular life, be it Asian, African or European, in relation with other numerous life forms of humanity as a whole could be considered as philosophy along the particularist view. For him, philosophy is a response to social conditions, from which such philosophies are generated mainly for the benefit of the community. On the other hand, Wiredu's view will be categorized as philosophy from the objective stance. However, this research sees philosophy from the complementary relationships of these two equal dimensions. In other words, it is possible to conceptualize philosophy from the objective dimension as a

critical reflection on any life forms that exist. Also, applying such reflective thinking to a particular form of life is doing philosophy from the subjective stance.

My view could be said to be strengthened by Gyekye's view that philosophy, being an intellectual activity is of a universal [i.e., objective, in my understanding] practice, which cannot be confined to a geographical location (1987, p. 9). Recognizing the importance of the subjective dimension of philosophy, he noted that “answers to philosophical questions provided by thinkers from different cultures may differ in quality [here, though, I express reservation], sophistication, and persuasiveness”. – Furthermore, on the relationship between the two distinct but related dimensions of philosophy as recognized by this paper, Gyekye has this to say:

When I claim that philosophical activity is universal, I mean simply that thinkers from different cultures or philosophical traditions ask similar philosophical questions and think deeply about them. It is in terms of the philosophical attitude, of the propensity to raise questions relating to the fundamental principles underlying human experience and conduct and not in terms of the uniformity of doctrinal positions, that philosophy can be said to be universal. This approach to certain fundamental questions about human experience is, in my view, the common denominator of all philosophical activities and doctrines .

While it is necessary to undertake or consider philosophy from the objective prism, it is insufficient not to also see it as a strand of subjective application. Here, I agree with Guyo that the objective dimension “is the proper dimension upon which we should ground any particular philosophy regardless of its origin” . Philosophy from the objective view would accord any activity in line with its intellectual orientation as 'philosophy', regardless of geographical locations, socio-economic capacities or ethnicity of the people engaging in such intellectual activity. This explains why this I sees both the Eurocentric conception of rationality with the deniability of African rationality and the ensuing “response debates” of such discussions, as intellectually prejudiced and conceptually arrogant. This is because any human being may engage in a systematic reflection on life. To hold thus that the “philosophical epoch of humanity began first among the Europeans is to undermine the vastness of reflective thinking and nothing but sheer intellectual chauvinism” .

My position on the objective dimension is not however oblivious of the fact that such reflective thoughts processes can be made to bear along particular conditions of the originators of such reflective thinking. In other word, applying or making objective conceptions of philosophy to bear upon one's way of life is a subjective dimension of philosophy.

Without any form of contradiction, one would thus be able to hold that rational and systematic reflection thus becomes a ground upon which particular philosophy i.e. Asian, Western or in the case of our discourse, African, will be able to stand. Also, upon such standing would intercultural communication be visible/possible. However, this does not

necessarily permit that such philosophy should only hold forth only in the threshold of contextual commission. This bias is further noted by Janz when he argued that “philosophy must attend to the conditions in which its question[s] arise... this attention does not diminish philosophy's traditional (although never completely fulfilled) striving for universals” . Thus, the quest for struggle to contextualize Philosophy in the existential question of Africa – even on the earlier explored tripartite challenge – and still maintain the abstractness to universality that gave rise to the intellectual dilemma of what African Philosophy is. The word struggle is employed here, because the emergence of philosophical discourse in Africa seems to be one that let itself out of the shackles of hegemonic enslavement and existential deniability. The denial of African Philosophy has itself entrenched in the subtlety of racism. This has also recently been noted as “a denial of humanity to Africans” . Thus, the early African scholars see the philosophical journey for the continent as the tool for the liberation from the holds of colonialism.

It thus becomes instructive to hold that a suitable view of philosophy must be one that would be based upon the objective stance of rationality and critical reflection, and also be able to transcends particularities or its subjective positions. In other words, being able to hold ties with cultural orientations even on the plain of objectiveness would adjudge any philosophy to be efficient. Also, for anyone to discard the objective dimension, especially by arguing that it is a Western orientation of philosophy is to, in my view, be assigning only to this segment of humanity the objective dimension and this is “tantamount to creeping relativism” which call to question the ability and value of rationality of other humans from the non-Western culture . This paper will thus hold that philosophy is a critical, rational reflection about life from the objective dimension without forfeiture of the subjective dimensions of one's lived experiences. Philosophy in this view becomes something to be practiced and employed for the particular usage of its practitioners. A sync of critical activity and subjective participation from individual life's orientations such as India, Asia, European or African. Conception of philosophy in this form is consequent upon the essence of humanity: rationality. Consequently, it would be logically absurd to arrogate exclusive ownership of philosophy to any segment of humanity based on material development, colour or race.

It is thus my view that African Philosophy should be seen from the complementary relationships of the two equal objective and subjective dimensions of philosophy. To reduce philosophy to either of the philosophical strands is to disregard the grasp of the part-whole relationship between them. For instance, while it would be right to agree that philosophy cannot be done in vacuum and as such will be made to bear on the existential realities of the practitioners, to reduce philosophy to such subjective engagements is to create an intellectual hegemony for philosophy itself. This appears to be the challenges of the response debate in African Philosophy. The debate, good as it may seems to be as the particularistic engagement of early African scholars to the forms of life of Africans, engages in the reduction of the objective dimension of philosophy to a particular form of life and considers it a particular trait reserved for the Africans alone. This, I believe, is a reductive exercise that is coloured with the stance of African ethnocentrism. Thus,

cultural orientation, social conditions, particular traditional dispositions are important in the creative thought processes of philosophizing. However, not to allow such subjective considerations to transcend particularities so as to absorb into the objective ground of thoughts is a distortion and negation of philosophy as a critical engagement. On the other hand, caution is expected also in transcending subjectivity in order not to universalize a particular conceptual idea. This is perceivable in the European discourses of exclusive models of rationality. For Guyo, such a worldview is nothing but a “subjective denial of objective ground, that struggles to globalize a particular ethnocentric view”.

African Philosophy will be seen as a rational and critical activity done on the objective ground without negating its subjective dimensions. For anyone to reject the objective ground on the idea that it is a re-echoing of an intellectual style of certain section of humanity, is to reduce humanity to that particular section of life. The objective ground of philosophy is for any practitioner's, regardless of race or group. To also reduce philosophy mainly to the particularistic view of any culture without the rigors of the objective dimension is to deny the segment of humanity that such particulars seek to represent, (be it Asian, African, European or Indian) the intrinsic traits of humanity. This suggests that rationality cannot be an exclusive property of any culture or continent. Thus, philosophy of any cultural orientation is essentially expected to be enshrined upon the tenets of objectivity—critical, rational and systematic—while still holding ties to its particular forms of life.

What this suggests is that it is impossible to detach any philosophy from the practitioners' *life-process*. The term *life-process* is employed here to mean the critical engagement with one's immediate environment and the universe as a whole. Such critical grasp, be it social, physical, spiritual, scientific or metaphysical are garnered through the respective encounters with various aspects of life which amounts to the gamut of existential realities of life. *Life-process* should be seen to be beyond a people's worldview or opinion, nor to be seen in the light of Masolo's concept of “experience”. Also, *Life-process* should be seen as the vivid canonization of human's confrontation with the complexity of life. Such confrontations may be in the form of spirituality, ethical, scientific or mere expression of bewilderment. Yet it sparks of a process that is not particular to any race, colour or form; But a process that is of a universal phenomenon: hinges on the very essential part of humanity; rationality. This is not however oblivious of the fact that such confrontations with the complexity of life despite the stance of humanness, are borne out of the various correlating factors like, geographical location, cultural or social inclinations. Such inclinations make naming life processes along the lines of particularities possible.

It would thus suffice to note that particular philosophies, i.e., Asian philosophy, African Philosophy, German philosophy etc., be named along the understanding of *life-process*. This reveals *life-process* as the medium of philosophical reflections on every aspect of human existence. Such reflections are born out of confrontations with everyday human life. Thus, to do philosophy without the consideration of life process would amount to doing philosophy *ex-nihilo*. It will be instructive to note that philosophy cannot be

detached from the life processes of its practitioners; and this is irrespective of the nationality, race, colour or material development. It is little wonder, then, that Theophilus Okere was of the view that “for philosophy to be African, it must have some expressions of the African life” . This also syncs with the Wireduan view that philosophy is a symbiotic function of theory and practice, albeit his view that it is theoretical before it is practical . This paper thus conceptualises “African Philosophy” as a **subjective presentation of any practitioner's intellectual endeavour to grapple with the African oriented *life-process*, situated on the objective ground of philosophy**. This definition suggests that while any philosophy is expected to be subjectively written and based upon the life process of the author, such philosophies must be grounded upon the objective dimension of philosophy. In other words, I presents African Philosophy as one to be understood from the particular African *life-process* through the objective nature of philosophy. To do African Philosophy is to deal with indigenous essential challenges of African *life-process* on the precepts of objective factors like rationality critical reflection and ethical standards. As we deal with the particularities of African *life-process*, such engagements would only be philosophy if done in recognition of the basic and fundamental nature of philosophy. Indeed, the paper's position syncs with Hountondji's view that “the universality of philosophy does not negate its particularity” .

### Conclusion

In this paper, the possibility of an analytical reconceptualization of African philosophy have been examined. While conceptualizing African Philosophy on the complementary relationship ensuing between the objective and subjective dimension of philosophy, it has been argued that only upon the interrelation of such distinctive but related dimensions would a proper understanding of African Philosophy be arrived at. This is because, seeing African Philosophy in this format – like any other philosophy of any culture of the world – will give a stance of engaging the existential challenges of Africa from an objective point of view. Thus, considering the existential challenges of our time as one of the examples of issues borne out of the lived experiences of people's *life-processes* that requires intellectual engagement, I have been able to make a case for a reconceptualized idea of African philosophy. In other words, having an African orientation in the discourse of any issue is a practical application of the complementary perspectives of the idea of objective and subjective dimensions of philosophy from that African prism. For instance, African Political philosophy, or African Development Philosophy will be aptly considered as a rational and critical discourse on politics or development from the African parlance. It is, thus, in the conception of African Philosophy as a resultant of the complementary relationship between objective and subjective dimensions of philosophy even in the quest to grapple with the tripartite challenges, that I believe the orientation of African discourses on any of the perennial existential challenges of the global world could be addresses. To this end I believe reconceptualizing African philosophy in this format opens such approach up to further research on the applicability of African philosophy to addressing the existential challenges of the global world.

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