

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, LITERATURE AND ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART

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Abstract

*Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart**, and the African philosophies it presents viz a viz the way of life of the people shall be the main thrust of this paper. African philosophy is an offshoot of the African culture and tradition which Chinua Achebe **Things Fall Apart** is perhaps the strongest proponent worldwide. The trado-philosophy of Africa is the totality of the world view that has been handed down from generation to generation, but which unfortunately has been watered down and eroded by the slavery and colonial experiences and the imposition of western-judeo philosophy by the colonialist. Consequently, African philosophy cannot be held apart from the African culture and tradition; with literature becoming the crucible for all its elements to coalesce and take on a life of their own, re-establishing the African ethos and continuing the tradition of African philosophy – the wisdom of the ancient that has both guided and guarded the lives of Africans since time immemorial. The postcolonial theory of literature and the generally held concepts of African philosophy and metaphysics shall be our guide in this paper whose conclusion shall be to the effect that that these African philosophies are alive and well and as valid as any other philosophy anywhere in the world – ancient or modern. Thus, our exploration shall analyze the effect of these philosophies on the people of Achebe's creation who are the people of his tribes and their possibility and potentiality for creating both socio-cultural and traditional awareness and change.*

Keywords: African Philosophy, Literature, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Culture

Introduction –Philosophy as Literature and Literature as Philosophy: Perhaps, we should begin our paper by examining two quotes that would shed more light on the thrust of this paper and the unique synergy between literature and philosophy as well as the tremendous energy they can unleash as pivotal forces in the human mind and society. But first let us take a sweeping view of the concept of philosophy – what exactly is it?

Morphologically, philosophy as a word is derived from two Greek phrases; 'Philo', meaning love and 'Sophia', meaning wisdom. Thus, etymologically, philosophy simply means the love of wisdom and not wisdom itself, but the act of loving wisdom. Sogolo (1993: 11). Philosophy emanated from mental studies and enquiries made into the acutely existential human conditions that man found himself. Often it deals with issues of a people's culture and traditions as well as their way of life and world view. Philosophy is generally described as the “mother of all disciplines”, that is why all disciplines have the

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree as their last and highest degree (Akande and Okorie, 2012: 3). At its fundamental stage therefore, philosophy began when the homo erectus man began to question the realities of his existentialism. However, as an academic discipline, philosophy is a critical inquiry which seeks to investigate the assumptions of knowledge and/or wisdoms. It acts as a litmus test and balance checker of other disciplines whether they are in the humanities, sciences or social sciences as it serves to ascertain the validity of their claims and application to reality. Philosophy allows man to exercise his critical faculties and frees man from the bondage of superstition, prejudices, and cultural tyranny (Akande and Okorie 2012: 6). Consequently, philosophy cannot but be described as a critical and rational inquiry into the truth and reality of the overall human existence.

But back to our two opening statements that effectively links philosophy with literature and literature with philosophy. The first statement is from the subject of our enquiry, Chinua Achebe himself when he posited that: “Imaginative literature ... does not enslave; it liberates the mind of man. Its truth is not like the canons of orthodoxy, or the irrationality of prejudice and It begins as an adventure in self-discovery and ends in wisdom and humane conscience.” (Chinua Achebe 1978). Here, he clearly establishes the sheer power of the imagination, which is perhaps man's greatest tool in this existential world, and its ability to both rearrange and recalibrate the human mind for the greater good of society and development of the humankind. As it stands therefore, the imaginative can rightly be described as the enclave of literature and philosophy and the melting pot of both concepts that allow both converging and diverging ideas to emerge for practice and propagation in the larger society.

The second statement is by no less a man than an all-time African legend and elder statesman, the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. In trying to explain how he was able to endure 27 years from a lifetime prison sentence, he remarks: “There was a writer named Chinua Achebe ... in whose company the prison walls fell down.” In other words, the sheer weight and power of the philosophies, African philosophies, espoused by Chinua Achebe in his works, especially his first novel *Things Fall Apart*, kept his mind sane and ameliorated his prison state that whenever he contemplated these works, his imagination roamed free and wide, and he never felt like he was in prison. This by implication means that literature and philosophy have the power to liberate the mind and make an otherwise difficult situation more bearable by offering tangible hope. It is instructive that this same great African, Nelson Mandela also made the remarkable statement that Achebe “brought Africa to the rest of the world” – no doubt by way by the philosophies he espoused in his works.

Clearly, there is a symbiotic relation between Literature and philosophy as it is obvious that they both feed on and off each other. This affinity between both concepts is not only concerned with the way of life and morals as well as ethos of a society; but you can find this synergy in almost every aspect of the human life and living. Both concepts are in the

humanities and give room for unending possibilities when they are analyzed. As a creative and therefore imaginative writer, Chinua Achebe espouses ideas that show his society where it is at, tell his people's story as it should be told to the rest of the world and hopefully ignite the fire for a change both in the way his people see themselves (their philosophies) as well as the way the rest of the world see them. This becomes more urgent and important given the sordid and unflattering philosophies the Whiteman have of Africa and Africans before African writers began to churn out African philosophies and ethos in their works. In this manner therefore, literature performs normative and didactic functions by setting the standard for the people to both take and follow.

As it stands therefore, the concepts of philosophy and literature make hitherto uncharted and forgotten narratives and/or cultures come alive in the present and reveal things as they were and presently are, to get it to the level of what it ought to be, using the tools of reason, argument, and philosophy through the vehicle of literature. Philosophy and literature see history and culture as the total becoming of a people taking a hard and honest look at the past, situating it with present realities and project into the future with a view to correcting the mistakes of the past by changing the people's conception or philosophies. As related concepts therefore, literature and philosophy have a transcendent synergy that allows them to be most effective as a form of social mobilization for change. Indeed, they reflect on the human condition and embellish it to a more relatable level in their depiction of society and human culture as they shine their philosophical and literary light to “reflects the human condition” (Raipuri 124).

This didactic and normative function performed by literature and philosophy come by way of challenging and interrogating the status quo through arguments and criticisms thus enabling the people and society to take more than a cursory look at their existence and therefore seek for ways to amend and improve on it. Accordingly in his philosophical and critical essays, Achebe insists that the issue of the awakening of the social consciousness of a people, which he sees as a writer's greatest function, is vital to literature. Reviewing Achebe's popular and well received essay: “The Novelist as Teacher.” A blogspot *literatureworms.com* posits that:

Chinua Achebe argues that writers, just as historians explore history or politicians deal with politics, have to fulfill their assigned duty: To educate and regenerate their people about their country's view of themselves, their history, and the world. He openly and impregnably expresses his firm conviction about how Europe influenced Africa's self-image, and his arguments are designed to announce this opinion. Assertively, he makes it clear that Africans would suffer from the belief that racial inferiority is acceptable. He wants to change this view and calls African writers to be responsible for - and dedicate themselves to - their society. (<https://www.literatureworms.com/2013/11/chinua-achebes-novelist-as-teacher.html#>)

From our exploration so far, it is quite clear that both literature and philosophy serve and function as veritable tools not only for social awakening and mobilization, but as well as for social reconstruction which invariably raises the conscious social development of man and his society.

Indeed, as a philosophical tool, literature has both the ability and capacity to capture all aspects of man's social and existential life (past, present, and even future) as well as being able to turn the inclination of man and his society towards a particular way of life. And in the case of Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, he wants Africans to relive the horrors of the Whiteman's coming to Africa, the oppression and injustice that followed, the suppression of their original and authentic way of life, the downgrading of their ancient African philosophies and/or cultures as well as the brainwashing that holds every white and western as good while everything black and African is bad.

African Philosophy: African philosophy is a clear and direct referent to a philosophy that is distinctly African. It refers to the gamut of thoughts, traditional thought patterns, wisdom, myths, legends, proverbs, and aphorisms that have dotted the African continent since mankind first organized themselves into socio-cultural structure millennia ago. It would also include the basic African belief systems, religion, laws, and the general world view of the Blackman. Indeed, while African literature has to do with the telling of the African story by the African writers and others for a worldwide audience, African philosophy has to do with what and who the African person is, what he believes in, and what his general values, norms, taboos, and entire life represents on this earth. Azenabor (2004) notes that African philosophy must be situated within a sociocultural paradigm. This means that the African environment influences the thinking and reasoning of the African. Therefore, African philosophy is the study of that philosophy that is distinctly African and native to Africa, but which shares the same and similar features with philosophies from other lands and climes. It is in this context that Godwin Sogolo (1990) defines African philosophy as any philosophical thought which has been developed in the African tradition. Further extending this definition, C. S. Momoh (1988, p. 40) posits that African philosophy consists of: "African doctrines or theories on reality (Being) and the universe, which is made up of things like God, gods, life, life after death, reincarnation, spirits, society, man, ancestors, heaven, hell, things, institutions, beliefs, conceptions, practices etc." In his own intervention and corroborating the above definitions, Okolo (1990, p. 10) defines African philosophy as:

A path to a systematic coherent discovery and disclosure of the African as a being in the African world. Through this knowledge or disclosure of himself and his world by critical reflection, the African grasps reality that is to say attains the truth about man and the cosmos in its entirety.

What is clear from these definitions is the fact that African philosophy is a set of philosophical thoughts from Africa by Africa for themselves and the rest of the world. Essentially, it examines the African experience and its response to the exigencies of life

and nature as well as its reaction to the philosophies of other people, especially those from the western hemisphere. Part of its area of operation is the traditional African mode of collating, contemplating, and interpreting the various levels of realities available to mankind. It seeks to answer questions such as the place of man in the universal scheme of things, the place of spiritual and ancestral phenomena as well as the concept of good and evil. In his description, Mbiti (1982: 2) posits that African philosophy is the “understanding, attitude of mind, logic, perception behind the manner in which the African people think, act or speak in different situations of life”; which invariably implies that totality of the pattern life and living of the African can be described as African philosophy. Extending these observations further, Mbiti (1982) avers that these ways of life and traditions that have been handed down by the ancestors of today's Africans who have themselves modified some of these cultural markers to adapt to present day reality include concepts such as: myths, rituals, ceremonies, morals, and general world views of the African. In conclusion therefore:

African philosophy is a rational coherent and critical reflection on the African experience. Because of its critical nature, African philosophy constitutes the highest form of African thinking and reflection, it is the motor and catalyst of Africa's entire cultural endeavours and civilization. (Okoro 5).

Like African literature which people like Achebe and the pioneer literary school of writers championed, the study of African philosophy was necessitated by the desire of Africans to tell their own story and take their place in the world stage in issues of worldviews and civilization. If philosophy is described as “love of wisdom”, then it simply means that anyone who loves and pursues wisdom anywhere in the world could be said to be engaged in philosophy. This means that as Mbiti (1982, p1) notes, the study of the actions and words of the people provide us a mirror into what their philosophy is, and African philosophy embodies the entire religion, proverbs, ethics, oral traditions, morals and way of life of the African people (ibid,p2).

The authenticity of African literature was once doubted and cause a very heated cross continental debate because it was essentially written in the language of the colonial masters – English, French, Portuguese. However, because it talks and writes about the authentic African experience, it held its ground. So too have there been hot debates on whether the African thoughts, viewpoints and worldview qualify to wear the toga “philosophy” since they are advanced in the language of the colonial masters. But then, all experiences are valid and deserve both documentation and introspection; thus deny Africa the existence of her own home-grown philosophy will be a loss to humans because the human story can never be fully told without the experience of the African being included. It will be a reduction of a people to one less than human. However, it is obvious that in recent years that giving African philosophy its pride of place and encouraging its study has further enriched world philosophy in terms of diversity and new thought. And even though a lot more still need to be done in developing indigenous African philosophy and not dismiss it as voodoo practice as some critics have described it, the study of this

branch of philosophy is well and truly on its way to worldwide acclaim. This paper shall attempt to take on a few of these issues of African philosophy as contained in *Things Fall Apart* and explore them.

However, it is no doubt that the study of African philosophy has further enriched the intellectual space of the world and has given Africans a pride of place in world civilization. But despite every research that has been conducted on the subject matter of African philosophy, there still remain issues that constitute the ongoing discourse in the discipline. Those issues and others will form the main topics of discussion in this course.

Achebean Philosophy in *Things Fall Apart*: Achebean philosophy in the light of this paper's exploration refers to the foundational thoughts on the mind of Chinua Achebe when he set out to write out the novel; the thoughts that he vividly displayed throughout the work and the thoughts that he wants the whole world to both hear and know about Africa. The Achebean philosophy also refers to the real and true story of Africa as told by an African in an honest, down to earth manner that reflected the truth about the people's ethics and ethos. In his narrative in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe took on the role of an unbiased and honest storyteller who is also a cultural ambassador of his people. He was unashamed about revealing what one might term the sordid aspects of the African philosophy and way of life, issues like human sacrifices, tribal wars, polygamy, female gender oppression and belief in the occult. He told these stories in a clearly honest manner with uncluttered language; but he never lost track of his purpose; which is to let the world know that Africa had a philosophy and a culture well before the Whiteman showed up in the continent. And that these philosophy and cultures are as real and as valid as any of their counterparts all over the world. In this novel, Achebe made good use of basic philosophical concepts like epistemology, Igbo metaphysics and tribal ethics which establish the fact that African philosophy is often better portrayed and seen in the rendition of African culture and traditions that Achebe displayed throughout the novel *Things Fall Apart*. Thus, he used elements of the African philosophy to fully establish, entrench and convey the Achebean philosophy that displays a proud African people to the whole world.

Gerald Moore in his *Seven African Writers* (1962) describes the book in the light of the author looking: “back to the life of his tribe before the first touch of the white man sent it reeling from its delicate equilibrium... (and) has recreated for us a way of life which has almost disappeared, and has done so with understanding, with justice and realism” (58). According to Irele, the historical:

... reconstruction of the Ibo village life is directed at revealing the forces at work both inside and outside traditional society that prepared the way for its eventual disintegration. Achebe's purpose is therefore not primarily to show its values ... but rather to show it as a living structure, as an organism animated with life and movement of

its members: and within this framework is contained the sphere of action which involves the personal drama of the characters themselves. (Beier 167)

In other words, Achebe is telling the story of real people, in real spatial and temporal elements with a view to establishing the fallouts of how their historical transactions have shaped their present state. Indeed, as told by Achebe and seen through the eye of the principal characters and their societies, while certain societal norms have shaped the individual's world view and personal disposition, his reception of and response to new and external social conditions eventually collude to determine his future. Man has here again gone full cycle historically with his past, present, and future combining to define his human condition. Reacting to this line of thought on Achebe and the human history as well as philosophy, especially of the African, Onuora Enekwe opines:

...in Achebe's fictions, there is a serious concern with the human element. In all his novels, Achebe seems to be saying that human beings are partially responsible for their success or failure. The ability to deal with the human factor side-by-side with social and political issues is one of Achebe's greatest achievements as an author. (Ogunbiyi 32)

Commenting on Achebe treatment of history in his works, Bernth Lindfors writes in his article "Armah's Histories" in *African Literature Today* vol. 11 that:

In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Achebe shows us complex human beings entangled in a web of circumstances that ultimately brings disaster on the Igbo society.... Moreover, the communities in which they live are not perfect or even remotely perfectable; they are rife with conflicts ranging from the petty to the profound, conflicts which are exacerbated when an alien civilisation intrudes into their relatively encapsulated world. (90-91)

Indeed, in depicting the real lives of real African in their contrapuntal everyday existence, Achebe captured and conveyed the ethno-philosophical and socio-cultural Aeon of the African people. By so doing, he became a great inspiration to many African writers and cultural activist. Indeed, Achebe's influence was so strong that a critic once said that what Achebe achieved in a few decades with his book *Things Fall Apart* could never have been achieved in a thousand years by a thousand historians or with a year-long TV series on Africa. Indeed, Achebe offered very valid insight and revelations into the authentic African life and living as well as portraying colonialism and its effect on both the colonized and the colonizers in a very down to earth manner. He was able to situate, and Africanized Igbo history and culture very clearly interrogate the clash of culture and/or philosophies at the turn of the nineteenth century when the Whiteman showed up in Africa; first to trade in goods and human cargoes and later to stay, colonize and rule. In his historical novels, Achebe avowed goal was to: "produce the effect of a pre-colonial

reality as an Igbo-centric response to a Euro-centrally constructed imperial reality” (Yousaf 38). And this he did in a most philosophical manner using the African philosophical tools of presenting the cultures and traditions of African to the rest of the world to iterate the fact that before the European came, African was alive, well and thriving as a civilized people with their own kind of civilization and entrenched in their own version of philosophy.

Metaphysics and the Metaphysical in *Things Fall Apart*: Metaphysics is a morphological construct of two phrases: “meta” and “physics”. It is a word with diverse meanings ranging from being a base reference to a group of 17th century English metaphysical poets, to something more than normal or physical. In philosophy however, metaphysics is that aspect “of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space.” (Google.com). Its undeniably Greek origin is based on the phrase *ta meta ta physika* 'the things after the Physics', referring to the sequence of Aristotle's works compiled by Andronicus of Rhodes. Thus, metaphysics would refer to the things Aristotle discussed after the subject of physics. For Aristotle however, metaphysics is the study of being as being and the final degree of abstraction, where things could be conceived independently of matter. Aristotle argued that non-physical controls the physical or the spiritual governs the physical, while Plato posit that physical reality participates in the non-physical. These and other arguments like them would later give rise to reasoning that birthed western epistemology and world view, particularly the concept of human existence, the afterlife, the supreme being and the transcendentalism of nature. Metaphysics tries to explore and authenticate the origin of human existence and journeys on this earth including why we are the way we are. Thus, it ends up exploring issues like cultures, traditions, myths, legends, the origin of being and the concept of knowing. And these are preceding ideas are very central to Chinua Achebe explorations and depositions in *Things Fall Apart* where the metaphysical is derived from Igbo cosmology where the gods and/or ancestors rule over the affairs of men and concepts like karma, reincarnation, ancestral worship, ogbanje and elaborate ceremonies are brought to the fore.

Expectedly, the metaphysical elements in *Things Fall Apart* are deeply entrenched in Igbo cosmology where the dividing line between the real and the surreal as well as the physical and the spiritual is often very thin. In fact, that truth that the ancestors, who are themselves referred to as the living dead, live among living human beings is a clear case in point. African metaphysics of which the Achebean philosophy is an integral part of is the tradition African thought pattern aimed at unravelling mysteries of nature and human existence as well as instilling a moral paradigm with concepts crime and punishment cum virtues and reward systems. It allows the African to organize his experiences to make better meaning out of life. Accordingly, African metaphysics would include inquiries into spirit and non-spirit forces that send a controlling aura around the activities and thought life of a people and society. Momoh (1989:8) calls it the “African doctrine on the spiritual” adding that: it includes “the concept of reality (and) encompasses the totality of everything that exists: visible or invisible, real, actual or potential.”

Language is often the source and store of all philosophies because until wisdom is spoken it cannot be known, applauded, or applied. So, Achebe language in terms of proverbs, local colours and witty saying shall be our first explorative point in this paper. Now, the language Achebe employs in his novels has been a major point of contention among critics. Having embraced the English language as the most potent legacy of Africa's colonial past, Achebe who sees the universe as his audience and indeed a classroom filled with pupils to whom he must educate about his people and tell how they came to be what they are today, often does not spare the whip when confronted with malfeasances from his own people. The narrative presents the life and times of an Igbo village and their encounter with the white man that sends their way of life into topspin from which they never fully recovered. Indeed, Achebe spins an open and honest post-colonial tale about his people that shows resistance in an unobtrusive way. The characters in their rustic settings use languages (proverbs, idioms and drumbeats) apt for their traditional discussions and interactions. He deploys local metaphors and easily understood allusion that are ethnic and historical. Indeed, his use of language is the antithesis of what Eurocentric critics expects from a second user of the English language. Achebe's deployment of the English language rips apart the fallacy of the white man's ideological and philosophical superiority because with the language they perpetuate their superiority complex - that sees the Africans and all other colonised subjects as the other (ugly) face of the human coin.

Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha describes the above scenario as ambivalence in his notion of hybridity, which he goes on to describe as a complex mix of attraction and repulsion interfacing the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Indeed, what Achebe has done with the white man's language is to make it his own without jumping ship by becoming more English than the English and neither has he been anachronistic and anthropologic by insisting on an African language form. Achebe makes his characters think in their dialects and speak in English and vice versa. His language ingenuity is such that he produces his work from Bhabha's third space - that "in between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture" - and creates a new transcultural form from the clash of cultures. It is that space where African and Achebean philosophy has come to occupy and to thrive in the world scheme of things.

As a novel, *Things Fall Apart* is replete with African proverbs and witty idioms from the first to the last page. Indeed, its use of local compressed metaphors to convey its message is acutely delightful. In a 2009, Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo lecture, the Late world-renowned literary critic and cultural activist, Professor Ben Obumelu (2009) writes that:

For many Igbo readers of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's great achievement is that it portrays Igbo life with great accuracy. This is seen most especially in the manner in which Igbo conversations are re-created. Achebe clearly enjoyed listening to Igbo elders and he dispenses that enjoyment to his readers as one part of his many bounties. Speaking to *The Paris Review*, he said again and again that the energy of the spoken

word is one of the sources of strength which African writers could take with them to the written literature of the world.

He however cautioned that the Igbo reader must resist the temptation of thinking that Achebe's proverbs are the grammar of Igbo thought and that his scenes of Igbo tribal life are the meaning of the novel. But they nevertheless light up his characters and make alive his depiction of events and situations even as they reflect good local colours by contrapuntally salting up conversations with witty sayings and idiomatic expressions. Corroborating the above, Professor Thelwell avers that:

Out of the idiom of our experience, the vocabulary and values of our cultures, the styles of our sensibilities ... Out of the resources of African linguistic expression, riddle, parable and song, sacred and secular myth and ritual, Chinua Achebe, appropriating to his purpose the medium of the English language, was forging a prose universal in its reach while remaining uniquely African in image, reference and tonality. It is a language appropriate to the experience and organic to the sensibility of the culture it presents. A prose of the most extra- ordinary lyrical lucidity, gracefully masking in its deceptive simpli- city undercurrents of the utmost profundity and originality of craft and purpose. Entirely natural and consonant with its subject, its universality lies in the integrity of its particularity. (Thelwell 1990: 8-9).

Indeed, by using the English language as his tool of communication in his works, Achebe faces an inherent problem of presenting the complexities and depths of African culture, thoughts and nuances to readers from other cultures – knowing that the English language can never truly and fully capture his thoughts. To get around this problem, Achebe who remarks that he has tried to fashion “a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (qtd. in Obumelu 1977:14), introduces some of early usages of the Nigerian Pidgin English and a repertoire of Igbo language, proverbs, speech rhythm and nuances. In doing this, Achebe not only bridges a cultural and historical divide, but succeeds in making his language universal and his work accessible to a worldwide audience.

Cosmologically, the Igbo believe in the existence of Chi, Chineke or Chukwu who they revere as the Supreme Being and maker of heaven and earth including everything inside and underneath them. They equally believe in the existence of many smaller gods of both sexes, whom they see as avenues to the one supreme deity, Chukwu. In fact, their belief system is akin to that of the ancient Greeks with their pantheon of gods with Zeus at the top. In this wise according to Edeh (2007:124) the Igbos are more realistic than tentative in their conception and presentation of reality. Commenting on this concept Achebe writes: “I have not heard of a message that could not wait. Or have you brought us news that Chukwu, the high god, is about to remove the foot that holds the world.” (Achebe, 1986:23). Observe the deification of the supreme being and the high metaphors

associated with his ability to shake up things in the world. All these are couched in proverbs and witty idioms which further mystifies the concept of the Almighty that answers to none. According to (Ejikeme, 2011, p. 123): the concept of Chukwu denotes an indefinable supreme deity. The name Chukwu (Chi-Ukwu) derives from two words Chi and Ukwu. Ukwu means “biggest” “supreme,” or “highest” and chi means “God”. Chukwu, therefore, means highest or biggest Chi (God).

From a philosophical perspective, Achebe sustained the Igbo binary world view of duality as well the concatenation of life and human existence. There is the belief in life and the after-life, good and bad chi, good and bad spirits, strong and weak persons, slaves and Freeborns, male and female as well as the sacred and the profane. Dependence and interdependence of members of the society on one another, inferring that no man is an island is also a strong part of this philosophy.

Echoing this view Chieke Ifemesia (1969:67-8) stated that in traditional Igbo cosmology: “nothing is absolute. Everything, everybody, however apparently independent, depends upon something else. Interdependence, exhibited now as duality or reciprocity, now as ambivalence or complementarities, has always been the fundamental principle of the [Igbo] philosophy of life.” Thus, life exists perpetually in a two-dimensional paradigm – up and down, left and right, black and white, joy and sadness, back and front, man and woman as well as good and evil. And curiously, the impact and effect of one is only felt, achieved, or seen in the light of the other opposite concept. This makes for better appreciation when one's fortune falls on the right side; even though both concepts can be found within a person, place, or situation at the same time. This thought pattern aligns with western philosophy that alludes to the existence of evil because good was in place and the Bible clearly alludes to this in the Book of Genesis when it stated that God called forth light from out of darkness. It is in this light that Mbiti (1969:74) avers that “both the physical and the spiritual are but two dimensions of one and the same universe”, while Okoye (2011:63) posits that: “the world of man and the world of the spiritual (ancestral) world are in constant causal relationship that the activity of one affects the other. However, while this may be so, it is also obvious that this African world view is not totally pluralistic or monistic but is a syncretism of both elements. Thus, the dividing line between the spiritual and the physical in African philosophy is often easily erased because it is very thin.

The concept of karma and toeing the path of justice and fairness under every circumstance which are very salient areas of African philosophy was also emphasized by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*. Indeed, the communality of the people can be fractured by any member of the society gone rogue either deliberately or unconsciously. A very telling incident recorded in the novel was the Ikemefuna incident. People from Ikemefuna's village had killed a lady from Umuofia and both the body and a young lady was given up as ransom to prevent war. While the lady took the place of the murdered Umuofian lady, Ikemefuna was sent to live with Okonkwo pending the decisions of the gods of the land. Ikemefuna lived in Okonkwo's household for many years and soon became a part of the

family. But the gods soon ordered that he be offered as a human sacrifice for some esoteric reasons and the community was duty bound to carry it out to avoid the wrath of the gods and ancestors.

Now, the African philosophy that sees everyone as his 'brother's keeper', especially someone of one's household is emphasized here. Before Ikemefuna was to be killed and offered as sacrifice Ogbuefi Ezeudu, one of the oldest men in the village cautioned Okonkwo not to bear a hand in killing because the boy had become family.

That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death. Yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom and kill him there. But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you his father (Achebe, 1958:40).

However, Okonkwo did not heed that advice and not only participated in the killing of Ikemefuna, his adopted son because he was afraid of being thought weak; but was the one that struck the final killing blows of the machete.

This killing marked a watershed in the life of Okonkwo and soon initiated a spiral of tragic incidents that only ended when Okonkwo committed suicide. Karma set in and the cosmic forces that once worked in Okonkwo's favour now began to work against him in a most tragic sequence. Soon after this incident, he inadvertently killed someone at the funeral ceremony of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the man who earlier warned him against partaking in killing Ikemefuna. Disobeying an old man's honest advice in African cosmology has dire consequences also. He was sentenced to exile for seven years during which he lost his place as one of the lords of the land, his family disintegrated, his son took on the Whiteman's religion and he ended up committing suicide which is a sacrilege against the gods of the land. And in the end, he was buried by strangers and cosmologically, he will be denied entry to the ancestral spiritual world and thus perpetually cut off from his kith and kins. As Obierika, Okonkwo's best friend complained to the district commissioner, 'that man (Okonkwo) was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself and now he will be buried like a dog' (147).

Okonkwo's sacrilege occasioned by a full cycle of karma that began running no sooner than he killed Ikemefuna, a boy who called him father, angered the gods and philosophy of the land and he had to pay the full price. According to Ansah and Segbefi (2022):

In killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo disturbed the cosmic balance and societal harmony since killing a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess. The result was he being out of place and in discord with the hierarchy of vital forces and, in the end, he lost his vital force by committing an abomination (suicide). African morality and moral laws are filled with beliefs and unshakable principles held from time immemorial.

Law and order are very vital and integral part of every society. And in the African context, African philosophy and world view are the custodians of these concepts, both in defining what crimes are and what measure of punishment to mete out. Deliberate acts of malfeasance attract heavier punishments than the inadvertent ones. For instance, when Okonkwo killed someone when his gun exploded during a funeral ceremony, it was taken as manslaughter and not murder even though it was still a sacrilegious crime against the land and its people. “It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years” (Achebe, 1958). His seven years' exile pacified the earth goddess Ani, and the course of justice was served and justice was served.

Conclusion: From our exploration so far, it is evidently clear that as a discipline, African philosophy is well and truly founded on genuine, verifiable African traditions and thought patterns. And that African philosophy can stand its own and excel among the other philosophies of the world by regional, racial or ideological paradigm, even as it has helped in further strengthening the study of philosophies the world over. Another very clear conclusion is the fact that the writer Chinua Achebe made copious use of African philosophy in his pioneering and extremely seminal work *Things Fall Apart*. Indeed, his rendition of the epistemology, ethical, mythical and cosmological aspects of African philosophies through the characters and happenstances he created in the novel made a historical become very much alive in the present and effectively established the idea that before the white men and Islamic jihadist came to Africa, there was an African with culture, tradition and of course philosophy; which help to maintain rule and order in the society as well as maintain the cosmic harmony of man, nature and the spirits.

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