

RETHINKING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AFRICAN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES: THE DIAGONAL COMPARISON AND ITS VALUE

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ABSTRACT

This study challenges the traditional binary opposition between African and Western philosophy, instead proposing a diagonal comparison approach that highlights convergences, divergences, and hybridities between these two philosophical traditions. By transcending essentialist and dichotomous frameworks, this research reveals the similarities and differences in epistemological, metaphysical, and axiological assumptions underlying African and Western philosophical thought, and between these traditions, this research promotes cross-cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and a more appreciation of philosophical diversity. Through a critical analysis of key concepts, such as Ubuntu, Nkrabea, and communalism in African philosophy, and rationalism, empiricism, and individualism in Western philosophy, this study demonstrates that both traditions share common concerns with human existence, morality, and knowledge. However, their distinct historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts have shaped unique philosophical perspectives and methodologies. This diagonal comparison approach not only enriches our understanding of African and Western philosophy but also fosters a more inclusive and global philosophical discourse. By acknowledging the complexities and diversity within.

Keywords: African philosophy, Western philosophy, diagonal comparison, philosophical diversity, cross-cultural exchange

INTRODUCTION

The term “AfricanPhilosophy” is to some extent a disputed concept due to its various misconceptions or unintended content by numerous people. It can be stated that African philosophers spend time doing work in different areas like; politics, morals, epistemology, etc. Research has revealed that a pivotal disagreement concerning African philosophy is about the term “African ” itself, that is, its rates, values, and operation; therefore, when one addresses African philosophy, does he relate to the content of the philosophy or the identity of the philosophers? On a veritably practical note, philosophy stands as African on the idea that it involves the African way of perceiving realities, the African system of study, and an understanding of the people around us and the world in which we live. Also, African philosophy is considered to be a study system driven by Africans or people of African descent. As a result of the oneness of the individualities involved, African philosophy may

differ from other international philosophies. The philosophy that's fostered by the African artistic experience, tradition, and history is appertained to as “ African Philosophy”.¹ Therefore, there's always the spirit of African philosophy, a spirit of philosophical and spiritual exposure that emphasizes concurrence with nature rather than conquering, collectivism above individualism.

The discussion about African philosophy began as a forceful response to European intellectualists' allegations of immoderation levelled against Africans. Africans' battle to affirm their identity was influenced by their relegation to the status of primitive creatures, deprived of the capability to aspire to metaphysical or intellectual realities. Throughout African history, numerous revolutions appeared to be probative of the restoration of African identity. The Aime Cesaire-led Negritude movement, the Harlem Revolution, the South African Intolerance movement, and others are all exemplifications of recent literature expressing opposition to the perspective of black inferiority and colourful cuts directed at black Africans. Some European scholars charge Africans of being illogical beings. These claims were the motivation for the spread of colourful beliefs and testaments masquerading as African philosophy. In light of this, the purpose of this paper is to falsify prejudicial claims made against Africans and African philosophy.

The major thrust of this paper is not to talk about which of the two philosophies is superior or which one is inferior but rather to use both philosophies to resolve the myriads of problems plaguing the world as well as ease the suffering of the people. It's important to note that the only thing that differentiates both of them is periodization i.e. Western philosophy came before African Philosophy. Still, there's no base for arguing in favour of Western philosophy because of its documentation advantage. We want to argue that both Western and African philosophies started with tradition. The origin of whichever philosophy started from experience. For instance, to philosophize is to reflect on human experience in search of answers to some abecedarian questions. A man takes a reflective look at himself or the world around him, he's filled with wonder, and some abecedarian questions arise in his mind. Like African philosophy which deduced its origin from myths, folktales, and proverbs, western philosophy began with wonders. No philosophy began from the documentation. Different perspectives live on what's regarded as philosophy. Some see it as a cultural enterprise while others see it as an individual enterprise. There are arguments for and against each of these views. Philosophers who claim that philosophy is a cultural enterprise believe that there are identifiable criteria that can be used to classify the subject into different cultural traditions. In this way, we can speak of Western Philosophy, Oriental Philosophy, and African philosophy. The main objective of embarking on this content of comparative philosophy is to look at the justification for labelling a kind of philosophy as Western, oriental, and African. Likewise, we want to ascertain whether, given the fact that each tradition has its distinctive abstract frame, there can still be an across-cultural comparison of the main thoughts of each tradition in the areas of Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Medicine, Religion, etc. The applicable question then

¹Presbey G. (2000). Teaching and Research in **African Philosophy** . In Luanga A. Kasanga, ed., Changes and Challenges at Historically Disadvantaged Universities. Sovenga, South Africa: **university** of the North Press. pp. 133-157.

is how iscross-cultural philosophical comparison possible. The current spirit in comparative philosophy is akin to the current trend in African philosophy where the issues being addressed are no longer the question of its existence or non-existence, rather the bull has been taken by the horn to embark on substantial work in the subject.² The professional philosophy trend has its members professionally trained. Philosophers who have imbibed the Western exposure of exercising philosophy. At the centre of this trend is the first generation of academic philosophers in Africa, namely Kwasi Wiredu of Ghana; Peter Bodunrin of Nigeria; Paulin Hountondji of Benin Republic, and Henry Odera Oruka of Kenya. These philosophers have been accused of denying the actuality of African philosophy, simply because they dissented from the presentation of folk beliefs as African philosophy by the ethno-philosophers. The fundamental contribution of this orientation to the enterprise of African philosophy is that they purified the discipline by ensuring that the demoralized form of philosophy is not espoused as African philosophy. African philosophy like Western philosophy has been a strict rigorous and critical discipline. It should not be seen in the popular sense of the idea as the totality of the worldview of the African people³. Still, Western philosophy grew out of religion and mythology in Greece about 600 B.C. This does not mean that before 600 B.C. the Greeks were not asking themselves fundamental questions about reality, about man, or the cosmos. They clearly did, but they sought answers to these questions through religion and tradition and thus offered religious and mythological explanations of reality, man, and the universe.⁴ Western philosophy began with “ wonder ” and curiosity about the nature of the universe. The early Greek philosophers were struck by two factors as they observed the universe first, they observed that although there were changes far and wide, effects changed from one form to another, nonetheless, there was durability amid the changes, there was always something They concluded that there must be original, primary stuff of which all things are made, and which explains the durability in changes and the underpinning unity in the plurality of things. But they differed as to what precisely this original stuff, this primary element of all things was. Philosophy in the West began with Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Empedocles, Anaxogoras, Democritus, the sophists, and in the Golden Age of Greek philosophy and philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The Cynics and the Cyrenaics, Stoics, and Epicures also belong to the group of philosophers in the West.⁵

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY

Ever since the emergence of man on earth, he has been an enigma of some kind, having failed to understand himself or the vast and seemingly unfathomable universe he finds himself in. But at no time has he desisted trying to unravel the mystifications that compass him. Men far and wide have sought and still seek to understand themselves and the world they live in. Their efforts were laid into philosophy.

Bamikole L.O. (2002) (ed). *Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Ilorin: Majab Publisher, 2002, Pp. vii-ix.

Kolawole O.O. (2000). *Issues and Problems in Philosophy*, Ibadan, University of Ibadan Press, 2000, p. 18.

Omorgbe J.I. (2007). *Knowing Philosophy*, Lagos. Joja Educational Research and Publisher Ltd, 2007, P. 71.

Omorgbe J.I. (2007). *Knowing Philosophy*, Lagos. Joja Educational Research and Publisher Ltd, 2007, Pp.71- 133

What do we mean by philosophy? It isn't correct to say that there's no definition of philosophy that philosophers far and wide will assent to as the correct definition. What philosophy, is for Azenaboris“ the most instigative question any philosopher can ask”.⁶ But let us not supplicate the question by assuming that philosophy is indefinable. However, the plethora of definitions of the subject matter is at the heart of the problem of acceptance, if anything. Philosophy has to do with our conception of the world; our conscious relationship to it; our world outlook that imbues our lives with meaning. Philosophy is, as George Bernard Shaw puts it, “ the supposition upon which we habitually act ”. Its absence is unbelievable, for no human society can longer exist without it. As Whitehead wrote in his *Adventures of Ideas*,

Man can flourish in the lower stages of life with simply barbaric flashes of thought. But when civilization culminates, the absence of aco-ordinating philosophy of life, spread throughout the community, spells degeneration, boredom, and the slackening of effort.⁷

It's the various forms that reality has taken, the impact that experience has made on a people, the fruit of their reflective inquiry, and ultimately, their participated meaning, aspiration, dream, and fear, with people of their immediate environment that have come to constitute for them a philosophy. While learning to know how to live, and also to live the life that he knows, man had derived from the regularity of nature some basic laws with which he'd make sense out of the maze of complexity, uncertainty, and temporality that are the thick companions of human life.⁸ Therefore, philosophy, it seems, is electable from the whole process of trying to resolve the problems that man and nature pose to man, satisfy the curiosity that men's finitude engenders, and the vast and horizonless universe reinforces, make meaning out of the conflictual and antithetical nature of quotidian life, clarify the riddling nature of the unknown, the supra- sensible and the hereafter. Man, the lever at which reflection turns, does so with a tool that's impeccable universal reason. Until recently, philosophy as an academic discipline has not made any significant impact on modern Africa. This is so because philosophy wasn't originally included in most African University programs. Until 1973 in Nigeria, there was no department of philosophy. Indeed when philosophy became part of university programs and scholars began to enrol in its courses, philosophy was viewed as a discipline that was abstract, theoretical, and too technical. This negative perception didnot allow the general public to see the applicability of philosophy to the achievement of sustainable development in Africa. Etymologically, the word “ philosophy ” came from two Greek words, philo meaning „love ? and „, Sophia ? meaning wisdom. Thus philosophy from the Greek perspective means the love of wisdom.

⁶Azenabor G. (1999). *Understanding the Problems in African Philosophy*, (Lagos: Academy Press, 1999, 2 Ccf., *The Cosmopolitan Pretensions of Philosophy?*

⁷Whitehead J.N. (1953). *Adventures of Ideas*, New York: New American Library, 1953, 125 cf. “*The Cosmopolitan Pretensions of Philosophy?*” an Unpublished paper Prof. Nkeonye Otakpor.

⁸Jinadu A.M. (2014). Rethinking the comparison between African and Western Philosophies. *Inter. J. Polit. Sci. Develop.* 2(8). Pp.180- 187

Still, the question „ What's philosophy ? is one of the most delicate questions in philosophy. It's just not easy to give a precise description of what we do in philosophy. However, since it's imperative in a work of this nature to define philosophy, one will attempt to do what one may call fishing in worried water by giving a description. Most importantly, we need a definition frame that would help in employing the services of culture to achieve a stable social order. It's instructional to point out that philosophy is generally used in two senses. First, philosophy in the loose sense or general view which in a way underlines what people do philosophy in the strict or technical sense which demands rigor and review.⁹ If you ask ten different philosophers what philosophy is you're likely to get ten different answers. The simple question “ What's philosophy? ” is veritably delicate to answer. A person who for the first time tries to find out what philosophy is is frequently disappointed to learn that there's no widely accepted definition of philosophy. Philosophers themselves differ on what philosophy is or how it should be defined. It seems strange that professional philosophers themselves don't agree on the nature, compass, and definition of their discipline. Philosophy has been conceived, described, or defined in various ways by different philosophers. Plato described the philosopher as a man whose passion is to seek the truth, a man “ whose heart is fixed on reality; According to Aristotle, ” philosophy is correctly called the knowledge of the truth; Epicurus described philosophy as “ an exertion which secures the happy life using discussion and argument; John Dewey described philosophy as “ thinking which has come conscious of itself; the end of philosophy according to Wittgenstein is “ the logical explanation of thought ”.¹⁰

SYMBIOTIC APPRAISAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

According to Fasoro man's philosophical thinking as well as outlook can not be told by what operates in his culture. The point we're reiterating then is that no philosophy can ever live without having an undertone of culture i.e. without evolving from a particular culture.¹¹ In comparing African philosophy with Western philosophy, it must be agreed at the onset that certain factors worked against the development of philosophical ideas among traditional Africans. The fact that, in traditional Africa, people weren't expected(indeed allowed) to appropriate radical and new ideas to themselves, though this might be seen as part of their culture, it did not promote the elaboration and growth of philosophy that might be regarded as African. In the same way, the absence of writing and documentation of facts was another factor that did not help the early growth of African philosophy. Still, it would be wrong to believe that the so-called Western civilization was never told by certain events from elsewhere. For example, there seems to be an agreement among historians of philosophy that Thales visited Egypt several times and these journeys took place by travelling on the seas.¹² The challenge to traditional culture in Africa and the West came from our exposure to the beliefs and practices of other peoples. Colonialism, capitalism,

⁹See Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, John Dewey, Wittgenstein in Joseph I. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy*

¹⁰Wittgenstein cf. Kolawole O. Owolabi, *Issues and Problems in Philosophy*, P.4

¹¹Fasoro J.O. (2002). *The Culture in Philosophy: A Comparative Analysis of Cultural Influences on the Evolution and Growth of African and Western Philosophies* cf. L.O. Bamikole, *Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Ibadan: Majab Publishers, 2002, Pp.1-7.

¹²Fasoro J.O. (2002). *The Culture in Philosophy: A Comparative Analysis of Cultural Influences on the Evolution and Growth of African and Western Philosophies* cf. L.O. Bamikole, *Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Ibadan: Majab Publishers, Pp.1-7.

and the current surge of globalization have presented us with comparison reasons. All these cultural interminglings present us with reasons for reflection and beget for projection on how our culture can sustain society and manage the challenges of the future. The fundamental problem that African society faces today is that of how to produce a cultural system that will sustain the community.¹³

At this juncture, culture, generally, must be refocused out that, is at the heart of human civilisation and development. The reason is that any meaningful human development takes place in a cultural milieu and to a very large extent, the degree of development in any society is a function of the degree of energy of the culture of that society. It's important to point out that not many people believe that the word „ culture ? refers only to artefacts, the mode of dressing, and how marriages and naming ceremonies are conducted. It's more than this.¹⁴ According to L.A. Thompson, Culture can be defined as the way of life of a given society or the universe of values and artefacts in which a given people live or formalized and anticipated behaviour within the frame of a given system of social organization.¹⁵

To broaden our knowledge of the meaning of culture, let us take a look at another definition. Culture has been conceived as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment which gives meaning to their social, political, profitable, aesthetic, and religious norms and modes of organisation therefore distinguishing them from their neighbours.¹⁶ Also, the supremacy of culture over human existence in society can not be overemphasized. Indeed numerous social scholars and philosophers have argued that our interpretation of reality is culture-bound. This of course explains why G.S. Sogolo conceives culture as the means through which people interpret reality. According to Sogolo“ Reality itself does not change ”. But its conception is imaged through the medium of a language which itself is culture-determined.¹⁷

Also, the role of culture as a vital instrument for the control and sustenance of human society was beautifully articulated by Ali A. Mazrui in one of his workshops“ Cultural Forces in World Politics ”¹⁸ In this book, Mazrui identifies the functions of culture in the society. They are

- i) It helps to give lenses of perception and cognition
- ii) Culture provides motives for mortalbehaviour and therefore serves as an instrument for control of change in society
- iii) It serves as a criterion of evaluation.
- iv) It serves as a basis of identity.
- v) Culture is a mode of communication

¹³Akinnawonu B.M. (2006). Introduction to Philosophy and Logic, Ilorin: Majab Publishers, Revised Edition, P. 83.

¹⁴Opt. cited

¹⁵Thompson L.A. (1991). Origin and Development of the Concepts cf. L.A Thompson, Dapo Adelugba and Egbe Ifie (eds.), Culture and Civilisation, P.4.

¹⁶Aret A. (1999). “Culture Solution to Oil Exploration Conflict” Guardian, P.15

¹⁷Sogolo G.S. (1987).„Translation Problem. Meaning and Reality in African Thought?, Ultimate Reality and Meaning, vol. 10, No. 1, March, P.73

¹⁸Ali A.M. (1990). Cultural Forces in World Politics, Ports mouth Heinemann, P. 7-8.

- vi) The role of culture as a basis for position
- vii) Culture functions as a system of product and consumption.

Philosophy has a functional part to play in the development of human society. Every society with culture has an underpinning philosophy. Philosophy is a human understanding in which people have been engaged since their creation. Bertrand Russell argues that under the influence of science or practical affairs, there are doubts whether philosophy is anything better than innocent controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is insolvable.¹⁹ To this end, philosophy distinguishes one culture from the other. Philosophy gives every culture its oneness of purpose and also gives it (every culture) structure and sets goals. The nature of a culture is determined by the philosophy underlying it.

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The Berlin Conference of 1885 gave sanctioned sanction to colonialism in Africa. Africa was divided among European countries for exploitation, subjugation, and domination. European countries became masters of African nations and owners of everything in Africa which was of any value. African nations were subordinated to foreign domination and exploitation. The arm of government was strongly seized from African autocrats by the new autocrats and tone-appointed masters. Those who dared to rebel were ruthlessly massacred. Having overpowered the African nations, the social masters began to cheapen, rule, and exploit them. They began to remove to their own countries, everything they set up in Africa which was of any value, and therefore began the underdevelopment of Africa by the Europeans who exploited Africa to develop Europe. Everything good in Africa was removed and used to develop Europe. Africa began to be drained, impoverished, and underdeveloped. African culture was lowered, and attempts were made to suppress it fully. However, this situation was destined to come to an end, for it's insolvable to continue indefinitely to deprive any people of their fundamental human rights. The first half of this century saw the rise of nationalism in Africa. Men like Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Kwame Nkrumah, having acquired advanced education abroad came back home and began nationalist movements aimed at putting an end to colonialism in Africa. This was the beginning of the end of social exploitation and domination in Africa. The heads that were strongly bowed down began to rise again, and African culture which the colonial masters had tried to suppress began to be revived. African thinkers began to concentrate their studies on political freedom. At present, most African countries are independent. But has colonialism desisted? Or has it only been converted into neo-colonialism? This is the setting of contemporary African political agitators. Among the leading contemporary African philosophers are Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold S. Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Kwasi Wiredu, Azikiwe, and Awolowo.²⁰ The question remains who, as at present among the leaders in Africa, can be said to be turning around the fortunes of the mainland? This and other very important questions are soliciting answers.

Though this session aims to carry out a descriptive analysis of African philosophy we want

¹⁹Bertrand Russell cf. Benson M. Akinnawonu (2006) (ed.), Introduction to Philosophy and Logic, P. 82.

²⁰Kolawole O. Owolabi, Issues and Problems in Philosophy, P.11.

to posit that various styles for resolving Western problems such as analytic, critical, and explanatory dialectical methods exist in Western philosophy. It's worthy of note that African philosophy also has its various methods of resolving problems in Africa namely fieldwork method, discussion method, and consultation method(e.g. consulting Ifa). To the Africans, the best method by which various socio-political and economic problems of the African continent can be resolved is by applying a cooperative method. The cooperative method is the type of method that requires the participation of all and sundry in the governance of the affairs of the African continent. For Africa to move forward, various leaders from different spheres have to collaboratively work together and deliberate on what can be done to revitalize the continent.

At this juncture, philosophy is occasionally conceived as the critical reflection by human beings on the problem of their existence and substance. African philosophy is not different. The idea of philosophy as an academic enterprise is recent in Africa. It's an off-shoot of Africa's contact with European culture. Nonetheless, that doesn't indicate that before this time Africans never gave attention to philosophical issues, at least in an informal manner. African philosophy, as we've it today, is an amalgam of the various ideas and problems of traditional African thought and modern philosophical culture; employing the methodology of the Western philosophical tradition.²¹ An African student of philosophy who takes a course in African philosophy for the first time may be shocked by the fact that an expansive portion of the literature on African philosophy is devoted to the polemic girding the issue of the existence and substance of African philosophy. But the shock ought to abate if he recalls that Western philosophy throughout its history is constantly questioning its existence and essence. The fact that African philosophy is metaphysical confirms its status as authentically philosophical.

However, the series of questions generated by the African philosophical enterprise are these.

(i) What's African philosophy? Do we have an African philosophy the way we talk of European philosophy or Eastern philosophy? What are the features of African philosophy? What makes a philosophical enterprise African?

ii) Do we've African philosophy that's unique and distinct from Western philosophy? How is this enterprise different from its Western counterpart? Do we have an African identity distinct from the Western one?

iii) Can African philosophy influence the development of the African society? Should African philosophy apply to African society? How can the African philosophical project contribute to the overall metamorphosis of African society?²² The three clusters of questions linked have become the three fundamental subjects of African philosophy.

The ethno-philosophy trend gives an insight into the exposure of African philosophy that subscribes to the approach employed by Placid Tempels in presenting the collaborative beliefs of the Bantu people as an illustration of what and how African philosophy should be. The majority of the scholars categorized as members of this exposure are theologians

²¹Opic. Cit.

²²Omogbe J. O. (2005) Knowing Philosophy, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd, Pp.30-31

such as J.S. Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu, and anthropologists like Mercel Griaule, Alexis Kagame, and Robin Horton. It has been said that these scholars are interested in African thought for two major reasons(i) to debunk the ethnocentric assertion made by the generation of European Africanists that African people are unable to carry out rational and rigorous reflection and analysis, and (ii) to make the African mentality or cultural matrix graspable to the Western mind, especially for the civilizing or colonizing project.²³

However, African philosophy should not be demonstrated or understood as the philosophy of the people of Africa rather it should be seen as a course that exists independently of the existence of either Eastern or Western philosophies. It(African philosophy) is not culture-bound but rather a course that has its distinctive features like other philosophies that are studied not only in Africa but other continents of the world.

Moreso, given the serious intellectual efforts wasted on the contestation of the existence of African philosophy, the issue, it seems to us, isn't whether African philosophy exists or not but that there's confusion as to what constitutes African philosophy, traditional or contemporary. The aegis of traditional African philosophy as it's being used here refers to the indigenous ways by which Africans from time immemorial, before the arrival of colonialism, have been reflecting on their daily experiences as individuals or groups. The mode of reflection could be theoretical or practical as the situation mandates. Maybe, like any other human race, Africans in their verbal literature(and yet written in the minds of their descendants from generation to generation and who remain as the custodians of this brand of knowledge) would have intuitively grappled with the questions of human existence, social relations, supreme being, divinities, ancestors, etc.

Contemporary African philosophy is, still, a child of circumstance. It grew out of the negative comprehensions of colonial masters, their scholars, intellectuals, and missionaries. As far as these people were concerned, Africans were considered primitive and thus unable of rational enterprise. Prominent among the scholars who held this opinion were Hegel, Hume and Levy-Bruhl.

More so, there's no gainsaying the fact that there's a close connection between theoretical concerns in philosophy and practical issues in human life. This implies that there's a need to make philosophy applicable to human needs. Any discourse of African philosophy today ought to devote attention to the issue of what the discipline can contribute to the challenge of social metamorphosis facing the continent.²⁴

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Men of thought have argued that a man or woman who'll never reason is a partisan and the one who can not is a fool, while the one who dares not is a slave. Such an argument is a statement of the fact of the supremacy of the art of reasoning in all human endeavours. Philosophy is the study of the search for the truth and equally an effort to know the retired realities and trueness about ourselves. Western Philosophy encompasses the philosophies of the founders of philosophy videlicet Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Socrates,

²³Kolawole O. O, Issues and Problems in Philosophy, Pp.13-14

²⁴Kolawole A. Owolabi Pp.13-14

Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics, and a host of others. Philosophy in the West began with wonders. However, this does not mean philosophy doesn't pre-date this Greek account. Philosophy began in the Western world among the Greeks. The great founders of Western philosophy(especially Plato and Aristotle) had a much deeper and more comprehensive conception of philosophy. They saw philosophy as a reflection on human experience, that is, man's experiences of himself and objective reality(the starry sky, the immensity of the universe, the natural phenomena, the sensations of the human being, the briefness of human life, birth, growth, death and decay man's joy and miseries on earth, etc). Man's experience of these fills him with wonder and this wonder gives rise to some fundamental questions. It's egregious also that it can not be the Western world alone that philosophizes; it can not be in the Western world alone that philosophy exists since it isn't only in the Western world that people reflect on human experience.

Western philosophy believes that philosophy is a search, a continuous search for meaning, intelligibility, and answers. It's a hunt that never ends, for by its very nature, philosophy is always on the way and never arrives at a conclusion, it's always an open-ended discussion. It's a continuous hunt for answers to questions, but it accepts no dogmatic answers. As Plato tells us there's no other beginning of philosophy than this wonder. Therefore the first step in the philosophical exertion is this ' wonder' that accompanies man's experiential contact with himself or the world around him. This wonder gives rise to some fundamental questions, and this is the second step. The third step is taken when a man begins to reflect on these fundamental questions in search of answers. At this stage, the man in question is philosophizing and if he puts down his reflections in writing he has written a philosophical book. Indeed, man has within himself a richer source of philosophy than the physical universe. There's no part of the world where men never reflect on similar introductory questions about the human person or the physical universe. In other words, there's no part of the world where men don't philosophize. The tendency to reflect on similar fundamental philosophic questions is part of human nature; it's embedded in man's instinct of curiosity the instinct to know.²⁵ Western philosophy is pronounced and recognized as a result of the efforts of the founders in documenting what they experienced in the course of engaging themselves with reflection or as a result of having contact with the physical universe through reflection. Documentation via writing was how the Western Philosophers recorded their beliefs, ideas, thoughts, sculptures, some loaded verses, etc. This was what affected African philosophy which eventually delayed its emergence as a recognised discipline. Some of the ideas, thoughts, and taboos of the African people suffered defects as a result of not being proved by their forefathers.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN AFRICAN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES

In comparing African philosophy with Western philosophy, it must be agreed at the outset that certain factors worked against the development of philosophical ideas among traditional Africans. The fact that, in traditional Africa, people were not anticipated(or indeed allowed) to arrogate radical and new ideas to themselves, though this might be seen as part of their culture, did not promote the evolution and growth of philosophy that might

²⁵Segun Ogungbemi,(2007). Philosophy and Development, Ibadan: Hope Publications, Pp.16-18

be regarded as African. In the same way, the absence of writing and documentation of facts was another factor that didn't help the early growth of African philosophy. Rather than arguing that writing isn't essential to philosophizing(Oruka, for instance, has argued that philosophy is thinking and that thinking precedes writing), or that philosophy is wholly a body of written corpus(Hountondji) it's our view in this paper that indeed though it may be argued that philosophy(folk philosophy) was not new to ancient Africans, yet their incapability to document and systematize their ideas and views did not augur well for the kind of ,, critical or scientific philosophy of the west. Contrary to the views expressed by such philosophers and writers as Anyanwu, Tempels, Senghor, and Sodipo, the distinctive Africanness of African philosophy is not to be seen in its fabulous nature. Rather, the preponderance of fabulous elements in “ philosophy ” is to be traced to its constructive i.e. academic, stage, and not inescapably because it's the philosophy of a particular culture.²⁶

It would be wrong to believe that the so-called Western civilization was never influenced by certain events from elsewhere. For instance, there seems to be an agreement among historians of philosophy that Thales visited Egypt several times and these journeys took place by travelling on the seas. Thales must have marvelled at seeing large expanses of water while travelling on the seas. Many writers and observers of African philosophy frequently make the mistake of comparing today's academic(western) philosophy with traditional African(religious) thought thereby concluding that there's no African philosophy in the real sense of that word.

Here then is the difference. At a time when attention was shifted from agriculture to commerce, fertility rites would no longer be needed for either the sun or the rain, gold was now demanded for marketable activities to a large extent indirectly. This ought to serve as a lesson to some observers on the existence or non-existence of African philosophy. Some of these observers argue that if one is to believe that Africans were(and perhaps are) not able to philosophize. The traditional African practices and thoughts that have always been the focus of utmost Western scholars ought not to be compared with modern philosophy. Rather, such a comparison should be done concerning periods antedating the birth of philosophy in Ionia. This is not to say that traces of superstitions could still not be established in the philosophical enterprises of the Ionian philosophers.

From the above, it would be clear to us that what appears like a monumental scientific achievement to one age, may be nothing further than a rudimentary enterprise to the coming generation. The point we're making then is that it would be wrong for anyone to compare the level of philosophical development of one literal time with that of another time with the sole aim of determining which of the two is critical or scientific.²⁷

To this end, if care is not taken, there's no doubt that prejudices may result in intellectual business on the part of some scholars who embark on a study of cultures other than their own. While it is not contended in this work that Africans must glorify their non-critical

²⁶Bamikole L. O. (ed), *Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Pp.6-7.

²⁷Bamikole L.O. (2002) (ed). *Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Ilorin: Majab Publisher, Pp. 8-10

history, we believe that if Western scholars have not come up with what philosophy is or ought to be and how philosophy ought to be done, they would have advantaged immensely from what they take to be the mythical beliefs of the Africans.²⁸

The above reference implies that African philosophy is richer in contents contrary to the views of Western philosophers.

CONCLUSION

Having juxtaposed the symbiotic relationship between Western philosophy and African philosophy, one could see that African philosophy can move the world like its sister philosophies in terms of contribution to knowledge and the course of intellectual engagement. The paper opines that if scholars could explore some of the hidden truths in African philosophy, value would be added to knowledge and the gap between knowledge and ignorance would be bridged. However, the frontiers of human ignorance would be pushed back, If African philosophy is given a pride of place in the scheme of knowledge. The paper does not relegate any of these philosophies to the background but rather strengthens the cordial and symbiotic relationship/ nexus between African philosophy and other philosophies. It emphasizes that if African philosophy is studied, there would be growth of knowledge and it would be an added advantage to knowledge. Once again, African philosophy is not culture-bound, as earlier said, as it's studied in other continents of the world.

To conclude, one needs to integrate sensibilities to compare. The paradigms of evaluation of what counts as knowledge can not be used in one culture to explain what transpires in another culture. The paper concludes by advancing further the study of African philosophy as a reinforcer and complement to Western and oriental philosophies. The whole nature of philosophy would not be complete if African philosophy is not duly given a pride of place in the scheme of knowledge.

²⁸bid P. 11

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