

ORALITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The essay recognized that the place of oral tradition is so indispensable in the development of African philosophy and that such rational placement cannot be ignored in the process of the establishment of a literary tradition of knowledge. The oral tradition of every culture or society often precedes its written consciousness. Thus, every literary tradition is rooted and/or indebted to the oral traditions of the space from which it emanates or attempts to reflect. All fields of learning, be it science and technology, arts and humanities, necessarily evolved from oral tradition. In the same vein, oral tradition itself is a brain child of some contingent historical and socio-cultural facts that unavoidable influences and informs the former. Premised on this basic understanding, the essay also critically exposes the place of oral tradition in the evolution, growth and development of African philosophical discourse. It argues that African philosophy evolved from ethno philosophy which was the oral stage, through sage philosophy, nationalistic ideological, to the present day contemporary professional

philosophy. It concluded by arguing that, in spite of the shortcomings of oral tradition as pointed out by arguments advanced by anti-traditionalists; it still remains an inviolable source and foundation of African philosophy, and indeed all philosophies.

Keywords: African Philosophy, Oral Tradition, Wisdom, Documentation, African Development, Orality, African Consciousness

Introduction

There are indispensable needs to examine the role of oral tradition in the evolution, growth and development of African philosophy. In most literature of the origin of African philosophy, it is dialectically interrogated on the nature and placement of oral tradition. They also assessed the modalities of knowledge from which oral traditions constituted the raw materials and the formative or embryonic substance of African philosophy. We historically recognized here that African philosophy as a historical fact must be understood within a historical frame. The origin, evolution, and development of African philosophy follow the streams and currents of African history. The long history of African philosophy has shown connections with other continents, chiefly with Europe, since the Graeco-Roman world. In remote times, African philosophy was mainly located in the Nile Valley, that is, in Kemet or ancient Egypt, and in Kush (Napata Meroe). Philosophy flourished in Egypt from about 3400 BC to 343 BC and in Kush from about 1000 BC to 625 BC (See, Deacon 2003: 77). And in the contemporary times, we recognized that the debates on the origin and authenticity of African philosophy are still on, owing to its modalities of documentation and its general philosophical interests and finesse. This is on the sideline of Babajide Dasaolu and Ademola Fayemi (2015: 57), as they averred that:

In recent times, several African scholars have attempted to document their local philosophy entrapped in oral tradition. Some fundamental questions arise in such documentation: can oral tradition qualify as philosophy?

Can there be philosophy in oral tradition? In what ways can we use oral tradition in philosophizing? Can knowledge derived from oral tradition be cogently relied on as a foundation for building a philosophical system? In answering this array of questions, one is also implicitly raising another question, on the dichotomy between orality and writing and the extent to which one can stretch the strength(s) and limits of the place of orality in philosophy.

Here, we argue that orality is the cradle of African philosophy, as there cannot be professional African philosophy as we have it today without the prior existence of oral tradition (Ajikobi 1998: 6). Essentially, the culture of oral transmission of knowledge and wisdom of the ages constitutes the foundations of written culture. This of course is not limited to African philosophy, for it is a universally shared experience. This accounts for the reason why every philosophy emanates from a given people and a given culture. Before man developed even the crudest technology and culture of writing, he has always been involved the onerous task of critically engaging reality, and the wisdom or knowledge that proceeds there from has always been shared or transmitted to posterity through verbal presentations. Everywhere in the world, before the advent of the culture of writing, before man in every age and time ever developed the culture of writing, all his intellectual exercises are basically transmitted through words of mouth. Hence, like other philosophies, African written philosophies emanated from oral tradition. Before proceeding to substantiating this assumption, what follows is an explication on the concept or “orality.”

However, there are some limitations militating the acceptance of oral tradition as a genuine and reliable source of African philosophy. These include: oral tradition is open to alterations of some sort; hence one cannot separate facts from fiction (Dasaolu and Fayemi 2015: 57). Those who are opposed to oral tradition argue that because it is linked with the era of primitivity, and it

cannot at best what it amount to knowledge, only at its lowest ebbs. In addition they contend that oral tradition depends on human memory for its preservation and since human memory is subject to forgetfulness, in the course of time it gives rise to the perpetual loss of valuable wisdom. After a critical examination of these arguments, this paper asserts that notwithstanding these limitations, oral tradition remains an inviolable and incredible source of African philosophy.

Conceptualization of Orality, Oral Tradition

Different strokes they say, for different folks, the concept “oral tradition”, could be perceived in different viewpoints by different scholars. For instance, oral tradition construed as “the testimony of the past which are transmitted from mouth to mouth” (Dasaolu and Fayemi, p. 12). This implies that orality has to do with evidence of the past experiences, events or phenomena, made available to posterity through mouth to mouth transmission (Ajikobi, p. 6). In relation to the subject matter of this study, oral tradition has to do with testimonies of the past relating to intellectual exercises handed down to posterity through voice medium. This understanding is collaborated by Ozumba (1997: 72) who indicated that, “orality refers to all kind of unwritten communication of intellectual significance.” Further, Ozumba gave an elaborate configuration of the concept of oral tradition thus:

Perhaps, it may be added that oral tradition is an indispensable source of history, indicator of deep thought, and transmitter of cultural and religious values and a testimony of material, symbolic and intellectual aspects of culture. Orality presents to us the ideology that radiates among a people, contra individual thought. From the foregoing, the expression “oral tradition” applies to a process as well as to its products. The process is the transmission of such messages by word of mouth

over a long period of time. The products are mainly oral messages based on previous oral messages which are at least a generation old (p.72).

This implies that oral tradition encompasses both the content and the mode of transmission. It refers to the ideologies and worldviews either speculated by an individual or a collective thought pattern of the people, propagated and preserved from one generation to the next. This assertion suggests that the philosophies of a people crystalize from a shared thought pattern or wisdoms emanating from individual reflections. It is germane to observe that whatever evidence or testimony of the past is passed across from a generation to the next, as far as oral tradition is concerned, the medium is through words or mouth-voices, vocal, verbal. Consequently, "the process of using speech rather than writing for the reciting, chanting and discussing all extant works in our heritage" (Ozumba, p. 72). It does involve unwritten past events or cultural values transmitted through the words of mouth. Oral tradition is a source of history, religion, philosophy, and even culture (Dasaolu and Fayemi, p. 58). In the African societal setting, folktale was one of the oral medium employed to instruct children in moonlight plays. The fundamental aim of folktales is for moral instruction, education and entertainment. Adedeji (1971: 19) gives the impression that folktale is a complex whole that is definitional of a people's being, and for him:

Folktale is a complex corpus or verbal or spoken art created as a means of recalling the past stories that incorporate a people's ideas, beliefs, symbols, assumptions, attitudes and experiences are composed. These stories give meaning to people's lives because they use what they see around to form stories regarding the aspects of their lives and environments that puzzle them. This is all in a bid to find solutions to the monumental questions about life.

In the light of the above, oral tradition epitomizes the following “myths, fable, legends, stories, proverbs, beliefs, folk tales, songs and dances, liturgies and rituals, pithy sayings, riddles and adages, ideas, social attitudes, conventions, institutions and customs” (Uduigwomen 2002: 39). These express the worldview, ideologies and philosophies of the people from where they emanate, they represent the oral tradition perpetuated and propagated by words of mouth to posterity. It remains in the realm of orality until they are written down. This, for centuries and from time immemorial, oral tradition which epitomizes the ancient people's worldviews and perception of reality, remained the culture of all pre-literate societies in the world, until the culture or better still, man developed the technology for documentation (Adedeji, p. 19). In this regard, Akinyoola, et al, plausibly asserted that, “Oral tradition to the peoples in pre-literate societies, is many things rolled into one, including religion, knowledge, the natural science, apprenticeship in craft, history, etc., with a view to re-enacting the past” (Akinyoola, Akano & Oyatowo, 2009:187) Hence, to Omolafe, “Oral tradition provides the most important source of data for any serious study of the cultural beliefs and practices” (Omolafe 1996: 1). It is basically a veritable raw material for the writing tradition.

It is essential to observe here that the most important defining features of oral tradition are its oral nature and the fact that it is a medium for cultural continuity (Gbadegesin 2010). It is equally essential to establish that language is the soul of culture and of the essence of man, because it symbolically communicates the life and being of a people. African traditional philosophy is embodied and epitomized in her language. Folktales, idioms, parables, riddles etc., are significant paraphernalia that epitomizing the philosophy of a people (Gbadegesin 2010). Traditional African philosophy is speculative in nature in African research, belief systems, folklore and music are of fundamental importance in the range of data that bear on the essential Oral tradition through its various media has helped in

the transmission of knowledge from one epoch to another. It has assisted humanity in general to preserve their thoughts and cultures. Consequently, oral tradition epitomizing the features enunciated and analyzed above is the chief sources from whence African philosophy evolved and developed to the stage it is today.

Oral Tradition as the Foundation of African Philosophy

In the quest to delineate the evolution and growth of African philosophy, Odera Oruka classified the strands of African philosophy to include: ethno-philosophy, sage philosophy, nationalistic ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy. Exact examples of African philosophy, in the ethno-philosophical denotation, are recognize in the folk philosophy of a people, that is, in terms of the customs, traditions, and religions of a specific people. This was the stage of oral tradition. This is premised on the assumption that is a metaphysical and ideological system embodied in the traditional wisdom and the institutions of the various African peoples, and this tends in direct contrast to individual, rational and critical elements displayed in European philosophy, if being the suggestion that the continuity, as totality, can philosophize.

It has been highly debated in many academic media that the veracity of construing oral tradition as philosophy may be continually confusing as its mode of documentation is highly unreliable. The important question here is what considerations are most fundamental in assessing the content of oral tradition in order to be classified as philosophy? There are divergent views on the above question. These views can be broadly classified into three: One is the view that oral tradition as it were can only serve as source materials for philosophizing. Second is the view that certain aspects of oral tradition constitute philosophy in themselves. The third view on the relation between philosophy and oral tradition is an outright denial of the theses of the first two views by scholars such as Pauline Hountondji and Theophile Obenga, T. U. Nwala. Here, Samuel Imbo maintains that:

It is more fruitful to realize that the oral traditions are just a means of transmitting the culture's rigorous intellectual traditions. Philosophy is the extraction of meaning from the accounts of the oral traditions.

Therefore, if we are to examine the philosophy of a people, the myths that exist in such culture are ready made materials that assist us in understanding the philosophy of such people. Proverbs, myths etc., which exist in oral literature are rich in content of the people's worldview and as such, can serve as a source material for the professional philosopher to work on by applying the essential tools of philosophy to them. Therefore, without resorting to any equivocation, oral tradition has significant role to play in the evolution of authentic African philosophy (See, Imbo 2002: 98). In a nutshell, Outlaw (2004) summarizes the place of oral tradition in the evolution and development of African philosophy thus:

The trends that characterize the developmental process of African philosophy marked a shift in the preoccupation of African thinkers. However, what the preoccupation of the periodization of African philosophy is, there is a continuity in the way Africans perceive, interpret and make meaning of their existential experiences. The first is the oral tradition. The oral traditional dimension of African philosophy is the origin and evolution of African philosophy... the second is the colonial era, this period.... "philosophizing is born of struggle." That is, one must look at, listen to, feel, and experience what does matter most to black folks in their various life-worlds as conditioned by struggles against racial oppression. (p. 96)

Godfrey Ozumba also holds similar view. For him, in non-literate society, people are conscious of preserving their culture, history, occurrence, religion, and philosophy in the right way. To achieve this, they use different method which makes it easy for members of the society to retain such thought and pass it

through posterity. Myth is one of such ways. It is mostly transmitted to posterity in form of entertaining the younger ones. Myth presents to us stories about the people of the past, event in the past, ideas of the past etc. Myth present the thinking of our fore-fathers on issues in form of fiction, in these stories wisdom are embedded in it. It is now left for us to have the ability and understanding of myth in order to extract such wisdom or philosophy. For Ozumba, it follows that the first science to be learned should be mythology or the interpretation of fables, for all histories of the gentiles have their beginnings in fables. By such a method the beginnings of the sciences as well as the nations are to be discovered (Gyekye 1987: 200). It is important to note at this point that mythology is not just the coinage of some people. It is the reality that radiates among a people and their beliefs about certain occurrence. "We must not discountenance the truth that there is no myth without a basis in reality. And conversely there is no sophisticated knowledge without its mythical basis" (Gyekye, p. 201).

It is in this light that Kwame Gyekye expressed that, in Africa, a great deal of philosophical system has remained oral for a long time. He sees philosophical materials embedded in the proverbs, myths, folktales, folksongs, rituals, beliefs, customs and the traditions of the African people(Gyekye, p. 201). In establishing the truth of this claim, Gyekye analogically notes that "the Vedas were handed down from mouth to mouth from a period of unknown antiquity.... When the Vedas were composed, there was probably no system of writing prevalent in India..." (Gyekye, p. 202). For Akporobaro "a collection of the proverbs of a community or a nation is in a real sense, an ethnography of the people which if systematized can give penetrating picture of the people's way of life, their philosophy, their moral truth and social values" (Akporobaro 2001: 10). Hence, in the work of Akporobaro's historical notation of African literature, just like African philosophy, Obiechina corroboratory contended to the fact that: proverbs are the kernel which contains the wisdom of the traditional people. They are philosophical and moral

expositions shrunk to a few words, and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and relevant to everyday life has to be committed to memory (Akporobaro, p. 10). Philosophy takes account of the contexts in which the conversations of human life take place. It is this aspect of philosophy that is expressive of varied ways in which human life is articulated, the values, ideologies, and truths of individuals and communities. It is the narrative aspect of philosophy that ties it to a culture and gives it its existential texture. It is also the narrative aspect of philosophy that preserves it from abstraction (Bell 2002: 106-107). According to Richard Bell;

Among the central kinds of narrative texts in Africa and of particular importance to philosophy are those to be found in its oral traditions and in its recent literature and art. Furthermore the development of civil society in particular African nations needs to be tied as much to patterns found in local council structures and the rational dialogues of village palavers as to either one party or multiparty democracies or to Western social engineers. To call forward traditions of orality alongside art and literature and explore how these contribute to an African philosophy may be anathema to some like Hountondji, but I believe they are essential to grasping the present African reality, especially if the grasp is from outside the African context.

By seeing specific African realities through the eyes of its own many voices, understanding them will be more than just hearing my own voice; we will be able to participate in them and respond to them (Bell, pp. 106-107). Such participatory consciousness invites us to a philosophical dialogue in order to draw us toward understanding one another; dialogue encourages both attentions to the development of African philosophy, politics, culture, morality and religion, then active participation in, the particulars of the world in which we find ourselves. Africa's

reality has its own particulars that command attention to grasp its complexity (Bell, pp. 106-107). Africa's oral narratives actively and critically involve their participants in a dialogue in which many questions are posed but for which not all the answers are directly supplied. To listen to these narratives even if once or more removed from them shows the critical level of their operation and reveals their significance for philosophy.

It is a mere prejudice to believe that the philosophical epoch of humanity begins first among the Greeks in the 5th Century BC. This prejudice implies that other ancient people did not engage in speculative thought. Undoubtedly, speculative thought transcends experience, but it always attempts to explain, interpret, and unify it in order to systematize it. Speculative thought, using aphorisms, allusions, metaphors, negative or positive methods, and dialectics, can be oral or written, and it is necessarily connected with the problems of life. Thus philosophy can be defined as "systematic reflective thinking on life (Deacon, p. 77). Such philosophy in African orientations is more important in its essential function than in its mere methodology as a critical or analytical inquiry into the nature of things. The basic notion of philosophy in ancient Egypt referred precisely to the synthesis of all learning and also to the pursuit of wisdom and moral and spiritual perfection. Philosophy in the ancient times of Pharaonic Egypt was, then, a kind of pedagogy fielding the wise teachings (sebayit) of the old sages, who were scholars, priests, and officials or statesmen at the same time.

Oral Tradition and the Development of African Philosophy to the Contemporary Era: Professional Philosophy

The evolution and development of African philosophy from oral tradition to what it is in this contemporary times could be deduced from Oruka's famous classification of the trends in African philosophy: ethnophilosophy, sage philosophy, nationalistic ideological philosophy, and, professional African philosophy. These strands of African philosophy are not some kind of disjointed and contradictory phases of African

philosophy; rather they constitute a continuum and advancement in thought patterns, as African philosophy moves from levels of speculation and less criticality (oral tradition) to higher degree of analyticity and criticality.

There is a conflict between the traditionalist and the anti-ethnophilosophical approach, in regard, for example, to the need for a critical evaluation. But there is a prior question as to how the traditional thought-contents are to be discovered. One historic claim to such discovery was Placide Tempels's *Bantu Philosophy*. Tempels formed the impression, which in the circles in which he moved was quite revolutionary, that those African peoples actually had a coherent philosophy and that it governed their day-to-day living. Not, of course, that he thought much of the validity of the Bantu philosophy. "No doubt," he remarked, "anyone can show the error of their reasoning, but it must none the less be admitted that their notions are based on reason" (Deacon, p. 77). He wrote the book to prove this revolutionary point and to equip fellow missionaries with an insight into the thinking of the Bantu accurate enough to facilitate their conversion to the truths of the Christian message (see, Deacon, p. 77). For Kagame, an extremely important question arises namely: To what extent do the characteristics of a natural language give any indications as to the philosophical thinking of the people who speak it? Kagame thought that the Bantu languages were fairly revealing in this respect (see, Deacon, p. 77). Whatever the truth in this matter, it is plain that, although language may not necessarily lead to the discovery of truths about reality, it can lead to the discovery of some truths about the thought of an individual or a group about reality. Language is, in fact, an essential resource in the discovery of the African philosophy embedded in an oral tradition not just in a lexicographical, but also in a deep conceptual sense. It goes without saying, of course, that caution is necessary in any recourse to language in this matter.

There is the dimension of the traditional belief on the authenticity of African philosophy that is hinged on the reliability of oral tradition. This is multifaceted not only because, as we saw, it has a communal as well as an individualized component, but also because it has multifarious media of expression. Access to it can be gained through “communal proverbs, maxims, tales, myths, lyrics, poetry, art motifs and the like.” (Pieter Boele Van Hensbroek, *Some Nineteenth-Century African Political Thinkers*, p. 78). Art and culture are in some ways approximations to writing. In some ways, indeed, they may have a vividness of message that a piece of writing may not approximate. In terms of profundity, this is even truer of some of the deliverances of African talking drums, which communicate abstract reflections through riddles and paradoxes in the very midst of music and dance. This last observation brings us to the intimate connection between philosophy and art, music, and dance in African society (Hensbroek, p. 78). To the dimension of the traditional, obviously, is to be added that of the contemporary. This is an evolving or, more strictly, an escalating tradition of thought and talk by way of books, journals, classroom teaching, and conferences. Hence, the delineation-nationalistic ideological philosophy is representative of the developmental stage of the African at a point in African history. African philosophy at this point “can be identified as constitutive of a post-colonial quest for a uniquely African identity which has been lost amid the brutality of the European rape of the African continent.” (Hensbroek, p. 78). African philosophy is African people's reaction in an attempt to reaffirm singularity, uniqueness, identity, and most importantly, a sense of self (Hensbroek, p. 78).. Commenting on the possible historical circumstances that leveraged this shift in the preoccupation of African philosophy, Pieter Van Herskovits observes:

There has been elaborate philosophical thought in African societies at least since ancient Egyptian times, taking forms probably as diverse as African societies themselves. The emergence of Western domination in the

nineteenth century created a new situation; it raised a new and common agenda for reflection by African intellectuals. The ideas of these intellectuals, who wrote in European languages, have often been attributed to an influx of European ideas resulting from trade, evangelism, intermarriage, and studies abroad. Some African authors have expressed disdain for the ideas of what they called "a hybridized species" and "deserters of their fatherland" (p. 78).

Along the foregoing lines of arguments and counter arguments, Herskovits took note of a matter that has frequently been of particular importance to many professional philosophers, though usually differently conceived, namely, personality formation in multicultural situations in Herskovits's terms, "the relation between cultural setting and personality integration in acculturated societies" (Hensbrock, p. 78). Highlighting the place of the oral tradition in the evolution and development of African philosophy, Herskovits painstakingly opted for the ordering of various ethnographic data along a continuum in terms of the degree of intensity of the persistence or transformation of a cultural element within a particular stream over time (Hensbrock, p. 78). Hence, Africans are said to "live" in a world that is fundamentally symbolic and ritualized in character. These two terribly overworked terms are meant to convey the point that Africa's indigenous peoples express their beliefs and values most directly by means of symbolic and ritualized behavior rather than discursive verbal statements. The closest such cultures come to any sort of systematic verbalization is said to be found in their myths and proverbs. Consequently in documenting African philosophy, Professional philosophers pay attention to these media for an authentic configuration of African philosophy. What follows the cotemporary valuation of African philosophy is an appraisal of the anti-traditionalist arguments against oral tradition as the authentic foundations of African philosophy.

Limited Veracities of Oral Tradition in Africa

The appeal to orality as the possible source or foundation of African philosophy is not one that enjoys a universal affirmation, especially from scholars of Western extraction. As such a number of polemics have been raised to discountenance the claim that oral tradition is a dependable source of knowledge. The arguments are as enunciated and analyzed below.

The first is that oral tradition is linked to the era of primitivity. Primitivity, we know connotes negativity, especially as it has to do with things existing in its lowest ebbs. However, this objection stands easily debunked. According to Ajayi (1981: 1): "that something is traditional does not imply that it is linked with the era of primitivity; what it simply means is it is an aboriginal and fundamental thing which is handed down from generation to generation and it is still being held, understood or practiced by living men today. It is this thing that connects the present with their past till eternity including their fears and hopes." Granted that actually oral tradition belongs to the primitive era, can there be the advanced or contemporary without the primitive? Of course know! Human knowledge is a continuum. It advances and improves as it moves from one epoch. All advanced knowledge today were evolved and developed from a parent primitive stock. Every advanced knowledge, wisdom or philosophy is only but a recycle and advanced traditional wisdom. This accounts for why philosophy is a continuum. In recognition of this, Isichei (1975) asserted that "the past is intelligible only in the light of the presents. Oral tradition acquires meaning only when it established a coherent relation between past and present" (p. 12). In other words, there must be a logical connect between the traditional and the contemporary, to make the former indubitable. It must be stated unequivocally that a knowledge or idea is traditional does not entail it is primitive, rather it would be plausible to link tradition with seminal principles or basic believes.

The second objection is harked on the mutable nature of oral tradition. This is owing to the fact that, oral traditions are sometimes subject to additions, subtractions, exaggerations and distortions. Consequently, it is difficult to separate truth from fictions (Isichei, p. 12). Stories derived from folktales, customs, belief systems and transmitted from mouth to mouth, cannot be independently verified. According to Henige, "this argument is derived from the fact that oral evidence changes imperceptibly with time. It is even assumed that many contemporary versions of traditions are to some extent the debris of an obliterated past" (Henige 1982: 4). Against this argument, it can be said that what is responsible for the polemics against the veracity of oral tradition with regard to its stability are changing circumstances.

There seems to be an underlying in operation which ensures that those traditions that are best able to outlive changing circumstances are those that exist today (Henige, p. 5). For the fact that such traditions are able to outlive changing situations without being completely obliterated could also be seen as a formidable proof of its ingenuity. Moreover, documentation does not even solve the problem of change, even when certain pieces of knowledge are documented, with time such pieces of information become obsolete and becomes irrelevant to present and future life's circumstances, even when the so called documented knowledge remains unaltered. In addition, apart from the fact that some ideas outlive all forms of alterations, one of the most fundamental factors that give credence to the cogency of orality as the parent stock of knowledge is the fact the non-stoppable development of ideas. Consequently, if the development of ideas is a continuum, it becomes logically spurious to link orality with primitivity. Accept it would be acceptable that at the every moment of oral communication, man is at his primitive stage; this of course is absurd.

The third objection is strongly casted against the veracity of oral tradition which bordered on the fallible nature of the human memory which happened to be the only receptacle of oral tradition. This problematic is encapsulated aptly by Uduigwomen (p. 40):

Since oral tradition depends largely on fallible human memories, facts often fade into fantasies. In the absence of mnemonic devices in oral societies, the people generally forget about things as they were in the past. Forgetting events in oral societies means forgetting it forever, since forgetfulness is a disease without a cure. Although, members of a literate society can be careless in retaining memories, yet they can retrieve what they have forgotten from the library. In oral societies, this is not the case, what is forgotten is cast into oblivion and not just unto a bookshelf in the library.

Granted that human memory is limited even to the point of brain fag, posterity has a way of preserving the essentials from generation to generation. Even literate societies cannot claim that they are able to document every bit of wisdom on knowledge from one generation to the next, even if it could have been possible, no book on earth, not even Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can make that possible. Inspire of these shortcomings of oral tradition, it has been and it is still a very veritable vehicle or means of transmission of knowledge in traditional African society. One cannot deny the authenticity of a thought system simply because it is undocumented. The problem of alteration pointed out above can be partly dismissed when one considers that the oral tradition of the African culture is transmitted mainly through traditional education (Uduigwomen, p. 40). In other words, from time immemorial, the African work has continually transmitted its morality, wisdom from antiquity and its worldview to her forebears through oral informal education.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the paper critically attempted a positive survey of oral tradition in the evolution, growth and development of African philosophy. The work painstakingly established an apt thesis that as far as all human knowledge is concerned, orality is the primordial idea or seminal germ of all advanced knowledge. With particular reference to African philosophy, the work has also lucidly established the thesis that oral tradition has a place in the development of African philosophy from the ancient to modern, to the contemporary era. Consequently, it is arguable that as far as African philosophy in particular is concerned, oral tradition constitutes the foundational bricks from and by which the contemporary African philosophy evolved and developed to its present stage. Hence, oral tradition occupies a crucial place in the evolution and development of African philosophy. (Be that as it may), it is germane to submit that although oral tradition is not without its own inadequacies, however, the weakness, both perceived and real, oral traditions continue to provide an inviolable raw material for African philosophical discourses. This is premised on the understanding that even ancient writings go into extinction, hence, oral tradition must not be written off on the guise that it is liable to possible alteration. So long every philosophy belongs to and evolves from a given/particular culture, every philosophy begins with oral tradition. A study of the history of African philosophy reveals a continual/steady, though not seamless evolution from the oral tradition to the present day contemporary times. Though the methods and approaches may have been modified, but the thought pattern and ideology remain constant. In conclusion, therefore, the oral tradition has played a fundamental role in the evolution and development of African philosophy.

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