African Philosophy on a Global Voyage

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Abstract
African philosophy has come of age such that debate on its existence and whatness may no longer be scholarly topical. Given its growth and content, African philosophy in the twenty-first century tends to arguably assume the status of counterpart continental philosophies. In view of its steady progress, this paper raises the question of its globalism. To what extent does it enjoy global appreciability? With the tools of phenomenological exposition and critical analysis, the paper relates that African philosophy's global march is not subtly anchored on the universality of philosophy but driven by its own stature and philosophicality.

Introduction
An Igbo adage has it that a monkey that clambers an Iroko tree is no longer a child. The formal coming into being and sustenance of African philosophy from the 1920s to date readily obliterates the debate of its existence. If African philosophy began as reactions to Africans frustration, as adduced by Ruch and Anyanwu(1981, 184-5), then every other philosophy did. The wonder of Plato's postulation obviously approximates the frustration of Ancient philosophers' immediately grasp of their environment. Hence, if African Philosophy began as Africans' questions, responses and reactions about their historical existential situation, it began with wonder, since wonder simply means questions and reflections on any subject borne out of curiosity.


The Philosophicality of African Philosophy
The question of whether African Philosophy can confidently assume the name 'Philosophy' informs the quest of its Philosophicality. If Philosophy is critical inquiry into reality, to what extent would African Philosophy be reckoned as a critical inquiry? Was
African Philosophy from the onset philosophically systematic? What constitutes its content and method? In attending to these questions, Oladipo (2006) posits that:

Within the course of its evolution, philosophers like Odera Oruka, Kwasi Wiredu, Peter Bodunrin, Paulin Hountondji argue that African Philosophy should be a critical philosophy not a descriptive record of traditional beliefs. The division between African philosophers, then was between those who held that the task of African philosophy should be that of discovering and documenting indigenous African beliefs and thought systems and those who advocated that African philosophy should a reflective and critical inquiry whose focus should not only be on African experience in its various dimensions, but also on human experience in general.


African Philosophy cannot, the critics maintain, be a consistent recount of African world views and acclaimed a systematic philosophy. Thus, Placide Tempel's (1945) Bantu Philosophy and Kagame's (1966) La Philosophie Bantu-rwandaise de L'Etre were considered by the ilk of More and Okere as not the product of an organic critical reflection. But then, Oruka's laudable classification counts as a subtle rescue of African Philosophy from its affliction and tended to have reinvigorated the efforts for the furtherance of the project. African philosophy is not just ethnology, but the aggregation of ethno-philosophy, nationalistic ideologies, sage and professional philosophies. Okere's eventual hermeneutic basis for the possibility of African philosophy tended to have sealed the deal. Philosophy is no other than the hermeneutics of culture. Thus in his African Philosophy: Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its possibility, he (1983, 119) posits that,"… a pertinent advice to all those aspiring to their own philosophy would be a return to their own culture." If Western philosophy would be a conceptualization of Western world views embedded in Western cultures, African philosophy enjoys equal philosophic status. The string of commonality between the two or even any other philosophy is hermeneutics. Literary artists' philosophy, as expressed in the works of literary figures such as Ngugi wa thiongo, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Okot p' Bitek,
and Taban to Liyong may not just be materials for African philosophy but its aspects. (New World Encyclopedia)

The Globalism of African Philosophy

How is globalism to be understood in the present context? For Joseph Nye (2002, 1), “Both globalism and globalization are all too often defined in strictly economic terms, as if the world economy as such defined globalism.” He conceives that Globalism, at its core, seeks to describe and explain nothing more than a world which is characterized by networks of connections that span multi-continental distances. It attempts to understand all the inter-connections of the modern world — and to highlight patterns that underlie (and explain) them. (1)

Philosophy is thus a global discipline. The reality of regional philosophies like Western, Oriental or African does not diminish that status. Even a regional philosophy is not delineated since philosophy's global stature would naturally project such philosophy globally. It could thus be erroneous to sustain that only Western philosophy may have grown to a global stature since the first usual contact with philosophy in universities almost world over is Western philosophy. What of the much contested Greco-African origin of Western philosophy? The universalization of African philosophy is another way of highlighting its global march. In the present context, universalization entails globalization, a process of transcending the realm of existential particularity. It defies the circumscription of limited location. But other forms are equally important. There are four distinct dimensions of globalism: economic, military, environmental — and social

To the extent that African philosophy is its existential phenomenon, is has become its own universalization. By beginning offspring like Bantu philosophy, Igbo Philosophy, Akan Philosophy, Yoruba Philosophy, African philosophy sets the pace of its spread and growth. The question of its universalization is at the same time that of the level of its popularity and global appreciability. Is African philosophy currently viewed as an enterprise limited to African continent and scholars? African philosophy's march to universality relates to addressing some of the questions raised by Jonathan O. Chimakonam in his appraisal of African philosophy studies in view of annual congress of African Studies Association titled, “The State of African Philosophy in African Universities Today.” He posed:

What forms of progress have been made? In what ways have scholars advanced the discipline within and outside the class room? What are the current statistics with regards to the number of universities in the Sub Saharan Africa where courses are offered in African philosophy? What is the ratio of these courses to courses offered in the undergraduate and the postgraduate studies? We know that there are a number of universities in Sub Sahara Africa where postgraduate degrees are awarded in African philosophy but how many of these universities also award undergraduate
degree in African philosophy? To my knowledge, none at the moment awards undergraduate degree in African philosophy. Courses are offered in African philosophy? What is the ration of these? The question is; how can universities award postgraduate degrees in an area where they do not award an undergraduate degree? Presently, the University of Calabar, Nigeria is on course to beginning an undergraduate programme in African philosophy. What would be the social and academic impact of such a programme? Should universities in Sub Saharan African float undergraduate programmes in African philosophy is there a need for this? Should the Department of African philosophy? What is the depth of such researches? What is the rate of their availability and presence? Should philosophy be taught to primary and secondary school students in Sub Saharan Africa? Which philosophy tradition, Western or African? Is it proper for the general studied course in Philosophy offered by every university student in Nigeria to continue to be in Western philosophy? What about scholarly publications? How many of the old journals in African philosophy are still surviving today? How many are springing up? What is the nature of academic publishing standard these journals implement today? What is the rate of scholarly interaction in such journals? What type of conversations do they support, promote and encourage? How many conferences on average are convened in African philosophy each year? How many faculties on average are active in African philosophy in Africa today? Of what social use and intellectual value is the study of African philosophy in Africa? What are the promises?

These questions aptly bother on the progress of African philosophy within Africa. Of course, the promotion of African Philosophy ought to be visible within Africa as an Igbo adage has it that a na ebido n'ulo adi mma (Expressions of goodness suppose to begin from the home). Beyond these questions is the question of the philosophicality of African philosophy. To what extent does it qualify as a sub-discipline of philosophical studies? That would be a major factor that propels its universality. If African philosophy is not philosophical in the real sense, its progress is basically hindered. African philosophy is not just the articulation of African culture and world views. It is a critical enquiry into reality. This position is vigorously corroborated by an American contemporary African philosophy scholar, Bruce Janz(2) who asserted that:

African philosophy is not so much an area or topic within philosophy as it is a set of culturally original questions about the full range of philosophical issues. African philosophy deals with metaphysics, epistemology, axiology and methodology, as well as with the problems and opportunities of intercultural philosophizing, and so in ways that cover the gamut of the analytic/continental divide in Western philosophy.
This professor of Humanities in the University of Florida, whose core research interest is contemporary African philosophy remains an instance of the product of African philosophies bid to universalize. In his distinct article “African philosophy” he vigorously posits:

African philosophy's development in the twentieth century is both relatively recent, traceable to some seminal texts, and ancient, drawing on cultural forms that stretch back in time and space. This seeming contradiction can be understood if we realize that philosophy itself is ambiguous, it designates on one hand a set of reflective practices rooted in culture and reason, which rigorously and critically explicate a life-world, and on the other a discipline in the university, with a set of codes, standards, recognized practitioners, and customs. More than almost any other side of philosophy, African philosophy, has struggled with the similarities and differences between these two senses of philosophy. For some, there can be no philosophy without the disciplinary structure without critical engagement in a life-world, which means that African philosophy may well exist in traditional African, and indeed may form the basis or model for philosophy in the rest of the world. (1)

Another important factor establishing the philosophicality of African philosophy is located in J. Obi Oguejiofor's profound article, “African and Greek Philosophy; A pristine Dialogue in search of Contemporary Relevance”. Here, Oguejiofor presents the organic intermarriage between African and Greek philosophy influencing the thoughts of each other. This mutual influence is evident in Breasted presentation of a clear picture of the philosophy of the Memphite priest being very close to Greek concepts of nous and logos. Oguejiofor (2012, 64) noted:

The relationship between ancient Greek and ancient Egyptian philosophy is seen clearly in the acknowledgement of Aristotle in his Metaphysics of the Egyptian origin of mathematical arts on account of the leisure of its priest. This acknowledgement is like a harbinger of more doctrinal connection between the two ancient philosophical traditions. In an article published by the eminent Egyptologist James Henry Breasted, more than one century ago, there is a thorough study of what he described as “the oldest known formulation of a Philosophical Weltanschauung” (Breasted 1901;39) titled The philosophy of a Memphite Priest. The study highlights the role of the Egyptian deity Ptah as inscribed in an old and badly damaged ancient Egyptian stone. The kernel of the finding is that the inscription presents a philosophical understanding of the function of Ptah as the mind and speech of the Gods (Breast 1901; 46). The priestly thinker chants of Ptah as
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the “source of the power by which heart and tongue carry out the plans and ideas which he furnishes” (Breasted 1901; 48). Ptah both suggests every plan and idea and at the same time furnishes the power of its execution. 64

The philosophicality of African philosophy is also rooted in what Chimakonam Okeke conceived as the moves of Afrozealotism developed by G. Ekwuru, For him(2014, 21):

Afrozealotism is an existential theory which seeks to restrict the African being or humanism. In the post colonial era, the African emerged distorted, not purely African but not purely Western. This is due to the colonial contamination of the African system of thought. Afrizealotism therefore, seeks, not to purge the Western influences totally, and certainly not to admit all of African tradition without censorship, but to produce a viable synthesis by sifting new and relevant variables from the Western system that is sufficient without making the new synthesis Western. All the while, it seeks to retain enough relevant African traditions to ensure that the synthesis is African but not archaic. This presupposes a logic that is dynamic and at least three-valued.

The import of Afrozealotists is to build African philosophy into a reconstructive system of thought by engaging other African philosophers in critical discourse. Chamakolam captured it thus:

Like Iroegbu Asouzu, Ozumba, Chimakonam and Agada, the champions of Afrizealotism are building the new edifice by reconstructing the deconstructed domain of thought in the later period of African philosophy. The central approach is conversation. By engaging other African philosophers or tradition in critical and positive discourses, they hope to reconstruct the deconstructed edifice of African philosophy. Hence, the New Era of African philosophy is safe from the retrogressive, perverse dialogues which characterized the early and middle periods. (2014, 21)

Some Factors Enhancing the Globalism of African Philosophy

a. African philosophers

African philosophy is replete with scholars who have become major Agents of African philosophy's march to universality. Within the African continent, African philosophers are represented across the regions. Although teaching of African philosophy was met with lukewarmness among philosophy teachers in Africa, the situation improved over time. Makinde (1998) noted in this regard that:
The irony of the case is that, at its inception, only the teaching of Western Philosophy was taken seriously among African philosophers whom I had called Euro-African philosophers somewhere else. Now, African philosophy, which was previously despised, has become very attractive, especially in the areas of metaphysics, ethics and social and political philosophy where there have been many publication.

Interestingly, beyond the shores of Africa, there are notable scholars who vigorously champion the course of African philosophy. Aside Placide Tempels, others include Lee Brown (Howard University), Jennifer Puma and Bruce Janz. Thus African philosophers are not only scholars of African descent, but every scholar from all over the globe interested in the scheme of African philosophy.

b. **African Philosophy as Area of Academic Specialty**

Over the years, African philosophy has grown from strength to strength, in leaps and bounds diversifying and consolidating. Its areas of focus include, Afrocentrism, Negritude, Ujamma, African Metaphysics, African Ethics, and African Social Philosophy. The evolution and development of Bantu philosophy preface the development of other ethno-oriented philosophies like Igbo philosophy, Akan philosophy, Yoruba philosophy, Kenyan philosophy. Of course, the study of African philosophy in higher institutions of learning across the continents already signifies its global spread. Notably, African philosophy like Chinese philosophy, Indian Philosophy and other regional philosophies constitute areas of study of comparative philosophy.

In academic fields and institutions within Africa and the West, African philosophy now exists as a field of study in departments of philosophy for both under graduate studies. In fact, the study of African philosophy was taken up by West African universities during the 1940s and 1950s, and by East African universities during the 1960s and 1970s. In Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria, African philosophy is an area of specialty for Master of Arts and Doctoral studies. Chimakonam Okeke is currently at the verge of succeeding in the study of African philosophy as a first degree study in University of Calabar, Nigeria. Professor Bonaventure Umeogu of Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria, is also processing the establishment of Igbo University with special attention to African philosophy. Some notable universities within and outside the continent of Africa, where African philosophy is studied include; American University, Washington DC, Institute of African Studies. Others are:

- Lincoln University
- Marist College
- University of Nairobi, M.A. in African Philosophy
- School for Oriental & African Studies, University of London
In SOAS University of London where African philosophy is studied at both undergraduate
and graduate programs, the set objective is that the students should, at the end of
undertaking the course, be able to demonstrate:
1. Having solid knowledge of African philosophy, its history, main topics, and its
relationship to other philosophical discourses in the world (European philosophies,
Intercultural Philosophy, Latin American philosophy, etc).
2. Having developed the ability of fundamental reflection and critical analysis of
central philosophical issues
3. Having developed a critical approach to the underlying cultural presuppositions of
philosophical discourses
4. Having developed oral presentations skills (gained practice for giving conference
papers)
5. Having developed writing skills (learnt to produce high-quality academic articles)
   https://www.soas.ac.uk/courseunits/155901397.html

The establishment of the Faculty of Afro-American studies of Harvard University in 1970
was informed by the need to study the African historic experiences in relation to the new
world order. Professor Ewart Guinier (1970) stated, in the preface of his report for
founding the Afro-American Studies Department, that “we are building a program-
graduate as well as undergraduate- which is being developed from a black perspective to
serve the interests of black community and thereby the interests of all.” He further
indicates in the introduction that the purpose of the department is “the development and
use of appropriate tools with which to examine the black experience in African and New
World in all its aspects and from a Black perspective.” Guinier reports a total enrollment of
354 students in the department’s 25 courses during the first academic year.

c. Availability of Library
One of the polemics against African philosophy at its inception is unavailability of written
documents. Its main source of scholarship was oral tradition. As the years evolved, African
scholars rose to the challenge and the product is simply amazing. In the present, African
Philosophy can boast of very robust library embodying volumes of books, periodicals,
journals, etc.

African Philosophy journals include, Filosofia theoretica: Journal of African
Philosophy, Oigiris: A New Journal of African Studies, Phronimon, etc. Works on African
philosophy are turned up almost on the point of thought of concerned scholars. The
dossier of African Study Centre, Leiden (2003) on African philosophy is stunning. It states:
This dossier on African philosophy contains a selection of titles from the ASC library's online catalogue as well as selected web resources on African philosophy. It begins with lists of the publications by Hountondji, Oluwole, Ramose and Wiredu that can be found in the library's collection. This is followed by a selection of monographs and articles on African philosophy published in the last ten years, and a list of periodicals on philosophy. The focus is on works about “African Philosophy” in general rather than particular philosophies, for example, Akan philosophy or Kenyan philosophy. Titles are arranged chronologically, by year of publication, and alphabetically within each year. The library catalogue provides details about each title and abstracts of most publications. African Philosophy,

d. African Philosophy Events
Crucial among the factors enhancing the popularity of African Philosophy are events organized for the promotion of its tenets. Series of academic exercises in form of conferences, colloquia, seminars, other enlarged forum that convoke scholars for deliberations on African Philosophy are strategic fronts that popularize African Philosophy. These events organized periodically are characterized with discreet spread across the globe. International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS) holds annual conference which has taken place in Nigeria, South Africa, USA, Ghana and Austria. A grand African Philosophy conference initiated and convened by Dr. Edwin Etieyibo in 2015 at University of Wittswatersrand, South Africa was a convocation of prominent names in African Philosophy. The next is being organized at University of Calabar for November, 2017.

c. Professional Bodies
African Philosophy embodies professional outfits prominent among which are:
International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS)
Association of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy (AATREPS)

Factors Militating against the Globalism of African Philosophy

a. Lack of Interest and Funding
A key factor impeding the growth of African Philosophy over the time has been disinterest among Philosophy teachers in Africa. This is hugely consequent upon their wide embrace of Western Philosophy of which they are significantly schooled and denigration of African Philosophy to which they are sparingly disposed. In Universities in Africa, the mainstream philosophical studies are grossly Western Philosophy. Thus, meager funding for philosophical studies mainly enhances Western Philosophy studies. This is alongside the
backdrop of often more educational funding for studies in the fields of science against those of Arts and Humanities within the frame of general inadequate educational funding in Africa. Makinde (1998) notes that:

Lack of funds, poor salaries and a general neglect of the university system did a great havoc that actually led to a general decline in the teaching and writing of philosophy in African, as from the late 1980's. Many of the African Philosophers had no access to funds by which they could attend international conferences abroad. It also became virtually impossible to purchase books and journals on Western philosophy as a result of the declined values of African currencies. Under this situation one could see that publishing in philosophy on the African continent would require a lot of ingenuity and improvisation on the part of African Philosophers who have no ready access to current books and journals, and who make do with obsolete equipment like archaic typewriters and rolling machines. As for computers, there are none. In fact, there is not a single computer in my faculty, or in the Dean's office, as of today. (15)

b. Non-Sustenance of Publications
The general state of African Philosophy publications is gleanable from Makinde's further account that:

There are, of course, other journals, mostly new ones, which have come on stage since the non-performance of the older journals. These are Uche, published at Nsukka, Journal of philosophical inquiry, (Ibadan), Journal of Philosophy and Development, (Ago-Iwoye) and Imodoye, (Lagos). These journals, however, do not publish regularly. I don't know much about the situation in Northern and Southern African, but there is at least one African journal that is regularly in business – Quest, in Zambia. From all indications, therefore, the writing of philosophy in Africa is extremely poor, as the avenues for publishing is almost non-existent. This bad situation has its negative impact on teaching philosophy as both students and staff rely on publications in foreign journals and the occasional publications of African Philosophers in irregular local journals. Even many of the publications in these local journals do not meet international standard and, for this reason, are probably not worth courting. (16)

Recommendations
- That Chimakolam Okeke's effort of achieving the study of African Philosophy as a first degree/certificate program be replicated in other African Universities.
- That African philosophy institute with befitting library is established in Africa and Europe.
- More African philosophy presence in Asia
- Enhanced media publicity

**Conclusion**

African Philosophy has actually come of age. It is on the part of steady progress. The paper has attempted to establish its global march. Interestingly, African philosophy is no longer delineated. Its scope covers the major branches of philosophy. It has begotten specific philosophies. Having in its fold scholars from across the globe, it has moved beyond frontiers. Its problems and challenges are getting gradually surmounted. The major advocacy is that apart from the need for its establishment as a first degree course in Universities, its publicity in all fronts ought to be accorded appropriate attention.
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