

Deconstructing, Constructing and Reconstructing African Philosophy through the Scientific Method

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ABSTRACT

Outside the shores of Africa, the idea of African Philosophy is rejected and within the confines of Western Universities, it is the usual practice to designate every study that pertains to the continent of Africa as African studies, rather than African Philosophy. Among researchers, teachers, Philosophers in African universities, the debate on the reality or not of African Philosophy is yet to wane. What the issues are and what the solutions can be are what this paper sets to examine. The idea of this venture is to interrogate the contending arguments, people and themes and explore the parameters that can set the tone in constructing and reconstructing African Philosophy to be in line with Western and oriental Philosophies. This paper asserts that African Philosophy can apply the methods of Science to arrive at its foundations and stand on the same platforms with Western and Oriental Philosophy in discussing the same issues but from different perspectives.

KEYWORDS: *Construct, Reconstruct and Science.*

Introduction

Not a few would argue that the subject matter and contemporary issues associated with Philosophy as an academic discipline is relatively young and at an infancy stage in Africa. It is important to note that the emphasis here is on the idea of Philosophy being an academic discipline or activity in the continent. This necessarily connotes that there is no argument on the existence of Philosophical thoughts and ideas in the continent but how academic are these ideas. This is the crux of the matter. At the same time, can we say that as a habit or a nature of thoughts and reflection, Philosophy is similarly new in Africa, especially in the South of the Sahara. Indeed there is no disputing the fact that Philosophy, as an everyday activity, is as old as the continent of Africa. The issue is the academic aspect of this activity and the late arrival of formal education in the continent may have contributed greatly to this.

Like so many other activity, it is indeed very normal and pedestal for any group of humans or community of people to possess some kind of world view, ideas and outlook which are basically some general assumptions and conceptions about the world around them and in which they live and interact, including how they see issues about themselves and their experiences as either individuals and communities or groups. This is without prejudice to their truth value. This means in effect, that rightly or wrongly, people hold beliefs about the universe and life generally, themselves and their society. The task of Philosophy is to examine how true these beliefs in the search for the true nature of reality. Views and beliefs as we know them in Africa most times fall under proverbs, thoughts about nature, religions and traditional understandings passed from generation to generation, in a mostly oral fashion. This lack of written materials in the African world is the main challenge facing the practice of African Philosophy, hence the controversy of its reality. This same lack of written material impeded the academics of Philosophy in Africa.

Making this point better understood, Wireldu (1989) explains this dilemma into two broad understanding of Philosophy in Africa: *“In the first sense, Philosophy is a technical discipline in which our world outlook is subjected to a systematic scrutiny by rigorous ratiocinated methods. In the second sense, Philosophy is that way of viewing man and the world which results in a world outlook in the first place. It might be said then, that Philosophy in the first sense is a second order enterprise, for it is a reflection on Philosophy in the second sense.”* (Wireldu, 1989, 1). This delineation clearly indicates that Philosophy as a critical and rigorous activity is different from Philosophy as a world view or belief. Philosophy thus is of a second order character, for that on which it reflects, namely our world view is itself a reflection on the more particularistic, more episodic judgements of ordinary day to day living.

Is there, then, any point of convergence in these two mutually exclusive understanding of Philosophy? Is the demarcation by Wireldu (1989) very rigid and cast in iron? We must bear in mind that the subject matter of Philosophy in the first place is day to day living and the content of nature. On one hand, we have an activity that takes place almost unconsciously in our environment without we taking note and on the other hand is the systematic study and understanding of these events taking place. This is the great difference between Philosophy as a conscious study and Philosophy as an ordinary activity. The issue for us here is to draw a line between when a people can be said to have a philosophy and when a person can be said to be doing Philosophy. For those who question the reality of formal Philosophy in Africa, they depend solely on the content of active and academic study of the everyday activities of the Philosopher as opposed to the world views of a people. Here philosophy is viewed as activities of persons and not a community set of beliefs.

Some African scholars, however, are of the view that the question as to whether African Philosophy qualifies as a Philosophical discipline is political, because Hume and Hegel has taken it for granted that the Negro African was bereft of Philosophical reflection, or else why is the existence of European, Indian, Asian and Greek Philosophies taken for granted, whereas people look away when the concept of African Philosophy is mentioned. Njoku (2002,1) belongs to this line of thinking and argues that: *“the reservations against the backdrop of the status of African Philosophy are part of the Western propaganda to deny the faculty of rationality and reflection to the African and confines him to conventional or primitive mentality as his preserve”*. His take is that African Philosophy is carved out of the influences of cultural history, religion, colonial experience and Christianity. The African, to him tries to respond to contemporary challenges as an African, Christian and a member of the larger world.

Sentiments aside, are there no clear differences between History, Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology? In all my study of Philosophy, Philosophy appears more like a tool in accessing reality and not some kind of cultural heritage. This argument by Njoku (2002) and other apologists of African Philosophy diminishes the fact that resorting to emotivism in the Philosophical discourse would only delay the take-off of the reality of African Philosophy. Philosophy takes everyday activity as the object of its activities and those everyday activities and experiences cannot turn round to be the Philosophy of the Philosopher. Philosophy must have boundaries and the boundaries must guide the Philosopher. Clearly, Africa was very late in coming to the era of civilization and modernization and this should not make any African scholar inferior or less intelligent and the inability for the African to critically examine the content of his thoughts as handed down to him and his ability to reflect critically on issues around him of universal nature must not be blamed on western Philosophers who in the first place provide the content of the subject of Philosophy. With these clearly stated, must there therefore be a contention on what should constitute African Philosophy as it is with Western and Oriental Philosophies? This is the crux of the matter as we go forward.

Deconstructing African Philosophy

As a background, let's keep ourselves abreast with the basic understanding of Philosophy as we know it and then delve into Philosophy as African Philosophers want us to know it. According to Thompson (2012), Philosophy asks very fundamental questions that are universal by nature. Questions such as, how has the universe come into being? Who are we? Do we have a soul that is separate from our bodies? Have we lived before and will we live again and resurrect? How are we to decide between right and wrong? What is justice and how do we know it? Do we always have to live with the consequences of our action? Is there a God or gods? Questions such as these have answers in different cultures and traditions. This is what is worth exploring in every Philosophy including African Philosophy. These questions are universal and the potential answers to them vary between cultures. With this basic understanding, our discussion can make more sense.

For me, the biggest problem confronting African Philosophy is what should constitute its content. In so many cases, I have had to engage friends and colleagues on what really we mean when we say African Philosophy. While some advocates see it as content, I see it as a tool. If Philosophy is seen as a critical examination of nature and issues of everyday living, then African Philosophy must follow in that line as Africans critically examining nature and issues of everyday living and the starting point is the issues of ancient beliefs and tradition in Africa. Those very beliefs, cultures and traditions that have been handed down from past generation should be examined with the tool of Philosophy. With this as a background, there is a problem with the views of some Philosophers as captured by Wikipedia, which sees African Philosophy as the Philosophical discourse produced in Africa or by indigenous Africans. The term African Philosophy covers the Philosophy made by African descendants including African Americans.

Perhaps the forerunner of what is being debated as African Philosophy is Placide Tempels. Tempels (1959) in his book "Bantu Philosophy explicitly claimed that Philosophy can be gathered from the cultural and sphere. He saw his views as applying to the Bantu family of ethnic groups as a whole and not just to the Baluba people first before Africans in general. His case study, therefore in advocating the existence of African Philosophy is Baluba tribe in central Africa. Tempels argues that Philosophy is a collective property of all the individuals of a culture and their philosophy is their lived experience. By observing the behaviour, customs and language of the Luba people, therefore, Tempels arrived at the Bantu philosophy. Here we see the beginning of the herd mentality in defining philosophy.

He notes further that from the study of the myths and rituals of the Bantu, Tempels generalises and arrives at the conclusion that philosophy can be carved out of people's cosmological ideas, which are held to be interwoven with their moral codes. The religious dimension of the Bantu beliefs about their ancestors, gods, and spirits lead one to their place in it, Tempels posits. Hence, philosophy becomes an expression of a world view, the collective value of a people often developed unconsciously in proverbs, riddles, stories and songs. As interesting as these views may be, one tends to think that Philosophy cannot just be about proverbs, songs and riddles but more about how those stories are arrived at and how reasonably true they are. We know that many African beliefs are handed down from generations and are not to be questioned...a situation that had made Africa to be seen as simply a dark continent.

Writing in the same direction but with a little slant, John S. Mbiti equally tries to construct an African Philosophy from his religious background and ties Philosophy in Africa to religion, especially Christianity. Imagine trying to construct an African Philosophy with Christianity. In his argument, just like Tempels and Oruka, Mbiti proposed that religion permeates all aspects of the life of the average African and religion is discerned in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious

ceremonies. He claims that philosophy unlike religion cannot be observed in terms of specific acts of people who engage in it, and is convinced that Philosophy concerns itself with people's lives and it is in the study of African religious acts that one can discover the Philosophy behind them. For Mbiti, therefore, Philosophy is found in the history, culture and religion of the African people. Noting that it is needless to talk of a specialized discipline called Philosophy.

Henry Odera Oruka, arguably one of the earliest voices of African Philosophy in a research carried out in 1974 on the nature of African Philosophy, believes that sage Philosophy is a horizon of insights and judgement belonging to community as a whole in its understanding of life as represented by some persons within the group. Community here means an African village. For Odera (2002) sagacity or sage philosophy is the thought of wise men and women within the group or community. In critically examining this understanding, we are confronted with the simple idea of Philosophy being a person's or a groups' set of beliefs. Philosophy in the modern sense has definitely gone beyond this and has assumed the life of a critical tool to arrive at the truth of reality in all spheres of human endeavour. To therefore see philosophy as words from supposedly wise men and women is to reduce the significance and meaning of Philosophy.

For Oruka, the basic principles of philosophic sagacity, which forms his idea of African philosophy is that in both traditional and modern Africa, there exists men and women, literate and illiterate who commonly engage in philosophical reflection on various problems of human life and nature in general. Philosophic sagacity searches for such individuals and thinkers in the traditional community and in his method, Oruka and his colleagues went with tape recorders into villages of different ethnic communities in Kenya to engage those who were thought by their own communities to be wise. It is clear to see what Odera tries to paint here and it has to do with words of people who are judged to be wise. Problem is, in this modern era, how do you merely judge wisdom by words of a person and how do you judge the words as being true or mere fantasy. Many proverbs in Africa taken for granted by people fall flat in the face of critical examination as most of them are not a priori by nature. In spite of the obvious short fall in the full application of the philosophical method which is known to all students and teachers of Philosophy, Odera (1991, 33) still anchored his idea of African Philosophy on the argument that sage Philosophy: "is a way of thinking and explaining the world that fluctuates between popular wisdom (well-known communal maxims, aphorisms and general common sense truths) and didactic wisdom (an expounded wisdom and rational thought of some given individuals within the community). While popular wisdom is often conformist, didactic wisdom is at times critical of the communal set up and of popular wisdom". As interesting as this may sound, Oruka has not produced and in fact, there is no shred of evidence where this took place anywhere in Africa.

Sage Philosophy is argued further to be a horizon of insights and good judgement and such judgement can be expressed in two ways: popular or folk sagacity and philosophic sagacity. Where popular sagacity consists in popular maxims, philosophic sagacity finds expression in the expounded wisdom and rational thought of some given individuals in the community. Philosophic sagacity to Oruka bears witness to the private world of individuals in the community. It is the sphere of critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgment by the power of reason and inborn insights rather than by the authority of communal consensus. The point being made here is that a sage person is we versed in the wisdom and traditions of his community. The person reflects the wisdom and traditions of the community but a philosophic sage goes beyond folk or mere sagacity. His stand before the inherited beliefs and wisdom of his people is that of a critical reflective attitude. He is not a mere reporter of the traditions but a critical participant, a thinker. Wireldu (1989) argues against this seriously, noting that genuine Philosophy demands the application to any thought, critical analysis and rigorous arguments.

Masolo (1994) counters Oruka when he argued that philosophic sagacity is not philosophy and based on the Socratic Method, Masolo's analysis shows how frequently tradition and opinion are based on insufficient reasoning. For Masolo then, true philosophy relies on analysis, definition, and explanation. Pre-Socratic knowledge according to him has no place in strict philosophy and philosophical sagacity falls into the category of pre-Socratic philosophy. Was Masolo right in asserting that philosophy before the emergence of Philosophy is not philosophy? What do we say about Oriental Philosophy that existed centuries before Socrates and has so many footprints in Western Philosophy? The point Masolo made has to do with the ability of the individuals in Oruka to apply proper reasoning in making their observations. Perhaps Oruka should have told us the level of understanding of his wise men and women of the things they were talking about that finally gave them the toga of wisdom. In a typical village of illiterates, anything can be termed as wise.

Wiredu (1989) in also picking holes in the arguments of ethno philosophers, believes that the African Philosopher has a unique opportunity to re-examine many of the assumptions of Western Philosophy by subjecting them to an interrogation based on African language and if I may add African thought. He vehemently opposes the ethno-philosophical and philosophical sagacity approaches to African Philosophy as enunciated by Odera Oruka¹, noting that all cultures have their distinctive folk beliefs and world view, but that those must be distinguished from the practice of philosophizing. The understanding here is that philosophising is an activity, rather than a destination and we must see Philosophy as a tool, an activity and means rather than an end. To this extent, the contents and objects of philosophy cannot be seen as Philosophy itself. This is where the confusion is brewed for those that promote African philosophy.

On the definition of African Philosophy, Wiredu further argues that the term African Philosophy was seen by Mbiti as the classical exposition of African Philosophy to refer to the understanding attitude of mind, Logic and perception behind the manner in which African people think, act or speak in different situations of life: "On this showing, the existence of African Philosophy seemed distinctly compatible with a philosophical inarticulateness on the ¹Henry Odera Oruka is of Kenyan origin and is known to be one of the first promoters of African Philosophy with his views on Philosophical sagacity. part of the traditional African. This did not seem to have worried Mbiti who even remarked , what therefore is African Philosophy, may not amount to more than simply my own process of philosophizing the items under consideration; but this cannot be helped and in any case I am by birth an African". Wiredu argues that in Mbiti's view thus, African Philosophy was held to be an implicit philosophy. It was the Philosophy implicit in the life, thought and talk of the traditional African, ethics and morals of the society concerned.

Still examining Mbiti's position on African Philosophy, Wiredu argues that Mbiti's position follows that any African's philosophizing on relevant African data can only consist of making explicit what is implicit there in. This, he says means that the result of contemporary work in philosophy in Africa can never attain any status other than that of a semi anthropological paraphrase of African traditional beliefs. Wiredu (1989) goes ahead to also puncture some of the ideas of Placide Tempels by asserting that exactly a decade before Mbiti, Placide Tempels had expounded much the same conception of African Philosophy in his Bantu Philosophy published in 1959. Wiredu makes it clear that Hountondji, who happens to be a severe critic of the concept of African Philosophy represented by Tempels and Mbiti objected to their tendency to postulate unanimity in Philosophical beliefs among various African peoples or even with the entire African race. For Hountondji, Wiredu cites there is no African Philosophy based on any kind of community among Africans, a view Wiredu sees as just.

In looking at all the foregoing presentations, what readily comes to mind is whether there is no demarcation between traditional beliefs and philosophy. The answer lies in asking if there is anything known as the philosophical method or the Socratic Method. I know this would be dismissed as a

Western creation to dim the reality of African Philosophy. Mbiti's ideas thus create a big hole in the definition of Philosophy. Must any definition be personal, sectional, ethnic, religious and tribal? The answer is definitely in the negative. Philosophy must be philosophy everywhere and anywhere with common methods and common methodology and the definition must universal. Two trends have emerged so far in this discourse: On the one hand is the view that African Philosophy is that which has inherited by today's Africans through the oral tradition and it is the duty of an African Philosopher to collect, interpret and disseminate African proverbs, folktales, myths and other traditional materials.

On the other hand is the group that maintains that African Philosophy ought to in this day and age take cognisance of modern developments in Knowledge and reflection. In this group are Wiredu, Bodunrin and Hountondji. For example, Wiredu (1989) notes that African Philosophy is mainly the result of the thought of African Philosophers, traditional as well as modern. Those who promote this second option do not believe that in modern times, Philosophy must remain a communal body of thought or knowledge. Instead they emphasise the importance of debate and inevitability of pluralism and diversity in opinion. This is what Hountondji has been particularly keen on emphasising. For him, African Philosophy is a kind of literature produced by Africans dealing with Philosophical problems. This definition seems to exclude African traditional communal thought from the bounds of African Philosophy. It however, includes within the bounds, writings that expound and interpret African traditional world.

One aspect of Hountondji's definition that is interesting is the idea that a philosophical work by an African need not be about a specially African topic in order to qualify as African Philosophy. This aspect of Hountondji's work is seen by Wiredu as progressive on the whole: Hountondji puts the matter thus: "just as the anthropological study of African societies by

Western scientific literature, likewise the philosophical studies of Western tradition by African scholars are part and parcel of African Philosophy literature as are all philosophical investigations made by Africans about conceptions which may have no special or privileged links with African experience" (Wiredu 1982, 6)

Concluding, Wiredu explains that African Philosophy is not just the world view of traditional African societies as African Philosophers are active today, trying to achieve a synthesis of philosophical insights of their ancestors with whatever is of philosophical worth they can extract from the intellectual resources of the modern world.

Constructing African Philosophical method

Like science, one major plank upon which Philosophy stands is the foundation of explanation. It is trite to assert that whatever cannot be scientifically explained is not science and whatever is not science is either nonsensical or superstitious and this is the biggest cloud covering the reality of African Philosophy. What most advocates of African Philosophy call so is nothing but some fetish inexplicable phenomena that lack explanation and reason. It is in this direction that many scholars have questioned the validity of African Philosophy as it is currently stated. It is very common to read and hear arguments that the words of the ancestors, gods and deities are sacrosanct in African culture. Good as this may be in the traditional setting, how is the problem of truth about the assertions by these entities whose very existence and reality are in doubt anyway resolved. Can one predict the future based on the words of a native doctor who is said to be speaking for the gods? This is very important for the establishment of knowledge and epistemology.

Latching on to this problem of an acceptable or clear methodology of doing African Philosophy, Anyanwu (1989) argues that those who are abreast of the philosophical activities of Philosophers would be baffled and discouraged by the apparent contradictions and conflicts between different philosophers on the same issues. For him: "the assumptions about the meaning or nature of

Philosophy determine the methods which they would adopt as the trustworthy route to knowledge, that is, what they regard as the “true” knowledge of reality. Furthermore, personal experience and religious beliefs, educational background and the financial interests influence the thoughts of Philosophers and many philosophers hide these facts and dogmatically assert that they alone possess the philosophy worthy of that name” (Anyanwu, 1989, 127)

Anyanwu’s (1989) argument simply ties the idea of method in Philosophy to the philosopher beliefs. Does this then conclude that there cannot be one acceptable universal way of doing Philosophy and describing the nature of Philosophy? Does this not make the method of Philosophy subjective and at best relative? Western and Oriental Philosophies seem to have shattered this assumption as Philosophy has gone on endlessly in these two worlds. That Western Philosophy and Oriental Philosophies have gone on this long with progressive developments where disagreements and counter positions are being canvassed only attests to the fact that there is a method all practitioners follow in doing philosophy. The issue of method therefore, cannot be personal as Anyanwu asserts. A Philosopher that is not properly educated on a particular subject can thus get up and make assertions that students and teachers are expected to read or accept. To me, this creates serious integrity and quality control for the practice of Philosophy.

African Philosophy seems to be in a prison and since there is no general agreement as to what it is or what it ought to be. There is no surprise that there is also no general agreement as to what its methods should be. Anyanwu (1989) believes that there are many methods of

Philosophy such as descriptive, analytic, critical, synthetic and speculative. I would rather not see these schools as methods but communities. Just as you have scientific communities working on different research programs using the same methods, that’s what Philosophy also employs in doing different aspects of the Philosophical enterprise. Anyanwu (1989) continues that it is not unusual that certain philosophers establish their own favoured methods as the absolute method of doing philosophy and reject all other methods. If this line of thinking is accepted, the entire edifice of science would collapse and society would be plunged into darkness. We believe so strongly that Philosophy and science share very similar missions and must therefore share similar methods.

From the foregoing, and based on the argument of people like Anyanwu, there is no unanimity on the method of doing African Philosophy and this is based on the lack of unanimity on its nature. While Anyanwu may seem to have done justice in countering those who objected to African Philosophy as African culture, and tradition, he offered no help in laying any foundation or base on the method most suitable to African Philosophy. For us, the debate should not be whether there is anything like African Philosophy or not but be about doing African Philosophy under the shadow of Western Philosophy. The issue should be how to apply the Philosophical, Socratic and scientific methods in arriving at what can be accepted as African Philosophy by readers outside Africa. The two schools around the debate are obviously in pursuit of the reality of African Philosophy and the way out is the introduction of a method that is not only acceptable but equally universal.

My argument remains that Western and Oriental Philosophy began where African Philosophy is currently standing: Ancient ancestral beliefs, myths, traditions, customs, religion etc. The task before the Philosopher in Africa is to question, interrogate, and examine these beliefs within the contexts of modern tools such as reason, Logic and science in arriving at explanations and predictions and thus add to the universal body of knowledge. The debate must be about developing African Philosophy through a very scientific method and not about its existence as we have gone beyond that. For as long as Western and Oriental Philosophy have thrived through the centuries, African Philosophy must adapt to existing methods in Philosophy and science to establish the rich and deep Philosophical thoughts in Africa on issues of justice, equality, science, ethics, democracy, politics Being and

existence. We are not to recreate the wheel but to join the conversation on the wheel and add to its body.

Reconstructing African Philosophy through the scientific method

So many scholars, including scientists have questioned the role of Philosophy of science and its relevance to the growth of science. Truth is, there are so many things philosophers of science do in terms of research and study, and one central set of concerns is what is distinctive about science -- how science differs from other human activities, (especially bearing in mind that not every human activity can go as science), what underlies its body of knowledge, what features are necessary and relevant to scientific engagement with reality, etc. This means philosophers of science must have spent and still spend some good bit of time trying to find and draw the line between science and non-science or what we call pseudo-science. Philosophy of science is also involved in trying to figure out the logic with which scientific claims are grounded, working to understand the relations between theory and empirical facts, and working out the common thread that binds many different but related scientific projects.

Stemwedel (2014) argues that we can choose to think of this set of philosophical projects as trying to give an account of what science is trying to do -- how science attempts to construct a picture of the world that is accountable to the world in a particular way, how that picture of the world develops and changes in response to further empirical information (among other factors), and what kind of explanations can be given for the success of scientific accounts (insofar as they have been successful). Frequently, the philosopher is concerned with "Science" rather than a particular field of science. As well, some philosophers are more concerned with an idealized picture of science as an optimally rational knowledge building activity -- something they will emphasize is quite different from science as actually practiced.

She believes that practicing scientists pretty much want to know how to handle questions in their particular fields of science and if the goal is to understand the digestive system of some exotic bug, you may have no use at all for a subtle account of scientific theory change, let alone for a firm stand on the question of scientific anti-realism. You have much more use for information about how to catch the bug, how to get to its digestive system, what sorts of things you could observe, measure or manipulate that could give you useful information about its digestive system, how to collect good data, how to tell when you've collected enough data to draw useful conclusions, appropriate methods for processing the data and drawing conclusions, and so forth. This is obviously how science flows

If it is accepted then, that the core aim of science is to explain and predict both natural and social events and phenomena, then the issue of truth is important and the process of ascertaining the truth becomes also important. This is because there are natural and non-natural explanations in doing science. A natural explanation can be described as one that follows the scientific method while the non-natural is one that can be described as superstitious or magical and the difference is found in result. While the former provides positives most times, the later ends up in disasters. This is the core of this section of the quest for method in African Philosophy. Until the Philosopher in Africa adopts this system of reasoning and build their research on the imperative of scientific explanation, their endeavour would continue to fall short of the set standard. Research all over the world has a set a standard and it cannot be different in the research in African Philosophy

The main difference between Western societies and African societies in our estimation is the fact that while the West relies on the scientific method, African societies still rely on the relics of traditions and cultures which are based on pure superstition and supernatural explanations which are not verifiable. In the practice of medicine and psychology to name but two for example, African societies depend on their gods and their ancestors for explanations, making them primordial even with the

advent of modernity. The result is disaster. The whole essence of science we might argue is to be able to solve human problems with the ability to explain and predict. For any society to make progress therefore, it must be able to use the understandings, explanations and predictions of science to create solutions and inventions. This is where the relevance of African Philosophy in the universal body of knowledge can be established. Beyond the works of local native doctors and diviners, African scholars must realise that knowledge becomes useless, nonsensical and meaningless when explanation is absent.

Not too many people would agree with the German Philosopher, Paul Feyerabend when he argued that there is actually no difference between science and non-science even though we cannot dispute the fact that sometimes the beginning of science is superstition. The method of science has made it very clear that for a method to be scientific it must be based on Induction or deduction and they are both anchored on observation, research, experiment and verification. The position that the demarcation between science and non-science is thin cannot stand the test of time and died naturally with Feyerabend expectedly. The place of superstition in the growth of African Philosophy, therefore, can only be argued within the context of the beginning of philosophy and science itself. For instance when the Ionian philosophers talked about the primary element of nature, they provided no evidence in the argument on Water (Thales), Air (Anaximander) and boundless (Anaximenes). They made their arguments purely from the perspective of superstition but the scientific method today has completely nullified their views with better explanations formulated and as such there is more certainty in the enterprise of solving problems through research and study.

It is based on the foregoing that the issue of method in science is as important as science itself and this is transposed with the importance of method in African Philosophy. For the world to find African Philosophy relevant, it must be defined within the lines of research, observation, experiment, analysis etc. This section is out therefore, to dig deep into the issue of the method of science being useful in the resolution of the problem of method in African Philosophy. In other words, what makes the processes of African Philosophy scientific as opposed to superstition, mythical or magical? Certainty, method, explanation and truth are at the core of knowledge and anything contrary would be destructive. That the world today is ruled by science is to state the obvious and science has become the core of life itself in society. This reality is what some of us as the reason why Philosophy in Africa must not be whimsical, personal or relative. The enterprise of African Philosophy must cohere with the demands of science, no matter how rigorous they may be.

In achieving the purpose of this section, we are juxtaposing the views of three major philosophers of science, Kuhn and his scientific revolution, Popper and his conjectures and refutations and Lakatos' research programme on the debate hitherto discussed in the work. We are laying emphasis on these three persons because they provide the core arguments in the issue of method and truth in the process of science which we believe can give the practice of African Philosophy the much needed impetus and momentum to flourish. Their views represent the benchmark in the understanding of what science is and what truth is in science and Philosophy. These three positions form a template upon which more ideas could be discovered. It is therefore common to observe that any meaningful deliberation on method and science must be about the three philosophers of science. At the end of the discussion, it should be obvious that they represent the solution to the quagmire in which African Philosopher is stuck.

Reconstructing African Philosophy: Conjectures and Refutations in Karl Popper

It was Paul Feyerabend that argued that there is really no strong demarcation between science and non-science or magic. The same way Tempels, Mbiti and Oruka argue that African Philosophy flows on its own accord. His argument was that science itself began on these notes and was a result of

superstition and that science is simply the examination of ordinary and lay man's views of reality and phenomena. Perhaps Popper(1963) laid his foundational views on science on this idea. Little wonder, he argues that nothing in the scientific enterprise is based on certainty. For him, the scientific enterprise is more of trial and error, what he termed conjecture or bold guesses and the only way to confirm the veracity of any assertion is not to prove it but to refute it and the more a theory or view survives a refutation, the closer it gets to the truth which he terms verisimilitude. Popper's position is that our knowledge, and especially our scientific knowledge, progresses by unjustified (and unjustifiable) anticipations, by guesses, by tentative solutions; in a word by conjectures and are not based on any stated paradigms or theories as adumbrated by Kuhn. This falls squarely within the arguments of advocates of African Philosophy and this method is worth examining within their arguments and relevance can be established.

Plausible as these ideas are in the elucidation of the aim of science which is truth, Popper cannot go without opposition. Philosophers such as Kuhn, Feyerabend, Lakatos and some others raised and developed strong views against Popper. Lieberman (1982) on his part argues strongly that Popper's falsification method cannot arrive at the truth, arguing that if we adopt Popper's description of the aim of science as the truth, it is pointless to pursue his method of conjectures and refutations, for he denies they can arrive at any rational claim to the truth. Going by this opposition therefore, African Philosopher must bear this in mind and adopt a method that can effectively lead to the attainment of truth. Rationality in Philosophy is as important as rationality in science. For Philosophy to make sense, it must be rational and stand the test of explanation. To thus build a Philosophy on some argument about tradition and community beliefs negates the rudiments of what constitutes knowledge.

Just as the ideas of Popper, as interesting as they may be were rejected by the community of the Philosophers of science, a lesson must be drawn that the advocates of African Philosophy must also understand that the community of African scholars can reject their views or method as the case may be. No one has absolute knowledge and all researchers must be guided by the rules of engagement. Popper (1963) looked at the growth of scientific knowledge from a totally different perspective and its novelty attracted attention. The idea of conjecture itself may look simple but on close examination, we find that Popper was not out of touch. It has stated in so many places that the growth of medicine is based on trial and error and none of its postulates are perfect. Falsification is nothing but verification in a different way. To falsify a theory is simply to verify it but from a different approach. African Philosophy can also move in this route.

Reconstructing African Philosophy with the Structure of Scientific Revolutions of Thomas

S. Kuhn

Kuhn (1972) made several notable claims concerning the progress of scientific knowledge. He argued that scientific fields undergo periodic "paradigm shifts" rather than solely progressing in a linear and continuous way, and that these paradigm shifts open up new approaches to understanding what scientists would never have considered valid before; and that the notion of scientific truth, at any given moment, cannot be established solely by objective criteria but is defined by a consensus of a scientific community. Competing paradigms are frequently incommensurable; that is, they are competing and irreconcilable accounts of reality. Thus, our comprehension of science can never rely wholly upon "objectivity" alone. Science must account for subjective perspectives as well, since all objective conclusions are ultimately founded upon the subjective conditioning/worldview of its researchers and participants. African Philosophy in applying this method must eschew any form of universal method but must mobilize the academic community in arriving at their basic theories rather than some personal, whimsical and relative idea of what African Philosophy should be.

To discover the core relation between rules, paradigms, and normal science, consider first how the historian isolates the particular models of commitment that can be described as accepted rules. Close historical investigation of a given field at a given time discloses a set of recurrent and quasi-standard illustrations of various theories in their conceptual, observational, and instrumental applications. The shared views and products of research remain the bible of a scientific community found in journals and books. These are the community's paradigms, revealed in its textbooks, lectures, and laboratory exercises. By an intending member or serving member studying them and by practicing with them, they learn their trade. Despite occasional ambiguities, the paradigms of a mature scientific community can be determined with relative ease. This method is very germane in the method suitable for African Philosophy. Set standards, rules of engagements and paradigms are agreed upon and adhered to by all members of an academic community such as that of the African Philosophy

The emergence of scientific revolutions and the growth of African Philosophy

What are scientific revolutions, and what is their function in scientific development? Much of the answer to these questions has been anticipated in earlier sections. In particular, the preceding discussion has indicated that scientific revolutions are here taken to be those non-cumulative developmental episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one. There is more to be said, however, and an essential part of it can be introduced by asking one further question. Why should a change of paradigm be called a revolution? In the face of the vast and essential differences between political and scientific development, what parallelism can justify the metaphor that finds revolutions in both? One aspect of the parallelism must already be apparent. Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the scientific community, which an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution.

Reconstructing African Philosophy with Imre Lakatos' Research Programmes

Imre Lakatos who was once a high ranking minister in the government of Hungary found the enterprise of science as a solace when politics became too hot to handle. After the Soviet crackdown in Hungary of 1957, Lakatos found his way to London where he allied himself with his fellow central European refugee, Karl Popper to forge a partnership that has made the views of Popper contending with those of Kuhn in the understanding of the methods of Science. Lakatos explicitly attacked Kuhn as making scientific beliefs subject to non-rational methods of mass persuasion, as fickle as matters of taste and style. Thus he sets out to build a theory of the rationality of the growth of scientific belief over time which remained true to Popper's falsificationist views but admitted the historical evidence that Kuhn had presented to show that scientists do not abandon theories when confronted by so-called "counter-instances." Closely looking at the contention, one thing is clear and it is the fact that there is a definitely demarcation between rational and irrational science and it is not everything that can be allowed as Science. It is also obvious that method is key in the growth of Science. As it goes for science, so it goes for African Philosophy as we adopt this argument fully.

Research Programmes and the growth of African Philosophy

Being an ally of Popper, Lakatos (2009) disagreed sharply with Kuhn and his idea of paradigm shift especially on the understanding that research communities abandon existing established traditions. The central analytical concept which Lakatos uses to replace Kuhn's "paradigms," therefore, is

designated as a "research programme." While the term "research program" is common in science, Lakatos gives this expression a very particular meaning in his philosophical proposition of the growth of scientific knowledge.. In the argument of Lakatos and in the explanation of what happens when scientists work in the communities, a research programme is essentially a sequence of theories and the application of these theories within a domain of scientific inquiries into different problems and challenges confronting the world. Individual successor theory according to Lakatos' estimation is held to be a kind of advance version over its predecessor theory. The move from one theory to its successor within a research programme, Lakatos categorises as a "problem shift." The question of the rationality of changing one's beliefs in science, or how scientific knowledge progresses over time, is thus transformed into the question of when a problem shift is progressive

Problem shifts may be "progressive" in two ways: theoretically or empirically. Theoretically, progressive problem shifts are in effect deliberate moves to new theories which enable members of a scientific community to predict and explain more than a former theory allowed. On the other hand, problem shift is empirically progressive if in addition to predicting new observable evidence, actual observation does indeed confirm this new prediction. In order for a research programme, as a whole, to be progressive, each problem shift must be at least theoretically progressive, and at least occasionally empirically progressive. In other words in a progressive programme, each move from an old theory to a new one must enable the users to explain and predict more, and at least sometimes these must be confirmed. If a programme fails to display this characteristic, it is no longer progressive but has become "degenerating." A rational scientist should stick with a progressive programme but abandon a degenerating programme. In our estimation, this is close to the paradigm shift in Kuhn and the opposition of Lakatos is actually weak.

The doctrine of Heuristics in African Philosophy

Just as we found in the doctrine of paradigms in Kuhn being shared conclusions and generalizations in different scientific communities working on specific areas of research, Lakatos expresses his idea in a different form but basically in similar situation. In designing new theories to replace old, Lakatos argues that the scientist in a research programme adheres to a constellation of beliefs which Lakatos calls a "heuristic". This heuristic includes both positive and negative aspects. These heuristics are guides to the kind of research a scientist can conduct to further the knowledge base of his community or research programme. A deviation from set agreements can take a scientist out of the focus of research directions.

The negative heuristic specifies certain claims of the research programme as not revisable: "tinkering" with these claims is not permitted as long as one adheres to the programme. They thus cordon off a "hard core" which cannot change from one theory to the next. Revising these beliefs is "off limits." This is Lakatos's analogue to Kuhn's contention that the normal scientist accepts a paradigm "dogmatically." A critical look at the ideas of Lakatos shows that they are not as violently different from those of Kuhn as Lakatos may want us to believe. In our conclusion, there is simply a very copious utilization of different nomenclature rather than drastic change of ideas or understanding of the processes of science. They are saying the same thing in different dictions and nuances. Their expressions further shows the method scientists employ in arriving at the truth, a veritable requirement of science

The positive heuristic on the other hand represents a body of beliefs which are allied to the hard core as well as suggestions regarding how these beliefs can be revised. These beliefs can be tinkered with; indeed the life of the research programme essentially consists of learning how to reshape these beliefs in the light of potentially refuting observational evidence so as to protect the "hard core" from being refuted. Thus they form a "protective belt" surrounding the hard core. These heuristics are the

ones that would enhance the effectiveness of the hard core and give the communities the necessary data to push their conclusions closer and closer to the truth and make their work more certain. A member of a community or as Lakatos describes, research programme, conduct experiments and analysis to throw more light on the agreed hard cores as a way of achieving success of their work.

As a research programme progresses, scientists involved would continue to refute or falsify the then accepted theory, in good falsificationist fashion. This is Lakatos's Popperian heritage. But when refuting evidence is encountered, according to the Lakatosian picture, the scientist will not consider the programme as "refuted." Instead he/she will begin to alter the assumptions of the "protective belt" in ways permitted or suggested by the positive heuristic, such that the "hard core" of the programme can be retained unscathed. As long as such moves enable scientists to predict more new phenomena (i.e. it is theoretically progressive), and at least some of those predictions get confirmed by observation, the programme is progressing and it is rational to pursue it. However, when modifications to the theory only protect the hard core from refutation, but do not predict new phenomena, and/or none of those new predictions get confirmed by observation, then the programme is degenerating and the rational scientist abandons it.

Unfortunately, critics are of the view that Lakatos is forced by the very historical evidence he seeks to use to illustrate his image of science to admit that a programme can go through a "bad patch" i.e., a rather long period in which no empirical progress is made. Historically, looking back on the development of a science, it might be easy enough to tell that a programme is beginning to degenerate at a certain point in time. But this is a matter of hindsight and thus of no use to determining rationality. The question to be asked at this point is what about the scientist in the programme itself at that historical moment? How can he/she tell if the programme is truly now beginning to degenerate or if perhaps it is only undergoing a rough period? In order to know whether it's rational to stick with the programme or switch to another different programme, which rejects the old "hard core," such a question must be answerable.

Conclusion

From the falsification, verification views of Popper to the scientific revolution of Kuhn and the research programme theory of Lakatos, we come face to face with the theory that all aspects of the scientific project is in the public domain and rather than the idea of herd or community Philosophy, the practice is to have shared thoughts, methods and processes in an academic community working on different aspects of knowledge. Science progresses in a certain manner as agreed by members of the scientific community. The above analysis has thrown more light on the scientific method as a method that has been established in which every scientific enterprise must adhere to. For Philosophy to make sense in the 21st century, the views of ancient philosophy can no longer be accepted as they lack rational explanation and empirical verification. African Philosophical must be a literature of discussions by Africans on universal issues that have impacts in Africa and African thought.

We can thus conclude that indeed African Philosophy can come alive and stand on the same podium with Western and Oriental philosophy as long as it is based on observation, experiments, analysis, etc. all linked to the scientific method. The quarrel on the existence or not of African Philosophy would be absolutely unnecessary when Philosophers in Africa depend less on the notion that African Philosophy can be distinct in method and content simply because they are Africans. The whole world is now linked with knowledge and science, making it possible for knowledge to be universal and useful to all peoples. In a contemporary world, the views of Tempels, Mbiti and Oruka cannot hold water and the idea of seeing the Philosophical/scientific method as Western imposition makes the discourse banal and nonsensical. Knowledge is universal, unchanging and permanent in its basic understanding and African Philosophers cannot reinvent the wheel or rewrite knowledge according

their whims and caprice. The Philosophical and scientific method hinged on rationality, explanation, empirical observation, induction, deduction etc. cannot be replaced by any other system. With these we can assert that African Philosophy can be reconstructed and made to fit into the universal body of knowledge accessible by all people from all worlds.

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