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**Paper Title: *The Logic and Epistemology of Life-Force
In African Philosophy***

**Chiedozie Okoro (Ph D)
Lecturer, Department of Philosophy
University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.**

The Logic and Epistemology of Life-Force in African Philosophy

We begin by stating that the task of “setting a new agenda for African Philosophy” is very much in tandem with Mudimbe’s clarion call for contemporary African scholars to embark on the journey of (re)discovering Africa from the rubrics of her past or what Kwasi Wiredu has branded “the conceptual decolonization of African philosophy”. In setting up a new agenda for African Philosophy contemporary African philosophers are thus challenged to forthwith begin to be original in their thoughts and stop inventing Africa through the eye of Europe or Asia. In a recent lecture entitled: *African Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernization* (Feb. 20, 2007). S. B. Oluwole informs us that the (University of) Lagos school of thought in its dogged defence and propagation of **Ancient African Philosophy** had been at the fore front of “setting a new agenda for African Philosophy”. The thing to note here is that the pioneering members of **Ancient African Metaphysical Purism** (the **Purist School** for short) such as D. E. Idoniboye, K. C. Anyanwu, C. S. Momoh and S. B. Oluwole are bent on digging up the thought systems of ancient Africans in their most possible unadulterated form with a view of subjecting them to the philosophical crucible. The common argument upheld by these philosophers is not that philosophy is culture bound or culture limited but that culture forms the springboard upon which every philosophy is propped up otherwise philosophy will cease to address the multidimensional existential problems of the world. This very latter point is reiterated by Hegel the German and Jose Ortega Y’ Gasset the Spaniard. Whereas for Ortega Y’ Gasset culture depicts “the vital systems of ideas” (1966, 38) in an epoch upon which philosophy is propped up, Hegel sees: “Every philosophy as belonging to its time and is biased by its limitations. The reason for this is because the philosopher is the son of his people, his world, he may put on airs as much as he pleases, he does not go beyond it” (Kaufmann, 1965, 286; quoted by Onyewuenyi, 1994, 93).

A cursory glance at world philosophical standards will immediately show that Black Africa is the only place where philosophy walks in limbo all because African philosophers are in complete disarray on how to proceed about developing consistent philosophical orientations that are comprehensive enough to tackle the multiple problems foisted on the continent by rampaging factors such as imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the globalization stuff. Elsewhere in Europe and Asia philosophy is either Euro-centered or Asian-centered, while philosophers of these two great traditions are complete devotees and patriots who staunchly defend and improve entrenched perspectives within their philosophical systems. Again, a second main problem is that it is only in Black Africa that scholarship is done in languages alien (e. g. English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and so on) to the various peoples and cultures that make up Black Africa, where upon the African indigenous languages are regarded as vernacular. A fundamental problem thus ensues here and this pertains to the following points: (a) if the notions of reality, truth and value must be captured in languages native to a people and (b) if these notions of reality, truth and value are necessary foundations for sustainable growth and development, the question thus arises if Africa’s growth and development is not being completely retarded?

The above questions are issues for a future debate. The reason for raising such questions for now is to show the dilemma in which the writer finds himself. A dilemma that borders on the fact that one has to distill a philosophical orientation from the thought systems of ones people in a foreign language (i. e. English). Worst still, ones dilemma is compounded by the fact that one is illiterate in ones own language (i. e. Igbo) and in the other African languages (Dogon, Yoruba, Edo and Akan) from which extractions were made to buttress the discourse on “the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy”. Therefore, the current exercise is one that depicts ones toddling path towards self-retrieval and it is in this light that we should understand the limitations of this essay. Another basic problem confronting

the writer is that the literatures available for research are very much deficient most of which are in the areas of ethnography and anthropology and are therefore not directly relevant to the task of a pure ontological delineation of the logic and epistemology of the life-force issue in African philosophy. To fill up this gap the writer had to work closely with a *Dibia Afa* (Igbo equivalent of an adept in traditional science and philosophy) by name Kalu Odim who is currently a final year student in the Department of Philosophy and is researching on “The Phenomenology of Sacrifice in Ifa Corpus”. As a specialist in the art and science of *Mgbaasi* (wizardry) he has deep knowledge of Igbo ontology and the ontological construct of the human individual among the Igbo, and how this could be used in enhancing the destiny of the individual. Thus most of the break through made in this essay about the ontological analysis of *Mmadu/Mmadi* (human being) as a necessary condition for enhancing the understanding of the nature of African metaphysics, epistemology and logic can be attributed to my open discourse with Kalu Odim.

This takes us to the goal of this essay which is that of doing a pure ontological exposition of the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy. It is not a matter of convenience but of consistency that any system of logic or epistemology that is profound must be pivoted upon a sound metaphysical (ontological) foundation. Hence, it is quite normal that the delineation of the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy should begin upon a metaphysical note. In essence, our approach in this essay shall be purely ontological or simply transcendental.

The Principle of Life-Force in African Philosophy

Any discourse on the principle of life-force in African philosophy is strictly speaking metaphysical. Now metaphysics as ontology has variously been defined as the “the theory of Being”, “the beyondness of Being”, “the science of beyondness” or “the science of transcendence”. If we grant that metaphysics is a pure art and science of transcendence (beyondness), it means that we should also grant the fact that the practice of metaphysics will be absolutely impossible without the human power of thought to contemplate ideas with which the physical world is organized. Two senses of metaphysics are manifest in the foregoing statement. The first concerns the *a priori* subjective source of metaphysics which deals with the analysis of ontological powers of humans to rationalize, contemplate, cognize and transcend. The second refers to the application of the ontological powers of humans to the study and configuration of entities lying out there in the world. Yet, there is a third meaning of metaphysics as the pure processing of the Being which is regarded as the ground of all beings or the being of beings. The first rendition of metaphysics is Kantian and it regards man as the *logos* of Being or what Heidegger prefers to call Daseinanalytic. The second rendition of metaphysics is Aristotelian and it deals with metaphysics as the anthropological study of objective reality (i. e. phenomena). The third rendition is Heideggerian and it sees metaphysics as pure ontology dealing with “the inquiry into the being of beings” (King, 1964, 1). The ground of beings is no other than Being itself which can be regarded as the ground that makes the interplay between logos and phenomena for purpose of world transformation possible. . In “The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics”, Heidegger refers to Being as “the light that gives sight to metaphysics or the light from which metaphysics derives its sight” (see Hartman, 1967, 433). Accordingly, Heidegger writes:

The truth of Being may thus be called the ground in which metaphysics, as the root of the tree of philosophy, is kept and from which it is nourished (Hartman, 433).

The three senses of metaphysics outlined above are of importance to this essay in that in the process of our discourse we shall frequently refer to African notions on reality and Being. Nevertheless, since the focus of this essay centers on the ontological delineation of the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy, we adopt as our operating standard the Kantian notion of metaphysics as dealing with the pure analysis of how finite pure reason, by its transcendent categories contemplates ideas and

concepts for world transformation. Thus, in the words of Kant, insofar as metaphysics is the transcendental science of Being, it means that its origin must always derive from the *a priori* faculties of human consciousness.

As it concerns the source of metaphysical cognition, its very concept implies that they cannot be empirical. Its principles (i.e. propositions and concepts) must never be derived from experience. It must not be physical but metaphysical, that is, knowledge lying beyond experience. It can therefore have for its basis neither external experience, which is the source of physics proper, nor internal, which is the basis of empirical psychology. It is therefore *a priori* cognition, coming from pure understanding and pure reason (1983, 107).

In *The Mind of Africa*, W. E. Abraham reiterates the above assertion of Kant when he explains thus:

According to the Akan's metaphysical view, the world is rationalist philosophical. Relations between ideas take on the body and flesh in the relations between things in nature. According to such a view, therefore, the true metaphysics must be a deductive system. And morality, politics, medicine are all made to flow from metaphysics (1962, 46 – 47).

We must however note that contrary to Kant's metaphysics in which a duality, an exclusivity exists between phenomena and noumena such that the human mind cannot transcend phenomena nor penetrate noumena, in the African thought system noumena (as non-being) and phenomena (as being) are not only equi-primordial but inclusively interpenetrate. It is in the latter light that W. E. Abraham further states as follows:

Though the world was metaphysical to the Akan mind, not all problems admitted of metaphysical solutions (p. 48).

It would appear then that the principle of life-force in African philosophy operates on the simultaneity of spiritual transcendentalism and spiritual realism. It is to the analysis of this that we now turn.

The Metaphysics of Life-Force in African Philosophy

Marx Scheler in his “sociology of knowledge” tries to show that human conceptions of reality and knowledge differ from society to society. Making reference to Europe and Asia, Marx Scheler succinctly shows that both continents have pursued the task of knowledge acquisition from different directions. Thus he says:

Europe was going from matter to the soul, Asia from the soul to matter. Therefore, the stages of evolution must be fundamentally different in the two cases – until the point is reached where they meet in a cultural synthesis which is already underway (Mannheim, 1959, 16 – 17; quoted by Onwuejeogwu, 1997, 84).

Marx Scheler did so well in identifying the conceptual and cultural differences between Europe and Asia. He however, could not see that the cultural synthesis he seeks for between Europe and Asia is exactly what African thought system is all about. Pointedly stated, the essential characteristics of any typically African thought system (be it in the area of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic or any other body of knowledge) is to establish a symbiosis, harmony or balance in the midst of the duality and diversity in the world. This explains why traditional Africans neither dichotomized reality nor created a hiatus between the epistemic subject and the epistemic object. Innocent Chilaka Onyewuenyi confirms this point in his book entitled *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism*. Narrating his journey towards self-rediscovery, he tells the story of how he was introduced into the study of African philosophy by Rev. John E. Brooks, S. J., who emphatically describes African philosophy as the “Philosophy of Harmony” (1994, 27).

Granted that the distinguishing feature of African thought system is that it strikes a balance between spirit (mind) and matter, how then is this balance created or captured? Traditionally, Africans do not see the world as a pure rational abstraction or as mere appearances; they simply reproduce reality in the life-world. And what exactly is this life-world all about? Schutz renders an anthropological definition of life-world as follows:

Man's fundamental and paramount reality ... that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense (1974, 3 – 4; quoted by Onwuejeogwu, 1997, 84)

Angulu Onwuejeogwu who makes reference to Schutz explains that Schutz sees “nature and culture as components of knowledge of the life-world and ‘meaning strata’ as an important factor in transforming nature into culture” (1997, 84). Hence Schutz further argues that:

The everyday reality of the life-world includes, therefore, not only the ‘nature’ experienced by me but also the social (and therefore the cultural) world in which I find myself; the life-world is not created out of the merely material objects and events which I encounter in my environment certainly there are together one component of my surrounding world; nevertheless, there also belong to this all the meaning-strata which transforms natural things into cultural objects, human bodies into fellow-man, and the movements of fellow-man into acts, gestures and communications (1974, 5; quoted by Onwuejeogwu, 1997, 84).

As we can see Schutz’s definition of the life-world is purely anthropological and is therefore merely preliminary to the purpose of this essay. Since our focus is ontological our definition of the life-world shall be purely transcendental. We define the life-world as man’s native transcendental capacity and ability to effectively and pragmatically synchronize the objective world with subjective understanding. It is the imaginative visioning of the world about us imaged in symbolic forms. In such a symbolic representation of the world things are not compartmentalized. On the contrary, in the universe of the life-forces things are inclusively interconnected and interpenetrating. This explains the reason why the African cosmos is said to operate on the tripod or what is otherwise referred to as the tripological symbolization and representation of the universe. Man and society are considered to be of tripartite composition. The “cosmic order” as a living entity is replicated in the “social order” which in turn is replicated in the “self order” and vice versa. The self order in turn consists of the body, mind and spirit. Wisdom consists in the harmonization of this tripartite composition of man and his society, usually done in a hierarchicized order with the singular purpose of unifying the horizontal and vertical factors in man and in the society. The tripological synergy that constitutes the essential attribute of the African cosmos is often represented with the aid of an equilateral triangle. To the extreme right of the equilateral triangle we place spirit (or idealism, capitalism, theism and so on) and to the extreme left we place matter (or materialism, socialism, atheism and so on). Harmony is accomplished by symbolically moving to the center which should allow for a perpendicular upward thrust to the apex of the equilateral triangle to make for a balance or unity.

The question that follows concerns what structure of reality or what principle of reality makes possible this tripological synergy or balance? This latter question takes us to the issue of dualism in African metaphysics which in the logical analysis of the principle of life-force in African philosophy manifests as the binary system. Dualism in African thought system is not the same as the principle of duality. Whereas duality allows for the bifurcation of things into compartments, dualism on the other hand refers to the equi-primordially (i. e. binary fusion) of the entities that comprise nature which occur in a pair. Thus for the traditional African, Being and non- Being, mind and matter, are equi-primordially predisposed. However, of two things that are equi-primordial, one has primacy over the other. In the light of this, the Igbo say “*The di abua ofu ka ibeya*”. Granted then that spirit and matter are equi-

primordial, spirit as the animating and organizing principle has primacy over matter, thereby giving preference to spirit, thought or mind as the “creative power”, “the principle of order or form”, the “artificer” and “potter” (James, 1959, 140). For the Igbo (as it is for every other African people) the primacy placed on spirit does not imply the denial of the existence of matter, it simply means that every material thing is endowed with spirit force which can be likened to soul, mind, psyche, vital force or life force. C. S. Momoh sheds more light on this.

The African conception is one of spiritual primacy not exclusivity nor dualism. For any physical thing, active or inert, dead or alive, the African conception is that it is primarily spirit or spiritual, not that it is absolutely and exclusively spirit or spiritual. The doctrine of spiritual primacy makes allowance for matter or the physical ... In other words the African is more interested in the spirit, mind, soul, or vital and psychic force in a tuber of yam, a tree or a flower (2000, 8).

The above view is strongly upheld by D. E. Idoniboye who emphatically states thus;

The ontology of any distinctively African world-view is replete with spirit, spirit is the animating, sustaining creative life-force of the universe. Spirit is real. It is as real as matter. Its reality is primordial and it is if not superior at least as primitive as that of matter. In its pure state it is unembodied (1973, 83).

Now, since it is obvious that emphasis on life-force or vital-force does not imply the denial of the physical or material world it follows that the African thought system operates the dualism or simultaneity of spiritual transcendentalism and spiritual realism. Nevertheless, insofar as life-force is primary and paramount to matter and if this entails the acknowledgement of the permeating and pervading strength of life-force, it means that the African cosmos is one of plenum of forces. Needless to say, in the universe of forces, things magically transform and transmute through the symbolic interaction of elements. And because it is spirit that necessitates the elemental symbolic interaction and alteration of things, it means that spirit has the power to interpenetrate and interconnect all things. It is for the foregoing reason that the operating principle of African metaphysics is variously known as “spiritual primacism” or the principle of the “interpenetrability of soul”, which we henceforth label the metaphysics of interfusion. How this metaphysics of interfusion is the background to the understanding of the epistemology of life force in African philosophy happens to be our next focus.

The Epistemology of Life-Force in African Philosophy

The epistemology of life-force in African Philosophy derives from the principle of metaphysical interfusion. It is a spiritualist kind of epistemology that operates the simultaneity of transcendentalism and realism. In such epistemological system the principles of rationalism, empiricism, idealism and materialism are all holistically interwoven, interconnected and interpenetrating. It is for this reason that we refer to the epistemology of life-force as being simply spiritually transcendental. This transcendental nature of the epistemology of life-force derives from the traditional conception of *Mmadu/Mmadi* (Yoruba *eniyan*). Within the confine of traditional African thought system *mmadu* is conceived to be essentially transcendental, metaphysical, ontological or simply spiritual. D. E. Idoniboye amplifies this point when he states thus;

Spirit is the animating, sustaining, creative life-force of the universe. It is what gives anything its individuality. In human bodies it becomes the *mind* or *soul* so that the individual mind or soul shares in the collective mind-or-soul-stuff of the universe (Idoniboye, 83).

From the above we can see the duality of *mmadu* as consisting of the physical body (the Igbo *abu* or *aru* or the Yoruba *ara*) and the immaterial self as pure consciousness (the Igbo *mmuo mmadu* or the Yoruba

emi). *Mmuo mmadu* or *emi* depicts man as pure spirit or pure consciousness or simply the vital-force or causative agent that animates man with awareness or consciousness. This point is reiterated by Bolaji Idowu and Adegboyega Orangun. According to Bolaji Idowu “*emi*, ‘invisible and intangible’, is the source of life and is associated (though not identified) with the breath, it is for the Yoruba, a human spiritual component, but it should be regarded as the vital-force or basic life principle” (quoted by Barry Hallen, 2000, 296). Adegboyega Orangun on the other hand regards *emi* as the: “Spiritual element in the human personality. It is immaterial and invisible, it is the vital-force that gives life to the body, its presence in or absence from the body depicts life or death respectively” (1998, 43).

From the above we notice at a glance the ontological backgrounders to a pure transcendental epistemological discourse. This concerns the duality of *mmadu* as physical body and as pure consciousness. Physicality depicts *mmadu* as an immanent finite being with fallible tendencies while pure consciousness depicts *mmadu* as a transcendent being with the infinite rational capacity to create, invent and discover, thereby making *mmadu* an ontological being with the propensity to transcend or rise beyond a given situation. Fundamentally speaking the whole talk about transcendence and immanence concerns which faculty of the mind institutes both “transcendental knowledge” (i. e. Ontological Transcendence) and “Objectivity”. The question then arises about how human consciousness could be both transcendent (showing infinitude and autonomy) and immanent (showing finitude and dependence) at the same time? Finitude shows the reliance of imagination, understanding and pure reason on sensibility (i.e. sense data of the senses). On the other hand the transcendent nature of consciousness shows the voluntary or spontaneous nature of the mind (as reflected in the higher faculties of the mind) which portrays consciousness as autonomous. Expressed in existential parlance, human creativity terminates at the point of death which signifies finitude. Yet, infinitely speaking, human consciousness has an endless capacity for invention, discovery and creativity.

Within the thought system of the epistemology of life-force therefore, consciousness is holistic, that is to say, it comprises the sum-total activity of the human soul. Consciousness consists of the “external conditions (i.e. the world as encounter with objects of experience and other physical conditions of human consciousness such as; physiological, chemical and neurological structures of the body; as well as general cultural and social conditions) of consciousness, and the internal conditions intrinsic to consciousness which relate reciprocally to consciousness as parts to whole, in which elements intrinsic to consciousness are lively structures through which one is aware of things” (Scott, 1972, 626). In the latter sense, consciousness is said to be presentational or representational by which we mean that “something is presented to or appears in a conscious state, in which case, consciousness is absolute in the sense that nothing occurs for consciousness that is not in some determinable sense presented by consciousness” (p. 627).

From both physiological and neurological perspectives, *abu* or *aru* consists of the five senses and this include *anya* (eyes) for *ifuzo* (sight), *nti* (ears) for *inuibe* (hearing), *imi* (nose) for *inuinsi* (smell), *ire* (tongue) for *inuto* (taste) and the *abu nile* (the whole body system) for *mmetuta* (touch or feeling). *Mmetuta* further consists of *mmetuta abu* (feeling of solidity or coming into encounter with conditions such as heat or cold of liquid or of gas) and *mmetuta obi* (emotional feeling). The physical body encounter with the environment is then coordinated by *akwara* (nerves) through *okpukpu azu* (spinal cord) to the *uburu* (brain) where upon the memory (*apauche*) plays its basic functions of storing (*ndokwa*), remembrance (*ncheta*) and association (*nchikota*). The foregoing can be described as the physical (body or external) condition for sense perception (i.e. experience). But this sense perception or sense experience is not possible without the pre-experiential function of *mmuo mmadu* (vital-force) which duty it is to animate the body with consciousness. From a transcendental point of view therefore, *mmuo mmadu* provides the pre-

experiential or *a priori* condition for consciousness in the first place and for knowledge formation and knowledge acquisition.

We are now left with the analysis of the human subjectivity or the internal conditions of consciousness. It is here that we go back to the delineation of the ontological or transcendental constitution of the human personality. In Igbo ontology *mmadu* as a transcendental entity is a tripartite composite of *chi* [Yoruba *ori*, Bini and Ishan *ebi*, Urhobo *emena*, Ijaw *tamuno*, Tallensi of northern Ghana *moyin* and Akan *okra* (see Matthew Omijeh & Kofi Appiah-Kubi, 1998, 259 & 265)], *eke* and *agwu* (Yoruba *esu*). As the determiner of one's destiny, *chi* is the source of human ontological transcendence otherwise known as the human prowess of existentiality. In Yoruba ontology *ori-inu* will most appropriately capture the human prowess of existentiality. Bolaji Idowu describes *ori (ori-inu)* as “the inner person, the soul personality” (Hallen, 2000, 296). Adegboyega Orangun on his part describes *ori* as “the essence of personality, personal ego and the guardian angel which rules, guides and controls the activities of man” (1998, 43). In “The Concept of Guardian Angel in Bini Religion”, Matthew Omijeh variously describes *ebi* (Igbo *chi* or Yoruba *ori*) as “a person's ‘second half’, his ‘invisible half’, his ‘super ego’, his ‘major ego’, his ‘over self’, his ‘other self’, his ‘transcendental self’, ‘spiritual companion’, ‘guardian angel’ ‘divine spark’ and son on” (1998, 265). Matthew Omijeh's definitions of *ebi* are both anthropological and ontological. Since we are preoccupied with the transcendental exposition of the epistemology of life-force in African philosophy, we extract from Omijeh's definitions those terms that most appropriately capture the transcendental essence of *mmadu*. The terms that are of preference to us here include “super ego”, “major ego” and “transcendental self”. These terms in unison depict *chi* as the human (finite) pure reason or the pure ego which as the faculty of pure reason possesses the power of transcendence or existentiality to levitate man beyond the physical to the metaphysical realm, from the given to the non-given, from that which is actual to that which is possible, thereby making *mmadu* a being of possibilities, a being of boundless potentialities. *Chi* therefore represents man's futurisric essence which is why it is used to depict man's destiny. Anyone who must strive to surpass the vicissitudes of life has no choice but to call upon the exploits of one's transcendent *chi*. It is in this sense that the Igbo proclaim the transcendentality of *chi* as follows: *onye kwe chi ya ekwe*, meaning that “if one affirms one's *chi* will affirm”. Hence *chi* as one's transcendent essence is the fountain of one's will to power.

Eke is the fulfilled path, the determined path or yesterday, that is, dealing with the past which we can do little or nothing about. In existentialist term *eke* would refer to human facticity or simply the given. *Agwu* refers to human fallenness which depicts man as an emotional sentient weak entity who has the tendency to backslid, loose focus, to be fallen or become entirely prostrate. Again we notice the human conflictual essence come into play. As a sentient being, *mmadu* is not different from the animals over which he rules and should one decide to recriminate about the past one will definitely fail to utilize one's *chi* possibilities. To lead life at the levels of *eke* and *agwu* is to lead life at its ebb and the ebbing of life amounts simply to self abandonment, to forfeiture. The path to ontological and epistemological realism is the way of *chi*.

Now we have seen that *abu* is the vehicle of perception, experience or sensibility. We have also seen that *chi* is the faculty of reason (i.e. ratio) which duty is to bring about illumination through intellectualization. Therefore, *mmadu* presented as a duality is capable of two principal types of concepts and these are: empirical concepts (as derived immanently from sensibility) and transcendent concepts (as derived from transcendent reason). The question that follows is this: How is it possible to overcome this duality in man and transcend towards holism? It is here that we enter into the analysis of the third main faculty of the mind known as *nlepu* (i.e. the imagination). *Nlepu* encapsulates the power to vision things ahead or to be able to see things up front. On the one hand therefore, *nlepu* entails forethought, projection or the visioning of things in trance. On the other hand, *nlepu* combines both sight (depicting immanence) and thought (depicting transcendence) to further amplify *olileanya* (i.e. expectation). Obvious in the foregoing

analysis is the fact that *nlepu* combines in it the powers of vision and synthesis. By its power of visioning *nlepu* as the faculty of imagination creates a trance situation through which process things are imaged in a pictorial or symbolic form. The ability to recall distant events or objects in the mind's eye as if these events or objects are present right before us is a trance creation by the imagination. Imaginative visioning is no other than depth meditation that results into the clear and lucid presentation of issues in such a way that both physical and mental sights are symbolically harmonized. Such deep insights into things have a way of penetrating into the core of things, to unveil or reveal their innermost structure, which of necessity yields deep understanding (i.e. what Leibniz calls apperception). In Memphite philosophy for instance, *nous* (mind) is attributed with the qualities of the imagination thus:

God Ausar (Greek Osiris) represented in all the Egyptian temples by the symbol of an *Open Eye*, which indicated not only sight that transcends time and space, but also the omniscience of God, as the *Great Mind* which created and directs the universe (James, 1988, 90).

Consequently, the imagination is symbolically resented as the *naked winged eye* (i.e. Egyptian *Heru* or Greek *Horus*) that has the ability to traverse all time and all space without hindrance.

Furthermore, by its function and power of synthesis the imagination operates the law of simultaneity such that by its mediating, integrative and symbiotic functioning the imagination becomes the intermediate way linking thought to sensibility and vice versa, in a way that makes thought and sensibility interdependent. This way transcendent ideas and concepts are made to teleguide the functioning of sensibility so that the raw sensory data of sensibility gather physical sight and inversely the raw sensory data of sensibility go through processing or purification until they become imaged to trigger off visioning, which in turn sparks up illumination through intellectualization. It is in this sense that Immanuel Kant states as follows:

Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuition without concepts are blind (1970, 93).

Beyond its functions of symbiosis and visioning therefore, the imagination is in actual fact the faculty of depth and trance, making it not just the faculty of production or productivity but also the harmonizer of knowledge as pure consciousness (as depicted by *mmuo mmadu*, that is, the human spirit or vital-force as pure consciousness) and knowledge as pure perception (as depicted by *abu mmadu*, that is, the human physical body as representing consciousness at the perceptual level). This way, the duality of human consciousness and the duality of knowledge are transformed into pure holism thereby providing human cognition or knowledge with depth and in turn making understanding a pure holistic and transcendental activity. It is by imaginative visioning that we are able to pierce into the *kpim* or *core* (see *Father Kpim Philosophy and Theology of Pantaleon Iroegbu*, 2005) of things and symbolically create interpenetrating links among the things of the world. Kenneth C. Anyanwu succinctly captures the African mode of cognition in the following words:

When the African looks at a tree within the assumptions of his culture, he sees and imagines a life-force interacting with another life-force. He sees the colour of the object (tree), feels its beauty, imagines the life-force in it, and intuitively grasps the interrelationships between the hierarchies of life-forces. If he did not do this, he would not have concluded that spirit exists in the world. He does not see spirit with his eyes nor is it a rationally and theoretically postulated concept like atoms and electrons (Anyanwu, 1981, 95).

We notice immediately the holistic and transcendental nature of human subjectivity that enables *akonuche* (wisdom and understanding). In essence, the holistic and transcendental nature of human subjectivity embodies the totality of *akonuche*. This is to say that *ako* (wisdom) and *uche* (understanding) are intricately

webbed together since the separation of the two will render *akonuche* spurious. *Ako* separated from *uche* will become derogatory since it will immediately connote cleverness or craftiness. *Uche* separated from *ako* will become redundant since it will merely refer to spurious or purposeless understanding. This means that *ako* (wisdom) cannot be separated from *uche* (understanding). What this means is that the processes of knowledge acquisition (i.e. *omumu* – learning and *mmuta* – education) should be such that fires one's imaginative capacity from the beginning so that the individual can acquire deep, functional, pragmatic and practical knowledge (*amamibe*) about things. In other words, *amamibe* as knowledge is worthless if it lacks depth, not functional, not pragmatic and not practically applicable. Hence, the Igbo say “*amamibe bu oke obia*”, meaning that knowledge is a boundless forest, it also shows the mystery of knowledge which in turn manifest as understanding. The point being made here is that for the African, knowledge formation is a pure symbiotic unity or homogeneity that follows an imaginative process. It is through this aesthetical or mystical imaginative process that transcendence is instituted and through this transcendental objectivity we come to gain knowledge of the world. Consequently, I. C. Onyewuenyi defines African concept of knowledge (wisdom) as “how deeply one understands the nature of forces and of their interaction” (1978, 250-51). Onyewuenyi substantiates his point by quoting Placid Tempels who states that: “True wisdom lies in ontological knowledge; it is the intelligence of forces, of their hierarchy, their cohesion and their interaction” (p. 250). This exactly is what imaginative or symbolismic knowledge entails, that is to say, the ability to create a fusion or balance between the ideal and the real.

To achieve the task of symbolismic symbiosis, the human imagination has to perform the act of *ntule*. *Ntule* is a tri-functional process that embodies introspection, retrospection and projection. By the tri-functional process of *ntule* the human imagination actualizes its prowess of synthesis, visioning, depth and trance all of which make cognition holistic, transcendental and realistic. This means that the imagination is the seat and the fountain of all human invention, creativity and the act of discovery. Hence, in Igbo ontology, the imagination is the hob upon which the disciplines of *ebia* and *mgbaasi* or *tusiasia* rotate and revolve. *Ebia* encapsulates all the arts and sciences of the specialized or professional *dibias*. The *dibia* is a specialist on some particular kind of art or science. Hence, there is the *dibia afa* (specialist in the science and art of divination), just as there are other *dibias* whose specialty include; smelting, immunology, medicine, technology, agriculture, arts and craft and so on. *Mgbaasi* or *tusiasia* on the other hand, is at a higher level than *ebia*, requiring depth and technicality. *Mgbaasi* or *tusiasia* is the process of technical interpretation through which revelation or revealing (i.e. unveiling) happens. *Mgbaasi* or *tusiasia* is therefore the realm of philosophy and of the philosopher or the very act of philosophizing. The distinction between *ebia* and *mgbaasi* or *tusiasia* marks the demarcation between the specialized sciences as regional philosophies or anthropologies (i.e. *metaphysica specialis*) and philosophy as ontology proper (i.e. *metaphysica generalis*), a demarcation that makes philosophy the infrastructure, the ground and apex, the parent and queen of all the other sciences.

It is by the combination of the principles of *ebia* and *mgbaasi* that the *dibia afa* is able to act as the medium or intermediary between the transcendental world of forms (i.e. what Angulu Onwuejogwu calls the ‘finite province’) and the world of everyday reality for his clients and by so doing he is able to institute balance and cohesion in the society. Commenting on this Onwuejogwu states as follows:

I describe the *afa* predictor as a chief participant in the social construction of reality. He is an empiricist as well as an idealist. He sojourns, by means of sign system and symbols of *afa*, between the common-sense world of reality and the reality of finite province. He is not an exploiter for he does not control any means of production (in the economy of the society), but he belongs first to the world of everyday life and secondly to a group that turns away from the reality of everyday life seeking clues in the finite provinces of meaning to illuminate and enrich the meanings of everyday life (1997, 86).

In dealing with his clients the *dibia afa* relies on the use of his imagination to symbolically create a harmony in the psyche of his client and he does this through a symbiotic simulation of the essences of the supersensible world and the stark realities of the everyday world so that his client can overcome anxiety and fear. In the case of a very severe and strange problem, the *dibia afa* takes *ekoro* and *ajuebe* leaves (both symbols of *ebia*) ties them together and puts the bundle under his pillow over night to fire his imagination into a trance where upon vision is created of how and where solution is to be obtained. Again, in the *ogbanje* (a split personality behaviour or one whose consciousness is always influenced or encroached upon by a past consciousness) case, the *dibia afa* through a process of incantation places the *ogbanje* into hypnosis, in this state of somnambulistic trance, the *ogbanje* is connected to his/her past and is made to identify his/her *iyinwa* (i.e. physical symbol of the encroaching consciousness). Upon identification, the *iyinwa* is made to be consumed in flames at the instance of which the *ogbanje* wakes up from trance/hypnotic situation a free person. What this means is that the split personality problem is purely at the state of imagination and such an individual cannot be said to be in full control of his/her cognitive powers. Therefore, within the realm of the epistemology of life-force, cognition is at once a pure holistic process that involves the representation and unification of degrees of experiences in one consciousness, made possible by the productive and unifying power of the transcendental imagination.

We shall now proceed to the delineation of the logical structure and process of the principle of life-force in African philosophy.

The Logic of Life-Force in African Philosophy

Generally, logic creates formal structures for making thinking methodical and organized through a set of rules or principles that provide strict guidance for thought. This means that logic is the tool for making reasoning or thought straight, rigorous and critical. It implies then that any system of thought that must follow an organized pattern should of necessity be anchored on one form of logic or another. The life-force principle in African philosophy is embedded in the divination process (*igba afa*) of the *afa* (Yoruba *ifa*) system. According to Angulu Onwuejeogwu “*afa* is not a language but it is a specialized communication sign system which generates symbolically, knowledge related to ‘past’ and ‘present’, employed in predicting future actions” (1997, 87). He further states that “*afa* is like a form of symbolic logic” (p. 65). *Afa* is used as a divination process by the *dibia afa* (Yoruba *babalawo*) “as a sign system to transmit meaning from the finite province to the world of everyday life, these signs are decoded into everyday common language to generate symbolic experiences and knowledge which determine social action in the world of everyday life” (p. 86).

From the above, we immediately see the logical system of symbolism behind the spiritual and transcendental kinds of metaphysics and epistemology of the African and how these spiritual transcendentalist metaphysics and epistemology are in turn fused into the logic of symbolism, accomplished through the process of *igba afa* or *afa* divination. Here we notice vivid and magnetic imagination at work to achieve balance, harmony or a mean between two extremes. Again, we notice at once that imaginative representation of the world in terms of symbolisms is purely mental or ideological but never physical. It is for this reason that Bonachristus refers to the logic of life-force as the “African Symbolismic Logic” that substantiates “African Symbolismic Philosophy”. He explains his preference for the term “symbolismic” to the term “symbol” or “symbolic” as follows:

Since the universe of African understanding and meaning of reality is invisible, ideological or non-material, the adjective “symbolismic” should be preferred to “symbolic”; because, even though if the terms “symbol” (symbolic) and “symbolism” (symbolismic) overlap in being ideological or non-material in relation of the qualities of existence, “symbol”, unlike “symbolism” does not exactly and always represent

ideological or non-material relation. “Symbol” can be material or non-material, but “symbolism” is always ideological or non-material (2003a, 7).

For the purpose of convenience, in this essay, we have used the terms “symbol”, “symbolic”, “symbolism” and “symbolismic” to mean the transcendental imaginative visualization or representation of the world in the mind’s eye and the purpose of such manner of representation is to achieve harmony and cohesion among the duality and diversity in the world. This latter submission is captured by Bonachristus thus;

African symbolismic logic is the science and method of the symbolismic deposition of the quality and relation of existence by the symbolismic order and category of the symbol of reality, knowledge and consciousness, the symbolism of word, truth and thought, and the symbolismic expression of language, meaning and understanding. So, African symbolismic logic is the science of the quality of existence and the method of the relation of existence. It is the science and method of the quality and relation of existence (2003b, 5).

But how exactly does this logic of life-force or logic of symbolism proceed? It proceeds by the actual process of *igba afa* (divination) which involves the throwing of the *afa* chaplets (usually in pairs) that represents a pure process of investigation or inquiry. The pair nature of the *afa* chaplets is meant to capture the duality and diversity of things in the world. “One part of the *afa* chaplets is concave side up, convex side down and is referred to as *Obi* or *Ogbi* [i.e. Open] the other part of the *afa* chaplets is convex side up and concave side down and is referred to as *Aknu* [i.e. Closed]” (Onwuejeogwu, 45; Bonachristus, 2003c, front page). The continuous throw of these *afa* chaplets yields what is called scale of modulations or what Bonachristus prefers to call “*scala modulationis* which include; the scale of symbol, the scale of symbolism, the scale of symbolismic expression and the scale of symbolismic deposition” (2003a, 6; 2003b, 2). Bonachristus believes that in these four scales or stairways can be found the categories of African logic as follows: The scale or category of symbol is about the order (i.e. structural organization) of reality, knowledge and consciousness such that through the ascribing of form into things reality and consciousness are made to harmonize in the universe of knowledge. The scale or category of symbolism is about the order (i.e. structural organization) of word, truth and thought so that through contemplation ideas (as products of thought) are ascribed to things. In other words, thought fashions the ideas that determine the attribute of word and truth. Thus, every symbolism involves mediation, a mediation of truth by word and thought. The scale or category of symbolismic expression describes the structure or order by which language and meaning are harmonized to instruct depth (*omimi*) or understanding through symbolic representation. Here, symbolism becomes a tool for creating a balanced or integrated view of reality, of appealing to experience and the meaning that underlies experience so that vivid and lucid images (i.e. mass significations) of things are created in such a way that they arouse speech before thought. Lastly, the scale or category of symbolismic deposition provides the model or order by which reason becomes productive (either immediately or mediately or imaginatively) of the inferential process by which premises are posited and conclusion drawn from the premises (2003b, 2 – 4).

Evident in the above is the point that within the African thought system, the universe of life-force abhors the rules of abstract logic (i.e. logic that presents *logos* simply as ratio) which visions the world as mutating on a linear scale with a teleos or end in view. In the universe of life-force, forces do not obey the strict laws of thought, forces do not obey the dialectical triad of linear progression, rather, forces move on a circuitous progression, in the fashion of concentric circles of dialectics, which explains why imaginative visioning becomes the way for attaining harmony, unity, balance, homogeneity and cohesion in such a universe. Thus, by balancing existence on the four pillars of symbolic representations viz: symbols, symbolism, symbolismic expression and symbolismic deposition, holism becomes the

watchword that qualifies and governs the universe of forces such that reality, knowledge, consciousness, word, truth, thought, language, meaning and understanding are all imaginatively and symbolically modeled and deposited in complete and comprehensive unity. In the words of K.C. Anyanwu the African universe “cannot condone regimentations because there is a continuous interplay, intermingling and interdependence between spirit [forces] and the material world” (1981, 87). The point here is that isolated cases do not exist in the universe of forces; a foundation is propped up by another and another by another and so on. Analyzing the nature of African cosmos, Chieke Ifemesia, states that: “In the (Igbo) cosmology, nothing is absolute. Everything, everybody, however apparently independent, depends upon something else. Interdependence, exhibited now as duality or reciprocity, now as ambivalence or complementarities, has always been the fundamental Principle of the [Igbo] philosophy of life” (1979, 67&68). Consequently, in the universe of forces things interfuse and in such a universe we do not speak of disunity or dissociation, but of association, co-existence and co-operation. We do not speak of isolated activities, but of symbiosis. In the universe of holism, things are not compartmentalized, departmentalized and fragmented. Based on this, K.C. Anyanwu drew the following submissions:

- (i) Since there are no isolated life forces in the universe, there can be no isolated individual person
- (ii) Society is the manifestation of the order of the universe.
- (iii) All relationships between all the life forces ought to be strengthened and not weakened.
- (iv) There is no dissociation of sensibility from rationality in the African culture. The duality of experience should not harden into dualism. Politics therefore, should not be discussed as if it were separated from religion or religion as if it were separated from all practical activities (1983, 53-54).

Considering the circuitous or cyclical nature of the universe of forces we cannot conceive the world as having a beginning or an end in time since as an organic entity it has the capacity for self-regeneration and self-sustenance.

Still on the question of procedure, *igba afa* or divination as a pure process of investigation operates on three principal principles and these are the rules of deduction, induction and hermeneutics. We now turn to the delineation of how these rules or principles of thought function within the universe of life-forces.

(a) The Deductive Procedure: Holism aptly captures the deductive procedure in African thought system. Holism in this instance involves the integration or harmonization of forces along vertical and horizontal lines. The integration of forces along vertical and horizontal lines is based on the assumption that things in the universe are equi-primordially inter-disposed. Nevertheless, of two things that are equi-primordially inter-disposed, one exercises primacy over the other. This is succinctly represented by the Igbo saying: “*Ibe di abua ofu ka ibeya*”, showing the prioritization or the order of things in the universe. Vertical integration shows the order by which things or forces in the universe are hierarchicized. By this process of vertical integration, the cosmos is considered one organic whole in which higher forces affect lower forces in a hierarchical order. Thus, in a vertical integration the components of forces that make up the entire cosmos, God as the most supreme force, divinities, ancestors, man, animals, vegetation and minerals in that respective order hierarchically exert influence on one another. On a horizontal scale, integration involves the effective coordination of the various systems that make up the cosmos and the human society into a circuitous whole thereby reflecting a common purpose, teleos or cohesion in the universe and in the society. For instance, the entire universe is a perfectly coordinated system of stars (suns), planets, moons (satellites), comets, meteors and meteorites, while the human society, reflecting the order in the universe, should replicate a perfect homogenization of the various institutions that make up the society.

We notice that the holistic and deductive nature of the universe is premised on the fact that forces interfuse or integrate and that this is made possible by the cyclical progression of forces in the universe. Again, the progression of things in a cyclical order further ensures that forces are prioritized in their order of importance such that forces are schematically arranged in a binary pattern, which in turn reflect the dualism in nature. Following this pattern of binary fusion, by which forces mutate in a cyclical progression, the first reality that occurs is the *number 4* or *base 4*. Hence in Igbo ontology, the *base 4* manifests in the four mystical days (i.e. *ubochi*, which include *eke*, *orie*, *nkwo* and *afo* or *abo*) that make a week (*izu*). These four mystical days actually represent four energies or waves and it is through their interfusion that reality become manifest. In essence, *Du* or *Di* (i.e. Being) permutes itself through the four elements and it is through this permutation that *ndu* (life), *mmadu* (human being) and phenomena (*ibe unwa*) become manifest. For instance, it is by its mutation on *base 4* that the earth rotates and revolves in a cyclical order such that we notice seasonal alteration on a quarterly basis. Now the quarterly arrangement of things brings in the *number 3* as another important factor in the cyclical progression of things. Thus, if on the *base 4* (as depicting the four pillars, four elements or four sources) things mutate, the *number 3* automatically becomes the order of progression. Needless to say, the teaming factors of *base 4* and *number 3* produce the prime *number 7* as another important factor in the holistic and deductive order of things and these numbers do really play significant factors in the codification of the order of forces into social reality. The symbolic importance of numbers in traditional African philosophy is also emphasized by the Dogon philosophy of creation. Here we notice intimate relationship and identity between man and the universe initiated by the vibrations of *kize uzji* (i.e. Being). The seven movements or vibrations caused by *kize uzji* created both man and the universe. “The first and the sixth vibrations ($1 + 6 = 7$) produced the legs. The second and fifth vibrations ($2 + 5 = 7$) produced the head. The seventh (7) produced the sex organs of man. Even though the *seed* produced the image of man, man also presents the image of the *seed*. Man, is therefore, a microcosm, a universe in miniature” (Anyanwu, 2000, 353).

Consequently, the logic of life-force in African philosophy is meant to reveal the ontological structure of things responsible for the holistic and tripological nature of the universe, which in turn determines the holistic and tripological nature of African conceptions of society, time, history, politics, family, economy and justice. The tripological conception of things in itself rests on the metaphysical principle of “interpenetrability of life-force” otherwise known as “spiritual primacyism”. Elements behave magically, miraculously as they symbiotically interact. And since spirit interlinks, interconnects and interpenetrates all things, it follows, that everything is in everything. In *Bantu Philosophy*, Placid Tempels explains that among the Bantu, “Being and Force are inextricably juxtaposed, one can neither decrease nor increase Being or Force, because, Being or Force is indestructible” (1959, 35-38). In essence, the indestructibility of spirit enhances its interpenetrating, self-sustaining, animating and permeating nature. It is obvious from the above that the African universe is dynamic and that this dynamism operates the logic of concentric circles. In other words, the cyclical nature of the African cosmos rotates and revolves on a triangular dimension otherwise known as the tripod. The cosmos, society and man are said to live a symbiotic unity. Holism is the appropriate word for describing the African understanding of the inter-relationship between the cosmos, society and man. Each is an individual whole energized and interconnected to the other by spirit. Spirit as the motivating element ensures that the cosmos, society and man are one intricate web, harmoniously integrated. This inter-fusion is such that the “world order is replicated in the “social order” and the “social order” is replicated” in the “self order” and vice versa. Again, by way of interfusion, the three orders are said to be identical and hierarchical. Whereas the hierarchicization of the forces and their identical nature requires that: “ All forces be strengthened and not weakened, that an individual should be seen in the light of the whole and that meaning, significance and value depend on the art of integration” (Anyanwu, 1981, 371). By implication, world reorientation,

social reconstruction, should begin from the enlightenment and reformation of the self, for the re-attunement of the self-order to the social and the cosmic orders. The African considers man and society to be embodiments of spirituality and physicality, which in turn rotates upon the cyclic triad or the tripod. Ancestors, living humans and unborn children represent the past, the present and the future respectively. This cyclic triad of the tripod is most visible in the age-grade system. According to M.A. Onwuejeogwu; “Age-grade is seen as a movement of the future through the present into the past. The future is transformed into the present by various ceremonies; the present is transform into the past by retirement and mortuary rites; and the past is transformed into the future by reincarnation” (1997, 115). In the same vein, “every normal individual has three levels of existence: as an individual, as a member of a group and as a member of a community” (p. 115). The same is applicable to the leader in traditional Africa. He is seen “as a symbol of authority representing the land as an embodiment of the spirit world, physical man and unborn children” (Anyanwu, 371). All these are made possible by the coordinating act of spirit. “Spirit embraces the power of beliefs, ideas and thoughts. It constitutes the source of authority, vitality, possibilities, law and integration. Spirit adds depth and cohesion to life. As a unifying principle, it eliminates all individual and group boundaries and creates a wider and deeper social consciousness or community of people” (p. 372). It is by this holistic and deductive nature of things that humans exercise the hope and the expectation that the future will continue to be like the past, thereby making induction to be a by process of deduction (see Karl Popper on falsifiability).

(b) The Inductive Procedure: The basic features of the principle of induction is that based on the law of reciprocity, it tries to link the future with the past and in doing this it hyperbolizes issues thereby creating room for a high case of probability. These features are very much evident in the *afa* symbolic and symbolismic system. As Onwuejeogwu says: “*Afa* is an integrated system of symbols, social reality, communication and control and social action mainly directed towards the construction or transformation of social reality conceived in terms of the past, present and future actions” (1997, 72) of future actors. The field of social actions and actors consists of “both mystical and mundane social relationships collectively linking the people in genealogical and age-grade structures” (p. 121).

Consequently, relying on his depth on what Onwuejeogwu says that Mills defines as “sociological imagination” (p. 112), the *dibia afa* is able to bring his client closer to social reality through a series of interpretations framed in terms of a given locality or society which includes the essential components of the society in question, the relationship between the components and the biography of the individual are all harmonized to be in tandem with the history of the society. In case the individual in question is a stranger, the assumption is that problems like their bearers are not isolated. So, no problem is so strange such that it has not been experienced in the past by someone else. Based on this, the *dibia afa* commits an inductive leap. He readily assumes that since we live in the same world controlled by the same elements what is true of the past will be true of the future, meaning that what worked for someone in the past will certainly work for some other person with a similar condition in the present. As long as the interpretations and explanations of the *dibia afa* are within this given scope the “validity and rationality of the *dibia afa* are assured and taken for granted” (p. 112).

It is quite obvious from the above that by using the rule of induction the *dibia afa* puts the efficacy of his divination procedure to test. The test we talk about here is no other than the high risk of probability. But it seems that the *dibia afa* knows about this problem which is why he often instructs his clients to appease *Ekwensu* (Yoruba *Esu*), that is the God of mischief and the minister of justice, through a prescribed sacrifice. If however the sacrifice and the entire divination process fail, the *dibia afa* attributes the failure to the lack of faith or will power on the part of the individual to affirm and since the individual did not summon enough faith and will power to affirm, his/her *chi* (personal god) did not also

affirm. Given the obvious limitation of the inductive procedure as a method of analysis used in atomizing things, traditional Africans insist that induction as a process of investigation can only gather greater significance if it is made a by-process of deduction. Hence, the insistence is made that all particularistic knowledge should be synthesized to become holistic or universalistic. In the contemporary world the problem of induction is tackled scientifically. Sacrifices are not made to any God or Goddess in the way of appeasement. Rather theories, rules and laws are subjected to series of tests repetitively in order to affirm the validity and veracity of these theories, rules and laws.

The next point to consider is how these procedures of deduction and induction combine in binary forms as points of fusion and opposition to form a continuous process of hermeneutic interpretations. This is to say, for traditional Africans induction and deduction are but two logical rules equi-primordially disposed to yield a continuous process of discourse which in turn yields a continuous process of interpretations and interpretations further yield revelations.

(c) The Hermeneutic Procedure: The word hermeneutics comes from the “Greek *hermeneus* which literally translates as an interpreter and has been general used to mean the art, skill, or theory of interpretation, of understanding the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions” (Bullock *et. al.*, 1988, 380). The term was first introduced into philosophy from theology by Dilthey in the late 19th century and he used it to refer “to the fundamental discipline that is concerned with the special methods of the human studies or *Geisteswissenschaften*, which do not merely order the raw deliverances of sensation but must seek an understanding (*verstehen*) of their essential meaningful subject-matter” (p. 380). The term has since been broadly employed by Martin Heidegger to mean the phenomenological study of human existence through the process of deconstruction or destructuring. As a process of destructuring, hermeneutics operates the trilogy of analysis, synthesis and revelation. It is this Heidegger’s usage of hermeneutics that appeals to us most in this essay and this is because it bears striking similarities with the process of enquiry by divination in *afa*. In a later paper to be entitled: “Hermeneutics and the Logic of Life-Force” we shall attempt a comparative analysis between Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology and the logic of life-force in African philosophy. For now, our interest is to explain briefly but vividly the hermeneutical procedure of the logic of life-force in African philosophy.

The hermeneutic procedure of *afa* divination operates upon a trilogy of analysis, synthesis and signification. Signification here defines the end of *afa* divination that expectedly should reveal or unveil a particular message or prescription which then would be applied to a given situation, making revelation and application to be by-processes of signification. What we notice at this level is that the rule of deduction (depicting holism) and the rule of induction (depicting particularism and probabilism) now role into one to produce the binary system that progresses by way of fusion or integration. In essence, holism and probabilism play interconnective roles in the investigative/divination process of *afa*. It is this interconnective functioning that brings about interpretation in the form revelation or revelation. Needless to say, this revelation process is a continuous one that juxtaposes opposing views that are in turn resolved at a higher level. The assumption is that the universe of forces is one of a continuum and in such a universe; things are transient (in the same way as solutions to problems are transient).

The *afa* divination and investigative process (i.e. the throw of a pair of *afa* chaplets) “entails a clockwise operation from down to up so that *obi* or *ogbi* (the open end of the *afa* pair of chaplets) and *akwu* (the closed end of the *afa* pair of chaplets) enter themselves at the point of *afa* mystical zero (Bonachristus, 2003c, 7 & 8). Each of the *afa* pair of chaplets *akwu* and *obi* consists of four *ugili* seeds held together by a string. Now both *akwu* and *obi* represent lines of light. *Akwu* as the closed end of the *afa* pair of chaplets

represents closed line of light, while *obi* as the open end of *afa* pair of chaplets represents the open line of light. Since the two belong to light and are two sides of light, they then meet at *circle of light* otherwise called *afa mystical zero*. Hence, the *afa mystical zero* or the *circle of light* depicts “the harmonic mean of the differential integration of *obi* and *akwu*” (p. 6), that is to say, it is the mean or the hob on which hermeneutic interpretation rotates, revolves and proceeds. In this instance, *zero* would depict the void, boundlessness, a limitless expanse or simply nothingness. We notice that the *afa mystical zero* depicting *nothingness* is the source from which *akwu* and *obi*, as paths of light and together also depict the pathways to Being, derive their essences and substance, implying that non-Being and Being are equi-primordially predisposed. *Du* or *Di* (meaning that which is, thing that is there or simply *to be*) as Being becomes the ground on which hermeneutic discourse and investigation progress, meaning that interpretative discourse is an endless process that evolves on a concentric circle of dialectics. As it applies to the arena of discourse intended for the settlement of dispute, it is readily assumed that conflict (disagreement) and resolution (agreement) are equi-primordially pre-disposed. Which is why the Igbo say; *egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibeya ebela nku kwaya*, meaning that the hawk and the eagle as predator birds contesting for space should make room for the other to perch, whichever says the other should not perch, let its wings be broken.

Furthermore, as pathways to Being, “*akwu* representing the closed line of light indicates darkness, permanence, passivity, inactivity, motionlessness, resting and by extension feminine in principle and negative in polarity, while *obi* representing the open line of light indicates light, activity, change, mobility motion and by extension masculine in principle and positive in polarity” (p. 6). Needless to say, the binary structure of *afa* is determined by a frequency of binary relationship as follows: “(i) Binary Dissimilarity, (ii) Binary Similarity, (iii) Binary Opposition, (iv) Binary Inversion and (v) Binary Inversion – Opposition” (Onwuejeogwu, p. 56). It is this structural frequency of binary relationship that plays up transformational relationships in the *afa* process of divination. Through this transformational processes of relationships, general situations are harmonized with particular individual traits, in the same way as general human traits are harmonized with existential circumstances. It is for this reason that Bonachristus states as follows:

The *afa mystical zero* is the circle of integro – differential reality that determines the nature and nurture of existence on earth. It is the circle of all things that are what they are and all things that are not what they are not. It is the ancestor of space and time, of every thought, every word and every deed. It is the cross of life and death, of light and darkness, of spirit and flesh, of being and non-being. It is the basket of wisdom, of knowledge and intelligence, the pot of power, the soul of conscience and character, the parameter of change and permanence, and the provider of nurture and nature (2003c, p. 6).

Symbolically speaking therefore, the hermeneutic procedure of *afa* otherwise coded as the logic of life-force yields an endless process of interpretations. It is indeed a continuous process that involves the concentric circles of dialectics thereby giving rise to myriad interpretations. In its traditional setting it yielded 256 verses of interpretations, but this is as it then applied to situations in traditional times. In contemporary times when human reality has enormously expounded its frontiers of activities, the *afa* symbolic system is being expounded to accommodate and correspond to the sum-total reality confronting humankind. Thus, the logic of life-force or “the African symbolismic philosophy is a system of representative inquiry, it is a symbolismic science and method of revelation, interpretation and analysis of existence, it is a representative system of theories and practices, governing thought and conduct in relation to the meaningful investigation of the principles and laws that regulate culture and existence” (Bonachristus, 2003a, 7). The question that follows concerns the consequences of a pure

philosophical delineation of the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy or how a pure philosophical discourse on the theory of life-forces in the African tradition can be made relevant to the African situation?

Evaluations and Conclusions

The point is emphatically made in this essay that African scholars can no longer continue to fantasize about Africa's problems through the foreign media and methodologies. This is not to say that Africa's problems are peculiar or unique such that they are impermeable to foreign ideas and ideals, rather, it is more of obeying the fundamental rule governing all developmental processes which states as follows: *agwu ga eto ga elo ibeya*, meaning that "the snake that will grow really big must swallow another". Nature records two ways to survival and existence and these include the way of damnation or alienation and the ways of domination and consolidation.

Damnation or alienation amounts to a life of forfeiture, of self-abandonment or bad fate by which an entity (person or society) allows self to be encroached upon, dominated and entirely permeated by the life and style of another to such an extent that the entity in question gathers inspiration by simply aping another. Such entity in question plays an inferior second fiddle to a supposed master who dictates directions of survival to the supposed slave follower. Such is the fate of contemporary Africans who principally live either as second rate Europeans or second rate Arabs. In fact, it will not be out of place to say that the psyches of contemporary Africans are completely dissociated and disarrayed so much so that contemporary Africans largely live in utter confusion depicting a climate of chaos hanging like the sword of Damocles over the frail necks of contemporary Africans. Contemporary Africans dance to the different winds of the world; Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo, Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, Jerusalem, Mecca and a host of others as if they have gone to sign different pacts with chaos. To say the least, to live a life of self-recrimination and self-abandonment is never the way to authenticity and inauthentic existence can never yield any positive fruit.

Domination and consolidation on the other hand, do not really imply the brutal urge to impose and transpose oneself upon another, it is rather the way that points to self-criticism through which the quest for self-rediscovery and self-accomplishment actually begin. It is upon the tip off of critical self-questioning that one truly begins to journey into the inner self where upon the key to ones possibilities and potentialities lie hidden like a secret treasure. Needless to say, this transcendental journey into oneself that results into self-rediscovery and self-actualization brings one into the limelight where upon the individual comes to realize self as pure ego, as a pure consciousness or attain the pedestal of realizing self as an ego concept. It is at this point that one really comes into accomplishment of the concept of power in its purest form and this entails the ability and capacity to control oneself and ones environment based on the laws, rules, ideas, theories and concepts fashioned by oneself in tandem with ones understanding of the forces that operate in that environment. Upon the attainment of the mastery of self and the forces of nature in ones environment, one then feels confident enough to pause, reflect and then proceed to examine other selves to see how these other selves articulate and live their experiences, sift from the pool of vital ideas that sustain these other selves and readapts these new ideas to further enrich ones circumstance. In other words, what we have dubbed the ways of domination and consolidation can otherwise be technically termed the way of deconstruction, reconstruction, destructuring or simply, the way of "total demolition". This indeed, is the save and authentic way to development.

Attempts at mapping out ways of rehabilitating traditional African values had kicked off in earnest in other essays entitled: “On Causality and Science: Towards a Deconstruction of African Theory of Forces,” “Philosophy and the Recultivation of African Culture” “Science and Traditional African Value System: Essay on Development” and “The Significance of the Kemetic Civilization to the Development of Contemporary Africa”. In all of these essays the point is clearly made that the way forward for Africa is to embark on a total demolition exercise of African traditional heritage with a view of intellectualizing and transforming African cultural values to meet up with contemporary challenges. But what exactly does the agenda of total demolition depict? It is the call to return to the primordial beginnings, to the cradle or the primeval state of *voidness* from where we begin to rebuild everything afresh. By the primeval state of *voidness*, we neither imply a state of absolute emptiness intended to invalidate or nullify the African personality completely nor do we advocate a return to pristine days of culture. Rather, we challenge Africans to return to the path of originality or authenticity (which used to be the hallmark of African ancestors in the pristine days of culture) where upon the human imagination is fired to soar to that Olympian height of beatific visioning, at this level the human intellect is inspired to illuminate the way for depth meditation and deep understanding, necessary for rediscovering, reinventing and recreating entities anew. It is in this sense that one understands Heidegger when he speaks of *nothingness* as the primordial beginning of all human developmental activities. It is also in this sense that one understands Naiwu Osahon when he speaks of the *African state of Fantasy*, which is that point at which the human intellect and human imagination become most productive at constructing entirely new perspectives for ameliorating and surmounting human vicissitudes and also synthesize all opposites. In the Kantian parlance, human pure reason as the legislator of the ideas and concepts for editing reality through its special endowment of autonomy or subjectivity has the power to raise old structures to the ground with the view of fashioning new ideas for erecting a more profound edifice.

Consequently, the way forward for Africa is to embark upon a tireless hunt of rediscovering and reinventing Africa from the rubrics of its past. This is exactly what we have tried to do in this essay. What we have unveiled before the eyes of contemporary man are the logical and epistemological principles of the ancient ontology of traditional Africans, particularly, the Igbo of South East of Nigeria, laced up in a pure philosophical manner. In its raw form, this ancient African ontology and its logical and epistemological procedures appear in mythical, mythological and religious form. In this raw form, this ancient ontology and its logical and epistemological procedures can hardly service contemporary challenges that are scientific, political, economic, historical and even cultural, that is to say, if we accept the fact that culture in its dynamism must always get transformed and updated to meet up the challenges of all times. Nonetheless, till date, seers, sorcerers and sorceresses resourcefully use this ancient ontology in the areas of traditional medicine, immunology, craft and science, magic, sorcery, alchemy, agriculture, technology and a host of others. Besides, in the traditional ontologies of traditional Africans are buried most of the secrets about human existence which in our contemporary world we go to the university to study and earn degrees on. Because contemporary African scholars have been cut off from their traditional pasts, because, as so painted by colonial apologists, contemporary African scholars denigrate African heritage as pristine and obsolete and because African scholars, like most Africans, have largely taken to alien orientations, they do not deem it fit to dig (or is it they lack the awareness) deep into mysteries of ancient Africans wherein lies the foundation of almost all our contemporary knowledge. Perhaps, we have forgotten too quickly that the past is the spring board of the future, that no one looks too long into the future without recalling and refocusing the past and that genuine focus on the present has a way of harmonizing the past with the future. Wise civilizations that have observed this simple rule have been catapulted to the mountain height. On this high way of civilizations, contemporary Africa has thrown up sporadic moments in distinguished individuals such as Cheik Anta Diop, Chinua Achebe, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Emeka Emeagwali, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Ayi Kwe Amah, Wole Soyinka and a host

of others, but collectively, contemporary Africa has failed to make a mark. The distinguishing feature between the African personalities mentioned above and other Africans is that these individuals believe fervently in their Africanity. This goes to attest to the point that the way to progress is through the reformation and purification of the past.

By exploring into the logic and epistemology of life-force in African philosophy, we show that traversing from the past Africans are not exactly the same people as Europeans, Arabs and Asians and by logical entailment, our experiences and concepts of history, economy, politics, society, education and so on, are not the same. As Marx Scheler puts it Europe was moving from matter to mind, Asia was moving from mind to matter and that both are moving towards a supposed point of fusion. We have clearly shown in this essay that Africa had always maintained the middle lane which is why her metaphysical orientation is that of balance or harmony. But this metaphysics of harmony has its merits and demerits. Its merit as implied lies in the power of fusion or integration, but this singular advantage if not well guided and guarded has the tendency of derailing into eclecticism and syncretism and this, essentially, is the bane of contemporary Africa. K. C. Anyanwu captures this succinctly in the following words:

The goal of African cultural values and civilization is to unify all opposites. Thus the source of African strength is at the same time that of her weakness. Europe rejected Islam and Asia rejected Christianity, yet, these two religious doctrines find adherents in Africa (1981, 373).

What Contemporary Africans require most to tackle the problem inherent in their ancient metaphysical system is wisdom. Wisdom is the instrument required to turn adversities into advantages. Nations such as Japan and China have immensely demonstrated this. With the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime, the Meiji Ishin initiated the Meiji restoration project and the first thing they did was to tackle the fundamental problem of why the Americans could invade Japan and forced Japan to America's terms of trade. The Meiji Ishin concluded that something was definitely wrong with the adamant attitude of the Tokugawa regime of being over protective of Japan's pristine culture. The Meiji Ishin then found the answer to Japan's problem in the modernization of Japanese culture, a task which they relentlessly and vigorously pursued and for which Japan has today become a most flourishing nation. China fought the opium war in 1893 to ward off British incursion. And from 1914 Chairman Mao Tse Tung started the war for China's freedom. In 1948, the communist government was born in China. The first thing Mao did was to study Marxism with a view of shedding it of its European content. He reasoned that Marx's politico-economic theory laced up on the historico-economic dialectics of matter could fit in so well into European societies but definitely not so with the Chinese society. Mao then sifts the essential kernel of Marxism which he then fused into Chinese historico-cultural experience and what came out of it is the modernization of China. We can now see why the decolonization process in Asia recorded a huge success but was a complete flop in Africa. This quest for self retrieval formed the basis of nationalism in modern Europe during which period European nation states revolted against the order of Rome and this took a three pronged attack which include; the rejection of Roman religion otherwise known as Roman Catholicism as the official religion of other European nation states, the rejection of Roman history as the official history of other European nation states and the rejection of Latin as the official language of other European nation states. Thus, nationalism in modern Europe addressed and tackled the problem of individual and national identity. This cannot be said to be the case in post-colonial Africa where what we have succeeded in giving to ourselves is token or nominal independence whereby, education, the very tool used in orienting and reorienting the mind is left in the hands of agents of colonial missionaries. The question is if wise civilizations embark upon the modernization of their cultures, one wonders how else a civilization that struggles to elope from her culture can be regarded.

In *A Dream of Africa* Camara Laye, through the eyes of his father, relays the main comparative difference between ancient African artists and contemporary African artists. Whereas ancient or traditional African artists were highly imaginative so that they intuitively tapped into the transcendental world (i.e. human spirituality) from which they symbolically deduced vivid images of human reality and the world around us; contemporary African artists, bleached and hybridized in the mind, are largely driven by the craze for profiteering, a bug, that is clearly the manifestation of the monetization process. This statement is fundamentally true of contemporary African scholars who have mostly become importunate beggars who smother genuine intellectual ideas and wallow in the ignorance of the letter, not the spirit, of knowledge. So despicable has the situation become for contemporary African scholars such that their ideas are mostly irrelevant to their environment and this sort of sham stems from the fact that most contemporary African scholars are but “historicized machines who chew up the carcass of knowledge to regurgitate mortar for social reconstruction” (Soyinka, 1977, 46).

Now is the time for contemporary African scholars to toe the wise and prudent path of returning to that herculean but a most necessary project of retrieving, rehabilitating and deconstructing Africa’s ancient symbolismic philosophy of harmony. “Symbolic systems are the keys to processes of learning, to effective action, and to intrinsic human values” (Loemker, in Thomas J. J. Altzer, 1962, 109; quoted by Anyanwu, 2000, 349). Therefore, the essence of the clamour for a return to the demolition of ancient African symbolismic philosophy of harmony is meant to create collective or group consciousness knitted together by common myths, rites, ideas and laws for societal cohesion. This point is buttressed by Leroy E. Loemker who defines a community as: “The permanent social state sustained by a more or less systematic whole of such common symbolic patterns, cognitive, imperative, evocative and operative. These take the form of myth, laws, customs and rites” (Loemker, in Thomas J. J. Altzer, 119; quoted by Anyanwu, 2000, 349). Explaining the role symbols play among the Dogon of Mali, K. C. Anyanwu states as follows:

The symbols in Dogon philosophy teach the people how things originated, how man was created and his relationship to the universe. Symbols are summaries of the origins of things. The land, for example, is symbolically represented as a woman carrying a child on her laps. This symbol is informative and also embodies values. It embodies what the symbolizing agents regard as important and useful. All the symbols in Dogon philosophy make communication and co-operation among the people possible because such symbols create common meaning and purpose. Those symbols unite the people as a community (Anyanwu, 2000, 349).

Imperative from the above is the fact that the mystical base of every culture forms the background for distilling pure philosophical orientations which comes about through the pure intellectualization of (i.e. the detonating of intellectual bomb upon) traditional philosophy which comes a delight to the mind. This however, is a totally different agenda from the debate on whether there is African philosophy or whether African philosophy is ethnology or simply a common world view of the people. Consequently, this essay is simply preliminary and preparatory to other future debates that shall focus on a comparative analysis between hermeneutic phenomenology and the logic of life-force and the application of the dialectics of concentric circles to the critique of history. The culminating point of these series of debates would be to work towards the evolution of pure philosophical system distilled from the traditional background of Africans.

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