

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

African Philosophy remains a discipline in its own right sharing in the tradition of world philosophical heritage. Hence, it is adorned with beauty exhuming from the nature of African differential lifestyles, properly expressed in many of her indigenous religions and autochthonous cultures craftily recited in oratures and recorded as literatures. However, African religion and literature, two of the oldest human practises, dating back to the chequered history of Africa as the cradle and mother of ancient civilization, need a philosophy, an African Philosophy as such. The unique African heritages, appreciated in religion and literature, have given room to many African legacies through proper appreciation of her traditional worship of a divine being and literary works or genre. Nevertheless, the exploration that led to the consumptive partitioning of Africa Nations in Berlin in 1884 and later turned into exploitation of Continental Africa left her deeply wounded as she lost her indigenous languages and literary genre to the colonial masters as well as her traditional religion to the white-man's supremacy and imperialism, all in the name of colonization which was nonetheless renewed in all forms of neocolonialism and debt strategies. Using the method of critical analysis the researchers find out that even though African literatures and religions were so much demonized yet some of those African literatures as well as African religious artefacts not only dot European history but adorn European literary world and museums in their profound sacrality and awe. However, an attempt at critical look at African philosophy of religion and literature will definitely help in this needed understanding and appreciation.

Keywords: African philosophy, African literature, African religion.

Introduction

Philosophy, etymologically from the Greek lexicon is *philos* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom) transliterated love of wisdom. To this point, philosophy remains a human science that seeks wisdom and a personal enterprise with an unaided reason. It is a human enterprise. Maritain (2005) maintains that philosophy is the highest of the human sciences, that is, of the sciences which know things by the natural light of reason. Philosophy, therefore, is *cognitio rerum per altissimas causas, solar rationis* (science that studies all things in their ultimate and universal principle). It is *scientia rerum per ultima causas* (knowledge of things through their ultimate causes). Aristotle, however, sees philosophy as *regina scientia* (queen of sciences). And William Anton Amo, a Ghanaian contemporary philosopher defined it as *habitus intellectu*, the habit of the intellect.

Philosophy, nonetheless, questions every reality in a bid to appreciate them. Questioning in this context makes and identifies one as a philosopher. This in line with Godalex Ezeani's definition

of philosophy as *inquisism*, that is, intelligent questioning. However, the actual meaning of philosophy for him is *intelligent questioning* plus *critical analysis*, that is, in a simple formula, Ezeani (2015) maintains that philosophy is primarily an inquiry. Therefore, it will always question your intentions and actions. It is the habit of the intellect and the will according to William Anton Amo. It is the habit of philosophy to examine your day to day activities and involvements. It is equally the habit of the will to carry on daily activities and involvements. And this again makes philosophers, to be mindful of the *dictum* of Socrates (the first philosopher of Western Philosophical Tradition) as scripted on the doorpost of the Delphic oracle, thus: *man know thyself* as well as being conscious of the Aristotelian *dictum* thus: *unexamined life is not worth living*. Maritain (2005) strongly was of the opinion that traditionally philosophy is divided into three principal sections: logic, speculative philosophy (when its knowledge based alone) or practical philosophy (when it is for the general good of man). African philosophy (coming from African Philosophical Tradition) which has assumed the status of a discipline and a movement is hereby understood more as a disciplinary movement. As a discipline, it is a course in its own right and as a movement its to be as a reaction to the western interference in African education, in the midst of long years of relegating Africans to the corridors of ignorance and ill-fated knowledge. African Philosophy, notwithstanding, is divided into main and minor branches while we acknowledge that it has come to stay like other counter parts within the philosophical tradition.

Geographically, African continent is blessed with landmass. Naturally, Africa is endowed beautifully with resources. Human resources seem to be the greatest endowment of continental Africa. The beauty of Africa, embellished more with natural and human resources has attracted the white-man's expedition of Africa and has continued to pull them over even till today to the extent that many have settled in Africa and refused to leave even when they were asked by the recent Papal order to *hands-off Africa*. If Africa is not gratifyingly rewarding why the rush in coming to Africa and the continual presence of the white people in Africa. Continental Africa, often referred by explorers as dark continent is made up of 54 countries with more than 75 languages amidst many cultures and ethnic traditions, (Wikipedia, n.d.). History, especially biblical history, attests to Africa's role in the salvation history as Jacobs and his sons were in Egypt for centuries till the Exodus, (cf. Gen- Ex.). Jesus Christ's refuge in Egypt with his parents during the massacre of Herod was very significant, (cf. Mtt.2:13ff). The christianization of African began in these biblical episodes culminating at the Calvary encounter with Simon of Cyrene (cf. Lk.23:26ff). The rich tapestry of African philosophy of religion and literature finds harmony within African culture and society through the oral traditions and storytelling. Equally, African philosophy of religion and literature explore the power of language and narrative in their profound insights into the interconnectedness of humanity and the diversity of their elements of beliefs.

Unfortunately the interference in the name of exploration of Africa that turned into exploitation deprived African of her human and natural resources as well as other socio-political development. The African Union Commission (2023) reiterates that the OAU, now AU, was the manifestation of the pan-African vision for an Africa that was united, free and in control of its own destiny in response to the aspirations of Africans for brother-hood and solidarity. The guiding philosophy was that of Pan-Africanism which centred on African socialism meant to look into Africa with her enduring aesthetics in literature and religion as this paper champions in the theme Critical Appreciation of African Philosophy of Religion and African Literature. A candid review of some scholarly works on African plights will help in this paper.

Review of Mama Africa's Edges of Predicament

Onebunne (2023) reiterates that “the edges of African predicaments are the boundaries of African difficulties created by nature and by the intruders into her continental bliss. The edges of African predicaments, therefore, are those problematiques which Africa has suffered as a continent as a result of her natural resources than natural impediments as well as human resources than her human incapacitation”. Some of the authorships and scholarships to be reviewed are within the boundaries of conceptual issues and contemporary blocs (debt colonialism, strategy, capital flight, digital divide, global divide) are often regarded as the edges or referred to as boundaries within African predicaments, (Onebunne, 2023). Most of their books contain and dwell on concepts that are related to and can be re-interpreted in a large sense to mean being in African studies and appreciation of many authorship-scholarships like Placid Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*, Innocent Onyenwueyi's *African Origin of Greek Philosophy*; Edward Wilmort Blyden's *African Philosophy in the 19th Century*, William Edward and B. Dubois' *The Souls of the Black Folk*, George G. M. James' *Stolen Legacy*, Osuagwu I. Maduakolam's *African Historical Reconstruction, Early Medieval History Of African Philosophy and A Contemporary History of African Philosophy*, Marcus Garvey's *Garveyism: Back To Africa*, Barry Chevannes' *Rastafari: Root and Ideology*, James P. Allen's *Genesis in Egypt*, James Henry Breasted's *Egyptian Civilization* and Claude Summer's *Ethiopian Philosophy*, to mention but a few.

More so, Mama Africa's predicament, therefore, will be understood more with the review of some of these scholarly texts thus: *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is a 1972 book written by Walter Rodney that describes how Africa was deliberately exploited and underdeveloped by European colonial regimes. In this classic book, Rodney makes the unflinching case that African mal-development is not a natural feature of geography, but a direct product of imperial extraction from the continent, a practice that continues up into the present. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a book by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, written in Portuguese in 1967–68, but published first in English, in a translation by Myra Bergman Ramos, in 1970. Later that year a Spanish translation was published. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is Freire's attempt to help the oppressed fight back to regain their lost humanity and achieve full humanization. Freire outlines steps with which the oppressed can regain their humanity, starting with acquiring knowledge about the concept of humanization itself. *The Partition of Africa in Berlin*, in 1884, was one of the most spectacular episodes in modern history. For Europeans, Africa was still an unknown continent in 1880. Thirty years later almost all of it were under European control. This race for colonies went hand in hand with a host of thrilling exploits and dramatic conflicts, of which Stanley's exploration of the Congo and Gordon's death in Khartoum were just two examples. *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Philosophy* by George Granville Monah James (November 9, 1893 – June 30, 1956) was a Guyanese-American historian and author, known for his 1954 book *Stolen Legacy*, featuring a new introduction challenging the notion that civilization started in Greece. *Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.* by Chancellor Williams and *The African Origin of Civilization:* by Cheikh Anta Diop are very definitive with regard to matters of Africa and her contributions to civilization. *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period, 2780-330BC*, by Theophile Obenga in 1990 was a landmark work on the authentic existence of African Philosophical Tradition centuries before Western Philosophical Tradition. The text was a work against the conspiracy of the Western philosophers trying to demean and deny African philosophy of its primacy and of authentic origin. Onebunne (2023) maintains that the primacy of African Civilizations is seen in the fact that it precedes European Civilization and Later European Colonization. Civilizations, therefore, are through African civilization. In the chequered history of humanity, the dawn of human civilization can be

traced back to the immense and diverse continent of Africa. Africa, a blessed land very abundant with a thriving and wealthy history of civilizations predated the arrival of Imperial masters as European Colonizers through their exploration that turned into exploitation, (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Appreciation of African Philosophy

Philosophy as part of world philosophical heritage has been divided into philosophical traditions: Western Philosophical Tradition (WPT), Eastern/Oriental Philosophical Tradition (EOPT), Abrahamic (Judeo-Islamic) Philosophical Tradition (AbPT) and African Philosophical Tradition (APT), (Onebunne, 2023). There is African Philosophical Tradition which has given room to African philosophical enterprise. African Philosophy through many debates, after barrages of doubts of its possibility, has finally shares in the world philosophical heritage as a subject area of its own. Kanu (2015), however, is of the opinion that “African Philosophy is one of the resilient and fastest growing areas of human inquiry”. A functional African Philosophy is appreciatively defined as a discipline and a movement. African Philosophy has come to stay and Kanu (2015) reiterates on such an idea thus, “the question of whether there is an African philosophy or not has been overtaken, captured and conquered by African philosophers”. To question the existence of African philosophy now or doubt its scholarly authorship is a show of blameable ignorance and sheer lack of scholarly investigative nerve.

Etymological, traditional and scholarly, African Philosophy is a discipline that is traditionally based on the knowledge of African realities and African realisms in their englobing universal principles. Pantaleon Iroegbu was among the very firsts in giving a concise definition. In this definition, one can read a kind of defence as regards African philosophy. This is why for Iroegbu (1994) African philosophy is a *philo-sophia*, a quest for African wisdom. Moreover, as a discipline, African philosophy is the love of African wisdom, that is, *philosophia Africana*. However, Socrates in epitomizing the idea of philosophy as pursuing of wisdom defines philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom. One, therefore, define African philosophy as the pursuit of African wisdom. African Philosophy, therefore, is *scientia rerum per ultima causas* within African realities. It is the search for the unaided authentic human knowledge that is philosophical and African. Echoing W. Anton Amo, it is the *habit* of every wiseman and the *will* of every reasonable African man.

As a movement, African Philosophy connotes a kind of reaction and denotes a strong activity towards. Consequently, African Philosophy as a movement is a clarion invitation by Bob Marley's redemptive insinuation to “emancipate yourselves from mental slavery...none but ourselves can free our mind”. His *Redemption Song* demands a total breakaway from the stereotype innuendoes that philosophy is the prerogative of the West, therefore, questioning directly our human nature as *homo sapiens* and *homo cogitans* as well as *animal rationalis*. As a movement, African Philosophy, rooted in and springing from African philosophical tradition, is a cursory look into the problematiqués and prospects of Africa as part of the world philosophical heritage. As a movement, African philosophy is an effort at recovering all lost status as result of the stolen legacies with regard to philosophy and its origin. As a movement, African Philosophy searches for the authentic knowledge that is philosophical and African within and or outside the African cultural world-view. Therefore, a definitive-thoughtful interpretation and critical analysis of the symbols of African cultures would be African philosophy *qua tale*. More so, a reflection with profound application of criticality, analyticity and originality on African thoughts and cultures will give credence to Philosophy and rightly put, African Philosophy.

African Philosophy is, therefore, a disciplinary movement that started as a reaction to the years of hidden facts about the existence of African philosophy as such. This reaction simply became a movement in reclaiming what was actually taken away from us in a way of intellectual dishonesty of the African exploiters and explorers as well as partitioner who forgot that one day, in the great speech of Martin Luther King (Jnr) *I have a dream*, that the son's of the slave a masters and the sons of the slaves will dine on one table. Therefore, as a movement, African philosophy picked up again after years of forgotten identity and appreciable recognition as such out of frustration (*onuma*). After many lies against Africans literary disposition and inability to think hence no history as championed by Hegel there came African Philosophy. African Philosophy is a disciplinary movement that branched into speculative and practical depending, not on the specific character of the various philosophic sciences or disciplines, but on the end which they pursue, (Maritain, 1985).

Appreciation of Literature

Our appreciation of literature has to begin with an appreciation of the lexical rudiments in the apprehension of literature with words like literacy, handwriting and its likes. Literacy is basically the ability to read and write. In *lato sensu*, literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets one communicate effectively and make sense of the word and world. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines literacy as a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills. [Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus](#), (2023) suggests that there are pillars of literacy as: phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Literacy skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print and the relationship between letters and sounds. Other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension. Wikipedia (n.d.) equally shows that literacy skills can be divided into three main areas: information Literacy, digital Literacy and media Literacy. Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy generally refers to reading and writing effectively in a variety of contexts. In the 21st century, the definition of literacy has increasingly reflected the ability to use technology for gathering and communicating information accommodating in a very special sense the revolution of AI (*Artificial Intelligence*) in today's world.

Etymologically, the term literature is derived from Latin *literatura/litteratura* meaning learning a writing, grammar; originally *writing formed with letters*, from *litera/littera*, letter. The term has been applied to spoken or sung texts. Literature is often referred to synecdochically as *writing*, especially creative writing, and poetically as *the craft of writing* (or simply *the craft*). Syd Field described his discipline, screen-writing, as "a craft that occasionally rises to the level of art." These definitions of literature have varied over time. In Western Europe, prior to the 18th century, literature denoted all books and writing. Literature can be seen as returning to older, more inclusive notions, so that cultural studies, for instance to include, in addition, canonical works, popular and minority genres. The word is also used in reference to non-written works: to oral literature and the literature of preliterate culture. A valued judgement definition of literature considers it as consisting solely of high quality writing that forms part of the *belles-lettres* (fine writing) tradition. An example of this is in the 1910-1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica, which classified literature as "the best expression of the best thought reduced to writing". The word

literature is primarily written works, especially those considered of superior with lasting artistic merit. It has to do with books and writings published on a particular subject. It is any thing scribed or written down. It has to do leaflets and other printed matter used to advertise products or give advice. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines literature as a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature is a term used to describe written works and sometimes spoken material.

Derived from the Latin word, literature meaning writing formed with letters. Literature most commonly refers to works of the creative imagination, including poetry, drama, fiction, non-fiction and in some instances, journalism, and song. [Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus](#), (2023) asserts that, literature is a body of work that transmits culture. Much of literature is written, but some are also visual (such as plays) and oral (such as folk-tales). [Collins, U.K. & Forsyth, M.](#) (2014) reiterates on the major forms of literature as non-fiction prose, fiction prose, poetry, drama and folk-tales. The body of written works of a language, period or culture. As well, it is an imaginative or creative writing, especially of recognized artistic value. According to Rebecca West, literature must be an analysis of experience and a synthesis of the findings into a unity. Literature in its elemental structure (plot, conflict, character, setting, point of view, and theme) maintains the art or occupation of a literary writer. Hence, there are two types or categories of Literature as: Written (form of literature that is written down and published, novels and poetry are some examples of written literature) and oral literature- orature (stories that are told orally; vocally articulated and can be chanted, spoken, or sung).

A good Literary work within the bounds of literature is good lettering properly referred to as good handwriting. Good handwriting, proper lettering, elementary literacy, ability to read (pronounce words) and elementary numeracy are human skills. Hence, one talks about the *orality African literature and literarity of African literature* (Onebunne & Obasi, 2018). To be literate borders on the ability to write and read: literacy and numeracy included. It has to do with proper formation of the words of the alphabets (capital and small letters) and recognizing them as in digraphs and trigraphs, etc. Illegible handwriting is a great lack in the training and formation of young minds today. Legible and beautiful writing makes a lot of sense. Rev. Fr. Augustine Okekoma (in his *Preface to the Fundamentals of Handwriting Book: An Exercise in Good Handwriting Skill* by Rev. Fr. Jude Onebunne) clearly explains that some of such students do not write, they scrawl, gripping the pen more like the hilt of a sword and producing not really a text but rather squiggles that will take no less than the concentration and lenses of an ancient Babylonian scribe to make sense of, if ever at all. This is a good description of a bad handwriting within the boundaries of poor literacy, unreadable handwriting. Unreadable handwriting is the first sign that announces general academic weakness. Such lack of basic literacy attracts disfavour. A beautiful lettering pleases and inspires. Samuel Johnson, 18th century man of letters once commented that whatever is written without effort is read without pleasure (Johnson, n.d.). And much is revealed in psychology with the way one writes. The art, skill or manner of handwriting is called penmanship. Moreover, handwriting in which successive letters are joined is called cursive script. Handwriting in which the letters are separated (as block letters) is called manuscript style or printing. Handwriting examination is a method used by criminal investigators to gather evidence and link a suspect to a crime through the handwriting found at the crime scene. There are many things to handwriting. Carlson (2014) draws our attention to handwriting analysis that combines the knowledge of forensic science, graphology and psychology. Forensic Graphology is the study of handwriting especially the ones that are found in ransom notes, poison pen letters

or blackmail demands. A forensic handwriting examination involves a side-by-side comparison of questioned and known writing samples for the purpose of determining whether the questioned writing was written by the writer of the known material, (Wikipedia, n.d.). Questioned writing is a body of handwriting for which the writer is unknown, (Carlson, 2014).

African Literature

African literature which is chiefly embedded in African orature remains a substantial work of its own, dating back to the era Africa merited the title of cradle and mother of civilization. Both ancient and modern civilizations owe a lot to Africa. Levy, Stewart and Kent (2023) made allusion to the fact that African literature is literature from Africa, either oral (orature) or written in African and Afro-Asiatic languages together with works written by Africans in European languages. The origins of African literature can be dated back to thousands of years unto Ancient Egypt through hieroglyphs or pictorial representations of words. Over time, the use of hieroglyphs became widespread around Egypt and became more developed. Belcher (2023) points to the fact that Ancient Africa had many indigenous scripts, including hieroglyphs and hieratic. Hence, the origins of African Literature can be dated back thousands of years to Ancient Egypt through hieroglyphs or pictorial representations of words. Over time, the use of hieroglyphs became widespread around Egypt and became more developed. This eventually led to the use of Arabic poetry, which began to spread more rapidly after Arabia conquered Egypt in the seventh century C.E and throughout Western Africa in the ninth century C.E. These African and Arabic cultures continued to blend with Graeco–Roman and other European culture and literature that resulted in its own unique literary form. It is only in the twentieth century that the Roman alphabet came to be used widely in Africa. By the late eighteenth century, Africans also invented the secret ideographic writing system of *Nsibidi* (Belcher, 2023).

Scheub and Gunner (2022) opined that African literature in versions of oral literature, pre-colonial African literature, colonial African literature, and post-colonial literature is sourced from all the nations of continental Africa can be complicated for any attempt at its definition as each nation has its own unique history, culture, tribes, and traditions. These works can be either oral or written, some in African and Afro-Asiatic languages and others in the European languages that influenced them. African literature, therefore, has an inclusive awareness that emphasizes an artistic use of words as a way to teach important truths and remind their community of what their ancestors once went through. Wikipedia (n.d.) tries to place African literature, properly as literary works of the African continent. African literature consists of a body of work in different languages and various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages (French, Portuguese, and English). Oral literature, including stories, dramas, riddles, histories, myths, songs, proverbs, and other expressions, is frequently employed to educate and entertain children. Oral histories, myths and proverbs additionally serve to remind whole communities of their ancestors' heroic deeds, their past and the precedents for their customs and traditions. Essential to oral literature is a concern for presentation and oratory. Folk-tale tellers use call-response techniques. Orature is very unique in Igbo world-view especially when expressed in a language that appeals to the people like the proverb or idioms. Onebunne (2018) reiterated that “language is one of the most beautiful tool that man has. Aesthetic values can be added to this language through stylistic devices...the most popular among these is proverbs...Proverbs, they say, fits every situation, therefore, they are used contextually to fit particular situations”. Continuing, Onebunne maintains that proverbs clash regularly, which is all part of their charm. You use a proverb to make a point, to summarise something, to rationalise, to explain and to teach. They express general observations, experiences that gives us a chance to say

something in a colourful way and hit the proverbial nail on the head, (Onebunne, 2018).

Belcher (2023) maintains that contrary to the general perception, the African literatures written before the twentieth century are substantial. Whatever limits can be imagined (in terms of geography, genre, language, audience, era) these literatures exceed them. Before the twentieth century, Africans wrote not just in Europe, but also on the African continent; they wrote not just in European languages, but in African languages; they wrote not just for European consumption, but for their own consumption; they wrote not just in northern Africa, but in sub-Saharan Africa; they wrote not just orally, but textually; they wrote not just historical or religious texts, but poetry and epic and autobiography; and they wrote not just in the nineteenth century, but in the eighteenth century and long, long before. Yet, the general public and even scholars of African literature are often unaware of these early literatures, mistakenly believing that African literature starts in the late 1950s as the result of colonization, instead of many centuries before it. However, Belcher (2023) is of the opinion that African literature written over the last millennia remains largely invisible for several significant reasons. He observes that: *One*, many of the texts written more than two hundred years ago have not survived, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately colonialism and imperialism know the truth of their existence. Scholars know they existed because travellers reported on them and extant texts make reference to now lost texts. *Two*, many were never published as print books and of those few manuscripts that were, most were published in obscure places. *Three*, very few of the texts written in an African language have been translated into any European language. Scholars refers to Alexandrian library that was burnt down by who and why? What of the oral tradition that incubated and housed most of the African sages and wisdom. As much Africans become literate in their own languages, they often reacted against colonial repression in their writings. Lagasse & Goldman, Eds. (2000), identified some Africans as Léopold [Senghor](#) who were active in the [négritude](#) movement from the 1930s; Nkrumah's consciencism, pan-Africanism along with Léon [Damas](#) and Aimé [Césaire](#), French speakers from French Guiana and Martinique. Their poetry not only denounced colonialism, it proudly asserted the validity of the cultures that the colonials had tried to crush. African literature has issues of the orality of African literature, literality of African Literature and the Africanity of African literature which borders more on the language use that makes it African. This is why colonialism remains the sterling interference and greatest disservice to African development. This resulted in many Africans writing African literature in European languages as their education system was equally Europeanized. Hence, the theme of many of their writings then were on slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and post-colonialism, and often they shared the same themes: the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European subjugation, pride in the African past, and hope for the continent's independent future. Onebunne & Obasi (2018), opined that African literature is a type of literature that has its root from Africa and deals with African issues. It is a form of literature within the boundaries of the africanity of African Literature and orality of African Orature, that is peculiar to the Africans because of the African varieties it possesses. Oral literature is described as orature, traditional literature, folkloric literature or folklore.

African Philosophy of Literature

African Philosophy of literature is the application of African critical and philosophical principles on any literary work. It is, therefore, an application of all forms of criticality on the literality of any piece of writing work. African Philosophy makes use of literature in the sense that African philosophical ideas are often brought to the readers through literature. African Philosophical discourse and literary discourse are closely connected. Historically, conceptually critical

discourse presupposes literary discourse. There is this differential relationship between African Philosophy and African Literature. Basically, African philosophy is the study of knowledge while literature is the study of written work. The term literature is more often associated with fiction while philosophy is associated with theoretical or non-fictional, rightly put with realities.

In Wikipedia (n.d.) [Jonathan Gilmore](#) maintains that philosophy of literature addresses the most fundamental questions about the nature of literature as an art. Continuing, he maintains that some of these questions address the metaphysics and ontology of literary works: What, if anything, essentially distinguishes literary works of art (such as epics, novels, drama, and poetry) from other kinds of writings, such as scientific reports, historical treatises, religious texts, guides, and manuals, which may happen to be written in a literary manner?, Gilmore, J. queried. African Philosophy of literature is not alone in pursuing these questions, for literary history, criticism, and other modes of scholarship address these concerns, as do readers when they reflect on their own and others' practices of attending to works of art. However, [Gilmore](#) continuing reiterates that the philosophical approach to literature, while often productively drawing on the empirical study and first-order analysis of literary works, tends to adopt a more systematic, theoretical, ahistorical and foundational approach than commonly found in other fields.

Globally, Philosophy in its different traditions remains the foundation for educational development and socio-political *cum* economic growth. African philosophy plays this critical role too within and for African heritages and in our concern, in the area of literature as Philosophy of literature thereof. African philosophy of literature addresses the most fundamental questions about the nature of literature as it critically appreciates or applies critical principles on the acts of creative writings and reading. It is a critical study of literature (writing and reading). In African Philosophy of literature there is a critical appreciation or application of philosophical principles on the acts of creativity and making as well as on the acts of writing and reading. It is a critical study of literature (writing and reading). Within the global community, philosophy of literature encompasses human engagements as *animal labourans* and *animal loquens*. This is why 21st Century remains a century of great possibilities and feasibilities and it is regarded as an age of great literary genre and literary presentations. Through artificial intelligence, that is AI, humanity is becoming automated and so much dependent on machine than trusting on the capability and potentiality of our unaided human faculty of reasoning. Literary works have gone far as photo-editor repackages reality into another reality. Science and technology as well as hyper-technologies are bringing revolution in the areas of aesthetics, arts and humanities especially with regard to African Philosophy of Literature (philosophy of writing and reading).

Appreciation of Religion

Religion is humans' respected interaction with the Divine. It is a responsible expressive relationship with the non-human. It is a response-able approach to Divinity. Religion, therefore, is man's disposition and mental devotion towards a being who is looked unto as greater with a candid aura. Merriam-webster (n.d.), noted etymologically that religion is from the Middle English *religioun*; from Anglo-French *religium*; Latin religion-, *religio* supernatural constraint, sanction, religious practice, perhaps from *religare* to restrain tie back. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023) maintain that religion, is "human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of special reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death". Religion, of course, is a personal set of attitudes, beliefs and practices. Continuing, religion is at the service and worship of God or the supernatural as well as the

committal devotion to religious faith or observance, (Merriam-webster, n.d.). In this sensible understanding, religion is properly appreciated and ought to be established on a sound theology. Theology informs religion properly. In this strict sense, religion is at the operational and practical function of theology. Theology, therefore, is at the service of religion as *ancilla religio*.

Theology etymologically *theo* and *logos* is science of God. According to Aquinas it is a sacred doctrine and science of a revealed truth. It is a systematic study and scientific appreciation of God. *Theo* and *logos* are all about the word of God. Theology in this regard is the narrative of God's encounter with humanity and humanity's responses as a result of such encounters. However, as the highest human discipline, it is a human project on the divine. In this theological project, humanity seeks an understanding of divinity. Iroegbu (1996), however, gave six nuances of the descriptions of theology as “God-talk; search for God through faith and reason, an enlightened reason, etc. Through an enlightened faith, this God that has continued to manifest Himself, is searched for and often with an encounter that will lead to all forms of religion and vagaries of worship. Theology, therefore, is a consequence of religion. Notwithstanding, without theology, religion or religious practises and innuendoes will be mere belief and shallow impressive practises. Theology, however, ought to have many traditions as many cultures and people have their different experiences and different established expressions of relationships in their religions as well as religious professions and practices. Thus, each theological tradition ought to give us a religion to be sustained by a theology. A proper appreciation of and a functional understanding of religion is a deep rooted opportunity for a divine reverential encounter.

Notwithstanding, theology remains a basic yardstick in the comprehensive understanding of religion within a people's Weltanschauung, hence, an African theology. This is why the idea of religion as worship of Divine is highly sustained with a sound African theology as a African science of God. This question of African Theology has God made present in Christ; Son of God, as the the foundation properly established on African view and understanding. It is crystal clear that the historical genealogy of Jesus Christ as religious than political messiah (Onebunne, 2019c) started with Israel coming to dwell in Egypt on the invitation of Pharaoh Joseph *via* slavery (cf. Gen. 37:25-27) as a family that went back as a nation. Those moments of sojourn chanced the possibility for an intermarriage between Israelites and Egyptians. This marriage nevertheless chanced a mixture of an African blood in the forefathers and in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. This was clearly played out in the Holy Family's (of Joseph, Mary and Jesus) flight into Egypt trying to escape the blood-splitting terror of King Herod's anger for a new King (cf. Mtt. 2:7ff) that was unleashed on the age-grades of Christ known and referred today as massacre of the Innocents (cf. Mtt. 2:13ff). That flight was couched in one of the Igbo's age long maxim and adage that *oso chua nwata be nnaya ogbanaa ikwunneya*. To this extent one can assert that African theology is deeply rooted in Jesus Christ and ought to be appreciated as such as African Traditional Religion.

African Traditional Religion (ATR)

Having prefixed African Tradition on Religion one may be tempted to define ATR as the religion of traditional Africans. That is, religion borne out of African traditions and cultures. It's a particularized religion within African cultural innuendoes expressing their ways of life. In this sense, ATR is the people's religion that grew from their experiential realities. Their theology will be within their experience in the worship or reverence of their God. African Theology is African understanding of God. It is the science of God within the boundaries of African realities. Such encounter is always within a definitive experience that leads to worship. Before the exploration

and exploitation through colonialism, Africans have had an experience of the Divine with many forms of worship rooted in their exalted beliefs and belief systems. Such has been their theology, an African Theology of the object and subject of their worship. African theology, therefore, is an ongoing experience and sustained encounter with African God as their Creator and all-in-all. African theology sustains the African knowledge of God and ATR. African theology presupposes African theism. However, Ikenga-Metuh (1999) in line with this thought opined that “most African societies recognise fundamentally two different types of divinities: the Supreme Being and the subordinate deities”, (p.94). African traditional theology is a consequential result of African Traditional Religion (African Religion) as the religion of the people anchored deeply on inculturation and anonymous form of Christianity.

Ikenga-Metuh (1999) summarily captioned the interference of the West on ATR as recorded by the European explorers and Missionaries thus “many of the authors of the observations did not stay long enough in Africa to get acquainted with the people's beliefs and practices, nor in fact did they attempt a systematic study of African Religion. However, these observations are significant in that they reveal the prejudices and biases of the people who wrote them and that of the European public”. A little patience with our forefathers would have revealed to the White-men (the missionaries and colonial masters) the religious and spirituality of the Africans who were actually anonymous Christians in all ramifications. African Religion and the corresponding theology is not all about Christ but ought to have Christ at the centre of its history as the world keeps the record of BC (Before Christ) and AD (*Anno Domini*). These complimentary views ranking with the anonymous Christianity of Karl Rahner is a kind of paradigm shift in the appreciation of humanity as one family within the Godhead of God the father as the Creator. The idea of anonymous Christian shows the unique dynamism in nature amongst human beings, (Encyclopaedia.com, 2019).

African Philosophy of Religion and Literature: The Defining Relationship

The length and breadth of African Philosophy is within the bounds of critical appreciation of African realities as African wisdom properly expressed in African literature and literary works showcasing African beliefs. History has shown that African philosophy of religion and literature have enraptured scholars and intellectuals for years across generations, plunging them in a multifaceted complexity of ideas, beliefs and artistic expressions that intricately intertwined and weaving them into African cultural identity and heritage. Investigating the interaction between these two domains of thought as well as the relationship between African philosophy of religion and African philosophy of literature unfolds as a subject of significant importance, unravelling the historical development and complex interconnectedness of profound spirituality, key concepts, historical underpinnings, exact storytelling, and philosophical perspectives in African contexts. This paper have explored the transformative potential of African literature and the profundity of African religion.

The historical development of African philosophy of literature is a clear testimony to the rich socio-cultural heritage that informs the original African literary works. Developing from a foundation intemperately influenced by oral traditions, orature and storytelling, African philosophy of literature consistently incorporates and integrates philosophical ideas and religious beliefs. Literary works throw more light on the interconnectedness of religious and philosophical discourse, exploring themes of morality, ethics and the nature of existence. More so, African philosophy of literature has continued to be shaped by external influences. Such influences ranges chiefly from European colonization. Such interference through colonialism

as the imposition of Western ideologies and western imperialism upon African societies and her own ideologies not only disrupted traditional modes of expression but also sparked a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of African philosophy of literature. Based on this there was an emergence on the part of African authors and intellectuals who sought out in reclaiming their cultural heritage while contributing to the proper development of African literature. However, the interaction between African philosophy of religion and literature is quite a fascinating area of study, as it highlights the intrinsic connection between these two disciplines. In order to fully grasp and appreciate the existing relationship between African philosophy of religion and literature, it is essentially important to compare contrastingly on their fundamental concepts and principles.

Concluding Remarks on African Philosophy of Religion and African Literature

By the analytical appreciation of key conceptual principles within African philosophy of religion and literature, a deeper appreciable understanding of the inter-connectedness and deep mutual influence between these two disciplinary courses emerges while paving ways for further possible exploration into the significant influence of African philosophy of religion on African philosophy of literature, and *vice versa*. African philosophy of religion has continued to played an enduring and significant role in shaping African philosophy of literature, providing a fundamental condition for exploring spiritual and metaphysical themes in African literary works. This interaction between African philosophy of religion and literature has resulted in the emergence of specific and unique literary traditions that reflect and celebrate African cultural heritage. Some African literary scholars argue along this line of thought that African literature is infused with the philosophical undertone of African religious innuendoes and belief systems, as seen in the constant exploration of the spiritual issues and supernatural elements. Through an astute examination of the relationship between African philosophy of religion and literature, one gains a more comprehensive understanding of the African experience and its multifaceted nature. African philosophy of religion nevertheless has limited the scope of African philosophy of literature by confining it to religious innuendoes. The connection and interaction between African philosophy of literature and African philosophy of religion show the dynamism in these disciplines, as they influence and are influenced by each other. With a promotion of a more comprehensive discussion on African religious culture and traditions. African philosophy of religion informs African literary criticism, we can gain insight into the complex cultural and spiritual dimensions of African literature. A re-examination of the influence of African philosophy of literature on African philosophy of religion, *vice-versa* shows the intricacies in the connection between African religious beliefs and the prominent themes, motifs, and symbols in African literature.

The profound relationship between African philosophy of religion and literature is seen more in the literary works serving as vehicles for conveying religious beliefs and practices in African societies. Chinua Achebe's novel is very unique in this aspects. *Things Fall Apart* presents the clash between traditional African religion and the intrusion of Christian missionaries, highlighting the complexity and diversity of religious experiences in African communities. Again in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo people's God-consciousness and belief in ancestral worship are intricately weaved. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as the consequences of disregarding one's cultural heritage. Additionally, African philosophy of literature helps deepen our understanding of God-experiences through its utilization of various literary techniques. African philosophy of literature, however, challenges mere interpretations of religious traditions and their belief

systems. Equally, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's play *I Will Marry When I Want* remains a critical challenge for the oppressive nature of some traditional religious norms which it advocates. Equally, the influence of African philosophy of religion is also seen in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*. The practise of divination as well as the presence of supernatural forces helped to shape the characters' actions and decisions. By integrating these religious elements, African authors and her scholarships are able to explore existential questions and probe the complexities of human existence. Generally, literature is shaped and reshaped by religious beliefs. More so, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's other novel *Petals of Blood* presents another example. This work showcased interplay between African religious beliefs and the struggle against neocolonialism. The characters in the novel were very apt to challenge the oppressive systems while inspiring readers to question the *status quo* and work towards societal change. More so Chimamanda's *Half of the Yellow Sun* is in this league.

The integration of African philosophy of religion and literature simply allows for a proper appreciation of religious texts, such as the Bible or the Qur'an. Other African scholars, such as Kwame Gyekye and Wole Soyinka, have focused their scholarly works on the interconnectedness between African philosophy of religion and literature. Their research, writings, and theories have shed light on the relationship between these two disciplines, providing valuable insights and perspectives. Gyekye's writings were on African traditional religions while Soyinka's exploration was on Yoruba's mythology in his literary works. They both have delved into the themes that are central to religion and literature making very significant contributions that enrich for the better understanding of both disciplines. The contributions of African scholars and philosophers have played a vital role in bridging the gap between African philosophy of religion and literature. However, the multifaceted nature African philosophy of religion and literature holds significant implications for African cultural identity and heritage.

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