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THE ‘MANY FACES’ OF PHILOSOPHY: THINKING BEYOND THE ANALYTIC ATTEMPT TO WESTERNIZE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

In this study, the phrase ‘many faces’ is deployed as the foil to show that the analytic quest to universalize African philosophy is a celebration of the superiority of the Western philosophical culture. The Universalist belief, for Gyekye (2004: 24), has greatly influenced the contemporary professional African philosophers to adopt the analytic method, and also, for the “several ethnological and anthropological excavations of Africa’s cultural beingness” (Afóláyán, 2018: 312). Despite an obvious limitation of the analytic method that it is one among many methodologies to how philosophy can be conducted, it is not entirely logical to argue that African philosophy be westernized because Levy Bruhl calls it ethnophilosophical or anthropological (Kaphagawani, 1998, p. 86). Another reason is that the genuine sincerity of the exponents of the analytic method is in serious doubt, since it is possible that they may be promoting a “racist project” (Biakolo, 1998: 1). As this study agrees with Afóláyán, “African philosophy serves as the platform to commence a reconstruction of an African self” (2018: 312); a self which colonialism relegated, which neo-colonialism extricates, a self which is “the soul of the postcolonial quest for a distinct African philosophy” (Oyedola, 2015: 20), and a self which must not be subjected to eventual recolonisation (Oyedola, 2024, p. 45).

Key Words: Many-faces, Westernization, Analytic, Methods, Africa, Philosophy, Racist

Introduction

Two schools of thought have analysed the nature of African philosophy: there are those like Bell, Mákindé, Appiah, Serequeberhan, Ōládíṣ̄ṣ̄, and Gyekye who believes that there is African philosophy. And there are also those like Bódúnrìn, Wiredu, Masolo, and Amato who believes that philosophy cannot be done according to how a region or culture sees it. The latter admits that philosophy is a universal discipline, and can only be conducted using the analytic method. The former has

aided the view that philosophy exist in different regions or cultures, since human beings will have to respond to the circumstances in which they find themselves in their different or respective location. This debate has been criticized that even if African philosophy exists, it will have to be conducted through the analytic method. This will be analysed by looking at different perspectives regarding the existence of African philosophy. This includes either the adoption or rejection of the analytic method. This calls for the need

to think beyond the analytic Westernization of African philosophy.

Contemporary African professional philosophers have argued that the analytic method remains viable because it can aid how African philosophy can be conducted. The adoption of the analytic method has aided the substantiation of the universality of philosophy. But if we consider that philosophers hardly agree on anything, we can see that a particular philosophical issue cannot have the same conclusion when different philosophers analyze it. But there is something peculiar which Uchenna Okeja, who asserts that “a space has been granted to African philosophy in African universities, but though there is a demand for improvements in the space granted because of the need for the maintenance of the current status quo of philosophy education in African universities” (2012: 715).

There is an argument that there is a supposition of a hypocrisy behind the propagation of the analytic method. The hypocrisy describes how the analytic method has been forced on how Africa should conduct philosophy. That is, the hypocrisy rests on how the analytic method has become the method which aids how philosophy is conducted. It is also generated by asking that shouldn't anyone know that there is not a single methodological route to carry out any philosophical task? Does the perspective which most analytic philosophers share about the reliability of the analytic method mean that it is devoid of problems capable of casting doubt on its eligibility? Is it absolute to say that the exponents of the analytic Westernization of African philosophy are genuine or sincere, such that it becomes untrue to admit that they are not promoting a political project? Or, should African philosophy be limited to how the contemporary African philosophers have described it? Contemporary professional African

philosophers as well as sage philosophers are still wrestling with these questions.

If the response to any of the questions is favourable to the analytic course, then, the ‘many faces of philosophy’ as Onyibor posits, that “philosophy as an academic discipline applies a combination of several methods” (2003: 22), cannot be easily jettisoned. Sogolo asserts that “the world has produced great philosophers but their works rank differently; their method and subject matter also differ” (1993: 11). Simply, philosophy does not have a monolithic methodological pattern through which it should be conducted. Onyibor had a reason for conceiving that philosophy applies a combination of several methods: “this in order (for philosophy) to achieve its ultimate goal which is critical reflection on human experience” (2003: 22). This is reminiscent of what Sogolo says, that “generally, it is believed that the ultimate concern of philosophy is with human predicament. Philosophy is conceived as the critical analysis of the ideas we live by” (1993: 11). And that “logic is the main tool of any philosophical analysis. Philosophy cannot be constructed from any body of thought whose structure is not suited to logical analysis” (1993: 13).

There is a question which Onyibor and Sogolo seems to have ignored: Is critical reflection a means or an end? If disagreement is the hallmark of philosophy, it becomes notable that critical reflection is a means through which a philosophical idea is subjected to analysis. To subject many issues to critical analysis has not stopped the proponents of the analytic method to deploy critical analysis to become the hallmark of philosophy. One can notice that analytic method has the potential to lead philosophy to infinite regress. Moreover, critical analysis cannot be the aim of philosophy. As Richard Bell admits, the central aim of

philosophy is to see something as it is (2002: 1). This is important, not because Bell does not see critical reflection as relevant, but because the overbearing nature of critical reflection can complicate where philosophy does not intend to face. It is almost impossible to be critical regarding what has not been presented as it is. It may be difficult to agree with Bell that “in approaching philosophy in Africa, if we wish to understand the ways in which the African people inhabit the world (where they live), we must work hard to determine what is significant from the point of view of the African people” (2002: 1). Critical reflection cannot be primary to philosophy.

Stephen Stich posits that “since the philosophical perceptions aimed at showing that man is irrational cannot be experimentally demonstrated are mistaken” (1985: 249), “those defending the sullied name of human reason have been philosophers, and their weapons have been conceptual analysis and epistemological argument” (1985: 249). It is not easy to blame Stich including those who rely of reflection with meta-epistemological tools to demonstrate how we ought to do philosophy. Rather than been fully critical, such that they should know that philosophy does not have a univocal method to doing it, they seem to appear prejudicially rational. Fámákinwá was no exception. He opens his work *How We Should All see African Philosophy Today*, with his suggestion about the direction African philosophy should follow. This is obviously informed by what he takes to be the primary preoccupation of philosophy as an academic discipline (2016: 321). As he says, we are already celebrating our Westernization in different spheres of our national life. It is his humble opinion that we should extend the celebration to the realm of philosophy (2016: 323).

The impulse of Fámákinwá in clamouring for the Westernization of African philosophy is disparaging. He seems not bothered about what Biakolo refers to as “the configuration of anthropocentric studies” (1998: 1). For Biakolo, this configuration “reveals an ingenuity which goes further to confirm the *political project* behind the Western construction of cultural paradigms of the ‘Other’” (1998, p. 1). We cannot extend the celebration of the Westernization of some aspects of Africa to the realm of philosophy. At least, some aspects of Africa need to be retained. Bell’s view which says that “I am a philosopher approaching and wanting to understand both philosophers in Africa and what is being explicitly called African philosophy; philosophy may arise from human language situations anywhere” (2002: 3-4), is a legitimate call to know that whatever is global is ultimately local.

If we follow Biakolo that “although in the field of philosophy, in consonance with the pattern of growth and development of the new science of culture, the determining factor was *race*” (1998: 1), we will notice that in spite of the failure of Fámákinwá to take note of the determining factor behind the project of Westernizing African philosophy which is *race*, he failed to pay attention to Kaphagawani’s warning that “traditions (i.e., methods) should be allowed to be proliferated” (1998: 86); and that “the attitude of letting one hundred flowers (i.e., methods) to blossom” (1986: 86) should be encouraged. It is in this light that this study will discuss the ‘many faces’ of philosophy. It rejects the analytic Westernization of African philosophy. The rejection will be conducted by using different theses.

Thesis I

The first thesis states that there are many methodological routes through which African

philosophy can be conducted. This can be seen in the way philosophy presents itself through diverse methods. Richard Bell's view that "philosophy starts from our ordinary language and life" (2002: 5) is helpful. This seems to stand against the orthodox universalist belief shared by some philosophers that philosophy is a universal discipline. Against this orthodox belief, Bell says that

Philosophy will be found wherever there are human beings expressing their deepest concerns and where there is sufficient reflection on how best to give expression to those concerns. The requirement I must adhere to in understanding the philosophy of others is to be attentive to their modes of expression, and sort out how their concerns are expressed — what concepts and categories are used. The key lies with my ability to see (as a foreigner to that culture and language) and make room for the categories and concepts used by others', which give expression to their life (2002: 4-5).

The assurances that we need when looking at the culture and concepts of the philosophy of other people cannot be jettisoned: what they say, how they say it, and the concepts they use matters to how their philosophy is to be represented. Moreover, it is a misnomer, if we are to understand Richard Bell that the analytic Westernization of African philosophy leaves many other methods of doing philosophy helpless. In his recognition of the many methods in philosophy, Onyibor was precise: "philosophy as an academic discipline applies a combination of several methods, which are, Socratic, deductive, inductive, existentialist, analytic, and phenomenological" (2003: 22-26). The admission of Onyibor concerning these methods is clear:

The Socratic Method (i.e., *dialectic* or *intellectual midwifery*) seems to be the oldest, and it applies to the art of debate by means of questions and answers. It has other name in the method of Intellectual midwifery. It aids an individual to give birth to the ideas with which he is impregnated. This method presupposes that knowledge is inborn, and by the technique of proper questioning, the individual is helped to give birth to the idea within his own mind. The deductive method is deduced by Aristotle. In this method, conclusions are deductively derived from general statements. Analytic method is a method of reflection, and its advocates believe that philosophical arguments could be solved through the analysis or clarification of language. This method has been criticised on the ground that it denies philosophy the opportunity of offering new knowledge or serving as a guide to action (2003: 22-25).

The importance of Onyibor's insistence is to show that there is a different method according to which African philosophy can be conducted. Similarly, a method adopted by a people should not be seen as unphilosophical. If all other routes to understanding philosophy apart from the analytic method are less philosophical, this is philosophically prejudiced. This is carefully illustrated by Biakolo. He says that "the seven stages of development are Lower Savagery, Middle Savagery, Upper savagery, Lower Barbarism, Middle Barbarism, Upper Barbarism, and Civilization, were not only determined by forms of family and kinship relations, the subsistence system and technology also corresponded with identifiable, that is, nameable societies" (1998: 2). Anyone who regards the

absence of phonetic writing a serious indictment on the African cultural orientation is playing to the gallery, as much as the person is auctioning her orientation.

People evolve, including their reason, orality, culture, and the perception of the world. A lot of laughable events had taken place before in the West. Biakolo calls the attempt to mentally degrade others “a curious permutation of the ideas in the consolidation of the colonial state all over Africa” (1998: 4), while some others call it power project. Of course, it is in the elaborate frame of politics, where the Euro-American society became the society which only “attained the status of civilization, typified by the possession of writing and especially, of the phonetic alphabet” (1998: 2). As Kwame Appiah characteristically describe the problem: “the fact that we are social beings that raises the problem of authenticity, regarding the problem of who I really am; is raised by the facts of what I appear to be. What I appear to be is fundamentally how I appear to others and only derivatively how I appear to myself” (2006: 540). How I appear to others, and what they say about me, might, as a matter of necessity, influence how they perceive my philosophy.

A retained mental construction of how to categorize other people arises from a particular instance of relationship in someone’s life. The person at the other end of the relationship whose world was invaded is unable to reconcile what has happened to his culture through the relationship which are enshrined in welcoming the invader who had a bad premonition for invading. This later precipitate a crisis of faith. It was caused by the invader who wonders why writing and phonetic alphabet should be the only yardstick for knowing who is developed. The invaded wonders why and how the invader could do this. In the midst of this existential turmoil, the invaded asks questions like

‘why is this kind of evil happening?’ How can the invaded believe there is a sincere way of saying philosophy is critical reflection or analytic in orientation? And, in view of what’s happening, how can I find it within myself to believe that philosophy is all what the invader has called it? A cultural/philosophical understanding of philosophy is about the existence of different and/or contending contexts of studying philosophy in general, not the specific way to doing philosophy employed by Fámákinwá that the analytic method is what makes philosophy beautiful. This creates an incorrigible conception of philosophy, and not the philosophy coming out of its etymology: *philo* and *sophia*. The search for wisdom can happen in any part of the world. The method with which this wisdom can be discovered is not one.

The variability of methods makes philosophy cultural, and this is plausible, but the plausibility is of no help to someone who wonders why African philosophy should not adhere to what analytic method says. Philosophers with the Western orientation and those Africans whose minds have been structured alongside the analytic tradition aids its perpetuity. This is without the need to mind the difference between the colonial structuring and restructuring of the African psyche, and the problem of moral stance. This is about the evils that have occurred during the Western invasion of Africa. It demands why there should be a continuous belief in whatever the West have brought to Africa. Kwame Appiah admits something similar, saying that “when I argue that ideological decolonization is bound to fail if it neglects either endogenous tradition or exogenous Western ideas, and that many African (and African-American) intellectuals have failed to negotiate a way” (1992, p. x), he had seen a problem. This was what

prompted Appiah to posit that “I am talking about friends and neighbours and I am talking about how we deal with our shared tradition” (1992: x). Two things are important here: what has happened between the West and Africa as the invader and the invaded, and how scholars have come to know why philosophy have never presented itself to be dogmatic or loyal to a method. These facts are crucial in understanding the psychology of the postcolonial Africa.

The problem clearly addressed by Appiah questions why there should be any sense of belief in the efficacy of the analytic method which Fámákinwá advanced. Thanks to Milos Kosterec. In his work, *Analytic Method*, he contends that “the notion of an analytic method is widely used but rarely characterized. Methods such as defining, explication or conceptual analysis are often considered analytic, but it is not clear which specific features lead to analyticity” (2016: 83). His work provides a definition of analytic method. The definition, he says, “should be non-trivial, i.e., not all methods should turn out to be analytic but at least one should” (2016: 83-84). Many writers or philosophers have committed themselves to the analytic trend or method and they have failed to appropriately define its nature. The usage or adoption is general but tied to so many problems in their dogmatic adoption of a method which they may not know how it should be used or dispensed.

Appiah warns that “we do well to be especially careful in applying definitions borrowed from the European philosophical traditions in which contemporary African university philosophers have been trained” (1992: 85). But he advises that “even within these traditions, there is a notoriously wide range of opinion about the tasks and the topics of philosophy” (1992: 85). He admits otherwise that “since I do not wish to prejudice the issue

of what should count as African philosophy, I shall assume, as Hountondji does, that it has to be written” (1992: 86). The problem with Appiah’s view as with other analytic African philosophers seems to be the same. One, as Appiah believes, “philosophy in Africa grows out of her own indigenous traditions” (1992: 86). And two, he opines that “academic philosophy has come to be defined by a canon of subjects as well as its argumentative method” (1992: 86), and that “the tradition that resulted came to be known as analytical tradition” (1992: 88).

Philosophers appear to be the only ones who seem to argue about this disproportionately. The apparent contradiction is visible. If philosophy in Africa grows out of the African indigenous traditions, isn’t it normal, as Richard Bell says that, “we have a reasonable benchmark for approaching another thing as it is” (2002: 1). The argument has been that philosophy is a universal discipline. As much as this is true does not presuppose that the concepts of reality in many African cultures are the same. The European conception of God is not the same with the way the Yorúbás have described Olódùmaré. The European conception of a person is not the same with how the Yorùbá tradition describes ènìyàn. We may compare and contrast but does not presuppose a relegation of one for the other.

If we take a careful look at the way Milos Kosterec have identified the faults in the way philosophers have adopted analytic method, Appiah is also found culpable. Almost if not all the proponents of the analytic method in African philosophy fails to carefully consider the module operandi ascribed to it by Kosterec. For example, Appiah’s adoption of the style of analytic method which involves “argument, distinctions, and the way it remembers to try to achieve it and succeeds, moderately plain speech, technicality,

and finds necessity in the way it adopts technicality” (1992: 89), conflicts with the picture painted by Kosterec regarding how analyticity should be perceived or used.

Peter Bódúnrìn’s admission of the possibility that African philosophy cannot be tailored permanently after a particular method is taken to heart: “philosophers like anyone may err” (1984: 12). Bódúnrìn’s admission of the position advanced by Richard Wright is notable. Wright may not be outrightly misguided, but as he admits, “there is no one method which is the method of philosophy today” (1984: 12). As an analytic-oriented philosopher, Bódúnrìn’s innate admission of the analytic method later surfaced: “the point, however, is that the philosopher’s approach to the study of philosophy must be one of criticism, by which one does not mean negative appraisal but rational, impartial and articulate appraisal whether positive or negative” (1984: 13-14). As an exponent of the analytic method, he concluded by saying that “if Marx is right that the important thing is to change the world, it seems that our choice is obvious. This can only be done through the method of philosophical criticism” (1984: 20).

The disposition of Henri Maurier is significant. We can’t be less thankful for his sincerity: without opening up endless discussions, Maurier says, everyone would agree that philosophy as a discipline is reflective, rational, and systematic (1984: 26); meaning that philosophy should question the proper value of its rational procedure and the epistemological validity of its results (1984: 28). This is strange. As much as there is no African method to doing philosophy in Africa or African philosophy, the end-result or end-product of questioning the rational procedure and the epistemological validity of results cannot, in or by

itself, be analytic. It will simply be the presentation of a thing as it is. Thus, circularity may be or could be the whole lot of philosophical enterprise.

Thesis II

The second thesis turns to the ground rules for handling the analytic method, which is scuttled by a retained mental construction of how to categorize others, which Biakolo calls the Western need to “confirm the *political project* behind the Western construction of cultural paradigms of the Other” (1998: 1). This is also better appreciated by the cultural condition of philosophy. Barry Hallen got the picture right, positing that “if you are mighty and powerful, then, gain respect through knowledge and through your gentleness of speech. Do not order a thing except as it is fitting. The one who provokes others gets into trouble and he who is agitated all day has no happy moments” (2002: 6). Hallen provided a reason, stating that academic philosophy in Anglophone Africa arose in a conservative yet turbulent intellectual climate. This is conservative because philosophical paradigms in the English-language academy derived principally from the analytic tradition. This provided for a comparatively narrower conception of the discipline (2002: 13). What is left for Africa to be able to do philosophy is what Hallen provided for Wiredu. First, Africans need to remind themselves that a very limited number of Europeans became fluent in an African language, and that this ignorance had profound consequences on communication, comprehension and appreciation of the African intellect. And two, such relatively culturally neutral and instrumentally useful elements can be adapted by Africans and used to develop their own interests (2002: 22). The concerns are two: One, there is the need to include the urgency to understand how and why analytic method became so agitated.

Two, analytic method needs to put its agitations to rest in order for its exponents to know that its continuous misrepresentation of what Africa calls philosophy entails some damaging views.

On the first point, it might not be appropriate to conclude that analytic method has not been helpful to the development of philosophy as a unity of theory and practice. It may have helped theoretically. Barry Hallen expresses his sincerity for the relevance of the analytic method in terms of its theoretical achievements. The first one is that “there is the level of technical sophistication displayed by the academic philosophers who have so obviously succeeded in adapting this complex methodology (of the analytic orientation) to a non-Western context. Two, it (analytic method) demonstrates that those using it among the African scholars have regained the initiative with regard to the complex task of defining rationality as it relates to Africa’s intellectual heritage. And three, contemporary African analytic philosophers are well aware of the split within their ranks. The analytic method is and will doubtless continue to be a source of vigorous debate and criticism; after all, it is an activity that can acceptably distinguish the discipline known as philosophy in any culture (2002: 48-49). This is well adapted from Godwin Sogolo, who asserts that “a critical examination of the raw materials of the African experience and their systematic formulation constitute the foundations of African philosophy” (1993: xvi).

The problem with the analytic method is mostly how its exponents appear to be too arbitrate about it. The way Hallen clarified the problem of arbitration is notable. For him, the fact that the analytic method took virtually no notice of the African conceptual studies (where Western philosophers and Western trained African philosophers were not inclined to treat the

philosophical analysis of a single concept extrapolated from an African language seriously when they had already been persuaded by anthropology that the conceptual network, the entire language of which it was a product, was created and used by a people whose mentality and rationality was relegated as pre-logical and pre-critical) was a major obstacle to gaining recognition of analytic African way as a scholarly endeavour that *de jure* was as qualified as more established traditions to claim its place within the larger discipline of philosophy. As far as the Hallen-Sódipò approach is concerned, the basic motive for experimenting with an analytic style that would be suited to the African context is strategic rather than the result of any deeper allegiance to analytic philosophy as the “correct” way to do philosophy” (2002: 36).

Analytic method became so arbitrate, in the sense that, African philosophy without it, for Hallen, is some form of deviant tradition (2002: 36). If we look at why analytic method needs to put its agitations to rest in order for its exponents to know that it entails damaging limitations and that other interests/methods need to be advanced or protected, Sogolo says that “Africa will only receive accurate and unbiased representations by this discipline (called philosophy) when philosophers in and of Africa begin to develop methodologies for the study of their societies that are uniquely suited to the African cultural context(s)” (1993: 2; Hallen, 2002: 40), is taken to heart. What Sogolo feels about Africa is simple: “with a universalist conception of philosophy, such African thinkers would not entertain any sense of artificiality in pursuing, to their heart’s content, any familiar philosophical problem which has no special link with the African experience” (1993: 2). As Hallen capture Sogolo’s words, some African philosophers have embraced a paradigm of cross-cultural rationality

that is too extreme and too Western in orientation, and thus, unfairly discriminates against the rationality of certain African modes of thought and beliefs (2002: 41).

Moses Mákindé was able to approach or resolve the problem of method by identifying the rationale behind the African modes of thought. His clear-cut demarcation between the Yorùbá system of divination and the methodology of science is insightful. According to Mákindé, “the Western or academic analytic tradition has promoted itself to a point where it now maintains an intellectual monopoly over the discipline (of philosophy)” (1988: 34; Hallen, 2002: 43). The spirit of the discipline (of philosophy) has always been more open to a multiplicity of avenues of thoughts or methods (Mákindé, 1988: 36; Hallen, 2002: 43). Kwame Appiah is no exception. He also defended a multicultural approach to philosophy. He posits that “the Western world has chosen to embrace analytic philosophy or method, but this is no reason for it to deny other cultures in the world an equal right to develop their own ways of doing and expressing their ideas about what philosophy is and should be” (1992: 143, 145, 149; Serequeberhan, 2000: 35-45).

Barry Hallen’s admission of a fact that “the only mainstream methodological approach to the discipline that has been explored in any detail is that conventionally referred to as analytic philosophy. Another approach is the one derived from the phenomenological tradition. This is conventionally referred to as hermeneutics” (2002: 56). The method of hermeneutics rivals analytic method. What now becomes relevant in the case of analytic orientation is the problem of taste. As Joan Callahan notes, “taste involves matters of choice which are, though value-laden, essentially morally neutral. This is what we

mean by a matter of mere taste—that it pertains simply to preference, to matters without moral import” (1988: 13). An implication is that analyticity has turned what its’ proponents believe to what has become the face of African philosophy. This is not strange but fraudulent.

Thesis III:

The third thesis centres on the theoretical and methodological consensus which exists among the analytic philosophers that are doing African philosophy. The general perception of these contemporary analytic philosophers is that analytic method radiates philosophy, and that it is everything regarding how philosophy should be conducted. The first premise upon which this claim stands is the view of Michael Bayles that “the impulse of philosophy is to generalize” (1988: 113). The contemporary African philosophers with analytic orientation seem to have erected an edifice through the analytic method. The edifice is that philosophy should generalize the questions or problems that best represent how it (philosophy) should be seen. The problem with this perspective is how it (AM) has succeeded in generalizing the kind of impulse with which philosophy should conclusively be aided. Supposedly, analytic method has been presupposed by the analytic African philosophers to be the impulse with which philosophy should generalize or be conducted. The role which analytic method plays, according to the third thesis, is paternalistic. As Callahan points out, “central to the paradigm case of paternalism is the picture of a relationship where one party acts on the presumption that he knows what is best for the other party” (1988: 106). This is the picture painted on how African philosophy should be contemplated or conducted by the analytic-oriented African philosophers. To do

otherwise is, in fact, to make philosophy look absurd, disorderly, unorthodox, or dogmatic.

Kwame Gyekye was sincere about the analytic method and the whole body of concepts related to it: (i) the impulse of philosophy should be generalised by using the method of reflection, conceptual and philosophical analysis, which is a priori intellectual activity, and critical inquiry. And (ii), that the analytic method is the paternalistic model to be followed in African philosophy and by African philosophers. The clarity of his insistence is that “philosophy is essentially a critical and systematic inquiry into the fundamental ideas or principles underlying human thought, conduct, and experience” (2004: 5-7). He points out that philosophy is essentially concerned with the critical inquiry into the most basic of our beliefs, ideas and assumptions. His disdain for other methods is clear: the most outstanding method of philosophy is reflection. He arrives at his conclusion that “philosophy is a wholly a priori intellectual activity. The systematic examination of the fundamental ideas underlying human experience involving the clarification of those ideas is usually referred to as conceptual analysis” (2004: 23-24). If this is the case, analytic method has prescribed the impulse that philosophy has to follow without putting its own attendant flaws into consideration.

Fámákinwá did not pretend in advocating for the analytic method. He is central to the third thesis. His agreement with Appiah that “philosophy is equivocal as a word, which could either refer to an academic discipline or a habit of reflection” (2016: 324), cross-carpet whatever the critics may have to admit. His perspective of philosophy that “philosophy is defined, today, as logical and conceptual analysis of issues” (2016: 325), makes it analytic in the way it is conceptualised and taught today. This is not different

from Moses Òkè’s submission. For Òkè, “a crucial premise in the argument against the existence of African philosophy is the view that African thought lacks those characteristics such as literary tradition, individual thinkers, a tradition or history of critical discourse, scientific orientation — in virtue of which Western thought is said to be paradigmatically philosophical” (1988: 91). While elaborating on the influence he got from Òkè, Fámákinwá sees it as true and without appealing to prejudice that “African philosophy should not resist dynamism” (2016: 325), but the question is simple: whose methodological view of dynamism takes priority or pre-eminence? The way and manner in which a question of this magnitude should be answered is, in itself, one of the things with which philosophy concern itself with. There is not a single way to answer it.

What creates the burden of trust is Fámákinwá’s position that “the high tempo of Western philosophy is, partly, made possible by its different methodologies” (2016: 325). Ségún Oládípò, before Fámákinwá, believes that “we cannot pinpoint a method as the philosophical method” (2012: 11). In spite of the claims of Fámákinwá and Oládípò, one wonders why the analytic method is still considered nonpareil and “yielding a pragmatic result, if applied to African philosophy” (2016: 325). Oládípò believes that “if language matters in philosophy as a means of sorting out human experience and deepening our understanding of that experience” (2012: 23), the importance of logic as a tool of philosophy cannot be overemphasized. And that to fulfil the task which makes a philosopher a relentless researcher to improve the quality of human relations between the people, clarity in thinking and rigour in argumentation are needed and needful (2012: 39). This can explain the

conflict or confusion created by their unrepentant admiration for the analytic method.

The evidence of Fámákinwá's admiration for the analytic method in African philosophy lie in the picture he painted in his earlier work, *Philosophy in Contemporary Africa: Argument for the Third-Order Level Inquiry*. Here, Fámákinwá is of the view that "philosophy is conceivable as a discipline which makes use of certain tools (i.e., methods) applied universally (this is tailored after the Universalist orientation in philosophy). The universalist orientation in philosophy is defined in part by critical examination of issues, through the use of human (logical) reasoning" (2007: 213-214). Moses Òkè could have influenced Fámákinwá, in this regard. He (Òkè) maintains that "it is critical reflection that defined philosophy" (1988: 93). Fámákinwá later created a diminished analysis of the nature of analytic method in support of Biakolo that the Westernized or Eurocentric perception of the "Others" is nothing but a political project, when he admits that "the whole task of philosophical examination may yield an outcome which produces a negative feeling about the worth of criticalness itself" (2007: 215). The demand for criticalness, as Fámákinwá says, is "too demanding. Individual thinkers do not have access to the end-point of rigour in philosophy. Philosophy, conceived as critical examination of issues, seems incapable of compelling equally intelligent thinkers to agree on issues. The open-endedness or open-ended nature of philosophy (as a critical analysis of issues) seems to put philosophy in a precarious situation" (2007: 215-216). In asking 'What is the worth of the rigorous (universalist) sense or method of doing philosophy,' Fámákinwá says that "human activity is not wholly about logic; besides rational capacity, human beings are also emotional,

psychological and social" (2007: 216). This, by implication, can mean that philosophical activity can be conducted through the human emotional, psychological and social methods or means.

Apart from Fámákinwá's critique of the analytic method that human activity is not wholly about logic, Bartholomew Nnaemedo posits that "the incorporation of the Western approach to doing philosophy which is analytic is nothing but neo-intellectual imperialism and colonization" (2019: 91). He concludes by admitting that "though analytic method has some values for African philosophy, it cannot permit a comprehensive access to reality from African perspective. And it is a poor tool of rational inquiry from an African perspective" (2019: 91). In the attempt to re-situate African philosophy into the mainstream analytic method, Nnaemedo's proposition that "a philosopher is better situated to weigh varieties of issues about his/her object of inquiry and is able to decipher the truth-value of each" (2019: 101), is not absolute, as much as Nnaemedo fails to recognise a fact: his claim is secondary. He thought that his view is primary, but not so. Richard Bell's position that "a central aim of philosophy is to see (or present) something as it is" (2002: 1), is taken to be primary over the insistence of Nnaemedo.

Thesis IV

In turning to the last thesis, it is noteworthy that the need for philosophy to return to contexts is long overdue. This is not a practically compelling accusation against the universalist perspective to philosophy or those who clamour for the centralization of philosophy the analytic method, but a recognition of the fact which many philosophers are now dealing with: that "understanding anything is always tied to its surroundings, which include language, customs,

geography, iconic traditions, and especially, the ordinary practices of its people” (2002: 1). This buttresses the reason why Bell insists that a central aim of philosophy is to see something as it is. This is not easily dismissible. It stands vis-à-vis with whatever perspective anyone intends to render as philosophical.

Fámákinwá admired the analytic method. His admission that “the rationality of each tradition is rooted in specific history, beliefs, and cultural practices or institutions peculiar to the community itself” (2007: 218), is admissible. Fámákinwá’s sentiment is adorable. African cultural values, he says, eroded through the encounter with the West, and if revived, would put Africa back on the track of progress, interrupted by foreigners’ invasion of the social/cultural and intellectual life of Africa (2007: 219). The cultural sense of philosophy, in Fámákinwá’s view, need to address the developmental programme such philosophy has for its society (2007: 220). In another sense, it becomes needful to ask why, how? The careful merging of the analytic method with Richard Bell’s view about the central aim of philosophy is encouraging. The point of difference between what Fámákinwá and Bell posited and what Moses Òkè admit, is succinct. Òkè’s point is that “a traditional philosophy is characterized by communal world views which are expressed largely in uncritical, unreflective, non-discursive, and deeply superstitious beliefs” (1988: 92).

Fámákinwá admits that “the application of the analytic tools of philosophy (second order inquiry) to African cultural values (first order level of inquiry) ought to be encouraged. The two approaches are means to an end, not ends in themselves” (2007: 223). However, adequate care must be taken. This is because the proponents of the analytic method could make the way

we need to see something as it is as vulnerable. Methodological vulnerability should be adequately taken care of. And that is why Peter Omonzejele in *The Concept of Vulnerability in [Clinical] Research Ethics* discussed, at length, the concept of mutual care. As he sees it, the absence of mutual care creates what he calls ‘the prisoners’. Prisoners find themselves in a strictly hierarchical ordered form of life with detrimental consequences for their capacity to live autonomous lives; and for whatever punitive or rehabilitative reasons supporting their confinement, the imprisoned persons (or, let us say cultures) are intentionally made vulnerable and stand in explicitly unequal power relationships that are best described as coercive (2007: 261). If Omonzejele’s view is compared with what Mákindé says in *Redefining African Philosophy in the 21st Century*, that “if we recognize that philosophical thought has the same characteristics everywhere, then, African philosophy must conform to the philosophical thought, with logic and critical analysis as its tools” (2007: 203), vulnerability sets it, while the need for mutual care becomes irrelevant.

Moses Mákindé’s admiration is not, also, hidden. In his view, “defining African philosophy outside of the context of Western philosophical tradition had led to claims and counter claims as to whether or not there existed African philosophy as an intellectual discipline” (2007: 200). As Mákindé says, “the controversy surrounding the issue of method took a central stage” (2007: 200), during the defining moments of accepting African philosophy as an intellectual discipline. The proper management of the views of philosophers, not in all cases, appear disappointing. Mákindé further reiterates that “philosophy has no precise definition” (2007: 199). However, the question central to the presentation of the

theses is that, since philosophy has no precise definition, how do we come to agree to it having a single method of conducting it? Mákindé's answer is simple: "since there is no precise definition of philosophy, the problem was reduced to that of the nature of philosophy and its methodology" (2007: 199). This is rather escapist in nature. The reason why the problem has to be reduced to the nature and methodologies of philosophy has not been made conclusive by any philosopher or conclusion so far.

Against this backdrop, the orientation which Fámákinwá later enjoins is welcoming: "African philosophy should accommodate questioning as one of its methods" (2016: 327). This is sincere. But what he later says that "African philosophy should be an open-ended discipline in which an answer to a philosophical question generates further questions" (2016: 328), shows a serious conflict with his earlier position. This orientation is denigrating. But to make African philosophy look as if without questioning and critical reflection as its tools, it cannot be conducted, is to grossly misrepresent facts. The problem with Fámákinwá's perception of analytic method is value laden. It may be good or right to admit, as Fámákinwá notes, that "debate, disagreement and questioning are essential ingredients of philosophy because they make our work interesting" (2016: 329), but the ingredients do not presuppose that they are all there is to doing philosophy. He perceives that "rigorous examination is not only an essential tool for social dynamism, but also a recipe for creativity" (2016: 329) signify why philosophy must have autonomy. But this is not philosophically enthusiastic. If philosophy should have autonomy, the question 'which philosophical method prevails,' and if the analytic method becomes what other methods must follow, will aid the revelation of an

ingenuity, which according to Biakolo, "confirms the political project behind the Western construction of cultural paradigms of the "Other" (1998: 1). As Sogolo says, "every approach or tradition of philosophy has its own merits, and its own kind of relevance" (1993, p. 15). That alone puts the matter on a plane that makes complete nonsense of the question, 'what tradition of philosophy is more relevant?' This may sound obscure, but it does point to an intrinsic feature of philosophical discourse, and a rewarding one for the professional. For, if, as Sogolo suggests, the question of relevance remains a purely subjective one, then, "one man's opinion is as good as another" (1993: 15).

Conclusion

This study has deployed the phrase 'many faces' as the foil to show that the various philosophical arbitrations for the analytic Westernization of African philosophy, such as we have in Appiah, Masolo, Amato, Bódúnrín, and Fámákinwá, is grossly misdirected. It is one-sided; a celebration of the superiority of the Western analytic culture. However, the Western academic culture is not, in its entirety, analytic. There are other methods which the Western culture did not discourage such as continental, phenomenological, oriental, and so on. The one-sided celebration of the Western analytic culture has not helped the development of philosophy, generally. The study supported this claim by using four different theses. These theses assert that the contemporary analytic African scholars had mistakenly created a false barrier or dichotomy between the cultures of Africa and academic philosophy, thereby trying to defeat what they falsely created. A.G.A. Bello admits that "the debate for the search for the right methodology to conduct philosophical activity by philosophers have been acrimonious. What matters to African philosophy is the method which professional

philosophers adopt for the good life for the peoples of Africa” (2006, p. 263). He ended up seeing this as faulty. He concedes that “no language or method is intrinsically superior to another” (2006: 266). It is admissible, as Ségún Oládípò says, that “the commitment of the African philosopher should be directed to the solution of three basic problems confronting Africa today: (i) the problem of cultural identity, (ii) the problem of knowledge, and (iii) the problem of social control” (2000: 271). If truth be told, at least to a great extent, analytic method cannot wholly, holistically and culturally help Africa to achieve the three basic problems or objectives given by Oládípò.

One thing, so particular about the concession that there are many methodological routes to conducting any philosophical task, is the question which Olúfsemi Táíwò attempted to resolve: Is African philosophy, philosophy? His response is that: “worse still, even among those who are most generous in their deployment of the term “African philosophy”, their purview does not extend beyond the corpus of work that has been produced by contemporary professional philosophers” (1998: 3). This is a testimony to what the

professional philosophers say about African philosophy that it is analytic, but this cannot be all there is to philosophy. What prompted Táíwò’s submission that, in all areas of philosophy basic and derivative, “Africa is a peculiar, almost total absence. Yet one cannot help the feeling that Africans have no philosophy, nothing Africans do holds any interest for philosophy” (1998: 4), —have played a significant role in the absence of Africa from philosophy. Thanks to Olúfsemi Táíwò: his admission that “given that the West presents itself as the embodiment and inventor of the ‘universal,’ we must protest even more loudly that its universal is so peculiar and that its global is local. That is, the West, in constructing the universal, has merely puffed itself up and invited the rest of humanity, or the educated (or analytic) segment of it, to be complicit in this historical swindle” (1998: 4). The historical swindle conducted by the West and those who use it has made a mockery of the value which academic or philosophy should have. This is due to the way the analytic method has been projected. This historical swindle will enhance a deteriorating perception of philosophy.

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