

## **CULTURIOLOGY AS A FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE FOR THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

The argument presented in this paper is that, there is a symbiotic relationship between philosophy and culture. Philosophy is fundamentally a rigorous articulation from the cultural experiences and practices of a given people, and the cultural experiences and practices of a people are articulated and expressed through philosophy. Hence, African philosophy is founded on African culture and African culture is defined and reshaped through African philosophy. This is what the paper calls the principle of culturiology. Generally, the paper conceptualizes culturiology as a foundational principle that asserts two basic claims. 1. Every tradition of philosophy has a cultural springboard which continues to influence its development. 2. Every culture is mainly defined and reshaped through philosophy. The paper adduces reasons in the history of philosophy to support these claims. However, it is discovered that while many philosophers acknowledge the cultural foundation of philosophy, very few are aware of the perpetual influence of culture on philosophy and even fewer realize a homage that every tradition of philosophy pays to its cultural foundation. The paper also exposes the nature of the four tasks of African philosophy. The paper contends that a proper understanding of the necessary symbiotic relationship between philosophy and culture by the practitioners of African philosophy will enable them to do African philosophy as a philosophical tradition that reflects on, articulates, redefines and reshapes the African culture in a changing world. The methods of critical analysis and conversational engagement with relevant extant positions were employed to arrive at the conclusion of the paper

*Keywords: Culturiology, Foundational principle, Progressive development, African Philosophy, and Conversational engagement.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue aimed at addressing in this article is the symbiotic relationship between philosophy and culture. Culture is at the foundation of every tradition of philosophy in the world. Thus, culture incorporates philosophy and philosophy is culture rooted. African philosophy is therefore rooted in the

African culture and African culture is articulated and expressed through African philosophy in all ramifications. This claim is defended by arguing that philosophy in general is the articulation of ideas within the context of a people's cultural heritage, that is, the experiences and way of life of a given people. African philosophy in particular is the articulation of ideas within the context of the cultural heritage of African people (Enyimba 2011). This is the idea represented here with the notion of *culturiology*. Culturiology takes into cognizance the intrinsic relationship between philosophy and culture. It is a philosophical approach that conceives philosophy as a product of a critical and systematic reflection on culture and culture as a fountain for the interpretation and understanding of the nature of reality as perceived in a given society. Culturiology is presented here as a basic principle for grasping the true nature, and promoting the progress of African philosophy.

According to Ekanola Adeshina, it seems axiomatic that all philosophies are the natural products of cultures. That is, there is no escaping the philosophical in a people's experiences... to prove the truism of the cultural embeddedness of philosophy is to argue that this very assumption is implicitly contained in the concept of a western philosophy. If this is granted, then we should not have any problem about the existence of African philosophy (2006:21). Adeshina's assertion aligns with the basic presupposition of this paper in the sense that, he recognizes the nexus between philosophy and culture. However, it differs from the submission of the paper in two senses. First, he uses the argument to show that philosophy is a product of culture and second, on the basis of this, he believes that the existence and relevance of African philosophy can be proven. It is the position of this paper that philosophy is not just a product of culture but is to a large extent culture itself. This approach which is identified here as culturiology, further calls for development of African philosophy as an articulate expression of ideas inherent in the African cultural heritage instead of merely proving the existence and relevance of Africa philosophy, which is in fact a dead issue.

The paper begins with the clarification of the concept of culturiology, then, it makes a distinction between culturology and such concepts as culturology and culturalism. It also presents a systematic exposition of the philosophical principle of culturiology and what it describes as the four tasks of African philosophy, namely, investigative, analytic, synoptic and creative tasks.

## CULTUROLOGY, CULTURALISM AND CULTURIOLOGY

Culturology is a concept associated with Leslie White, an American anthropologist known for his advocacy of theories of cultural evolution and socio-cultural evolution. Leslie Alvin White was born in January 19, 1900 in Solida, Colo USA and died in March 31, 1975. He is said to have played a major role in creating the development of anthropology at the University of Michigan and was the President of American Anthropological Association in 1964.

According to him, culturology is the science and study of culture. It is the scientific understanding, description, analysis and production of cultures as a whole (3). From the perspective of social sciences, culturology is defined as the field of science which studies culture as cultural systems. In the words of Epstein, Mikhail; "In the terms of contemporary social sciences, the word culturology is borrowed from American anthropologist Leslie White who defines it as the field of science which studies culture as cultural systems (Epstein, 1999: 2). Following White, Mario Bunge (1998) defines culturology as the sociological, economic, political and historical study of concrete cultural systems. Culturology is a branch of anthropology concerned with the study of cultural institutions as distinct from the people who are involved in them. Leslie's notion of culturology perceives culture among other things, as distinct from the people who practice or own this culture. This is very difficult to fathom and appears to be contradictory. How can a culture be divorced from its people and how can a people be divorced from their culture? Culturology which this paper advocates does not perceive such distinction. A people and their culture are indistinguishable and so are their philosophy and their culture (Enyimba, 2019a: 43).

Culturalism on the other hand is a philosophical and sociological concept developed by Polish-American philosopher and sociologist, Florian Znaniecki (1919: 1-23). It was used by him to describe the central importance of culture as an organizing force in human affairs. Culturalism exposes the role of culture in any human affairs and in institutional and organizational dynamics. This again differs from the philosophical idea, approach and principle of culturology proposed in this paper.

The concept and principle of culturology as used in this essay differ remarkably from such similar concepts as culturology and culturalism. Culturology is a philosophical approach or principle which perceives culture as the foundation of any philosophy of any society and forms the central distinguishing factor between and among philosophies of the world. Culturology insists that in the event where culture is downplayed, there is no philosophy of any kind, and in the event where philosophy is downplayed, culture becomes empty, mere superstitions and crude practices. Thus for the principle of culturology, philosophy and culture are so intertwined that they are inextricable from each other. Culturology is therefore an authentic approach to African philosophy by way of rigorous and critical cogitation on the Africans in the context of their cultural experiences and heritage. Culturological approach to the study of any aspects of African reality will among other things enhance the restoration of the loss dignity and glory of Africa's culture and heritage. Hence culturology can be applied to any aspect of Africa's or a people's life, namely education, politics, religion etc.

Unlike the approaches, principles and methodologies of African philosophy which shall be highlighted in a subsequent section of this work,

which perceive culture as simply relevant in the articulation of the philosophy of a people (Africans for instance), culturology equates philosophy with culture. It portrays philosophy as the foundation of culture and culture as the foundation of philosophy. Culturology is a “back to the root” kind of approach to Authentic African philosophy. In other words, to understand the culture of a people, one needs to go back to the philosophical foundation, origin or root of that people’s culture and worldview. In the same vein to comprehend the nature of the philosophy of a people is to go back to the cultural foundation, origin and root of that people’s cultural worldview. For culturology, to do one is to be engaged in doing the other, which implies that to do cultural analysis of a people’s reality is to be engaged in philosophical analysis of such reality, vice versa.

## A SYSTEMATIC EXPOSITION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLE OF CULTURIOLOGY

Different principles, theories and methodologies have been developed by different scholars such as philosophers, sociologists, educationist, anthropologists, historians, political Scientists etcetera, as a way of building a strong intellectual edifice that can be truly African. These exercises are carried out by these African scholars with the aim to reconstructing the bastardized image of Africa, its denied heritage and identity, establishing its original contributions to the intellectual *well* of all nations, and hence re-inventing the authentic African identity.

In line with the attainment of this noble goal, African philosophers have postulated ideas which have metamorphosed into systems and methods of philosophy which they believe answer the question of the nature of African philosophy. It is worthy of note, that some of these philosophical postulations seem to have overlooked the important place of culture in the articulation of anything “African” or what can be described as “African anything”. By this I mean any intellectual postulation that can be called African, such as African philosophy, African politics/democracy, African literature, African science etc. Other philosophers who may have recognized the vital place of culture in the evolution, articulation and development of Africa philosophy, have done so in a manner different from the demands and tenets of the principle of culturology which is expounded in this paper. A highlight of some of these philosophers and their theories, principles, methods and/or systems of doing African philosophy is of essence here.

In a very insightful paper entitled “A Brief History of African Philosophy: From Frustration to Reflection,” Chimakonam (2014: 325) made a rigorous attempt to prove the point that African philosophy originated not from wonder like the Western tradition but from frustration which eventually led to reflection. According to him, it was the frustration of the returnee African scholars that first led them into philosophizing and still leads African philosophers to this day a continent under turmoil. In his words; “My point

with frustration is meant to draw the attention to the emotions that provide the philosophical impetus to the returnee African scholars" (2014:325). What this scholar suggests is that, instead of "wonder" which is believed to be the root of philosophizing in the west, the African were driven into philosophical activities by an angry frustration, an emotional outburst against what can be termed an affront on his (very existence) beingness.

It is my view that Chimakonam was too harsh with the African by describing his reaction to the distortion of his self-identity by the West as "frustration". It was rather in the spirit of apologetics or defense of oneself that the African began to philosophize. A frustrated person loses his/her self-worth, sees nothing good in him/her self again and so resigns to fate. But an apologetics or a defender believes in his/her self-worth and makes every bold attempt by any means necessary, not only to defend him/her self but also to re-assert his/her authentic self. Hence, apologetics and not frustration explains better the historical development of African philosophy. However, in line with the principle of culturology, it is more appropriate to argue that, neither wonder nor frustration is itself the basic foundation for philosophizing. It is the cultural reality of a people; and the African did not begin to philosophize after the returnee scholars. Philosophical cogitation has been inherent in the cultural practices and worldview of the Africans long before the advent of Europeans and indeed before the returnee African scholars. So Chimakonam's view is relative to the context of the development of African philosophy as an academic discipline. Perhaps the cultural reality of the African at that time was frustrating. The same could be said of the sort of disillusionment that faced post Aristotleian philosophy after the destruction of Athens, which led to the withdrawal from the state to the individual as a source of happiness. This could be noticed in the difference between the approach of Epicureanism and Stoicism. The important point is that wonder or frustrations are at best immediate rather than the basic roots of philosophizing. The prevailing cultural experiences of a people in a given society at a given time are the root source of philosophizing everywhere. No one philosophizes from nowhere or in a cultural vacuum.

Be that as it may one cannot but agree with Chimakonam that the historical development of African philosophy cannot be partitioned after the western tradition, since for him, "the historical concepts as ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary have no factual historical determinative meaning with recourse to the history of African philosophy which just began in the 20th century (2014:361). Thus, his, delineation of the history of African philosophy into four periods namely, early period (1920s – 1960s), middle period (1960s – 1980s), later period (1980s – 1990s) and New Era (1990s – date).

It was in the later period from his analysis that one witnesses the emergence of schools and systems of doing African philosophy. according to Chimakonam, the afro-eclectic school for instance, which is described as a

romantic interaction of the ideals of the particularist and universalist schools, was first advocated by Uduigwemen and this was further elaborated in various works by people like Abanuka, Onunwa, Ekwealor and Ijomah (Chimkonam, 2014: 350). This scholar maintained that Njikoka philosophy by Ozumba and himself is a variant of Afro-eclecticism. Other variants of Afro-eclecticism according to Chimakonam include Innocent Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* ontology, Iroegbu's Uwa Onoloty, Ekwuru and Ekwutuorah's Afrozealotism among others (Chimakonam, 2014: 350).

In what seems to be a corroboration of Chimakonam's exposition above, Mesembe Edet, in his book *Afroxiology, Conceptual Mandelanization and the Conversational Order in the New Era of African Philosophy*, hold the view that, until recently African philosophy lacked system-building approach to philosophical inquiry. In his thinking it is in the present new era or contemporary period of African Philosophy that work began on developing philosophies, systems and schools with their unique approaches in African philosophical inquiry. Accordingly, Mesembe identifies *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy and the system of integrative humanism as two prominent systems that have emerged in the Calabar School of Philosophy (2017:7). Other methods, systems and approaches to African philosophy and their proponents, as rightly identified by Mesembe are as follows:

Wiredu's cultural reconstructionism and conceptual decolonization, Peter Bodurin's universalism and Paulin Hountodji's scientificism, C. S. Momoh's Canons of Discourse in African philosophy, Odera Oruka's philosophic sagacity, Barry Hallen's cultural Thematics, William Abraham's cultural essentialism, Olusegun Oladipo's method of relevance, M. B. Ramose' Ubuntu, Ozumba and Chimakonam's integrativism, Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, Chimakonam's interrogativism and conversationalism (Mesembe 2017: 8).

In very unique ways, these philosophical systems and methodologies in one sense or other recognize the relevance of culture to the philosophical enterprise, but merely as reference point where the need arises. The philosophical import of African culture is seriously de-emphasized or better still completely ignored or down-played. Most of these philosophical systems and their progenitors describe in derogatory terms any attempt to postulate any culturally relevant philosophical idea. This is what culturology intends to overcome.

In his book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, John S. Mbiti subscribing to what has become known as the traditionalists or ethnophilosophic conception of the nature of African philosophy, avers that authentic African philosophy refers to the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which Africans think, act or speak in different situations of life. It is the communal world view which is to be found in the religions, proverbs, oral tradition, ethics and morals of the concerned council (1977:2). Scholars like Bolaji

Idowu, Asare Opoku, Marciel Griaule, etcetera seem to subscribe to Mbiti's assertion. The point here is that, culturiology which is the idea pushed forward in this paper does not subscribe to the idea of African philosophy being essentially communal world view rather it posits that the authentic way of doing African philosophy is by a critical or rigorous cogitation on the African in the context of their cultural heritage and experiences. Thus, to restore the dignity of the African person, African cultural values and heritage and the authentic contributions of Africa in world civilization, is to perceive African culture and African philosophy as two sides of a coin, in which case the philosophical nature of African (culture) experiences and practice, as well as the cultural nature of (African) philosophy is made bare. According to Momoh;

a genuine philosopher like a genuine individual is a child of experiences, time and culture and all philosophizing take place using these influential parameters. A philosopher can write to reflect or react positively, negatively or critically towards his experience, times and culture. A positive reflection can sometimes end up in the speculative and holistic system building, a negative reflection may sometimes end up in a devastating and uncompromising criticism and rejection of one's experiences, times and culture. But a critical reflection can build on the ruins of the later to erect the former (1993:1).

Momoh's declaration above lends credence to the relationship between philosophy and culture and between the philosopher and his cultural milieu, which the principle of culturiology projects. This interdependence is so intrinsic that the philosopher becomes a product of his cultural experiences and culture becomes the springboard for philosophical cogitations. This position has been variedly expressed by Mankinde (2010:14), Okolie and Nweke (2017:18), Russell (1945:14) and a host of others. The significance of this interrelationship between philosophy and culture for the progressive development of African philosophy is the central focus of this paper and as encapsulated in the principle of culturiology. In African philosophical studies, it has been argued that culture is a necessary but irredeemably insufficient criterion for the categorization of philosophies. This type of argument is very important for the principle of culturiology, in the sense that, it recognizes the necessity of culture in the articulation and categorization of philosophical traditions. However, the major concern of this paper is to draw attention to symbiotic relationship between philosophy and culture that is so often neglected and how this influences philosophical cogitations, articulations and expressions. This is what culturiology aims at. In what follows, the paper examines the nature of the four tasks of African philosophy.

## CULTURIOLOGY AND PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

I demonstrate in this section how culturiology enhances the progressive development of African philosophy. In doing this I shall make reference to some randomly selected African philosophers and some African cultures. As stated earlier, culturiology perceives culture as the foundation or root of African philosophy, and forewarns that any attempt to eliminate or neglect culture in any philosophical cogitation or engagement may spell doom for further development of African philosophy. This is why as observed elsewhere it is uncharitable and grossly erroneous to brand any rigorous interpretation of aspects of African cultural experience in African thought as 'ethnosophy' or 'ethnophilosophy'. The fact is that most pioneers of African philosophy, if not all, unwittingly subscribes to the demands of the principles of culturiology in their different writings.

The relevance of culture both as an aspect of communal worldview of African societies and as a viable aspect of philosophical cogitation is not in doubt, only that most African scholars either choose to neglect or are only engaging in mere argumentation. What is meant here is that African culture still serves as a fundamental aspect of philosophical ideas even for contemporary African philosophers such as T U Nwala (1985), C S Momoh (1989), K C Anyanwu (1989), C B Okolo (1993), Panteleon Iroegbu (1995), Innocent Asouzu (2004, 2007a, 2007b), Jonathan Chimakonam (2015), Fainos Magena (2016), Ada Agada (2019 and 2020), Edeh (1985), Okere (1976) and a host of others. These scholars do not perceive African philosophy as communal (which is the reason it is described as ethnophilosophy), but as an individual, critical enterprise riding on the crest of rigorous contextual and conscientious articulation and interpretation of African cultural experiences. The aim is to solve existential problems facing the African person and society. Doing African philosophy from this stand point is what can give African philosophical thought a distinct character in the global philosophical space.

The significance of upholding African culture as the vehicle upon which African philosophy could thrive is made clear when one recognizes the intricate relationship between and among language, culture and thought or philosophy. To begin with, we communicate our thoughts with language, which is itself a combination of words, sounds and or signs that represent our reality (See Wittgenstein 1993, 19). Language is a fundamental aspect of a people's culture, whereas culture forms part of a people's reality, worldview or philosophy? For Okolo (1993,13), language is the tool of the logician and the vehicle of his thought. Following this, if language is a constituent of our culture and our culture is expressible through our language, then it follows that culture is the tool of the philosopher and the vehicle of his thought (Enyimba 2019a, 39; Enyimba 2019b, 11).

Furthermore, following Wittgenstein's position that "the limit of one's language is the limit of his world (1993, 36), one might rightly argue that the

limit of African reality, philosophy or worldview, is the limit of African culture and language. Thus, culturological approach in philosophical cogitation becomes very indispensable in the progressive development of African philosophy.

Culture generally is a combination of indigenous language, thought system, values, dressing, food, dance, drama, music, literature, customs, signs, symbols, beliefs, religions, attitudes, perceptions, all which constitute a people's total way of life. These are what define who we are and what is important to us as a people (Bryam 2008, 188). This means that culture underlies and sustains a people's language and thought since language and thought are products of culture.

Ngugi (1981, 15) corroborates this assertion with his description of language as both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Thus, the idea of culturology in the development of African philosophy aligns with Ngugi's submission that specific culture is transmitted in its particularity as the language of a specific people with specific history. For him, written literature, orature and philosophy are means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries. Language as communication and as culture as well as language and culture as carriers of philosophy and worldview are then products of each other. Language carries culture and culture carries the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world (Ngugi 1981, 14). Indeed, these are what constitute our philosophy. When we look at this objectively and critically, it becomes difficult to agree with those scholars who would dismiss any philosophical engagement that is culturally embedded as non-philosophy.

To further understand the place of culturology in the development of African philosophy, let us X-ray the cultural nuances, cultural concepts and categories employed in the philosophical excogitation of some randomly selected contemporary philosophers from different cultural background.

C B Okolo believes that thinking occurs in a given cultural milieu (1993, 14). African mode of thinking (philosophy) starts from the culture and through it transcends the culture. It is plausible to argue that one's philosophical views are dependent on the culture which has influenced or inspired them and can be described by using the language which has been shaped by that culture. Thus, the understanding of a people's reality or worldview or an aspect of reality from the perspective of a given culture is enhanced by the knowledge of their cultural values and experiences as can be found in the language, proverbs, customs and norms. Similarly, an understanding of a people's virtue culture and its nuances can be enhanced by the knowledge of their reality or worldview evident also in their language, values, proverbs, customs and norms.

In his idea of conceptual decolonization, Wiredu (2002) suggests two major things. First, an avoidance of the unexamined assimilation in our thoughts of conceptual framework embedded in foreign philosophical tradition

which has had strong impact on African thought and life. Second a utilization of the resources of our own African indigenous/cultural conceptual schemes in our philosophical cogitations (cited in Oladipo 1996, 19-20). These aspects of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization point to the need for African philosophy to take African meanings and cultural concepts seriously. This is to say that the growth and development of African philosophy will ensue from a critical and conscious appropriation of philosophical elements of African culture as an aspect of philosophizing activities.

Wiredu further demonstrated the possibility and viability of this culturological approach in the development of African philosophy in two of his works namely, "African Concept of Mind" (1983, 113) and "The Concept of Truth in Akan Language" (1985, 48). In these two works, the author leans strongly on the cultural framework of the Akan people of Ghana to demonstrate an African indigenous understanding of the concepts of mind and truth. This is a culturological approach to philosophical investigation. It is this type of approach; I argue that will drive philosophy in Africa to its expected height and place in the global philosophical place. Even though Wiredu constitute part of those African scholars that ridicule 'cultural philosophy', yet he employs concepts, schemes and categories in his philosophizing, perhaps, because of its inevitability in any philosophical investigation process (see also Wiredu 1980; 2000). This is why I observed earlier that most notable African philosophers unwittingly employ culturological approach in the articulation of their thoughts, ideas and systems of philosophy.

Panteleon Iroegbu is another scholar whose philosophical-cum-intellectual trajectory thrives on the appropriation of cultural nuances, conceptualization of indigenous – cultural words, notions, wise sayings, and categories, and the unveiling of the nature and philosophical imports of the same. His works are instances of the cultural essentialism that the principle of culturology encourages as a way towards the development of African philosophy. For example, Iroegbu leverages on Igbo cultural categories to develop his "Uwa Ontology" in which he articulates and addresses some of the weaknesses of found in most western and African ontological theories (Iroegbu 1995; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 65-88).

The culturological underpinning of the work is such that the word 'Uwa' is drawn from the Igbo cultural language and conceptualized to mean 'an englobing phenomenon' such that it serves as the only existing reality, which consists of other beings. This was used to further develop 'Uwa Ontological System' by deepening the notion of 'Uwa' to perceive being as being because it belongs to 'Uwa' and being enfolded in 'Uwa' is multi-dimensional and inter-relational (Iroegbu 1995; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 65-88). Other such approach in the development of philosophical ideas by Iroegbu is his African theory of education encapsulated in his concept of "Nkuziology" (Iroegbu 2005; Irabor and Olufowobi 2020) which is inspired and drawn from the Igbo cultural notion of 'Nkuzu' which connotes teaching or impactation. These are some of

the evidences that strengthens the view that if we proceed in this form, African Philosophy will not only be enriched, but will also grow in originality, content and application especially as it will aid in addressing existential issues of concern.

Similarly, we see culturiology enhancing the African philosophical development in the works of Innocent Asouzu. Drawing philosophical inspiration from the Igbo cultural life world, Asouzu (2007a, 5) developed his "Ibuanyidanda" philosophical system also known as complementary reflection. According to him, having observed the mutual complementary relationship embedded in lives and experiences of the Igbo people of Akunwata community in Arondizuogu village in Abia State where he hails from, Asouzu discovered that this is the spirit or mindset behind his people's survival and ability to surmount every difficulty. Moreover, this cultural lifestyle of mutual-interdependence was inherent in such proverbs, adages and wise sayings of the Igbo people of the Sub-Saharan African as *ibuanyidanda*, *igwebuike*, *njikoka*, among others. These are all connotative and expressive of the 'power in togetherness, unity and co-operation (Asouzu 2004, 19; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c). The point being made here is that culturiological approach is what has enabled Asouzu to develop the theory of complementary reflection (Ibuanyidanda philosophy) to what it is today. Indeed, a careful reading of Asouzu's works on complementary reflection will reveal the fact that culturiological concepts of Igbo extracts are replete in the entire system of philosophy.

These may include but not limited to the following; *Ikwa-Ogwe* (bridge-building/methodology), *Ihe mkpuchi anya* (Phenomenon of concealment), *Ihe di isi nwere odu* (missing links of reality). This strengthens our claim that culturiology is a foundational principle for the progressive development of African philosophy. The argument here is that African culture as can be found in the various cultural experiences, languages, proverbs and worldviews of different principles of African descent is not to be denigrated, but perceived and employed as philosophical ideologies when critically and rigorously articulated in African philosophical studies. It should be considered the intellectual hobnob of a systematic and methodological articulation of African philosophy that is original and progressive. Asouzu lends credence to the above claim when he observes that;

One can say that philosophical ideas and systems are deeply enshrined in wise sayings and religious symbols of all peoples and at all times. These can be considered the much needed materials of history of ideas, which need to be made explicit in the process of personal critical reflection. This is valid, not only for African philosophy, but also, for all peoples who equally have their own symbols, wise sayings, proverbs, witches, fortune tellers, wizards, sorcerers, lands of the living dead, medicine men and women and

all those phenomena that many have come to regard as typically African experiences (Asouzu 2007, 61b).

Nevertheless, our point of departure from Asouzu is that these are philosophy in practice when they are critically, rigorously and creatively engaged with, not just philosophical materials.

Culturiological enhancement of African philosophical articulation and reflection can also be found in the Yoruba tradition as evident in the works of Sohie Oluwole, Oladele Balogun, Ogunmodede, Fayemi, among others. These scholars have demonstrated in their different works the indispensable place, role and significance of Yoruba cultural experiences, life-world, values, proverbs and wise sayings in the development of Yoruba philosophy in particular, and African philosophy in general. These were done by reformulating certain Yoruba notions or words into concepts and categories upon which some particular philosophical ideas, thoughts or problems were unveiled, espoused, and unpacked. These were also used to point a way to possible solutions to some existential problems faced by the African person in his/her world.

See for instance, Oluwale's argument that cultural songs, proverbs, liturgies and stories are important sources of African responses to perennial philosophical questions as well as contemporary issues (1996, 1-20; 1999). Being true to this claim, her philosophical works reflects the tenets of the Yoruba school of philosophical thought which is ingrained in the cultural and religious beliefs of various region of Yoruba land popularly known as "ifa". Her belief in the primacy of culture in philosophical cogitation led to her claim that African philosophy built on the cultural and religious belief of the people predates the Western tradition as the ancient African philosopher 'Orunmila' predates Socrates. For her, while 'Orunmila' represents the African cultural values and orientation, Socrates represents that of the West. This forms the carnal of one of her influential books with the titled *Socrates and Orunmila: Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy* published in 2017.

Another Yoruba scholar who applies culturiological approach in philosophical cogitation the Yoruba cultural ambiance is Oladele A. Balogun. He understands the primacy and inevitability of cultural conceptualization and categorization in the development of African philosophy. For example, in addressing the question of meaningfulness of life, Balogun (2020), draws inspiration from the Yoruba communal society to articulate a Yoruba philosophy of (meaningful) life that is neither supernaturalistic nor nihilistic in motivation and orientation. More culturiologically appealing is his appropriation of the Yoruba notion of 'Ori' to articulate a Yoruba traditional theory of Human destiny. He locates the idea of 'ori' and human destiny in traditional Yoruba thought within the framework of soft-determinism. His arguments in the work, provides a philosophical justification for punishment and moral responsibility in traditional and contemporary Yoruba society (2007,

118). The same can be rightly said about his work on "Proverbial oppression of women in Yoruba African Culture" published in 2010.

Attoe David Aribiah engages in a culturological assessment of gender issues as it affects the African society. In doing this, he exposes the weaknesses of affirmative action in ensuring gender balance in African societies. He adopts an indigenous Efik cultural notion of *Ukem*, re-articulates and re-conceptualizes it as a philosophical idea alongside its two principles of *Owo* and *Irike*, to present an African philosophical model or tool that is capable of confronting the ills of gender inequality in African society and the world over (Attoe 2019, 38). Even though Attoe is one of the hard critics of philosophizing from a cultural stand point, often known as ethno-philosophy (Attoe 2016, 100), yet in the work under discussion, he adopts a cultural standpoint to articulate a philosophical solution to the societal problem of gender inequality ravaging Africa and the globe. Hence, quite unwittingly like most other philosophers subscribe to the dictates and demands of the principle of culturology in their philosophical cogitations. This further goes to substantiate the argument for the indispensability of culture in philosophical reflection and the interpenetration of philosophy and culture in any investigation in African Philosophy. This approach is what will encourage the progressive development of African philosophy, and the maintenance of the benefits so far achieved in African philosophy project.

Ephraim Essien and Iniobong Umotong articulate a robust philosophy of the Annang people of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria, South of the East. In that rare work, they leaned heavily on the rich and colourful cultural notions, concepts, words and categories of the Annang people to unveil and present their rich philosophical embeddedness that reflect the life world and reality of the people of Annang and their culture (2013, 166-187). This is what culturology proposes and encourages in the development of African philosophy. Relevant cultural notions, words or expressions are creatively and innovatively and innovatively engaged with, elevated to a level of concepts and presented as a philosophy of a people, since culture and all it stands for, and philosophy are inseparable in the light of culturological principle.

Thus, with such cultural notions cum philosophical concepts such as *Agwo* (personhood), *Uwa* (fate), *Abot* (destiny), *Ifiok* (knowledge), *Akpaniko* (truth), *Abotology* (causality), among others; the Annang conception of human person, freewill and determinism, epistemology, and causality respectively, were articulated by these scholars. The major challenge confronting this exposition of Annang cultural philosophy by the duo, is the fact that a whole lot of ideas and almost all aspects and branches of philosophy of the Annangs were compressed in just a twenty two (22) paged journal article. For me this is significantly inadequate. It is pertinent to devote time and space on each of the concepts and or branch of the cultural philosophy in a given paper and in different journal outlets, contrasting, and comparing them with other similar concepts and branches in other cultures.

When this is done in the spirit and principle of culturology, it will aid the growth and dissemination of these cultural concepts, ideas and philosophies of the Annang people for instance, to be widely read and engage with by other scholars in the discipline but from different cultures. In this way, African philosophy becomes progressive in its development.

Mention should be made at this point of other scholars who have made effort in the direction of appropriating some cultural notions, concepts and sayings to formulate a system, method or principle of philosophizing. These include J O Chimakonam's notion of *arumaristics* (2015, 2017,), M. Ramose (2006) and F. Mangena (2014a; 2014b; 2016) in their respective works on *Ubuntu*, M. Enyimba's notion of *Madukakism* (2019c), M. I Edet's "African Concept of a Good Man", and others too numerous to mention.

In what follows I unveil what can be considered as the major tasks of African philosophy. But because space will not allow me to apply culturological principle to these problems here, I call on interested scholars to see it as an area for further research otherwise I might be laden with the responsibility to do a follow up paper where this identified limitation will be taken up.

## THE FOUR TASKS OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

### *Investigative Task*

This particular function of African philosophy has to do with the concern to locate the principles, and presuppositions underlying various experiences and activities within African culture. The implication of this task of African philosophy, is that, in any given experience or activity within an African cultural setting, there is a basic principle or assumptions upon which they are built, and it is the duty of African philosophy or worldview to discover these principles and lay-bare its significance. In other words, to investigate the ultimate principles underlying any activity is to investigate its basic foundation, and to search for its metaphysics or reality. This line of reasoning must have informed Adebola's assertion that "metaphysics...also lies at the very foundation (or principles) or practically all human discourses (experiences) and endeavour" (2006: 74).

### *Analytic Task*

Here, African philosophy having discovered the basic principles or presuppositions underlying various experiences or activities in an African culture, engages itself in the analysis or breaking down of these principles into simpler units for easy grasp and ultimately to reveal their forms, structures and nature. Commenting on the nature of this analytic challenge or task of contemporary African philosophy, Oladipo (1992: 65) avers that, this analytical and critical attitude to traditional worldviews would enable us to determine the strengths of the beliefs, values of the principles and practices that constitute their basic elements.

### ***Synoptic Task***

What African philosophy does at this level is to place the various identified principles underlying African experiences side by side according to their functions and show where they agree or disagree with the sole purpose of building an orderly society. This synoptic task is derived from the analytic function of African philosophy. In other words, the synoptic task of African philosophy begins where the analytic stops. In this sense, it enables us to achieve a fundamental understanding of the world in which we live in order to change it towards a desirable direction. For Ijomah (1996:25), to philosophize synoptically is to see every aspect of everything together. Synoptic philosophy therefore encourages us to perceive everything not only by considering the thing alone but also considering all its border issues that constitute its universe of discourse.

### ***Creative Task***

African philosophy also performs a creative task in that it formulates new values or principles for the purpose of harmonization and provision of conceptual framework by which the values can be understood, analyzed and justified. What is clear here is that African philosophy in weighing the principles and presupposition underlying some African cultural experiences attempts to discard those ones which are either unfounded or have become obsolete and replace it with a well founded or more forward looking one all in the bid to justify the particular practice or African experience in question.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, attention has been drawn to the symbiotic affinity of every philosophical tradition with its cultural springboard. The point was made that culture is an indispensable element that influences the nature of a given tradition of philosophy. This line of thought was used to draw attention to the often-neglected symbiotic relationship existing between philosophy and culture. Thus, culturology was articulated as a foundational principle that recognizes this symbiotic relationship, thereby aiding the progressive development of African philosophy. References were made to different African scholars whose works betray an appropriation of some of the significant aspects of their cultural concepts, categories and proverbial sayings in the formulation, articulation and presentation of their philosophical methods and systems. Thereby showing how culturology enhances the progressive development of African philosophy. Four major tasks were shown to challenge African philosophical studies and cogitations in line with the need for a culturological approach. While this paper does not claim to be exhaustive, there is a need for further studies on the application of the principle of culturology in confronting the four major tasks of African philosophy.

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