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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND LITERATURE

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Abstract

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

Keywords: African philosophy, African Literature, African religion.

Introduction

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

Philosophy questions every reality in a bid to appreciate them. Questioning in this context makes and identifies you a philosopher—this aligns with Godalex Ezeani's definition of philosophy as *inquism*, that is, intelligent questioning. However, for him, the actual meaning of philosophy is *intelligent questioning plus critical analysis*; that is, in a simple formula, Ezeani (2015) maintains that philosophy is primarily an inquiry. Therefore, it will constantly question your intentions and actions. It is the habit of the intellect, according to William Anton Amo. It is the habit of philosophy to examine your daily activities and involvements. Moreover, this again makes you, young philosophers, be mindful of the *dictum* of Socrates, the first philosopher of Western Philosophical Tradition,



as scripted on the doorpost of the Delphic oracle, thus: *man knows thyself* as well as being conscious of the Aristotelian *dictum* thus: *unexamined life is not worth living*. Maritain (2005) was firmly of the opinion that traditionally, philosophy is divided into three principal sections: logic, speculative philosophy (when it is knowledge-based alone), and practical philosophy (when it is for the general good of man). African philosophy, which has assumed the status of a discipline and a movement, is hereby understood more as a disciplinary movement. As a discipline, it is a course in its own right. As a movement, it is a reaction to the Western interference in African education amid long years of relegating Africans to the corridors of ignorance and ill-fated knowledge. African Philosophy is divided into main and minor branches, and we acknowledge that it has come to stay like other counterparts within the philosophical tradition.

Geographically, the African continent is blessed with landmass. Naturally, Africa is endowed beautifully with resources. Human resources seem to be the greatest endowment of continental Africa. The beauty of Africa embellished more with natural and human resources, has attracted the white man's expedition of Africa and has continued to pull them over even till today to the extent that many had settled in Africa and refused to leave even when they were asked by recent Papal order to hands-off Africa. If Africa is not gratifyingly rewarding, why the rush in coming to Africa and the continual presence of white people in Africa? Continental Africa, often referred to by explorers as a dark continent, comprises 54 countries with more than 75 languages amidst many cultures and ethnic traditions. History, especially biblical history, attests to Africa's role in the history of salvation, as Jacobs and his sons were in Egypt for centuries till the Exodus. Jesus Christ's refuge in Egypt with his parents during the massacre of Herod was very significant. The Christianization of Africans began in these biblical episodes, culminating at the Calvary encounter with Simon of Cyrene.

The original ancient name of Mama Africa, popularly acknowledged as the mother of civilization, was Alkebulan, meaning mother of mankind (*Australopithecus afarensis*). At the same time, other sources translated it as the Garden of Eden (Wikipedia, n.d.). However, historians have tried to connect the name Africa to the continent's climate. Some historians traced the word Africa to the Greek word *aphrikē*, translated as the land free from cold and horror. Some historians prefer the Roman word *aprica*, meaning sunny, or the Phoenician word *afar*, meaning dust. Whichever connection stands, Africa is nicknamed the mother continent, linking one to Alkebulan (Wikipedia, n.d.). Africa has a richly diverse religious complexness amidst distinct religious traditions that have had an intense and fundamental impact on philosophical thoughts and critical enterprise. From their autochthonous and indigenous belief systems deeply rooted in many forms of animism and ancestor worship to the advent of many religions of the book like Christianity and Islam, through colonialism and Uthman Dan Fodio's Jihadist Movement of 1804, African indigenous religion has been shaped and reshaped by a multitude of cultural and religious *cum* socio-historical factors. Some of the African socio-political theories, like communalism, igwebuikism, nkrumaism-consciencism, ujaama, et cetera, which are central to many African religious traditions, have significantly influenced African philosophy of religion. It emphasizes the sole idea of brotherhood and the interconnectedness of individuals within the community. Hence the idea of no community, no communion. These socio-political concepts express uniquely the spirit of collective well-being. Today, such religious understanding of belief systems and appreciation of values

have greatly influenced the African philosophy of Literature. Hence, many scholars and authors are into African literary works gradually exploring themes of African and Africana political theories, thoughts, spiritual innuendoes, and understanding between humans and the divine. Equally, the renowned prolific writer and African author, Chinua Achebe, remains a good example of one who seamlessly integrates and employs oral storytelling techniques in his seminal novel *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe masterfully adopts the use of storytelling to vividly portray the complex and intricate connection between the African philosophy of religion and Literature. Achebe demonstrates how these two domains are intertwined in their exploration of the human condition expressed adequately in the African experience. The rich tapestry of African philosophy of religion and Literature finds harmony within African culture and society through oral traditions and storytelling. Equally, African philosophy of religion and Literature explores the power of language and narrative in their profound insights into the interconnectedness of humanity and the diversity of their elements of beliefs.

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

Review of Mama Africa's Edges of Predicament

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

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa is a 1972 book by Walter Rodney that describes how European colonial regimes deliberately exploited and underdeveloped Africa. One of

his main arguments throughout the book was that Africa developed Europe at the same rate as Europe's underdeveloped Africa. An online assessment has this to say about the book thus: *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is an ambitious master work of political economy, detailing the impact of slavery and colonialism on the history of international capitalism. In this classic book, Rodney makes the unflinching case that African mal-development is not a natural feature of geography, but a direct product of imperial extraction from the continent. This practice continues up into the present. The meticulously researched *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* remains a relevant study for understanding the so-called significant divergence between Africa and Europe, just as it remains a prescient resource for grasping the multiplication of global inequality today. Angela Davis offers a striking foreword to the book, exploring its lasting contributions to a revolutionary and feminist practice of anti-imperialism.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a book by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, written in Portuguese in 1967–68, but published first in English, in a translation by Myra Bergman Ramos, in 1970. Later that year a Spanish translation was published. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is Freire's attempt to help the oppressed fight back to regain their lost humanity and achieve full humanization. Freire outlines steps with which the oppressed can regain their humanity, starting with acquiring knowledge about the concept of humanization itself.

The Partition of Africa in Berlin, in 1884, was one of the most spectacular episodes in modern history. For Europeans, Africa was still an unknown continent in 1880. Thirty years later, almost all of it was under European control. This race for colonies went hand in hand with a host of thrilling exploits and dramatic conflicts, of which Stanley's exploration of the Congo and Gordon's death in Khartoum were just two examples. *The Partition of Africa*, also called the Scramble for Africa or Conquest of Africa, was the exploitation, invasion, annexation, division and colonization of most of Africa by seven Western European powers during a short period known as New Imperialism (between 1881 and 1914).

Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Philosophy by George Granville Monah James (November 9, 1893 – June 30, 1956) was a Guyanese-American historian and author, known for his 1954 book *Stolen Legacy*, featuring a new introduction challenging the notion that civilization started in Greece. An on-line overview assessment of this uncompromising classic attempts to prove that the true authors of Greek philosophy were not Greeks but Egyptians. The text asserts that the praise and honour blindly given to the Greeks for centuries rightfully belong to the people of Africa, and argues that the theft of this great African legacy led to the erroneous world opinion that the African continent has made no contribution to civilization. Quoting such celebrated Greek scholars as Herodotus, Hippocrates, Aristotle, Thales, and Pythagoras, who admitted to the influence of Egyptian studies in their work. *Stolen Legacy* was one of the first scholarly works that attempted to recover the lost history of early African civilization.

Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D. by Chancellor Williams was his sixteen years of research. It was believed that Blacks have always been at the bottom. Hence, the *Destruction of Black Civilization*. Williams instead contends that many elements - nature, imperialism, and stolen legacies - have aided in the destruction of the black civilization. The book was written at a time when many black students, educators, and scholars were starting to piece together the connection between the way their history was taught and the way they were perceived by others and by themselves.

The African Origin of Civilization: by Cheikh Anta Diop is very definitive with regard to matters of Africa and her contributions to civilization. But the rate of poverty, chaos, shame and disgrace of black people everywhere were so loud that such allusions that Africa was the cradle of civilization seemed to be music to pacify our grieving heart. The book showed that the Egyptians who invented the arts and sciences and gave humanity civilization were blacks— not just black-skinned, as though some accidental sunburnt or something. They were Negroes. Dr. Diop was right to note that the Egyptians, the great Pharaohs, the tutors of the Greeks, were Blacks like us the researchers.

African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period, 2780-330BC, by Theophile Obenga in 1990 was landmark work on the authentic existence of African Philosophical Tradition centuries before Western Philosophical Tradition. The text was a work against the conspiracy of the Western philosophers trying to demean and deny African philosophy of its primacy and of authentic origin. The text shows the early engagement of African philosophy in all its Africanity and philosophicality dealing with basic principles of reality, and of course, existence or belongingness, or rightly put, being itself. Going through the pyramid texts, Obenga, re-emphasizes that over 2500 years before our age, the thinkers of Pharaonic Egypt grappled with quintessential riddles of existence, reflecting upon issues as the question of origins, the problem of the cosmos and of any way it came into being. It is no more disputable whether African scholars or philosophers with their philosophy existed earlier or within the time of their Western counterparts.

On African Civilization

Onebunne (2023) maintains that the primacy of African Civilizations is seen in the fact that it precedes European Civilization and Later European Colonization. Civilizations, therefore, are through African civilization. In the chequered history of humanity, the dawn of human civilization can be traced back to the immense and divers continent of Africa. African, a blessed land very abundant with a thriving and wealthy history civilizations predating the arrival of Imperial masters as European Colonizers through their exploration that turned into exploitation. The world has witnessed many powerful kingdoms the originated from the ancient kingdom of Egypt. Across the ages and epochs, drawing upon a variety of historical accounts, profound understanding of archaeological discoveries, and tapestry of scholarly research, strong kingdoms and great empires emerged leaving an ineradicable mark on the socio-cultural and politico-economic landscape of Africa leading to a significant Egyptian civilization which gave room to an enduring African civilization. Notably, as a hub of contemporary and modern innovations, Egypt remains the pioneer cultural heritage and the centre of many scientific cum technological advancements in areas as sophisticated irrigation systems, monumental architecture like the pyramids, mathematics, medicine, and writing systems. Egypt pioneered these innovative prowess, which has influenced other African and global societies. The geo-strategic location of Egypt between continents of Africa and Europe as well as Asia served as a great network for great exchanges of natural and human resources, ideas and sociocultural cum economic dealings. A look at the Egyptian civilization shows that African civilization is part of the Egyptian civilization (Onebunne, 2023).

Appreciation of African Philosophy

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

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

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

African Philosophy is, therefore, a disciplinary movement that started as a reaction to the years of hidden facts about the existence of African philosophy as such. This reaction simply became a movement in reclaiming what was actually taken away from us in a way

of intellectual dishonesty of the African exploiters and explorers as well as partitioner who forgot that one day, in the great speech of Martin Luther King Jr: *I have a dream*, that the son's of the slave masters and the sons of the slaves will one day dine on one table. Therefore, as a movement, African philosophy started out of frustration by many lies against Africans literary disposition. African Philosophy is a disciplinary movement is branched into speculative and practical depending, not on the specific character of the various philosophic sciences or disciplines, but on the end which they pursue.

Appreciation of Literature

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

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



products or give advice. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines Literature as a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature is a term used to describe written works and sometimes spoken material.

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

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



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

More so, Literature is any collection of written work, but it is also used more narrowly for writings specifically considered to be an art form, especially prose fiction. In recent centuries, the definition has expanded to include oral Literature, much of which has been transcribed. Accordingly, Literature as a methodological moments records, preserves, and transmits knowledge and entertainment, and can also have a socio-political cum psycho-spiritual role. This is why Literature includes works in various non-fiction genres, such as biography (autobiography), diaries, memoirs, letters and essays as well as *AI* revolution in literary works, printing technology and all forms of electronic Literature. Collins & Forsyth (2014) define Literature as writings in prose or verse; the body of writings on a particular subject; the body of written works produced in a particular language, country, or age; printed matter (such as leaflets or circulars); the production of literary work especially as an occupation, the aggregate of a usually specified type of musical compositions. Continuing, Collins & Forsyth (2014) refer to Literature as writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays. Literature, therefore, is a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature may be classified according to a variety of systems, including language, (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2023).

African Literature

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



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

Belcher (2023) maintains that contrary to the general perception, the African literatures written before the twentieth century are substantial. Whatever limits can be imagined - in terms of geography, genre, language, audience, era - these literatures exceed them. Before the twentieth century, Africans wrote not just in Europe but also on the African continent; they wrote not just in European languages but in African languages; they wrote not just for European consumption but for their own consumption; they wrote not just in northern Africa, but in sub-Saharan Africa; they wrote not just orally, but textually; they wrote not just historical or religious texts, but poetry and epic and autobiography; and they wrote not just in the nineteenth century, but in the eighteenth century and long, long before. Yet, the general public and even scholars of African Literature are often unaware of these early literatures, mistakenly believing that African Literature starts in the late 1950s as the result of colonization, instead of many centuries before it. Belcher (2023) is of the opinion that African Literature written over the last millennia remains largely invisible for several significant reasons. One, many of the texts written more than two hundred years ago have not survived, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, colonialism and imperialism know the truth of their existence. Scholars know they existed because travellers reported on them and extant texts make reference to now lost texts. Two, many were never published as print books and of those few manuscripts that were, most were published in obscure places. Three, very few of the texts written in an African language have been translated into any European language. Scholars refers to Alexandrian library that was burnt down by who and why? What of the oral tradition that incubated and housed most of the



African sages and wisdom? As much Africans become literate in their own languages, they often reacted against colonial repression in their writings. Lagasse & Goldman, Eds. (2000), identified some Africans as Léopold Senghor who were active in the négritude movement from the 1930s, Nkrumah's consciencism, pan-Africanism along with Léon Damas and Aimé Césaire, French speakers from French Guiana and Martinique. Their poetry not only denounced colonialism, it proudly asserted the validity of the cultures that the colonials had tried to crush. African Literature has issues of the orality of African Literature, literality of African Literature and the Africanity of African Literature which borders more on the language use that makes it African. This is why colonialism remains interference and greatest disservice to African development. This resulted in many Africans writing African Literature in European languages as their education system was equally Europeanized. Hence the theme of many of their writings then were on slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and post-colonialism, and often they shared the same themes: the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European subjugation, pride in the African past, and hope for the continent's independent future. Onebunne & Obasi (2018), opined that African Literature is a type of Literature that has its root from Africa and deals with African issues. It is a form of Literature within the boundaries of the Africanity of African Literature and Orality of African Orature, that is peculiar to the Africans because of the African varieties it possesses. Oral Literature is described as orature, traditional Literature, folkloric Literature or folklore.

African Philosophy of Literature

African Philosophy of Literature is application of African critical and philosophical principles on any literary work. It is, therefore, an application all forms of criticality on the literality of any piece of writing work. African Philosophy makes use of Literature in the sense that African philosophical ideas are often brought to the readers through Literature. African Philosophical discourse and literary discourse are closely connected. Historically as well as conceptually critical discourse presupposes literary discourse. There is differential relationship between African Philosophy and Literature. Basically, African philosophy is the study of knowledge, while Literature is the study of written work. The term literature is more often associated with fiction, while philosophy is associated with theoretical or non-fictional, rightly put with realities.

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

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

Appreciation of Religion

Religion is humans' respected interaction with the Divine. It is a responsible expressive relationship with the non-human. Religion, therefore, is man's disposition and mental devotion towards a being who is looked to as greater with a candid aura. Merriam-Webster (n.d.), noted etymologically that religion is from the Middle English *religioun*, from Anglo-French *religium*, Latin religion-, *religio* supernatural constraint, sanction, religious practice, perhaps from *religare* to restrain, tie back. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023) maintain that religion is "human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of special reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death". Religion, of course, is a personal set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Continuing religion is at the service and worship of God or the supernatural, as well as the committal devotion to religious faith or observance (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this sensible understanding, religion is properly appreciated and ought to be established on a sound theology. Theology informs religion properly. In this strict sense, religion is at the operational and practical function of theology. Theology, therefore, is at the service of religion as *ancilla religio*.

Theology etymologically (*theo* and *logos* is the science of God. According to Aquinas, it is a sacred doctrine and science of revealed truth. It is a systematic study and scientific appreciation of God. As (*theo* and *logos*) it is word of God. In this regard, theology is the narrative of God's encounter with humanity and humanity's responses as a result of such encounters. However, as the highest human discipline, it is a human project on the divine. In this theological project, humanity seeks an understanding of divinity. Iroegbu (1996), however, gave six nuances of descriptions of theology: "God-talk; search for God through faith and reason, an enlightened reason, etc. Through an enlightened faith, this God that has continued to manifest Himself is searched for and often with an encounter that will

lead to all forms of religion and vagaries of worship. Theology, therefore, is a consequence of religion. Even with theology, religion or religious practises and innuendoes will be merely beliefs and shallow impressive practises. Theology, however, ought to have many traditions as many cultures and people have their different experiences and different established expressions of relationships in their religions as well as religious professions and practices. Thus, each theological tradition ought to give us a religion to be sustained by a theology. A proper appreciation of and a functional understanding of religion is a deep-rooted opportunity for a divine reverential encounter.

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

African Traditional Religion (ATR)

Having prefixed African Tradition on Religion, one may be tempted to define ATR as the religion of traditional Africans. That is, religion is borne out of African traditions and cultures. It's a particularized religion within African cultural innuendoes expressing their ways of life. In this sense, ATR is the people's religion, which grew from their experiential realities. Their theology will be within their experience in the worship or reverence of their God. African Theology is the African understanding of God. It is the science of God within the boundaries of African realities. Such encounters are always within a definitive experience that leads to worship. Before the exploration and exploitation through colonialism, Africans had an experience of the Divine with many forms of worship rooted in their exalted beliefs and belief systems. Such has been their theology, an African Theology of the object and subject of their worship. African theology, therefore, is an ongoing experience and sustained encounter with African God as their Creator and all-in-all. African theology sustains the African knowledge of God and ATR. African theology presupposes African theism. However, Ikenga-Metuh (1999), in line with this thought, opined that "most African societies recognise fundamentally two different types of divinities: the Supreme Being and the subordinate deities" (p.94). African traditional theology is a consequential result of African Traditional Religion (African Religion) as the religion of the people anchored deeply on inculturation and anonymous form of Christianity.

Inculturation

ATR remains the religion of the native or primitive people within their experiential realities. Hence, it has no defined dating nor well-articulated doctrines that are uniformly realistic. Ikenga-Metuh (1999) explains that "animism, totemism, fetishism, polytheism or primitive monotheism has often been used to designate African Religion...with other descriptive terms as Tribal religion, Ethnic religion, Preliterate Religion" (p. 3). However, Ikenga-Metuh (1999) continuing, complimented this view when he maintains that "the study of African Traditional Religion is plagued by number of problems some of which are inherent to the nature of African Traditional Religion itself, while others derive from the historical development of its study", (p.xv). However, ATR is very specific with regard to many differential nuances when compared with other religions; thus, ATR is not a religion of the book. ATR, as an ethnic religion, has many historical currents of interference and sweeping encounters (Ikenga-Metuh, 1999). Colonialism and Christianization of Africa, alongside contemporary developmentalism in Africa, all had their turns in subduing ATR to Western imperialism and Christian-Europe subjugation. Most humiliating were the acts of stolen legacies, where most of the African idols and artefacts in ATR were taken to museums in many European countries. Unfortunately, these were things they condemned as paganism and forms of black magic, yet they adorn their museums with them. Ikenga-Metuh (1999) summarily captioned the interference of the West on ATR as recorded by the European explorers and Missionaries; thus, "many of the authors of the observations did not stay long enough in Africa to get acquainted with the people's beliefs and practices, nor in fact, did they attempt a systematic study of African Religion. However, these observations are significant in that they reveal the prejudices and biases of the people who wrote them and that of the European public".

Anonymous Christianity

African Traditional Religion and the corresponding theology are not all about Christ, but Christ ought to be at the centre of its history as the world keeps the record of BC (Before Christ) and AD (*Anno Domini*). The theology of anonymous Christians explains this understanding better. However, ATR has remote practices that have endeared and informed the theology of Karl Rahner in the formation of the concept of anonymous Christians. However, Wikipedia (n.d.) explains that anonymous Christian is the controversial notion concerning the fate of the unlearned, which was introduced by the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904–1984), declaring that people who have never heard the Christian gospel might be saved through Christ. Equally, Encyclopaedia.com (2019) explicated that a notion of contemporary theology of anonymous Christian is usually connected with the name of Karl Rahner, who proffered it as a way to maintain the universalism of Christianity within the present context of heightened consciousness of religious pluralism. Christians believe that God will not only save all men (1 Tm 2.4) but also that no man is saved except through Christ (1 Tm 2.5–6). It follows that all men must be affected by God through Christ. For most men, this grace is real but hidden; it constitutes the possibility of an authentic though implicit faith without which salvation is impossible (Heb 11.6). These complimentary views ranking with the anonymous Christianity of Karl Rahner is a kind of paradigm shift in the appreciation of humanity as one family within the Godhead of God as the Creator. The idea of an anonymous Christian shows the unique dynamism in nature among human beings (Encyclopaedia.com, 2019).

African Philosophy of Religion and Literature: Their Defining Relationship

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

The historical development of African philosophy of Literature is a clear testimony to the rich socio-cultural heritage that informs the original African literary works. Developing from a foundation intemperately influenced by oral traditions, orature and storytelling, the African philosophy of Literature consistently incorporates and integrates philosophical ideas and religious beliefs. Literary works throw more light on the interconnectedness of religious and philosophical discourse, exploring themes of morality, ethics and the nature of existence. More so, the African philosophy of Literature has continued to be shaped by external influences. Such influences range chiefly from European colonization. Such interference through colonialism, as the imposition of Western ideologies and Western imperialism upon African societies and her own ideologies, not only disrupted traditional modes of expression but also sparked a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of the African philosophy of Literature. Based on this, there was an emergence on the part of African authors and intellectuals who sought out in reclaiming their cultural heritage while contributing to the proper development of African Literature.

However, the interaction between African philosophy of religion and Literature is quite a fascinating area of study, as it highlights the intrinsic connection between these two disciplines. In order to fully grasp and appreciate the existing relationship between the African philosophy of religion and Literature, it is essentially important to compare their fundamental concepts and principles. African philosophy of religion embraces a rich complexity of belief systems, practices and rituals that form the kernel and nexus of African religious engagement. These belief systems are deeply ingrained in African traditions as they remould the worldview of its people's various aspects of life; thus, Ancestors are revered as a go-between betwixt the living and the spiritual realm. Divination as a religious act is entertained with its various methods like reading the palms or patterns in cowrie shells, dreams interpreted, insight gained into future events and through intermediaries sought as solutions to daily human and natural problems. African philosophy of religion, in its rich complexity, embraces as well as encompasses all forms of inspiration for African Literature. African Literature, therefore, with its diverse engagements, subject themes, motifs, and symbols, reflects the cultural values, social and ethical issues, as well as the contextual historical dispensations of African societies. Through orature or the power of storytelling, Idiomatic expressions encrypted in the *Ilu* African writers and their literary works



incorporate elements of African philosophy of religion into their narratives, giving voice to the spiritual beliefs while showcasing their influence on human experiences and characters.

Conclusive Tapestry on African Philosophy of Religion and Literature

By the analytical appreciation of key conceptual principles within African philosophy of religion and Literature, a deeper appreciable understanding of the inter-connectedness and deep mutual influence between these two disciplinary courses emerges while paving the way for further possible exploration into the significant influence of African philosophy of religion on African philosophy of Literature, and vice versa. African philosophy of religion has continued to play an enduring and significant role in shaping the African philosophy of Literature, providing a fundamental condition for exploring spiritual and metaphysical themes in African literary works. This interaction between African philosophy of religion and Literature has resulted in the emergence of specific and unique literary traditions that reflect and celebrate African cultural heritage. Some African literary scholars argue along this line of thought that African Literature is infused with the philosophical undertone of African religious innuendoes and belief systems, as seen in the constant exploration of spiritual issues and supernatural elements. Through an astute examination of the relationship between the African philosophy of religion and Literature, one gains a more comprehensive understanding of the African experience and its multifaceted nature. African philosophy of religion, nevertheless, has limited the scope of African philosophy of Literature by confining it to religious innuendoes. The connection and interaction between the African philosophy of Literature and the African philosophy of religion show the dynamism in these disciplines, as they influence and are influenced by each other, with a promotion of a more comprehensive discussion on African religious culture and traditions. African philosophy of religion informs African literary criticism, and we can gain insight into the complex cultural and spiritual dimensions of African Literature. A re-examination of the influence of African philosophy of Literature on African philosophy of religion, and vice-versa, shows the intricacies in the connection between African religious beliefs and the prominent themes, motifs, and symbols in African Literature. This profound relationship between African philosophy of religion and Literature is seen more in the literary works serving as vehicles for conveying religious beliefs and practices in African societies. Chinua Achebe's novel is very unique in this aspect. *Things Fall Apart* presents the clash between traditional African religion and the intrusion of Christian missionaries, highlighting the complexity and diversity of religious experiences in African communities. Again, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo people's God-consciousness and belief in ancestral worship are intricately woven. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as the consequences of disregarding one's cultural heritage. Additionally, the African philosophy of Literature helps deepen our understanding of God-experiences through its utilization of various literary techniques. African philosophy of Literature, however, challenges mere interpretations of religious traditions and their belief systems. Equally, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's play *I Will Marry When I Want* remains a critical challenge for the oppressive nature of some traditional religious norms it advocates. Equally, the influence of African philosophy of religion is also seen in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*. The practice of divination, as well as the presence of supernatural forces, helped to shape the characters' actions and decisions. By integrating these religious elements, African authors and scholars are able to explore existential questions and probe

the complexities of human existence. Generally, Literature is shaped by religious beliefs. More so, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's other novel, *Petals of Blood*, presents another example. This work showcased the interplay between African religious beliefs and the struggle against neocolonialism. The characters in the novel were very apt to challenge the oppressive systems while inspiring readers to question the *status quo* and work towards societal change. More so, Chimamanda's *Half of the Yellow Sun* is in this league.

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

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