

African Proverbs as Conveyors of African Philosophy

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Abstract

African cultural imperatives highlight the indispensable place of proverbs in African philosophy; and the folkloric elements of myths, legends, folktales and folksongs also incorporate African philosophy. However, this study focuses on proverbs only, as conveyors of African philosophy. The study is so focused, because proverbs alone embody the largest proportion of African philosophy and constitute the most rhetorically appealing folkloric element. A panoramic view of African philosophy is presented in the study as the theoretical basis for its hypothetical position, namely that African proverbs convey African philosophy, substantially. Philosophy, as an academic discipline, means the continual search for truth through reasoning as well as empirical facts. From a scholarly perspective, there is no consensus on the definition of philosophy. Nevertheless, scholars generally accept its etymological definition as 'love for wisdom' which entails 'love for knowledge', a perspective which unties its encryption in proverbs to justify this study. Each of tables 1-6 in the study presents a compendium of selected radical and non-radical African proverbs sourced purposively from six African countries namely Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya and Ethiopia with analytical interest focused only on those of them that reflect significant radical semantics. The results of the analysis prove the validity of its hypothesis namely that African proverbs convey African philosophy, but certainly not exhaustively. The analysis has established the central evaluative assertion, repeatedly made in the study, to the effect that African philosophy is God-centred. This assertion certainly explains why contemporary African philosophy is largely influenced by Christianity, God being the spiritual architect of Christianity. Another finding of the study is that polygamy as a contingent African custom has long been rendered an outmoded nuptial custom in contemporary African philosophy in outright preference for monogamy which rules out concubinage. Finally, the study reinforces the self-evident truth asserted by Chinua Achebe in 1973 to the effect that African philosophy, and by extension, African culture and the dignity of African identity, are not resultant outcomes of Africa's colonial experience. The authenticity of this position resides in the obvious fact that most, if not all African proverbs predate the colonial period in Africa.

Key words: African proverbs, African philosophy, conveyors, significantly radical

1.0 Introduction

A people's corpus of native as well as co-opted wisdom constitutes their philosophy. Native wisdom stems from enculturation and intuition. Co-opted wisdom refers to wisdom acquired by means of acculturation. As an academic discipline, Philosophy means the continual search for truth (wisdom) through reasoning as well as empirical facts. Obviously, the continual search for truth as such is not restricted to the four walls of a school at whatever level. In other words, the search for truth goes beyond citadels of learning to the larger society. The deduction arising from the elucidation so far in this paragraph is that wisdom is not the exclusive preserve of formally trained philosophers who hold diplomas and/or degrees in Philosophy. This deduction explains and justifies the claim of a people, such as Africans, to indigenous philosophy as opposed to formal philosophy. Hence, no such claim can ever be rationally discredited, even if the literacy level of the people is zero in so far as they are elders among the people. The pragmatics of this assertion is that in every traditional human society elders are the custodians of the people's philosophy. Hence, African elders are the custodians of African Philosophy which stems wholly from knowledge, experience and intuitive understanding all of which are most substantially associated with elderliness, especially experience.

That the philosophy of a people is in the custody of their elders underpins the basic definition of philosophy as love for wisdom. This assertion connects the logic that love for wisdom is incubated and given expression at old age. Hence, St. Paul in 1st. Cor.13:11 asserts that he thought and reasoned like a child when he was a child, but gave up childish ways when he grew up. Indisputably, this Pauline declaration indicates that childish (infantile and adolescent) ways are bereft of maturity, nay, knowledge and wisdom due to lack of experience, hence, the correlation of wisdom with elders whose wealth of experience is always palpable in their nobility.

Obviously, the wisdom characteristic of elders in human societies resides in proverbs. Consequently, in some cultures, among the Yoruba's of Nigeria for instance, the rhetorical or discursive use of proverbs is exclusively reserved for elders. In such cultures, youngsters who consider themselves cognitively mature enough to deploy proverbs in continuous speech or contextualised utterances must make references to elders, distinctly or collectively, for the purpose of authoritative backing. This African cultural imperative highlights the indispensable place of proverbs in African philosophy. According to Onyemelukwe and Ogbecie (2013), the folkloric elements of myths, legends, folktales and folksongs also incorporate African philosophy. However, this study focuses on proverbs, only, as conveyors of African philosophy. The study is so focused, because proverbs alone embody the largest proportion of African philosophy and constitute the most rhetorically appealing folkloric element.

In view of the focus of the study on African proverbs, i.e., the proverbs that are native to Africa, it is necessary to conceptualise proverb as a linguistic trope. Onyemelukwe and Ogbechie (2014) contains the following scholarly definitions of it:

- (a) A proverb is commonly thought of as a phrase, saying, sentence, statement or expression of folk which contains above all, wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation (Mieder and Litovkina, 1999).
- (b) A proverb is wisdom expressed in a sentence (Mieder and Litovkina, 1999).
- (c) According to Padoye (2012) proverbs add poetic quality to literary works, generally, and are expressions of wisdom with connotative and contextual meanings.
- (d) Proverbs are commonly used to mark thematic shifts, indigenous high rhetoric, self-conscious speech and the intellectual sharpness of characters [or real persons] (Adeeko, 1998:50).
- (e) A Proverb is a condensed text which embeds a whole gamut of historical, cultural and moral narrative with intent for didactic values as a school of philosophical thought (Fashina, 2008:314).
- (f) A Proverb is a social and linguistic narrative of logical revolt against the extenuating circumstances of social and economic negation (Fashina, *ibid.*).
- (g) . . . a proverb is a graphic statement that expresses the truth of experience. Its beauty and source of delight is that what it says is readily perceived and accepted as an incontrovertible truth. The truth presented in a proverb is not a logical *priori* or intuitive truth. It is often an empirical fact based upon and derived from the people's experience in life, human relationships and interaction with the world of nature (Akporobaro, 2004:80).
- (h) To Ruth Finnegan as referenced in Akporobaro (2004:81), a proverb is a saying in more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in it.
- (i) A proverb is a traditional saying that is concise, witty and figurative in form and which usually expresses a truth derived from practical experience (Akporobaro, *ibid.*: 96).
- (j) A proverb is a generally figurative wisdom assertion equivalent to an utterance which sometimes takes the form of an allegorical anecdote (*authorial*).
- (k) A proverb can be defined as a wisdom-studded corpus of verbal reasoning anchored on indigenous folk science (Fashina, 2006).

A critical reading of the foregoing definitions, especially a, d, g, i and j shows clearly that proverbs are rhetorical devices. They are precisely used as such in Africa, where they serve to distinguish mature from baby orators much more than other tropes. Pertinent and plentiful use of proverbs in Africa, for oratorical purposes particularly, is so much a cherished imperative that Chinua Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart* declares that proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten. Achebe's assertion is indisputable, hence, the focus of this study on African proverbs. Figuratively, therefore, the study is an investigation of the palm oil with which words are eaten in Africa. As already implicit, the study is motivated by the fact that proverbs convey African philosophy. Hence, in reality, the study sets out to investigate African philosophy. The study investigates African philosophy for the purpose of identifying and highlighting its richness in native as well as Divine wisdom. By so doing, the authors join voices with Achebe (1973) to dismiss the incorrect Western notion that Africans are a people without philosophy and culture. By dismissing the notion, it will be underscored in the study that Africa and Africans have dignity which they constantly strive to safeguard.

The proverbs analysed in this study are sourced from Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya and Ethiopia. Proverbs from these countries, only, are purposively selected for the reason of spatial limitation and for their relative higher philosophical value. Five proverbs are selected from each of the countries except Nigeria from which sixteen are selected. The proverbs analysed in the study are the radically significant ones purposively selected from the entire corpus. Sixteen proverbs are selected from Nigeria much more than those of other countries, because the authors are Nigerians, and so, have easy access to radically significant proverbs from Nigeria. To be sure that the proverbs actually convey African philosophy the next section of the study dwells on a concise overview of the theoretical foundations of African philosophy.

2.0 An Overview of African Philosophy

The purpose of this section is to concisely present a panorama of African philosophy. It is necessary, however, to first conceptualise philosophy as a formal academic discipline before narrowing down to African philosophy. As already lexicographically captured, Philosophy, as an academic discipline, means the continual search for truth through reasoning as well as empirical facts. As such, it comprises five branches, nay, five specialised areas or subfields namely logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics with the middle three as the major subfields. From scholarly perspective, there is no consensus on the definition of philosophy. Its definition above as ‘love for wisdom’ which embeds ‘love for knowledge’ stems from its etymology.

The absence of scholarly consensus on the definition of philosophy as a formal academic discipline means that there are as many definitions of philosophy as there are scholars. The multiplicity of the definitions of philosophy includes those already encoded as part of this study in this section and in section 1 which constitute our primary operational definitions of it in the study. The two definitions constitute the primary working definitions of philosophy in this study, because directly or indirectly, every other definition of it such as the following ones adapted from Azenabor (2012: 236) is firmly rooted in them, especially (e):

- (a) Philosophy refers to the collective consciousness of a people at a given point in time.
- (b) Philosophy is invariably tied to social reality
- (c) Philosophy is inter-disciplinary in nature, and consequently, idealistic, rationalistic, theological, ideological, analytical, speculative, humanistic and scientific, depending on its disciplinary focus.
- (d) Philosophy is a technical enterprise which requires formal training on interrogative thinking focused chiefly on metaphysical, epistemological and ethical preoccupations in life.
- (e) Philosophy, doctrinally and pragmatically, incorporates the worldview, principles, belief systems and convictions of a people such as Africans, Asians, Europeans, Americans and Chinese.

Definition (e) connects various regional perspectives of philosophy such as African philosophy, Asian philosophy, European philosophy, American and Chinese philosophy. With reference to (c) and (d) above, the following intellectual foci points or elements are central to philosophy:

curiosity, wisdom, reflection, asking fundamental questions, argumentation, rational and critical evaluations, clarifications and objections. Note that curiosity as an element of philosophy explains its ancient Greek definition as the desire for fresh experience.

Before providing pertinent insights into African philosophy, it is necessary to capture some scholarly conceptualisations of it. Before presenting the conceptualisations, let it first be stated that basically, African philosophy refers to Africans' perspectives of philosophy as a broad field of study. Obviously, this fundamental conceptualisation of African philosophy is the springboard for these various scholarly conceptualisations of it as a regional philosophy. Apart from the authors' own definition, every other one is stated as referenced in Ndubuisi (2012).

- (a) African philosophy is the understanding attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African people think, act or speak in different situations of life (Mbiti, 2012).
- (b) African philosophy is socio-culturally situated in connection with Mbiti's paradigms above (authorial).
- (c) African philosophy refers to African cultures, religions and traditions (K.C. Anyawu).
- (d) African philosophy is the philosophy done by African philosophers (P.O. Bodurin and P. Hountondji).
- (e) African philosophy is African doctrine on the spiritual which is the culture of harnessing the spirit of the whole and its communality to enhance and transform the spirit, interests, aspirations and ambitions of the parts and the individual (C.S. Momoh).
- (f) African philosophy is the African doctrines or theories on the universe, its creator, the elements, institutions, beliefs and concepts (C.S. Momoh).
- (g) African philosophy incorporates all philosophical works dealing with African issues done by indigenous African thinkers or alien thinkers versed in African cultural and intellectual life (adapted from Odera Oruka's perspective).
- (h) African philosophy refers to the reflections of Africans or non-Africans on how Africans make sense of their existence and the world in which they live, relying on African cultural experience and realities (Azenabor, 2012: 238, which incorporates a-g above).

A critical reading of a-h above, especially h, reveals that African philosophy like every other regional philosophy as well as formal (academic) philosophy embodies each and every major subfield of the latter. Consequently, Africa also has African metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, logic and aesthetics.

Critically evaluated, African philosophy, as noted above in definitions (b, c, and h), particularly, is socio-culturally rooted. Consequently, any discourse focused on the nature of African philosophy is concurrently a discourse that centres on African philosophical tradition. African philosophical tradition connects the scholarly consensus in Philosophy which holds that African philosophy and African culture are inseparable. In other words, African culture is a direct reflection of African philosophy just as African philosophy constantly governs African culture. Therefore, at any point in time, any thorough examination of African culture identifies African philosophy to be essentially meta-physical and epistemological in nature. This assertion is the obvious imports of definitions (c, e, f, g and h) above. In the context of this study, culture is

understood in its narrow and broad definitions, i.e., in its non-material and material senses, respectively. Nevertheless, it is discursively applicable more in the non-material than the material sense. Narrowly defined, it refers to the totality of a people's way of life as determined by their beliefs, values and habits, i.e., their customs, traditions, norms and conventions. Broadly defined, it refers to its narrow definition in addition to the people's modes of art, architecture, science and technology.

At this juncture, it must be clarified that meta-physics as a fundamental component of African philosophy stipulates that God is at the centre of African philosophy. Hence, the study of African philosophy is essentially the study of Meta-physics or the study of God as the Being qua Being, i.e., the study of African religion. In this sense, African philosophy connects European Philosophy, *ab initio*, which was then synonymous with scholasticism or theology which is simply another term for metaphysics. See Azenabor (2012: 238, 239), Omoregbe (2012:31-37) as well as Onyemelukwe, Irolewe, Ogunnaike and Ogbechie (2017) for more expository insights on what Meta-physics is all about. Similarly, epistemology as an essential component of African philosophy identifies it as a regional philosophy that places maximum premium on temporal knowledge acquisition. Hence, no true African is ever oblivious of his immediate and extended environments. Environments, in the context of this study, refer to people as immediate and extended family members, people as community members, people as visitors and strangers as well as the whole of nature and institutions such as various town unions, kindred associations, community development associations and masquerade cults in the continent.

The pragmatic implication of the foregoing elucidations is that African philosophy drives Africans to engage in insightful relationships with God, nature and their fellow human beings with no geographical or ethno-linguistic bifurcation. By so doing, Africans grow to master how to make sense of their existence and the world in which they live in consonance with definition (h) and several others above. Putting all of these together, God and the environment constitute African epistemological pillars. For avoidance of doubt, environment here embodies experiences, old and new. Consequently, Azenabor (2012: 241) identifies holism to be the backbone of African philosophy. According to him, holism is a pluralistic theory which advances the idea that the fundamental principle of the universe is holistically rooted, and so, constitutes a complete self-contained system. Simply deconstructed, holism translates to unity in diversity. Hence, D.A. Masolo as cited by Azenabor (2012: 241) asserts that holism translates to an ontology which accepts diversity or otherness without hierarchical judgement of human worth.

The anchoring of African philosophy on holism means that it rules out tribalism, nepotism, discrimination or segregation for Africans. Hence, to Ekei (2001), holism translates to communalism or communality as to C.S. Momoh in definition (e) above. To Onyemelukwe and Oriaku (2015), holism incorporates the principle of collective responsibility by which every African is his or her brother's or sister's keeper. It must here be noted that in contemporary African philosophy which has drawn enormous influence from Christianity brother or sister in the foregoing assertion refers to an African's fellow African as well as non-African interactants.

Pragmatically, the summary of every insight provided on African philosophy in this and other studies is that African philosophy defines Africanness. It is also that Africanness relies exclusively on African philosophy. Consequently, to fully grasp the ontological dictates of Africanness is to fully comprehend African philosophy. For this reason, a copious reference is hereby made to Onyemelukwe and Oriaku (2015: 20-22) who have extensively propounded the ontology of Africanness:

Basically, Africanness refers to the totality of the personality attributes typically characteristic of an African. Fundamentally, to be an African, one must biologically descend from parents who are Africans by birth. That is, one who must be regarded as an African must hail from the continent of Africa.

Broadly considered, however, being an African entails much more than hailing from Africa. Being an African goes beyond hailing from Africa to embody the internalization and unapologetic exhibition of African ideals as socio-culturally defined by African forebears and by African patriarchs and matriarchs of every generation. From this perspective, an individual can hail from Africa without being an African. Such an individual is generally regarded as an estranged African and is humorously portrayed as 'a been-to' in modern African Literature. See Olufunwa (2004: 523-543). That a been-to is a funny character is not a surprise. It is not a surprise, because his thoughts and actions are dictated and governed by manifest colonial mentality. Colonial mentality constructs a senseless phobia for everything that is African just as it thoughtlessly endorses everything western in nature.

A been-to is, therefore, a direct opposite of an ideal African. An ideal African is, indisputably, a philosopher-king. In other words, the thoughts and actions of an ideal African are determined and driven by profound philosophies of life. These highly thoughtful philosophies cut across every facet of life as clearly evident in African oral literary tradition which is highly creative and pedagogical. Hence, Layiwola (2010:5) asserts that:

In our peculiar experience in Africa and some other cultures of the South and the pacific rim which have developed traditions of oral literature, our critical faculty would require a more robust accommodating and cosmopolitan conception of knowledge and cult application.

As evident above the textual messages contained in traditional African works of art are on a higher pedestal, philosophically factual, albeit, fictional thoughts that express error-proof or harmless (beneficial) codes of conduct.

Intrinsically, the ideal African who strictly lives the codes is self-contented, laughs it off to relax, appreciative and affectionate. Extrinsically, the ideal African is brave, diligent, well fed, helpful, gregarious, hospitable and adventurous. All of these traits portray real Africans as noble men and women of substance who celebrate achievement, virtue and discipline. Hence, in line with Aristotelian literary bifurcation on artists, traditional African poets, lyricists and dance-dramatists reflect enormous seriousness and sense of nobility in their various artistic productions. See Aristotle (1965:36).

The ideal African is absolutely intolerant of every dint of negativity. Hence, he abhors criminality in all its ramifications. Consequently, in African culture, among the Igbo's for instance, every crime is an abomination, a taboo. A crime such as stealing a cash crop or live domestic animal, adultery, bribery and corruption is an offence, because it is culturally an offence against the gods and ancestors. The abominable nature of crimes in Africa explains why a culprit must appease the gods with several items such as fowl, goat, ram, cow, kola and alligator pepper. Should the gods not be appeased, the entire community bears their wrath, usually in form of epidemics that result in massive death. These aftermaths of a crime, respectively, follow the conviction of an accused person or his unjust acquittal on false oath or by a kangaroo trial.

The penal codes in a typical African socio-cultural setting evince that life in Africa is guided by the principle of collective responsibility. By this principle, as stated by Onyemelukwe (2014), everyone is guilty once one is guilty. So the principle makes every African his brother or sister's keeper and guard as it recommends and validates communalism and community (mutual) policing among Africans. Another obvious implication of the deified nature of the penal codes in African native lands is that an ideal African, today as even in distant past, is a highly religious person who practices polytheism, if a traditionalist or monotheism, if a Christian. An ideal African is highly religious, because he is piously faithful to his religious precepts. One obvious indication of piety among Africans is that no true son or daughter of the soil does anything odd in a shrine or church.

Africanness also expresses itself in the traditional quasi-jury judicial system of African homelands. The system is headed by the masquerade cult, followed by *nze na ozo's*, *ndi ichie*, town/village unions and *umunna* group or kindred associations, respectively. Except for unavoidable isolated cases of misinformation due to whatever reason, justice is absolutely and promptly guaranteed for all litigants in each of the traditional courts. Hence, it is an abomination to convict and penalize the innocent in African culture, and should it happen for any reason, the injustice must very quickly be re-dressed, else the whole community will face the wrath of the gods in line with the principle of collective responsibility.

Finally, on Africanness, there is no gainsaying the fact that a typical African cherishes the mother tongue, which is used for inter-personal, inter-group, and of course, for intra-group communication at both micro and macro levels. The mother tongue also serves the purpose of cultural transmission and socialization in Africa. See Layiwola (ibid.). As a result of these indispensable purposes, any African who lacks linguistic proficiency in his mother tongue is considered a been-to, i.e., uncultured.

For avoidance of doubt, Onyemelukwe and Oriaku's ontology on Africanness identifies the following values to be the indispensable fruits of African philosophy: polytheism which incorporates reverential and/or self-protective fear of God to whom entreaties are sent through lesser deities or gods, expedited non-negotiable justice, individualised or communal purification

as may be necessary, enculturation, guarded acculturation, discipline, valour, diligence, gregariousness or companionship, hospitality, sharing (communalism), communal or mutual policing, adventurism and gerontocracy (cultured respect for elders and the great by extension who, therefore, provide leadership with exemplary nobility). All of these as fruits of African philosophy are products of native African intelligentsia as the custodians of African intelligibility. This ontological analysis depicts ethics and aesthetics to be innately embodied in African philosophy which, therefore, is truly a colossal corpus of African wisdom which is certainly not bereft of logic as evident in the analysis section below. As already stated in the fourth paragraph of the introductory section, African philosophy (wisdom) is substantially articulated in African proverbs, hence, the focus of this study on African proverbs as conveyors of African philosophy. The validity of this thesis will be analytically established in the next section.

3.0 Analysis and Discussion of African Proverbs as Conveyors of African Philosophy

Each of tables 1-6 below presents a compendium of selected radical and non-radical African proverbs sourced from six African countries namely Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Table 1: Selected radical African proverbs from Nigeria

Tags	Proverbs
Nigp1	A mother brushes off fire from her body before doing same for her baby.
Nigp2	An ant that rudely climbs up one’s body ends up in fire.
Nigp3	Proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten (p.5).
Nigp4	What youngsters cannot see standing up, elders see sitting down.
Nigp5	A poor man must not fail to have good tongue.
Nigp6	(a) A man who pays respect to the great or the elderly paves way for his own greatness or elderliness. (b) A child cannot pay for its mother’s milk (117). (c) Nza, the bird challenges its chi (god) to a combat once it feeds to its satisfaction.
Nigp7	(a) Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit must not forget to be humble (p.19). (b) Wealth is obtainable from heaps of thorns. (c) Oiled mouth comes from soiled fingers.
Nigp8	But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also (p.19).
Nigp9	He was like the man in the song who has ten and one wives and not enough soup for his foo-foo (p.37).
Nigp10	(a) Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching (p.16). (b) Where are the young suckers that will grow when the old banana tree dies? (p.46). (c) The compound of a warrior is always identified from the compound of a coward.

Table 2: Selected African proverbs from Ghana

Tags	Proverbs
Gp1	The earth is wide, but God is supreme.
Gp2	No one points out God to a child.
Gp3	God removes the ring from the fingers of a giant through his shoulders.
Gp4	If God is a human being, there can be no rain.
Gp5	Human gathering is sweet.

Table 3: Selected African proverbs from South Africa

Tags	Proverbs
Zup1	He likes to be looked at like a long-hairy goat.
Zup2	A nice fig is often full of worms.
Zup3	No wise owner suffers for foolish lending.
Zup4	A nice plate does not last.
Zup5	No one licks his own back.

Table 4: Selected African proverbs from Cameroon

Tags	Proverbs
Doup1	The hen favours searching with two feet, because searching with one does not guarantee success.
Doup2	The bottom of a boat does not disclose what can be found at the bottom of the river.
Doup3	The elephant is never tired of carrying its tusk.
Doup4	A chameleon does not break its back, because a lizard stumbles.
Doup5	A bird does not rest on a tree unknown to it.

Table 5: Selected African proverbs from Kenya

Tags	Proverbs
Mbep1	A fool is like a beehive.
Mbep2	One's own wound does not stink.
Mbep3	The sun waits for no traveller.
Mbep4	A soft answer breaks a set bow.
Mbep5	Gluttony makes the stomach sick.

Table 6: Selection of African proverbs from Ethiopia

Tags	Proverbs
Ethiop1	A flea whose belly is filled will rather sleep than continue sucking.
Ethiop2	No one stares at darkness and strangers.
Ethiop3	Bad news, like a tail, always comes at last.
Ethiop4	He who is deaf to advice will eventually take it from trouble.
Ethiop5	A hungry cow fixes its attention on the grass, totally unaware of the adjoining ditch.

It is necessary to begin the analysis in this section with some essential clarifications. Following Onyemelukwe and Ogbechie (2014) to analyze and discuss proverbs as conveyors of African philosophy is to conceptualise them as linguistic tropes and popular axiomatic sayings which collectively encode the native wisdom of Africans as a people. Native wisdom translates to the totality of positive rational ideas generated by the people for value-adding accomplishments indicative of continual individual and societal overall growth and development. In other words, the philosophical ideas needed for civilisation at both individual and collective levels reside, substantially, in the proverbs of a given traditional society. See Ogbalu (1965) and Pritchett (2013).

Taxonomy is another essential term which requires clarification as it relates to this study. Taxonomy is a factor here, because while majority of the proverbs tabulated for analysis in this study are figurative, the remaining ones are not as already semantically evident and as reflected in the latest authorial definition of the concept in the paragraph immediately before this. Concurring with the duo of Onyemelukwe and Ogbechie we consider as core (pure) proverbs, those that are figurative and as soft proverbs, those that are not figurative. Following this categorisation, all popular sayings, otherwise termed local axioms such as Nigp4, 5 and 6 (a and b), 8, 9 and 10 (a) are soft proverbs. Other soft proverbs in tables 1-6 include Gp1-5, Zup 3-5 and Mbep 2-5. Every other proverb in the tables, including all of Doup 1-5 are core proverbs. The core proverbs are so classified, because being figurative, they are most intellectually challenging. On the other hand, the soft proverbs are so categorised, because they are framed in plain language, and so, easily 'decodable'. Special proverbs, such as Nigp10 (a), constitute yet another category and include all allegorical anecdotes which encode native wisdom as conceptualised in this study. Proverbs can further be classified into conventional and creative, radical and non-radical categories.

Conventional proverbs are time-honoured in origin, and so, cannot be credited to anybody. On the other hand, creative proverbs are contemporary in origin and may be traceable to a particular originator. Moreover, a creative proverb is evidently a critical rendition of a given conventional proverb. The distinction between radical and non-radical proverbs resides in their semantics. The semantics of radical proverbs is unequivocally topical quite unlike the semantics of non-radical proverbs which is clearly non-topical. In other words, the semantics of radical proverbs boggles the mind, being hardly anticipated, whereas the semantics of non-radical proverbs rattles the mind in no way, being overtly or subtly expected. The analytical interest of this study objectifies radical proverbs. Consequently, the proverbs analyzed in this section include only the significantly radical ones. Significantly radical proverbs refer to those that reflect superlative radical semantics, and so, exclusively touch on current societal preoccupations. In the light of the foregoing criterion, the analytical beam light of this study focuses on Nigp1, 3 and 4, 6-9 and 10 (a and c); Doup1-5, Gp2 and 5, Zup2 and 4, Mbep3 and 5, Ethiop4 and 5. Whenever necessary, reference will be made to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart (TFA)* for the purpose

of elaborating the semantics and/or pragmatics of a specified proverb, because *TFA* is an archetypal African novel that aptly mirrors African socio-cultural realities. See Onyemelukwe (2014) as well as Larson (1978).

The wisdom incorporated in Nigp3 is fundamental to African philosophy, hence, the analytical discussion of proverbs in this paper begins with it. Being a core proverb, it is metaphorical. It, therefore, appropriates metaphor as a figure of direct comparison to comparatively equate proverb as a rhetorical device to palm oil, an indispensable condiment for most African menus. By this comparative equation, it emphasises a fundamental imperative in connection with oration, discussion and conversation in Africa. This imperative is namely that none of the foregoing forms of discourse can effectively take place in Africa without proverb just as bitter leaf and *edikaikong* (vegetable) soups are unimaginable without palm oil in South Eastern and South Southern parts of Nigeria in West Africa. Why is proverb indispensable to discourse in Africa? As rightly stated by Onyemelukwe and Ogbechie (2014), pertinent and profuse use of proverbs in Africa, especially for public speeches, is an indicator of maturity in the art of public speaking. Beyond serving as maturity indicators in relation to orators, proverbs as also noted by the duo of Onyemelukwe and Ogbechie and as already postulated in this study are custodians as well as conveyors of African philosophy.

The foregoing elucidation of Nigp3 captures, precisely, the sense in which it is deployed on p.5 of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart (TFA)*. The pragmatics of the elucidation is that Africans, especially as elders, are innately (culturally) philosophical, and so, cannot do without wisdom in all their endeavours. Consequently, the elucidation lends credence to Achebe's (1973:8) assertion on p.1 of the postcolonial web, corroborated by Onyemelukwe (2014:50, 2016:16) to the effect that:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty and above all that they had dignity

The pragmatics of Nigp3 is the high point of Nigp4 which identifies African elders as the human custodians of African philosophy on account of their higher level of intuitive and experiential knowledge laced with God-anchored native wisdom in contrast with the youths. In other words, African elders, past and present, are collectively the originators of African proverbs. This deduction underpins Onyemelukwe's (2016) position that true African elders are men (and women) of nobility. For avoidance of doubt, true African elders refer to cultured elderly Africans who obligatorily embody Africanness, Africanness as expounded and espoused by Onyemelukwe and Oriaku (2015:20-22) which is already incorporated as part of this study in section 2.

Nigp8, a soft proverb, articulates the fundamental of African metaphysics which is faith in God, the Supreme God, worshipped by non-christian Africans through many gods, recognised in their religion as His emissaries. See Azenabor (2012), Ekei (2001) as well as Onyemelukwe and

Fatuase (2012) for more expository insights on African metaphysics. To Africans, everything begins and ends with God. In other words, God is all in all in Africa as in Christianity. God, being all in all, is the source of life and the giver of every desirable good including virtues and wealth. As also held in Christianity, humility is the mother of all virtues. Hence, all true sons and daughters of Africa are expected to be humble irrespective of their socio-economic statuses. The high and mighty are, particularly, expected to be humble as dictated by Nigp7 (a). Observe that its semantics, indeed, makes humility an obligation for the wealthy and the powerful. Consequently, once they exhibit dehumanising ignorance, it is always promptly deployed to remind them of this obligation, as done to Okonkwo in *TFA* by the oldest man in Umuofia for calling Osugo a woman at a kindred meeting. The wealthy in Africa must not insult the poor, because African philosophy, with reference to Nigp7 (a), holds strongly that being wealthy as for every other achievement is not exclusively creditable to human effort. In truth, as strictly evident in the semantics of Nigp7 (a), Africans, like Christians, traditionally believe that nobody succeeds by his/her own effort, but exclusively by the grace of God, hence, the reference in the core proverb to *benevolent spirits cracking metaphorical palm kernels* for favoured beneficiaries. In other words, to Africans as to Christians, our help as human beings is in the name of God who made heaven and earth.

It must, however, be stated here that in Africa nothing in the semantics and pragmatics of Nigp7 (a) proscribes diligence in favour of laziness. The direct opposite of this assertion rather applies to Africa, traditionally, since with reference to Nigp7 (b and c) African philosophy obliges Africans to celebrate diligence and achievement. This aspect of African philosophy indicates that Africans understand that labour creates wealth quite unlike idleness which embodies abject poverty. By implication, Nigp7 (b and c) evince that Africans appreciate the dignity that goes with labour. This implication explains the abomination of laziness in Africa together with every crime associated with it such as stealing, burglary and armed robbery. The accelerated rise of Okonkwo as an uncommon diligent poor lad in *TFA* to become one of the lords of the land in Umuofia proves indisputably that African philosophy celebrates diligence and achievement with Africans knowing that there is dignity in labour, indeed. Okonkwo's diligence explains the unprecedented favour he found in the sight of Nwakibie, a very rich yam farmer, in connection with the share cropping deal which they struck between both of them for mutual benefits. While this intra-textual fact in *TFA* is the case, Okonkwo's prompt rise to wealth and fame demonstrates the indispensable place of diligence in wealth acquisition.

African philosophy of creating wealth from labour, in the contractual context of Okonkwo-Nwakibie's sharecropping deal, connects yet another African cultural wisdom namely the culture of gerontocracy. Gerontocracy refers to sacrosanct respect for elders, nay, the high and mighty which places leadership responsibility on their shoulders as stated by Onyemelukwe and Oriaku (2015). This noble culture explains and justifies Okonkwo's honest and productive management of the eight hundred seed-yams entrusted to him by Nwakibie under the deal quite unlike countless other young men in Umuofia who had grossly abused the same privilege before him.

Consequently, he appropriated Nigp6 (a) to secure the deal. The situational context of Nigp6 (a) in *TFA* depicts the strong correlation between diligence, elderliness and being wealthy in Africa. The pragmatic import of this observation is, obviously, that African socio-economic philosophy abominates the culture of get-rich-quick as well as that of wealth without godly productive labour.

Okonkwo's honest and productive management of the eight hundred seed-yams entrusted to him by Nwakibie under their sharecropping contractual deal is also clearly indicative of appreciation, appreciation to a benefactor which is another hallmark of African philosophy. In this regard, African philosophy places maximal premium on being grateful for favours received, big or small. The native wisdom embedded in this philosophy dictates unlimited appreciation which could span through a whole life time as 'decodable' from the semantics of Nigp6 (b), a soft proverb sourced also from *TFA*, depending on the magnitude of the favour. The underlying African native wisdom here which connects Divine wisdom is that appreciation is an open door for more favours. This underlying wisdom stems from cultural communal attitude to tribal warriors in Africa who must be celebrated to motivate them for subsequent wars else they will decline subsequent participation. It must here be clarified that a beneficiary's debt of gratitude is owed, first and foremost, to God, the ultimate grantor of all favours and to the human benefactor through whom the favour is made available to the beneficiary.

Approval for appreciation in African philosophy translates to disapproval for its direct opposite: being ungrateful. Hence, as denoted by the semantics of Nigp6 (c), a core proverb, ingrates occupy no social space in Africa. They are regarded as ignoramus, who as such are as worthless as Nza, the proverbial tiny bird mentioned in the proverb. The tiny bird is pathologically ignorant, indeed, for contemplating the impossible task of fighting its creator just for having fed to its satisfaction. Going by the philosophical logic of being grateful which has been traced before here, the door of more favours is automatically slammed on every ingrate just as applicable to the foolish tiny bird.

Nigp1 and 10 (a) are logically interconnected such that Nigp10 (a) provides philosophical justification for Nigp1. All things being equal, a mother and child or any other two or more close relatives should not be victims of the same misfortune at the same time so that the affected one or ones can find succour from the lucky one or ones. Nevertheless, in the face of the opposite, especially in the specific case of a strong and weak duo such as a mother and daughter or a father and son for instance, the extra-ordinary has occurred, being most unexpected. The foregoing example, being an extra-ordinary incident demands an extra-ordinary measure, naturally, as dictated by Nigp10 (a). Consequently, the strong between the duo will momentarily jettison his/her duty to protect the weak. In reality, an affected mother or father will entirely forget her daughter or son for as long as it will take her/him to secure appreciable relief, if not total relief.

With reference to *TFA*, Nigp10 (a) is an utterance from Nwakibie and a core proverb. It serves to explain the speaker's refusal of yam seedlings to many young men. Okonkwo is among the

lucky few to benefit from his rich barn on account of his diligence and steadfastness. He is so diligent and steadfast that Nwakibie, his benefactor, offered him double the quantity of yam seedlings he requested for. Those whose request was turned down were notoriously lazy, prompting Nwakibie to hold on to his yam instead of lavishing it in the name of sharecropping with zero profit prospects, hence his use of the proverb. This disclosure from Nwakibie identifies Okonkwo indeed as a man of character deserving expedited success such as credited to him in the novel. This assertion indicates that character which here incorporates steadfast diligence and integrity is a predisposing platform for success. Deconstructed as a general philosophy of life, Nigp10 (a) underscores the wisdom of constant strategic adjustment in the face of changing attitudinal tides. In other words, it stipulates that extra-ordinary problematic situations require extra-ordinary reactions as solutions.

From this perspective, it justifies ‘cautious cowardice’ sanctioned in Nigp10 (c), war being an extra-ordinary event in the sense of its pragmatic irrationality. Hence, those who fear war in all human societies are understandably rational, the life span of cautious cowards being generally longer than that of warriors. Nigp10 (c), therefore, incorporates Africa’s philosophical foundation for considering war a last resort measure on inter-tribal imbroglios. Consequently, no African tribe embarks on warfare without being authorised by its god or gods of war and no god in Africa authorises an unjust war. Moreover, no god in Africa authorises war without first sanctioning a peaceful resolution of the conflict in question as seen in *TFA*. War is a last resort measure in Africa, because Africans are fully conscious of the fact that war solves no problem as categorically declared by Ojukwu (1989) and very recently by General (rtd) Ibrahim Badamosi Babaginda (2017) who asserted that war is no tea party. War is, indeed, no tea party. It is rather an evil wind that blows nobody any good in view of its irredeemable destructiveness (Onyemelukwe, 2016). In the light of African philosophy of war, all the civil war fought in the history of African countries and every other one in future, God forbid, are unfortunately indicative of native value erosion on the part of the key players. The cognitive import of this assertion is that contemporary African philosophy rules out war in all situations in favour of amicable dialogues, since it is no solution to any problem. War is so ruled out, because it translates to absolute senselessness, being a gross violation of the fifth commandment of God: *Thou shall not kill* which embeds its corollary: *Thou shall not destroy*.

African war philosophy, it may be necessary to highlight, is obviously an anti-war theory which stands in contradistinction to the pro-war theory embodied in European philosophy. Taking a clue from William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the basis of European war philosophy resides in this maxim: *a coward dies many times before his death*. It also resides in this declaration made by Caesar in the classical drama generally reflective of European mindset: *I came; I saw; I conquered*. Obviously, these two assertions celebrate valour as a war virtue. Consequently, the history of nation-building in Europe, England particularly, is replete with unimaginable wars executed for dethronement and enthronement purposes. Moreover, the pro-war nature of European philosophy is sharply evident in British colonization of Nigeria and several other

African countries which is indisputably the execution of a conquest that victimised Africa, most aggressively and most heartlessly, especially in view of the ensued slave trade the history of which is better imagined than narrated or experienced. In this regard, Walter Rodney's (1972) *How Europe Under-developed Africa* is even an under-statement as well as Prof. Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me by My Rightful Name*, a mind-boggling fictional but realistic exposition on Americans' racist ideology which horribly victimises Afro-Americans and other non-native Americans living in the United States of America as also on their slave trade in Africa which victimised native Africans on African soil and beyond.

With reference to Nigp9, African philosophy criticises and lampoons senseless polygamy, a seeming nuptial custom in Africa. The disapproval of senseless polygamy in African philosophy resides in the pragmatics of Nigp9 which discloses that polygamy impoverishes polygamists, hence, a man with eleven wives cannot feed well as unfolded by the semantics of the proverb. This pragmatic interpretation of Nigp9 distinguishes between senseless and sensible polygamy. Sensible polygamy, espoused in African philosophy permits no more than three wives with the second and third ones married as solution to unforeseen procreative issues and contingent demand for labour for agro-allied purposes. Nevertheless, it should and must be pointed out here that polygamy as a contingent African custom has long become an abused wisdom of the elders. Consequently, in view of the contact impact of Christianity on African philosophy and Africa's sociological transformation which has undermined farming as a viable means of livelihood, it is now an outmoded custom in Africa. Hence, it has long been replaced with legal adoption as a solution for contingent procreative issues such as childlessness and lopsided sex distribution of children. As a result of the foregoing radicalisation of African nuptial custom, contemporary African philosophy from the philosophical purview of the Yoruba's of South-western Nigeria in West Africa now drum into the ears of every African, especially young married and unmarried men, that:

It is only one wife that brings pleasure. When they are two wives, they become rivals; when they are three, they destroy the wine; when they increase to four, they laugh one another to scorn; when they are five, they accuse one of them of monopolising their husband's property; when they are six, they become wicked people and when they are seven, they become witches (Onyemelukwe, 2016: 267).

A content analysis of the contemporary African philosophy of marriage above shows clearly that every additional wife of a polygamist comes with additional nerve-shattering headache, hence the strict exclusive shift to monogamy. For avoidance of doubt, contemporary African philosophy of marriage, taking a clue from its genesis, rules out concubinage.

The philosophy of Doup1, a core proverb, stipulates a success principle: persistent thoroughness, persistent thoroughness as found in the life of every hen. Every hen constantly scratches the ground very thoroughly in search of food for her chickens. In this manner, she never fails to provide for her young ones. Likewise, Africans are convinced that any individual who pursues any realistic life goal is bound to achieve success. Africans' conviction in this regard is valid

even in the face of opposition in so far as the success seeker meticulously applies the two success principles of persistence and excellence (thoroughness) embodied in the proverb. The first of the two principles is precisely the pragmatic import of Doup3 which is also a core proverb. Hence, whoever aspires for any achievement at whatever level is expected by Africans never to relent, just as the elephant never relents bearing its tusks. Taken together, Doup1 and 3 are Africans' way of saying that quitters do not win and that winners do not quit.

Doup2, another core proverb, philosophically, cautions Africans and humanity by extension against reckless disclosure of information. Its logic is that the informant must be sure to disclose authentic information, especially confidential information. It is, therefore, unAfrican to release false information on anybody and/or anything to somebody. It is also unAfrican to disclose reliable information to a wrong recipient. A wrong recipient is anybody who is not genuinely in need of the information. On the part of information recipients, the wisdom to apply is being discriminatory regarding whom to seek information from. The logic of Doup2 regarding this wisdom is that one's target informant must be somebody rightly positioned to possess the required information. This logic is sacrosanct, because seeking information indiscriminately can lead to seeking it from a wrong person and seeking it from a wrong person is equivalent to seeking information about the bottom of a river from that of the boat which is never in contact with that part of the river even when it capsizes, and so, oblivious of its environmental specifics.

Doup4 is a core proverb that articulates Africans' way of saying that two wrongs do not constitute what is right. Hence, it embeds a philosophy that enjoins Africans to always aim at virtuous breakthroughs rather than creating and sustaining vicious cycles. With regard to offending and being offended, the wisdom enshrined in the proverb demands unhindered forgiveness instead of conventional or unprecedented vendetta which automatically initiates and sustains vicious cycles as opposed to total and complete forgiveness which guarantees virtuous breakthroughs. With regard to bereavement and misfortunes suffered by one's beloved, the philosophy of Doup4 urges reasonable reactions. Hence, in either situation one is expected not to injure or kill himself/herself in the course of mourning or in the name of empathizing with the beloved. In Biblical parlance, this philosophy of life enjoins empathizers to mourn or grieve like those who have hope. In other words, the pragmatics of Doup4 is that Africans understand that no bereavement or any other misfortune is the end of life, because there is hope as long as there is life, God, the author of life being eternally immortal and active for their benefits as His worshippers.

Doup5 incorporates African version of this maxim: *Look before you leap*. This is a common sense maxim, because very clearly leaping without looking can be unimaginably risky. Consequently, just as no bird perches on a strange tree, nobody should seek succour or refuge from a prospective benefactor whose trust-worthiness is in doubt. This wisdom counsel is incontestable, because doing otherwise is most likely to expose one to every kind of possible danger such as abduction, bewitchment, rape, duping and even death.

Gp2 and 5 are soft proverbs. Both of them adduce the obvious. The obvious but radical wisdom in Gp2 is that one does not need to be an elder to know God. In other words, age is not a factor regarding the knowledge of God which induces the fear of God. This axiom is ratified by Biblical insights in relation to Jesus Christ, His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, King David, King Solomon, Samson, Gideon, Joshua, Esther and others all of whom became men and women of God quite early in life, as early as twelve to sixteen years of age. It is further ratified by Moses' declaration to the effect that the laws of God are in the heart of man (Rom.2:15) In the light of these insights, no African, young or old, has any excuse to adduce for not knowing God. Hence, it is grossly unAfrican to be an enemy of God or to be diabolically inclined. This assertion presupposes that all Africans ought to be friends of God. Realising this presupposition validates the semantic content of Gp5 which echoes Psalm (133:1): *How good and delightful it is to see the same kindred members living together in unity*. The validity of Gp5 is strictly tied to the presupposition, because true fraternity or friendly familial relationship is directly a function of Divinely anchored unity in diversity as declared by Jesus Christ, an exceptional rabbi, in Luke 8:21.

Zup2, a soft proverb, is Africans' rendition of the popular maxim which asserts that all that glitters is not gold. In other words, the real value of whatever is not strictly a determinant of its appearance or surface value, because appearance can be deceptive. Hence, the taste of the pudding is in the eating, not in its appearance. Socio-economically, the philosophy of the proverb connects that of Nigp7 (b and c). In view of this inter-connection, it provides that a treasure or wealth seeker must labour to secure the desired treasure or wealth, since labour creates wealth. For instance, he who aims at mining for gold in a particular expanse of land must dig deep to harvest the gold. In this sense, Zup2 asserts, metaphorically, that there can be no crown without a corresponding cross. Interpreted in its own terms it is saying that whoever desires a nice fig must be ready to contend with the worms that infest it and such a person must not be a lazy man or woman, but a hard-working person.

Zup4, also a soft proverb, expresses an obvious wisdom. Literally, a nice plate does not last, because everybody eats with it. That everybody eats with it means that everybody wants nice things. Consequently, it is generally said that success has all available friends, whereas failure has none, hence, *no money, no friends*. In the light of this logic, any one rich man or woman in any kindred, clan, community or town cannot remain rich for life, because his/her array of fair-weather (parasitic) friends will pull him down, sooner or later, except he is wise and fortunate enough to make some of them rich. In the alternative, his/her door must not be open to everyone who comes knocking on it. The pragmatics of the foregoing in this paragraph is that no man or woman of substance must bother to be nice to everybody at all times and places. It must, however, be cautioned here that nothing in this assertion permits cruelty. It rather permits cautious overall goodness.

Mbep3 is a core proverb that, obviously, articulates the philosophy of time management. It, therefore, serves to state that Africans know that whatever ought to be done must be done immediately. The philosophy has no room for procrastination as well as zero tolerance for lateness. It rather enjoins promptness and punctuality for every course of action, indicating that Africans understand that procrastination is a lazy man's excuse and that time is money. It must here be emphasised that this philosophy refutes its direct opposite encoded in the popular phrase, 'African time.'

Mbep5 is a core proverb, being a metonymic expression. It is African philosophical legislation against uncontrolled appetite. The legislation is absolute, because flouting it really causes illness, abdominal cramps and diarrhoea, for instance. If habituated, it is also a gateway to obesity which is a precursor for several deadly chronic diseases, especially diabetes. Over and above all, the legislation is absolute, because neglecting it is indicative of greed, a killer vice. It is, therefore, a legislation that implicitly proscribes selfishness to promote sacrificial love for others in line with African God-centred philosophy.

Ethiop4, which personifies trouble, is a core proverb. It cautions against not heeding advice, useful advice. This caution is necessary, because wielding the wisdom of recognising and heeding pertinent advice is a fundamental success principle. Hence, whoever aspires for success in any life endeavour must possess the wisdom in addition to other principles of success all of which are incorporated in African philosophy, generally. In other words, lacking the wisdom in focus here can lead to trouble including the trouble of suffering failure which is capable of teaching the victim some pertinent lessons about life, but not without leaving some ever memorable scars. Pragmatically, this deduction means that experience is not really the best teacher as wrongly believed in general. Another pragmatic implication of Ethiop4 which makes its wisdom imperative is that whoever neglects wise advice habitually lacks inhibition and can do anything including what can cost life. Such a person may not live long enough to tell his own story. From this pragmatic perspective, the proverb links up another African wisdom saying popular among South-Eastern Nigerians namely *Life subsists in being wisely inhibited*, i.e., avoiding 'no-go areas' in life, generally.

Ethiop5 metaphorically articulates a stern warning against greed. So it pointedly but implicitly captures the warped psychology of greedy people namely that they are totally blinded by their greedy aspirations to their own detriment which is usually self-disgrace and/or self-destruction. This is their psychology, because they are so blinded that glaring surrounding obstacles on their way escape their notice. Hence, the underlying message of the proverb is that Africans abhor greed which explains the inclusion of this and other anti-greed proverbs such as Mbep5 and Nigp6 (c), in Africa's indeterminate glossary of proverbs. Africans abhor greed, because African philosophy abominates selfishness which embeds hatred for others, rather urging incorruptible Divine (agape) love in accordance with its fundamental God-centred attribute. This deductive logic underpins Ekei's (2001) extensively expounded thesis which asserts that communalism is

practically and purely the pillar of African Philosophy. For avoidance of doubt, communalism in the context of Ekei's thesis makes reference, essentially, to charity or charitable love which imperatively embeds selfless benevolence to the less privileged in both material and non-material terms. It also imperatively incorporates mutual sharing of material and non-material resources among members of a particular community.

4.0 Implications of the Study for International Relations between Africa, Europe and America (USA)

The juxtaposition of African war philosophy in this study with Europe's own war philosophy which connects Americans' incredible slave trade in Africa constitutes a rational ground for Africa demanding reparation from Europe and America. Nevertheless, the God-centred nature of African philosophy does not permit such a demand. Consequently, for the sake of God, Africa should put behind her, every bit of her colonial and slave trade disgusting experiences and offer Europe and America total forgiveness. Nevertheless, in the comity of nations, African countries should and must always demand due recognition from European and American countries with zero tolerance for superiority complex on their part. In strict pragmatic terms, Africa must not allow her now refined culture, philosophy and identity to be subsumed in those of Europe and America. Cf. Onyemelukwe (2014: 64-65). Nothing in this wisdom counsel, however, proscribes Africa from maintaining reasonable soft linguistic and non-linguistic boundaries. With clues from Onyemelukwe (2016:71), we assert that soft linguistic boundary permits borrowing as a morphological process for the purpose of enriching an indigenous language and that soft non-linguistic boundary accommodates alien cultural elements without discarding native ones except those found to be deficient in whatever manner. In non-technical but proverbial language, African countries' international relations with Europe and America and other continents by extension should and must be governed by the wisdom of the chameleon. Nevertheless, quite unlike the chameleon, they must be rationally selective regarding the environmental colours to integrate with their domestic and already domesticated colours.

5.0 Conclusion

The results of the analysis, done in section 3 of this study, prove the validity of its hypothesis namely that African proverbs convey African philosophy as stated in sections 1 and 2, but certainly not exhaustively. Moreover, the analysis has established the central evaluative assertion, repeatedly made in the study, to the effect that African philosophy is God-centred. This assertion, certainly, explains why contemporary African philosophy is largely influenced by Christianity, God being the spiritual architect of Christianity. Perhaps, the most interesting finding of the study is that polygamy as a contingent African custom has long been rendered an outmoded nuptial custom in contemporary African philosophy in outright preference for monogamy which rules out concubinage. Finally, the study has reinforced the self-evident truth asserted by Chinua Achebe in 1973 to the effect that African philosophy, and by extension, African culture and the dignity of African identity are not resultant outcomes of Africa's colonial

experience. The authenticity of this claim resides in the obvious fact that most if not all African proverbs predate the colonial period in Africa.

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