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Complementarism and Consolationism: Mapping Out a 21st-Century African Philosophical Trajectory

Abstract

African philosophy has been compelled to constantly define itself in relation to a domineering Western philosophy given the historical circumstances of colonialism and the dual heritage of the professional African philosopher; who is at once an African by cultural affiliation and a participant in Western civilisation by reason of their Western education. Many notable African philosophers have responded to the challenge posed by the tremendous success of Western philosophy by philosophising in ways that seek to transcend a purely Afrocentric agenda on the one hand and an uncritical acceptance of Western philosophical methods on the other hand. In this paper, I present and interrogate the response of the noted Nigerian philosopher, Innocent Asouzu, to the crisis of identity in African philosophy. I demonstrate that Asouzu's ibunyidanda philosophy of complementarism is a philosophical synthesis that seeks to transcend the famous universalism-particularism divide in African philosophy. Adopting an expository, analytical, and evaluative methodology, I show how the philosophical current of consolationism advances the philosophical trajectory Asouzu was blazing. I introduce into African philosophical discourse the universal category of consolation which supplies a panpsychist framework for exploring meaning in a tragic universe.

Keywords

complementarism, consolationism, African philosophy, ibunyidanda philosophy, mood, panpsychism

1. Introduction*

The philosophical tradition now universally known as African philosophy has been disproportionately dominated by metaphilosophical discourse.¹ The term 'metaphilosophical discourse' refers one to the preoccupation with me-

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Cf. Jennifer L. Vest, "Perverse and Necessary Dialogue in African Philosophy", *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 1 (2009) 2, pp. 1-23;

ta-philosophy noticeable in African philosophy. Meta-philosophy arises as a field of philosophical enquiry that investigates the conditions of the possibility of philosophy through the interrogation of philosophy itself. Meta-philosophy is philosophy reflecting on itself, its methods, conceptual schemes, and goals. The dominance of meta-philosophy, especially in the early period of the establishment of African philosophy, brought to the fore the problem of African philosophy in search of a unique identity that distinguishes it from the philosophies of other cultures, notably Western philosophy.

As a written intellectual tradition, African philosophy emerged in the first half of the 20th century, with the arrival of anti-colonial nationalist thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah, J. B. Danquah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kenneth Kaunda, L. S. Senghor, Julius Nyerere, and others. As professionally trained African philosophers emerged from European and American universities, the discipline made a shift towards greater intellectual rigour, away from the ideological fervour of the nationalists. The emergent professional philosophers found themselves in two camps based on their responses to the challenge of Western philosophy in which they were trained. The question arose over what African philosophy is, whether it even exists and how different and similar it is to the dominant Western philosophy. This question created the great divide in African philosophy, the universalism-particularism rupture. While the universalists, led by the acute Paulin Hountondji, insisted that African philosophy must exhibit the criticality and generality that essentially characterise Western philosophy, others like Onyewuenyi towed the path of Placide Tempels and endorsed ethno-philosophy as a uniquely African philosophy. Others, yet, like Kwasi Wiredu sought to transcend the universalism-particularism divide by applying Western analytical methods to the interpretation and systematisation of traditional African belief systems and phenomena. The universalists, or modernists, urge African philosophers to embark on, in the words of Hountondji, “a systematic appropriation of the international philosophical heritage, which is inseparable from (...) [the] scientific heritage”.²

On the other hand, the particularists – and especially that sub-set called ethno-philosophers – assert that African philosophy should carve out a unique space for itself and retain a distinctive identity. What this distinctive identity should consist of precisely³ and how an authentic African philosophical system can be constructed based on this distinctness remains, perhaps, the most significant task for African philosophers in the 21st century. Ethno-philosophers have ventured to present ethno-philosophy as that distinctive African philosophical tradition that robustly contrasts itself with Western philosophy. This stance of the core proponents of ethno-philosophy is opposed by universalists who see in ethno-philosophy a tradition of thought deficient in criticality.⁴

The long-drawn universalism-particularism debate significantly contributed to sustaining the preoccupation with metaphysical questions about the existence and validity of African philosophy. Over the years, however, a number of African philosophers have moved in the direction of system-building. Innocent Asouzu’s *ibuanyidanda* philosophy pursues the goal of system-building both as an acknowledgement of the relative absence of system builders in African philosophy and as a homage to the necessity of intercultural philosophy in a continually globalising world. Advancing Asouzu’s system-building project, philosophers of the conversational school of thought have recommended the conversational method as an appropriate procedure

for achieving the goals of building systems in African philosophy and showing how these newly constructed African systems are similar to, and different from, non-African thought-systems, and Western systems of thought in particular, at the roundtable of intercultural philosophical engagement.⁵

This paper locates Asouzu's philosophy of complementarism in the historical context of African philosophy and presents it as a response to the universalism-particularism conundrum. Specifically, this paper seeks to show how consolationism draws inspiration from ibuanyidanda philosophy in particular and the broader African philosophical heritage in general to arrive at the consolationist synthesis which is founded on the explication of the doctrine of *mood* and its implication for ontology. I seek to show how consolationism, in its peculiar way, realises the hope of Hountondji that African philosophers will ambitiously pursue the "reappropriation of our philosophical past and (...) reconstitution of our theoretical history".⁶ Section two presents a brief historical overview of African philosophy. Section three examines Asouzu's philosophy of complementarism, while section four shows how consolationism builds on the foundation of complementarism and advances Asouzu's philosophical trajectory. Section five concludes the paper.

The approach that I adopt in this article is the conversational approach developed by the Conversational School of Philosophy. This approach pursues critical engagement with the major schools and orientations in modern Afri-

Simon M. Makwinja, "Questions of Method and Substance and the Growth of African Philosophy", in: Edwin E. Etieyibo (ed.), *Method, Substance and the Future of African Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2018, pp. 93–112.

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Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, translated by Henri Evans, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1996, p. 107.

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Cf. L. Uchenna Ogbonnaya, "What Makes African Philosophy African: A Conversation with Aribiah David Attoe on 'the Foundational Myth of Ethnophilosophy'", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture, and Religions* 7 (2018) 3, pp. 94–108, p. 99, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v7i3.7>. Ogbonnaya believes that this distinctive characteristic that makes a philosophy African philosophy is the essential African communitarian ontology that exhibits the dynamic wholeness of reality. If Ogbonnaya is correct, then African philosophers have the task of constructing sophisticated logical, epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and socio-political thought-systems that draw inspiration from Afro-communitarianism in its narrow and broad dimensions. This task has largely been completed in the fields of moral and socio-political philosophy with the remarkable success of ubuntu ontology in undergirding African ethical and socio-political systems.

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Cf. Fainos Mangena, "Ethno-philosophy is Rational: A Reply to Two Famous Critics", *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 6 (2014) 2, pp. 23–38, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/tp.v6i2.3>; Bernard Matolino, "Universalism and African philosophy", *South African Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2015) 4, pp. 433–440, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2015.1116331>; Aribiah D. Attoe, "An Essay Concerning the Foundational Myth of Ethnophilosophy", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture, and Religions* 5 (2016) 1, pp. 100–108, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v5i1.7>.

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Cf. Ojah U. Egbai, "Why African Philosophers should build Systems: An Exercise in Conversational Thinking", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture, and Religions* 7 (2018) 1, pp. 34–52, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v7i1.2>; Jonathan O. Chimakonam, "Transforming the African Philosophical Place through Conversations: An Inquiry into the Global Expansion of Thought (GET)", *South African Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2015) 4, pp. 462–479, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2015.1104795>.

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P. Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, p. 107.

can philosophy, notably the ethnophilosophical, universalist, and hermeneutical tendencies, with the avowed objective of generating new concepts that aggregate into the formation of original systems of thought. In other words, my approach is a system-building approach.

2. African Philosophy: A Brief Historical Overview

Afrocentric scholars like Théophile Obenga, D. A. Masolo, Innocent Onyewuanyi, and I. M. Osuagwu trace the history of written African philosophy as far back as ancient Egypt and the medieval age of North African Christian philosophy ably represented by St Augustine, Tertullian, and Origen.⁷ The historical linkage between modern African philosophy and ancient Egyptian and North African Christian thought is intended to show that philosophy in Africa has a long and venerable history. Another goal of the historical linkage is showing that there is, in fact, an African origin of Greek philosophy and, therefore, Western philosophy. Western scholars have pushed back against this endeavour, arguing that ancient Egyptian thought (regarded as aphoristic) is radically of a different kind from ancient Greek thought (regarded as abstract) and cannot be linked to the latter.⁸ African philosophers like Chimakonam unimpressed by the Afrocentric endeavour on the grounds of an absence of conclusive evidence of the blackness of the ancient Egyptians and other North African elements have insisted on cutting out the ancient and medieval periods and concentrating on the modern history of African philosophy which witnessed the most productive and uncontroversial writings.⁹

Postcolonial African philosophy was born in controversy. This is understandable given the relative absence of a culture of writing in Africa before the advent of colonialism. Western thinkers and anthropologists like Hegel and Levy-Bruhl had questioned the capacity of Africans for philosophical and abstract thinking.¹⁰ The first generation of African philosophers, therefore, found themselves in the strange position of justifying the existence of African philosophy as a direct response to the Eurocentric scepticism of Western philosophers who measured non-Western philosophies against the benchmark of Western philosophy. Given this scenario of denial, protestation, and contestation, Chimakonam has suggested that while Aristotle may have traced the origin of Western philosophy to wonder, African philosophy was spurred by frustration.¹¹

Whether one agrees with Chimakonam or not, the inescapable fact remains that African philosophy had to justify itself before a sceptical Western audience that claimed the right to decide what was philosophy and what was not philosophy. Consequently, African philosophy launched its search for a unique identity. The search polarised African philosophers, with a group of philosophers endorsing the particularist approach to African philosophy and another group led by Hountondji betraying the pervasive influence of Western philosophy by insisting that there can be no unique African philosophy but simply a culture of philosophy in Africa that applies the critical methods of Western philosophy to its discourse.¹² The latter came to be known as the universalists. Particularists like Tempels,¹³ Senghor,¹⁴ Onyewuanyi,¹⁵ and Mangena¹⁶ prominently championed what has now been labelled ethno-philosophy. Ethno-philosophy is the accumulated worldviews of traditional African societies considered as embodying a coherent philosophical vision of the universe and the place of living and non-living things in this universe.¹⁷ Eth-

no-philosophers have promoted this traditional thought system as distinctly African given its cultural rootedness, while universalists dismiss it as merely a system of traditional wisdom not self-conscious and critical enough to meet the conditions of philosophy. Hountondji, perhaps the most trenchant critic of ethno-philosophy, asserts that ethno-philosophy implies the existence of a collective African philosophy, whereas philosophy is universally regarded as an explicit project of individual intellectual production.

Hountondji demands the rejection of the very idea of an implicit, collective philosophy discoverable by individual investigators. He asserts that:

“By completely putting aside the idea of an implicit, silent, latent philosophy, I meant to value discourse and the history of discourse as being the only possible place where philosophy appears.”¹⁸

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Cf. Théophile Obenga, *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period: 2780–330BC*, translated by Ayi Kwei Armah, Per Ankh, Popenguine 2004; D. A. Masolo, “African Philosophers in the Greco-Roman Era”, in: Kwasi Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford 2004, pp. 50–65, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470997154.ch3>; Innocent Onyewuenyi, *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism*, University of Nigeria Press, Nsukka 1993; I. Maduakolam Osuagwu, *African Historical Reconstruction: A Methodological Option for African Studies*, Amamihe, Owerri 1999.

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Cf. Barry Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2002.

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Cf. Jonathan O. Chimakonam, “Dating and Periodization Questions in African Philosophy”, in: Jonathan O. Chimakonam (ed.), *Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions in Contemporary African Philosophy*, University Press of America, Lanham (MD) 2015, pp. 9–34.

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Cf. Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree, Batoche Books, Kitchener 2001; Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality*, University of France Press, Paris 1947.

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Cf. J. O. Chimakonam, “Dating and Periodization Questions in African Philosophy”.

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Cf. Jay M. van Hook, “African Philosophy and the Universalist Thesis”, *Metaphilosophy* 28 (1997) 4, pp. 385–396, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9973.00067>; Emmanuel C. Eze, “African Philosophy and the

Analytic Tradition”, *Philosophical Papers* 30 (2001) 3, pp. 205–213, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568640109485084>; Ward E. Jones, “Belonging to the Ultra-faithful: A Response to Eze”, *Philosophical Papers* 30 (2001) 3, pp. 215–222, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568640109485085>; Edwin Etieyibo, “The Question of Cultural Imperialism in African Philosophy”, in: J. O. Chimakonam (ed.), *Atuolu Omalu*, pp. 147–170.

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Cf. Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, translated by Colin King, Presence Africaine, Paris 1959.

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Cf. Leopold S. Senghor, *On African Socialism*, translated by Mercer Cook, Pall Mall, London 1964.

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Cf. I. Onyewuenyi, *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy*.

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Cf. F. Mangena, “Ethno-philosophy is Rational”, pp. 23–38.

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Cf. Henry O. Oruka, *Sage Philosophy and the Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden 1990; Tsenay Serequeberhan (ed.), *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*, Paragon House, New York 1991; Barry Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2002; Polycarp Ikuenobe, “Logical Positivism, Analytical Method, and Criticisms of Ethnophilosophy”, *Metaphilosophy* 35 (2004) 4, pp. 479–503, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9973.2004.00332.x>.

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P. Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, p. ix.

Given the centrality of criticality or analyticity in Hountondji's definition of philosophy, it is understandable that he is willing to bring oral discourse under the umbrella of philosophy provided it satisfies the condition of criticality.

The pitfall in glorifying criticality and making it the defining essence of philosophy, however, is the tendency to see criticality as a method peculiar to philosophy. In contrast, it is correct to regard it as an essential feature of all rigorous thinking, as that quality which accompanies robust thinking.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mangena responds to Hountondji's stance by submitting that:

"... ethno-philosophy is not a mere collection of beliefs, customs, values and traditions of a particular group of people; it also involves critical analysis of the same. *Reasoning* involves analysing the relationships between or among given premises and drawing conclusions from them."²⁰

Mangena contends against Hountondji and other opponents of ethno-philosophy that since ethno-philosophy adopts the inductive and deductive procedure of critical thinking, the accusation of non-analyticity levelled against ethno-philosophy fails.

The merit of Hountondji's call for an ambitious African philosophy that exhibits the rigour pertaining to proper philosophical discourse lies in the recognition of the conceptually impoverished status of ethno-philosophy. While Mangena's stance allows African philosophy to claim the quality of uniqueness and present itself as different from Western philosophy, either in terms of content or subject matter,²¹ he conveniently overlooks the ethnographic character of ethno-philosophy which denies it universal applicability, more or less. Outstanding professional philosophers like Wiredu, Orika, Gbadeshin, Sodipo, Hallen, and Asouzu have tried to take a middle course by subjecting ethnographic data to the analytical method in order to tease out individual philosophical interpretations that meet the standard of philosophical rigour. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to determine the boundary between ethno-philosophy and the kind of rigorous philosophising recommended by Hountondji in the works of the professional philosophers who attempt to transcend the universalism-particularism divide by reconciling ethno-philosophy with rigorous analysis.²² The works of these professional philosophers lend some legitimacy to the idea of a viable but unsystematised philosophy that is collective by being diffused in the community, given these philosophers' acute awareness of their cultural rootedness and their willingness to construct thought-systems on the foundation supplied by ethnographic data. As Irele asserts eloquently in his introductory notes on *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*:

"... the professional philosopher in Africa today operates in a situation of cultural and social tension. For although his mind has been moulded by the principles of Western philosophy, he too is confronted by the vast body of worldviews and thought systems which continue to inhabit the consciousness of the majority of Africans and to determine a fundamental attachment on their part to a traditional way of life (...). Faced with a dualism both of modes of thought and modes of existence, the philosopher in Africa is compelled to undertake an examination of the implications of this dualism for his discipline and for his practice of that discipline with specific reference to the African situation (...) there can be no form of reflection in Africa today that does not bear a direct relation to history and culture. In this broad perspective of the conditions of thought and discourse on our continent, the present debate on the question of African philosophy (...) can be seen to form part of a comprehensive process of reflection by the African intelligentsia upon our total historical being: it represents a significant moment in the intellectual response of Africans to the challenge of Western civilisation."²³

Hountondji admits that it is difficult for the contemporary African philosopher to ignore the cultural matrix in which they are embedded along with the worldviews this matrix produces.²⁴ The constant pressure on the African philosopher to respond to what Irele calls the challenge of Western civilisation, specifically the success of Western philosophy, while remaining faithful to their primary African cultural constituency, is eloquently captured by Robert Bernasconi who notes that:

“Western philosophy traps African philosophy in a double bind: either African philosophy is so similar to Western philosophy that it makes no distinctive contribution and effectively disappears; or it is so different that its credentials to be genuine philosophy will always be in doubt.”²⁵

This is true because African philosophy, on account of its late emergence as an uncontroversial written intellectual tradition and in view of the appropriation of universalism by the tremendously successful Western philosophy,²⁶ finds its bearing more or less with direct reference to Western philosophy – a fact attested to by the insistence of the universalist school of thought on Western philosophical methods as the only valid methods for African philosophy.

Nevertheless, philosophers of the conversational school of thought have noted the need for system-building by African philosophers, the creation of authentic African concepts woven around fundamental theories that respond to African existential conditions while, at the same time, having universal applicability and capable of offering alternative perspectives as Africa’s challenge to Western thought-systems and thought-patterns.²⁷ Such a project, as envisaged by the conversationalists, will involve a revival of the African reason as it is embedded in African languages, reliance on traditional African phenomena, and the rigorous transformation of these traditional phenomena using the time-tested analytical methods that have immensely benefitted Western philosophy.²⁸

In this regard, the Conversational school incorporates claims of the hermeneutic school of Theophilus Okere, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Okondo Okolo, and others who urge African philosophers to value African phenomena like myths, proverbs, and traditional worldviews as important elements of African

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Cf. U. Ogbonnaya, “What Makes African Philosophy African”, pp. 96–103. Here Ogbonnaya points out the inadequacy of the critical-ity criterion.

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F. Mangena, “Ethno-philosophy is Rational”, pp. 31–32.

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Cf. U. Ogbonnaya, “What Makes African Philosophy African”, pp. 94–108.

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Cf. Alena Rettová, “The Role of African Languages in African Philosophy”, *Rue Descartes* 36 (2002) 2, pp. 129–150.

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P. Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, pp. 10–11.

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Ibid., p. ix.

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Robert Bernasconi, “African Philosophy’s Challenge to Continental Philosophy”, in: Emmanuel C. Eze (ed.), *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Cambridge (MA) 1997, pp. 183–196, p. 188.

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Cf. Olufemi Taiwo, “Exorcising Hegel’s Ghost: Africa’s Challenge to Philosophy”, *African Studies Quarterly* 1 (1998) 4. Available at <http://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/Vol-1-Issue-4-Taiwo.pdf> (accessed on 7 December 2019). In this work Taiwo decries the hegemony of Western philosophy in a sombre language.

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Cf. O. Egbai, “Why African Philosophers should build Systems”, pp. 34–52.

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The Conversational School of Philosophy has developed the following canons to spur

philosophy that should be transformed into higher-order thought for the renewal of Africa.²⁹ Okere, Njoku, and Devisch amplify the political dimension of philosophising as an African when they assert that since philosophy, in any tradition, has culture as the horizon of the unfolding of its questions and answers to the questions its history generates, every philosophy is a particularist perspective. The universalist claim of Western philosophy merely reveals a disregard for non-Western cultures; an attitude emboldened chiefly by the circumstances of colonialism.³⁰

In furtherance of the goal of reviving African philosophy by way of a return to its source, Janz has challenged African philosophers to discover the ultimate source of African philosophy. He does not mean ‘sources’ in the plural but the ultimate source; for, if we are talking about sources, even Western philosophy is obviously a source of African philosophy given that African philosophers borrow elements of Western philosophy, especially in the dimension of philosophical methodology. However, for this project not to degenerate into the exaggeration of ethno-philosophy as substantive African philosophy, Janz adds a caveat:

“By that [return to the source of African philosophy] I do not mean another attempt to locate philosophy in some culturally ancient form, but rather, to think about the unique well-spring of concepts that continues to this day for African philosophy.”³¹

In the following sections, I will show how Asouzu responds to the challenge of a return to the source of African philosophy, which surely must be in the traditional African thought-world itself, and how consolationism latches on to the trajectory Asouzu blazed to constitute itself as a 21st-century African philosophical synthesis.

3. Ibuanyidanda Philosophy and Asouzu’s Quest for an African Philosophical Synthesis

Asouzu adopted the procedure of complementary reflection in the explication of his philosophical system. Complementary reflection is the epistemological vehicle of what Asouzu calls *ibuanyidanda* philosophy. The term *ibuanyidanda* can be translated roughly from the Igbo language as complementarity or complementarism.³² The chief thesis of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy is that the universe is a composite of missing links advancing towards the completion of the part and the whole in the process of mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence which the human mind grasps when reflecting on the nature of things. Complementary reflection is the procedure that seeks to realise the unity of the parts of the whole in the face of the apparent fragmentation of being which we perceive in the isolated spheres of individual entities, in the diversity of forms, beings, ideas, traditions, values, etc. As a method of philosophising, complementary reflection is the vehicle of an optimistic philosophical vision of life that explains the universe in terms of the perfectibility of the whole in which isolated parts are missing links. The notion of a missing link plays such a prominent role in Asouzu’s optimistic philosophy that it requires elucidation, which I will soon supply.

Asouzu’s complementarism has an African epistemic flavour because it is founded on African complementary worldview. It transcends the African experience to the extent that it deploys the critical tool of Western philosophy and makes a claim to universal applicability.³³ The optimism of *ibuanyidanda*

philosophy is hinged on the very idea of complementarity itself which regards perfection as a possibility, indeed eventuality. The quest for perfection, the increasing degree of the realisation of a broader horizon of solidarity among existent things, arouses in the human mind what Asouzu calls *jide ka iji*, or the joy of being. According to Asouzu, *ibuanyidanda* is:

“... a philosophy of categorisation, sorting, harmonisation, pairing-up, and complementation. In complementarity, we seek to relate world immanent realities to one another in the most natural, mutual, harmonious and compatible ways possible (...) to allow being assume its natural completeness as the joy that unifies all realities. Herein is rooted the joy of being as the transcendent joyous experience of the ultimate foundation of reality. In this way, *complementation is a philosophy that seeks to consider things in the significance of their singularity and not in the exclusiveness of their otherness in view of the joy that gives completion to all missing links of reality.*”³⁴

Asouzu is optimistic. Limitations exist to be overcome, whether the overcoming happens or not. For Asouzu, it is enough that the inherent complementary drive at work in things seeks the overcoming of limitations. In overcoming, we experience an intellectual-cum-emotional satisfaction, *jide ka iji*. He writes:

original and systematic thinking among African philosophers in the intercultural age of globalization where different cultures compete in the marketplace of ideas: critical intracultural and intercultural conversation with authors and their writings, the transformative indigenization of the intellectual productions of non-African cultures to fit into the African intellectual environment, noetic re-Africanization as the deliberate expansion and deepening of knowledge about African intellectual productions and the African thought-world, moderate decolonization which involves the affirmation of African authenticity while avoiding racial jingoism, and creative interrogation of authors and their writings to elicit new meanings and intellectual horizons. See J. Chimakonam, “Transforming the African Philosophical Place through Conversations”, pp. 462–479; Victor C. Nweke, “Mesembe Edet’s Conversation with Innocent Onyewuanyi: An Exposition of the Significance of the Method and Canons of Conversational Philosophy”, *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture, and Religions* 5 (2016) 2, pp. 53–72, pp. 61–62, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v5i2.4>.

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Cf. Theophilus Okere, *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibilities*, University Press of America, Lanham (MD) 1983; Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, Routledge, New York 1994; Barry Hallen, “Contemporary Anglophone African Philosophy: A Survey”, in: K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, pp. 125–129.

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Cf. Theophilus Okere, Chukwudi Anthony Njoku, René Devisch, “All Knowledge is first

of all Local Knowledge: An Introduction”, *African Development* 30 (2005) 3, pp. 1–19, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ad.v30i3.22226>; cf. Ada Agada, “The Sense in which Ethno-philosophy can Remain Relevant in 21st Century African Philosophy”, *Phronimon* 20 (2019), pp. 1–20, doi: <https://doi.org/10.25159/2413-3086/4158>.

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Bruce Janz, “Conversation in Place and about Place: Response to Chimakonam, ‘Conversational Philosophy as a New School of Thought in African Philosophy: A Conversation with Bruce Janz on the concept of Philosophical Space’”, *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies* 1 (2016) 1, pp. 41–50, p. 48, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2979/jourworlphil.1.1.04>.

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The concept is similar to ubuntuism in the sense that both promote the necessity of cohesion of parts of a whole in the whole, thus lending priority to community. Yet, they are different in the sense that complementarism, more than ubuntuism, prioritizes the individual entity as an important sphere of influence necessary for the completion of the whole.

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Asouzu’s philosophy of complementarism opens itself up to dialogue with non-African philosophical traditions. It is not fixated on the particular in which it is rooted. His perspective is decidedly intercultural and welcomes the mutual enriching of traditions in dialogue.

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Innocent I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*, University of Calabar Press, Calabar 2004, p. 39.

“In complementary reflection, we seek always to transform the limitations of being to the cause of our joy. In this case, we seek ultimate explanations, in joy, of why things happen and seek to re-establish the positive lesson that such incidents seek to communicate and try to learn from such events in very positive and optimistic manner. *In complementarism, we seek to put fatalism, pessimism, despondency, alienation and indeed all negative existential experience on their head...*the foundation and driving force of all existent realities is the inherent joy that gives legitimacy to all missing links of reality...As missing links of reality, diverse entities in their diverse ways of expression, give us an insight into how to understand them in relation to other categories of thought. In this way, they serve a positive missing link in view of the certainty of the joy that is implicitly intended in the process of their realisation.”³⁵

The idea of missing links is integral to the narrative of perfection or perfectibility³⁶ in ibuanidanda philosophy. Sometimes Asouzu seems to think that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality”, implying that existents can be at once discrete or isolated and event-like, in the sense of needing other existents to be complete.³⁷ In this sense, Asouzu seems not to commit himself to the firm view that everything that exists or every existent thing is a missing link – for then, one may argue, the idea of missing links becomes incoherent since there will be nothing to link in the chain of entities and events. This appears a superficial interpretation of Asouzu, however, for he views all actually existing and potentially existing things as missing links. The universe is a dynamic whole of incomplete individual elements in a necessary relation of interdependence with one another. Asouzu’s universe thus is Ramose’s universe of *be-ings* rather than beings, in which things are in a constant process of becoming, dynamic and interdependent rather than static and discrete. A complementary ontology undergirds this view of existents as missing links.³⁸ A link is not missing because it is unavailable or absent but because it is incomplete, arising from the fragmentation that characterises things in time and space. Fragmentation denotes incompleteness and incompleteness connotes a quest for completeness in absolute unity of being. Asouzu writes that:

“*Missing links* are the diverse units that make up an entity within the framework of the whole and as they are complementarily related. They are all the imaginable, fragments, units, components, and combinations that enter into our understanding of any aspect of our world. They are also all the units and combinations necessary in the conceptualisation of an entity or of the whole. These missing links are, for example, thoughts and the thoughts of thoughts. They are diverse modes of manifestation of being in history. They are categories and the categories of categories. They are the units and the units of units, entities and the entities of entities, things and the things of things. They are ideas and the ideas of ideas, etc. as these can possibly be abstracted and related to each other as conditions of possibility of their perfectibility in a harmonious systemic manner.”³⁹

The above quote clearly shows that Asouzu understands missing links in the strong sense of ‘all existent or possible things are missing links’ rather than the weak sense of ‘some existent or possible things are missing links’. Thus every existent thing is a missing link, and such can be simple or complex. A single atom, as a unit, is simple while the human being as an organism is complex. The human being, for instance, has an internal organisation with many units functioning as missing links and granting purposiveness to the human being as a whole. Yet, there are different kinds of wholes. A human being is a whole, a family is a whole; so the community and the universe are as well. Asouzu reveals his true understanding of missing links when he tackles the problem of how things serve a missing link of reality. Separating ‘things’ from ‘missing links’, at face value, points to the distinctness of a ‘thing’ and a ‘missing link’. But this is hardly Asouzu’s understanding of ‘things’ and the ‘miss-

ing links' they serve. All things are units and fragments of wholes and the grandest whole is the universe considered as the widest sphere of reality. For Asouzu, these units or things are at once entities and missing links. He notes:

"We have two legitimate formal ways of viewing units or fragments as ontological entities. First, we can abstract them from the whole and view them, as completely isolated discrete units. In this sense, they have the semblance of complete independent non-relational existence (...) they are missing in relation to each other. This idea of complete isolation and non-relation, though theoretically conjecturable, remains counter-intuitive. This makes a second way of viewing them necessary. Here they stay in relationship to each other."⁴⁰

He adds that the mind affirms the complementary relation subsisting among entities in thought that necessarily orients itself towards the future in optimistic anticipation of ever-expanding horizons of progress, what Asouzu calls the transcendental unity of consciousness. Interchanging 'things' with 'missing links', he notes:

"In this complementary conscientisation, things serve a missing link. Since these missing links serve each other (...) they exist necessarily in anticipation and in a future referential perspective."⁴¹

Missing links, therefore, are things in their state of incompleteness. Their incompleteness gives them the character of events, by which they are dynamic links in being.

Critiquing Asouzu's idea of missing links, Chimakonam favours the term 'necessary links'. According to Chimakonam:

"Everything in the ecosystem serves a necessary link of reality (...). This can be contrasted with Innocent Asouzu's idea of complementarity, formulated in terms of the missing link of reality. Both may suggest the idea of relativity in ontology, but while the former suggests the relativ-

35
Ibid., pp. 282–283.

36
Compare with the narrative of *consolation* in consolation philosophy. See section 4 of the paper.

37
I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*, p. 45.

38
Cf. Mogobe B. Ramose, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as a Philosophy", in: Pieter H. Coetzee, Abraham P. J. Roux (eds.), *The African Philosophy Reader*, Routledge, London 2003, pp. 270–280. While Ramose's universe is more dynamic than Asouzu's universe, the former does not deny the existence of individual things. The notion of 'being becoming' exhibits individuality in its originary and permanent state of interactivity or flux; see also: Jonathan O. Chimakonam, "Can Individual Autonomy and Rights be Defended in Afro-communitarianism?", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture, and Religions* 7 (2018) 2, pp. 122–141, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v7i2.8>. According to Chimakonam, the system of logic that he calls Ezumezu accounts for the seemingly

contradictory results African complementary ontology produces in relation to the status of apparently independent entities which are dependent on other apparently independent entities. In addition to the truth and falsity values, Ezumezu acknowledges a third complemented value characterized by value glut, where the law of contradiction loses its strict applicability so that a thing can be what it is and something else even as seemingly opposing propositions can both be true, with contexts taken fully into consideration. Affirmative and negating propositions are sub-contraries rather than contradictories in the Ezumezu system. Chimakonam asserts that Ezumezu logic undergirds African complementary theories because it prioritizes complementarity at the expense of contradiction without invalidating contradiction.

39
I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*, pp. 277–278.

40
Ibid., p. 278.

41
Ibid.

ity of presence, the latter suggests the relativity of absence. But scholars of the conversational mindset believe that it is better to talk of reality as a presence rather than as an absence, hence, the idea of the necessary link.⁴²

However, there is no fundamental difference between Asouzu's missing link and a necessary link as formulated by Chimakonam. Asouzu conceived a missing link in terms of incompleteness rather than absence or unavailability. The necessity demanded by Chimakonam is already entailed in the concept of the 'missing' link since a missing link is also a necessary link considered in isolation from other (missing) links which, nevertheless, complete the individual link.

4. From Complementarism to Consolationism

In this section, I will interrogate Asouzu's *ibuanyidanda* philosophy from the perspective of consolation philosophy and show how consolationism advances the philosophical vision of Asouzu. The approach dilutes Asouzu's optimism with the new category of consolation which highlights the ontological, conceptual, and existential problems that accompanies the thesis of perfectibility.

The Consolationist Critique of Asouzu's Complementarism

Like complementarism, consolationism arises out of the cultural tension Irele alludes to (see section two). Both systems seek to project the historical being of Africa in the language of the philosopher, through philosophical syntheses that draw inspiration from the ubiquitous African complementary worldviews while acknowledging the necessity of finding answers that transcend the African thought-space in their universal applicability for the consolidation of human solidarity across cultural boundaries. Like complementarism, consolationism "seeks to understand reality from the preceding conditions of (...) [an] African background, without committing itself uncritically to these preconditions".⁴³

Both consolationism and complementarism seek a wider circle of solidarity. Asouzu says pointedly that complementary reflection, "while leaning against the traditional African ontology, seeks to transcend this in a manner that seeks wider applicability".⁴⁴ Complementarism and consolationism acknowledge the capacity of African philosophy for uniqueness by admitting an African ontology which supplies a distinctive content relative to non-African ontologies. This ontology is a complementary, processual, and dynamic understanding of reality, and is widely acknowledged in African philosophical literature.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, there is a marked difference between consolationism and complementarism in their approach to the notion of perfection concerning the constitution of the universe. Asouzu's vision is overly optimistic, for it assumes that since human consciousness, in its transcendental dimension of expansive thinking, does indicate perfection as the ultimate purpose of universal existence, this high point of all future orientations of missing links is reachable.⁴⁶ The mind indeed indicates perfection as the (possible) goal of all things that strive for the fullest possible realisation of being even as there is empirical evidence of the attainability of degrees of completeness in nature. Such empirical evidence includes biological growth and development from infancy to adulthood, the capacity of humans to realise certain life goals and comfort-enhancing technological progress. But such degrees of completion pale in comparison with the ideal of perfection as a grand purpose which these incomplete instances of the intelligibility of the thesis of perfection re-

inforce. Humans and things strive indeed for completion, but degeneration and decay intervene to terminate the march towards perfection. In the case of humans, who are endowed with advanced consciousness, death puts an end to the grand project, and not even belief in an omniscient being who will, or can, at some point in cosmic history help humans reach a perfect state in a different plane of existence suffices. Death and decay put an end to active striving, without this striving realising the purpose that actuated it in the first place.

Elsewhere, while mulling over the thoughts of Asouzu, I noted that:

“The concept of the *joy of being* (...) is pivotal to the optimism of Asouzu (...). Why must the optimistic vision of the universe stand given that human life provides enough materials to feed pessimism and put forward the claim of pessimism to metaphysical priority over optimism? Is optimism not a missing link in the chain of complementarity? If yes, what is its relationship with pessimism? What significance can be attached to a notion such as the *sadness of being*?”⁴⁷

Consequently, consolationism challenges Asouzu’s optimism and offers a more pessimistic vision of the universe that sheds light on the paradox of the human mind indicating perfection as the goal of existence even in the face of the impossibility of the attainability of this perfection.

The Thesis of Consolationism and the Doctrine of Mood

Consolationism seeks to find a balance between Asouzu’s optimism and the pessimism which the reality of moral and physical evil arouses in the mind that proposes perfection as the possible culmination of all strivings in the universe. The consolationist asserts that yearning or striving characterises all

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Jonathan O. Chimakonam, “Ohanife: An Account of the Ecosystem based on the African Notion of Relationship”, in: Jonathan O. Chimakonam (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*, Routledge, London – New York 2018, pp. 120–134, p. 126, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315099491-10>.

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I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*, p. 41.

44

Ibid.

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African philosophical currents and concepts like negritude, *ujamaa*, consciencism, Afro-communitarianism, *ezumezu* logic, conversationalism and ubuntuism clearly promote an interconnected, interdependent, and dynamic conception of the universe. See, for instance, P. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*; L. S. Senghor, *African Socialism*; Julius Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi 1968; Innocent I. Asouzu, *Ibuaru: The Heavy Burden of Philosophy beyond African Philosophy*, Lit Verlag GmbH & Co., Zurich 2007; L.T. Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global*

Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu, Springer, New York 2014. The African holistic perspective of the universe is not necessarily a unique African perspective but Africans certainly project a distinctive complementarism as reflected in the radical understanding of nature as an interconnected and interdependent network of actualities and possibilities.

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This debatable optimism emboldens Asouzu to assume that the emotional-cum-intellectual attitude of *jide ka iji* can be sustained over significant periods in the face of the constancy of the existential obstacles whose overcoming in the first place leads us to the experience of joy. But sadness and grief are real states of the mind and are as existentially significant as joy. Stoicism, which Asouzu seems to be indirectly advocating, merely underlines the fact that all is not well although all may still be well. According to the consolationist, this stoic attitude symptomizes *consolation* as a universal existential category.

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Ada Agada, *Existence and Consolation: Re-inventing Ontology, Gnosis and Values in African Philosophy*, Paragon House, St. Paul (MN) 2015, p. 57.

things that exist and all things that will exist. For, to exist now means to have in various degrees realised the impulses that constitute yearning and to exist at some point in the future indicates the causative power of yearning. Something precedes yearning as its ground and which is yet yearning in its inchoate state. For the consolationist, this thing is *mood*. Yearning, as the essence of things, indicates the working of reason throughout the universe. This universal reason rises from the unconscious state imputed to supposedly inanimate things and lower life-forms to the intense subjectivity discernible in higher life-forms like humans. Reason implicates the actuality of feeling or emotion and intellect, both being orientations of a primitive subjectivity. This primitive subjectivity I call *mood*. It transits between conscious and unconscious states by virtue of an internal dialectic (of yearning) and defines all things and pervades all things as original mind.

To be is to yearn and to yearn is to be *mood*. The ontological framework that conceives every existent thing or every possible existent thing as an expression of *mood* is a panpsychist framework. This is the case since *mood* is a composite of feeling and intellect – both constituting reason – and, therefore, proto-mind. All subjective forms and bodily constructions in the course of geological and evolutionary history are orientations of *mood*, according to the consolationist hypothesis. I noted elsewhere that:

“Mood is an originary intelligence, the basis of feeling, a primordial reason, a proto-mind from which advanced reason, thought, affects and attitudes arise.”⁴⁸

Matter understood in terms of substantiality is an orientation of *mood*; so are mental states like joy, sadness, desire, etc. Mental activities such as thinking and behavioural dispositions are ways in which *mood* expresses itself.

The term proto-mind underlines the panpsychist credentials of the consolationist system. Panpsychism itself is the view that mentality is fundamental and distributed throughout the universe. That is to say, objects, both living and non-living, exhibit mentality in their micro-history or at the micro-level. Panpsychist views come in different shades. For instance, idealistic panpsychism submits that reality is fundamentally mentalistic while physicalist panpsychism views the mind as ubiquitous in the universe and as fundamental as matter with which it (mind) is coexistent in a unified experiential field.⁴⁹ While the literature on panpsychism in African philosophy is scanty, some notable Western philosophers have devoted much attention to panpsychism because of its promise in the field of consciousness studies.⁵⁰

Consolationist panpsychism is closer to idealistic panpsychism than physicalist panpsychism, for it claims that *mood* as original subjectivity and the most fundamental reality is prior to both matter and mind (as advanced consciousness). Matter and mind are orientations of *mood*. At this point, the acute thinker will wonder how mind and matter emerge out of *mood*. The process is less one of emergence than of differentiation since mind and matter already subsist in their inchoate forms in *mood*, which is their defining essence. According to the philosophical hypothesis I present, mind and matter are orientations of *mood*, imbued with the capacity for further development by their yearning essence, which arises as a consequence of an internal necessity in *mood*. They arise as differentiations brought about by an internal dialect in *mood* necessitated by the very nature of *mood* as yearning.

Consolationism assumes a darker aspect and presents a more pessimistic vision of the universe relative to Asouzu’s complementarism because con-

solationism submits that whatever exists as *mood* and carries the burden of yearning cannot reach its ultimate goal. This ultimate goal is the apotheosis of the human phenomenon in its attainment of freedom and happiness and the completion of nature in a way that eliminates physical evil such as earthquakes, hurricanes, diseases, and other natural occurrences that have negative consequences for humans and the natural environment. Yearning should have a purpose; and, indeed, the human mind, which reflects on empirical states of affairs, indicates perfection as the goal of the universe, being the ideal concept under which all causal dispositions, existential struggles, and forms of progress find their bearing. Nevertheless, this perfection is impossible. The indication of perfection as the goal of the universe and the impossibility of that which consciousness indicates as a final purpose capture the universe's tragic dimension. Given the tragic dimension of existence, I use the term *consolation* to describe whatever is actual or potentially actual, what endures or will endure in a universe of yearning. For, the sphere of being and meaning already subsist in tragedy, notwithstanding the potential for progress that, yet, never reaches the ideal which this same progress indicates. The ultimate futility of yearning reveals this tragedy. Consolationism describes as tragic a universe "whose ultimate purpose the human mind can discern as completion/perfection but which never seems to reach this goal".⁵¹

Consequently, it makes sense to describe the universe as a consolatory universe, where everything that exists and is determined by yearning possesses that inherent capacity to be and to strive without reaching its ultimate target.⁵² The very fact that something can exist even while its very existence denies it

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Ada Agada, "A truly African philosophy", *Aeon Magazine* (27 September 2018). Available at: <https://aeon.co/essays/consolation-philosophy-and-the-struggle-of-reason-in-africa> (accessed on 7 December 2019).

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See, for instance, T. L. S. Sprigge, "Idealism", in: Richard M. Gale (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics*, Blackwell, Malden (MA) 2002, pp. 219–241, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998984.ch11>; Galen Strawson, "Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13 (2006) 10–11, pp. 3–31; William Seager, "Panpsychism, Aggregation and Combinatorial Infusion", *Mind & Matter* 8 (2010) 2, pp. 167–184.

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A seemingly intractable question in the philosophy of mind is the mind-body imbroglio. By positing the fundamentality and ubiquity of mind-stuff in the universe, panpsychism supplies a compelling response to the question of the nature of mind and matter, their dependence or independence, and interaction. Physicalists like Strawson have vigorously defended panpsychism and others like Chalmers find it plausible. Strawson's argument is that experience implicates consciousness and the only way to avoid imputing the miraculous to

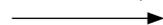
the emergence of consciousness in the natural world is to posit the fundamentality of mind-stuff side by side with physical stuff. A form of panpsychism called Russellian monism after the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, who sketched an outline of a form of monistic panpsychism, has intrigued philosophers who see it as supplying the basis for thinking the completion of the data physics supplies about the world. Russellian monism suggests that consciousness underlies reality and accounts for the intrinsic or inner nature of things which science has not deciphered even while adequately describing the behaviour of physical phenomena. Cf. Torin Alter, Yujin Nagasawa (eds.), *Consciousness in the Physical World: Perspectives on Russellian Monism*, Oxford University Press, New York 2015.

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Ada Agada, "Rethinking the Metaphysical Questions of Mind, Matter, Freedom, Determinism, Purpose and the Mind-Body Problem within the Panpsychist Framework of Consolationism", *South African Journal of Philosophy* 38 (2019) 1, pp. 1–16, p. 5, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2018.1560589>.

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The category of consolation can be understood in terms of the popular saying that half a loaf of bread is better than no loaf. Thus, it



the power to reach its goal means this thing is a *consolation*. All existents are consolations even as the universe itself exists as a consolation. The universal category of consolation underlines the tragedy of existence. Whatever exists is *ab initio* a victim of existence even as its actuation is a concession to its being. Every existent thing is at once victim and victimiser.

The notion of purpose in relation to perfection deserves further elucidation. The consolationist regards perfection in the Asouzian sense of the completion of the individual parts of the whole and, therefore, the whole itself. In the human sphere where subjectivity is integral to being, perfection is that state of being that equates freedom. In consolationism, freedom is conceived as transcendental and absolute. Freedom is the capacity to initiate a course of action or make a choice that always leads to favourable or desired outcomes. To be free

“... is to possess the capacity to always will an ideal or perfect state of affairs that conduce to human happiness. The free being is a perfect being and the perfect being is a free being (...) it is the capacity to will a perfect state of affairs that constantly calms the radical yearning which defines the human being.”⁵³

My conception of freedom deviates from the conventional understanding of the term to mean the ability to make a rational choice in the face of options, the ability to have acted differently than one did. My conception of freedom regards choice as a decision made in an environment of struggle and conditioned by antecedent physical, biological, and psychological impulses.⁵⁴ To embrace a course of action out of many options or at least two options is to exercise the power of choice. This is by no means freedom because, from the very beginning, the outcome of the choice made is not guaranteed to be favourable as impediments lie in the path of realisation.

Perfection is that ideal that renders intelligible the ceaseless strivings and push for progress that characterise the natural world and the entities that subsist in this world. This ideal informs us that the dispositions of matter at sub-atomic levels and the pursuit of progress that defines human existential engagements are not irrational but supply the human mind with the data that compel it to posit perfection as the goal of the universe. The impossibility of this ideal, which I have previously noted, validates the postulation of *consolation* as a universal existential category.

Possible Objections to the Perfection Thesis

1. The theist's objection: It is possible that an omnipotent and omniscient Being can and will realise perfection in nature and for humans, if not in this world, then in another world: in which case the submission that perfection is unrealisable is false.

I respond that not even such a Being escapes the reach of *mood*. Since every existent thing is constituted by *mood*, yearning defines the essence of such a Being. Consequently, the categories of omnipotence and omniscience do not apply.

2. The realist's objection: The idea of perfection is too expansive. It is not necessary for humans and the natural world to have perfection as a final purpose. It is enough that we pursue our worldly goals to the best of our abilities.

I respond that this is a fatalistic stance that accepts the imperfect world as simply a brute fact. The respectability of this stance lies with the claim that stoicism is the most appropriate behavioural response to the way the world appears to humans. This stance does not invalidate the consolationist hypothesis but, in fact, affirms the tragedy of existence, which tragedy calls for a resolute stoicism.

3. The atheist's objection: There is no final purpose in the universe. For there to be a final purpose, a Being or power outside the world must guarantee it. But no such Being exists. Therefore, the universe has no purpose.

I respond that the panpsychist framework of consolationism helps us meet this objection. Since the mind is fundamental and ubiquitous in the universe, reason permeates all things in varying degrees of actuality. The rationality of the universe is an argument in favour of a final purpose which the human mind intuitively perceives as perfection. If existence is not irrational by virtue of the yearnings in the universe at sub-conscious and conscious levels and if the realisation of these yearnings, however limited, creates meanings in the universe, it is plausible to presuppose a final purpose that entails all existential strivings as their ideal reference point. The non-existence of God does not annul the reason that animates the world.

4. Humans are not wholly determined. They are endowed with the power of choice. Therefore, freedom is already a reality.

I respond that this capacity for rational decision making is conditioned by antecedent physical, psychological, and biological impulses even as our decisions enter a field of impediments and struggle where outcomes are unpredictable as decision-makers lose control and contend with highly unfavourable scenarios that introduce the element of chance.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a brief historical overview of African philosophy, highlighting the tension between universalism and particularism and the importance of a philosophical agenda that transcends the divide this tension creates. I presented Asouzu's *ibuanidanda* philosophy as an African philosopher's attempt at transcending the universalism-particularism divide by building a rigorous thought-system on the foundation of the basic African complementary perspective of the universe. I traced the philosophical trajectory of complementarism to the system of consolationism which seeks to advance the Asouzian universe by accounting for the gloomier side of existence which the philosophy of complementarism conveniently overlooks.

was always better to have an imperfect universe of yearnings where striving actualizes meanings in various degrees than not to have any. An imperfect universe already exists, and, inexorably in the bargain, has been experienced and seen to manifest the good and the bad, while a perfect or imperfect universe that can never be remains a fancy of the pessimistic intellect dissatisfied with the current imperfect universe. For elaborate arguments

in favour of this point, see: A. Agada, *Existence and Consolation*, 2015.

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Cf. A. Agada, "A truly African philosophy".

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Cf. A. Agada, *Existence and Consolation*, pp. 223–225.

While complementarism predicts a future convergence of all missing links of reality in a more perfect unity that will further expand into a perfect state in an undetermined future state, consolationism submits the claim that this future ideal condition is an illusion of the thinking mind.

The affirmation of the impossibility of the perfection the human mind indicates as the final purpose of the universe has implications for the reconceptualisation of philosophical notions like freedom and determinism. Since the scope of this paper is limited to exhibiting the relation between complementarism and consolationism and showing how these thought-systems arise as a response to the universalism-particularism conflict, a fuller exposition and analysis of the concept of freedom and determinism in the consolationist system is required in a future work.

Ada Agada

Komplementarizam i konzolacionizam: kartiranje dvadesetiprvostoljetne afričke filozofijske putanje

Sažetak

Afrička je filozofija bila primorana stalno se određivati u odnosu prema dominantnoj zapadnoj filozofiji, što je bilo uvjetovano povijesnim okolnostima kolonijalizma i dvostrukog nasljeđa profesionalnog afričkog filozofa, afričkog po kulturnoj povezanosti, ali sudionika u zapadnoj civilizaciji temeljem njihove zapadnjačke izobrazbe. Mnogi su poznati afrički filozofi odgovorili na izazov nametnut iznimnim uspjehom zapadne filozofije time što su, s jedne strane, filozofirali na načine koji teže nadilaziti čistu afrocentričku agendu, a s druge strane, nekritički prihvatili zapadnofilozofijske metode. U ovom radu predstavljam te istražujem odgovore poznatog nigerijskog filozofa Innocenta Asouzu na krizu identiteta u afričkoj filozofiji. Demonstriram da je Asouzuova filozofija ibuanidandijskog komplementarizma filozofijska sinteza koja teži nadilaženju famoznog prijepora između univerzalizma i partikularizma nalazivog u afričkog filozofiji. Primjenjujući ekspoziornu, analitičku i vrednujuću metodologiju, pokazujem kako filozofijska struja konzolacionizma unapređuje filozofijsku putanju kojom se Asouzu kretao. U afričku filozofiju uvodim opću kategoriju utjehe koja podaruje panpsihistički okvir za istraživanje smisla u tragičnom svemiru.

Ključne riječi

komplementarizam, konzolacionizam, afrička filozofija, filozofija ibuanidande, raspoloženje, panpsihizam

Ada Agada

Komplementarismus und Konsolationismus: die Kartierung der afrikanischen philosophischen Bahn des 21. Jahrhunderts

Zusammenfassung

Die afrikanische Philosophie sah sich gezwungen, sich in ihrer Beziehung zur vorherrschenden westlichen Philosophie immerfort bestimmen zu müssen, was durch die historischen Umstände des Kolonialismus und des doppelten Erbes eines professionellen afrikanischen Philosophen bedingt war: Einerseits handelt es sich da um einen durch den kulturellen Konnex afrikanischen Philosophen, andererseits auch um den vermöge seiner westlichen Bildung an der westlichen Zivilisation beteiligten Philosophen. Zahlreiche bekannte afrikanische Philosophen sind auf die durch den außergewöhnlichen Erfolg der westlichen Philosophie auferlegte Herausforderung eingegangen, indem sie in einer Art philosophierten, die dazu neigt, einestils die reine afrozentrische Agenda und anderenteils die unkritische Aufnahme der westlich-philosophischen

Methoden zu überschreiten. In diesem Artikel präsentiere und erforsche ich die Reaktionen des prominenten nigerianischen Philosophen Innocent Asouzu auf die Identitätskrise in der afrikanischen Philosophie. Ich demonstriere, dass Asouzus Philosophie des Ibuanyidanda-Komplementarismus eine philosophische Synthese ist, die danach trachtet, die famose Kontroverse zwischen Universalismus und dem in der afrikanischen Philosophie vertretenen Partikularismus zu überwinden. Indem ich die expositorische, analytische und bewertende Methodologie anwende, zeige ich, wie die philosophische Strömung des Konsolationismus die philosophische Bahn vorwärtsbringt, die Asouzu eingeschlagen hat. Ich führe in die afrikanische Philosophie eine allgemeine Kategorie des Trostes ein, die einen panpsychistischen Rahmen für die Erforschung des Sinns im tragischen Universum anfacht.

Schlüsselwörter

Komplementarismus, Konsolationismus, afrikanische Philosophie, Ibuanyidanda-Philosophie, Stimmung, Panpsychismus

Ada Agada

Complémentarisme et consolationnisme : une cartographie de la trajectoire philosophique africaine du XXIème siècle

Résumé

La philosophie africaine a été souvent contrainte de se subordonner à la philosophie occidentale dominante, ce qui a été conditionné par les circonstances historiques du colonialisme et du double héritage de philosophe professionnel africain, africain en regard de son lien culturel, mais acteur au sein de la culture occidentale sur la base de son éducation occidentale. Un grand nombre de philosophes africains éminents ont relevé le défi imposé par le succès de la philosophie occidentale en cela qu'ils ont, d'un côté, philosophé d'une manière qui cherche à dépasser le pure enseignement afrocentriste, et de l'autre, refusé d'accepter les méthodes philosophiques occidentales sans regard critique. Dans ce travail, je présente et recherche les réponses de l'éminent philosophe nigérian Innocent Asouzu à la crise identitaire au sein de la philosophie africaine. Je démontre que la philosophie Ibuanyidande du complémentarisme de Asouzu est une synthèse philosophique qui tente de dépasser la querelle bien connue entre l'universalisme et le particularisme présente dans la philosophie africaine. En appliquant une méthodologie expositoire, analytique et évaluative, je montre comment le courant philosophique du consolationnisme contribue au développement de la trajectoire philosophique dans laquelle Asouzu se situait. J'introduis la catégorie générale de consolation qui donne un cadre panpsychique pour la recherche du sens dans l'univers tragique.

Mots-clés

complémentarisme, consolationnisme, philosophie africaine, philosophie Ibuanyidande, disposition d'esprit, panpsychisme