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## Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo on the question of African philosophy and its periodization

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### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to respond to Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo's position that African philosophy emerged at the African-European contact. For Okolo, there was what could be referred to as expressions of philosophic tendencies which were not philosophy *per se*, called 'Philosophy in Africa' which has existed in Africa. They could be explained as basic cultural expressions of the people. But real philosophy characterized by critical reflection began after the Second World War when Africans must have attained some level of formal education and critical reflection, hence 'African Philosophy'. But then, questions arise: 'Why, in the first place, questioning African Philosophy but not religion, arts, politics, etc.? Why must African Philosophy, the expression of African-wisdom, be a product of African-European contact? A clear problem in Okolo's position is the affirmation that everything African, especially the essence of being-African which he designates with the term 'being-with' is either non-African-originated, not really a humanistic philosophy or European originated. This paper defends the thesis that 'being' implicates the 'facticity of existence' which is the central focus of philosophy, and once there 'is' in Africa before the African-European contact, there 'is' 'philosophy' in its real sense. This paper is expected to (1) analyze and expose Okolo's thought and weaknesses, (2) address the issue of periodization of the African Philosophy hence the position that philosophy has always existed but systems and schools of philosophizing can be found in times, (3) postulate that what is African can commendably sustain Africa. The paper shall adopt philosophical conceptual and contextual analysis and clarifications.

**Keywords:** Okolo, Africa, Philosophy, Dating/Periodization, Thinking, Cultural, Educatedness

### 1. Introduction

It is baffling to come across argumentative positions on the reality of 'African philosophy' and how scholars, most surprisingly, Africans get distracted by engaging headlong in such a debate. The worst of it all is that even Africans hold the view that African philosophy must take after the traditions of Western philosophy which implies (1) subjection of African philosophy to Western logic and philosophical principles; and (2) placing more relevance on the Western philosophy over and above the African philosophy; (3) that Africans had never been logical and critical enough and consequently incapable of philosophizing until their European-contact. Ironically this position is substantially no different from the derogatory conception of Africa and Africans by some biased European minds like Hegel, Levy-Bruhl, Westermann, Diedrich, Hume, Kant, and Carothers; and surprisingly some African scholars concerning African philosophy like Wiredu, Hountondji, Momoh, Okolo, Okere, among others. However, rather than saying that this paper primarily is a contribution to the argument and counterargument as to the reality and periodization of African philosophy, it would be said that it is an attempt to respond majorly to Okolo and other scholars of like minds who hold that African philosophy just arrived at the African-European contact.

From this light, therefore, this paper necessarily postulates a thesis that the facticity of existence implicates the idea of being (reality) which is the central discourse of philosophy; hence the position it defends therefore, becomes that hence there 'is' (in Africa), there is 'philosophy' in every sense of it so long philosophy is an expression of wisdom. Put differently that the dating of the African Philosophy implicates the idea of dating being in Africa, hence being in Africa predates the World War II as Okolo and the likes, postulated. Thus, the question of dating/periodization of philosophy, especially in the perspective it has been projected to the intimidation and disdaining of the African, implying that the African has no philosophy hence irrational and existentially worthless until s/he got European-contact, and subsequently intellectual brush, does not even arise at all. At this, however, certain questions begging for answers arise: what is the conceptual/ideological and contextual meaning and implication of philosophy? If 'philosophy in Africa' has always existed in Africa hence identifiable together with the facticity of existence, and 'African philosophy' began Post World War II, what is the substantial difference between them? Is the African personality (the socio-ontological 'being-with') which is the African humanistic philosophy as identified by Okolo, a product of Pre or Post World War II Africa?

This said, the research shall adopt philosophical conceptual and contextual analysis and clarification methods, anchored on critical evaluation. By this, the expectation is that the dating and analysis of the philosophy of the African peoples as upheld by Okolo and other scholars alike is faulty and hence unfounded. The paper shall also pave the way for further discussions on African philosophy and as well posit a view that what is African can commendably sustain Africa existentially.

This paper is structured in sections to include the abstract where a concise summary of the paper is contained; the introduction where the abstract contents are given a broader analysis. Following this is a section discussing general conception of philosophy which contains an analysis of the conceptual scheme of philosophy, a section discussing Okolo's conception of philosophy as an ideology and activity, another presenting Okolo's periodization of African philosophy, the following section tries to present a responsorial attempt to Okolo's periodization, and finally, the evaluation section.

## 2. On the Concept of 'Philosophy'

The term 'philosophy', as history holds is first scholarly used by the Samosian, mathematician and numeric thinker, Pythagoras who in his attempt to appreciate the wonders of human wisdom as expressed with the intellectual capability in interrogating certain existential situations as involved, coined the term. Thus, even 'philosophy' as a term, (just like its doing/process— contextualization), is a product of wonder and appreciation of wisdom expressed with the human intellect in interacting with existential facts. Fortunately, discussing African Philosophy in particular, a scholar like Chimakonam (2015, 4, 9) <sup>[2]</sup> would argue that while it follows that other philosophies of the world could be said to be products of wonder, that of Africa is a product of 'frustration' inherent in the predicaments like slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, apartheid, etc., that befell Africans as a people. However, as a term, in its etymology, 'philosophy' is

Greek— *philein* (or *philo* in Latin) meaning 'love' or 'friendship' and *sophia* meaning 'wisdom', hence the 'love or friend for/of wisdom' or better still, 'being in friendship with wisdom' hence a 'philosopher' becomes a 'lover/friend of wisdom'. The implication here is that the concept, 'philosophy', inheres 'practicality', that is, must be applied, to real existential situations to validate/affirm its wisdom; it does not end in theory or something out there, but in here.

However, today in a broader perception, the 'wisdom' here is sometimes interchanged by some scholars with the term 'knowledge'. But knowledge does not mean and imply exactly one and the same thing as 'wisdom'. Thus, it may be asked: what is *wisdom*, and how can one *love (friend) wisdom*? Or, is philosophy all about theoretically *loving wisdom*? First, to 'love' here connotes the idea of critically and logically searching for wisdom and sincerely applying it in life to bring about results. 'Wisdom' here is the true or real innate knowledge, expression of high cognition, which could be termed a 'gift of/from nature'. It associates with the human sense of perception or 'common sense'; by this, it manifests through human common sense. According to Makumba (2005, 32) <sup>[8]</sup>, wisdom can be defined as "certain knowledge of the deepest causes of everything," implicatively, "the wise man is the one who has certain knowledge about the most general causes of everything, and not just in some particular specialty as is commonly understood." In this definition, 'wisdom' (certain knowledge of the deepest causes of everything or certain knowledge about the most general causes of everything) is differentiated from intelligence, a product of the educational process (knowledge of some particular specialty). But Plato, like many others one of whom is Okolo, would liken wisdom to that status, *condition or state which gifted individuals seek to attain as a result of many years of education*. Nonetheless, that is a wrong conception of wisdom anyways as wisdom is different from academic exercise (education) and its end product (intelligence/excellence).

Wisdom is a natural gift to creatures— experientially predominant in animals, from Nature in an ontological perspective. Many scholars are not wise, but they can be intelligent, and academically excellent/brilliant. Many who did not attend schools are wise but not academically excellent. Anyways, a wise man needs intelligence/scholarship for complementarity; if not, he could easily be deceived by an intelligent man—especially when it comes to reading, writing, speaking and other intellectual engagements/technicalities. But on the other hand, a wise man could easily play on the intelligence of a scholar and make him/her look foolish, especially when it comes to things outside academics to culture, good and socially accepted manners, observing norms and the people's traditional ordinances, attitudes guided by the sense of perception or 'common sense', making enquiries into the existential situations of the people, etc. Hence it is unfortunate that practically, some 'scholars' today cannot even say where they come from and who they are academically, intelligently, and scholarly excellent, let alone define themselves in their culture and traditional background. Put differently that some 'intelligent' people cannot just define themselves existentially.

Wisdom is more valid in essence than academic intelligence/excellence. It is the bedrock upon which intelligence is initiated and commendably sustained. Thus, what does it entail to be wise? To become wise does not

necessarily need to become a scholar and live all the scholarly lifestyle as Okolo holds are the bedrock of philosophy or characteristic of act of 'real' philosophizing. All these ingredients are contained in the words, actions, and speeches of the wise man (the philosopher in Africa, as Okolo would hold) but not in a scholarly way, and when he talks, speaks or thinks, the academically intelligent man (the African philosopher, as Okolo would hold) may even find it difficult to clearly and easily understand him. He (the former) communes and understands with and by nature. His teacher is 'nature' while the teacher of the academic intelligent/excellent man (Okolo's real and critical philosopher who is literate), is his fellow 'intelligent man'. It is based on this perspective that the African sages who initiated certain critical and philosophical thoughts, circumscribing them into words and expressions were philosophers by nature, and not by profession. The only thing differing theirs from the modern ones is articulating and dispensing their thoughts globally and equally individualizing or particularizing them to personalities, but the point remains that all these thoughts express certain wonders and criticalities and equally picture existential realities found in those environments from where they lived and invented those proverbs, thoughts, sayings, and texts. That is why Oruka (1978, 3-4) <sup>[21]</sup> insists that the sages were philosophers and were really "critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgment by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of communal consensus." Imbo (1998, 26) <sup>[5]</sup> toeing the same perspective still insists that "the result of sagacity is critical effort, which is the property of individuals rather than the community at large." The implications of these citations are that all the classical and disciplinary qualifications of modernity are not why the thoughts of the sages should be termed less-philosophical or no-philosophy or even uncritical as Okolo and co, hold.

At this point, if philosophy is all about wisdom and appreciating it (by applying it to interrogate existential facts), and what the sages, the 'philosophers in Africa' did was wise and interrogated the African existential experience of their time, what then stands as the bases for Okolo's argument? However, to lay a formidable foundation for the argument, the paper shall interrogate Okolo and other scholars who maintain the same position on the concept of 'philosophy' in relation to Africa.

### 3. Okolo's Conception of 'Philosophy'

As a professor of AFRICAN philosophy, Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo has always hesitated to give a definition of philosophy *in se*, in no relation to people like 'African', 'Indian', 'Chinese', or even 'Western', etc. However, Okolo somewhere finally renders a definitive voice for philosophy as a profession and in a general sense. For him, philosophy is

A form of critical inquiry into things and their causes, human experience, and man's role and prospects in it. It is in short the highest form of inquiry because it alone involves no presuppositions, no taking anything for granted. Philosophy thus questions everything including itself... Philosophy tries to give a coherent, systematic account of the multi-faceted reality, of all nature and how man knows and interprets it. Philosophy indeed addresses itself to all sorts of problems which burden the human

mind and which are important to or confront man in their kinds and intensity (1993<sub>a</sub>, 3-4)

This implies that philosophy is the application of critical reflection into what exists and which subsequently affects man in varieties of ways. In other words, it deals with existence: man and other realities, problems bothering man and/or in his environment, for ontological action which resultantly influences man, other realities, is the essence of being, and this is the subject matter of philosophy. By this, philosophy therefore "endeavours to rationalize and give a systematic, orderly view of what exists and every aspect of human experience;" it deals with "the most general abstract questions which impinge upon the human mind" and replicates in human experience. Okolo goes ahead to list these existential realities (problems now) affecting man.

At times, the particular problem is about the ideal government and social organization for man; at other times, it is the ideal human life, laws, the nature of the universe, human history, world history, thinking itself, material objects, human consciousness and intentionality, etc. these are typical philosophical subject-matters dealt with by different branches and systems of philosophy (1993<sub>a</sub>, 4)

Thus, engagements that do not bother human experiences and relationship with other realities, are not philosophy, or philosophic in nature. Philosophy is therefore characteristically taken to mean the application (loving) of wisdom to address existential situations (realities) and as they affect man in (and) his environment. Man thus becomes the fundamental subject of philosophy. Little wonder then Heidegger, in his ontological deconstruction process, gave credit to Pre-Socratic thinkers who attempted the question of being in holism by not giving it a critical categorization leading to a distinction between the ideal (essence) and the empirical (existent, matter); and equally frowned at Socrates and Post-Socratic thinkers who deviated from the mainstream question of Being, segregating the question among the essence and existence, laying a wrong foundation upon which Western philosophies today took from as prevailed in the philosophies of Medieval thinkers, Descartes, Kant, Locke, etc. (Korab-Karpowicz 2019, 64-7, 109-78; OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 6) Finally, after this process of critiquing, Heidegger laid a conclusion of his philosophy around *Dasein* and his mode-of-existing-in-the-world. Philosophy is primarily of and for man and his experience in the world.

The conception above, however, could be identified with Okolo's view of philosophy when it is formal and a product of literacy and critical reflection. But to a layman's understanding, subtly referring to his 'philosophy-in-Africa', the era of really-no-philosophy, Okolo holds a different definition/conception of philosophy:

To some people, philosophy connotes something 'mystical', 'mysterious', 'difficult', 'esoteric', reserved for massive intellects only; Others think of philosophy as a subject which deals with matters out of this world, in a spiritual realm. Others still call philosophy 'people's world-view' or one's moral guide (1989, 19; OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 3).

Suffice it to say that philosophy understood by Africans and as expressed above is in a loosed, informal or non-academic sense which is no philosophy, for all these connotations of philosophy, for him, do not engage critical reflection and rely solely on reasoning to be philosophically dialogued. This positions, Okolo (1990) summarized saying, “in my own understanding of philosophy in its formal sense it is a conscious personal critical reflection on human experience and man’s place and prospect in it. It is the fruit of trained reflection with reason as the main tool”.

Coming down to how ‘philosophy’ relates to Africa, Okolo begins separations to distinct philosophy in eras basically emphasizing ‘degree’ of philosophizing leading to his informal or Philosophy-in-African Canon and formal or African-Philosophy Canon. Okolo begins by enumerating distinctions of thinking as they concern man in engaging philosophy as an enterprise. Briefly, this paper will examine them.

**3.1. Ordinary Thinking:** This is the thinking ability with which man is endowed to be differentiated from other lower animals. It is natural in man, and man uses it on an everyday basis to organize and interpret his existential experiences. It is the rationale behind a man being described as a ‘thinking-being’ whose manifestation of his consciousness nature pushes him into using it. “In this sense, all men in all cultures are rational,” following this, it could be said that “there is no pre-thinking, pre-logical stage of human development; no pre-logical human beings. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that people in all cultures and races differ in *degree* not *kind* in the use they make of this faculty unique to man” (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 1). A critical implication of this is Okolo’s attempt of solving the racial problem on the one hand, but creating more such problems on the other hand. Western scholars have prioritized thinking as the fundamental essence of man, now if a degree in thinking differentiates a people (Africans) from others (Europeans, Americans, etc.), then those who have argued that the predicaments meted on Africans by Europeans are due, based on low thinking degree of Africans compared to other peoples, are right. And to show Western influence on Okolo, he tagged this ‘ordinary thinking’ era, the era of no philosophy in Africa. Nevertheless, in conclusion, Okolo (1993<sub>a</sub>, 1) reiterates: “All men, literate and illiterate, civilized or backward, unless impaired by some accident, carry out “ordinary reflection or thinking” in their everyday world, in living out their daily experiences.” Ordinary thinking is an indication of the Greek verb *philosophein* which meaningfully implies that the nature of man is ‘to desire, to find out, dig out, or investigate’; and what is being found out, dug or investigated is “wisdom or truth about the universe; things of man’s daily experience.”

**3.2. Scientific Thinking:** This thinking, according to Okolo (1993<sub>a</sub>, 1-2), has two faces of meaning: the ‘general’ meaning, and the ‘modern’ meaning. In its general meaning, being “applicable to any organized body of knowledge,” scientific thinking or reasoning “refers to an organized mode of inquiry with an end-in-view and guided by laws of thought.” Thus, suffice it to say that “every academic pursuit or discipline can be said to be scientific in its mode of inquiry.” However, in its narrow or modern meaning, scientific thinking means the thinking applied in “studies or disciplines carried out through hypothesis, experiments,

verifications by use of instruments generally in laboratories.” Thus, suffice to posit then that it “requires some form of formal education and training and is thus a mode of inquiry or knowledge-acquisition by experts in their various fields of study and this, according to some rules or laws of thought.”

**3.3. Philosophic Thinking:** Characteristically, philosophic thinking employs reasoning and criticality to enquire into things and their causes. It leads to the truth through reasoning and criticality. It engages existential situations rationally and not speculatively, religious means and beliefs. That is why Okolo insists that, unlike the science that engages itself with the question of the ‘howness’ of a reality, philosophic thinking engages itself with the ‘whyness’ of the thing. By this, suppose it to say that the “philosopher’s task is geared to problem-solving, elucidation or even interpretation; his method must therefore be suited to his end-in-view, but it is generally by thinking reflectively. Thus, the method of philosophy is a priori and not empirical one;” and that is getting a conclusion a priori the experience and independently of the world not from the experience.

Okolo does not stop at explaining in generic terms and conceptualization, ‘Philosophic Thinking’, but goes on to explain it in relation to the African person.

**3.4. African Philosophic Thinking:** To lay a clear foundation as to what Okolo means by this, he says: “To complete these basic distinctions, we lastly take note of the distinction between philosophical thinking and African philosophical thinking notwithstanding the fact that the latter is what this work is all about.” By this, he makes it clear his intention of distancing between the era of ‘not-really-philosophy’ (‘Informal’ and ‘Philosophy-in-Africa’ characterized by ‘Ordinary Thinking’ and ‘Understanding-of-Philosophy-in-its-Loosed-Sense’) and the era of ‘really-philosophy’ (‘Formal’ and ‘African-Philosophy’ characterized by ‘African Philosophic Thinking’ but introduced comprehensively by the ‘Philosophic Thinking’ concept). Be that as it may, African Philosophical Thinking “is truly philosophical thinking or philosophizing” for “not every philosophical thinking, even by Africans themselves, is African philosophical thinking, which distinction is important for understanding the true nature of *African philosophy*” (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 6). From a general sense in reference to the ‘anthropocentric ontology, so to say, of Heidegger, Okolo turns to make particular reference to the African regarding philosophical thinking. He writes:

African philosophical thinking... restricts its inquiries to the African and his presence-in-the-world. It is certainly philosophizing but in the context of African experience or world-view. In short African philosophical thinking... is one of the many modes of philosophizing or critically analysing and interpreting reality as different peoples, races, and cultures view it. In African philosophy, therefore, the philosopher reflects and concentrates on African reality, on the African, his role and place in it and not on reality as such nor on man in the abstract (1993<sub>a</sub>, 6).

The central point here about African philosophical thinking which he finally identifies as the ‘African Philosophy’ is

tripartite: (1) It is primarily all about the African-man, African-experience and African-world(view), (2) It is a mode of philosophizing(thinking) peculiar to a people, the African regarding his peculiar experience and in his environment, (3) It centres on anything African and as basically 'real', not 'abstract'; and as such, of course, it is primarily left to be plausibly done by Africans. Summarily, by this, the African has his own mode of philosophizing to picture African realities and its central task is to systematically analyze and understand the African world, and 'possibly' change it, hence, "African philosophy... carries out its own analysis and interpretation of African reality, the world of actualities as experienced by the African. This sort of enterprise, of critically and systematically analysing African experience is what African philosophy... all about" (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 6-7).

#### (4) Okolo on Periodization of the African Philosophy

Broadly speaking, for Okolo, there are two eras of designating the term 'philosophy' to Africans. One is the era referred to as Informal, Pre-literacy, Pre-modern, non-academic, non-professional, the expression of 'philosophy in African' or 'philosophy of the African people', the expression of humanity through common sense or ordinary (human tendency to) thinking which differentiates humanity (Africans participate in) from lower animals, traditional experience, etc. The 'African people' refers to the 'pre-literate Africans.' In this era, what is called 'philosophy' could be identified with such names like 'ethno-philosophy', 'folk-philosophy' 'mythical folklores' or even 'traditional thoughts of the African peoples'; and for Okolo (1993<sub>a</sub>, 8), "this type of philosophy has always existed and will exist in Africa." In this era, Africans existed with only 'ordinary thinking', ordinary/common sense characteristic of human beings but which unfortunately could not fetch real philosophy. He contends that among the preliterate Africans, the "understanding and articulation of their experiences were largely uncritical, uncoordinated, and undifferentiated. It was generally through myths, idioms, religious arts and symbols, etc. This era is characterized by approaching existential issues (philosophizing so to say) with "subjective factors such as personal prejudices, beliefs about reality, his own understanding of what 'philosophy' is, its role, etc. which influence, at times, define his mode of inquiry." Okolo describes thus an era of African experience "in his then self-enclosed world of ideas, beliefs, and outlook on reality. It is the world or cultural experience... through fables, folklore, idioms, myths;" and it is characterized by lack of literacy or written tradition/documentation. The task of philosophers of this sort of experience (traditional experience) is strictly to subject the data of this experience to the nature of the ideas, collective views of elders, sagacious men and women, diviners, medicine men, myths, folklore, taboos, cultural artefacts, idioms etc.(OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 1).

Okolo is not the only one who agrees to this position in ascribing philosophy to Africans; and so, in the words of Wright: "To make matters even worse, non-African scholars often refuse to even consider African thought as potentially philosophical" (Preface). Many hold views aligning with Okolo's that African activities/engagements that deserve to be ascribed 'philosophy or philosophic' dates from the European-African contact. Some like Diedrich Westermann, Evans-Pritchard, Hegel, Carothers, Levy-Bruhl, Robin Horton and R. Finnegan, R. Horton, Karl Popper, Immanuel

Kant, David Hume, Barbe, Gobineau, Gallais and Planques, Meiners, etc, hold such view (UGWU 2019, 1-2, 32-37; UKWUOMA 2021, 7-15, 72-6; UGWU and ABAH 2021, 44). Some Afro-Europeans who have been brainwashed to believe such disorientation include W, E, Du Bois and Booker T. Washington (NGŪGĪ 1981, 132), Louis Hughes (LEVINE 1978, 72), Phillips Wheatley (NGŪGĪ 1981, 126), etc.

Still on the same line of thought as to what and when of the 'African Philosophy', in the 70s, Maurier (1984, 25) asks and answers himself in emphasis: "Do we have an African philosophy? No, not yet." In fact, from a scholar like Bodunrin, we hear the proclamation that "everyone would agree that philosophy as a discipline is reflective, rational and systematic. Now it so happens that the research pursued in Africa up till now... does not satisfactorily meet these requirements", hence, "African thought, if it is thought at all, must encompass philosophy" (Wright 1984, 8, 26). This aligns with Ruch's position thus: "What goes under the name of African Philosophy is nothing more than cultural anthropology decked out for the occasions in the cloak of Philosophy jargon" (1983, 13). Momoh on his own seems to picture most of the aura of African-Philosophy-arrival and equally identifies with the affirmation of the reality of the existence of anything African.

Fortunately, African philosophy has arrived. Because African philosophy has arrived, the African has arrived. African philosophy has been the missing link in the long awaited arrival of the African. We are the ones who will chart. And we have in fact started charting the direction and future of African philosophy (MOMOH 1985, 101).

For Momoh, this arrival also implies the arrival of the African person who does the philosophy; hence without philosophy or philosophizing by an individual, seemingly, he does not exist. The African never really existed until his philosophy existed post-Second World War. But Momoh would soon become the most confused of them all, holding a contrary opinion to his former stance from another paper: "In traditional and ancient African societies these were generally medicine men, priests, rulers, military leaders and sagacious elders, whose position in the group corresponds roughly to the position occupied by the scholars and thinkers in modern societies" (MOMOH 1985, 75; OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 25). By this, he has just acknowledged that the position of these 'Philosophers in Africa' as Okolo would refer to them, "corresponds roughly" to the position of the 'African Philosophers' as obtainable today.

Another attractive, sensitive dimension (to this paper and) of this argument is whether or not there could be African philosophy or philosophies. Wright (43-4), arguing from the diversity of culture among African peoples, has raised such an issue before now. However, the position this paper maintains is that African philosophy should be dissected down to African philosophies, down to Ghanaian, Nigerian, Ethiopian Philosophies, down to Igbo, Akan, Yoruba Philosophies, to Nsukkan, Udian, Aba-Ngwa, Ikwere Philosophies, down to community like Arochukwu, Umuokan, Opi Philosophies and finally to individuals, based on extra effort made to be so unique to articulate/come up with a distinct thought even within a common language among a people of same ancestry, like the one between

Wiredu and Gyekye on the discourse of the human person in Akan, Ghana. This should be the case because if as maintained that language conveys philosophy, then as many substantially different as language is, is as many philosophies or philosophic as there are. Even among Igbo scholars, the conceptualization and articulation of, for instance, the human being differ (UGWU 2022, 151-9). Of course, method, era, and realities obtainable in an era all pointing to human experience are essential factors of/in philosophizing, and these are prioritized in the following citations: Gyekye (1978, 278); Maritain (1961, 3); Wright (1984, 54); Okolo (1993<sub>a</sub>, 32). The question some of these scholars must answer as it bothers on African Philosophy is: if this difference is a reality of philosophy, why deny certain people of reason or philosophy during a certain era?

Nonetheless, Okolo thought of 'real' philosophy as concerned with 'Africa' to mean and imply a product of an intellectual process which is attained through academic rigour (education, literacy) manifesting in criticality and reflection from solely/pure reason; and as a practical and procedural manifestation, it must be cemented through departmentalization of philosophy in universities. So, in as much as all these qualities that identify 'philosophy' as a concept were not there in 'Africa' some time ago, there was no 'really' but 'loosed' philosophy. It is in this light that he initiates the idea of dating philosophical enterprise which he also identifies as an 'enterprise of/in wisdom' and as concerns 'Africa' according to his canons designated as informal or philosophy-in-Africa or ordinary thinking and formal or African-philosophy or African philosophical thinking respectively. Hear him:

By my own basic distinction of "informal" and "formal" philosophy as my own Canon, I am poised to tackle this rather sensitive question, when did philosophizing start in Africa?, that is to say "African Philosophy"; and in the same sweep of arguments, reflect on its possible periodization... By my understanding of philosophy strictly so-called (formal philosophy) as a product of critical reflection carried out in the light of pure reason (some form of training implied) we can and should trace the historical origins of African Philosophy to the period of literate tradition, period of formal education or scientific thought (OKOLO 1992, 36-7)

Elsewhere, Okolo reiterates this:

We must reckon it from the period of literate tradition in Africa, in the modern times, in Anglophone Africa, for example, it is certainly after the Second World War. In other parts of Africa, the historical origins of African Philosophy, if any, are traceable to the same period of literate tradition, after people had attained some degree of leisure and material satisfaction (OKOLO 1990, 32)

A funny aspect of this statement is that even when Okolo holds that the African Philosophy he projects started after the Second World War, he still doubts if there was any then which could be traceable to that period, hence his word, "if any."

## 5. Responding to Okolo

The question always asked is, if what existed in Africa before the African-European contact (pre-Second World War) was

not philosophy, why terming its philosophy at all whether in a debased/loosed or strict/real sense of it? It should have been termed ethnology, or ethnography, fetishism/fetichism, superstition, anthropology, sociology, social science, behaviourism, etymology, linguistics, artistry, history or even any of the 'folks' like folklore, folktale, folk-psychology, etc. It remains a wonder why Okolo should argue that there was no philosophy, or was rather 'philosophy in African' before the African-European contact; and that real African philosophy emerged after African-European contact, precisely after the Second World War. What is the difference between these Okoloist jargons: 'Philosophy in Africa' and 'African Philosophy'? Do both not convey the idea of 'Africa' and 'Philosophy'?

It is disappointing that what Okolo presents to us is 'Europeanized/Westernized-African Philosophy'; a philosophy characterized by everything western: western education in classrooms in the western formality of logic and principles, western curriculum, western pattern of education and writing capabilities. A philosophy based on formal education, undertaken in the classroom and in western logic and written documentation which started post-second World War is what Okolo presents as AFRICAN philosophy. Pitiful! He believed that philosophical reflection and arguments can never be possible without a western form of education which is the bedrock for really-doing-philosophy or philosophizing. Perhaps, Africans never knew God or had no clear perception of God, spiritual beings and the here-after until they contacted and got preached to, by priests of Europe-originated religions like him. By extension, Okolo praises the African predicaments like the slave trade, colonialism, etc which are the central feature of the African-European contact which originated the philosophy he calls real one of the African and which he projects. Perhaps, just as the former American President Donald Trump (2016) says, Africans need more of these predicaments so that they could solidify their philosophy and critical thinking.

Literacy attained through a formal/western pattern of education is inseparable from what could ever mean philosophy, to Okolo. Thus, for Okolo, 'literacy' implies 'philosophy', or as Onyibor captures it: "Philosophizing therefore, is a special sort of intellectual activity" (<https://www.igwebuikerresearchinstitute.org/>). Supposedly, the era of philosophy, just as Socrates and Plato and even Okolo would uphold, should presuppose the era of truthfulness and more moral consciousness, more adequacy to existential issues. This event formed the coining of the title of his work as it is the central message of the work (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, iii, 20, 21-40). Unfortunately, following the reality obtainable in the contemporary, the so philosophical post-second World War era, instead of these expected goodies proceeding from the philosophiness/literacy of the era, the era has experienced the very opposite proceeding from the application of the philosophiness/literacy. In fact, an uneducated and subsequently unintelligent person barely escapes from committing evil. It is the highly intelligent who commit and manipulate the system and the structure of the affairs and still go scot-free.

Okolo (1993<sub>a</sub>, 4) explains the wisdom inherent in the universal conception of philosophy to mean not the sort "which a bright judge or magistrate exhibits while handing down sentences or even the astuteness of a politician in his easy win at the polls at an election." But these are

professionals who should carry what philosophy means having undergone western education! He equally holds as dominant in his work, that the wisdom of (African) philosophy (philosophiness) is expressed in addressing the African person, his environment, his existence as it concerns politics, religion, arts, etc (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 4, 6-7, 11-2, 14, 17, 19, 22-30, 32-47; OKOLO 1992, 29-64). Characteristically, thoughts expressed in Africa and certainly by Africans before second World War “were largely uncritical, uncoordinated, and undifferentiated” (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 12). At this point, the question is: has the African never engaged reflectively, his existential challenges and used the available resources obtainable in his environment before the European contact or precisely pre-second World War to resolve these challenges be it in politics, war, creativity/entrepreneurship, economy, ethics and moral related fields, significantly practical education, arts, home management, interpersonal and inter-communal relationship, among other life-endeavours? Were the Europeans the ones who taught the African how to fashion knife out from palm-frond extract which served him adequately, and later from bronze iron, or the construction of beds in storey forms, or making of cultural musical drums which were highly technical? Were they the ones who taught the African how to make pots used for cooking and storage which science has proven to be healthy and safe, or how to engage religiously and understand the ontological implication of interrelationships between the visible and the invisible beings? The Europeans did not invent, for the African, the signs and those of the ancient origins with which s/he communicated, like the *Nsibidi* (Proto-writing) type of writing which has variously been corrupted as *Nsibiri*, *Isimbidi*, or *Nchibiddi/Nchibiddy*, and which would develop into orthographics, that of Northern Africa (Egyptian *Hieroglyphs* which would see for *Hieratic* and *Demotic* via *Phoenics*, the *Coptis*, etc, the Sudanese *Meroë*, *Tifinagh* of Berber (Algeria), *Ge'ez* and *Abugida* of Ethiopia and Eritrea), the Akan *Adinkara* (*Adinkara Nkyea*) *Lusona* of Angola, Zambia, Congo Democratic, and a whole lot of modern African writing versions, etc. It was not the European who taught the African how to explore nature and mix products from trees, animals, man and other natural creatures and apply the force as the *kpim* (nitty-gritty) of the African metaphysics or science to cure or incur sicknesses, disappear and fly for a very long period of time (witch-craft), and even apply it on other creatures (plants and trees for instance) to tell him/her their efficacies. It was not the Europeans who taught the African how to apply herbs, roots, flowers and other natural items on mammals so as to push down quickly and painlessly, the placenta when it became difficult to fall together with the new offspring. They did not teach the African the invention of agricultural tools and management of farm inputs, or eating good food which kept him/her longer than what the Europeans have provided him/her with, today, that damages systems and sends him/her to earlier grave than what was obtainable in the tagged ‘irrational, uncoordinated and uncritical African existential era’. It was not the Europeans who taught the African the pure scientific expression demonstrated in making some local objects like drums, palm-wine tapping ropes, etc; or the strategy applied in warfare by digging deep holes/well in the footpath against enemies for them to fall inside and get severely pierced beyond survival by firmly planted arrows in the well, or how

to wedge war by climbing on mountain to repel wars, took to mountain caves for safety and to repel wars, and even create openings through which encroaching enemies could successfully be attacked unawares in the part of his/her house facing major entrances. It was not the Europeans who taught the African how to produce arts designed in elegantly looking colours like that of *Nok*, Igbo-Ukwu and Benin/Bini people artefacts, or taught him the production of some locally made items with which s/he sustained him/herself like mortar and pastel for pounding, stone and wood for grinding, etc. The Europeans did not teach the African the identification or invention of mysterious mirror through which the past and future could be seen; what and what was mixed to produce the poisonous acidic fighting item *uta(uta-eka)* which is pointed/shot at a healthy tree and it will immediately wither and dry in just days and when shot at a human being, dies instantly; the application of animal power and its utilization, or even the ancient traditional irrigation method like the *Tassa* method in Niger Republic, to facilitate agricultural productivity, among other instances as they related to existential realities.

Okolo (1992, 25; OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 6-12; OKOLO 1983, 8) paints what he describes as ‘African Philosophy’ as “essentially an activity, a project, a systematic, coherent inquiry into African experience, on how the African conceives and interprets the world as being-in-the-African-world... an explicit work of reason alone carries out a critique of the African experience in general and on what this entails for the African subject,” and so on and on and on. The ancient African thinkers used what was obtainable in their era and critically applied them, and it yielded efficaciously to resolving their obtainable existential challenges and experiences then just as these days’ thinkers are scratching to resolve their own era-related existential challenges which are, in every sincerity, overpowering their almighty ‘philosophic’ systematic rationality, criticality, logicity and coherency. One has always stood constant in Okolo’s is the attachment of his conceptualization of (African) Philosophy, whether in the pre- or post-Second World War, to (the African) experience: “African philosophy is essentially a critical reflection on African experience (past or traditional and modern or contemporary). This experience entails God, religion, man, history, society, material universe, etc” (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, iii) the question is: was it not on African experiences that those ‘Philosophers in Africa’ did whatever less philosophical in the eye of Okolo and the likes, they did in the pre-second World War? The fact that today, writing (which, in every honesty speaks volumes of intellectual productions) has come to a more formal limelight unlike what was obtainable in the referred era here, that ideas/ideologies are ascribed to individuals, that science and technology have dominated human lives, that more varieties of epistemological enquiries have arrived (with their problems which have clearly overpowered the capabilities and prowess of intellectual productivity) should and must never be the rationale to tag the primitive or traditional society and existence less-philosophical or entirely no-philosophy. Every era applies realities of the era to address existential issues of/in that era and as they unfold. Thus, no era invented reality, just like philosophy. Every era only used what is obtainable to address the reality and philosophic issues as they unfold in the time and space of/in that era. Reality (Being), just like philosophy or which is expressed in philosophy, is (or exists

in) a structure, or has been structured in a pre-formation prior to the man who, of course as the highest intellectually rated among every other visible reality, would tackle these realities, philosophies of divergent aspects or philosophic issues facing toe-to-toe with man and his existential fairness/progress. They made use of those existential realities obtainable then to do theirs. Thus, the way they do things today should not undermine the philosophical approach they took in the past. Hence, all of them are geared towards questioning existential realities, exploring human life, welfarism, religion, socio-economic purposes, moral and ethical outlooks, political engagements, etc. If philosophy is all about questioning those existents that affect human life, it influences human position among realities in existence and influences his future, and what happened yesteryears just did all these but like today's mannerism of following these things up, it should mar the philosophic contents, status and qualifications of what philosophy should be. In this argument, philosophy as a concept remains one and only phenomenon, but contextually, its doingness and application differ with era, time, and space. The concept remains the same in every era hence it deals with wisdom-expressions and manifestations and questioning existence- be it of invisible or visible realities. So, philosophy, and realities (by extension being) have always been in existence in/across every era, and every era has always attempted to follow/address it with every possible reality findable in the era within a space and a time. Neither the human being nor eras/periods are inventors of reality/being; thus, they only participate in the procedural attempts in grasping reality or philosophy as is the case here. Emphatically, this has been Omoregbe's point of argument (1985, 1-12). Thus, philosophy, just like reality, is dateable as far back as being in Africa; in fact, the initiative of dating philosophy amounts to dating of reality and that is a fallacy of the highest order if it is dated circa 1940s according to Okolo. This has been extensively argued elsewhere (UGWU AND ABAH 2021, 28-53).

This said, what should be talked about is the methods, manners, or ways predominant in eras in approaching or engaging in philosophy (philosophizing). What is meant by this is the predominant method according to understandings; or schools through which reality and philosophy are approached in every era. In the traditional era, two broad schools or predominant manners expressed in two different understandings are rationality and religion. Nonetheless, if African Philosophy must be periodized, it necessarily has to be conscious of these eras in which different systems and schools of thought or patterns/methods of philosophizing are found, as (Ugwu forthcoming) has earlier postulated:

(1) The Immemorable Era: This era was the era before human beings. Referring to the biblical creation account, it could be referred to the period before human being was created, hence it is an era and the recognition of beings as expressed in existence, and the beings upon and from which human beings thought and began their philosophic postulations. It pictures the facticity of existence/beingness as expressed in being, among which was the logos, the Universal Reason from which human beings drew. It was the era of the existence of natural phenomena which human beings explored and then instituted what they built life on. From the beings in this era, the principle of philosophy and philosophizing could be fathomed. Philosophy and the act of philosophizing were all inhered in beings, and that was what this era symbolized.

(2) The Antiquity or Ancient Era: This was the era when unrecorded sages existed. It was the era when sages who thought out ways of survival, lived. These sages made existential intellectualism from anthropological, religious, political, ethical, moral, technological, artistic, cultural, economic, medicinal, systematic/systematized mathematical and herbal perspectives, and created educational and African traditional scientific impacts that the next era scholarly built on. Their thoughts were not documented. It was a traditionalist era when the originality of Africa was intact. The African-European contact began the end of this era.

(3) Political Era (Dark Ages): There is no clear-cut line between the Ancient and the Political Eras. However, this era could be referred to the era of Westernization/Europeanization of Africa. It was an era of Westernized scholarship seen as an upgraded era than the Antiquity Era because it was an era of scholarly engagement and documentation of what practice that characterizes the Antiquity Era which was not written or documented. It was a 'Dark Age' because Africans were existentially uprooted from real existence in their consciousness. Their existential realities were not there. They lived in enslavement, bitterness, torture, colonialism, inhumanity, and the highest level of dehumanization. Characteristically, and as an era of consciousness provocation, the 'Political Era' was the era that Pan-Africanist consciousness emerged as a reaction. This era has a lot to argue about, on what identity is/has the African. Achebe on an 'Interview' and Apiah (1992, 173-80) hold strong positions about this personality discourse regarding this era. To some scholars like Chimakonam (2015, 9-10) <sup>[2]</sup>, it was an era when Africans grew the consciousness for philosophy/philosophizing and to create a distinct (Africanized) identity. Furthering on this, he argued that it was the frustration experienced from these predicaments characterizing this era, that befell Africans, that stirred up their consciousness for philosophy and eventually philosophizing (Chimakonam 2015, 4, 9) <sup>[2]</sup>. Be that as it may, this era was a sort of 'Pre-Modern or Early Modern Era'. It was a significant era in which existed the Western (European) racial ontologization of the African political, economic, and religious life solely for the European's fame and selfishness. Giving it a political definition, it was an era necessary for the African emancipation. The ending of this era began a sort of Westernized conceptual scheme of thought among Africans that began to question the African being and particularly African Philosophy having now been mentally westernized.

(4) Modern Era: This was the era of exploration of the Westernized formal education by Africans, or scholarship in accordance with the Western/European format. It was an era characterized by influences of the Westernized pattern of philosophizing, which in the bid to compare the Western and African Philosophies arose questions about the reality and periodization of African Philosophy. It was an extension of scholarship that started from the Political Era; in that, there was a sort of shift from a nationalist philosophical movement to an individual (ized) philosophical enterprise. This individualization, documentation and training in the Western philosophical tradition were the core characteristics of 'real' philosophy(izing) as held by some African scholars like Okolo, Bodunrin, Wiredu, Okere, Momoh, Hountondji, Ruch, Maurier, and many others, hence their contention that it was when 'real' African Philosophy began. It was the era



of academic *cum* philosophical professionalism, or the exercise/prowess of intellectualism. Based on that, it was the era of the Great Debate which is an exercise of the prowess of intellectualism. But these scholars holding that this era was the real philosophical era in Africa made a mistake by interchanging ‘intellectualism’ with ‘philosophy’, in other words, ‘intelligence or educatedness or scholarship or formal education’ is interchanged with ‘wisdom’— a core identification of philosophy.

(5) Contemporary Era: This is now, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century era. It is an era in which rationality (philosophy/philosophizing) is blended with science (sciencism). But from another perspective of this era, there is a reversal, a U-turn to the defence of the first and second eras that (a) they were eras of real philosophy for that matter, (b) they were eras when the real question of ‘what is being’ was raised in its reality and holism, and (c) they were the eras the originality and reality of the Africans were so manifesting politically, religiously, morally, socially as expressed in ‘communalism’ and not ‘communitarianism’ (UGWU, *et al.* 2022<sub>c</sub>, 27-33), and otherwise, and (d) they were the eras when the discourse on being was not watered, adulterated, and buried with the Westernization influences.

Finally, there is an un-named, prospective sixth era. It could be described as ‘Later Contemporary’; or better still, ‘Scientist Era’ or ‘End-Era’ because it is an era when sciencism would provoke nature, and nature would reactively lead/land humanity to virtually no further era. In this era, nature will be intimidated and challenged by the activities of science to reaction, and when nature would react, it would be an existential epic that its end *may* lead to no further era. Ohanyere (2014, 40-60), indeed, among others, has had insights into what this era could look like, and he described it as an era that could enhance ‘Third-World-War’. It is an era of super science; ‘super’ in the sense that its sciencism will be higher than what is scientifically obtainable now. This is predictable by the trend of science today, and the level science has presently attained. It will be an era of ending; and sciencism remotely through nature would lead to this era. The only hope for humanity-posterity in this era is if intellectualism, as scientifically exercised, is interrogated with the U-turn-perspective of the ‘Contemporary Era’.

Be that as it may, Okolo identifies who the African person really is and by what he must be identified, or better still, ‘what is to be African’, and this is the attitude of ‘being-with’. For him, “the African is not just a human being but essentially a ‘being-with’, the very basis of his claim to the title, ‘African’” (OKOLO 1993<sub>b</sub>, 5). Okolo equally goes on to posit that this personality is never alien to the African; rather, it is culturally inherent to the African (1993<sub>b</sub>, 5, 10-11, 33-4). He does not just stop there, but goes forth to opine that this attitude is not just social, that is, micro form/dimension, (horizontal relationship: man-with-man and man-with-other-visible-realities), but also ontological, that is, macro form/dimension, (vertical relationship: man-with-the-invisible-realities— Supreme Being, departed-living, divinities and other spiritual entities). In this regard, he says: “In its macro dimension, African self as a “being-with” is seen in its ontological relations not just of self to self or man to man but self to all reality, material and spiritual; visible and invisible... African self is conceived essentially in terms of social relations, a being-with-others” (1993<sub>b</sub>, 7). This said, the question now becomes: is this identifying cultural

attitudinal disposition upon which the personality of the African firmly stands, a product of pre-second World War presupposing truly-African, from the African day-to-day experience and cultural manifestation; or post-second World War presupposing European-contact-birthed? If the former, then the unavoidably necessary question is: is it philosophy (philosophic) or not? If yes, then he has self-contradicted; but if no, then what he posited as the personality of the African does not worth it, hence less-philosophy or entirely no-philosophy. But at the centrality of this personality is humanism; how can ‘humanism’ as a personality concept less-philosophic, or entirely no-philosophy? If the latter, however, then Okolo has to explain how worthy is it that what identifies a people as their personality is not of origin from the identified people. Finally, from a general perspective, can something ontological be less-philosophical or no-philosophy?

Okolo is never consistent with his periodization of African Philosophy. Somewhere he says that it started in Anglo-phone Africa “certainly after the second World War” (OKOLO 1990, 32). Suffice it to say that it began with Plaid Tempels whose Bantu Philosophy work was first published then. But how can a non-philosophy (Tempels’) as described by Okolo, significantly stand as the beginning point of real-philosophy? Again, if education births philosophy through critical thinking and applying of reason as the sole and main tool, many personalities in Africa have attained education, and critically interrogated their experiences as Africans before then. In another place, he says it started two decades ago from the publication date (1993) of the work wherein he says it (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, iii, 8, 9, 10, 11). But before the 1970s, there have been works on African Philosophy, Religion, Arts, Music, Culture etc. But to maintain his ground, Okolo has to consistently reject the works of African great minds like St. Augustine, Ammonius Saccas, Tertullian, Aristippus of Cyrene and his daughter Arete, the founder of the Cyrenaic School of *bon viveur* (immediate sensual pleasure), Origen, Cyprian, Plotinus, Clement of Alexandria, the wisdom of ancient idols like Imhotep, Akhenaton, Hypatia, Anniceris of Cyrene, Bolus of Mendes, Philo of Alexandria (Philo Judaeus), the Pharaohs—Ptahhotep, Amasis II or Ahmose II, among others to include the Egyptian Brothers (Mystic School Men/Priests) whose temples are located at Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis, Delphi, Siwa, Libya, etc. It is based on this that many scholars like G. G. M. James, C. A. Diop, H. Olela, G. R. Levy, C. Sumner, Y. B. Jochannan, Ochieng’-Odhiambo, I. C. Onyewuanyi, J. I. Omoregbe, J. O. Eneh, among others (UGWU and ABAH, 2021, 40-50) strongly argue that not only has Africa been identified with a peculiar philosophic thought (philosophy), but also that it is the progenitor of the Greek/Western Philosophy.

Significantly what Okolo projects as the fundamental principles of philosophy in Africa are products of what uprooted Africans from their being, their very self-consciousness. A philosophy originated about a people outside their full self-consciousness must be questionable. Even as he blends them ‘radical change’ (OKOLO 1992, 57), he still recognizes them as experiences that “affected the African and his mode of being-in-the-world drastically.” In other words, what Okolo has imposed on Africa as the African Philosophy is nothing but a European/Western product; after all, all the working tools to it are all European/Western-fashioned— Western education, in

western structured classrooms, logic, enlightenment, etc. Scholars like Kant, Hegel, Hume, Westermann, Levy-Bruhl, Meiners, etc, who have not only promoted racism but ontologized it in every aspect of human affairs are justified, following Okolo's position. Unfortunately, finally, Okolo falls into the problem he identifies with the consumerism of the West and used the psyche to Africanize (articulate 'Africanly').

There are series of confusion with Okolo's style of articulation. For instance, he says: "Our basic distinctions above are really to introduce us to the true meaning of the phrase 'African Philosophy'. It is not the 'philosophy of the African people.'" Another way of saying this is that 'African Philosophy' differs from the 'Philosophy of the African people'; and how reasonable is such a stand? Even though, it could be deciphered that for him, the 'philosophy of the African people' means "philosophy" in its loose meaning of common beliefs of African peoples' which is no-philosophy, the question is: 'Why attaching 'Africa' to both distinct eras of engaging reality?'

## 7. Evaluation

Generally, there are some inseparable thematic terms that are inherent in defining philosophy; terms like: (1) *curiosity/desire*- strong feeling/hunger to acquire/possess more knowledge/knowing about things/phenomena-anything at all, hence 'being'. (2) *Criticality*- the procedural thoroughness, rigorousness with the logic of realities on the ground- be it principle, etc. (3) *Truth*- just like Edmund Husserl, this is the 'Eidetic Science', the science/knowledge of essence, the product of pure process devoid of any sort of uncriticality and bias. This position presupposes that the epistemological (knowing) process, the 'howness' of arriving at the 'truth' is most necessary than the truth itself (the known) and the epistemological enquirer (the knower). It is in this 'howness' that reflections, questionings and criticality surface for affirmation of what the process has produced as the end product, the truth of the epistemological enquiry/search.

Making a reference to Wright: "Almost every philosopher has a view as to what constitutes philosophy, and this view is decisive in the determination of whether African Philosophy exists" (OKOLO 1993<sub>a</sub>, 25). However, anchoring on the above-established argument, some have argued that while some people's philosophy is critical and formal hence pure philosophy, others are uncritical and informal hence impure or 'ethno' philosophy. Supportive to this position is the facticity of being articulated (written) and personalized (that being "a person's philosophy", not "a people's philosophy"), hence the pure/critical philosophy is by that reason the written/articulated and personalized one, whereas the ethno/uncritical philosophy is by that reason the unwritten/unarticulated and non-personalized one. Influence from these factors clearly and carefully played out largely in the ascription of philosophy to the Europeans differently from the Africans. Following this, it is now obvious that even racism is not un-experienced in what philosophy could mean and imply to some people based on their colour as one is superior to the other hence Eurocentric and Afrocentric ascriptions of philosophy to peoples.

Three things must have happened to Okolo: (1) It is either he had no clear understanding and implication of what philosophy means; (2) He was not able to overcome

westernization and its mentality influences as an African; or (3) He just wanted a place of pride among African scholars who debated about the reality and periodization of African philosophy. These three factors (idols) played out in his conceptualization of what philosophy ever means and implicates. For Okolo: (1) Western/formal education, not wisdom, implies philosophy, (2) Philosophy is not wisdom *per se*, but the teaching-and-learning exercise done in classrooms via formal education,(3) The establishment of schools(universities) and in the western setting is the establishment(beginning) of philosophy. Western education means/implies philosophy because for you to lay claim to the possession of philosophy, you must have attained a certain level of the formal, western setting of education. It is ONLY through this that one can count oneself as possessing philosophy because it is identifiable/inseparable from classroom exercises, critical thinking, and Western logicity. This presupposes: 'no classrooms of western setting, no philosophy' hence any time in history one now establishes schools and in the western setting and passes through it in learning philosophy, becomes the time(period) one can be said to become a REAL philosopher and possessor of REAL philosophy. What a reductionist perception of philosophy as a concept and life! That is how incongruous, hazy, and problematic Okolo's conceptualization and articulation of philosophy, not (perhaps, fetish) religion, customs, tradition, or art, etc, in/of Africa could be; and this paper wonders why particularly philosophy!

Be that as it may, philosophy as a concept and ideology is inseparable from existence hence if there 'is', there is 'philosophy'. Existents connote the whole idea of philosophy hence this paper argues that existence— be it of human or non-human beings— inheres a whole lot of indefinite philosophy. Okolo has attracted quite a lot of criticisms to himself because of certain strange and highly un-African philosophical positions he has held (UGWU 2022, 137-53; OZOEMENA, *et al.* 2022, 119-28; UKWUOMA, *et al.* 2022, 154-8; UGWU, *et al.* 2022<sub>a</sub>, 74-8; UGWU *et al.* 2022<sub>b</sub>, 98-0; UGWU and OZOEMENA 2023, 4-7).

The term 'periodization' inheres to the idea of systematization, structurization and organization. It portrays the manner of harnessing and arranging, in a well-organized order, a system or process. Suffice it to say that it conveys the idea of definition which as a consequence, facilitates the possibility of losing some essential contents of the system it intends to structuralize or organize. But definitely, everything to include but never limited to existence or life, wisdom, and most importantly philosophy, are not dateable. To date, philosophy is an analytic fallacy for they are dateable in their nature. Standing on the context of this paper, we will centre on philosophy to exemplify the point under discussion here. Trends or vogues or manners or levels at which philosophy exists could be dated, these are trends of a constant phenomenon that has always been on the move, but not the phenomenon itself. This explains why there are schools, conceptual schemes, and beliefs in studying or approaching philosophy or philosophical discourse. We have the era of idealism, or empiricism, or spiritism, or pragmatism, or materialism, etc. was in vogue and a driving force towards academics, knowledge and intellectualism and led a particular people or the world. These trends or era does not mean the beginning of wisdom or philosophy, they only stand as shapes and trends the pursuit of knowledge or philosophy

as a constant phenomenon took then. It is based on this established fact that periodization of philosophy is contradictory in itself as a phrase. If philosophy can be dated, then wisdom, existence and life can too- unfortunately, which is highly impossible. The reason is as simple as this: if at all, there 'exists' then, there exists 'philosophy' and wisdom. Drawing from this position, it therefore becomes a waste of time to discuss the dating of timing of when philosophy in Africa got started. The idea of philosophy started when existence was factualized.

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