MESEMBE EDET'S CONVERSATION WITH INNOCENT ONYEWUENYI: AN EXPOSITION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE METHOD AND CANONS OF CONVERSATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Clement Victor NWEKE, MA
Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract
The basic thesis of this essay is that the progressive development of any discipline is propelled by incessant constructive criticisms, creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of established positions and received opinions in the discipline. Accordingly, the essay argues that the method and canons of Conversational Philosophy (CP) are very significant to the progressive development of African philosophy. This is because they are fundamentally articulated to promote the constructive criticism, creative emendation, and articulate reconstruction of established positions or received opinions in African philosophy. It buttresses this point using Mesembe Edet's conversation with Innocent Onyewuenyi on the question of the African belief on reincarnation. This choice stems from the explicit admittance of Edet that his conversation with Onyewuenyi adopts the method of conversationalism and the method of conversationalism is undergirded by the canons of CP. Specifically, this essay explicates how the conscious adoption of conversationalism and adherence to the canons of CP enabled Edet to engage Onyewuenyi in a very critical and creative conversation on the African belief in reincarnation which eventually led to a novel reconceptualization of reincarnation in African philosophy. It unveils the significance of conversationalism and the canons of CP in practice. It is therefore a conversational, expository and argumentative essay.
Keywords: Conversationlism, Conversational Philosophy, Interrogative theory, Onyewuenyi, Reincarnation.

Introduction
Knowledge production is by nature a conscious activity that necessarily consists of the systematic study, constructive criticism, creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of existing claims about reality within a given culture or discipline. While the systematic study of established positions about a given reality within a given culture or

discipline makes one *knowledgeable*, one becomes *a knowledge producer* to the extent he/she is able to constructively criticize, creatively emendate and articulately reconstruct the received opinions established or projected by his/her predecessors or contemporaries towards the novel inauguration of a better informed opinion about the said reality. This is because every novel inauguration of a better informed opinion about any reality in any culture or discipline always generates concepts, principles, and ideas that could lead to what Chimakonam (2015a, 464) describes as the "Global Expansion of Thought (GET)."

In view of the above, one realizes that the mere study and comprehension of the received opinions or established positions within a given culture or discipline without some constructive criticism, creative emendation and articulate reconstruction does not expand the frontiers of human knowledge. Also, the incessant constructive criticisms of the received opinions or established positions within a given culture or discipline without some creative emendation or articulated reconstruction does not really expand the growth of human knowledge. For though, one comes to know the flaws within a given position through the help of constructive criticism, the knowledge of the flaws within a given position does not in itself provide an alternative position that is better. Against this backdrop, Oguejiofor's (2010) view that among the three prevalent ways of doing philosophy; namely, criticisms, hermeneutics, and synthesis, the last is the most comprehensive and fruitful approach can be said to be very correct in the sense that it is the only one that is necessarily committed to the systematic study, constructive criticism, creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of existing opinions about reality in order to arrive at a better one, as well as expand the frontiers of human knowledge. However, Oguejiofor admits that this most advanced and fruitful way of doing philosophy "is not very prominent in contemporary African philosophy" (2010, 20).

Notably, the foregoing analysis suggests that the act of creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of existing propositions in African philosophy towards the novel presentation of better ones in a conscious and systematic manner is very minimal in contemporary African philosophy. Agada (2013a; 2013b) avers that this situation is the major factor responsible for the dearth of innovative thinking. This point is corroborated by Nweke (2015a). On his part, Chimakonam (2015a; 2015b; 2015c) suggests that the paucity of system-building in African philosophy which invariably stagnated and still tends to vitiate the robust development of African philosophy as a reputable philosophical tradition. It is on this basis that Nweke (2015a, 18-21) further explains that the systematic application of the method and

canons of Conversational Philosophy (CP), formulated by Chimakonam (2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c) and endorsed by the Conversational School of Philosophy (CSP), will help to entrench the systematic study, constructive criticism, creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of existing African philosophy episteme.

On the whole, this essay seeks to substantiate the above thesis through the study of Mesembe Edet's conversation with Innocent Onyewuenyi as a concrete demonstration of the significance of conversationalism and the canons of CP. I shall begin with a lucid exposition of conversationalism and the canons of CP. Afterwards; I shall proceed to pin-point how the adoption of conversationalism and the systematic observation of the dictates of each of the canons of CP enable Edet to converse critically and creatively with Onyewuenyi. It is with this strategy that he succeeded in presenting a better informed and novel position about the question of reincarnation in African philosophy.

On Conversationalism and the Canons of Conversational Philosophy (CP)

Conversationalism is one of the two basic methods of Conversational philosophy (CP) articulated by Jonathan Chimakonam and endorsed by the Conversational School of Philosophy (CSP).[1] The other method is known as Interrogatory Theory (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 1-25). The two methods are basically united by the major preoccupation of Conversational Philosophy which is the systematic inauguration of viable ideas, thoughts, principles, theories, and systems in African philosophy that can help humans in different societies across the globe to address specific challenges and meet their needs. Whereas Interrogatory Theory (IT) as a method in African philosophy and studies

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[1] The CSP is a philosophical movement inspired by the works of I. I. Asouzu, P. Iroegbu and C. S. Momoh but formally convened (at the University of Calabar, Calabar Nigeria) as a professional body of (African and non-African) scholars who are committed to doing African philosophy, and/or any aspect of African studies using the methodological dispositions and canons of Conversational philosophy (CP) articulated by J. O. Chimakonam (2014; 2015a; 2015b; and 2015c). It is modelled after the likes of the Frankfurt school and the Vienna circle. The professional body was originally known as the "Calabar School of Philosophy" because it was first articulated, convened and only located at the University of Calabar. Given the admission of new members from universities other than the University of Calabar, the name of the body was during the 2015 End of Year Meeting of the group (on December 20, 2015) formally changed to the "Conversational School of Philosophy" to denote the method and canons of the school and as well affirm its international composition and organizational structure. However, its international secretariat is still at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. For more details, visit http://csp.uncial.edu.ng

is primarily applied to the incessant criticism of social institutions and issues in order to ensure the establishment of strong institutions as well as shape the formulation of informed policies that will help to better the condition of human beings in and beyond Africa; Conversationalism calls for the constant conversation, peer-criticism, deconstruction and critical, but creative reconstruction of the thoughts of past – anonymous, budding, and seasoned – scholars in African philosophy and studies towards the systematic articulation of more viable principles, theories and systems. In view of this, Conversationalism as propounded by Chimakonam (2015b; 2015c) differs significantly from the version of conversation technique of Oruka that was originally introduced by Griaule (1965) and recently employed and discussed by Falaiye (2005) and Azenabor (2009) respectively.

The latter is a method for consulting, documenting and projecting the informed opinions, philosophic thoughts, and ideas of *illiterate* but *philosophic sages* in African societies about a given reality through the medium of field research such as oral interview, personal dialogue and conversation. It is specifically the methodological disposition of the Philosophic Sagacity School of Oruka which according to Chimakonam emerged during the great debate in the Middle Period of African philosophy (CHIMAKONAM 2015b, 11, 19-24). The focus of this method was mainly to debunk the false supposition popular in the Western place that Africans are incapable of philosophical rigor by substantiating the following interconnected theses:

> [1] that African philosophy, even in its pure traditional form, does not begin and end in the folk thought and consensus; [2] that Africans even without outside influence are not innocent of logical and dialectical critical inquiry, [3] that literacy is not a necessary condition for philosophical reflection and exposition. [4] … one has a possibility to seek for and find a philosophy in traditional Africa without falling into the pitfall of ethno-philosophy. Among the various African peoples one is likely to find rigorous indigenous thinkers. These are men and women (sages) who have not had the benefit of modern education. But they are none the less critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgements by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of the communal consensus. (ORUKA 2003, 142)

In contrast to the conversation method of Oruka's Philosophic Sagacity School, which is mainly a tool for documenting the *unwritten* but informed opinions and positions of revered indigenous sages in African philosophy, conversationalism is more dynamic. It is a method for the conscious and systematic articulation, documentation and projection of novel opinions, ideas, thoughts, concepts, and principles in African philosophy by an individual philosopher. The individual African philosopher utilizes this tool to engage with the thoughts of peers and intellectual predecessors.   As a method of Conversational philosophy, conversationalism promotes the creative adaptation of the relevant postulations   of   both   the   traditionalist/particularist   and modernist/unversalist schools of African philosophy in a manner that "clearly   defines   African   philosophy   as   a   'platial'   enterprise commanding phenomenological preoccupations that do not lead to ethnophilosophy or strict metaphilosophy" (CHIMAKONAM 2015a, 464). In this connection, Chimakonam further elucidates that:

> The conversational mode of philosophy I propagate is not so keenly interested in metaphilosophy; its main concern is on building the episteme of African philosophy with phenomenological raw materials of thought. Thus I say that conversational philosophy refers to that rigorous and critical engagement of individual African philosophers with one another's thoughts (that are phenomenological rather than metaphilosophical or ethnographical), which leads to the creation of original, innovative and rigorous episteme, geared sometimes toward a synthesis borne out   of   contestations,   protestations,   dialectical concessions, dialectical complementarity and using the African mode of thought. (2015a, 464)

Having   explicated   the   nature   of   Conversational   philosophy, Chimakonam goes further to reveal the relationship between its method and goal with the traditionalist and modernist stance in African philosophy. As he puts it:

> Additionally, the conversational school thrives on fulfilling the yearning of the universalist/modernist school to have a robust individual discourse as well as fulfilling one of the convictions of the traditionalists that a thorough-going African philosophy has to be erected on the foundation of an African thought system. Conversationalists make the most of the

> criterion which presents African philosophy as a critical tradition that projects individual discourses from the mainstay of an African system of thought. It is not plagued by the distractions of burden of justification, perverse dialogue and philosophical nationalism. It does not aim to prove a point nor seek to attack a group nor strive to reclaim some territories or personalities; in conversing, it simply looks forward to the future unhindered by tradition and does not look backwards tied to tradition; it is rather enhanced by what has been called the 'valuable past' or 'usable past' or as I would have it, 'relevant tradition', but not tied to it. (2015a, 465)

Against this backdrop, one realizes that Conversational philosophy blends the positive aspects of both traditionalist and modernist schools in African philosophy to inaugurate a better idea of African philosophy as a written documentation of the personal critical and innovative reflections of individuals (irrespective of nationality or sex) inspired by or produced from the African thought system using "the background logic of African ontology" (CHIMAKONAM 2015b, 106). At this point, it is pertinent to note that while all members of the CSP are proponents of Conversational Philosophy; all the practitioners of Conversational Philosophy are not necessarily members of the CSP as an academic body. Conversational Philosophy is often exhibited in the publications of many contemporary African philosophers that directly or indirectly support "the synthesis of "usable" tradition and modernity, rigor, individual creation and critical conversations among practitioners" (CHIMAKONAM 2015b, 11-12) as the best approach to African philosophy that will help to eschew perverse dialogues. It is also often employed in works that concentrate on individual critical and creative reconstruction of existing standpoints in African philosophy towards the incessant production and projection of better alternatives. In this connection, the explicit exponent of Conversational Philosophy, Jonathan Chimakonam explains:

> By conversational philosophy I mean the rigorous engagement of individual African philosophers in the creation of critical narratives by the fusion of tradition and modernity. There is also critical conversation among practitioners, critical synthesis, theoretic evaluation, re-enforcements and purification of the thoughts of other African philosophers in ways that upgrade them to metanarrative of African philosophy.

> These also make such thoughts universalizable although with the primary purpose of solving African problems. (2015b, 28)

Seen from this perspective, Conversational philosophy is neither an informal discussion between individuals nor mere conversations with pristine indigenous sages in different African societies. It is purely a framework for doing and projecting African philosophy as the manifestation of the incessant critical and creative protestation and contestation on the propositions of individual participants on phenomenological issues of concern towards the emergence of better ones using the basic tools of conversational thinking (i.e. the methodological disposition and canons of CP). Chimakonam aptly espoused this view as he explains the position of the CSP:

> Philosophical conversation for us is not a mere informal exchange of ideas or a simple informal dialogue between two interlocutors; it is rather a strictly formal intellectual exercise propelled by philosophical reasoning in which critical and rigorous questioning creatively unveils new concepts from old ones. By conversational philosophy we mean that type of philosophical engagement between individual thinkers with one another, on phenomenological issues of concern, or on one another's thoughts where thoughts are unfolded from concepts or from concepts of concepts. Conversational philosophy is therefore more than a dialogue; it is an encounter between proponents and opponents, or a proponent and an opponent engaged in contestations and protestations of ideas and thoughts. A conversational school therefore would be any circle of like-minded philosophers who adopt this approach in their practice of philosophy. (2015c, 19-20).

The point underscored in the above citation is that any philosopher or group of philosophers within any given tradition of philosophy can, and do use, the method of Conversationalism to develop novel philosophical thoughts, ideas or principles. Nonetheless, Conversationalism as a method of a fundamental philosophic orientation, movement or school in the New Era of African philosophy called Conversational Philosophy, is strictly guided by certain interconnected canons captured in the diagram below:
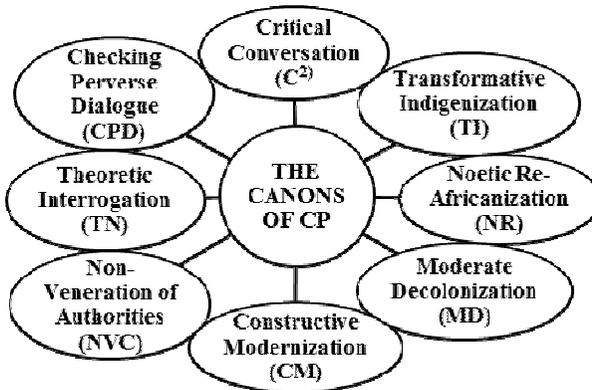
Source: NWEKE, C. A. Victor. "Complementary Reflection Vs. Binary Complementarity: An Interrogatory Discourse of The Problem of Anachronism in African Philosophy". Paper presented at an International Conference on African Philosophy, Past, Present and Future, Department of Philosophy, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, Sept 9-11, 2015

As shown in the above diagram, the canons of CP are eight (8) interconnected criteria for doing systematic African philosophy. They were first articulated by Chimakonam (2015c, 26-28), following his conversation with many scholars in response to the suggestion of Vest (2009) on the need for criteria for "checking perverse dialogues" and the standardization of African philosophy. The canons are articulated as the minimum requirements that should guide the mode, focus, and direction of thinking in contemporary African philosophy. In essence, they are formulated to guide the standardization of African philosophy and its development as a viable tradition of philosophy that can contribute meaningfully to the Global Expansion of Thought (GET). By this strategy, Conversational philosophy holds the promise of saving African philosophy from the ailments of "perverse orientation", illicit philosophizing and the impending danger of stagnation. As the diagram shows, the canons necessarily interpenetrate and complement each other.

The first canon, critical conversation stipulates that a work in African philosophy should necessarily engage other authors/positions/philosophical traditions in a critical conversation. The second, transformative indigenization, stipulates that a work on non-African issues or which employs methods/concepts that have been developed in other traditions, can still count as African philosophy if the author/s endeavor to indigenize them through contextual transformation that would give them relevance in the African place. In essence, this canon upholds the view that human ideas and societies are hatched and developed through cross-cultural fertilization and pollination (Asouzu

2004, 257-60). The third canon, noetic re-Africanization stipulates that one can only do African philosophy or become an African philosopher if he/she is versed in African intellectual life. Thus, any scholar from Africa or any other continent, who as a result of his/her contact or undue influence by his/her orientation in a Western or any other non-African mode of thought has a poor knowledge of the African intellectual life; such a person must deliberately undergo a measure of re-Africanization. This involves a retuning or reconscientization through proper self-study in which he/she delicately balances non-African and African modes of thought, recognizing the relevance of both modes and their limitations thereof in the construction of the African philosophy epistemes.

The fourth canon is moderate decolonization. This canon stipulates that in doing African philosophy, the ideal approach toward African philosophy should not be that of radical decolonization as advocated by Kwasi Wiredu (1995) but rather of moderate decolonization that would incorporate concepts of our colonial heritage that are relevant to understanding the African lived-experience. It also stipulates that intellectual decolonization in African philosophy does not entail the radical racialization of African philosophy by using only African concepts or by claiming that it can only be done by philosophers from Africa. The fifth canon is constructive modernization. It stipulates that a standard work in African philosophy is one that marks a creative fusion of relevant modern and traditional thoughts developed in different philosophical places, African, Asian or Western, using the background logic of African ontology. The sixth canon, non-veneration of authorities, simply stipulates that "any work in African philosophy, irrespective of the author, deserves a full measure of peer criticism."

The seventh is theoretic interrogation. This canon stipulates that "the best route to the progressive development of African philosophy is through continuous interrogation. This interrogation involves peer-criticism, critical, but creative (re)construction of thoughts of fellow actors aimed at increasing the sophistication of the episteme" (CHIMAKONAM 2015c, 28). Chimakonam attributes the eighth canon, checking perverse dialogues, to Jennifer Lisa Vest. It stipulates that "before any work is acknowledged as properly produced contemporary African philosophy, it must pass the test for perverse orientation" (CHIMAKONAM 2015c, 28). In this sense, the canon declares that not every published work that claims to be a treatise in African philosophy should be accepted as such unless the said work can pass the test of systematic African philosophy, in this case, the first seven canons of CP.

Accordingly, the contention of Nweke (2015a) is that the method and canons of CP are effective intellectual tools for doing African philosophy as an innovative and systematic academic discipline

that is devoid of all forms of racial segregation or "intellectual apartheid." In this connection, Nweke agrees with the stance of Pearce (1992, 440) that for the philosophical depth and significance of African philosophy to manifest, African philosophy "must conceive of itself as addressing universal problems instead of pursuing intellectual apartheid." In his conversation with David Oyedola, Nweke (2015b) specifically demonstrates how fidelity to the canons of CP necessarily eliminates the "intellectual apartheid"[2] implicit in African philosophy. This conversation with Mesembe Edet is particularly tailored to unveil how the method and canons of CP can be applied to produce innovational propositions in African philosophy. I shall now proceed to do this by explicating how Edet applied the method of Conversationalism and the canons of CP in his conversation with Innocent Onyewuenyi and how this enabled him to produce a novel proposition on the question of reincarnation in African philosophy.

Edet on Onyewuenyi's Reappraisal of the African Belief in Reincarnation
I was scouting for relevant reading materials for my secondary (high) school certificate examinations in a bookshop when I first saw Onyewuenyi's monograph, [African Belief in Reincarnation: A Philosophical Reappraisal]. The title appeared very interesting to me and after scanning through its "Foreword" and "Preface", I decided to buy it. On reaching home, I read through the whole monograph and was thrilled by the lucidity of his analysis and argument that the acclaimed proposition that Africans belief in reincarnation is "grossly erroneous and misleading". His apt analogical argument – "It is as incorrect to say that Africans believe in reincarnation as it is to hold that African religion is ancestor-worship" (ONYEWUENYI 1996, x) – impressed his thesis on my virgin mind. Since then, I nursed the conviction that Africans, specifically the Igbo people of Nigeria, do not belief in reincarnation in exactly the same *sense* with either the Western or Eastern understanding of reincarnation. However, it never occurred to

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[2] The "intellectual apartheid" in African philosophy refers to the explicit view that it deals ONLY with African issues or that it can be done ONLY by indigenous African scholars. This is similar to what Chimakonam calls the "Hountondji's Dilemma" in African philosophy. As he puts it: "Some African philosophers share the noble idea that authentic African philosophy must be universal and critical and still share his ignoble idea that such a philosophy can only be constructed by Africans…. This amounts to shooting oneself on the foot – a dilemma… If non-Africans cannot construct African philosophy, where lies its universal character and how can this be justified" (2015d, xiii).

me to revisit and examine the plausibility of Onyewuenyi's analysis and argument as a trained (academic) African philosopher; and this is exactly what Edet has done using the method of Conversationalism. As stated earlier, my basic concern here is on how Edet applied the method of Conversationalism and the canons of CP in his conversation with Innocent Onyewuenyi and how this enabled him to produce a novel proposition on the question of reincarnation in African philosophy.

Edet's (2016, 76-99) conversation with Onyewuenyi is analytic, critical and creative. Edet agrees with Onyewuenyi's major thesis that the acclaimed proposition that Africans believe in reincarnation is "grossly erroneous and misleading" and then proceeds to break down and test the coherence, validity and veracity of the propositional claims and argument of Onyewuenyi using the tools of analytic and conversational philosophy. In this regard, the critical flavor in Edet's essay becomes manifest as he interrogates and repudiates some of the basic propositions that Onyewuenyi used to buttress his thesis. He particularly posits that Onyewuenyi's proposition that the question of the African belief in reincarnation is a "semantic problem" is inconsistent with his (Onyewuenyi's) proposition that the solution to the semantic problem lies in "African metaphysics", a term which Edet sees as an inappropriate conceptualization for "models of Metaphysics in African Philosophy" (Edet 2016, 86-88; 2013, 112-124). He thus repudiates Onyewuenyi's presentation of African metaphysics on the ground that it is "Tempelsian", "static", and inaccurate. Edet cites the position of other scholars to substantiate his claim. Above all, Edet's conversation is consciously undergirded by some of the canons of CP especially the canons of Critical Conversation (C^2), Transformative Indigenization (TI), Theoretic Interrogation (TN), and Non-Veneration of Authorities (NVA).

The wide consultation of the relevant views of other seasoned and budding scholars about reincarnation in African, Western and Eastern traditions of philosophy as well as the critical tone of the essay are in themselves a manifestation of C^2 which necessarily insists that in doing African philosophy one should endeavor to consult, compare and contrast existing views especially the seemingly opposed ones. For the comparison and contradistinction between seemingly opposed propositions about a given reality in the same or different philosophical traditions furnishes one with the necessary premise which will enable him/her to draw an informed judgment and articulate a better proposition about the reality in question. TI is displayed in Edet's conversation as well. Adhering to TI, Edet transformed and indigenized the analytic method in the sense that he consciously used it to disambiguate and test the lucidity, coherence and veracity of the basic

propositions of Onyewuenyi (see EDET 2016, 80-86). Edet did this using established or well informed conventional positions in African philosophy inspired by or produced from the African thought system as a sine qua non and not the established positions of analytic or any other alien tradition of philosophy. The critical repudiation of Onyewuenyi's presentation of African metaphysics via the framework of Tempels' conceptualization of Bantu ontology encapsulates TN (see EDET 2016, 86-95). This is because; it subjects Onyewuenyi's acceptance of the proposition of Tempels which suggests that for the pristine African, "being is force and force is being" to the tribunal of theoretical interrogation. He also interrogates Onyewuenyi's conceptual analysis of the concept of reincarnation. Apparently, the critical tone of Edet's essay bespeaks of NVA. His regard for Onyewuenyi did not deter him from subjecting his work (which he (Edet) also considers to be "ground-breaking" (EDET 2016, 78), to the purifying fire of peer-criticism: interrogating and criticizing some of the propositions that he consider to be wanting on certain grounds. He did not even spare the foundational concepts and propositions established by Tempels.

More so, Edet's conversation is also interwoven with a creative synthesis and re-conceptualization of the concept of reincarnation. He was concurrently *thinking-against* and *thinking-with* Onyewuenyi. This is evident in the fact that he did not just criticize but also attempted to reconstruct the basic propositions of Onyewuenyi on the meaning and nature of reincarnation (in and beyond Africa), the nature of "African metaphysics", as well as his alternative conceptualization of what the African belief about the relationship between the living and the dead. It is this critical and creative conversation that made the propositions to provide adequate support for the major thesis and conclusion that the claim that Africans believe in reincarnation is erroneous. In all, Edet's creative emendation and articulate reconstruction of the basic propositions of Onyewuenyi were done in line with the following canons of CP: Noetic Re-Africanization (NR), Moderate Decolonization (MD), Constructive Modernization (CM), and Checking Perverse Dialogue (CPD).

NR stipulates that a standard work in African philosophy can only be produced by a scholar who is versed in African intellectual life and since all participants in African philosophy are necessarily products of a Western oriented educational system, it suggests that one must consciously Africanize or re-Africanized his/her mindset by recognizing the similarity and difference between the African and the Western modes of thought and the relevance of both in the construction of different epistemes before he/she can produce a standard work in African philosophy. Edet's emendation of Onyewuenyi's presentation of

the concept of reincarnation and the nature of "African metaphysics" adhere to this stipulation. Edet draws attention to the various meaning attached to reincarnation by different philosophers, in different philosophical contexts, and in different philosophical traditions in order to correct Onyewuenyi's propositional claim that "reincarnation is an European word which conveys a definite constant concept" (1996, 14). He also draws attention to the inadequacy of Onyewuenyi's uncritical acceptance and reliance on Tempels' erroneous presentation of Bantu ontology/metaphysics as "African ontology/metaphysics" using the Western mode of thought as a basic paradigm as against the African mode of thought. He aptly reconstructs these propositions using the relevant paradigms. He explicates that what Onyewuenyi actually means is that Africans do not subscribe to the classical Western rendition of reincarnation. That is, the belief in the view that the human soul separates from the body at death to inhabit a new body for another span of earthly rather than spiritual existence. Used in this sense, it is grossly erroneous to say that Africans believe in reincarnation. He rejects the Tempelsian presentation of "African metaphysics" not because Tempels was not an indigenous African scholar but because it was conceptualized using the dichotomizing, and static Western mode of thinking instead of the complementary and dynamic African mode.

Edet's criticism of Tempels on an intellectual rather than on a racial ground also adheres to the stipulation of MD. MD abhors any kind of radical decolonization that negates the reality of cross-cultural borrowing as well as the possibility of non-African scholars doing African philosophy as an academic discipline. He did not in any way suggest that only indigenous philosophers from Africa (or of African descent) or that all indigenous philosophers from Africa (or of African descent) can do African philosophy. He imbibed the stipulations of NR and MD that only scholars (whether from Africa or not) that are versed in African intellectual life through a conscious study of the African thought system and lived-experiences documented, stored and transmitted through oral medium, social practices and written publications can do African philosophy as an academic discipline. It is sequel to this that Edet creatively reconstructs the standpoint of both African and non-African scholars that he finds wanting in relation to providing an adequate explanation to the African belief about the relationship between them and their dead relations. He did this relying his profound understanding of established traditions, social practices and well-informed publications on the African belief about the necessary relationship between living and death individuals that are biologically related.

Agreeing with Onyewuenyi that Africans do not believe in the classical rendition of reincarnation in Western philosophy, Edet proceeds to explain the prevalent African belief about the relationship between people living on earth and those that are dead and have been properly buried. A recap of his explanation on this is necessary. Roughly put, Edet (2016, 90-95), in consonance with Onyewuenyi suggests that unlike the prevalent view about reincarnation in the West, the prevalent view in Africa is that at death, individuals that lead moral lives enter into the ancestral world which is different from the physical existence on earth. However, these individuals continue to maintain a very cordial (but more influential), relationship with their progenies that are still living on earth – starting from their immediate family, kindred, village to the entire community. This influence is believed to be so powerful that they among other things can choose to *perpetuate themselves* by engraving *their physical features and personality traits* in the life of specific children that are born into the family of their beloved living progenies after their death.

The above explanation as well as the creative emendations and syntheses in Edet's essay follow the prescription of CM that a standard work in African philosophy must combine the relevant propositions of both the modernist and traditionalist schools of African philosophy. Reading the essay carefully, one sees in display Edet's personal critical reflection, analytic evaluation, apt explanation and creative articulation of the African perception and belief about the relationship between them and their dead relations as encapsulated and buttressed in the African thought system established by pristine African oratures, social practices, and well-informed publications. He systematically blends the significant critical personal rigor and argumentation recommended by the modernist school and the pristine African thought system established by orality which the traditionalist school projected. What is now left at this point is for me to show how Edet's essay meets the demand of CPD (checking perverse dialogue).

CPD stipulates that a standard work in African philosophy must not be a "perverse dialogue" and any work that adheres to the first seven canons have passed the test. Having shown that Edet's essay adheres to the first seven canons of CP, it becomes logical to conclude that it has pass the requirement of CPD. This point will become more vivid when one comes to understand what Vest (2009) describes as "perverse dialogue" in African philosophy. She writes: "To engage in academic dialogues implicitly or explicitly guided by a request or a felt need to justify and defend the very possibility of African philosophy or African rationality is to engage in perverse and unnecessary dialogues" (2009, 1). These preoccupations are perverse and unnecessary because they

"often precede, prevent, or condition the formulation of what counts as necessary debates" (Vest 2009, 1) in African philosophy. The bottom line is that "perverse dialogue" in African philosophy consists of any reactionary metaphilosophical work that is mainly a protestation or contestation on either the rational capacity of Africans or the possibility of African philosophy. Apparently, the major aim of Edet's conversation with Onyewuenyi is on the belief in reincarnation which is a phenomenological issue inherent in the African lived-experiences.

Conclusion: On the Significance of the Method and Canons of CP
Generally, the significance of the method and canons of CP lies in the fact that they necessarily promote incessant personal criticisms, counter-criticisms, creative emendations and articulate systematic reconstruction of established positions and institutions to inaugurate novel ideas, concepts, principles and other propositions in African philosophy. And the importance of criticisms, counter-criticisms, sound argumentation and creative reconstructions of existing established opinions to the growth of knowledge can hardly be over-emphasized. Peter Bodunrin states that: "Philosophy thrives on mutual criticisms, and criticism is best when it is directed at those who are in a position to reply" (1985, xiv). This is the case because responses to criticism often lead to clarification, and at times new arguments that help to improve the quality of the work, idea, theory or system under review. Criticisms and counter argumentation are so central to philosophy that Kwasi Wiredu had to conclude that "without arguments and clarifications there is strictly no philosophy" (1980, 47). The advancement of philosophy, and indeed any field of human endeavor, from its earliest beginning to its present state, is due to the incessant critical emendation, deconstruction, reconstruction, revolt, or outright repudiation of the conventional ideas, principles, systems or practices of preceding or existing scholars (RORTY 1992, 1; UDUMA, 2004, 1). What this suggests is that no knowledge claim or standpoint, including that of a critic, is perfect, eternal and sacrosanct. Hence criticisms and counter-criticisms are indispensable intellectual antidotes. Of course, criticisms can discourage a chicken hearted scholar. Nonetheless, it enables a scholar to popularize, "interrogate, purify, refine, investigate, and clarify the dark areas of the ideas or theories under investigation…This therefore, means that criticisms has high intellectual cash-value; it is the vehicle both for dissemination, improvement and popularization of theories or ideas" (OZUMBA AND CHIMAKONAM 2014, 105).

It is therefore unfortunate that an intellectual critic is often seen and treated as an enemy. When a student criticizes the paper of his/her colleague, he/she is often seen as wicked, arrogant or unfriendly. This

situation also applies to academics that are contemporaries. A budding academic that dares to criticize the views of his/her teachers, senior colleagues or a seasoned scholar is often presented as an arrogant or disrespectful child that deserves to be punished (ASIEGBU 2008, 177-93). Yet, a critic does a lot of thankless peer review that enables one to improve the quality of his/her work, theory or system and this should ideally present him/her as an intellectual collaborator that should be encouraged rather than an enemy that should be punished.

Finally, my submission is that the quality and quantity of knowledge production in African philosophy (and any other aspect of African studies), will appreciate tremendously if both budding and seasoned academics adopt an intellectual disposition that adhere to the canons of CP. This is because such an intellectual disposition will necessarily promote scientific attitudes such as "freedom of enquiry, openness to criticism, a general type of skepticism and fallibilism and non-veneration of authorities" (BODUNRIN 1985, xii); and as well exhibit the creative emendations and articulate syntheses that will help to accelerate the constant systematic inauguration of viable ideas, concepts, and principles in African philosophy. I have particularly buttressed how the conscious application of the method of conversationalism within the context of the canons of CP by Edet strengthens the veracity of this conviction. Other works that have consciously applied the methods and canons of CP include the award-wining book by Ada Agada [Existence and Consolation: Reinventing Ontology, Gnosis, and Values in African philosophy] and Jonathan Chimakonam's edited book [Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions in African philosophy] as well as his article "Addressing Uduma's Africanness of a Philosophy Question and Shifting the Paradigm from Metaphilosophy to Conversational Philosophy" (CHIMAKONAM 2015e, 33-50). There are also some other works in the New Era of African philosophy that to a large extent adhere to the canons of CP. Reading such works, one sees individual reflection, critical argumentation, innovational thinking, and personal creativity in display. All this point to the fact that the conscious application of the methodological dispositions of CP undergirded by the canons articulated by Jonathan Chimakonam and endorsed by the CSP will promote the incessant critical and creative development of African philosophy as a systematic philosophical tradition with viable ideas, concepts, and principles for addressing the topical challenges of human beings in Africa and across the globe.

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