

Ludwig Wittgenstein's Critique of Metaphysics: Implication and Relevance for African Philosophy

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Abstract

In this paper, the linguistic philosophy of L. Wittgenstein (1963; 1961; 1958) is defended against charges brought against it by C. Okoro (2011); J.I. Unah (2004); and J.A. Omolafe (2000). Wherein these erudite scholars of African descent argue that the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein is hostile to Metaphysics, we counter their arguments to promulgate that Wittgenstein's assessment of Metaphysics is a constructive approach vis-à-vis the destructive or eliminative affair synonymous with members of the Vienna Circle. Furthermore, the paper also reveals that the rendition by the afore-mentioned scholars that Wittgenstein calls for the annihilation of the Metaphysical enterprise is the opposite of the truth. Thus, a fair and unbiased interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas on language divulges deep corollaries and relevance for the regurgitation of discourse on Conceptual Decolonization which is germane to an authentic and pragmatic African philosophy. In the end, we submit that Wittgenstein's impression on the role of language, if faithfully interpreted is synonymous with the call made by Kwasi Wiredu (1995); Frantz Fanon (2008); and even Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986) towards making philosophy significant for Africa and African people.

Keywords: African philosophy, conceptual decolonization, Metaphysics, Wittgenstein

Introduction

Metaphysics, being one of the core areas of philosophy is highly indispensable in the quest towards realizing ourselves as humans as well as our relation to the world at large. Right from antiquity, this branch of philosophy, has always been concerned with the quest for the ultimate reality. It is therefore not a booboo that the stab to eliminate the enterprise by some members of the Vienna Circle met with an intellectual gridlock. Erroneously, Ludwig Wittgenstein has been touted as one of those seeking the demise of the metaphysical enterprise [see Okoro (2012); Unah (2004); and Omolafe (2000)]. It is a consequence of the foregoing that a deeper appreciation of the ideas of Wittgenstein in relation to Metaphysics and the conceptual decolonization of African philosophies, religions and languages has remained elusive.

Conversely, this essay purports to retrieve Wittgenstein from this erroneous gridlock. The paper argues that both the Early and Later Wittgenstein did not construe metaphysics as a candidate for intellectual annihilation. Rather (and as it would be argued herein), Wittgenstein criticized Metaphysics in the constructive way Jim Unah (2004) is willing to grant Martin Heidegger (2000; 1967) and Immanuel Kant (1964), albeit at a different degree.

Through the method of analysis and interpretation, this essay will argue that Wittgenstein's reflection on language has a far reaching relevance for African philosophy as opposed to the view promulgated by the afore-mentioned scholars of African pedigree. To realize this feat, this essay has five parts, the first being this introduction. The second part of this study focuses on the meaning, nature as well as disparagements within Metaphysics. The section reveals the belligerent warrants leveled against Metaphysics by prominent members of the Vienna Circle. Furthermore, it also reveals the grouses of J.I. Unah, C. Okoro and J.A. Omolafe against Wittgenstein as they erroneously portray the later, not only as a member of the Vienna Circle, but also as sympathetic to the cause aiming at the extinction of Metaphysics. In the third part, we defend Wittgenstein against their objections. The part also exposes the thoughts of Wittgenstein to endorse the study's position that his assessment of Philosophy and Metaphysics is not nihilistic, but a quest for authentic Metaphysics, Religion and Philosophy freed from the shackles of the limitations beset by the use of language. Afterwards, the paper, in the fourth section, evinces the relevance of Wittgenstein, in the aspect of birthing an authentic African philosophy. In mind here is the exposition of how some 'foreign concepts' have made philosophizing in Africa digress to purely Western philosophico-intellectual contribution, leaving African problems almost unscathed. Concepts such as 'God' and 'Satan', would be employed to substantiate from a Wittgensteinian perspective. This part clearly reveals the place of Wittgenstein and his relevance in the persistent making of an African philosophy. The last part concludes this inquiry.

Metaphysics: Meaning, Nature and Criticisms

Etymologically, the term ‘metaphysics’ is derived from the utterance of Andronicus of Rhodes (Okoro, 2011:113) (Iroegbu, 1995:21-2) who while ordering the works of Aristotle encountered those that deal with First Philosophy, but to label them as the ‘books after the books of Physics’. This implies that Aristotle had construed Metaphysics as First Philosophy but generally, Metaphysics has often been construed as the study of the origin and nature of reality. In a similar disposition, Cayne (1992:628) construes Metaphysics as “the branch of philosophy dealing the first principles of things. It includes ontology and cosmology”. For Pantaleon Iroegbu:

Metaphysics is thinking, reflection, critique, into the inner depths of things. You need a mind to do that, and only individuals have minds to think. Only individuals can do metaphysics. A community cannot. It may appropriate the thoughts of given individuals as a common heritage. But the thinking is individually originated. So is metaphysics only individually done (Iroegbu, 1995:325).

In a related development, Martin Heidegger chronicles: “By ‘Metaphysics’, we do not mean a special field or branch within philosophy in contrast to logic and ethics. There are no fields in philosophy because philosophy itself is not a field” (Heidegger, 1967: 3). He further avers that “metaphysics is the pivotal point end core of all philosophy” (Heidegger, 2000:19). For him, the fundamental question of metaphysics should therefore be: “Why are there essence rather than nothing?” (Heidegger, 2000: 1); (Unah, 2006: 7).

Overtime, metaphysics has been understood in different ways. Innocent Onyewuenyi furthers that the ancients for instance, hold metaphysics as the study of three components of life: cosmology, cosmogony and ontology (Onyewuenyi, 1994). Campbell Shittu Mommoh in the same vein amplifies that metaphysics is the philosophical corporate name for cosmology (what exists), cosmogony (the origin of what exists) and ontology (the constituent of what exists)” (Mommoh, 2000:8).

In *Heidegger through Kant to Fundamental Ontology*, Jim Unah informs that Aristotle conceives metaphysics from two perspectives – *metaphysica specialis* and *metaphysica generalis*: He writes:

While the former fragmented into regional ontologies (i.e. specialized sciences), the later remained the soul of philosophy and was christened “ontology”, “first philosophy”, the study of being qua being and the ultimate basis for the system of the sciences (Unah, 1997: 20).

It is therefore not an error to aver that various conceptions, interpretations and renditions of metaphysics had been articulated a few centuries even before Aristotle who holds that the first principle is the 'Unmoved Mover'. This is an idea, with serious theological conundrums that gained popularity among prominent scholastics, especially St. Thomas Aquinas (see Ofuasia, 2017:152-3). However, it is pertinent to note that philosophers before Plato and Aristotle had attempted to ground the basic constituent of the universe on a single substance. Thales had opted for water, Heraclitus fire, the Stoics, Logos etc. This is why Rudolf Carnap expatiates:

The sort of propositions I wish to denote as metaphysical may most easily be made clear by some examples: the Essence and Principle of the world is "Water", said Thales, "Fire", said Heraclitus, "the Infinite", said Anaximander; "Number", said Pythagoras (Carnap, 1998:461).

However, the debate between what Aristotle called *metaphysical specialis* and *metaphysical generalis* is yet to be resolved in the present century despite Kant's recommendation that *metaphysical specialis* be grounded in *metaphysical generalis*. For Kant:

Undeterred by difficulty from within, and opposition from without, from endeavouring, by a method quite opposed to all those hitherto followed, to further the growth and fruitfulness of a science indispensable to human reason – a science from which every branch it has borne may be cut away but whose roots remain indestructible (Kant, 1964:37).

However, in the early 20th century, some linguists, philosophers and scientists, called for the repudiation of metaphysics as an intellectual enterprise. Popular minds here are: Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Alfred Jules Ayer, Hans Reichenbach, Friedrich Waismann, and Herbert Fiegl. These are the prominent cognoscente of the Vienna Circle. But it is worth noting that "the Circle or club was established in Vienna. The Circle was interested in demarcating science from non-science" (Alozie, 2004:40). What arguments did these minds converge to dislodge metaphysics?

Before engaging with their arguments, it should be recalled that the destructive criticisms of metaphysics may be traced to David Hume who had called for burning of books on the subject in the following words:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning containing quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion (Hume, 2007:lvi).

In a related development, Moritz Schlick opines that the metaphysician "...seeks vain illusion" (1926:117). This was exactly echoed by Rudolf Carnap in the following words:

Our claim that the statements of metaphysics are entirely meaningless, that they do not assert anything,... how could it be explained that so many men in all ages and nations among them eminent minds, spend so much energy, on metaphysics if the later consisted of nothing but mere words, nonsensically juxtaposed? (Carnap, 1959:36).

Alfred Jules Ayer (1952), one of the staunch arch enemies of metaphysics had proposed the *Verification Principle* which ruled out statements whose propositions cannot be observed. Anthony Kenny articulates in the following words:

The great weapon in this attack was the Verification Principle. This, in its original form, ruled that the meaning of a proposition was the mode of its verification. Such a view of meaning enabled one to rule out of court as meaningless all statements which could neither be verified nor falsified by experience. Faced with a dispute about the nature of the Absolute, or the purpose of the Universe, or Kantian things-in-themselves, the Positivist could expose the emptiness of the quarrel by saying to the warring metaphysicians: 'What possible experience could settle the issue between you?' (Kenny, 2006:369).

From the foregoing, it does not require much to deduce that these scholars have amassed an all-out destructive criticism against metaphysics. Unfortunately, Ludwig Wittgenstein has been branded as an 'enemy' of metaphysics, just like the afore-mentioned scholars.

This, in our view is an error because an unbiased reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein, void of prejudicial sentiments reveals that his criticism of metaphysics is constructive but not destructive. Next, we assess the views of three scholars of African descent that have put Ludwig Wittgenstein in the faction of those who aimed for the obliteration of metaphysics.

For Omolafe, Wittgenstein believes that “the business of philosophy is not to engage in metaphysical or ‘transcendental’ speculation” (Omolafe, 2000:192). He expands that Wittgenstein believed that philosophy is not a theory but an activity. This understanding of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and/or *Investigations* by J.A. Omolafe is not faithful to the intellectual spirit of Wittgenstein. We shall give the explanatory justification for this later. However, in a related development, Unah (2004) informs that:

The best way to eliminate metaphysics, according to Wittgenstein, is to re-write sentences of natural language into their proper logical form such that a sentence would depict a state of affairs in the logical world. When this is done, Wittgenstein thought, quandary-generating utterances would be avoided, philosophical perplexities would vanish and the metaphysician would be flushed out of business (Unah, 2004:83).

Above is not only a biased misappropriation of Wittgenstein but an incorrect expression of Wittgenstein’s intent both in the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. This is not all. Unah (2004:83) continues that “Wittgenstein is guided by the assumption that there is one-to-one correlation between language and the world”. This is an inference from Wittgenstein’s (1961:25) notion that “the world is a totality of facts not of things”. In a similar vein, Okoro (2012:117-120), discusses Ludwig Wittgenstein under the heading of logical positivism, arguing that the view of Alfred Jules Ayer is corroborated by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Does this imply that Wittgenstein is very much particular about the elimination of metaphysics as Ayer does? Let Okoro speak for himself:

For Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy consists in the elucidation and clarification of language. His aim in the *Tractatus*, was to show the bound or limit within which language can make meaning. Language, he argued should be used to describe things in the physical realm. To do otherwise is to take language beyond the empirical realm (i.e. the linguistic state of affairs) into the non-empirical realm (i.e. the non-linguistic state of affairs) which amounts to taking ‘language on holiday’ (Okoro, 2012:120).

Okoro continues that “now, since the metaphysician goes on building systems and using utterances that give rise to ‘language on holiday’, the best way to eliminate metaphysics is to rewrite sentences of the natural language into proper logical form such that a sentence will depict a state of affair in the world” (Okoro, 2012:120). It is obvious that Okoro’s rendition of Wittgenstein is in the negative anti-metaphysical sense.

The foregoing claims emanating from these African scholars have been one of the reasons why the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein has yet to receive deserving consideration among researches that pass as African philosophy. It is crucial at this juncture however, to then raise the question regarding the aim of Wittgenstein’s writings vis-à-vis metaphysics and philosophy. In other words, why has Wittgenstein been misconstrued as an adversary of metaphysics? What are his arguments? Of what relevance are his aims? These questions shall be examined shortly.

Wittgenstein: Metaphysics and Philosophy Assessment

In this section, we defend Wittgenstein and reveal the origin of the quandary that made scholars like Okoro (2012); Unah (2004); and Omolafe (2000) tout him as an arch enemy of Metaphysics. We shall focus on the ideas presented in the *Tractatus* as well as those in the *Philosophical Investigations* in order to vindicate Wittgenstein from the charges laid against him.

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein’s main concern centers on the nature of language and its relation to the world. This has come to be termed as the picture theory of meaning (Lycan, 2008); (Kenny, 2006). According to this theory, language consists of propositions which picture the world. In the words of Anthony Kenny: “Propositions are the perceptible expressions of thoughts, and thoughts are logical pictures of facts; the world is the totality of facts” (Kenny, 2006:365). This to use Jim Unah’s (2004:83) words means: “Wittgenstein is guided by the assumption that there is one-to-one correlation between language and the world; that language pictures reality...”

The main thrust of the *Tractatus* is that there must be a common denominator which language and the world possess. This shared minimum is what Wittgenstein calls logical form. He goes on to claim that in our ordinary use of language, the logical form of thoughts is concealed in complexities. He reasons that the relation between propositions and facts will only become clear if complex objects are analysed into simpler forms. How is this ideal to be realized?

In this mould, Wittgenstein employed the Russelian *Theory of Descriptions* which implies that “sentences containing definite descriptions should be analyzed as triples of general statements” (Lycan, 2008:29). Wittgenstein was convinced that if complex propositions are broken, symbols that denote non-complex objects shall be arrived at.

The aim, of this exercise for him is pertinent for the “truth value of propositions of science would depend upon the truth-value of the atomic propositions from which they were built up” (Kenny, 2006:367). This especially is where he thinks that Philosophy can assist Science and even Metaphysics. His explanatory justification for this is within the next few paragraphs.

From the above, it is not difficult to infer as Omolafe (2000), Unah (2004) and Okoro (2012) do that for Wittgenstein, metaphysical propositions, being unable to be broken into logical forms makes metaphysics an impossible enterprise. This is captured by Anthony Kenny (2006:368) that “would-be propositions which are incapable of analysis into atomic propositions reveal themselves as pseudo-propositions which yield no pictures of the world”. These pseudo-propositions are the ones employed in metaphysics as well as philosophy. ‘God’ as a metaphysico-religious concept fails this test. God does not reveal itself *in* the world. Wittgenstein augments: “it is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists” (Wittgenstein, 1961). Philosophy could in one sense do very little for us; but what it could do, Wittgenstein believed, had been done once for all by the *Tractatus*. The book contained all that was essential for the solutions of the problems of philosophy; and so, having written it, Wittgenstein gave up the subject (Kenny, 2006:368). For Wittgenstein, “we feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course, there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer” (Wittgenstein, 1961).

Given this succinct rendition of the early Wittgenstein, it is doubtful if Omolafe’s (2000); Unah (2004) and Okoro’s (2012) commentaries that Wittgenstein sought the total annihilation of metaphysics remain valid. From where did this muddle arise?

Perhaps a consideration of the one and major problem that Wittgenstein noticed when he started his philosophy could assist us. Relying on the authority of Marie McGinn:

In 1912 he presented his first paper to the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club. The subject was ‘What is philosophy?’, and it shows that from the very beginning Wittgenstein recognized the importance of understanding the nature of philosophical problems and of reflecting on the appropriate methods for approaching them. This concern with diagnosis and method remains characteristic of Wittgenstein throughout his philosophical development (McGinn, 2002:2).

His *Tractatus* became a subject of misuse. Marie McGinn informs that:

Moritz Schlick, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Vienna and a leading member of the Vienna Circle, also studied and greatly admired Wittgenstein's work. In 1927, Schlick persuaded Wittgenstein to attend regular meetings with him and other members of the Circle, including Friedrich Waismann, Rudolf Carnap and Herbert Feigl. The meetings were not entirely successful, as it gradually became apparent that the members of the Vienna Circle had misread the *Tractatus* as putting forward a version of their own positivist philosophy. In fact Wittgenstein did not share their attitude to metaphysics, their commitment to science, or their views on philosophy and ethics, and his own manner of doing philosophy—which Carnap thought closer to that of a creative artist than a scientist— meant that possibilities for cooperation were limited” (McGinn, 2002:3-4).

Anthony Kenny (2006:368) in the same connection, reveals that the book's “enthusiastic admirers were the anti-metaphysical positivists of the Vienna Circle”. Anthony Kenny corroborates this clearly in his words that:

Like the positivists, Wittgenstein is hostile to metaphysics. But he attacks metaphysics not by the blunt instrument of some positivistic verification principle, but by the careful drawing of distinctions which enable him to disentangle the mixture of truism and nonsense in the metaphysician's concept of mind. Moreover, the kind of metaphysics which he criticizes is one of which many positivists were themselves guilty. For Wittgenstein, metaphysics consists above all of grammar masquerading as science (Kenny, 2006:372).

The implication of the foregoing is that though, Wittgenstein was familiar with the prominent members of the Vienna Circle, his book was merely employed as a corroborator of the Verification Principle which had been adopted as their ‘Hume's Fork’. It is obvious from the foregoing that Omolafe (2000), Unah (2004) and Okoro (2012) merely fed a faulty premiss about Wittgenstein into their works and their erroneous conclusions about him is not far-fetched. This is why it had been difficult all along to see how Wittgensteinism can play a major role even in original African philosophizing.

Having answered the fundamental question that has led to the misappropriation of Wittgenstein as a foe of metaphysics, the next task is to take a look at his later philosophy where he repudiated most of the claims in the *Tractatus*, a view which Okoro (2012), Unah (2004) and Omolafe (2000) though writing decades after the publication of the *Philosophical Investigations* do not take cognizance of.

The *Philosophical Investigations* was published post-humously in 1953 after Wittgenstein's death in 1951. It expresses how he modified the views expressed in the *Tractatus*. Perhaps it would be helpful to commence with his notion of philosophy. For Wittgenstein "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (Wittgenstein, 1963:109). Elsewhere, he writes "philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert on us" (Wittgenstein, 1958:27).

For Wittgenstein, language is very important and a proper comprehension and use of it can make the philosophical enterprise highly profitable. In this connection, he takes his cue from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and compares his system with a therapy or the treatment of an illness (Wittgenstein, 1963:254). This is well captured in the words of Anthony Kenny (2006:371) in the following words:

The philosopher, like a psychoanalyst, encourages us to express doubts and puzzlement which we have been taught to repress; he cures us of the confusions we nurture in our minds by encouraging us to bring them out to the light of day, turning latent nonsense into patent nonsense.

Hence, for Wittgenstein (1963:109) "we may not advance any kind of theory". He continues that "we must do away with all explanation and description alone must take place" (1963:109). He submits that "philosophy neither explains nor deduced anything" (Wittgenstein, 1963:126).

Wittgenstein is highly convinced that the problems that confront philosophy are not metaphysics as some are wont to state. Rather, the problems are rooted in 'a misunderstanding of the logic of our language' (1963:93). He construed language as the source of philosophical problems as well as the means of overcoming them. How, in the first place did these problems enter philosophy? Wittgenstein (1958:18) retorts that:

Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and to answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics and leads philosophers into complete darkness.

The implication of the above excerpt is a testament to the incoherence that plagues philosophy. It is not surprising when Alfred North Whitehead hints that “philosophy has been haunted by the unfortunate notion that its method is dogmatically to indicate premises which are severally clear, distinct, and certain; and to erect upon those premises a deductive system of thoughts” (Whitehead, 1978:8). Ofuasia Emmanuel expounds that: “This idea is especially striking if we recall that Descartes for instance, was seeking to make philosophy have a method like mathematics and geometry” (Ofuasia, 2015:29). Robert Mesle corroborates this assertion when he chronicles:

If you were to look at the works of early modern philosophers like Descartes, Benedictus de Spinoza, or Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, you would easily see how much they hungered for the certainty achieved by mathematics. They modeled their systems on mathematics, beginning with definitions and axioms and building on them as if they were perfectly clear, self-evident principles beyond all possible doubt. They hoped that if, like mathematics, they started with absolutely certain truths and carefully checked each step of the argument, they could build a whole system of knowledge that would itself be certain (Mesle, 2008:16).

It is not surprising therefore, that such an incoherent and illogical method of philosophizing inspired the Hume’s Fork and the call for the total elimination of metaphysics in the early 20th century (Ofuasia, 2015:29-30).

Wittgenstein’s main motivation for writing the *Investigations* comes wholly from the fact that he regretted simplifying the relation of language to the world in his *Tractatus*, a charge which other philosophers are as well guilty of. Anthony Kenny (2006:372) makes this abundantly unvague that:

Wittgenstein thought that in his earlier work he had, like other philosophers, grossly oversimplified the relation of language to the world. The connection between the two was to consist of two features only: the linking of names to objects, and the match or mismatch of propositions to facts. This, he now came to believe, was a great mistake.

In *The Investigations*, he uses the metaphysician's appraisal of the problem of the 'mental' to make his arguments more direct. He accuses metaphysicians in this domain of possessing a bad metaphysical conception of the mental. Wittgenstein is of the notion that "where philosophers have gone wrong is in believing that the meaning of a sentence, and understanding of a sentence, was a mental process underlying the utterance, or accompanying the hearing, of the sentence. Reflection shows that this cannot be right" (Kenny, 2006:372). Closely knitted with this idea is also the metaphysical conviction that naming is a mental act. Wittgenstein believes that such a construction of language which is prevalent among philosophers leads to solipsism. Private language, as Wittgenstein calls it leads metaphysicians astray from the real source of the problem that they aim to address. He believes that private definition and use of terms is no real definition, for there cannot be a language whose words refer to what can only be known to the individual speaker of the language (Kenny, 2006:377).

The charge of solipsism is therefore inevitable for the world is my world only if language is my language, but reality portrays the converse to be the case. Wittgenstein concedes that the *Tractatus* is guilty of this charge but so are scholars such as Rene Descartes, James Mill, Arthur Schopenhauer, and even Martin Heidegger.

Descartes, for instance assumes that language remains meaningful even when the existence of the body, other bodies, the universe are doubtful. This assumption is implied in his 'Methodic Doubt'. Mill and Schopenhauer made the erroneous assumption that one could express the content of her mind in language whilst questioning the existence of other minds. These scholars are guilty of the charge of solipsism - the 'manufacture' of a private world and its language whereas *The Investigations* refutes solipsism, evincing that the use of language depends on the public and social world, hence the use theory of meaning.

The 'use' theory of meaning in language, allows us to decipher that when an expression is used, the meaning is already assumed in social behaviour. Lycan (2008:76) informs that:

Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that words and sentences are more like game pieces or tokens, used to make moves in rule-governed conventional social practices. A "meaning" is not an abstract object; meaning is a matter of the role an expression plays in human social behavior. To know the expression's meaning is just to know how to deploy the expression appropriately in conversational settings.

So far, the impetus has been to reveal why the destructive criticism leveled against Metaphysics by Wittgenstein is a misfire. In the section that follows, we shall focus on the implication and relevance of the kind of thinking expressed by Wittgenstein in African philosophy.

Wittgensteinism and Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy, Religions and Languages

This essay has shown that Wittgenstein is not out against metaphysics; rather he is concerned about the methods of science being employed by metaphysicians and the improper use of language in philosophizing. Some insights may be deduced from his work on language to assist original philosophy in Africa, but first some random comments on Africa.

The African continent has a history tainted by colonial experience whose scar could still be noticed especially in language. The literatures that are published by the intellectuals of the continent are written mostly, in the 'foreign' languages of their former colonial interlopers. Given, this reality, how can these languages be used or correctly employed to facilitate an original philosophy, indigenous and autochthonous to African people? How can it be said that a work written in French or English or Portuguese mirrors the African reality? In other words, how can philosophy in Africa be authentic when the language employed is not native to the African scholar?

From Wittgenstein's perspective, there is no reason to doubt that philosophy in Africa has much to benefit from the understanding of the limits of language. From this angle, this paper invites African intellectuals to battle the bewitchment of their intelligence caused by language. In their cases however, it is the quest to be freed from their colonial (French, Spanish, English, and Portuguese) languages which limits the extent of their thoughts and outlooks. On the authority of Anthony Kenny, Ludwig Wittgenstein harps: "in the very language we use there is a philosophy which bewitches us. This philosophy is not a set of theories or propositions: it is embodied in the misleading nature of the grammar of natural languages, which disguises the actual way in which words are used" (Kenny, 2006:371). Implied herein is the glaring admonition from Wittgenstein that every language is laden with its philosophy. An African person whose native language is *Igbo* and who is philosophizing in the English language on an African issue, for instance has brought the linguistic interpretative category of the English language into her schema. This, in the opinion of this study, cannot birth an authentic and original work that is truly African. It is merely a work written by any other English man, versed with the *Igbo* culture. Can there be an authentic African philosophy in this regard? We doubt if there can be. In the same vein, Fanon elaborates:

In any group of young men in the Antilles, the one who expresses himself well, who has mastered the language, is inordinately feared; keep an eye on that one, he is almost white. In France one says, "He talks like a book." In Martinique, "He talks like a white man" (Fanon, 2008:11).

Fanon, corroborating our interpretation of Wittgenstein continues that language leads to personality change. He queries:

What is the origin of this personality change? What is the source of this new way of being? Every dialect is a way of thinking, Damourette and Pichon said. And the fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a language different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation” (Fanon, 2008:14).

This stance is also validated by D. Westermann who exposes that “the wearing of European clothes...adorning the Native language with European expressions, using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements” (Westermann, 1976:331). If an African aspires to philosophize about African themes, it is very likely that s/he could import ‘jargons’ which may not capture the real idea s/he intends to pass on. This is Wittgenstein’s caution in *The Investigations* as well as in the *Blue and Brown Books*. In the face of these antecedents, the struggle with a foreign language, and what Wittgenstein terms the “bewitchment” therein, what is the way out of this labyrinth?

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, seemingly aware of the ‘bewitchment’ that beset African intellectual authenticity and heritage, went to the extreme of demanding that African writers write in their indigenous languages. In other words, he demands African writers to begin writing literatures in their own languages, and to make these literatures connected to their people’s revolutionary struggles for liberation from their neo-colonial contexts. The role of language and its bewitchment, from Ngugi’s perspective is very pertinent. Ngugi (1986) is one of the very few African writers aware of the limits and extents, how a foreign language renders almost obsolete African indigenous concepts or even world-views. A perusal of the Ghanaian scholar, Kwasi Wiredu reveals a moderate approach.

Kwasi Wiredu invites African intellectuals to take a critical look at the concept that they use whilst addressing discourses on subjects pertaining to Africa. He sees as an impediment, to the ‘entrapped’ African philosophers, the language of the West. He reveals that most African scholars are institutionally soaked in Western modes of philosophical thinking. Wiredu (1995) informs that the remote and immediate consequences of the steeping of African scholars in Western modes of philosophic tinkering is the experience of a delay in self-understanding and realization, since African scholars are consigned to grappling with concepts and discourses in a mode of philosophizing that is not primarily theirs. How can an authentic African philosophy birth from this methodology?

Wiredu (1995) in response to the above question recommends African philosophers to think philosophically in their own language or vernaculars. This signifies the commencement of decolonization. Wiredu (1995) implies here that language plays a very important role in decolonizing.

With the need to decolonize conceptually pertinent, an instance that reveals the contention of the afore-mentioned scholars whose world-view clearly echoes Wittgenstein needs justification. Two concepts: 'God' and 'Satan' would be employed in this mould.

The mere mention of the concept 'God' (Murray and Rea, 2008:6), and the mind construes an Omnipotent, Omnibenevolent and Omnipresence entity who created the world *ex nihilo*. The entity who commanded man to possess and dominate all other creatures on Earth, whose son was killed but resurrected after three days, ascended into the Heavens and is still being awaited to judge the world, separating the good from the bad, accepting the former to eternity and the later to damnation, is what it 'normally' stands for.

This entity (God) has angels and soon after one of them *Lucifer* 'rebelled' against it and has come to be known as 'Satan', the one who deceives humans to commit sin against 'God'. This notion of 'God' and 'Satan' is not alien to Islam as it pervades the Judeo-Christian world-view, but implied here is the 'struggle' between 'God' and 'Satan', good and evil. This is what the mind of an average African person brings to the fore, thanks to "Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic invasion", to use the phrase of Kwame Nkrumah (1964). But does this conception of God bear any semblance with the understanding of the Supreme Being or Higher God, at least in the language of the average indigenous African person? Put otherwise, is this how African people understand and construe the notion of 'God' and 'Satan'? We think not! Ripostes appear in Samuel O. Imbo (2004) and Okot p' Bitek (1973, 1971) as they employed the *Acoli* language to show how such a conception of God fails for the traditional African. But this paper employs the *Yorùbá* language ingenuous to the ethnic group occupying the South-West region of Nigeria. Labeodan (2008:2) amplifies that: "They are found in South-Western Nigeria, and in some parts of Benin Republic and Togoland".

The *Yorùbá* are distinguished from other ethnic groups on cultural and linguistic characteristics. However, while displaying relatively homogenous cultural traits, they are organized in subgroups among which are the *Ekiti*, *Ijesha*, *Ondo*, *Igbomina*, *Yagba*, *Awori*, *Egbado*, *Ife*, *Ijebu*, *Egba* and *Oyo*. We also have some *Yorùbá* in Benin Republic and Togo. They speak their language, *Yorùbá*, with various dialects; they are however united to a large extent, by a common culture and by traditions of a common origin in the town of *Ilé-Ife*. The Language, today, is written mainly in a standard Oyo dialect".

The *Yorùbá* have different names alluded to the Supreme Being. In the words of Bolaji Idowu:

In Yorùbá culture, for instance, Olodumare (the Supreme Being), who stands at the apex of the theoretical entities in terms of which the Yorùbá explain human experience, is regarded as the creator (Eleda a) and maker (Ase da) and the origin and giver of life (Elemi i'). He is also conceived as the undying king (Oba A1 ku), whose habitation is in the heavens above (Oba Orun) and who is above all divinities and humans; a being whose work is done in perfection (Ase-kan-ma-ku); a supreme judge who judges in silence (Ada ke da jo); and the controller of humankind's destiny (Idowu, 1962:39-42).

The above signifies the different linguistic concepts employed by the *Yorùbá* to picture their understanding of the Supreme Being. In the *Yorùbá* schema, the idea of God creating the world out of nothing, *ex-nihilo* is not present as is the case with the Abrahamic Monotheisms. Unlike the West, the *Yorùbá* do not ascribe their God as possessing transcendence and immanence. He is neither "wholly other", nor is He a purely spiritual being. The *Yorùbá* God does not possess any gender as does the Western's masculine God. When one tinkers on the notion of Satan, the situation does not improve (Oladipo, 2004:360). *Esu* is usually misconstrued for Satan. Meanwhile, *Esu* is not necessarily opposed to *Olódùmarè* (the Higher God). In fact "*Esu* is one of the primordial deities, amongst many others who must be appeased during rituals or supplications meant for *Olódùmarè*" (Ofuasia, 2015:5). This paper believes that the idea of Western 'God' and 'Satan' that permeates the average *Yorùbá* originated from the translation of the *Holy Bible* from English to *Yorùbá* by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Observing that there is no direct equivalent of the Western 'Satan' who is necessarily opposed to God/*Olódùmarè*, *Esu*, one out of many other divinities was singled out and ever since, the trend has been thus. We see, then, that the identification of the Supreme Being in African culture with the Christian God is a specific example of conceptual superimposition, which has for long prevented a proper appreciation of the nature of indigenous or aboriginal African religions (Oladipo, 2004:360). It is this superimposition which has obscured the humanistic characteristic of these religions (Liyong, 1997) that makes an authentic philosophizing on philosophy of religion very porous.

The foregoing is replete with what Wittgenstein implores in *Tractatus*, *Investigations* and the *Blue and Brown Books*. Even when he was critical of Metaphysics, he is concerned with how to improve the way metaphysicians use language therein. For him, there is a way language dissuades a mind from its real intent and this may not be obvious. Contra C. Okoro (2012); J.I. Unah (204); and J.A. Omolafe (2000), this study submits that the ideas of Wittgenstein surpasses their erroneous interpretation. Just like other works within the African philosophical spectrum on conceptual decolonization, we find the implication of Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy very relevant too. It does not matter whether or not Wittgenstein is African or if he has an African audience in mind. No! Rather, what matters is the pragmatic relevance of his thoughts to African philosophy and to this end, this essay has disintered.

Conclusion

The study has been able to uncover how the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein may assist in birthing an authentic African philosophy by breaking the shackles of the bewitchment a foreign language that infringes the African mind. The African people shall have glitches getting to the roots of their problems without a transparent language that can make them see their quandaries clearer for a proper panacea. The past six decades are suggestive that to philosophize in the language of the settler is a recipe for disaster. Indeed Frantz Fanon was right: "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture" (Fanon 2008:2). Unfortunately, African scholars philosophizing in the language of the settler, take for granted that some Western concepts actually mirror Western problems and solutions leaving African problems stagnant and unscathed. It is therefore not surprising that African scholars would be solution providers to European problems. Lastly, this work may be objected on the grounds that it appears even in the English language. Though this is a valid objection, it enjoins the critics to see this work as a ladder employed to climb atop a building and then kicked away to see the 'world' properly, instigating scholars to tinker on an authentic manner of decolonizing concepts, think in their indigenous vernacular or even writing in their indigenous African tongues where need be.

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