

ORALITY AS A SOURCE OF METAPHYSICAL DOCTRINES IN IGBO WORLD-VIEW

Chinedu Stephen Ifeakor
cs.ifeakor@unizik.edu.ng
Department of Philosophy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria
08037702719
&
Chukwueloka S. Uduagwu
elokauduagwu@gmail.com
Department of Philosophy
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja
08060489346

Abstract

In this article, we argued that orality serves as the basis for some metaphysical ideas in African philosophy. The reason for this claim is based on the realization that oral tradition such as myths and proverbs have served as means through which Africans have preserved and transmitted original ideas. Incidentally, efforts have been adduced mainly to the mythical and proverbial characters of orality without almost no effort to move beyond these and extrapolate some philosophical doctrines enshrined within them, hence the contention of this article. Through the method of hermeneutical analysis, the present article examines some elements of oral tradition that have inherent metaphysical undertone using Igbo society as paradigm. This will be done in three stages: First, we articulate metaphysics in Africa and discuss in details what oral tradition means for Africans. Second, we make a case for oral traditions/literatures such as proverbs and myths in Africa to offer insightful information over how reality is comprehended among Africans and its relevance to contemporary times. Finally, we assess oral tradition to articulate how proverbs and myths demonstrate their metaphysical ideas and its implications for explaining reality in African philosophy. We contend that these two elements (proverb and myths) shared relational theory in pristine Africa that supply reliable data for developing authentic metaphysical ideas in African philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Metaphysics, Relational theory, Orality, Myth, Proverb

Introduction

Some African philosophers like Polycarp Ikuenobe (2018), Ifeanyi Kanu (2014) attempt to articulate oral tradition as source of African epistemology and African ethics. The latter shows how Africans acquire knowledge, whereas the former prescribes what one ought to do from the African perspective. In this article, our aim is to attempt an excavation of oral tradition as a source of metaphysics, a core branch of African philosophy. Metaphysics is a systematic study of Being in its deepest form. It is an ordered inquiring into existence. Contemporary African philosophers seem to have neglected oral tradition and focused their academic exertions on written literatures because of its availability and accessibility. Perhaps this is why Pauline Hountondji recommended writing as one of the criteria for African Philosophy (1991, 111). However, it is important to note that explanation of reality cannot be attained without a harmonious complementation between the oral

and the written. This justifies the focus of this paper as a move beyond focusing only over the written without neglecting the oral.

Realizing the foregoing, Henry Odera Oruka proposes some basic trends in African philosophy namely: ethno-philosophy, nationalistic-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy, philosophic sagacity, hermeneutic philosophy and artistic or literary philosophy (1991, 49). He argues that these trends in African philosophy should be complementation between oral tradition and written literature. For example, Philosophic sagacity is derived from harmonious complementation between the oral and written sources of the society. However, "... professional philosophy rejects oral tradition and community thought system as non-philosophical because of lack of documentation" (Oruka 1991: 49). This article admits that it is complementation of oral and written tradition that gives a holistic explanation for grasping the core of African metaphysics. This paper discloses how oral tradition sets the structure for metaphysical ideas in African philosophy, in a related matter as scholars who engaged oral tradition as a source of African epistemology and African ethics. To achieve this, this study has three sections. The first, which commence shortly, concerns with the nature of African metaphysics. The second part considers oral tradition as a source of metaphysical ideas in African philosophy. The section is the conclusion which brings the arguments and convictions of this paper to a close.

The Nature of African Metaphysics

Metaphysics is derived from the Greek expression: "*Ta meta ta physica*" (after the physics). The originator of this expression "Metaphysics" was Andronicus of Rhodes. While he was arranging Aristotle's work in the philosophical school of Alexandria, he placed the works which Aristotle called "First Philosophy", after the ones on physics and titled it "after physics" (Iroegbu 1995: 21). This is how the name metaphysics was surfaced in the history of Western philosophy and evolve as an essential or core aspect of philosophy. This could be the reason why Emerich Coreth, defines philosophy simply as metaphysics. He argues that "... philosophy is metaphysics, in that it is a science of the supersensible that is, the causes and model of the visible world" (1968: 18). This conviction is an endorsement of the position of Aristotle who defines metaphysics as the first philosophy. By implication, metaphysics is the science of suprasensible, the science which investigates the cause of all things as any or combination of material, formal, efficient and final causes. The science of being as Being and non-Being as non-Being. This implies that the object of metaphysics is all about reality as a whole in so far as there are beings and they exist. In other words, metaphysics examines both physical and spiritual entities

Metaphysics, in a nutshell is the study of the ultimate reality. Metaphysics is the foundation of philosophy and it has been the pilot of philosophical inquiries. Metaphysics offers an avenue for grasping the deepest meaning to reality. It is an indispensable aspect of the human enterprise in philosophy. It sets out to provide the rationale and explanation of reality as it affects all beings in existence especially in their totality and ultimacy? However, in African belief system, both the physical and metaphysical play a very important role in explaining reality. It therefore comes as no surprise that "Metaphysics englobes the workings, handling and study of the dynamic through invisible and non-material aspect of the world" (Iroegbu 1995: 22). Thus far, we have focused on the meaning of metaphysics in general. It is now important to examine metaphysics from the African place and within African context.

African metaphysics is an examination, a construction and attempt to expose the nature, features and role of metaphysics in Africa. In other words, African metaphysics may be defined as the worldview about what constitute reality among the African people. It is the African's way of thinking about the origin of nature, human existence and reality in general. Hence, a scholar like Godfrey. Ozumba defines African metaphysics as "... the way African people perceive, interpret and make meaning out of interactions among beings in the framework of reality in general" (2004: 21). It is the totality of the African's perception of reality. This means that the African, like his counterpart elsewhere, asks questions about ultimate reality and tries to provide answers to such questions. The African's inquiry about reality and the answers which he gives to these problems constitute what African metaphysics stands for. It is an investigation into "... the nature of the ultimate reality for the African, the nature of forces and Beings within the African worldview, the relationship between the seen and the unseen" (Enyimba 2009: 98). Metaphysics in Africa articulates the nature of reality.

With all these points concerning African metaphysics already outlined, it is important to now show its connection to orality. This is a pertinent aspect of African thought system whose connection to African metaphysics has yet to command critical scholarly attention. In the next section, focus will shift to how orality presents itself as one of the veritable sources of authentic metaphysics.

The Connection between Metaphysics and Orality in Igbo World-View

Perhaps it would be helpful to commence this section with the outlook that tradition is an important means of transmitting knowledge both in traditional and contemporary African society. Tradition could be oral or written. Tradition is not a blind adherence to the past. It evolves or adapts as new circumstances arise in view of making the person and the community to survive and progress. This is in line with Bertrand Russell's claim that it is the circumstances of a people that determine their philosophy (cited in Chimakonam 2016, 514). In traditional African societies, oral literature was commonly used.

A thought system is said to be oral if it has no written literature or sacred scriptures. Following this, it implies that African thought (traditional) system which is largely unwritten is not merely a continuous alteration but is also process of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another. Oral tradition is defined as follows:

- i. The process of handing down information, opinions, beliefs and customs, by words of mouth or transmission of knowledge and institutions through successive generations without written instruction.
- ii. Cultural continuity embodied in a massive complex of evolving social attitudes, beliefs, conventions and institutions rooted in the experience of the past and exerting a normative influence on the present.
- iii. Something existing only in popular belief; inherited reputation or memory
(*The Webster's Third New International Dictionary (vol 3)*)

From the above definitions of oral tradition, it is obvious that, for a thing to be regarded as tradition, it must be widely understood, accepted and practiced in a society and it must have been handed down for at least many generations back. Oral tradition involves the handing down of a "... thought system from one generation to another by word of mouth or by practice. The elderly and wise men are regarded as the purveyors of the thought system" (Uduigwomen 2009: 174). Oral traditions,

which we project as one of the sources of African metaphysical doctrines comprises of the following: myths, legends, stories, proverbs, belief, folktales, songs and dances, liturgies and rituals, pithy saying, riddles, adages and customs. However, some might argue that all these are part of ethno-philosophy which professional philosophers like Richard Wright, Peter Bodunrin, Paulin Hountondji and a host of others have criticized. Amidst this rejection of ethno-philosophy as a reliable basis for African philosophy by professional philosophers, Ada Agada still maintains that the foundation of African philosophy is in traditional cosmogonies, proverbs, communal wisdom, religious beliefs, and cultural practice which are elements of ethno-philosophy. He stresses that ethno-philosophy has strongly promoted philosophy from culture to conceptual articulation in African philosophy (Agada 2015, 244).

As a way of contextualizing the importance of oral literature in African metaphysics, which is the focus of this section, emphasis shall be on proverbs and myths. Even as Ada Agada pointed out that ethno-philosophy is the foundation of African philosophy, he goes on to articulate that we should go beyond that by critically examining the raw data of culture and extracting from these data what may pass as philosophy and also discover some metaphysical ideas or theories in them (Agada 2015, 244). However, it is important to relay that before Agada's assertion, there have been efforts at moving beyond the elements of ethno-philosophy in order to critically extrapolate the philosophical ideas in them. On this note, Momoh affirms that "... proverbs function as pedagogical instruments to educate the youths among traditional Africans just as the modern formal schooling system is an educational forum for instructing the youth" (2000: 361). Oral traditions like proverbs, together with names, oral interviews, folktales, myth, music, and cultural practice have proved very helpful or can be very essential in metaphysics in African philosophy. Oral traditions are to the African what the Bible or the Koran is to Christians and Muslims respectively. Any African history or tradition which underestimates oral tradition or which relies exclusively on written documents cannot be regarded as authentic history or tradition of the African. Hence, S. P. M'bra Ekanze maintains that

... a written document not only diminishes as one penetrates deeper into the past, but this type of material is generally poor in intent, as it is from the view-point of the outsider; a written document describes an object from its external dimensions and does not delve into its innermost intricacies (1990: 82).

African philosophers must explore various sources (oral and written) in order to give authentic explanation of reality. Oral traditions such as proverbs serve as a stepping stone to metaphysical ideas/theories in Africa; it serves as the base for metaphysics in Africa philosophy to flourish.

It is through tradition and elements of communal belonging that the relational character which underpins African thought system is founded. This is the principle which Innocent Asouzu (2004) referred to as 'complementarity'. In an attempt to substantiate the importance of proverbs in African society, Momoh (2000: 362) asserts:

There are at least three options open to a philosopher who wants to show that there is philosophy in African proverbs. The first option is to consider a collection of full loads of the proverbs of an African people and discuss how philosophical each proverb is. Another option is to examine this proverb's metaphysics, logical, moral and epistemological values. The third option, which is the major aspect of this paper, is to consider proverbs, myth, folktales that are in fact metaphysical principles.

For philosophers, metaphysical theory sets the mode for the whole philosophical structure; this fact applies equally to proverbs. Hence, there is often an idea underlying the proverbs of a people which have some metaphysical content. Having defined the proper character of oral tradition within the African context, the remainder of this section will be dedicated to using myths and proverbs as illustrations.

Myths: This is a story that is passed down through generations, often explaining natural phenomena or the origins of a people. Myths are often rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs and are usually associated with deities, demigods or supernatural beings. Myths and fables are both forms of traditional narrative, but they serve different purposes and have distinct characteristics. Fables are used to describe a short story that conveys a moral message, often with non-human entities as the main characters. Myths are concerned with explaining the world and its origins while fables aim to teach moral lessons and offer practical wisdom. Myths are often more serious and sacred, while fables are more playful and humorous. However, in this work we use the concept myths to show how traditional Africa stored their ideas or explain the origin of things in their society.

In some of myths, the principal characters are animals familiar to the community just like fables which are short tales that usually feature animals adorned with human qualities to deliver a specific moral lesson. These animals are personified and endowed with intelligence in order to represent the genius of the community. Humans ascribe “wisdom” and “foolishness” to some animal. For instance, the “tortoise” is used to represent a wise person and the “goat” is used to represent the foolish person in the community. Myth in this view would be humanity’s effort to offer answers to the many-sided aspects of nature in the earliest times. Here, human would have lacked wider knowledge and could not precisely articulate their views of nature and what happens in nature. This myth is always in the form of a story or event that traces the history of something, be it tradition or rules of the land. Bartholomew Abanuka defines myth as “... simple human attempt to explain in symbolic language the origin of the world, human discoveries and invention, suffering and death, which the community accepts as belonging to it” (1999, 5).

In traditional Africa society, myth was the most suitable method open to man to organize the world around him in order to situate himself and try to explain the existence or the origin of all things in Africa. In Igbo tradition, the origin of four spirits which now associated with the four market days in Igbo land that protects the individual and community within the society was a myth. Hence, Bartholomew Abanuka (1999, 31) avers:

Myth of four spirits namely; Eke, Orie, Afọ, Nkwọ is that these spirits visited Nri, the son of Eri in the form of persons and concealed their names. In the night Nri sent rats to enter the baskets of fish belonging to these spirits. When the rat entered that of Eke, Orie called the attention of Eke to what was taking place; “Eke, Eke a rat has entered your basket.” Then they slept. The rat entered the baskets of Orie, Afọ, and Nkwọ respectively, breaking their sleep and the attention of Orie was called by Afọ that of Afọ by Nkwọ and of Nkwọ by Eke to what was happening. In the morning, Eri greeted the spirit guests by calling their names one after the other. They were surprised.

The foregoing indicates how the Igbo in Africa understanding of the four market days; the four market days represent four spirits of the market which has existed in Igbo society from ancient times. The myth does not only contribute to the account of market days and the existence of the

spirits, it also presents the days of the weeks and calendar of the year in Igbo society. The metaphysical idea of this myth shows that the Igbo have an intimate relationship with the spirit-world and desire to sustain the relationship for as long as possible. This is why the names of these spirits serve as: (1) market days (2) the four spirits that institute the markets days (3) the names of the market and names of individuals in Igbo-African society (4) the days of the week and calendar of the year. Here one may discover that relational theory is active in the myth. Relational theory as used in context of the work describes how human being create both social and spiritual relationship and organize interactions in the universe.

Another myth narrates the origin of palm wine in Igbo society. It happened that, a palm tree was uprooted by a tiger. After some days, some fowls that were passing by, perched on the uprooted palm tree. Soon, a hunter who was passing by, saw some liquid dripping from the top of the uprooted palm tree. He tasted it and found that the taste was good. Then he got a container and put it close to the palm tree. The container filled up with the dripping liquid and the hunter took the container home. On arriving home, he called his family members to come and see what he had discovered in the forest while hunting. They all gathered and tasted the liquid and called it *mmanya* (palm wine) because it came from palm tree. In this way, the first palm wine was 'tapped.' Palm wine remains a popular alcoholic drink in Igbo society. The metaphysical ideas of this myth reveals that the animate and inanimate play an important role in any discovery in the society.

In African cultures, cosmogony that is the origin of the universe is often explored through myths which serve as a way to understand and explain the creation of the world, the gods, and humanity. Thus, for every discovery in the world, there is a kind of interplay that exist between different entities. Today, in Igbo society, palm wine plays a very significant role in marriage especially traditional marriage. Palm wine today, in Igbo society is given to women in order for her to identify the husband to be among the gathered crowd. Within the traditional marriage system, palm wine serves as a means of identification in Igbo traditional marriage system. Having used instances from myth to justify my outlook that African metaphysics explores some oral tradition, it is now pertinent to turn and see how proverbs too reinforce this outlook.

Proverbs: A proverb is a short well known saying that expresses an obvious truth and often offers advice. George Ehusani referred to proverbs as "... short pithy saying loaded or pregnant with metaphors and allegories which lend themselves to easy memorization" (1997: 153). He further explains that "... it serves as both the store house and the medium of transmission of accumulated wisdom from one generation to another" (1997: 153). In the traditional Igbo society, he who is incapable of using and understanding proverbs does not represent his people well in an assembly. Edward Orji puts it succinctly when he writes: "[A]s salt enhances the flavor of food, so does proverbs add flesh to the bare statement of fact." He asserts that "... proverbs tell the bitter truth about us, our lives, unsavory events and situations which have been transferred to humor and summarized into philosophy of which depicts the attitudes and beliefs of our people and their outlook to life" (cited in Ehusani 1997: 154). Today proverbs have gained the recognition of scholars of African Literature, African religion and African philosophy. John Mbiti explains proverbs to be "... the common ways of expressing religious ideas and feelings in Africa... it is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religion and philosophical wisdom" (1970: 69). Knowledge, mastery and appropriate usages of proverb in traditional African societies also provide a scale of ranking in learning abilities of individuals in the society. Proverbs

are seen within Igbo society as constituting a tower of ideas. It is in proverbs that artistic mediums of learning like stories and wise sayings imbued with philosophy are propagated. In general, the metaphysical ideas of proverbs shed light on: (1) human life (2) human relationships to human beings (3) human society and human destiny (Ehusani 1997: 153). It is in proverbs that the traditional African society stores some of its culture, learning, knowledge, science, metaphysics and aspects of its civilization for easy reference and retrieval.

Hence, "... it is said that what is not in a people's proverbs does not exist or is not real" (Momoh 2000: 362). One can also go on to say that in traditional African society, what is not proverbial is not known. Traditional African proverbs serve as a good medium for explaining and transmitting knowledge within a particular circle in Africa. Important deliberations are spiced with proverbs in traditional African society. Proverbs represent the foundational authority of the communal or public aspect of a people's belief or philosophy. Thus, in the traditional African society, to be, is to be in proverbs and to not be is not to be in proverbs. This implies that reality is best explained in traditional African society through proverbs. In Igbo society proverbs are seen as "*ilu bu mmanu ndi Igbo ji eri okwu*" (proverb is the oil with which words are eaten). This implies that for every Igbo person, to know and understand their tradition very well, they must know and understand common proverbs. Hence, we shall be focusing on some of these proverbs that have some metaphysical ideas in Africa. The first proverb to consider is "I prefer to die running to keep the lead than for my colleagues to overtake me." In the Igbo society, humans perceive existence as a race in which everyone is a participant. The effort you put into making meaning of existence matters greatly. Here one discovers the importance of essence and existence in human life. This is why an African does not want to retrogress from their present position; rather he prefers to move from a lower position to a higher position. He prefers to die rather than go backward in life. This mindset shows why a rich man, most often finds life very difficult when he becomes poor.

Another important proverb is "*onye wetara oji wetara ndu*" (he who brings kolanut brings life). This proverb is used to demonstrate metaphysical ideas in Igbo society. In traditional African societies, especially among the Igbo, kolanut represents life. For the Igbo, kolanut symbolizes communalism. That is why the breaking and eating of kolanut is the first ceremony performed in the course of any serious business. The person who performs the kolanut-breaking task is usually the oldest person present who invites all the temporal and permanent forces, the spirits and ancestors to join in the deliberation or merry-making. The kolanut is split into pieces; if there are four pieces, they represent the four spirits and four market days, which is a good omen in Igbo society. If there are seven or five pieces, they represent '*Omumu*' (fruit of the womb) and days of the week, which is also good; and all those who partake in it are assumed to be in a kind of mystical fellowship. However, splitting the kolanut into two pieces is a bad omen in Igbo society. It is a sign that something bad will happen. If a man who is invited to an occasion is not given his share of kolanut or is being sent on errand, he is either a suspect, or unwanted or the group has not made up its mind about his integrity. Similarly, in Igbo society when a host tells his visitor: "I have no kolanut," the host is making it known to the visitor that he is not in the mood for comradeship. But when he says "the house is full of kolanut," he is sending a message of hearty welcome to the guest.

The social function of kolanut is not only restricted to the living. It is useful in religious and spiritual interactions with the ancestors as well. In some Igbo communities, the eldest member of

the family takes kolanut to the family shrine every morning to offer prayers to the gods and ancestors, thanking them for the gift of a new day and also pray for continue protection and guides the people. In spite of these usefulness, it is not misplaced to query: what has kolanut got to do with life? What is the relationship between kolanut and life?

For the Igbo, life means interaction between himself and his fellow human beings, among the living, non-living objects, the dead and the gods as well as the interaction between other animate and inanimate forces of nature. The Igbo believe that reality consists in the mutual interdependence between natural and supernatural forces in which humans must find peace if they do not wish to endanger their existence. Traditionally, among the Igbo, kolanut is never eaten without prayers. For them whoever brings kolanut has created an opportunity for prayer, communion and supplications to the gods and ancestors; such a man has created an opportunity for the people to contact all 'Beings', spirits and forces to provide long life, prosperity and peace for the individual and the community. The metaphysical assertion in the proverb is that "kolanut is life." It is not only "food" for man on any occasion; it is also the food of the gods, ancestors and spirits. It is the bond that unites the living and the dead. It is also a medium of communication between the human, natural and supernatural. Kolanut is the only food item which the Igbo believe is favored by the natural and supernatural forces, the gods, and ancestors. Sometimes the Igbo say "There is no kolanut now" as a mark of reproach, when the supernatural forces have been disappointing and frustrating the people. The Igbo would tell the natural and supernatural forces that they have been eating their kolanuts all these years, without ultimately performing.

Another proverb goes thus: "*o nweghi ihe bu ihe oħurũ n'okpuru anyanwũ*" (nothing is new under the sun). This is a proverb that is generally found in all the societies in Africa. The proverb is restated thus: "... nothing can be that has never been" (Momoh 2000: 368). For example, "nothing is that never was", or "nothing can ever occur now which has never occurred before". For the African, nothing is new in the world: the new things we think we see are just discoveries and not inventions. This proverb is used in moments of crisis and misfortune, like when a child or elder dies, a person is seriously sick; a person dies in a ghastly accident and so on. This proverb carries a message of consolation in moments of pain. It persuades one to take heart and nurtures the attitude that all is well. Additionally, this proverb "nothing can be that has never been" or "nothing is that never was" is uttered in social and moral contexts. It serves as a principle of moderation and communality. This is because in moments of sorrow, one is consoled and in moments of joy one is cautioned not to be haughty, arrogant or self-conceited. This proverb also provides a basis for the doctrine of reincarnation in African philosophy. This is why when someone is born people say "he or she is a photocopy of his father or her mother" while some say "his father or her mother is back"; there is the belief that the new born baby has existed before.

The next proverb that we turn to, is popular among the Igbo: "*onye chi ya egbughi, mmadu agaghi egbu ya*" (he whom his gods does not kill, man cannot kill). Traditionally, in Igbo society 'Chi' is a personal god that guides the individual in the society. According to traditional Igbo cosmogony, 'Chi' is one of the fundamental entities or impersonal agents through which the relationship between man and forces in the spiritual world can be understood. Samuel Ade-Ali avers that "'Chi' is a spiritual component of man as well as a metaphysical force behind human life" (2004: 55). What is imperative in this proverb is that humans relate with their 'Chi' the way they relate with their companions in the material or physical world. However, the 'Chi' is conceived as a "spiritual

companion” at the metaphysical level. Given this importance of ‘*Chi*’ as the architect behind the operational principles of man in the visible world, the Igbo confer on ‘*Chi*,’ a worthy recognition in their metaphysical speculations. This ‘*Chi*’ is seen as a personal god that governs and regulates the individual’s life. The Igbo still believe in existence of the supreme ‘God’ called ‘Chukwu’ (the Great God) or ‘Chineke’ (the God that creates) in spiritual realm that is above the ‘*Chi*’. However, the personal ‘*Chi*’ is meant to guide the individual and it serves as a mediator between the higher supernatural Being and the individual. Among the Igbo, the individual has the free will and moral disposition to propose to his ‘*Chi*’ a thing of personal interest. This implies that among the Igbo, the only role gods play is to approve or sanction what the individual has declared for himself. That is why the Igbo believe that the power to survive depends on the power of the individual and not necessarily the gods because the gods are there to approve or sanction what has been declared by the individual.

From the assessments of myths and proverbs, it may be deduced that there are metaphysical ideas in them that underpinned the Igbo world-view. These metaphysical ideas may simply be easily captured from the perspective of relational theory. First, from myths, as discussed above, metaphysical idea of these myths shows that the Igbo have an intimate relationship with the spirit-world and desire to sustain the relationship for as long as possible (relational theory). This is why the names of these spirits serve as: market days, the four spirits that institute the markets days, the names of the market as well as names of individuals in Igbo society. This is also true for the days of the week and calendar of the year. Through this way, African myths engage with cosmogony, providing a rich and diverse understanding of the universe and humanity within it. Secondly, one can see the metaphysical idea of proverbs as follows: human life, human relationships to human beings, the living dead and non-human entities, human society and human destiny. It is in proverbs that the traditional African society stores some of its culture, learning, knowledge, science, metaphysics and aspects of its civilization for easy reference and retrieval. Looking at both elements (proverb and myth), we contend that the relational theory which lays emphasis on social and spiritual relationship and organize interactions occur in both elements. Relational theory is embedded with three base principles which is found in proverbs and myths discussed above. First, there is the principle of communal sharing, which holds that individuals within a particular community feel they share something in common. Second, there is authority ranking. This is a status quo wherein there is a linear hierarchy of responsibilities and privileges given to individuals in the community. Third, there is the principle of equality matching, wherein the relationship is based on equal sharing, equal right and balanced reciprocity. These two aspects of oral tradition, proverbs and myths are characterized with these principles of relational theory.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have attempted to argue that orality is one of the sources of African metaphysics by using Igbo philosophy as model. Specifically, this study explored the wisdom in myths and proverbs for its aim. It revealed how some Igbo myths and proverbs disclose how African philosophy and metaphysics would not have thrived if not with the information got from oral tradition. Consequently, there is a need to preserve this orality in order to keep the philosophy going. Against this backdrop, one-way, which the paper has undertaken, is to revisit these oral traditions in attempt to recover philosophical values from them. The past is rooted in both written and unwritten traditions, but we tend to neglect the oral tradition and focus more on the written tradition because it is very easy to access, forgetting that the easier way is not the only way out.

The study is intended to rouse African philosophers from their dogmatic slumber on the issues of orality and spur them to investigate and see how oral tradition is a source of metaphysical idea in Africa. We must be able to hold this source of knowledge that has been passed to us through African culture and values. It is in doing this that metaphysics in Africa will move at a faster pace in the discipline of African philosophy.

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