

Considering the possibility of African philosophical counselling rooted in African hermeneutics and conversationalism

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Abstract

Contemporary philosophical counselling literature is undergoing continuous expansion through the introduction of new and established philosophical traditions. However, certain traditions remain inadequately represented in the existing literature, most notably African philosophy. This current deficiency, if adequately acknowledged, presents an immensely creative opportunity for the expansion of philosophical counselling. Drawing on the hermeneutical work of Tsenay Serequeberhan and conversational philosophy as offered by Jonathan Chimakonam, I propose to introduce a notion of African philosophy that roots itself in the horizon (*philosophical place*) of philosophical counselors enmeshed in dynamic conversations with counselees also rooted in and speaking from a specific horizon. Various contemporary philosophical counselling practises fail to grasp the importance of the very rootedness and origins of these philosophisings, subsequently failing to foster an environment conducive to the creation of new concepts and ways of becoming. Philosophical counselling underpinned and informed by this understanding of African philosophy emphasises the collaborative nature of the interpretative endeavour that originates from and is rooted in the concrete lifeworld of a counselee.

About the author

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1. Introduction

Olúfẹ̀mi Táíwò (1998: 3) writes at the turn of the century that

[a]nyone who has lived with, worked on, and generally hung out with philosophy ... must at a certain point come upon the presence of a peculiar absence: the absence of Africa from the discourse of philosophy.

This silence has since been acknowledged via numerous curricula changes¹ at several South African universities. This is an important marker due to its impact on academic contributions, particularly to foster the emergence of new philosophers and influencing scholarly output. “African philosophy”² is thus no longer hindered nor blocked by an explicit and unjustified neglect. However, these historical injustices accompanied by arbitrary and exclusionary structures still lead to problems experienced today. This is especially evident in the normalisation and internalisation of these structures which still marginalise, exclude, and/or occlude. The absence of African philosophy in the discourse of contemporary philosophical counselling (henceforth PC) is thus a given, one that necessarily follows. Contemporary PC literature on African philosophy consequently suffers from a serious epistemic dearth. There are few if any studies pertaining to the viability of using and incorporating African philosophy in PC. This silence accompanied by a persistent importation of knowledge from beyond the lifeworld from which the questions/problems emerge as quasi-universal solutions, perpetuates the structural marginalisation and silencing of indigenous voices. As a response, I provide a peculiar reading of African

philosophy that at once sufficiently acknowledges this neglect, but which also provides a working solution to rectify and amend the assumption that led to this peculiar silence. Contributing to the literature of African philosophy in PC, I attempt to counter the current epistemic dearth by emphasising the need to (re-) turn to philosophical practices that originate from and are rooted in the concrete lifeworld of counselees. This reading of African philosophy is inspired by and based on the hermeneutic philosophy of Tsenay Serequeberhan and conversational philosophy as offered by Jonathan Chimakonam. Emerging from these philosophical practices is an interpretative actualisation situated within a conversational framework.

I will proceed as follows. Firstly, I will begin by providing a working definition of PC to prevent any unnecessary confusion. Working with this understanding, I proceed to acknowledge the unjustified silence of African philosophy in the current literature. Thirdly, I provide my reading of African philosophy, which begins to lay the foundation to trouble this silence. Contrary to this reading, I then juxtapose the viewpoints of two philosophical counsellors whose work seems detached and decontextualised, thus perpetuating and maintaining the notion that particular philosophical practices can be universally applied. Accordingly, the significance of *philosophical place* (horizon/lifeworld) and the very rootedness of these philosophical practices are disregarded, potentially forfeiting opportunities to cultivate rich perspectives emerging from these different lifeworlds. And lastly, I offered a markedly situated and contextually cognisant understanding of PC, which critically challenges the (re-) production of philosophy lacking these crucial

¹ The approach taken by some universities, such as Stellenbosch University (Arts and Social Sciences, 2023: 224) and University of the Western Cape (Undergraduate, 2023), was to incorporate separate “African philosophy” subjects. Others, such as the University of Pretoria (Philosophy Undergraduate Offering, 2023), have incorporated African philosophers into their main subjects.

² Two initial problems regarding “African philosophy” must be mentioned. Firstly, the term might designate a homogenous and singular field in philosophy, which is not the case. A second problem is raised by, for example, Ramose (2005: 4) who states that “Africa” is an invented term imposed onto Africans from the outside. Subsequently, he uses “Africa” under “protest”. In this article, I still refer to “African philosophy” but with the preceding two remarks in mind.

considerations. This understanding, however, does not promote a prescriptive method that the philosophical practitioner should blindly apply across diverse contexts.

2. Understanding PC as collaborative philosophising and a hermeneutical happening

PC has as many definitions as it has practitioners (Marinoff, 1999: 37; Raabe, 2001: xix; Tillmanns, 2005: 2; cf. Schuster, 2004: 3). This makes the task of identifying a singular understanding of its practise difficult. Nevertheless, this lack of singular defining characteristics might actively safeguard against the inherent perils of dogmatically adhering to either authoritative figures or rigid theories (Robertson, 1998: 6). Given this multitude of interpretations and understandings surrounding its practise, the pursuit of a singular or centralised concept capable of encapsulating its diverse practices appears to be counterproductive. Moreover, linking this to the fundamental hermeneutical or interpretative nature of PC, the philosophical counsellor needs to possess and be in control of multiple methods (Pollastri, 2006: 109) and various philosophical perspectives (Lahav, 1996: 266; Schuster, 1995: 101). By encouraging this approach, the philosophical counsellor can effectively uncover and disclose all that philosophy has to offer, thus potentially edifying the counselee's life (Raabe, 2001: 214).

The praxis of PC might be understood through two objectives. Firstly, the counselee presumably seeks the guidance of the philosophical counsellor due to the presence of certain questions or problems in her life. Rather than addressing or resolving such concerns immediately, the philosophical counsellor perceives them as vital points of departure for the subsequent session. The second objective is thus to turn the counselee into a fellow philosopher. In this vein, the process of PC becomes inherently educational. Diverging from rigid pedagogy, the philosophical counsellor aspires to educate the counselee in a manner that encompasses, inter alia, the cultivation of skills related to

the art of living (Schuster, 1999: 5), the cultivation of self-care for the "soul" (Schuster, 2013: 125-126), and the expanding of her horizon through self-transformation (Lahav, 2016: 12). Fundamentally, the philosophical counsellor exposes the counselee to various philosophical perspectives that grapple with analogous questions/problems of her own. This exposure does not necessarily entail immediate resolution of her concerns; rather, it furnishes her with the tools to perceive her issues from different viewpoints. Consequently, the counselee can enter a dialogue/conversation with the philosophical counsellor that uses the counselee's problems/questions as points of departure.

I briefly expand on these ideas. The philosophical counsellor can be conceptualised as a nomadic figure dwelling in, what Shlomit Schuster (1999: 12) calls, the "no-man's land", which is the space *between* different enterprises such as the sciences and humanities. The reason for this is that the philosophical counsellor stands in a unique relation to her practice: the philosophical counsellor can critique both the practice of philosophy and PC itself. Embracing this unique metaphysical position, the philosophical counsellor establishes a reciprocal relationship between her own practice and her chosen philosophy. As a result, the philosophical counsellor is shaped by her philosophical practice, but she also actively shapes that very practice, akin to a nomad being shaped by the place she dwells in and subsequently shaping that very place in turn (Janz, 2001: 395). Moreover, the philosophical counsellor enmeshed in this reciprocal process is also constantly influenced by the counselee and her needs. In this scenario, the counselee assumes the role of an indispensable co-creative partner (Allen, 2002: 5, 11-12). Within this dynamic collaborative session, the philosophical counsellor not only generates novel ideas, but she is also shaped by them. This reciprocal process is engendered through an ongoing conversation between the counsellor, the counselee and philosophy itself, wherein novel philosophical perspectives are unearthed and embraced. The philosophical counsellor's horizon is continually expanded all whilst

helping the counselee traverse through the rough territory, not alone but collaboratively.

What becomes apparent in this notion of PC is the central role of the counselee and philosophy as conversational partners, and the subsequent dynamic conversation that inspires further (re-) interpretation. A *hermeneutical happening* transpires in which the philosophical counsellor unites and entangles herself with the question/problem that the counselee brought to the counselling session (Raabe, 2000: 16; Schuster, 1992: 587, 1999: 38). Her problem/question is not understood as something in need of immediate resolution; conversely, it is seen as the point of departure for the ensuing PC session. The discussion is thus rooted in and emerges from the counselee's presented concerns, questions, and/or problems. This understanding of philosophical counselling thus emphasises the importance of collaboratively philosophising.

While these notions are not entirely novel, universal or value neutral, two problems impede me from properly grounding them in an African context. Firstly, there is still widespread neglect of different philosophical traditions, such as African philosophy, in the PC discourse. This limits the conversations that might unfold subsequently, especially in South African contexts. Rich conversations, rooted in indigenous philosophical praxes that emerge from situated questions and problems, are marginalised, excluded, and/or occluded. This is because philosophy originating from elsewhere, such as Western philosophy, will be preferred in lieu of other philosophical traditions, such as African philosophy. Secondly, by keeping this silence unacknowledged, the need to change and incorporate different philosophical traditions into the PC discourse will be slow. Understanding philosophical praxis as rooted in a specific horizon thus

problematizes the exclusive reliance on other markedly particular philosophical praxes in ways that suggest they are universally the same everywhere and for everyone. If this is not problematised, philosophy originating from outside African lifeworlds are preferred, leading to the uniform importation of philosophy. Consequently, problems and questions arising from and pertaining to a particular lifeworld are dealt with as if universal – that is, the particularity of Western modernity masked as universal.

3. An unjustified silence: The lack of African philosophy in PC

The lack of African philosophy in the PC discourse has only been mentioned by a single article (Pilpel & Gindi, 2019: 71). Transcending mere recognition of this issue, the authors put forth Ubuntu and sage philosophy as viable understandings of African philosophy that “have the most obvious therapeutic potential” (ibid.: 72, 73). Aimed at addressing the current epistemic dearth, their article might serve as an initial step in the proper direction; nevertheless, it demonstrates a serious lack of the much-needed subtlety and nuance required to contextually understand the philosophical schools of thought they discussed. Notably, it neglects to acknowledge or discuss, for example, the challenges of understanding Ubuntu philosophy within a Western framework or from a quasi-universal perspective³ and it remains oblivious to the inherent issues surrounding sage philosophy such as the reliance on Western philosophical constructs.⁴

Their attempt points to a pertinent problem, one which I want to call a necessary evil. Philosophers from beyond the African lifeworld – from the outside – are currently trying to incorporate African

³ See, for example, the discussion by Dladla (2020: 45-55). He is critical of discussions surrounding ubuntu without the needed nuance, stating that “most of these ‘Ubuntus’ which taken hold are curiously ‘Ubuntus’ without abantu [and] ‘Ubuntus’ without or isintu” (Dladla, 2020: 45).

⁴ See, for example, Serequeberhan (1996: 111) who states sage philosophy is essentially the product of a dialogue between the philosopher/transcriber and the sage; but, more importantly, it still relies on essentially Western philosophical constructs and frameworks.

philosophy into the discourse. Voices emerging from and responding to the African lifeworld are looking to the global North for answers. The internalised normality of viewing the particularity of Western philosophy as universal has not been addressed in the PC discourse. Publications emerging from (South) African contexts pertaining to PC noticeably overlook the rich and diverse potential of African philosophy. This neglect does not seem to be peculiar but rather embedded in the exclusionary tendencies of Western philosophy (Táíwò, 1998: 5, 9; Serequeberhan, 2021: 35-36).

In a single article mentioning African philosophy and PC from the African context, Bellarmine Nneji (2013: 6) writes emphatically that “in many African settings ... *there is serious need for philosophical counselling*” (emphasis mine), especially regarding helping the counselee come to grips with understanding her current situation. However, the author almost entirely relies on Western philosophy and philosophical counsellors to introduce PC into the African context. Initially, this may not appear too problematic. Considering different perspectives may have the potential to offer fresh insights. However, the predominant introduction of Western philosophy into African contexts poses a significant challenge when contrasted with the glaring silence and absence of African philosophy within the discourse of PC. An impression is created that Western philosophy is favoured for addressing African problems and questions.

This juxtaposition of using Western philosophy in place of African philosophy raises two serious concerns. Firstly, it highlights the problem of prioritising imported knowledge over cultivating knowledge from the very soil where the issues originate, thus accentuating the problem that African philosophy is not adequate to deal with its own issues. Secondly, it accentuates the need to address these asymmetrical dynamics in the creation of concepts/ideas which, if left unstressed, will perpetuate the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge, as is currently the case. I now turn to formulating an understanding of African philosophy that addresses these concerns.

4. Construing African philosophy as a radical hermeneutic in conversation

4.1 A radical African hermeneutic responding to a particular lifeworld: A reading of Serequeberhan

There are various understandings and schools of thought pertaining to African philosophy. As theoretical points of departure for my understanding of African philosophy, I first turn to the hermeneutic philosophy of Tsenay Serequeberhan. Serequeberhan offers an understanding of contemporary African philosophy as a direct response to the concrete needs that arise from and respond to the contemporary African situation. Serequeberhan contrasts this existentially aware position to two other prominent African philosophical schools of thought, namely, ethno- and professional philosophy. Both these schools of thought uphold the problematic assumption that subordinates African philosophy by either trying to validate negative stereotypes or by universalising and normalising the particularity of Western modernity (Serequeberhan, 1994: 6-7). Paulin Hountondji's (1996: xii, 33, 105) claim that, for example, African philosophy simply constitutes philosophy written by Africans, seems unproblematic at first. However, this position maintains Western hegemony by mirroring its exclusionary practices in uncritically assuming Western philosophy as the paradigmatic example or yardstick. It assumes that African philosophy is “universal” philosophy – often mirroring Western philosophy – practised by Africans. What follows is referred to by some scholars as “Hountondji's dilemma” – the dilemma in which, on one hand, the universal practice of African philosophy is praised to distinguish it from ethno-philosophy, while, on the other hand, asserting that non-Africans cannot partake in this practice, thereby raising questions about its universal claims (Chimakonam, 2015: xiii). Conversely, searching for some unique feature to essentialise as African can either validate negative stereotypes that should be dismantled (e.g., Senghor) or seek out some static pre-colonial past to which one cannot return (e.g., Oruka's charitable reading of

Tempels).⁵ In short, the problem with these schools of thought is that they do not pay attention to the concrete needs of those situated in the contemporary situation, which for Serequeberhan is one marked by neo-colonialism.

As my own point of entry into the complexities of Serequeberhan's thoughts, I begin by considering the notion that "contemporary African philosophy is concretely oriented toward thinking the problems and concerns that arise from the lived actuality of post-colonial 'independent' Africa," (Serequeberhan, 1994: 7). Initially, it is crucial to understand the tension and paradoxical nature of the post-colonial "independent" Africa as this directly leads to the goal of his African philosophy, viz., interpreting/understanding and subsequently moving beyond the deplorable contemporary neo-colonial situation. Coming to an understanding of this situation, Serequeberhan (2000: 2; 2009: 44) writes that it is marked by an in-between-ness, a gap, or liminality which constitutes the resulting (non-) identity of the formerly colonised in the post-colonial present. On epistemological and ontological levels, colonialism violently exported and inserted its own history wherever it went and subsequently blocked/halted/stopped any indigenous histories and ways of living it encountered (Serequeberhan, 1994: 21, 24; 2000: 1, 6). This was based on a very specific "pre-text" or metaphysical assumption (read: myth) which still functions today. As Serequeberhan (2009: 44) states

every aspect of our existence in the formerly colonized world is still—in essential and fundamental ways—

determined and controlled by our former colonizers.

The metaphysical assumption, pre-text/idea, or pre-judgement, underlying the neo-colonial situation is referred to as the "ideology of universalism". This idea assumes and uncritically proclaims that "European existence is, properly speaking, true human existence *per se*," (Serequeberhan, 1997: 144). The most prominent problem in African philosophy is thus not the outright rejection of everything Western in the post-colonial present, but rather the identification and overcoming of the normalisation and acceptance/internalisation of this pre-text by the formerly colonised. This leads to what Serequeberhan (1994: 119; 1997: 141; 2009: 46) calls the double task of African philosophy, viz., a critical-negative and de-structive element and a positive constructive element. Both these elements are indispensable vis-à-vis the "hard work" that needs to be done to get beyond the neo-colonial situation. Because, as Serequeberhan (1994: 9; 2000: xii; 2010: 32-33) states multiple times, and in reference to the important notion of a "return to the source", following decolonisation⁶ the vigour and driving force of the anti-colonial struggles were forgotten and led to the deplorable contemporary neo-colonial situation. Thence the contemporary liminal situation, a state of being in-between the former colonised and the contemporary neo-colonial situation, i.e., not-yet liberated.

The necessity of Serequeberhan's double task can now be elaborated. Serequeberhan (1997: 157 footnote 4) utilises the term de-struction,⁷ a term he borrows from Heidegger,⁸ to emphasise the need to lay bare the inner workings, or the prejudices/pre-text, of a text. In

⁵ See Serequeberhan (1991: 18-19; 1994: 6) for more detailed discussion on these figures.

⁶ In decolonial studies, "decolonisation" instantiates a concrete event contra decoloniality (coloniality referring to the logic of colonialism). See, for example, Serequeberhan (2010: 32) who writes that the formerly colonised "reclaimed the 'lands that belong to them'" but they have not yet purged their minds of coloniality, nor have they regained control over their "historical existence".

⁷ Cf., destruction entailing the total eradication or elimination of something.

⁸ At first glance, it might seem strange or ironic to use Heidegger for the purpose of critiquing hegemonic philosophy. However, Serequeberhan (1994: 2-4) first appropriates and indigenises the philosophy he uses.

effect, it might reveal the problematic assumptions of the author. One can thus identify how these assumptions function in maintaining, for example, the idea of Western superiority/hegemony. Thereafter, these assumptions can be mended or discarded through the “return to the source”, where the “return” signifies a cultural filtration and fertilisation (Serequeberhan, 1994: 109) or sifting and sieving (Serequeberhan, 2021: 38) of indigenous as well as hybrid/synthesised/Western ideas. The goal is “a new synthesis” through which (i) a critique of hegemonised Western-centric ideas is facilitated to particularise them and (ii) to discard anything that might hinder the liberation process/struggle (Serequeberhan, 1994: 109; 2021: 38). Moreover, the *source* to which the African philosopher returns is not some static and untouched pre-colonial past. Rather, it is a return to the “vigor, vitality (life), and ebullience of African existence” to continue the “hard work” needed to get to the ideal of liberation, i.e., beyond the neo-colonial liminal situation (Serequeberhan, 1994: 107-108, 126-127 footnote 16).

5. The indispensable need for creative conversations: A reading of Chimakonam

The question might naturally arise: how should the aforementioned *theoretical* contemporary African hermeneutic philosophy be *practised*? Departing somewhat from the traditional notion of philosophy as a solitary, abstract endeavour, I propose the adoption of conversationalism as a means of engaging with Serequeberhan’s philosophy as praxis. In essence, this framework situates Serequeberhan’s philosophy within a conversational context, with the intention of both concretising its theoretical foundations and exploring the creative consequences emanating from it.

Before fully turning to conversationalism, it is important to be cognisant of two further important ideas promoted by Serequeberhan that might form a link to the work of Chimakonam. Firstly, Serequeberhan (1994: 9) following Fanon states that we should “turn over a new leaf” and “work out new concepts”. Secondly, Serequeberhan (2021: 39) asserts that

philosophy, fundamentally, is not concerned with the exotic or the intriguing, but always about the concrete questions and problems originating from a specific lifeworld. It is at this point that the method of conversationalism might emerge as an instrumental tool for concretising these ideas, interwoven with the indispensable imperative of collaborative philosophising, a crucial element somewhat neglected in Serequeberhan’s account. I will now explicate this reading of conversationalism.

Conversationalism emerges, according to Chimakonam (2017b: 120), as a tangible product from the methodisation and systematisation of a specific understanding of “relationship” embedded within the Igbo language. Relationship, in this instance, refers to

a wilful, creative and critical epistemic experience which two agents ... share with the intention to create new concepts and open up new vistas for thought (Chimakonam, 2017a: 15).

Already visible in this notion of relationship is the goal of creating new concepts and disclosing restricted ways of becoming, thereby establishing a connective thread between itself and the philosophy of Serequeberhan.

The roots of conversationalism can further be identified in the translation of the Igbo notion “arumar-uka”, meaning either “engaging in a relationship of doubt” (Egbai & Chimakonam, 2019: 181) or “engaging in critical and creative conversation” (Chimakonam, 2017a: 120). Embedded in this idea of conversation is *nwa-nsa* or the defender of a position and *nwa-nju* the opponent or doubter of a position (ibid.: 121). One might also tentatively refer to these positions respectively as thesis and anti-thesis, but unlike in dialogue/dialectics, synthesis is actively discouraged as an outcome. In fact, Chimakonam (2017a: 17) articulates a perspective that labels yielding to the demands of synthesis as a creative *surrender*, as opposed to a creative *struggle*. A creative struggle refers to the dynamic interplay and outcome between *nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju* in which both parties retain their original

positions but are positively transformed. Chimakonam (2017a: 17.) states accordingly:

[c]reative, in that its foremost goal is to birth a new concept by opening up new vistas for thought; struggle, in that the epistemic agents involved pit themselves against each other in a *continuous* disagreement. (Emphasis mine)

I proceed to explicate a few remarks integral to understanding conversationalism. One might begin by assessing or weighing the “relationships of opposed variables”, situated in a framework that ontologically views these variables as interconnected and not as isolated entities (Chimakonam, 2017b: 121).⁹ These variables are then “shuffled” between disjunctive and conjunctive modes. In short, variables are either joined to showcase their inter-connectedness, or terms such as “and”, “or”, “but” are used to showcase how the variables might differ from each other. The goal of these shuffling modes is to continually “refresh” *nwa-nsa*’s position to reach higher levels of discourse. Most importantly, a synthesis is never reached because, as mentioned, this will lead to a creative surrender, i.e., a conclusion to the dynamic conversation. Additionally, this idea is captured when Chimakonam (ibid.: 122) states *nwa-nsa* has a “transgenerational life-span” contra a synthesis that might only have a generational life-span. The objective of conversationalism, in essence, is to preserve an ongoing conversation that attempts to consistently generate and reveal novel concepts, without a predetermined termination point (Chimakonam, 2017a: 22).

6. African philosophy concretised as an interpretative actualisation through conversation: A meta-philosophical observation

The understanding of African philosophy flowing from these discussions can be construed as a critical hermeneutic or interpretive actualisation emerging from and responding to a distinct lifeworld or philosophical place, facilitated, and continually informed by the practice of conversationalism. The significance of this relationality – the indispensable need for the other to collaboratively philosophise – lies in the fundamental characteristic of mutual engagement through ongoing conversations, which not only brings forth new concepts but also amends outmoded concepts. Moreover, the concretisation of the radical and critical hermeneutic practised through conversationalism has the purpose and goal of fostering continual (re-) interpretation catalysed by active participation from conversational partners with no immediate need to “conclude” or “synthesise”.

Combining a radical hermeneutic and conversationalism serves to illustrate the importance of philosophising through and in a philosophical *place*. Philosophical place is essentially the horizon or lifeworld from which a philosopher philosophises. Historic-political-socio-economic factors influence and shape to what and how a philosopher responds. Linking this back to the nomadic figure, as espoused in the above discussion, the African philosopher responding from and to the African lifeworld is necessarily shaped by these factors. This does not mean that the philosopher is restricted by these factors in a crude form of determinism. The claim is merely that these issues are more pressing than the exotic and intriguing issues that do not relate to or affect the contemporary situation (Sequeberhan, 2021: 39). Philosophy should thus be understood as philosophy-in-and-through-place (Janz,

⁹ This is referred to as the ontological thesis of conversationalism. See Chimakonam (2017a: 18) for a more detailed discussion.

2015: 481; Olivier, 2016: 514-515). That is, it always responds to the questions (discourse) flowing or originating from a specific place (horizon) and contemplates what it is to philosophise in and from that place (Janz, 2001: 398). In the terminology used in this article, the conversation occurs from the African lifeworld focusing particularly on interpreting and understanding what this conversation entails. Being a radical hermeneutic, following Serequeberhan, it cannot simply rely on frameworks and concepts that still maintain Western hegemony and superiority, and neither can it return to a stagnant source stuck in the past. It thus necessitates the construction of a new vocabulary. Through the praxis of conversationalism, this ideal can be concretised therefore transcending mere abstraction. It does this by continually pitting two or more conversational partners against each other to struggle continuously yet creatively. From this, new concepts and different ways of becoming might be disclosed.

The notion of African philosophy presented here remains meta-philosophical in essence. It does not definitively describe what constitutes African philosophy, concentrating instead on laying a foundation for the potential emergence of an African philosophy intrinsically rooted within and responding to a specific lifeworld. Recognition of and honouring the inherent multiplicity is imperative, due to the emphasis on African philosophy originating from and responding to a particular African lifeworld. Therefore, African philosophy takes on the form of the lifeworld it originates from and engages with. This underscores the nomadic quality intrinsic to this conception of philosophy, thereby constituting a fundamentally reciprocal relationship. A particular horizon or lifeworld thus profoundly shapes the discourse or conversations which philosophers engage with. The contributions of Serequeberhan's hermeneutics and Chimakonam's conversationalism accentuate an inherently collaborative nature to the interpretative actualisation. That is, it facilitates a process wherein two or more participants collaboratively engage in a conversation pertaining to significant topics. These conversations subsequently

unfold, undergo continual reinterpretation, and evolve through an ongoing yet creative struggle.

Before turning to what I want to call African PC, I briefly identify and discuss a few problematic examples in the PC discourse which I contend maintain the neglect of other philosophical traditions.

7. Case in point: Deeper than an unjustified silence

The unjustified silence relating to different philosophical traditions in the PC discourse points to a deeper problem, one embedded in Western philosophy's exclusionary tendencies. As discussed above, following Serequeberhan, for a substantial time in the history of Western philosophy the pre-text was maintained that its own particularity was true of human existence universally. With the use of these philosophical praxes, contemporary philosophical counsellors uncritically reproduce these very exclusionary practices. I will discuss two such instances.

Recently, Ran Lahav (2016: 11) stated that one should look beneath the "theoretical clothing" of an argument to see the "essential body". What this means, in the context of his PC, is that we should identify the essential and underlying "call for transformation" situated in various philosophical perspectives throughout the history of Western philosophy. Irrespective of how these philosophies are "dressed", i.e., contextual and situated factors, they are all read to contain a single transformational fact: they ask the reader to transcend their current way of being for something "better". The counselee should transcend their particularity in the search for universality or Plato's forms. Lou Marinoff, in his turn, provides ample "case studies" of counselees who changed their lives because of PC/philosophy. They are usually provided in the form of *Counselee P resolved problem x by incorporating the philosophy of philosopher y*. Marinoff (2003: 120-121) writes about one such case in which Ruth, with a minimal understanding of the Socratic method of philosophical midwifery, changed her way of living. She understood that

she was using her own circumstances as an excuse to prevent herself from becoming what she truly wanted to be.

Applying Lahav's terminology, these philosophical practices are stripped of their theoretical "clothes" leaving behind an oversimplified "core" which is then offered to the counselee for practical application in her daily life, aiming to address, resolve, or assist with any issues she may have presented to the philosophical counsellor. The crux of the issue lies in the fact that these philosophical approaches are employed by philosophical counsellors in a way that suggests they can effortlessly be extracted from their original and embedded contexts, devoid of these distinctive ideas that shaped them, and thus utilised in an ostensibly and untenable value-neutral fashion. The very rootedness of the philosophy they utilise is forgotten in a search for universal application across an array of contexts. Moreover, the collaborative nature of philosophising, as presented in this article, is forgotten and neglected. The philosophical counsellor presents the counselee with this decontextualised and uprooted philosophy as if it contains hidden truths and powers to transform her life. These philosophical counsellors do not hail from the African lifeworld, but their reliance on a particular philosophical tradition, i.e., Western philosophy, in a completely universal manner is problematic and gets reproduced in African contexts (as discussed above in section 3). What is needed is an understanding of PC that honours and utilises philosophical praxes emerging from and rooted in concrete lifeworlds.

8. Considering the notion of an African PC

8.1 The impact of grounded philosophy informing PC

From the preceding discussion, I contend that a clear imperative emerges for philosophical counsellors to embrace an explicit situational framework that underscores the significance of questions and problems (discourse) originating from and responding to distinct

philosophical places or lifeworlds (horizons). Moreover, PC should always remain concretely rooted within and aware of historical and geographical contexts, thereby stressing the importance of the embodied presence and lived experiences of the conversational participants. This imperative informs PC's praxis in three distinct ways.

Firstly, it redirects the philosophical counsellor's focus towards philosophical practices rooted in African lifeworlds. This emphasis does not preclude the utilisation of, for instance, Plato's philosophy in her philosophical practice. Nevertheless, it is critical about the application of philosophy originating from different lifeworlds, especially if one hegemonises the particular philosophy or if one applies it instead of more relevant philosophy. In this framework, it honours philosophy that originate from within and as a response to a specific philosophical place or lifeworld, thereby informing the philosophical counsellor's praxis in a situated and contextually aware manner. Philosophical place therefore acts as the foundational guiding principle for the philosophical counsellor in shaping the ensuing conversations and interpretations. The horizon from which the philosophical counsellor engages shapes the particular response (discourse). Employing a particular philosophy under the guise of universality risks at best being rendered inconsequential and irrelevant to the specific situation; at worst, it perpetuates the problem of actively excluding and marginalising philosophy and different ways of living/being.

The second way through which the rootedness of philosophy informs PC is by making philosophy relevant to a distinct lifeworld. In the late 1980's, Nails (1989: 100) contended that due to the Western-centric nature of Plato's philosophy there was little relevance for it in a South African context. In a later publication, Okeja (2018: 112) confirmed this position by stating that "[t]here is little need to keep educating young minds in Africa about Plato's world of forms" in lieu of indigenous philosophical approaches. Directing attention towards the inclusion of philosophy that resonate with and emanate from a particular lifeworld guides

the philosophical counsellor in incorporating philosophical praxes that align with the contextual and situational requisites of the counselee. Both the integration of these rooted and situated philosophical activities and the appropriating/indigenising of philosophy arising from different lifeworlds within the philosophical counselling discourse becomes a unique challenge for the philosophical counsellor. Informing her practice with these philosophical approaches, the philosophical counsellor lowers the risk of utilising philosophy that might marginalise, exclude and/or occlude.

Thirdly, by highlighting the collaborative essence of philosophising and acknowledging the particularity of both the counselee and the philosophical counsellor, the groundwork is laid for the development of contextually aware concepts. This unfolds through the process of philosophising qua an interpretative actualisation – the praxis tailoring concepts to fit the needs of the counselee – within a conversational framework that necessitates a creative struggle. This accentuates the intrinsic link between concept creation and the place or lifeworld from which the conversation originates and emerges. This assertion aligns with Janz's perspective (2015: 481), when he asserts that concepts bear their own provenance, meaning that they are shaped into functional constructs from where they emerge.

9. Radical hermeneutics and conversationalism informing PC: African PC

I argue that the integration of both a radical hermeneutic rooted in Serequeberhan's work and a conversational framework proceeding from Chimakonam's approach can facilitate the conceptualisation of an African PC. The rootedness of their philosophical approaches, both theoretically and practically, becomes pivotal for this nuanced comprehension of PC. I will briefly elucidate the conception of African PC, underpinned by their distinct philosophical praxes. This conception underscores a markedly situated and contextually aware understanding of PC, which critically challenges the (re-) production of philosophy that lack

these essential considerations. I do not advocate that this understanding should be universally applied by philosophical counsellors across diverse contexts. Instead, it becomes the philosophical counsellor's imperative to adapt and indigenise various philosophical praxes emerging from and responding to concrete lifeworlds in their practise. That is, by accepting the reciprocal and continually unfolding nature of this understanding of philosophy, the philosophical counsellor cannot passively rely on and subsequently apply a philosophy without first critically conversing with it. The same applies to the counselee.

Through the application of a conversational framework, the philosophical counsellor facilitates a conversation where both she and the counselee can assume the roles of *nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju*. Emphasis is placed on the reciprocal nature of these roles. For example, the counselee can critique the philosophical counsellor's response, thereby instantiating the position of *nwa-nju*. Moreover, this precludes the counselee from passively accepting what the philosophical counsellor said. But it also prevents the philosophical counsellor from merely responding with decontextualised philosophical texts. Thus, the focal point becomes the critical relationality between the philosophical counsellor and the counselee during the ensuing discourse. This dynamic transcends mere informal information exchange; instead, it unfolds as a critical and creative struggle through which concepts can be created and novel ways of becoming can be revealed which might have previously been enclosed or ignored.

Employing a radical hermeneutic, the ensuing critical and creative exchange among the engaged conversational participants is highlighted as encapsulating a fundamental interpretive essence. Within the ongoing oscillation of the conversation – the shuffling of modes – interpretations and reinterpretations of concepts and ideas are sustained, facilitated by a process of filtration and fertilisation. Moreover, it problematises the inclusion of hegemonised philosophy through its interpretative and critical stance. While

philosophy originating from diverse lifeworlds can be integrated if deemed relevant and beneficial, their inclusion hinges on the situated and contextually aware philosophical counsellor's discretion.

10. Conclusion

Introduced in this article is a notion of PC that relies on (i) the inherent necessity for dynamic and critical conversations that (ii) confront the contemporary (temporally) situated needs of its conversational parties through a constant interpretation and re-interpretation (re-shuffling). This understanding is rooted in the ideas cultivated by Serequeberhan and Chima-konam who are explicitly aware of their own situatedness and contexts from where they write/speak.

Subsequently, the concretisation of African PC is manifested by the philosophical counsellor who explicitly situates herself within her own historical context (philosophical place) and that of her counselee. The participants' embodied presence and living voices are embraced in a collaborative effort to reveal new concepts and disclose new ways of becoming. However, this is not seen as an endpoint (synthesis/creative surrender). Emphasis is placed on an ongoing conversation that continually and concretely unfolds. Therefore, this revised understanding of PC attempts to contribute to the current identified dearth in the discourse. Present in this reconceptualisation is a markedly situated and contextually aware notion of PC; the mere reproduction and uncritical application of it in diverse contexts are absent.

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