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An Analysis of the Nature of Spirit in Ifa Literary Corpus

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Abstract

The dialectical orientations in world affairs promote zero tolerance or the winner takes all game. This challenge has perhaps been responsible for the deprived peace and progressive development, especially in Africa. In this direction, this paper examines the nature of *spirit* in Ifa literary corpus. Ifa is regarded as a compendium of knowledge and wisdom. The paper aims to unearth the essential qualities of *spirit* in Ifa's philosophy. However, *spirit*, as it is used in this work, refers to mind. Mind in Ifa is holistic, consisting of the material and non-material aspects. Hence, the discourse on spirit in Ifa is dualistic not dualism but monistic duality. Mind in Ifa operates on the rules of symbiosis and complementarity. In Ifa, spirit has primacy but not superiority over matter. The nature of spirit in turn determines how the mind relates to the external world. In Ifa, the external world is not just an appearance, but co-exists with spirit. Ifa

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operates the methodology of hermeneutic analysis, which is further anchored on the principle of duality. The principle of duality states that opposites are equal and reciprocal, but for the purpose of convenience, one must be active while the other should be passive. This allows for symbiosis and complementarity. The objective of this essay, therefore, is to unearth the logic and epistemology of the metaphysical system in Ifa, which should set the stage for a philosophical analysis of Ifa tradition. On this note, the essay employs the hermeneutical analytical method native to philosophical inquiry as a process of investigation. The paper argues that the culture of a people forms the background for distilling pure philosophical orientations that affect the process of development.

Keywords: spirit; monistic duality; dualism; logic/epistemology; metaphysics; Ifa literary corpus.

1. Introduction

The question of the nature of *spirit* (mind) has in recent times come up globally, especially as it affects the external world. The *Arcus Dictionary* defines mind as that which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings; the seat of the faculty of reason. According to Omoregbe (2003:32) the concept of mind can be defined as the power of thinking. Thinking is intangible as well as a power native to man. Put differently, the mind by nature is nonphysical or immaterial aspect of human person where it is believed that consciousness takes place. The point to underscore here is that the mind is a nonphysical or spiritual power native to man.

Specifically, it has been argued that where there is mind there is consciousness, and consciousness itself is metaphysical power underlying the physical operation of the human mind. In this regard, it shows that consciousness is an alert cognitive state by which one is aware of oneself and one's situation. The awareness of oneself and one's situation helps to condition one's environment. In consciousness, therefore, there must always be a correlation between the subject (knower) and the object (known) which brings about a balance output of reasoning or thinking. This is simply because the mind cannot function itself, on its own without the external world. The external world in this

regard represents sensibility in both the living and nonliving things such as human body, stones, rivers etc., while the mind represents reason, understanding, illumination and *spirit* (see Azenabor 1999:124).

Furthermore, the concept of spirit is used interchangeably with the mind among African scholars like Idoniboye (1973), Unah (1999), Azenabor (2010) and Okoro (2015) to mention just a few. They describe *spirit* as the one entity that remains constant in all spheres of African belief system. The material has meaning and purpose only through the lenses of the spiritual. In fact, the idea of “Spiritual Empiricism” is the beginning of African metaphysics. In this direction, even nothing becomes something, when the right spiritual apparatus is utilized.

Be that as it may, it is an established fact that in a state of knowledge process phenomenon and tradition in African metaphysics, like Ifa, the relationship between mind and body is not a problem; it is in everyday experience. No clear-cut distinction exists between the mind and the body; they are interrelated, connected and are different aspects or manifestations of the same reality, which is undifferentiated. Although, Ifa offers a physical aspect in reality, but in the expression and conduct of an adept there is no distinction between the physical and nonphysical. This is because it is believed that African notion of reality have two sides that are symbiotic.

In his book entitled, *Individual: an Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, P. F. Strawson underscore double aspect of reality just as Martin Heidegger’s thesis on *being* and *non-being*. These are Western philosophers who have come closest to the African notion of reality, yet there is a fundamental difference between Strawson’s and African’s notion. Whereas Strawson believes that it is only man who has these two aspects, an average African man believes that every existing object has this realistic nature. Thus, “the African, unlike most Western philosophers, goes as far as to ascribe *spirit* or *mind* to other things, like trees, rivers, stones, moon” (Azenabor 1999:125).

In consequence, it is the mind or spirit that gives a thing its essence and life in African notion of reality. It is by joining of a spirit to a material body that all things are created, and it is by the separation of spirit from the body that they are destroyed. Therefore, it is the spirit that gives strength, vigour, power and growth to anything. Spirit is the basis of a thing. It is its distinctive character (cf. Azenabor 1999:126). In this regard, Idoniboye rejects the Cartesian concept of causal interaction between mind and body and rather favours the idea of *symbiosis*, as expressing the relationship between the two.

2. Ifa as a compendium of knowledge

It has been cited and accepted by different scholars and researchers that Ifa literary corpus contains a total of 256 chapters or categories of understanding known in Yoruba thought system as *Odu* (cf. Abimbola, 1976). These categories of understanding are sub-divided into two main parts, namely; major and minor categories of understanding. The major categories known as *Oju Odu* which are sixteen (16) in number and the minor categories known as *Omo Odu* or *Amulu Odu* (means permutation) comprises of two-hundred and forty (240). Through these categories of understanding, all reality takes their meaning or essence in the universe. According to Abimbola (1976:29), the former are by far senior to the latter perhaps because they are whole and intertwined in nature. The chronological order among the first sixteen *Odu* is presented in the table below:

1	Eji-ogbe	Nature
2	Oyeku-meji	Change
3	Iwori-meji	Grace
4	Odi-meji	Blockage
5	Irosun-meji	Time
6	Oworin-meji	Scarcity
7	Obara-meji	Plentitude

8	Okanran-meji	Strife
9	Ogunda-meji	Work
10	Osa-meji	Scattering/disruption/hindering
11	Ika-meji	Mischief
12	Oturupon-meji	Burden
13	Otua-meji	Favour
14	Irete-meji	Productivity
15	Ose-meji	Choice
16	Ofun-meji or Orangun-meji	Circulation

Fig. 1 Adapted from Wande Abimbola's *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* and interaction with an adept of Ifa.

As has been noted earlier that Ifa is a compendium of knowledge and wisdom which embraces double aspect reality (i.e. spirit/matter, mind/body, rationalism/empiricism, etc.) as revealed unto the illuminated minds, manifesting in religion, politics, philosophy and science. It involves the practice of aiding the memory and meditative device to interpret the past, present and future. Okoro (2015:63) extensively quoting Augulu Onwuejeogwu describes Ifa as

A system of transmitting meaning from the finite province to the world of everyday life, this signs are decoded into everyday common language to generate symbolic experiences and knowledge which determines social action in the world of everyday life.

He explains further that these sign systems of transmitting meaning are represented in the divining chain (i.e. opele) of eight half-seed shells.

Ifa is consulted by the supplicants for reasons such as uncertainty as to know whether something is the case or not, illumination of obscure phenomena and advice or deliverance in human helplessness. To shed more light on the exposition and analysis of Ifa as a compendium of knowledge, Olufemi Taiwo (2004:306) reasoned that:

Ifa is a compendium of knowledge and wisdom. It bespeaks a sophisticated society in which people, ordinary folk and experts alike are agitated by questions of causality, proof, consistency, clarity, efficacy, correctness, and the likes. And this, the human need to know, to anticipate the imponderables of human existence in an often hostile and inscrutable world, and we can better appreciate the premium that is placed on Ifa as an omniscient intelligence.

It is deducible from the above quotation that embedded in Ifa is the wisdom, knowledge and understanding anyone can think of. Perhaps, it is root of the appellate in Yoruba thought system that: “akere-fi-inu-ṣ’ogbõn/akere-fõgbõn-ṣe-’nu” translated as: ‘little but immensely wise and repository of wisdom.’ By implication, Ifa can be described as the wisdom of the old, the fundamental basis of all the African sciences, as represented in each of the categories of understanding.

Owolabi (2001:574) explains that at the heart of African notion of reality is the veneration of wisdom (i.e. Yoruba *Ọgbõn*) as the ultimate value. It suffices to say that the concept of wisdom is inexhaustible in the African system of thought. Besides wisdom, a reasonable number of handful colourations are embedded in the African notion of reality. Wisdom is simply the capacity for rational decision and mystical relations of forces. It is the synergy between rationality and experience, spurned by ‘will’ and ‘imagination’. Above all, wisdom is

continuous improvement on one's destiny, as wisdom is continuous *ad infinitum*. Perhaps, this is the reason why Sophie Oluwole (2015:16) states that: "Ogbon odun yi, were emi" translated as: wisdom of today is folly of tomorrow. In this light, wisdom is the mastery between the metaphysical or supernatural forces and the natural/societal forces, as mediated by the human self. Put differently, wisdom consists in the harmonization of this tripartite composition of man and his society, usually done in a hierarchicized order with the singular purpose of unifying the horizontal and vertical forces in man and in the society (Okoro 2012).

Human being is the center or subject of ontological harmony called 'wisdom'. In other words, human essence abound in the harmonious coordination of the various parts of the body, each mechanically significant for the collective whole. Thus, the centripetal force is 'Ori' or 'Ori-inu' (i.e. inner head), the seat of destiny and self-actualization (power of the will and imagination). In all, the practical manifestation of the will is via 'owo' (hands), the essence of it is hard work in the African thought system. In this direction, all human beings attain self-order. Mediating between metaphysical and physical realities in a cosmic order, man exhibits his transcendental immanence and structuring prowess to attain a collective *teleos* or *destiny* (which results into social order). In all, Ifa sees anything or every reality as basically interconnected, ranging from human being through its society and the activities therein. Thus, holistic understanding of this piece offers core knowledge of the African notion of reality.

2.1. The epistemology of Ifa literary corpus

The expression, epistemology of Ifa literary corpus derives its strength from the principle of metaphysical interfusion. This is because it is a nonphysical kind of epistemology that operates the simultaneity of transcendental and realism. In this kind of epistemology, the principles of rationalism, empiricism, idealism and materialism are all holistically interwoven. It is against this background that the epistemology of Ifa literary

corpus is simply describes as nonphysical or spiritual transcendental.

The transcendental nature of epistemology in African notion of reality derives from the traditional conception of 'eniyan' in Yoruba (Igbo mmadu/mmadi). *Eniyan* is conceived to be essentially transcendental, metaphysical, ontological or spiritual. It is in this light that Idoniboye (1973:83) writes that:

Spirit is the animating, sustain, creative life-force of the universe. It is what gives anything its individuality. In human bodies it becomes the mind or soul so that the individual mind or soul shares in the collective mind-or-soul-stuff of the universe.

It is clear from the above quotation that *eniyan* as consisting of the physical body (the Yoruba 'ara' or the Igbo 'ahu' or 'aru') and the immaterial *self* as pure consciousness (the Yoruba 'emi' or the Igbo 'mmuo mmadu'). 'Emi' or 'mmuo mmadu' represents man as pure spirit or pure consciousness or simply vital-force or causative agent that animates man with awareness or consciousness. This point was variously underscored by scholars including Bolaji Idowu and Adegboyega Orangun in respective order. In the words of Bolaji Idowu, "emi 'invisible and intangible', is the source of life and is associated (though not identified) with the breath, it is for the Yoruba, a human spiritual component, but it should be regarded as the vital-force or basic life principle" (quoted by Hallen 2000:296). On the other hand, Orangun (1998:43) regards *emi* as; "the spiritual element in the human personality. It is immaterial and invisible, it is the vital-force that gives life to the body, its presence in or absence from the body depicts life or death respectively". Granted the analysis offered by these scholars, one can safely posit that 'emi' is the structure of intelligence of man in African notion of reality.

At a glance, one can also deduce the ontological root or source to a pure transcendental epistemological discourse from the aforementioned. This concerns the duality of *eniyan* as physical body and as pure consciousness. The material body or

the physicality depicts *eniyan* as an immanent finite being with fallible tendencies while pure consciousness depicts *eniyan* as a transcendent being with the infinite rational capacity of new innovation to create, invent and discover, thereby making *eniyan* an ontological being with the propensity or capability to transcend a given situation. Philosophically speaking, the whole discourse about transcendence and immanence concerns which faculty of the mind institutes both “transcendental knowledge” (i.e. ontological transcendence) and “objectivity”. The pertinent question here is; how could human consciousness be both transcendent (showing infinitude and autonomy) and immanent (showing finitude and dependence) at the same time? Finitude reveals the reliance of imagination, understanding and pure reason on sensibility. On the other hand, the transcendent nature of consciousness reveals the spontaneous nature of the mind (as reflected in the higher faculties of the mind) which portrays consciousness as autonomous. Existentially speaking, human creativity terminates at the point of death which signifies finitude. Meanwhile, the infinite aspect of human consciousness has an endless capacity for invention, discovery and creativity.

In epistemology of life-force rationalism and empiricism are interwoven, whereby consciousness is holistic; that is to say, it comprises the sum total activity of the human soul. To shed more light on consciousness, Scott (1972:626) explains that:

Consciousness consists of the external condition (i.e. the world as encounter with objects of experience and other physical conditions of human consciousness such as; physiological, chemical and neurological structures of the body; as well as general cultural and social conditions) of consciousness, and the internal conditions intrinsic to consciousness which relate reciprocally to consciousness as parts to whole, in which elements intrinsic to consciousness are lively structures through which one is aware of things.

The summation of the above quotation shows that the latter sense of consciousness is said to be presentational or representational. By this token, we mean that something stand in for or appears in a conscious state, in which case, consciousness is strictly absolute in the sense that nothing occurs for consciousness that is not, however, in some determinable sense presented by consciousness precisely.

Taking a cue from both physiological and neurological perspectives, 'ara' (the Igbo *ahu* or *aru*) consists of the five senses and these include *aju* (eyes) 'ri' for sight, *eti* (ears) 'siri oka' for hearing, *imu* (nose) 'gborun' for smell, *ahon* (tongue) 'ede' for taste and the *aida-ara* (the whole body system) *isan imo* (touch or feeling) (cf. *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*). 'Isan imo' further consists of *gbi-gbo-riri* (feelings of solidity or coming into encounter with conditions such as heat or cold of liquid or of gas) and *imi edun* (emotional feeling). It then explains that the physical body has a direct relation with the environment that is processed or coordinated by *agbara ogbon* (nerves) through *ogoro-ehin* (spinal cord) to the *opolo* (brain) whereupon the memory (*iranti*) plays its basic functions of storing (*isura*), remembrance (*iniran*) and association (*egbe*). It goes to show that the physical (body or external) condition of consciousness in perception is paramount in knowledge acquisition. But this sense perception is not possible without the pre-experiential function of *emi* (spirit or vital force) which duty it is to animate the body with consciousness. Therefore, from the transcendental point of view, *emi* provides the pre-experiential or *a priori* condition for consciousness in the first place and for knowledge formation and knowledge acquisition.

From the above, we have seen the analysis of human subjectivity or the internal conditions of consciousness that has to do with double aspect of reality. It is from this point that we go back to the delineation of the ontological (transcendental) constitution of the human personality. For instance, *emi* as a transcendental entity is a tripartite composite of *ori*, *ori-inu* [Igbo *chi*, Bini and Ishan *ehi*, Urhobo *emena*, Ijaw *tamuno*, Tallensi of northern Ghana *moyin* and Akan *okra* (cf. Omijeh & Appiah-Kubi 1998:259-265)] and *esu* (the Igbo *eke* and *agwu*).

As the determiner of one's destiny, *ori* is the source of human ontological transcendence otherwise known as the human prowess of existentiality. 'Ori-inu' will most appropriate to capture the human prowess of existentiality. According to Bolaji Idowu, *ori* (*ori-inu*) is the inner person, the soul personality. For Orangun (1998:43), *ori* is the essence of personality, personal ego and the guardian angel which rules, guides and controls the activities of man quoted in Hallen (2000:295). The concept of 'ori-inu' (the Igbo *chi*) has been described as a person's second half, his 'invisible half', his 'super ego', the 'guardian angel', his 'major ego', his 'over self', his 'other self', his 'transcendental self', 'divine spark' (cf. Okoro 2015:40). It is evident from the foregoing that 'ori-inu' has been used both anthropologically and ontologically. However, as part of the earlier mentioned, our preoccupation is the transcendental exposition of the epistemology of Ifa, that is to say the theory of knowledge in Ifa literary corpus. Among the outlines of the concepts that are germane to our ontological inquiry include "super ego", "major ego" and "transcendental self". These concepts together depict 'ori-inu' as the 'pure ego' which, as the faculty of pure reason, possesses the power of transcendence to levitate man beyond the physical into the metaphysical terrain, that is from the given to the non-given, from that which is actual to that which is possible, thereby making *emi* a being of possibilities or a being of boundless potentialities. 'Ori' therefore represents man's futuristic essence which is why it is used to depict man's destiny. Nevertheless, anyone who aspires to surpass the vicissitudes of life has no choice but to call upon the exploits of one's transcendent *ori*. It is in this light that the African notion of reality affirms the transcendentality of *ori* as: *ori ni onise ẹda ò ni aropin*, translated as: "it is ones inner-head that matters no one is indispensable". Put differently, everyone has his/her talent as endowed by nature, if and only if, one can discover this talent ones 'ori-inu' *will* therefore affirm. It is from this light that we see 'ori-inu' as one's transcendent essence which is the fountain of *will* to power.

Consequent upon the above, *esú* serves as the fulfilled path, the determined path or yesterday; that is to say, it deals

with the past which we can do little or nothing about. Within the purview of the existentialist, 'esu' would refer to 'human facticity' or simply 'the given'. It refers to human fallenness which depicts man as an emotional, sentient, weak entity who has the tendency to backslide, lose focus, to be fallen or become entirely prostrate. Again, the inevitable human conflictual essence comes into *being* as usual. As a sentient being, *eniyán* is not different from animals over which he rules and should one decide to recriminate about the past, one will definitely fail to utilize one's 'ori-inu' possibilities. To lead life at the levels of *esu* is simply to lead life at its ebb and the ebbing of life amounts simply to self-abandonment, to forfeiture. The path to ontological and epistemological realism is the way of *ori-inu*.

From the above exposition and analysis of epistemological procedure in Ifa literary corpus, we have seen that 'ara' (i.e. body) is the connecting point or vehicle of perception. We have also seen that 'ori-inu' is the faculty of reason (ratio), which duty is to bring about illumination through intellectualization. It goes to show that *eniyán* as a duality is capable of two principal types of concepts such as empirical concepts (derived immanently from sensibility) and transcendent concepts (derived from transcendent reason). The pertinent question that an inquisitive mind might ask is that: how is it possible to overcome this duality in man and transcend towards holism? It is at this juncture that we enter into the analysis of the third main faculty of the mind known as *imagination* (i.e. *iro* in Yoruba or *nlepu* in Igbo). 'Iro' encapsulates the capacity to vision things ahead or be able to see things up-front. Therefore, *iro* entails forethought, projection or the visioning of things in trance on the one hand. On the other hand, *iro* combines both sight (i.e. immanence) and thought (i.e. transcendence) to further amplify expectation (i.e. *ireti* in Yoruba or *olileanya* in Igbo).

What is apparent in the foregoing analysis is that *iro* combines in it the powers of vision and synthesis. By its power of visioning, *iro* as the faculty of imagination creates a trance situation through which process things are imaged in a pictorial or symbolic form. This is the ability to recall distant events or

objects in the mind's eye as if these events or objects are present right before us. This is simply a trance creation by the imagination. Imaginative visioning is no other than depth meditation that results in the clear and lucid presentation of issues in such a way that both physical and mental sights are symbolically harmonized. Indisputably, such deep sights into things have a way of penetrating into the core of things, to unveil or reveal their innermost structure, which of necessity yields deep understanding (what Leibniz describes as *apperception*). Thus, the imagination is symbolically resented as the naked winged eye that has the ability to traverse all time and all space without hindrance.

Furthermore, by its function and power of synthesis, the imagination operates the law of simultaneity such that by its mediating, integrative and symbiotic functioning, imagination becomes the intermediary linking thought to sensibility and vice versa, in a way that makes thought and sensibility interdependent. This way, transcendence ideas and concepts are made to teleguide the functioning of sensibility so that the raw sensory data of sensibility gather physical sight and, inversely, the raw sensory data of sensibility go through processing (i.e. purification) until they become imaged to trigger off visioning, which in turn sparks up illumination through intellectualization. It is in this light that Kant (1963:78) writes that "without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuition without concepts are blind".

Beyond its functions of symbiosis and visioning therefore, the imagination is in actual fact the faculty of depth and trance, making it not just the faculty of production or productivity but also the harmonizer of knowledge as pure consciousness (as depicted by the Yoruba *emi* or the Igbo *mmuo mmadu*, that is, the human spirit or vital force as pure consciousness) and knowledge as pure perception (as depicted by the Yoruba *ara* or the Igbo *ahu mmadu*, that is, the human physical body as representing consciousness at the perceptual level). This way, the duality of human consciousness and the duality of knowledge are transformed into pure holism thereby

providing human knowledge with depth and in turn making understanding a pure holism and transcendental activity. To buttress this expression, Iroegbu (2005) submits that it is by imaginative visioning that we are able to pierce into the core of things and symbolically create interpenetrating links among the things of the world. Okoro quoting Anyanwu (1981:95) succinctly captures the African mode of cognition in the following expression:

When the African looks at a tree within the assumptions of his culture, he sees and imagines a life-force interacting with another life-force. He sees the colour of the object (tree), feels its beauty, imagines the life-force in it, and intuitively grasps the interrelationships between the hierarchies of life-forces. If he did not do this, he would not have concluded that spirit exists in the world. He does not see spirit with his eyes nor is it a rationally and theoretically postulated concept like atoms and electrons.

We observe immediately that the holism and transcendental nature of human subjectivity is that which enables “ogbon ati imo” (i.e. wisdom and understanding). In essence, the holistic and transcendental nature of human subjectivity embodies the totality of ‘ogbon ati imo’. This is to say, that *ogbon* (wisdom) and *imo* (understanding) are intricately webbed together since the separation of the two will render ‘ogbon ati imo’ spurious. ‘Ogbon’ separated from ‘imo’ will become derogatory since it will immediately connote cleverness or craftiness. ‘Imo’ separated from ‘ogbon’ will become redundant since it will merely refer to spurious or purposeless understanding. This means that ‘ogbon’ (wisdom) cannot be separated from ‘imo’ (understanding). It goes to show that the processes of knowledge acquisition (i.e. *oye*- learning and *eko*- education) should be such that fires ones imaginative capacity from the beginning so that the individual can acquire deep, functional, pragmatic and practical knowledge (the Yoruba *moye* or the Igbo *amamihe*)

about things. Put differently, 'moye' as knowledge is worthless if it lacks depth, functionality, pragmatism and practicality. Hence, the Yoruba thought system has this experience encapsulated in the following expression: "oye o kan ti agba", translated as: 'knowledge is boundless', showing that the mystery of knowledge which in turn manifests as understanding are not restricted whether in the old or young mind. The point to underscore here is that, for the African knowledge, formation is a pure symbiotic unity or homogeneity that follows an imaginative process. It is through this aesthetical, mystical and imaginative process that transcendence is instituted and through this transcendental objectivity we come to gain knowledge of the world. Perhaps, it is through this African notion of reality that Onyewuenyi (1978:251) defines the African concept of knowledge (wisdom) as how deeply one understands the nature of vital-forces and their interaction with one another. To buttress this point further, Onyewuenyi employs Tempels' argument that "true wisdom lies in ontological knowledge; it is intelligence of forces, of their hierarchy, their cohesion and their interaction". Indisputably, this is exactly what imaginative or symbolismic knowledge entails; that is to say, the ability to create a fusion or balance between the ideal and the real.

In achieving the task of symbolismic symbiosis, the human imagination has to perform the act of trio process. This entails a tri-functional process that embodies introspection, retrospection and projection. By these tri-functional processes of the human imagination, human being actualizes its prowess of synthesis, visioning, depth and trance, all of which make cognition holistic, transcendental and realistic. This means that the imagination is the seat and fountain of all human invention, creativity and discovery.

Therefore, in Ifa, the imagination is the hob upon which the disciplines of *ogun* rotate and revolve. 'Ogun' encapsulates all the arts, sciences of the specialized or professional adept. The adept is a specialist in some particular kind of art or science. Hence, there is the Ifa adept (specialist in the science and art of divination), just as there are other adepts whose specialty include the followings: smelting, immunology, medicine,

technology, agriculture, arts and craft etc. The Ifa adept is at a much higher level than other adepts, simply because his profession requires depth and technicalities that are uncommon. The distinction between the former and the latter marks the demarcation between the specialized sciences as regional philosophies or anthropologies (i.e. *metaphysica specialis*) and philosophy as ontology proper (i.e. *metaphysica generalis*), a demarcation that makes philosophy the infrastructure, the ground and apex, the parent and queen of all the other sciences (cf. Momoh 2000:8).

In sum, it is by the combination of these principles as mentioned above that the Ifa adept is able to act as the medium or intermediary between the transcendental world of forms (what African scholars like Okoro and Onwuejeogwu among others describe as the 'finite province') and the world of everyday reality for his clients and, by so doing, he is able to institute balance and cohesion in the society. The back and forth of this argument is that the split personality problem is purely at the state of imagination and such an individual cannot be said to be in full control of his/her cognitive powers. Therefore, the epistemological procedure in Ifa literary corpus, cognition connotes holistic process that involves the representation and unification of degrees of experiences in one's consciousness via power of the transcendental imagination.

2.2. The metaphysics of Ifa literary corpus

The transcendental features in the Ifa literary corpus centers on imaginative visualization or representation of the world in the mind's eye and the purpose of such manner of representation is primarily to achieve harmony and cohesion amidst the duality and diversity in the world. The idea of imaginative visualization or representation of the world as the subject of the thinking activity in Ifa and the unity of all perception are made possible by the life-forces or vital forces. Thus, resolution in Ifa is not purely a matter of logic but also lies beyond the scope both of sense experience and of the proper use of theory answerable to sense experience (Abimbola 1976:29 and Okoro2015:47).

Our experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness determines the type of comprehensiveness we are dealing with in a particular situation. It is in this light that Asouzu (2004:423) argues that:

This idea determines if we are dealing with a low-level comprehensiveness or with comprehensiveness on a higher plane. These experiences serve as the bridge between knowing and acting, between the ego and the world. That is to say, where we have an authentic form of this experience, we have an instance of a situation where the mind is in a position to put into action the demands of the principle and imperative of complementarity.

The point from the above quotation is that, based on data of sense experience, the babalawo (i.e. an adept of Ifa) draws inferences and made predictions. In this direction, the babalawo will be able to give common sense account and explanation to most occurrences in the world. Most especially in matters deserving down-to-heart solution, they made spirited efforts to offer insightful answers devoid of mythological insinuations. The babalawo are often interested in offering solutions to human problems in the future and now and for this reason, they devote much energy towards evolving a functioning human society with most of the social institutions that take care of the needs of all.

To this end, the universe of African understanding and meaning of reality constitute the visible, invisible, ideological or nonmaterial. 'Eniyan' (i.e. human being) has a natural tendency to form these three ideas because he has an irresistible tendency to seek the unity of things. Hence, this human transcendental imagination which is the tendency to seek the unity of all reality which forms the primary idea of the soul, that is to say, the unity of all phenomena that make-up the entire cosmos (such as divinities, ancestors, animals, vegetation and minerals respectively). The tendency to form these concepts is therefore

quite natural and irresistible since 'ogbon' (i.e. human reason) naturally seeks the unity of things.

The usefulness of these ideas or their function is to serve as guidelines directing human understanding towards unity. For, just as the understanding brings unity to the diversity of the world through its synthesizing activity, so does the mystical zero (at this point all things are one) brings unity to the diversity of conceptions by means of the imaginative visualization. They direct the understanding towards points of unity, and the purpose of employing them is to bring about a systematic unity of thoughts.

2.3. The logic of Ifa literary corpus

Conventionally, the concept of logic creates formal structures for making thinking methodical and organized through a set of rules or principles that provide strict guidance for thought. Based on this explanation, logic is the tool for making reasoning rigorous and critical (cf. Okoro 2015:46 & Otaphor 2000:13).

Taking a cue from Okoro's article, the life-force principle in the African philosophy is embedded in the divination process (igba Afa) of the Afa (i.e. Yoruba Ifa) system. As part of his bid to expatiate further on Ifa or Afa divination system which will reveal its logic, Okoro, quoting Augulu (2007) explains that divination system is not a language but it is a specialized communication sign system which generates, symbolically, knowledge related to past, present, that are employed in predicting the future actions. Ifa is like a form of symbolic logic. Hence, Ifa is used as a divination process by the babalawo (Igbo dibia) as a sign system to transmit meaning from the finite province to the world of everyday life, these signs are decoded into everyday common language to generate symbolic experiences and knowledge which determine social action in the world of everyday life (Augulu, 1997:85-86 cited in Okoro).

It is deducible from the above analysis that the logic behind the spiritual and transcendental kinds of metaphysics and epistemology of the African notion of reality and how these spiritual transcendentalist metaphysics and epistemology are in

turn fused into the logic of symbolism, is accomplished through the process of Ifa or Afa divination. At this juncture, we notice a magnetic imagination at work to achieve balance or a mean between the two extremes. Again, we notice at once that imaginative representation of the world in terms of symbolisms is purely mental or ideational but never physical. To buttress this view further, Okoro, quoting Bonachristus, refers to the logic of life-force as the “African symbolismic logic that substantiates African symbolismic philosophy”. He adds that:

Since the universe of African understanding and meaning of reality is invisible, ideological or nonmaterial, the adjective “symbolic”; because, even though if the terms “symbol” (symbolic) and symbolism (symbolismic) overlap in being ideological or nonmaterial in relation of the qualities of existence, “symbol”, unlike (symbolism) does not exactly and always represent ideological or nonmaterial relation. Symbol can be material or nonmaterial, but “symbolism” is always ideological or nonmaterial (2003:7).

It is imperative to clarify that the use of the terms “symbolic”, “symbolism”, and “symbolismic” in this study to means transcendental imaginative visualization or representation of the world in the mind’s eye and the purpose of such manner of representation is to achieve harmony and cohesion amidst the duality and diversity remain the reality of the African world-view. To capture this expression vividly, let us consider the statement of Bonachristus (2003b:5):

African symbolismic logic is the science and method of the symbolismic deposition of the quality and relation of existence by the symbolismic order and categories of the symbol of reality, knowledge and consciousness, the symbolism of word, truth and thought, and the symbolismic expression of language, meaning and understanding. So, African

symbolismic logic is the science of the quality of existence and the method of the relation of existence. It is the science and method of the quality and relation of existence.

The pertinent question here is: how exactly does this logic of life-force or logic of symbolism proceed? It proceeds by the actual process of Ifa divination which involves the throwing of the Ifa chaplets (i.e. *opele* usually in pairs) that represents a pure process of investigation or inquiry. The pair nature of the Ifa chaplets is meant to capture the duality and diversity of things in the world.

The statement of Anyanwu (1981, p.87) on the African universe is in line with the foregoing when he says that it “cannot condone regimentations because there is a continuous interplay, intermingling and interdependence between spirit (forces) and the material world”. The point to underscore in Anyanwu’s statement is that isolated cases do not exist in the African universe of forces; that is to say, a foundation is propped up by another and another by another and so forth. Put differently, in African conception of the universe, nothing is absolute, everything is interconnected; apparently the fundamental principle of the philosophy of life in the African reality is complementary. Consequently, Africans do not talk of isolated activities, but of symbiosis. In the universe of holism, things are not compartmentalized, departmentalized and fragmented. Based on this, Okoro extensively quoting Anyanwu (1983:53-54) draws the following conclusion:

- (i) since there are no isolated life forces in the universe, there can be no isolated individual person;
- (ii) society is the manifestation of the order of the universe;
- (iii) all relationships between all the life forces ought to be strengthened and not weakened;
- (iv) there is no dissociation of sensibility from rationality in African culture. The duality of experience should not harden into dualism. Politics therefore, should not be discussed as if it were separated from religion

or religion as if it were separated from all practical activities

Granted the circuitous or cyclical nature of the universe of forces, we cannot conceive the world as having a beginning or an end in time since, as an organic entity, it has the capacity for self-regeneration and self-sustenance. Thus, still on the question of procedure, it is imperative to add that the Ifa divination system as a pure process of investigation operates on three principal principles, namely; the rules of deduction, induction and hermeneutics. Before we delve into the delineation of deductive and inductive principles, let us see how the hermeneutic principles of thought function within the universe of life-force.

3. The hermeneutic procedure in Ifa literary corpus

The term hermeneutics comes from the Greek *hermeneus* which literally translates as an *interpretor* and has been generally used to mean the *art, skill, or theory of interpretation*, of understanding the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions (Bullock 1988:380). The term was used in philosophy from theology by Dilthey in the late nineteenth century. It refers to the fundamental discipline that is concerned with the special methods of human studies, which do not merely order the raw deliverance of sensation but must seek an understanding of their essential meaningful subject-matter.

The hermeneutic procedure of Ifa divination operates upon a tripartite sequence of analysis, synthesis and signification. Signification here defines the end of Ifa divination that expectedly should reveal or unveil a particular message or prescription which then would be applied to a given situation, making revelation and application to be by processes of signification. What we notice at this level is that the rules of deduction (depicting holism) and the rules of induction (depicting particularism and probabilism) now roll into one to produce the binary system that progresses by way of interfusion or integration. In essence, holism and probabilism play interconnected roles in the investigative/divination process of

Ifa. It is this interconnective functioning that brings about interpretation in the form of revelation or revelation (cf. Okoro 2015:56-57). This revelation process is a continuous one that juxtaposes opposing views that are in turn resolved at a higher level. The assumption is that the universe of forces is one of a continuum and in such a universe; things are transient, the same way as solutions to problems.

The Ifa divination and investigative process (meaning the throw of a pair of *opele*) entails a clockwise operation from down to up so that the *jinkoto* (i.e. open) end of the *opele* and the *malu* (i.e. closed) end of the *opele* are connectively interpreted at the point of Ifa divination (cf. Abimbola 1976:15-16 and Okoro 2015:56). Each of the *opele* insides (i.e. *jinkoto* or rough) or the outside (*malu* or smooth) surfaces consist of four half nuts which are attached to each half of the chain. In this direction, both of them represent lines of light. The closed end of the *opele* represents closed line of light, while the open end of the *opele* represents the open line of light. Since the two sides belong to light and are two sides of light, they then meet at circle of light otherwise known as the Ifa mystical zero. According to Okoro, the Ifa mystical zero or circle of light depicts the harmonic mean of the differential integration of the two sides of *opele*; that is to say, it is the mean or the hub around which hermeneutic interpretation rotates, revolves and proceeds. With this pattern, zero would depict the void, boundlessness, a limitless expanse or simple nothingness. It is observed that the Ifa mystical zero depicting nothingness, which is the interconnecting point from the two sides of the *opele* (i.e. *jinkoto* and *malu*) as paths of light and together they also depict the pathways to *Being*, derive their essences and substance. This implies that the *nonBeing* and *Being* are equi-primordially predisposed at that realm. In defense of the Ifa hermeneutic interpretation of reality, Okoro (2015) writes:

Du or *Di* (meaning that which is, thing that is there or simply to be) as *Being* becomes the ground on which hermeneutic discourse and investigation progress, meaning that interpretative discourse is an

endless process that evolves a concentric circle of dialectics. As it applies to the arena of discourse intended for the settlement of a dispute, it is readily assumed that conflict (disagreement) and resolution (agreement) are equi-primordially pre-disposed.

Consequently, it shows that as pathway to *Being*, *jinkoto* representing the closed line of light indicates darkness, permanence, passivity, inactivity, motionlessness, resting and, by extension, feminine in principle and negative in polarity, while *malu* representing the open line of light indicates light, activity, change, mobility motion and by extension masculine in principle and positive in polarity. To paraphrase Okoro's (2015:36) statement, the binary structure of Ifa is determined by a frequency of binary relationship as follows: "binary dissimilarity; binary similarity; binary opposition; binary inversion; and binary inversion-opposition". Needless to say, it is this structural frequency of binary relationship that plays up transformational relationships in the Ifa process of divination. Through this transformational processes of relationships, general situations are harmonized with particular individual traits, in the same way as general human traits are harmonized with existential circumstances. To buttress this thought further, Okoro (2003b:6), quoting Bonachristus extensively states that:

The Ifa mystical zero is the circle of *integro-differential* reality that determines the nature and nurture of existence on earth. It is the circle of all things that are what they are and all things that are not what they are not. It is the ancestor of space and time, of every thought, every word and every deed. It is the cross of life and death, of light and darkness, of spirit and flesh, of being and nonbeing. It is the basket of wisdom, of knowledge and intelligence, the pot of power, the soul of conscience and character, the parameter of change and permanence, and the provider of nurture and nature.

Thus, the logic of Ifa literary corpus is a system of representative inquiry, in the words of Bonachristus (2003a) and Okoro (2015:60), it is a symbolismic science and method of revelation, interpretation, analysis of existence. It is a representative system of theories and practices, governing thought and conduct in relation to the meaningful investigation of the principle and laws that regulate culture and existence.

4. The deductive procedure in Ifa literary corpus

Perhaps, the shortest and quickest way to answer the question of deductive processes in Ifa literary corpus is to say that it is all about holism. According to Azenabor (2010:79) holism is simply a theory with many dimensions. It is based on the idea that the fundamental principle of the universe is the criterion of wholes, that of complete and self-contained systems. He adds that, in holism, whole is greater than the single part. Holism seeks to grasp the single wholeness of the varied pattern of culture. Thus, the holistic value is built around an ontology that accepts diversity or otherness without hierarchical judgments of human worth. By implication, it is with this mode of thought that we are able to establish a synthesis of human knowledge.

Furthermore, it is believed that holism captures the deductive procedure in Ifa thought system. For example, Okoro sums up this holism in the instance that involves the harmonization of forces along vertical and horizontal lines. The integration of forces along vertical and horizontal lines is based on the assumption that things in the universe are equi-primordially inter-disposed, one exercising primacy over the other. In the instance of vertical integration, it presupposes that Ifa reveals the order by which forces in the universe are hierarchicized. By this process of vertical integration, the cosmos is considered one organic whole in which higher forces affects the lower forces in the hierarchical order. It is from this that the system of vertical integration is considered the components of forces that make up the entire cosmos (God as the most supreme force, divinities, ancestors, man, animals, vegetation and minerals in that respective order) hierarchically exert influence on one another. On a horizontal scale, integration

involves the effective coordination of the various systems that make up the cosmos and the human society into a circuitous whole, thereby reflecting a common purpose, teleos or cohesion in the universe and in the society. Okoro (2015:52) writes:

The entire universe is a perfectly coordinated system of stars (suns), planets, moons (satellites), comets, meteors and meteorites, while the human society, reflecting the order in the universe, should replicate a perfect homogenization of the various institutions that make up the society.

Consequent upon the above quotation, we notice that the holistic and deductive nature of the universe is premised on the fact that forces interfuse and that this process is made possible by the cyclical progression of things in the African universe of forces to ensure that the forces are schematically arranged in a binary pattern, which in turn reflect the dualism in nature. Granted this pattern of binary fusion by which forces mutate in a cyclical progression, the first reality that occurs is the number four (4) or base four. This is represented on the table in figure 2 below.

S/N	Four Principles in Ifa Literary Corpus	Translation
1	Ogbe	Permanence
2	Irosun	Space and Time
3	Ogunda	Mechanism
4	Otura	Flow

Fig. 2 Adapted from Wande Abimbola's text entitled, *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* and in my conversation with an adept of Ifa during the course of this study.

The four mystical realities actually represent four energies and it is through their interfusion that reality becomes manifest. In essence, Du or Di (i.e. Being) permutates itself through four elements and it is through this permutation that *emi* (life), *eniyan*

(human being) and phenomena (ifarahan) becomes manifest. For instance, it is by its mutation on base four (4) that the earth rotates and revolves in a cyclical order such that we notice seasonal alteration on a quarterly basis. Now the quarterly arrangement of things brings in the number three (3), another important factor in the cyclical progression of things. Perhaps, it is against this background that Okoro (2015:52) argues:

...if on the *base 4* (as depicting the four pillars, four elements or four sources) things mutate, the *number 3* automatically becomes the order of progression. Needless to say, the teaming factors of *base 4* and *number 3* produce the prime *number 7* as another important factor in the holistic and deductive order of things and these numbers do really play significant factors in the codification of the order of forces into social reality.

Taking a cue from the above quotation, the researcher observes that the symbolic importance of numbers in traditional African notion of reality is also presented by the Dogon philosophy of creation (cf. Momoh 2000). For instances, it is argued that the intimate relationship and identity between man and the universe is initiated by the vibrations of 'kize uzi' (i.e. Being). The seven movements or vibrations caused by 'kize uzi' created both man and the universe. In order to expatiate further on this reality, Anyanwu (1981:353) writes:

The first and the sixth vibrations ($1 + 6 = 7$) produced the legs. The second and fifth vibrations ($2 + 5 = 7$) produced the head. The seventh (7) produced the sex organs of man. Even though the *seed* produced the image of man, man also presents the image of the *seed*. Man, is therefore, a microcosm, a universe in miniature.

It is clear from the logic of life-force in African metaphysics that it is meant to show the ontological structure of things

responsible for the holistic and tripological nature of the universe, which in turn determines the holistic and tripological nature of African conceptions of society, time, history, politics, family, economy and justice. The tripological conception of things in itself rests on the metaphysical principle of “interpenetrability of life-forces”. Elements behave magically, miraculously as they symbolically interact. And since spirit interlinks, interconnects and interpenetrates all things, it goes to show that everything is in everything (cf. Anyanwu 1981; Momoh 2000; Azenabor 2010; Unah 1999; & Okoro 2011, 2012, 2013, & 2015).

To this, Okoro adds that this interfusion is such that the “world order is replicated in the social order” and the “social order” is replicated in the “self-order” and vice versa. In explicating this further, Anyanwu (1981:371) writes:

...by way of interfusion, the three orders are said to be identical and hierarchical. Whereas the hierarchicization of the forces and their identical nature requires that all forces be strengthened and not weakened, that an individual should be seen in the light of the whole and that meaning, significance and value depend on the art of integration.

In essence, all these are made possible by the coordinating act of spirit. Anyanwu (1981:372) argues that:

Spirit embraces the power of beliefs, ideas and thoughts. It constitutes the source of authority, vitality, possibilities, law and integration. Spirit adds depth and cohesion to life. As a unifying principle, it eliminates all individual and group boundaries and creates a wider and deeper social consciousness or community of people.

Hence, it is by this holistic and deductive nature of things that human exercise the hope and expectation that the future will

continue to be like the past, thereby making induction to be a by-process of deduction.

5. The inductive procedure in Ifa literary corpus

The basic features and fundamental principle of induction is that it is based on the law of reciprocity. It tries to link the future with the past and in doing this it hyperbolizes issues thereby creating room for a high case of probability. These principles are very much evident in Ifa literary corpus. Ifa is an integrated system of symbols, social reality, communication and control and social action mainly directed towards the construction or transformation of social reality conceived in terms of the past, present and future action (cf. Abimbola 1976 & Okoro 2015).

Thus, in African notion of reality, there is nothing new in the present as the future will continue to reproduce past experiences in a cyclical order. Owing to this reality, the babalawo commits an inductive leap. He readily assumes that, since we live in the same world controlled by the same elements, what is true of the past will be true of the future, meaning that what worked for someone in the past will certainly work for some other person with a similar condition in the present. In making allusion to Okoro's expression where he argues that as long as the interpretations and explanations of the babalawo are within this given scope, the validity and rationality of the babalawo are assured and taken for granted.

It is clear from the rule of induction that, babalawo puts the efficacy of his divination procedure to test. In the words of Okoro, this test is no other than the high risk of probability. But it seems that the babalawo knows better about his problem which is the reason why he often prescribes his clients to appease 'Esu' (i.e. Igbo Ekwensu), is the key balance of forces and that is the god or master of mischief and the Minister of Justice, through a prescribed sacrifice. However, if the sacrifice and the entire divinations process fails, the babalawo attributes the failure to the lack of faith or will-power on the part of the individual to affirm, and since the individual did not summon enough faith and *will*-power to affirm, his/her personal god (i.e. Yoruba *ori-inu* or Igbo *chi*) did not as well affirm. Following the

shortcoming of the inductive procedure as a method of analysis used in atomizing things, traditional Africans insist that induction as a process of investigation can only gather greater significance if it is made a by-process of deduction. Hence, the insinuation is based on the fact that all particularistic knowledge should be synthesized to become holistic or what Okoro describes as universalistic. In the contemporary world, the problem of induction is tackled and confronted scientifically. This suggests that sacrifices are not made to any god or goddess by the way of appeasement. Rather, theories, rules and laws are subjected to series of tests repetitively in order to affirm the validity and veracity of these theories, rules, laws etc.

6. Analytic summary

What the researchers have done in this paper is pure architectonics. Besides, the analytical exploration of Ifa as a compendium of knowledge, attempt has been made to examine the epistemological procedures and the logic while bringing out the deductive and inductive procedures of the Ifa metaphysical system. In this direction, we explored the principle of hermeneutics and its components of duality, cyclicity, symbiosis and complementarity of Ifa. Findings have shown that, in African notion of reality, the mind or spirit is an extension of the cosmic forces whose dynamism is held on course by mutual interaction of units. This understanding of man's interaction with the world makes it possible to live beyond the demand of their immediacy. They draw inferences based on empirical evidence but also see deep-rooted connections between events in the world and the need to attend to the human quest for higher values. This experience birthed the analysis in this article with the cardinal message of teasing out the philosophical quintessence of Ifa literary corpus in a bid to open it up for comparative study and discourage misconception of the Ifa philosophical system.

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