Establishing a foundation for African philosophy to contribute to the literature of philosophical counselling[1]

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Abstract

Philosophical counselling, a relatively new field in practical philosophy, offers to potentially edify the layperson's everyday life with the help of philosophy. This lofty ideal is upheld by philosophical practitioners introducing various contemporary philosophies to its growing literature. However, many philosophical traditions beyond contemporary philosophy still somewhat suffer from an unwarranted neglect. Presently, African philosophy faces an almost complete absence in the philosophical counselling literature. It is thus a given that a prevalent lack of inquiry exists regarding its use in philosophical counselling. Despite this silence, fertile grounds exist for innovative contributions to further advance the development of African philosophy in philosophical counselling.

In this talk, I will introduce a novel reading of African philosophy to the literature of philosophical counselling. This understanding of African philosophy is greatly inspired and influenced by the work of Tsenay Serequeberhan and Jonathan Chimakonam. More specifically, the notion of African philosophy gathered from these philosophers seek to advance the critical interpretation/hermeneutic actualised from a specific philosophical place or lifeworld through the method of conversationalism. Furthermore, the very rootedness of this notion of philosophy, stemming from a concrete lifeworld, actively problematises philosophies that reproduce a supposed and untenable value neutrality.

Developing this understanding of African philosophy in a philosophical counselling context, I offer an initial critique of uncritical applications of philosophies originating from distinct philosophical places under the guise of a value neutrality. In maintaining this unwarranted silence on different philosophical traditions, philosophical counsellors might promote the use of philosophies as if universally applicable. And secondly, I propose that following from this understanding of African philosophy, philosophical counselling as such can begin to foster an environment in which new concepts can be co-created. Consequently, and in conjunction with conversationalism, radically new ways of being/becoming can be explored which might hold greater contextual significance.

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1. Introduction

In the late twentieth century, philosopher Olufemi Taiwo (1998:3) draws our attention to a notable neglect within the discourse of philosophy during that period:

> [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 and amended by various inclusions, especially on the front of curricula in South African universities.[3] However, another peculiar silence or absence has not yet been sufficiently interrogated. There is an almost complete absence of African philosophies[4] in the discourse of philosophical counselling.

2. A working definition of philosophical counselling

Before delving further into the examination of this silence, it is essential to first provide a minimal working definition of philosophical counselling. This step is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges the various definitions of philosophical counselling, resultant from the diverse perspectives and inputs of its practitioners,[5] and thereby avoiding potential confusion. Secondly, the working definition draws attention to the problematic silence in such a way as to stress the need to rectify it. By doing so, it creates a space where concrete actions can be taken to foster the necessary change.

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[3] The inclusion of African philosophies within South African universities serves as a significant indicator, not only highlighting academic output but also nurturing the development of emerging philosophers. Numerous universities have undertaken significant efforts in addressing the neglect of African philosophies within the broader discourse of philosophy. However, it is essential to acknowledge that several challenges persist, particularly concerning the way these philosophies are introduced and included. See, for example, Gaudry & Lorenz (2018:219) regarding this issue.

[4] It is important to be cognisant of two problems regarding the notion of "African philosophy". Firstly, it might signify a homogenous and coherent school of thought. This is not the case, as there are multiple schools of thought and various understandings of its practice. Secondly, authors such as Ramose (2005:4) use the term "Africa(n)" under protest or under erasure as it is a term invented and imposed on Africa from the outside. In using "African philosophy/philosophies" I am cognisant of these two remarks/problems.

[5] It is generally accepted that there are as many renditions of philosophical counselling as there are practitioners (Marinoff, 1999:37; Raabe, 2001:xix; Tillmanns, 2005:2). However, not everyone agrees with this sentiment. Cf. Schuster (2004:3).

Two initial ideas can help us understand the practice of philosophical counselling.

Firstly, the philosophical counsellor can be conceptualised as a nomadic figure, as described by Shlomit Schuster (1999:12), who inhabits what she refers to as a "no-man's land". This metaphorical space exists within the liminal or in-between space that transcend or go beyond the scope of various disciplines, including the sciences and humanities. Within this understanding, the philosophical counsellor occupies a distinct position in relation to their own practice, enabling them to critique both the practice of philosophy and philosophical counselling itself.[6]

Secondly, arising from this unique position, the philosophical counsellor is invariably implicated in their own practice.[7] This implication arises from taking seriously Jacques Derrida's (1995:376) assertion that "[a]ll philosophical discussions carry within them the question: What is philosophy? Where does it begin, where does it end? What is the limit?" Consequently, the philosophical counsellor is confronted with at least two parallel metaphilosophical questions: "What is philosophy?" and "What is philosophical counselling?" This highlights a fundamental principle of philosophical counselling articulated by Raabe (2000:16) and Schuster (1992:587; 1999:38) in that its practice is inherently a *hermeneutical happening*. Emphasis is, thus, placed on the dynamic and active nature of this interpretive and creative undertaking.

In this regard, the philosophical counsellor is constantly shaped by their practice and the "interruptions/disruptions"[8] of the counselee, while simultaneously shaping their practice and

[6] See, for example, Louw (2021:25-26) for a more thorough discussion of this unique position. But see also Schuster (1999:14) who incorporates what she calls "de-analysing" and/or "de-diagnosis" into her practice. In short, she provides an "undoing" and reinterpretation of, for example, psychological/psychoanalytic diagnosis through/in a philosophical framework, thereby going beyond mere philosophising as such. This locates her practice outside of pure philosophising and other disciplines but located in their liminal or in-between spaces.

[7] Serequeberhan (1994:2), for example, writes that "philosophy has the peculiar characteristic of always being implicated in its own conceptions and formulations."

[8] One might here evoke the image of Derrida's "genuine hospitality" leading to a potential "absolute surprise". See, for example, Plant (2006:142-144) discussing Derrida's *perhaps* in relation to the last mentioned two ideas. In essence, and in the context of philosophical counselling, the philosophical counsellor can make all the necessary preparations for the arrival of the counselee. But this arrival is characterised by two significant factors: (i) the philosophical counsellor cannot determine when the counselee will arrive. In accordance with genuine hospitality, the counselee may arrive unexpectedly at any given time, catching the philosophical counsellor off guard, i.e., an absolute surprise. (ii) No matter how extensively the philosophical counsellor prepares for the counselee's arrival,

the philosophical frameworks they employ in response to the concrete needs of the counselee.[9] When responding to the specific requirements of the counselee or addressing the metaphilosophical questions concerning their practice, the philosophical counsellor cannot simply rely on previous responses. Instead, their practice is characterised by a fundamental transformative process and a continuous reinterpretation of the past, always oriented towards the present problem at hand.

3. "How might one live?" and the lack of nuance

Due to the counselee's specific and tangible needs, another question inevitably arises – one that is also invariably hermeneutical – "How might one live?".[10] I argue that this is one of the most important questions the philosophical counsellor must grapple with, whether explicitly or implicitly (Louw, 2022:66-67). The reason for this is rather simple. The counselee seeks the guidance from the philosophical counsellor precisely because they perceive a problem with their present way of being or living. The philosophical counsellor, who is in control of various methods[11] and philosophies,[12] adequately responds to the counselee's needs. This is done by engaging in a collaborative journey to navigate these challenging terrains and by exploring various alternative ways of becoming.

However, it is evident that the question of "How might one live?" currently lacks a crucial nuance when it comes to considering situational factors (Louw, 2022:67). It fails to incorporate a temporal or historical and geographical awareness, neglecting to inquire about how one might live *here* and *today*. Recognising this lack of nuance, the philosophical counsellor cannot

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the counselee will always bring something new and potentially challenging. The arrival of the counselee in philosophical counselling is thus marked by both an element of absolute surprise and the constant need for the philosophical counsellor to adapt their practice and to address the unique situation of the counselee.

[9] Drawing inspiration from Deleuze's discussion of the nomad, Janz (2001:395) notes that "[t]he nomad continually deterritorializes, in that this person re-produces the environment at the same time as he or she is produced by it." This is an important element to understand the philosophical counsellor as a nomadic figure.

[10] The specific form of the question stems from the work of May's (2005:1-25) reading of Deleuze's philosophy.

[11] See, for example, Svare (2006:32) who refers to a special kind of context sensitivity associated with being in control of methods and not being controlled by methods. See also, for example, Pollastri (2006:109) who mentions the need to have multiple methods and not just one in philosophical counselling.

[12] See, for example, Raabe (2001:214), Lahav (1996:266) and Schuster (1995:101) who emphasise the indispensable need for the philosophical counsellor to expose the counselee to various philosophies and philosophers and not just one.

effectively create an environment conducive to addressing the question of "How might one live, here, today?" through the sole reliance on a single philosophical tradition.[13] An inherent issue within philosophical counselling emerges as one examines the attempt to extend a singular philosophical tradition across diverse environments and contexts. That being the omission of temporal and geographic, i.e., situational, factors which lead to the possible occlusion and marginalisation of radically different ways of being/becoming not encompassed by the philosophical counsellor's chosen philosophies. This issue will become more evident as I introduce the reading of African philosophy below. But before turning to this reading, I briefly showcase the almost absolute neglect of African philosophy in the discourse of philosophical counselling.

4. Dearth of African philosophy in philosophical counselling discourse

The recent publication by Avital Pilpel and Shahar Gindi (2019:71) stands out as a first to acknowledge the absence of African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse. The authors introduce ubuntu and sage philosophy as African philosophies possessing "the most obvious therapeutic potential" (Pilpel & Gindi, 2019:73). However, being one of the first of its kind, their article lacks much-needed nuance. For example, the authors do not mention the complexities of utilising ubuntu philosophy in a western framework that may disregard the metaphysical and linguistic considerations necessary for a more contextually aware understanding of this philosophy.[14] Furthermore, the authors do not mention any of the relevant critique of sage philosophy as has been discussed multiple times in the literature which might have led to a more nuanced discussion.[15] It is crucial to clarify that the intention here is not to critique the authors' attempt but rather to extend an invitation for more nuanced conversations.

[13] Schuster (1995:101) and Raabe (2001:214), among others, argue against solely relying on single philosophies or philosophers, thus emphasising the importance of exposing the counselee to a range of different philosophies and philosophers. However, their contributions fail in extending their practices to contain multiple philosophical traditions beyond a singular one. Due to this failure, they also do not contend with *how* to introduce different philosophical traditions to the discourse.

[14] See, for example, the discussion of ubuntu in Dladla (2020:45-55). He states, for example, "most of these 'Ubuntus' which taken hold are curiously 'Ubuntus' without *abantu* [and] 'Ubuntus' without or *isintu*" (Dladla, 2020:45). It is worth nothing that this critique boils down to the neglect of situational and contextual factors by various philosophers, especially philosophers who write from the "outside" or from a different context/lifeworld/horizon (Dladla, 2020:45).

[15] See, for example, the critique by Serequeberhan (1996:111) who states that sage philosophy in many instances upholds and utilises western frameworks that subordinate African philosophy.

By foreshadowing the forthcoming discussion, an understanding is required that acknowledges and addresses the specific needs, questions, and issues that emerge from the contemporary African context or horizon.

Beyond this contribution, few mention African philosophy in conjunction with philosophical counselling. For example, turning to philosophical counselling as practiced and theorised from the South African lifeworld or horizon the same neglect is found. From what I could attain from universities' scholarly repositories, a total of five dissertations or theses have been published at South African institutions.[16] Sparce, if any, mention of African philosophy is found in these works. This same neglect is found in turning to journal publications. And lastly, the websites and online profiles of several philosophical counsellors practicing in South Africa provides no immediate indication of the inclusion of African philosophies in their practices.[17]

Considering the limited academic contributions in the discourse of philosophical counselling, one may raise the question: Is there a need for philosophical counselling in the African context? I concur with Bellarmine Nneji's (2013:6) affirmative response, who asserts that "in many African settings [...] *there is a serious need for philosophical counselling*" (emphasis added). However, it is noteworthy that Nneji, rather than turning to African philosophers and African philosophies, looks towards Western philosophy and Western philosophical counsellors as a starting point for introducing philosophical counselling in the African context.

Exploring contemporary African philosophical literature, particularly regarding curricula changes, one readily encounters statements such as Okeja's (2018:112), who suggests that "[t]here is little need to keep educating young minds in Africa about Plato's world of forms." By extrapolating this sentiment to philosophical counselling, one can argue that the exclusive dependence on Western philosophies in its practice restricts and inhibits the potential for valuable and enriching contributions. While it may be contended that the initial introduction and discussion of Western philosophy and philosophical counsellors in the African context may not seem problematic, this approach presents a significant challenge when juxtaposed with the conspicuous silence and absence of African philosophies within the discourse of philosophical counselling.

[16] See Louw (2009), Stützner (2015), Sivil (2019), Louw (2021), and Oosthuizen (2022).

[17] See Douglas (2019), Pittaway (2021), Du Plessis (2020), Chapman (2021), and Norman (n.d.).

In line with this observation, the aim is not a total rejection of Western philosophy. Rather, it involves contextualising Western philosophies alongside African philosophies and subsequently introducing and utilising works that are most responsive to the contemporary situation and its specific needs. For this reason, I turn to two specific African philosophers that uphold this sentiment.

5. A notion of African philosophy: A critical hermeneutics in conversation

To substantiate these observations and lay the groundwork for introducing African philosophy into the discourse of philosophical counselling, I turn to the hermeneutical philosophy of Tsenay Serequeberhan and the conversational philosophy of Jonathan Chimakonam. By engaging with their work, I aim to cultivate[18] a conception of African philosophy that emphasises the importance of contextually aware responses to questions and problems emerging from a concrete lifeworld. This entails embracing a dynamic and collaborative conversation as a means of engagement. Drawing from Serequeberhan's insights, I incorporate the notion of a radical hermeneutics, which involves actively interpreting what it means to live within and respond to a specific lifeworld. Additionally, with the guidance of Chimakonam, I solidify the concept of a conversational response facilitated by conversational partners who are situated and contextually aware. By bringing together these two authors and their respective ideas, my intention is to challenge the identified silence in the discourse and the underlying assumption that maintains its existence.

As a point of entry to the complexities of Serequeberhan's writings, it is necessary to provide a brief elucidation of what he terms the contemporary African neo-colonial situation. This is important as Serequeberhan (1994:7) states that:

> contemporary African philosophy is concretely oriented toward thinking the problems and concerns that arise from the lived actuality of post-colonial 'independent' Africa.

According to Serequeberhan, the notion of an "independent" Africa is paradoxical and problematic due to the persisting neo-colonial situation experienced by the formerly colonised. This neo-colonial situation is characterised by a state of in-betweenness, a gap, or liminality that shapes the (non-)identity of post-colonial societies (Serequeberhan, 2000:2; 2009:44). The

[18] The notion of "cultivation" is preferred over and above "production", following the discussion in Zondi (2021:239), because "knowledge production" might still harbour capitalist/colonial sentiment of "extraction". Moreover, cultivation captures mutuality better than production.

emergence of this (non-)identity can be attributed to the violent imposition of colonialism, which forcefully imposed its own history while suppressing and obstructing indigenous histories and ways of life (Serequeberhan, 1994:21, 24; 2000:1, 6). This imposition was rooted in a specific metaphysical assumption or myth, which continues to exert influence and shape the very fabric of life in the postcolonial present (Serequeberhan, 2009:44). In fact, as Serequeberhan asserts (2015:36-37), the neo-colonial situation is essentially the continued western hegemonic rule disguised merely under new guises or codewords.

The underlying metaphysical assumption, referred to as the "ideology of universalism" by Serequeberhan, serves as the foundation of the neo-colonial situation. This assumption uncritically asserts that "European existence is, properly speaking, true human existence per se" (Serequeberhan, 1997:144). In response to this claim, Serequeberhan's approach involves a complex interplay of various ideas. I will focus on two key aspects: the "return to the source" and the "double task of African philosophy". These concepts provide us with an insightful and contextually aware understanding of African philosophy as a response to the concrete needs arising from the African lifeworld.

According to Serequeberhan, the double task of African philosophy encompasses a critical, negative, and de-structive element, as well as a creative, positive, and constructive element. Drawing inspiration from Martin Heidegger, Serequeberhan (1997:157, footnote 4) employs de-struction[19] to emphasise the need to expose the underlying mechanisms of a text. This process aims to uncover problematic assumptions that the author may have held during the production of the text. By doing so, one can discern how these assumptions contribute to maintaining the aforementioned problematic idea of Western superiority or hegemony. Subsequently, these assumptions can be rectified or discarded through the concept of "return to the source". The notion of "return" denotes a cultural filtration and fertilisation (Serequeberhan, 1994:109) or a sifting and sieving process (Serequeberhan, 2021:38) of indigenous as well as hybrid/synthesised/Western ideas. In short, it attempts to remove the "residue" of Western superiority and anything that hinders the liberation process. The constructive and creative objective is to achieve a "new synthesis" that involves the above, viz., (i) critiquing hegemonised Western-centric ideas with the aim to particularise them and (ii) subsequently discarding anything that hinders the liberation process (Serequeberhan, 1994:109; 2021:38). Furthermore, the source to which the African philosopher should return

[19] Cf. destruction which entails the total eradication or elimination of something.

is not a static and untouched pre-colonial past. Rather, it entails a return to the "vigor, vitality (life), and ebullience of African existence" to continue the ongoing "hard work"[20] required to attain the ideal of liberation, and in doing so transcending the neo-colonial liminal situation (Serequeberhan, 1994:107-108, 126-127, footnote 16).

At this point, I introduce the conversational philosophy of Chimakonam as a means of concretising Serequeberhan's creative and constructive element. While Serequeberhan's approach somewhat overlooks the relational and collaborative aspect of philosophising, the inclusion of conversationalism helps to supplement this aspect. Moreover, there is an alignment between these philosophies regarding the creation of new concepts that enables the philosopher to better understand and respond to the contemporary situation.

Conversationalism originated from the methodisation and systematisation of a specific interpretation of "relationship" deeply embedded within the Igbo language (Chimakonam, 2017b:120). In this context, "relationship" denotes:

> 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).

The origins of conversationalism can further be traced to the translation of the Igbo notion of "arụmarụ-ụka," which can be understood as either "engaging in a relationship of doubt" (Egbai & Chimakonam, 2019:181) or "engaging in critical and creative conversation" (Chimakonam, 2017a:120). Embedded within this idea of conversation are two positions: *nwa-nsa*, the defender of a position, and *nwa-nju*, the opponent or doubter of a position (Chimakonam, 2017b:121). These positions can tentatively be seen as analogous to thesis and antithesis; however, unlike in dialogue or dialectics, the pursuit of synthesis as an outcome is actively discouraged. In fact, Chimakonam (2017a:17) articulates a perspective that labels yielding to the demands of synthesis as a creative *surrender*,[21] opposed to a creative *struggle*. A creative struggle refers to the dynamic interplay and outcome between *nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju* in which

[20] Serequeberhan (2010:32) notes that the deplorable liminal neo-colonial situation is, in part, due to when the "hard work" stopped at the moment of decolonisation (as an event). He 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".

[21] Surrender in this context merely refers to the conclusion of a dialogue.

both parties retain their original positions but 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 added)

The aim of these "struggles" within conversationalism is to continuously "refresh" the position of *nwa-nsa*, aiming for higher levels of discourse while actively promoting the conversation itself. This concept is captured in Chimakonam's assertion (2017b:122) that *nwa-nsa* possesses a "transgenerational life-span" as opposed to synthesis, which may only have a generational life-span indicating that the dialogue essentially concludes after synthesis. The objective of conversationalism, therefore, is to maintain an ongoing and dynamic conversation that continually seeks to generate and disclose new concepts, without a predetermined ending (Chimakonam, 2017a:22). Additionally, it endeavours to revise old concepts that may no longer be as applicable or beneficial within the contemporary situation.

6. Teasing out a problematic assumption

With this notably situated and contextually aware relational understanding of African philosophy, one can begin to unravel the problematic assumption that underlies the neglect of diverse philosophical traditions. Two examples of this can be found in the works of prominent philosophical counsellors, Ran Lahav and Lou Marinoff.

In a recent publication, Lahav (2016:11) curiously suggests delving beneath the "theoretical clothing" of an argument to grasp its "essential body". Within the framework of his philosophical counselling practice, Lahav identifies the essential and underlying "call for transformation" present in various philosophies throughout the history of Western thought. Regardless of their "theoretical clothing", Lahav asserts that all these philosophies share a singular call for individuals to transcend their current way of being in search of something "better", i.e., stepping out of Plato's cave (which is also the title of his book). Lahav (2016:11) states accordingly that:

> [w]e come here to the heart of *every* philosophical approach that can be called transformational: At the center of *every* such approach is a call. It is a call because it nags us, shakes us, pulls away from our comfortable, complacent routine. (Emphasis added)

Lou Marinoff, in his turn, provides ample "case studies" of counselees who changed their lives according to the introduction of philosophy. They are usually provided in the form of *Counselee P resolved problem x [insert problem] by incorporating the philosophy of philosopher y [insert philosopher]*. Marinoff (2003:120-121) provides the following case:

> With assistance from the Socratic method of philosophical midwifery […] Ruth finally faced the fact that she had prevented herself from being a writer, and had used her circumstances as an excuse.

These philosophies are, if we borrow Lahav's terminology, stripped of their theoretical "clothes" leaving behind an oversimplified "core". This is then offered to the counselee for practical application in their daily life, aimed at addressing, resolving, or assisting them with any issues they might have presented to the philosophical counsellor.

The fundamental issue lies in the utilisation of these philosophies by philosophical counsellors. It is suggested that these philosophies can be easily extracted from their original and embedded contexts, subsequently discussed, applied, or presented devoid of the situated factors that contributed to their formulation. The resulting application takes place within a supposedly value-neutral framework, which is inadequate for the exploration of new ways of becoming or the creation of new concepts. This situation can be better understood by considering the metaphor provided by Masolo (1981:73), which likens philosophy to an ecosystem:

> [p]eople living in a specific ecological area are expected to possess a comprehensive understanding of the system in which they are intimately immersed, as well as an awareness of visible changes occurring within that ecosystem.

Considering this metaphor, those who originate from a particular lifeworld are better positioned to address the questions arising from that lifeworld, rather than attempting to apply a philosophy that originated from a different lifeworld and era in response to different sets of questions.[22]

[22] It is crucial to clarify that my argument does not advocate for a crude form of incommensurability between various philosophical traditions. Rather, the argument posits that contributions arising from a specific lifeworld are more adept at addressing the needs of a counselee. Importantly, Serequeberhan (1994:2) highlights that one should "indigenise" and "organically appropriate" Western philosophy from a dehegemonised position within the African context if it serves the purpose of liberation. Serequeberhan (1994:2), for example, does this to the philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer.

In the concluding section, I provide an explication of what I refer to as African philosophical counselling, which directly emerges from the conceptualisation of African philosophy discussed above and as a response to the identified neglect.

7. African philosophical counselling in focus

Flowing from these discussions, one might begin referring to African philosophical counselling. Using the conception of African philosophy as discussed above, two important elements are highlighted to trouble the adoption of philosophies lacking contextual and situational considerations. These elements include Serequeberhan's situated hermeneutic investigation actualised from and as a response to a concrete lifeworld and Chimakonam's conversational approach that honours the embodied presence and living voices of its participants. By adopting these perspectives in philosophical counselling, a more nuanced response to the needs of the counselee can be facilitated.

Taking seriously the implications derived from Serequeberhan's philosophy, the utilisation of exclusively Western philosophies within one's philosophical practice becomes suspect. This scepticism arises from recognising that these philosophies may not offer the most appropriate response to the needs of a counselee stemming from the contemporary African context. Such concerns can be examined at two distinct levels.

Firstly, numerous Western philosophical approaches continue to embody a hegemonic status, either explicitly or through their exclusionary tendencies. Consequently, these approaches tend to be regarded as the norm, thereby marginalising African philosophy and other philosophical perspectives. It remains a stark reality that African philosophical approaches are still perceived as peripheral, as Serequeberhan (2021:35, 36) recently underscored, portraying Africa's role as a "willing victim" and an "servile appendage" in perpetuating western hegemony. Zondi (2021:236) accords this by stating that:

> Africa is said to import 95 per cent of the knowledge it uses, and exports next to nothing, because the post-colonial Africa exists after the destruction and discrediting of all its indigenous knowledges.

Such a situation disrupts the continuous exchange and flow of knowledge and philosophies, fostering a perception that Africa lacks the capacity to generate intellectual discourses based on their own indigenous knowledge.

Secondly, it reinforces a tendency to prioritise the importation of knowledge rather than cultivating it from the very soil where these questions and issues originate. In the realm of philosophical counselling, this phenomenon manifests itself in the preference for Western philosophies and philosophical counsellors, rather than turning towards the lifeworld or conceptual framework from which the needs of the counselee emerges. Consequently, voices that emanate from this specific context, which could potentially enrich and contribute significantly to the philosophical counselling discourse and practice, find themselves possibly marginalised, occluded and/or excluded. Interpretations of African philosophies that may perpetuate Western hegemony are often uncritically reproduced and favoured over those that genuinely attend to the needs and concerns of individuals within the African lifeworld.

Taking Chimakonam's conversationalism seriously engenders a recognition of the indispensability of collaboration within the process of philosophising. By embracing the practical implementation of Serequeberhan's creative and constructive element, the ongoing conversation between conversational partners assumes a vital role in sifting, sieving, filtering, and fertilising philosophies that may hinder the emergence of novel concepts or the disclosing of different ways of becoming. Moreover, this conversational approach actively discourages uncritical reproductions of philosophical ideas due to the inherent critical nature of the opponent, who bears the responsibility and duty to challenge the proponent. As a result, the proponent is compelled to address and fill the gaps and deficiencies exposed by the creative struggle or intellectual exchange of ideas.

The implications of this understanding for philosophical counselling are manifold. On one hand, both the counselee and the philosophical counsellor enter a conversational framework that demands active participation, fostering a climate conducive to "knowledge growth and intellectual progress" (Chimakonam, 2017b:122). On the other hand, adopting a conversational approach within philosophical counselling actively prevents the reliance on mere reproductions of philosophy devoid of situational factors, which is comparable to merely "prescribing philosophical texts" (Sivil, 2009:205-207).

8. Summary remarks

As a summary, this talk addressed the prevalent issue of uncritically reproducing philosophies that either subordinate African philosophies or neglect the significance of situational and contextual factors, within the discourse of philosophical counselling. In response, I introduced a specific interpretation of the hermeneutical philosopher Serequeberhan and the

conversationalist philosopher Chimakonam. Drawing from these philosophical perspectives, an understanding of philosophical counselling which is contextually aware and situated was deemed more suitable to address the contemporary African context. This choice is motivated by two key reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges and embraces Serequeberhan's philosophy, which underscores the importance of responding to questions emerging from and pertaining to a concrete lifeworld. Secondly, it embraces Chimakonam's philosophy, which prioritises critical relationality within a conversational framework that values the embodied presence and authentic voices of all participants involved.

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