Philosophical Counselling as a Method of Practising Contemporary African Philosophy: Setting the Context for a Conversation between Serequeberhan and Chimakonam

JACO LOUW

Abstract: Philosophical counselling is typically conceptualised as a praxis going beyond academic and theoretical philosophy. However, two problems soon follow, namely the lack of agreed-upon methods and a substantial neglect of different philosophical traditions informing its practice. In this article, I propose reconceptualising philosophical counselling as a distinct method through which academic philosophy can be practised. This allows me to introduce an understanding of African philosophy, inspired by African philosophers Chimakonam and Serequeberhan, that might encourage the philosophical counsellor to render academic philosophy more applicable to the counselee. Moreover, it allows for embodied voices talking from an embedded African lifeworld to create new and more relevant concepts that emerge from that lifeworld.

Keywords: philosophical counselling, African philosophy, conversationalism, hermeneutics, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Jonathan Chimakonam

Introduction

The philosophical counselling discourse remains unsettled on whether philosophical practitioners should have methods. Some argue that there should be a single method for its practice (e.g., Cohen 113–114), others argue for various methods (e.g., Pollastri 109), or some tend to outright reject method (e.g., Achenbach 11; Schuster 4–5). Due to the numerous conceptualisations of its practice, finding consensus regarding this issue remains contentious. Nevertheless, this allows for creative interpretations and applications of methods. Incorporating different methods from various philosophical traditions can thus potentially improve the counselee's way of being, especially by providing fresh insights and perspectives. The philosophical counselling discourse, however, is still relatively impoverished because the inclusion of traditions beyond Western philosophy remains largely under-explored. Some expansionary changes have been made, but African philosophy has received almost no attention in the discourse. Pilpel and Gindi, in one of the few articles on African philosophy and philosophical counselling, suggest that Ubuntu and sage philosophy have the most therapeutic potential among the various notions of African philosophy (72–76). Beyond this, African philosophy is mentioned rarely in conjunction with philosophical counselling. There is also only one philosophical counsellor whose practice is inspired and informed by African philosophy (see Broodryk). The present article, consequently, adds to the sparse literature of African philosophy in philosophical counselling, focusing particularly on African philosophy as a praxis.

One possible approach to resolve the present dearth in philosophical counselling discourse would have been to incorporate additional philosophical schools of thought akin to the ap-

proach taken by Pilpel and Gindi (72–76). However, this approach lacks much-needed nuance, particularly when bearing in mind the reasons for the persistent neglect of African philosophy in the discourse and the subsequent problems stemming from mere *indigenous inclusion*, that is, the notion that, in this case, African philosophers should justify their own entry to the status quo (Gaudry and Lorenz 219). The neglect is thus not immediately seen as a problem from the perspective of, say, Western philosophers. This problem remains insufficiently acknowledged in the philosophical counselling literature.

Cognisant of these problems, I propose a different approach concerning the incorporation of African philosophy into the philosophical counselling discourse. I contend that the current problem resides in how philosophical counselling is conceptualised, especially when considering it as a distinct field *in* philosophy. As noted, this leads one directly to the problem of method(s) – what methods should the philosophical counsellor use, how are these methods different from academic philosophy and psychotherapy, and so on. And more importantly, it leads to and maintains the current neglect of African philosophy. In contrast, and as a solution to both these problems, I propose reconceptualising philosophical counselling as a *method* in and of itself. Various philosophical counsellors align with this somewhat unarticulated position when they claim that philosophising is the sole objective of philosophical counselling (e.g., Schuster 5, 23; Weiss 16). Through the proposed reconceptualisation, I explicitly align myself with this position.

Various implications follow, as will be discussed below, but the principal implication is worth mentioning here. Understanding philosophical counselling as a method highlights the inherent imperative that its practice should be informed and influenced by philosophical traditions embedded and situated in specific lifeworlds, in this case, the African lifeworld. This allows me to conceptualise philosophical counselling in such a manner that one can *practise* contemporary African philosophy beyond the boundaries of academia, creating new concepts for understanding.

There are numerous schools of thought and approaches to African philosophy. In this article, I propose a particular understanding of contemporary African philosophy based on the work of contemporary African philosophers Tsenay Serequeberhan and Jonathan Chimakonam. As a point of departure, I take seriously Serequeberhan's notion of African philosophy as a critical hermeneutic or interpretation of the contemporary African situation. An indispensable focus is on grasping and understanding the current situation, which is temporally and spatially located. This position necessitates the creation of new and more relevant concepts. I therefore turn to Chimakonam, who proposes a method for practising African philosophy that potentially leads to these new concepts being created from the embedded lifeworld of the practitioner through *conversationalism*. Taking this method seriously allows me to underscore the necessity of collaborative philosophising.

I structure the article as follows. In the first section, I briefly discuss contemporary philosophical counselling. By doing so, the deficiency of different traditions informing its practice will become apparent. Secondly, I delve into the resulting need for African philosophy in philosophical counselling with the aim of providing adequate responses to the specific needs of the counselee located in different contexts. In the third section, I introduce my preferred reading of African philosophy by setting the context for a conversation between Serequeberhan and Chimakonam. An understanding of African philosophy emerges that emphasises an embodied voice articulating concrete problems originating from those embedded in the African lifeworld. In the fourth section, I discuss three implications of the reconceptualisation of philosophical counselling as a method, viz., (i) the search for methods becomes obsolete, (ii) academic philosophy is made relevant to the public, and (iii) philosophical counsellors qua philosophers become intimately aware of the needs of those situated and embedded in a concrete lifeworld. In the last section, I showcase how this understanding of African philosophy can be practised through philosophical counselling, focusing on concept creation from and relevant to the concrete African lifeworld.

Contemporary philosophical counselling and its deficiencies

It is generally accepted that philosophical counselling has as many interpretations as there are practitioners (Marinoff, *Plato* 37; Raabe, *Philosophical* xix; Tillmanns 2). Some have stated that philosophical counselling is a variant of psychotherapy (Mills 1); some hold the view that all talk therapy is essentially philosophical counselling (Raabe, *Philosophy's Role* 3-4); and yet for others, philosophical counselling is an alternative to therapy and not another type of therapy (Schuster 75). Most of these debates centre around the problem of method(s) and outcome(s), viz.: should the philosophical counsellor have a method, and what should the outcomes of her practice be? Some have suggested that philosophical counselling, like philosophy, should have multiple methods and approaches (Pollastri 109). Its practice seems to be characterised by a multiplicity of understandings, sometimes vastly different from each other. Peter Raabe (*Philosophical* xviii-xix) captures this diversity in a fitting metaphor in which philosophical counselling is likened to a roll of yarn in which there is no essential centre but merely various diverging strands.

Keeping this in mind, a couple of descriptive characteristics can be mentioned as a kind of point of departure to understand its practice. Philosophical counselling usually pertains to the dialogue between a philosophical counsellor and counselee about philosophical problems/questions arising in the counselee's life. This is *philosophical* because the ensuing discussion utilises the philosopher's skills and knowledge in philosophy; and *counselling*, in that there is an intentional meeting between the philosophical counsellor qua philosopher and the counselee in a specific setting. The philosophical counsellor, usually a trained philosopher with a PhD or master's degree, therefore, facilitates a philosophical dialogue that goes beyond a mere informal discussion with the aim of edifying the counselee's life (Marinoff, *Philosophical* 299). This description, however, is still relatively vague in terms of what precisely philosophical counselling is. It thus behoves me to provide a minimal understanding of its practice. To do this, I briefly focus on two imperative elements, namely, a hermeneutical happening and collaborative philosophising.

Philosophical counselling is characterised by a hermeneutical happening in which the philosophical counsellor becomes, so to speak, united and entangled with the counselee's problem/question (Raabe, *Philosophical* 133; Schuster 38). That is, the counselee's problem/question becomes a philosophical problem that needs interpretation and critical consideration. The outcome of this interpretation is to provide the counselee with a new philosophical framework through which she can potentially better understand her current situation. Importantly, this understanding does not rely on uncovering underlying truths through the one-sided expertise of the philosophical counsellor. Instead, the focus is on the process of collaborative philosophising through which the very confrontation of the philosophical counsellor and the counselee leads towards a "fresh impulse" of the situation (Allen 11–12; Raabe, *Philosophical* 143–144; Schuster 38). The result of this endeavour does not reside in the philosophical counsellor or in the counselee. It is only engendered through the interconnected and dynamic engagement of the philosophical counsellor and the counselee, who both impart important contributions.

This understanding relies on the philosophical counsellor having experience and knowledge of various schools of thought and traditions of philosophy to disclose all that philosophy can offer to the counselee (Raabe, *Philosophical* 214). However, mostly Western philosophy informs and influences philosophical counsellors' practices (e.g., Marinoff, *Plato* 52–79, 275–288; Schuster 27–70). Different philosophical traditions have slowly been included in the literature of philosophical counselling (e.g., Marinoff, *Plato* 53–57, 301–304; Pilpel and Gindi 68–82). Nevertheless, two problems remain. Firstly, this inclusion is happening on a small scale and at a slow pace. African philosophy, for example, remains mostly overlooked and underexamined. And secondly, the mere addition of different voices to counter the existing lack does not sufficiently deal with, inter alia, the problem of *indigenous inclusion* (Gaudry and Lorenz 219). Simply put, the issue of dearth and exclusion is not resolved by merely adding to the problematic

status quo. This is because the burden of change and justifying its inclusion will typically come down to the newly included. The underlying assumptions maintaining the status quo remain unquestioned and in place. The philosophical counselling literature mirrors and reproduces these problems by utilising mostly Western philosophy, which still, in many cases, actively relegates other traditions to the periphery and boundary.

Recognising and justifying this overreliance on Western philosophy and the accompanying problems poses a significant challenge for contemporary philosophical counselling. If left unacknowledged, the uncritical acceptance of sameness is continually reproduced. Sparse mention of this issue is found in the philosophical counselling discourse. Looking beyond this discourse, various African philosophers and psychologists have critiqued contemporary psychotherapies for being almost exclusively based on Western theories (Ratele 97; Makhubela 9). These therapies are often adapted for and based on Western subjects subscribing to Western ways of living. We are also reminded by decolonial philosophers such as Ramón Grosfoguel that the subject in Western philosophy is usually conceptualised devoid of human characteristics in a mission to inhabit a so-called universal position speaking on behalf of everyone (89). These exclusionary tendencies are consequently reproduced in philosophical counselling, especially when the epistemic subject is mostly conceptualised as Western. A more nuanced approach to including different philosophical traditions is thus needed. It becomes necessary first to critique contemporary philosophical counselling so as to trouble and disturb its uncritical reliance on a singular philosophical tradition. This allows me to consider the need for African philosophy in the philosophical counselling literature.

The need for African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse

There are few references to African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse. In one of these few, Bellarmine Nneji states poignantly that "in many African settings […] *there is [a] serious need for philosophical counselling*" (6. Emphasis mine). However, Nneji relies solely on Western philosophers and philosophical counsellors to introduce philosophical counselling into an African context, essentially reproducing the problem of preferring Western ways of being/ living (3–4). The author does not mention the potential of including African philosophies or philosophers, especially in the African context. This seems suspect in relation to the conspicuous silence of African philosophy in the discourse. In a different context, Uchenna Okeja (112) states, for example, that "[t]here is little need to keep educating young minds in Africa about Plato's world of forms" in lieu of indigenous knowledge systems. Extrapolating this sentiment to philosophical counselling, one can subsequently question the relevance of philosophical counselling solely relying on singular philosophies in an African context. Whilst its practice is mainly informed by Western philosophy in place of African philosophy, philosophical counselling will not have a particularly profound impact in an African context. In fact, it might do more harm than good by occluding and marginalising those who do not conform to Western ways of being by viewing the particularity of questions and problems emanating from the African lifeworld as essentially the same as those from other lifeworlds.

In their turn, Avital Pilpel and Shahar Gindi (71) are the first to mention the absence of African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse. They subsequently introduce African philosophy through Ubuntu and sage philosophy. According to the authors, these philosophies have the most therapeutic potential in philosophical counselling (72–76). Nevertheless, the authors do not engage with the intricacies of including the philosophies they discuss. The reasons behind the conspicuous silence of African philosophy in philosophical counselling are left insufficiently questioned and not problematised, thereby evading the issue of indigenous inclusion. Their effort, nonetheless, initiate a much-needed conversation regarding (i) the lack

of African philosophy in the literature of philosophical counselling and (ii) the appropriate approach required to incorporate African philosophy into the corpus.

The lack of African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse juxtaposed against the reliance on Western philosophies and philosophical counsellors in an African context is especially problematic regarding the creation of new concepts and the disclosing of different ways of being/living. Potentially valuable contributions are subsequently not incorporated because the conversations are not considered or facilitated. Moreover, the manner of incorporation is also not sufficiently addressed, subsequently recolonising African philosophy by still preferring and maintaining Western philosophical concepts and frameworks as paradigms (Sands 373–374). It is apparent that there is a dire need to incorporate African philosophy into the discourse, but one should be cognisant of how this is done. Additionally, it requires an understanding of African philosophy that is continually situated and contextually aware not to perpetuate the abovementioned problems. I now turn to two African philosophers who allow me to facilitate this mindful position and the subsequent reconceptualised notion of philosophical counselling as a method.

A particular reading of African philosophy: setting the context for a conversation between Serequeberhan and Chimakonam

Various approaches and diverse schools of thought give rise to multiple understandings of African philosophy. As I introduce a reading of African hermeneutic and conversational philosophy, I am also cognisant of the numerous understandings of these philosophies in the discourse. As a theoretical point of departure, I take seriously the understanding of hermeneutic philosophy proposed by Serequeberhan, which is cognisant of the questions and problems stemming from and responding to a concrete lifeworld. I also take seriously the strand of conversationalist thought proposed by Chimakonam through which the situated and contextualised conversation recognises and honours the embodied voices of its embedded participants. I contend that these authors allow for a concretised interpretative actualisation ensuing from a specific lifeworld, cognisant of the questions and problems pertaining to the specific context. Subsequently, new concepts might be created that can better help with understanding and disclosing new ways of being/living. However, these authors have garnered some critique in the wider literature of contemporary African philosophy. These critiques can nonetheless be appreciated to help the ensuing conversations become more nuanced and refined. With that in mind, I briefly discuss my reading of the two chosen authors.

Serequeberhan's African hermeneutic philosophy is presented as a response to the contemporary African situation, with the subsequent goal being a critical interpretation or understanding of what it means to be situated in the African lifeworld (Serequeberhan, *Hermeneutics* 118). "Contemporary" and "African" here simply refer to the period in which the philosopher is historically situated and the specific geographical lifeworld from where these interpretations are affected and actuated (*Existence* 11; *Philosophy* 33). The contemporary African situation for Serequeberhan, though, is one characterised by neo-colonialism in which the previously colonised is situated – a deplorable situation affected by the residue of colonialism's forceful imposition of its own history, destroying indigenous ways of living (*Hermeneutics* 21, 24; *African* 44). This sentiment is echoed by various African philosophers who enunciate the need for philosophies to have an acute awareness of problems and questions arising from the concrete African lifeworld (e.g., Chimakonam, *Conversational* 15; Sogolo 97). If ignored, the disclosing of new ways of being/living and the creation of new concepts are stifled, and the philosopher becomes somewhat irrelevant to her society by mirroring a context with different sets of questions and answers.

The task of the African philosopher then becomes one of addressing and understanding this deplorable neo-colonial situation with the aim of transcending it by constructing a new vo-

cabulary (Serequeberhan, *Hermeneutics* 9; *Existence* 36). Serequeberhan is acutely aware of the problems pertaining to philosophies upholding and relying on quasi-universal frameworks. At length, he discusses the problems of exclusion and occlusion in the work of ethno- and professional philosophers. The subordination of Africans stems from and is maintained by either valorising negative stereotypes, as was done by some ethnophilosophers such as Léopold Senghor, or by claiming that African philosophy is merely the practice of Western philosophy by Africans, such as the claims by Paulin Hountondji (Serequeberhan, *Hermeneutics* 6–7). The critique of these philosophies boils down to disregarding the contemporary situation in which the previously colonised are situated.

In contrast, Serequeberhan proposes that the African philosopher has a double task, one that is at the same time critically destructive and creatively constructive; instantiated by, firstly, critiquing Western-centrism, and secondly, constructing a new framework that incorporates both the particularised Western philosophy and what is deemed valuable from the past/history. This is somewhat concretised through a process of "sifting and sieving" and a "filtration and fertilisation" in which the past is critically appropriated, and philosophies stemming from beyond the concrete African lifeworld are organically indigenised (*Hermeneutics* 9, 108–109; *Philosophy* 38; *Decolonization* 150). A new framework is subsequently reached involving the critique of hegemonized Western-centric ideas and the subsequent discarding of what might hinder disclosing new ways of living. By doing so, Western philosophy in its hegemonized form becomes irrelevant to understand the neo-colonial situation or postcolonial present (*Decolonization* 150). But the African philosopher can also not return to a past untouched by, inter alia, colonialism. Here, Serequeberhan relies on Amílcar Cabral's idea of a return to the source. The African philosopher does not return to a static pre-colonial past. Instead, she returns to the "vigor, vitality (life), and ebullience of African existence" demonstrated through the various anti-colonial struggles (*Hermeneutics* 126). The aim here is to get beyond the neo-colonial situation.

Even though Serequeberhan's philosophy serves as a significant turn, some critique is worth addressing. The first important point of critique regards the possibility of appropriating and indigenising philosophies stemming from beyond the African lifeworld. Serequeberhan's existentially aware turn stems from the work of both Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, whom he attempts to "organically appropriate and indigenize" (*Hermeneutics* 9). Following the critique of Bryan Mukandi, one might rightfully question the possibility of this challenge because, as he states, "an Africanised Gadamer is still Gadamer" (527). Serequeberhan's turn to Western hermeneutic philosophers is thus contrasted against the possibility of turning to other, more indigenous philosophers. But one might ask if an appropriated and indigenised Gadamer is, in fact, still Gadamer. By accepting Mukandi's logic, one gives credence to the notion that ideas and concepts are stagnant and cannot be moulded or shaped/transformed; they essentially remain what they are. More damning, though, is that this logic again precludes the conversation from organically unfolding by trying to keep the conversation clear of outside influences.

This leads to a more severe critique stemming from Janz, who states that Serequeberhan's hermeneutical approach in fact closes down the possibility of further interpretation as he relies on too fixed notions regarding the deplorable neo-colonial situation (Janz, *Alterity* 227). African philosophy merely becomes a response to this situation. The discussions stemming from Serequeberhan's philosophy might have been closed off even before it started. A continual self-critical and dynamic interpretation is replaced by a "hermeneutic of convenience", i.e., taking what is needed and discarding what is not useful (227). This critique carries a lot of weight as the ensuing discussions stemming from Serequeberhan can get stagnant and over-reliant on, for example, the neo-colonial situation. African philosophy is thus merely the product of this answer; it remains responsive, descriptive, and predefined (228). The ensuing dialogue or conversation is not as open as first imagined, again enclosing creative possibilities. As a response to this critique,

I turn to conversationalism as a meaningful philosophy to again open up and rejuvenate the conversation whilst keeping in mind the importance of Serequeberhan's hermeneutic philosophy that turns our attention to African philosophy being an interpretative actualisation rooted in a concrete lifeworld.

I explore conversationalism as a concrete example of a method particular to African philosophy, which, I contend, helps with going beyond the reliance on fixed readings/singular frameworks, thus improving Serequeberhan's somewhat stagnant position. Moreover, it aims to create new concepts and disclose new ways of being/living, thus keeping the link to Serequeberhan's philosophy alive. Conversationalism thus begins anew to write its own whilst looking at the past with a critical eye (re-) centring embodied voices from the African lifeworld. The aim is to create relevant concepts for those living in the African lifeworld, which might continually rejuvenate the hermeneutic or interpretative nature of philosophy.

The proponents of conversationalism methodised a specific understanding of "relationship" and "interdependence", emphasising a critical epistemic encounter aimed at creating new concepts and opening new ways of thinking (Chimakonam, *What* 115, 120; *Conversationalism* 11, 15). Underpinning this idea of relationship is the Igbo idea of *arụmarụ-ụka,* which roughly translates to either "engaging in critical and creative conversation" or "engaging in a relationship of doubt" (Chimakonam, *What* 120; Egbai and Chimakonam 181). Conversation, in this context, is understood differently. It is not used to signify an informal exchange of ideas. Instead, it emphasises a critical epistemic encounter when two embedded parties, viz., *nwa nsa* or the proponent and *nwa nju* or the opponent, continually rejuvenate the conversation through a "creative struggle" (Chimakonam, *What* 116, 119). A creative struggle is the dynamic interchange of ideas between *nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju* through rigorous and critical argumentation and incessant disagreement, which drives the conversation forward. Both parties retain their original positions but positively transformed, in contrast to a dialogue where a synthesis or conclusion might be reached. In fact, Chimakonam contends that yielding to the demands of synthesis is a creative *surrender* when the dialogue ends (*Conversationalism* 17). In contrast, a sustained critical and creative conversation might yield new concepts and disclose different ways of being/living. This idea is captured when Chimakonam refers to the *nwa-nsa* position as having a "transgenerational life-span" due to the relentless attacking of *nwa nju* (*What* 121-122). After every attack, the proponent is obliged to reshuffle her position by creatively amending it. This action engenders new grounds for *nwa nju* to respond to, but more importantly, this serves as the fertile soil from which novel concepts might be disclosed.

I identify two initial benefits to this method that might amend the shortcoming of Serequeberhan's philosophy. Firstly, the voice of the situated participant embedded in a specific lifeworld is always recognised and honoured, emphasising the collaborative aspect of philosophising, which is somewhat neglected in hermeneutical philosophy. This leads to the second benefit: no particular voice or philosophy will be hegemonized. The metaphorical playing field remains equal. Different voices are important catalysts for further conversations, potentially strengthening their original positions.

It is crucial, however, to mention and address two glaring issues. Firstly, the concept of conversation endorsed by Chimakonam might be understood too narrowly, thus enclosing the conversation again. Conversationalism does not, for example, mention the necessity of listening, which forms part of any conversation (Janz, *Conversation* 42). Neither does it include the importance of silence, which might also produce further responses and subsequently lead to new concepts (Ibanga 82). These issues should not be seen as critiques but as shortcomings that call for serious attention. By continually refreshing the conversation, meaningful silences and the different aspects of listening might be neglected. Raabe, in the philosophical counselling context, has conceptualised the difference between a listening-to-understand and

a listening-to-critique (*Philosophical* 144). This distinction might be of utmost importance in conversationalism as confusing them can lead to merely listening-to-respond to rejuvenate the conversation. Misunderstandings and superficial conversations are bound to follow.

A more pressing issue, however, is the similarity of conversationalism to the praxis of philosophy itself (Matolino 135). That is, one might question the veracity and novelty of conversationalism as a method in African philosophy. As a result, many of the concepts used by its proponents have been critiqued as being either established concepts merely with a corresponding Igbo term (Rettová 32-33) or that they are purposefully obscured, which might, in the end, stifle conversation (Matolino 134). This critique resembles the one levelled against Serequeberhan's attempt at indigenising Western philosophers. With some thought, this critique might not seem that weighty, especially regarding the dynamic nature of philosophy. Concepts and ideas change over time and from where one speaks. Or, as Janz rightfully argues, concepts and ideas are rendered useful and usable by a place, that is, thought as rising and responding to a given situation (*Philosophy-in-Place* 481). Giving undue prominence to ideas having fixed meanings, especially by favouring one's own position, again encloses what is supposed to be an open conversation. In the next section, I briefly respond to this critique by discussing the problem of translation in philosophy. I will now turn to the rationale behind the reconceptualisation of philosophical counselling.

From methods in philosophical counselling to philosophical counselling as a method

As mentioned above, one of the central problems in philosophical counselling is that of method(s). What should the method of the philosophical counsellor be, or should her practice even have one? How are the methods used in philosophical counselling different from those utilised in academic philosophy and psychotherapy? These are some of the pressing questions in the discourse, consensus rarely being the outcome. However, this presupposes that philosophical counselling is a separate field in philosophy with its own method(s). In this section, I contend that philosophical counselling should rather be viewed as a method per se. I briefly highlight three important implications which serve as a justification for the reconceptualisation of philosophical counselling.

Firstly, the search for method(s) will become obsolete. Philosophical counsellors who adhere to the view that the only goal of philosophical counselling is to philosophise will naturally gravitate toward this position. That is, they already practice philosophical counselling as a method, even though they do not articulate this position. If one accepts the bare minimum understanding of a method being repeatable steps taken to achieve some desired outcome or goal, then viewing philosophical counselling as a method fulfils at least one of the two mentioned conditions. That being the desired outcome for practising philosophical counselling as a method is to philosophise. However, finding identifiable and repeatable steps that one can take to achieve this goal is difficult due to, amongst others, the myriad of different philosophical traditions with their own particular methods. In accordance with the tenets of conversationalism, repeatable steps might hinder the continual, active, and critical conversation. But this leads to the second implication, viz., getting academic philosophy out of the metaphorical ivory tower.

As I argued in the previous section, in accordance with Serequeberhan and Chimakonam, contemporary African philosophy should help the Africans embedded in a specific lifeworld understand their current situation living under neo-colonialism or the postcolonial present. Moreover, emphasis is placed on engendering voices conversing from a concrete lifeworld to creatively struggle, aiming at creating new concepts and disclosing ways of being that critically appropriate the past with a better future in mind. However, one might ask: how can this academic enterprise help the African living outside of the academy, possibly when (i) money is scarce and (ii) English is not a first or second language? This is where I envision philosophical

counselling to make a valuable contribution that purely academic philosophy cannot. Philosophical counselling is a direct link to the public in which the philosophical counsellor translates academic philosophy into a language the counselee can understand. The translation here refers to (i) the act of translating academic language to a language the counselee can understand and (ii) the literal translation from, say, English to the language of the counselee. The former has been dealt with in the philosophical counselling discourse (e.g., Tuedio 27). However, the latter, a well-established problem in the broader landscape of philosophy, has not yet been mentioned in the literature of philosophical counselling. That said, I contend that translating philosophy into philosophical counselling poses immense possibilities for creating new concepts, especially when the idea that philosophy needs a particular lingua franca, such as English, is given up (Janz, *Conversation* 42).

The second important implication, therefore, is that by practising philosophical counselling as a method of philosophising, academic philosophy can be made relevant to the public. For example, the work of Chimakonam and Serequeberhan, as discussed above, can be incorporated into the counselee's way of living. Understanding philosophical counselling as a separate field having its own methods might lead philosophical counsellors to search for inspiration beyond academic philosophy. Moreover, the philosophical counsellor would also need to demarcate her practice sufficiently from psychotherapy in order to justify its presence in the realm of psychotherapy or the mental health professions. Focus is thus on justifying its own practice rather than responding to the issues originating from the lifeworld of the counselee. Academic philosophy, in some sense, already deals with the concrete problems of the counselee, albeit in the metaphorical ivory tower. Both Chimakonam and Serequeberhan, for example, write about issues stemming from and responding to the concrete African lifeworld, but their works are not as accessible to the public and are written for a predominantly academic audience. Reconceptualising philosophical counselling as a method of practising academic philosophy effectively sidesteps the problem of justifying its own practice. Moreover, one does not have to look beyond academic philosophy to inform one's practice. The philosophical counsellor qua academic African philosopher, consequently, helps the counselee understand her way of being, situated in the African lifeworld, with the help of African philosophers such as Chimakonam and Serequeberhan by disclosing their work to the counselee.

At this point, it is worth addressing an anticipated shortcoming concerning the reconceptualisation of philosophical counselling as a method, especially regarding a perceived tension between the production and transmission of philosophy. From the above discussion, there is an impression that greater emphasis is placed on the transmission of philosophy in a counselling session. This idea has been touched upon in the discourse, with various philosophical counsellors emphasising the importance of an educational component, or an intentional transference of knowledge, in the philosophical counselling process (e.g., Raabe, *Philosophical* 146–148; Schuster 33). The production of philosophy through philosophical counselling conceptualised as a method, however, appears to be more problematic as it seems like its practice is restricted to unique educational situations, i.e., the transmission of philosophy. In addressing this tension, I envision conversationalism to play an important role in the creation of concepts in a distinct way, thereby constituting the production of philosophy. I elaborate on this point below in the third implication.

The third implication of conceptualising philosophical counselling as a method is that philosophical counsellors qua philosophers must be intimately aware of the problems and questions emanating from and pertaining to a concrete lifeworld. The tension between the production and transmission of philosophy via philosophical counselling as a method can be addressed more sufficiently now. Take conversationalism as an example. If it is practised through philosophical counselling, it might facilitate the creation of concepts, i.e., the production of philosophy, in

two unique ways. Firstly, as the counselee becomes an active participant in the conversation, she does not passively receive the responses of the philosophical counsellor. This amounts to philosophical texts being "prescribed", i.e., given without much discussion, akin to the prescription of medication. And secondly, as alluded to above, the translation of philosophy in itself becomes a creative endeavour. Concepts and ideas are not static, and by translating them from either one language to another or from one context to another, a fundamentally creative act ensues. One can thus charitably interpret the translation of philosophical concepts into Igbo by the proponents of conversationalism in this light. The very moment of translation then becomes what Janz refers to as a philosophical moment (*Philosophy-in-Place* 488). Concepts can thence be refined and transformed, and new concepts might come from this act of translation. The counselee plays an integral role in this process, but she might also be affected by it, especially when the philosophy/concept is more relevant to her lifeworld.

In the last section of this article, I want to briefly defend the notion of practising African philosophy through philosophical counselling, reconceptualised as a method. The focus is on fostering an environment rich for concept creation relevant to a counselee situated in a concrete lifeworld.

Philosophical counselling as a method of practising African philosophy: concretising concept creation through creative struggles

I now return to the notion of philosophical counselling in Africa. A reworked understanding of philosophical counselling as a method of responding to philosophical problems originating from concrete lifeworlds might prove to be more helpful than contemporary philosophical counselling relying on singular traditions. Moreover, the way African philosophy is incorporated into the philosophical counselling discourse proves to be more nuanced. Rather than attempting to add to the status quo, I proposed reconceptualising philosophical counselling as a method. Two initial strengths warrant mentioning. Firstly, the status quo is not left unquestioned. As I discussed, there is an evident lack of African philosophy in the philosophical counselling discourse maintained by the continual reliance on Western philosophy. And secondly, I go beyond mere acknowledgement of the problem by proposing a novel manner to incorporate African philosophy into the discourse, viz., by reconceptualising philosophical counselling as a method through which African philosophy can be practised. In this last section, I provide an example of this reconceptualised philosophical counselling, focusing on how the ideas of a hermeneutical happening and collaborative philosophising, discussed earlier, are positively changed when situated in a conversational framework.

In short, African philosophy conceptualised in this study is an interpretive actualisation situated in a conversational framework in which the participants' voices are recognised and honoured as speaking from and responding to a concrete lifeworld. Philosophical counselling thence becomes the method through which this idea of African philosophy is concretised and practised, thus going beyond the theoretical and abstract realm. In utilising the concepts gained from conversationalism, the philosophical counsellor and counselee can both enter the *nwa nsa* and *nwa nju* positions. In this framework, it becomes imperative that both parties partake in the dynamic and creative conversation or philosophise collaboratively. Passive prescription of texts will thus not promote a conversation understood as a critical discursive practice. Usually, a counselling session in contemporary philosophical counselling might end where a quasi-synthesis is reached when the counselee states that she understands her situation differently or that her problem is resolved in relation to the philosophy provided by the philosophical counsellor. Philosophical counselling case studies often read as follows: *Counselee P's problem [insert problem] was resolved by incorporating philosophy [insert philosophy]*. Lou Marinoff, for example, writes that "[w]ith 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" (*The therapy* 120–121). But in the proposed framework, this instantiates a creative surrender, a position in which the conversation ends as a mere informal exchange of ideas. If we take seriously the ideas of conversationalism, one might go as far as to state that there was little to no creative struggle and thus no philosophising qua a rigorous and critical conversation. Using the idea of the hermeneutical happening, the exercise of interpretation and reinterpretation is absent, or in conversational terms, there was no reshuffling of original ideas. Two questions might soon follow: (i) what is the practicality of this continual questioning in a philosophical counselling framework, and (ii) practicality aside, what is the benefit of the creative struggle for the counselee? I briefly address these questions below.

Inherent in philosophical counselling is a tension between the philosophical counsellor's philosophical commitments and the want to respond to the counselee's concrete questions/problems so as not to alienate her. One might construe this as the tension between producing and practising philosophy versus the transmission of philosophy to help answer the questions of the counselee. This tension is captured by Reinhard Duβel when he writes that the counselee "might have left in the meantime, […] not much happier than before, but not unhappy either" (337). This anecdote signifies the tension that leads to the first question. The counselee might not always uphold the same philosophical commitments as the philosophical counsellor. With conversationalism, the counselee might not want to maintain the continual conversation by entering the *nwa nsa* position. With hermeneutical philosophy, the counselee might not want to consider a reinterpretation or a position that counters her original position. A counselee might merely request a quick solution to her philosophical predicament, whilst the philosophical counsellor qua philosopher might find the counselee's predicament a unique position demanding philosophical pondering and critical conversation.

This leads to the second question regarding the benefit of creative struggle. According to the founder of the modern philosophical counselling movement, Gerd Achenbach (3), a philosophy that does not discomfort "is not worthy of our attention". This idea is not novel, as many have noted the importance of tension in the practice of philosophy, especially regarding the creation of concepts (see, e.g., Janz, *Philosophy-in-Place* 480–481). To informally discuss or come to an agreement does not produce the desired tension. Situated in conversationalism, one might refer to this tension as a creative struggle. Practising conversationalism through philosophical counselling might thus again pit the philosophical commitment of the philosopher against the needs of the counselee. A creative struggle in a philosophical counselling session might ensue when either the philosophical counsellor or the counselee de-structs, critically interrogates or interprets a statement, question, or problem. I maintain that through this practice, even if some discomfort or intellectual tension is present, concepts might be created, entailing a greater understanding of problems/questions and one's way of being/living. Some authors have recently proposed conversationalism as being capable of confronting existential problems, thus transcending the mere theoretic and abstract realm and entering the (philosophical) counselling realm (e.g., Ogbonnaya 108). Practising conversationalism through philosophical counselling might thus positively change a counselee's life, which stems from the African lifeworld. With the help of a situated and contextualised hermeneutic, a counselee might come to a greater understanding of her way of being in the world. But more importantly, it stimulates the practice of African philosophy in a profoundly new manner and context not yet articulated in the discourse.

Conclusion

Philosophical counselling is usually conceptualised as a separate field/movement in contemporary philosophy. However, this leads to the problem of justifying and distinguishing its methods from other similar practices, like academic philosophy and psychotherapy. But a more

pressing problem follows, viz., the neglect of different philosophical traditions beyond that of Western philosophy. In this article, I argued that if philosophical counselling is reconceptualised as *a method* of practising philosophy, contra a separate movement *within* philosophy, the above-mentioned two problems dissipate. Moreover, philosophical traditions previously neglected and ignored in philosophical counselling, such as African philosophy, can no longer be relegated to the periphery. I turned to African philosophers Tsenay Serequeberhan and Jonathan Chimakonam to facilitate my understanding of African philosophy qua conversationalism and a critical hermeneutic of the current African situation. More specifically, I rely on the use of conversationalism as a method of practising African philosophy in a situated and contextually bound lifeworld in such a manner as to help understand neo-colonialism or the postcolonial present in Africa but in a philosophical counselling context. I argued that this understanding of African philosophy and the reconceptualisation of philosophical counselling facilitates an environment to, inter alia, take philosophy from the abstract and theoretical realm and render it applicable to the everyday life of the counselee by creating new concepts relevant to her lifeworld.

Stellenbosch University, *South Africa*

Notes

[1] In using the term "Western philosophy" I do not want to imply that there is coherent practice with, inter alia, singular method(s). One might equally have used "Western philosophies".

[2] In using the term "African philosophy" I do not want to imply that there is coherent practice with, inter alia, singular method(s). One might equally have used "African philosophies". Moreover, various authors, such as Mogobe Ramose, use the term "Africa(n)" under protest or erasure as it is an invented and subsequently imposed term (4).

[3] Unfortunately, in the process of finalising this paper, Dr Johann Broodryk passed away.

[4] Various works still perpetuate the problem of, inter alia, indigenous inclusion. Philosophical traditions, such as African philosophy, occupy their own section on the periphery of contemporary philosophy. See, for example, the recent publication by Anthony Grayling that neatly delineates Western philosophy from "the rest" (viii). See especially Allais (207) and Cantor (728) who problematise the fictive narrative of Western philosophy developing without outside influences.

[5] Writing from a South African perspective, I make two assumptions pertaining to this lifeworld: (i) high costs of education lead to unequal opportunities, directly affecting the poor and those under the yoke of neo-colonialism (Mseleku 254), and (ii) a vast majority of speakers' first language is not English; isiZulu, isiXhosa and Afrikaans being the most frequently spoken languages (Lehohla 24).

[6] Few in the literature of philosophical counselling have problematised the language in which a philosophical counselling session happens. That is, most uncritically accept that the philosophical counsellor and counselee speak the same language. In a context where the academically preferred language is different from the first language of a country, problems might arise. For example, in a South African context, English is the preferred academic language. Most, if not all, philosophy courses/modules/degrees are in English. However, isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans are the three most frequently spoken languages (Lehohla 24).

[7] See, for example, Jonathan Rée stating that "of all the kinds of translation, none is trickier than the translation of philosophy" (226).

[8] As there are currently few if any efficacy studies of philosophical counselling treating any symptom/disorder, one can merely speculate what contribution academic philosophy can have for the counselee.

[9] See, for example, Ran Lahav who recently proposed "Deep Philosophy", i.e., contemplating short texts, contra critical argumentation and conversation/dialogue ('Texts for Philosophical Contemplation').

[10] I am grateful for a comment by an anonymous reviewer that prompted this anticipated critique.

[11] See, for example, Richard Sivil discussing this particular problem (205-207).
[12] See Schuster (127-180) and Marinoff (*Plato* 83-256) for more such case studies.

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