# JUSTIFICATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF AFRICAN METAPHYSICS AGAINST THE THEORY OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM

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**Abstract**
This essay critically explores the justification of African metaphysics in response to the challenges raised by the theory of logical positivism. Logical positivism, with its verification principle, dismissed metaphysical discourse as meaningless since it could not be empirically verified or analytically proven. Such a stance has often been used to marginalize non-Western metaphysical traditions, including African philosophy, which emphasizes spiritual ontology, communal existence, and the unity of material and immaterial realities. The essay argues that African metaphysics remains philosophically valid, not only because logical positivism is internally inconsistent—its own verification principle cannot be empirically verified—but also because metaphysical categories are indispensable for meaning-making, identity, and ethical reasoning. Drawing upon the works of African philosophers such as PlacideTempels, John Mbiti, and Kwame Gyekye, the essay demonstrates that African metaphysics presents a holistic and context-sensitive account of reality that challenges the reductionism of positivist scientism. Ultimately, the discussion reaffirms the legitimacy of African metaphysics as a vital philosophical framework and highlights the importance of plural rationalities in global philosophical discourse.

**Keywords:** African Metaphysics; Logical Positivism; Verification Principle; Epistemology; Philosophy of Religion; Pluralism

## 1. Introduction: The Problem of Metaphysics and the Positivist Challenge

The place of metaphysics in philosophy has been one of the most enduring and controversial questions in the history of thought. From Aristotle's Metaphysics, which sought to explore "being qua being" and the first principles of reality, to Kant's critical philosophy, which both limited and reformulated the metaphysical enterprise, metaphysics has long stood at the center of philosophical reflection. Yet, with the rise of modern empiricism and later analytic traditions, metaphysics was increasingly regarded with suspicion. In the twentieth century, this suspicion reached a climax in the movement of logical positivism, which sought to eliminate metaphysics altogether from the domain of meaningful discourse (Ayer, 1946). For the

positivists, metaphysical statements lacked cognitive meaning because they were neither empirically verifiable nor analytically true. Within this framework, propositions concerning God, spirit, ultimate reality, or causality were dismissed as nonsensical, belonging not to philosophy but to poetry or myth (Carnap, 1959). This radical dismissal of metaphysics posed a fundamental challenge to diverse philosophical traditions, particularly those outside the Western canon, whose ontological frameworks are deeply metaphysical. African philosophy is one such tradition.

African metaphysics, understood broadly, investigates the structure of reality in terms of the interconnection between spiritual and material realms, the vital force underlying existence, and the communal ontology of personhood (Mbiti, 1969; Tempels, 1959). Far from being abstract speculation, African metaphysics is embedded in lived experience, cultural practices, and worldviews. Yet, from the perspective of logical positivism, its claims about spirits, ancestors, or vital force would be dismissed as meaningless, since they cannot be empirically verified in the narrow sense advocated by the Vienna Circle. The resilience of African metaphysics in the face of such dismissal raises an important philosophical question: Can African metaphysics be justified against the critique of logical positivism? This problem is not merely academic. It touches on the broader issue of epistemic justice, that is, whether African thought-systems can be recognized as legitimate contributors to global philosophy, or whether they are to be excluded by the epistemic strictures of Western scientism (Wiredu, 1980; Hountondji, 1996). The question also resonates with contemporary debates about pluralism, intercultural philosophy, and the validity of non-Western forms of knowledge.

The aim of this essay is to justify the philosophy of African metaphysics against the theory of logical positivism. Specifically, the essay seeks to demonstrate, first, that the verification principle of logical positivism is self-refuting and too narrow a criterion for meaningfulness; second, that metaphysical categories are indispensable for human existence, even within scientific and analytic reasoning; and third, that African metaphysics provides a coherent, context-sensitive framework for understanding reality, one that cannot be dismissed by positivist standards without committing epistemic reductionism. To achieve this aim, the essay is guided by three key research questions:

What are the main features of African metaphysics, and how do they function as philosophical explanations of reality?
How does logical positivism, through its verification principle, critique and dismiss metaphysical claims?

On what grounds can African metaphysics be justified as a valid and indispensable philosophical discourse in the face of positivist critique?

Methodologically, this essay employs the tools of comparative philosophy, critical analysis, and hermeneutics. Comparative philosophy allows a juxtaposition of African metaphysical thought with the analytic framework of logical positivism, highlighting both tensions and contrasts. Critical analysis provides the evaluative framework to interrogate the assumptions

of logical positivism and the resilience of metaphysics. Hermeneutics, in turn, allows for an interpretation of African metaphysical categories within their cultural and historical contexts, rather than reducing them to alien categories imposed from outside. By combining these approaches, the essay aims to articulate a defense of African metaphysics that is both philosophically rigorous and contextually grounded. The structure of the essay reflects its orientation.

The first section examines the core features of African metaphysics, drawing on the works of Placide Tempels, John Mbiti, Kwame Gyekye, and other African philosophers who articulate the ontology of vital force, the unity of spiritual and material realms, and the communal nature of personhood. The second section turns to logical positivism, tracing its historical origins in the Vienna Circle, its articulation of the verification principle, and its programmatic dismissal of metaphysical, theological, and ethical claims. The third section presents the central justification of African metaphysics, highlighting the philosophical weaknesses of positivism, the indispensability of metaphysics to human reasoning, and the unique contributions of African ontology. The concluding section synthesizes these arguments, reaffirming the legitimacy of African metaphysics and underscoring the importance of philosophical pluralism in a global context. In sum, the essay argues that the philosophy of African metaphysics can and must be justified against the theory of logical positivism. Such a justification does not merely defend a cultural worldview but challenges the hegemony of a narrow epistemic paradigm that sought to delegitimize metaphysics. By affirming the validity of African metaphysics, the essay contributes to broader efforts at decolonizing philosophy and opening up the space for multiple traditions of rationality.

**2. The Philosophy of African Metaphysics**

African metaphysics refers to the indigenous African way of conceiving and interpreting the nature of reality, existence, and being. Unlike Western metaphysical traditions that often begin with abstract categories of substance or essence, African metaphysics is rooted in a dynamic ontology of vital force. PlacideTempels (1959), in his pioneering but controversial text Bantu Philosophy, argued that for many African worldviews, “being is force, and force is being.” Existence is not defined in static terms but is understood relationally, as the capacity to exercise, increase, or diminish one’s vital force. This orientation provides a unique metaphysical framework where all entities — humans, animals, plants, ancestors, and spirits — are integrated into a continuum of forces. A central implication of this ontology is the radical interconnectedness of reality. African metaphysics does not posit a sharp dichotomy between spiritual and material realms but rather conceives them as interpenetrating dimensions of existence (Mbiti, 1969). The spiritual, manifested in ancestors, divinities, and ultimate reality, directly influences the material, while the material world is always already infused with the spiritual. This spiritual-material unity means that African metaphysics is not speculative in the abstract sense but is experiential, practical, and lived out in the daily relations of individuals and communities.

Several key themes that characterize African metaphysics flow from its ontological foundation. The first is the notion of personhood. In contrast to the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am,”

African metaphysics advances a relational conception of the self: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108). Personhood is not an isolated essence but a process realized through communal belonging, moral responsibility, and recognition by others. This is elaborated in Gyekye's (1997) distinction between the "communal self" and the "individual self," both of which are integrated in African philosophical anthropology. Closely tied to personhood is communal existence. The African metaphysical worldview emphasizes the primacy of community over the individual. Existence acquires meaning not in isolation but within the social fabric, guided by traditions, kinship structures, and moral norms (Menkiti, 1984). The community sustains the individual, while the individual contributes to the flourishing of the community. Thus, metaphysical reflection is inseparable from social and ethical life.

A further theme is causality. African metaphysics often interprets causation in holistic and sometimes spiritual terms. Events in the physical world may be traced not only to immediate material causes but also to spiritual forces, ancestral interventions, or disruptions in cosmic harmony (Mbiti, 1969). This expanded view of causality does not reject empirical explanation but supplements it with metaphysical dimensions that aim to restore balance and meaning. Finally, African metaphysics acknowledges transcendence. Ultimate reality, often symbolized by God, divinities, or ancestral spirits, serves as the source and ground of all being. Transcendence here is not divorced from the world but intimately involved in the rhythms of life, death, and rebirth. This orientation provides metaphysical grounding for African religious, moral, and existential practices.

Several African philosophers and scholars have articulated and developed these themes in systematic ways. PlacideTempels (1959) argued that the ontology of vital force is the key to understanding Bantu philosophy, though his account has been criticized for paternalism and for projecting European categories onto African thought (Hountondji, 1996). Nevertheless, Tempels opened a space for taking African metaphysics seriously within philosophical discourse. John Mbiti (1969), in African Religions and Philosophy, provided a more comprehensive account of African metaphysical categories, emphasizing time, communal ontology, and the living-dead as metaphysical realities shaping African life. For Mbiti, African metaphysics is inseparable from religion, as the two are deeply interwoven in practice and worldview. Kwame Gyekye (1997), in Tradition and Modernity, advanced a moderate communitarianism, seeking to reconcile African metaphysical concepts of community and personhood with modern liberal ideals of autonomy. Gyekye's work underscores the philosophical sophistication of African metaphysics as a living tradition capable of dialogue with contemporary issues. Innocent Asouzu (2004), through his Ibuanyidanda (complementary reflection), extended African metaphysical thought into a systematic philosophy of complementarity, arguing that reality is constituted by mutually dependent fragments that achieve meaning only in relation to each other. His framework offers a metaphysical justification for African holism and relational ontology. Together, these thinkers illustrate that African metaphysics is not merely a set of cultural beliefs but a rigorous philosophical tradition that addresses fundamental questions of being, causality, and meaning.

Unlike the abstract, formalized epistemology often found in Western philosophy, African metaphysics is epistemologically grounded in narrative, proverbs, and lived experience. Proverbs, folktales, and myths function as repositories of metaphysical wisdom, transmitting concepts of causality, morality, and communal responsibility across generations (Wiredu, 1980). Rituals and cultural practices, such as libation, ancestor veneration, and initiation ceremonies, embody metaphysical principles in lived form, linking the spiritual and material dimensions of reality. This grounding challenges positivist assumptions that only empirically verifiable or analytically true statements are meaningful. In African metaphysics, meaning arises from coherence with communal experience, pragmatic efficacy, and existential depth. Thus, African metaphysics constitutes a valid epistemic framework for engaging reality. Ultimately, African metaphysics functions as a comprehensive framework for meaning-making. It provides answers to existential questions about life, death, suffering, and destiny, situating individuals within a cosmic order that is relational and purposeful. Its emphasis on vital force and interconnectedness fosters a strong sense of ethics and social cohesion, grounding moral responsibility in the preservation of life, the enhancement of communal welfare, and the restoration of harmony when disrupted.

Asouzu (2004) has argued that African metaphysics also offers a resource for contemporary global challenges by emphasizing complementarity over fragmentation, cooperation over competition. In this way, African metaphysics is not a relic of tradition but a living philosophy capable of contributing to global philosophical discourse. In sum, African metaphysics articulates a coherent and context-sensitive worldview grounded in vital force, interconnectedness, and spiritual-material unity. Through its themes of personhood, communal existence, causality, and transcendence, and through the contributions of thinkers such as Tempels, Mbiti, Gyekye, and Asouzu, it provides an indispensable framework for understanding reality. Its epistemological grounding in narrative and lived experience affirms its resilience against positivist reductionism, while its role in meaning-making and social cohesion underscores its enduring relevance.

**3. Logical Positivism and the Rejection of Metaphysics**

The movement of logical positivism arose in the early twentieth century within a group of philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians known as the Vienna Circle. Figures such as Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Herbert Feigl sought to unify philosophy and science through a radical new empiricism grounded in the formal clarity of logic (Uebel, 2007). Emerging in the intellectual aftermath of World War I and amid rapid advances in physics, mathematics, and linguistics, the Vienna Circle believed that philosophy should abandon speculative metaphysics and instead serve as the logical clarification of scientific knowledge. Their intellectual context was shaped by several influences. First, the empiricist tradition of Hume and Mill underscored the conviction that knowledge must be grounded in experience. Second, the advances in symbolic logic by Frege and Russell provided the formal tools for linguistic analysis. Third, the success of Einstein's relativity theory reinforced the belief that science, rather than metaphysics, offered the most reliable account of reality (Friedman, 1999). Against this backdrop, the Vienna Circle's project was both philosophical

and cultural: to cleanse human thought of metaphysical illusions and replace them with the precision and rigor of scientific knowledge.

The cornerstone of logical positivism was the verification principle, first fully popularized in English by A. J. Ayer in his influential book Language, Truth and Logic (1936/1946). The principle states that a statement is meaningful only if it is either (1) analytically true, as in mathematics and logic, or (2) empirically verifiable, that is, testable through sensory observation. Any other kind of statement, particularly those making metaphysical, theological, or ethical claims, was dismissed as meaningless. Ayer (1946) was explicit: "If a statement does not satisfy either of these conditions, then it is not a genuine statement at all. It is simply devoid of literal significance" (p. 41). With this formulation, metaphysics — long considered the queen of philosophy — was dethroned as a pseudo-discipline. Statements about God, ultimate reality, the soul, or the Absolute were not false but meaningless, because they did not pass the test of verification. The verification principle thus became both a methodological and ontological weapon. It not only provided criteria for distinguishing meaningful from meaningless discourse but also implied a radical narrowing of philosophy's scope. Philosophy was no longer to produce speculative systems but to analyze the language of science, thereby becoming an underlaborer to empirical inquiry.

Logical positivists applied the verification principle with striking consequences. Metaphysical claims, whether in the form of Hegel's Absolute Spirit, Aristotle's substance, or Kant's noumenon, were dismissed as unverifiable and therefore meaningless (Carnap, 1959). Similarly, theological assertions such as "God exists," "The soul is immortal," or "The universe has a purpose" were treated as cognitively empty. Such claims might evoke emotions or inspire behavior, but they lacked factual content in the positivist sense. Even ethical statements were not spared. For Ayer (1946), moral judgments were mere expressions of emotion — the so-called "boo-hurrah" theory. To say "murder is wrong" was not to state a fact but to express disapproval, much like saying "boo to murder." In this sense, ethical discourse was relegated to the realm of emotivism rather than objective knowledge. By reducing meaning to empirical verifiability or analytic truth, logical positivism sought to establish a purified domain of knowledge that excluded speculative metaphysics and normative discourse. Philosophy's task became that of linguistic clarification, while science held the monopoly on substantive knowledge about the world.

Traditional metaphysics was thus a central target of logical positivism. Schlick (1932/1979) argued that metaphysical propositions such as "The world exists" or "There is an Absolute" fail to add anything to our knowledge since they cannot be confirmed by experience. Carnap (1932/1959), in his essay "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," went further, declaring metaphysical statements not merely unverifiable but literally meaningless, produced by a misuse of language. Religion, too, came under heavy attack. Ayer (1946) argued that theism, atheism, and agnosticism alike were equally nonsensical, since none could be empirically verified. The verification principle thus positioned logical positivism in stark opposition to the metaphysical and spiritual traditions that had long shaped human thought, including non-Western systems such as African metaphysics, which

grounded knowledge in transcendent and communal realities. This critique reflected not only an epistemological stance but also a cultural agenda. By dismissing religion and metaphysics, logical positivism aligned itself with modernity's secular and scientistic ethos, which privileged science as the sole arbiter of truth.

Despite its initial influence, logical positivism soon faced serious philosophical criticisms. One of the earliest objections was that the verification principle itself was neither analytic nor empirically verifiable, and thus, by its own standards, meaningless (Strawson, 1950). Furthermore, the principle's demand for strict verifiability was untenable, since many scientific statements — such as claims about subatomic particles or cosmological entities — were not directly verifiable but inferred. Quine (1951), in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," exposed further weaknesses by challenging the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements and by arguing that empirical verification is holistic rather than atomistic. Later philosophers such as Popper (1959) suggested that falsifiability, not verification, was a better demarcation criterion for science. By the mid-twentieth century, logical positivism had largely declined as a coherent philosophical movement. Nevertheless, its legacy endures. The spirit of logical positivism survives in scientism, the belief that only scientific methods yield genuine knowledge and that metaphysical or spiritual claims are illegitimate.

The scientistic attitude continues to marginalize traditions such as African metaphysics, which ground meaning in dimensions beyond empirical verification. In this sense, logical positivism's influence persists, even as its philosophical foundations have been undermined. In a sense, logical positivism represented one of the most radical rejections of metaphysics in the history of philosophy. Emerging from the Vienna Circle's quest for clarity and scientific rigor, the verification principle articulated by A. J. Ayer sought to eliminate metaphysical, theological, and ethical discourse as meaningless. While the movement ultimately collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions and external criticisms, its legacy survives in the ongoing dominance of scientism and empiricism in contemporary thought. For African metaphysics, which grounds its categories in spiritual-material unity, communal ontology, and transcendence, the challenge of logical positivism remains crucial: how to defend metaphysical claims against a tradition that sought to silence them altogether.

**4. Justifying African Metaphysics against Logical Positivism**

The most direct challenge to logical positivism lies in its central dogma: the verification principle. As critics have long observed, the principle itself is neither analytically true nor empirically verifiable, and thus, by its own standards, meaningless (Strawson, 1950; Putnam, 1981). If one were to ask for the empirical evidence that "only empirically verifiable or analytic statements are meaningful," no such evidence could be provided. The principle is a philosophical stipulation rather than a scientific observation, and therefore fails its own test of meaningfulness. This self-refutation undermines the very foundation of logical positivism's claim to eliminate metaphysics.

Beyond self-refutation, positivism suffers from epistemic reductionism — the narrowing of all meaningful discourse to a single epistemic model. By privileging sensory verification, logical positivism dismisses vast domains of human experience, including moral, religious, and

aesthetic knowledge, as illegitimate. Such reductionism overlooks the reality that human understanding operates through multiple modes of cognition, including narrative, intuition, symbolic expression, and practical wisdom. As Gadamer (2004) later argued, human knowledge is hermeneutical, arising through interpretation and meaning-making, not merely through empirical testing. In this sense, the positivist attempt to delegitimize metaphysics reflects not an objective insight but a culturally specific epistemic prejudice masquerading as universality. Even science, which the positivists idolized as the paradigm of knowledge, rests on metaphysical assumptions. The belief in the uniformity of nature, the reality of external objects, the causal structure of the world, and the applicability of mathematics to physical phenomena are all metaphysical presuppositions that cannot themselves be empirically verified (Nagel, 1961). For example, no empirical test can demonstrate the universal validity of causality; it is a metaphysical principle underlying all scientific reasoning.

Karl Popper (1959) also highlighted the above point when he argued that science does not proceed by verification but by conjectures and refutations — a process that presupposes metaphysical commitments about the falsifiability and testability of hypotheses. Similarly, Quine (1951) showed that the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths, foundational to positivism, was itself untenable, thereby dissolving the supposed purity of empirical verification. If science cannot operate without metaphysical assumptions, then metaphysics is not a dispensable illusion but a necessary dimension of rational inquiry. To deny metaphysics is to deny the very conditions of possibility of science itself. This recognition opens a space for revaluing non-Western metaphysical traditions, such as African metaphysics, not as meaningless but as alternative frameworks of intelligibility.

Against the reductionism of positivism, African metaphysics asserts itself as a valid mode of knowledge. Its epistemological foundation is not empirical verification in the narrow positivist sense but experiential, pragmatic, and community-grounded validation. Knowledge is authenticated by its coherence with lived experience, its ability to guide communal life, and its pragmatic efficacy in addressing existential concerns. For example, the belief in the influence of ancestors is not verified through laboratory experiments but through its experiential resonance in ritual, moral practice, and the communal sense of continuity with the past (Mbiti, 1969). Proverbs and oral traditions function as vehicles of metaphysical wisdom, distilling complex ontological insights into forms that guide daily life (Wiredu, 1980). In this sense, African metaphysics offers an epistemic model that is relational and contextual, rejecting the positivist demand for isolated, sense-data-based verification. Innocent Asouzu (2004) has argued that African thought operates through a principle of complementarity, where truth emerges through the integration of diverse perspectives rather than the reduction of knowledge to a single criterion. This orientation provides a robust epistemic framework that resists the narrowness of positivism while affirming metaphysics as a legitimate form of knowledge.

Another strength of African metaphysics lies in its holistic ontology, which integrates material and spiritual dimensions, reason and experience. Unlike logical positivism, which reduces knowledge to empirical verification, African metaphysics acknowledges the multidimensionality of reality. The spiritual and material are not mutually exclusive but co-

constitutive; reason is not opposed to experience but embedded within it. The concept of vital force, articulated by Tempels (1959) and elaborated by later African philosophers, exemplifies this holism. Being is not reducible to matter or abstract categories but is understood as a dynamic interplay of forces that permeates all existence. This ontology affirms the unity of life and the interdependence of all beings. By contrast, the reductionism of positivism fractures reality into isolated empirical data, overlooking the deeper connections that give human life meaning. Furthermore, African metaphysics integrates rational reflection with practical and experiential dimensions. Knowledge is validated not in abstraction but in its capacity to sustain communal harmony, ethical responsibility, and existential balance. In this sense, African metaphysics offers a richer account of reality than positivism, which excludes precisely those dimensions most significant to human flourishing.

The dismissal of African metaphysics by logical positivism reflects a broader danger of Eurocentric epistemic exclusivism — the imposition of a single cultural standard of rationality as universally binding. By declaring that only empirically verifiable statements are meaningful, positivism effectively delegitimized non-Western traditions of knowledge, branding them as nonsensical or primitive. This epistemic hegemony is not merely philosophical but political, reinforcing colonial hierarchies that marginalized African thought. Scholars such as Hountondji (1996) and Wiredu (1980) have highlighted the need to resist such epistemic colonialism by affirming the validity of African philosophical systems on their own terms. To justify African metaphysics against positivism, therefore, is not only a philosophical task but also an act of epistemic justice — a refusal to allow Eurocentric frameworks to monopolize the criteria of meaning. Cross-cultural philosophy requires recognizing the legitimacy of multiple rationalities and epistemic traditions. As Hallen (2009) notes, African epistemologies are neither irrational nor unphilosophical but are grounded in different cultural logics of coherence, evidence, and justification. The challenge is not to subordinate African metaphysics to positivist standards but to engage it as an equal partner in global philosophical dialogue.

African metaphysics does more than resist positivism; it offers categories that can enrich global philosophy. Two examples are the notions of vital force and relational personhood. The concept of vital force challenges reductionist accounts of being by emphasizing dynamism, interconnection, and life-affirmation. This ontology provides a resource for ecological philosophy, ethics of care, and holistic approaches to science that resist mechanistic reductionism. Similarly, the African conception of personhood as relational — “I am because we are” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108) — challenges the individualistic metaphysics of Western liberal thought. It grounds identity not in isolated autonomy but in communal belonging, offering insights into debates on human rights, social justice, and political philosophy. These categories illustrate how African metaphysics, far from being meaningless, addresses enduring philosophical questions in ways that extend and deepen global discourse. Positivism, by contrast, impoverishes philosophy by excluding such categories from consideration.

Finally, the justification of African metaphysics rests on the recognition that metaphysics is indispensable for ethical, religious, and cultural identity. Human beings are meaning-seeking creatures who cannot live by empirical facts alone. Questions about the purpose of life, the

nature of death, the foundation of morality, and the possibility of transcendence cannot be resolved through scientific verification, yet they remain central to human existence. African metaphysics provides frameworks for addressing these questions, grounding ethics in communal harmony, religion in the interconnectedness of spiritual and material realms, and cultural identity in a worldview that affirms the dignity of life. To dismiss metaphysics as meaningless is to strip human existence of its deepest sources of orientation and value. Thus, African metaphysics must be justified not only against the logical inconsistencies of positivism but also as an indispensable resource for human flourishing. Its categories of vital force, personhood, and transcendence enrich global philosophy by affirming the metaphysical dimensions that positivism sought to deny.

**5. Conclusion: Toward Philosophical Pluralism**

The theory of logical positivism, once heralded as the final solution to the perennial disputes of metaphysics, has ultimately proven inadequate on both philosophical and practical grounds. Its central principle—the verification principle—collapses under the weight of self-refutation, since it cannot itself be empirically verified or analytically demonstrated. This fundamental inconsistency undermines the entire positivist program, rendering its rejection of metaphysics unconvincing. Moreover, positivism's epistemic reductionism, which equates meaningfulness with empirical verifiability, arbitrarily excludes vast domains of human discourse—moral, religious, aesthetic, and metaphysical—without justification. The history of twentieth-century philosophy confirms these weaknesses. Even within analytic traditions, philosophers such as Quine (1951), Popper (1959), and later Putnam (1981) demonstrated the untenability of positivism's strict empiricism and its false dichotomy between analytic and synthetic truths. The eventual decline of positivism was therefore not an accident but a logical consequence of its inherent limitations. Yet, despite its collapse as a philosophical school, its spirit persists in scientism and reductionist epistemologies that continue to marginalize alternative ways of knowing. It is against this backdrop that the justification of African metaphysics becomes both urgent and necessary.

African metaphysics, far from being the "meaningless" speculation dismissed by positivists, represents a coherent and resilient philosophical framework. Rooted in the ontology of vital force, the unity of spiritual and material realities, and the interdependence of all beings, it provides a worldview that addresses fundamental human concerns of existence, causality, morality, and transcendence. Thinkers such as PlacideTempels (1959), John Mbiti (1969), Kwame Gyekye (1995), and Innocent Asouzu (2004) have shown that African metaphysics is neither irrational nor uncritical, but grounded in experiential validation, pragmatic efficacy, and communal coherence. Epistemologically, African metaphysics relies on narrative, proverbs, and lived practice as vehicles of knowledge. These forms, though distinct from positivist methods, provide legitimate modes of accessing truth. For example, the metaphysical principle that "I am because we are" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108) captures a relational ontology of personhood that is both philosophically rigorous and socially transformative. Similarly, the notion of vital force articulates a dynamic cosmology that resonates with ecological and holistic approaches in contemporary philosophy. By these standards, African metaphysics is not a relic

of "pre-scientific" thought but a living tradition of inquiry, fully capable of philosophical justification.

The justification of African metaphysics has profound implications for African philosophy more broadly. For decades, African thought was marginalized under colonial and Eurocentric frameworks that labeled it as irrational, mythical, or "ethnophilosophical" (Hountondji, 1996). Logical positivism, with its narrow criterion of meaning, reinforced such marginalization by dismissing African metaphysical systems as meaningless. To reclaim metaphysics is therefore also to reclaim philosophical dignity. By affirming the legitimacy of African metaphysics, African philosophy resists intellectual colonization and asserts its right to define its categories, methods, and epistemologies. This is not a retreat into cultural relativism but a demand for intellectual pluralism. As Wiredu (1980) argues, African philosophy must critically engage with both indigenous traditions and global currents without being subjugated to foreign epistemic criteria. In this light, African metaphysics serves not only as a body of doctrines but as a symbol of epistemic sovereignty—an assertion that Africa has the intellectual resources to contribute meaningfully to global philosophical discourse.

The defense of African metaphysics against logical positivism points to a broader imperative within philosophy: the recognition of plural rationalities and worldviews. The attempt by positivists to impose a single epistemic standard on all discourse mirrors a wider tendency in Western philosophy to universalize culturally specific criteria of rationality. Such universalization not only marginalizes non-Western traditions but also impoverishes philosophy by excluding alternative modes of understanding. Philosophical pluralism demands that multiple traditions of thought—Western, African, Asian, Indigenous—be engaged on equal terms. Each brings its own categories, epistemic practices, and existential concerns. African metaphysics, with its emphasis on holism, relational personhood, and vital force, provides categories that challenge and enrich dominant paradigms. It invites philosophy to broaden its horizons, to move beyond narrow empiricism toward a recognition of the diversity of human ways of making sense of existence. This pluralist orientation does not negate the value of science or empirical inquiry. Rather, it situates science within a wider spectrum of rational practices that include metaphysics, ethics, religion, and aesthetics. Philosophy's task is not to eliminate these dimensions but to critically mediate among them, creating space for dialogue rather than exclusion. In this way, African metaphysics contributes not only to the self-affirmation of African philosophy but to the renewal of philosophy as a truly global enterprise.

In closing, the justification of African metaphysics against the critique of logical positivism affirms two essential points. First, the inadequacy of positivism demonstrates the impossibility of eliminating metaphysics from human thought. Metaphysical assumptions underlie even the most rigorously empirical sciences, and human beings cannot dispense with questions of meaning, value, and transcendence. Second, African metaphysics represents a philosophically legitimate response to these questions, grounded in its own categories, epistemologies, and cultural practices. To justify African metaphysics is therefore not merely to defend an intellectual tradition but to articulate a vision of philosophy as plural and inclusive. It is to insist

that no single epistemic framework—whether positivist, empiricist, or otherwise—can monopolize the criteria of meaning. Instead, philosophy must embrace the diversity of rationalities that emerge from different cultural contexts.

As the world grapples with crises of identity, ecology, and global justice, the categories of African metaphysics—vital force, communal personhood, interconnectedness—offer indispensable resources. They remind us that reality is not reducible to isolated data points but is a web of relations, forces, and meanings. They challenge us to think beyond reductionism, to embrace a holistic vision of life, and to recognize the dignity of all human cultures in the search for wisdom. Thus, the justification of African metaphysics against logical positivism is more than a defensive gesture. It is a constructive affirmation of metaphysics as a vital dimension of human existence and of African philosophy as a rightful contributor to global philosophical dialogue. In affirming metaphysics, we affirm philosophy itself—not as the exclusive preserve of one tradition, but as the shared heritage of humanity.

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