

Ezumezu Logic: A Clarification and Defense

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Abstract

Two common denominators may be discerned from the overall body of objections leveled against Ezumezu logic. The first, questions the originality of the Logic saying it is no different from Hegelian logic where the third value is a synthesis. The second seems synonymous with the fallacy of passing one of the many species as the genus – being an Igbo-inspired logic, critics have probed, to what extent it speaks to philosophizing for the entirety of the Africa continent. Our aim therefore is to defend Ezumezu against these charges and clarify the principal thesis of the System. We argue that a synthesis in Ezumezu is an anathema, hence it bears no semblance with Hegelian logic. In addition, we counter the outlook that the system impresses itself as the dominant African logic. Hence, we implore critics and African philosophy experts to engage the logic of their cultures critically, to discern places of parallels and departures from Ezumezu. This is pertinent for two reasons – a philosophy is African, or Western or Asian because of the logic that fortifies it and a logic that undergirds African philosophy and studies must evolve from within the continent but not without.

Keywords: African Philosophy, Defense, Ezumezu Logic, Hegelian Logic, Logic-Criterion

Introduction

The principal character of this disquisition concerns with addressing the brows that critics have raised since the appearance of Jonathan Chimakonam's inspiring and monumental work on African Logic – *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies*. As the subtitle of the work relays, the author seeks to foreground an Africa-inspired logic that will mediate thought, theory and method within the African philosophic place. Even when the Logic is Africa-inspired, the author stresses in several pages throughout his treatise that for the sake of originality and Africa's contribution to world knowledge, Ezumezu Logic is not culture-bound. The implication of this claim is that it also extends to places non-African too (Ofuasia 2019, 63). As Amara Esther Ani (2019, 85) puts it, Chimakonam's motivation is to present "Ezumezu Logic as an Africa-developed logic that lays a structure for enquiry in Africa in particular and in the globe in general." Since the publication of the work however, it has gathered some criticisms most of which arose from the failure to understand that classical logic

is one out of many strands of logic that humans use to order reality. As a result, our aim is to clarify and defend the System against the structured misrepresentation of its inner kernel by critics.

While most of the criticisms miss the mark, it is important to engage the constructive criticisms leveled against the System by David Martens (2019). This will however be explored in a latter part of this paper. For the moment, it is helpful to relay that to attain its major focus, this research, has five parts including this introduction. In the second section which follows shortly, we commence with a brief recapitulation of the main thrust of Ezumezu Logic. Here, we disclose the main primary nature of the System to forestall future misconceptions and misrepresentations. In the third section, we deduce two common denominators from the deluge of warrants leveled against Ezumezu. We reflect over plausibility of these objections. In the fourth section, we evince the misleading nature of the two overriding objections in the light of our brief exposition of Ezumezu in the first section. The fifth part concludes this inquiry.

The Essential Character of Ezumezu Logic

Ezumezu is an Igbo word that depicts aggregation. As an Igbo-inspired logic system developed by Jonathan Chimakonam, Ezumezu is an amalgam of three values – ‘ezu’ (truth); ‘izu’ (falsity); and ezumezu with small letter ‘e’ (complemented), which is usually presented as ‘C.’ This makes it a trivalent logic, since it explores three values in its analysis of thought. Now it needs to be stated that Chimakonam’s (2019) logic is not the first trivalent system. The author is not only aware that there are other logic systems that are trivalent but is quick to differentiate his system from them. In his words, Ezumezu is “a variant of three value logic that is context-dependent which unlike the variants by Jan Lukasiewicz and Stephen Kleene, prioritises complementarity rather than contradiction” (Chimakonam 2019, 160). Essentially, Ezumezu logic boasts of two seemingly opposed variables which are complemented in the third value. Unlike the mainstream and dominant bivalent logic system in the West where ‘T’ and ‘F’ are treated as contradictories, Ezumezu logic passes these as sub-contraries. Chimakonam’s Ezumezu logic presents itself as a philosophy of logic, methodology and as a formal system. There is however one chief motivation for the development of this system.

The need to propose a logic for African philosophy and studies, according to Chimakonam (2019, 22) arises out of the charge that African philosophy is nothing but the transliteration and reproduction of ideas of Western philosophers by experts of African philosophy. Hence “it becomes pertinent for African philosophers to map out their methods and the logic that grounds them” (Chimakonam 2019, 22). This is based on his conviction that a philosophy is African, or Western or Asian because of the logic that fortifies it. Hence for Chimakonam (2019), a philosophy is African if and only if it is mediated by African logic. What we have relayed subtly here is Chimakonam’s logic criterion concerning the question of the Africanness of African philosophy. It has been documented elsewhere that “Chimakonam seems to hold the outlook that this criterion has the capacity to make African ideas more original than previously articulated proposals aimed at exorcising the spell of Aristotle in the concurrent African

academia. This spell, according to him, was brought into the African place by Peter Bodunrin, Paulin Hountondji and Henry Odera Oruka” (Ofuasia 2019, 74).

Another crucial point concerning Ezumezu is the introduction or addition of three supplementary laws of thought to the three classical laws initiated by Aristotle. Aristotle’s classical laws of thought are the laws of contradiction, identity and excluded-middle. Upon a critical assessment of these laws of thought, Chimakonam (2019) finds them deficit for mediating how Africans conceive reality. Initially, the classical laws had been perceived as sacrosanct and axiomatic, needing no revision. Any foray into these laws was perceived as scandalous (Chimakonam 2019, 108). Princewill Alozie (2004, 53) had written in this connection too that the classical laws “are considered immutable and true under all circumstances.” It is crucial to however affirm that Chimakonam (2019) is not the first to call attention to the limitations and incompetence that beset the classical laws.

In the history of Western philosophy, Gottfried Leibniz is known to have added a supplement law to the three classical laws of thought (Alozie 2004). The law of Principle of Sufficient Reason (PRS) admits that “every true thought should be sufficiently substantiated” (Alozie 2004, 60). Leibniz must have arrived at this conviction following the insistence that the classical laws of thought need to be supplemented, owing to their logical incompetence. While commenting on Leibniz’s supplementary law, Sir William Hamilton chronicles: “In modern times, the attention of philosophers was called to this law of Leibnitz, who, on the two principles of Reason and Contradiction, founded the whole edifice of his philosophy” (Hamilton 1860, 67). In a recent formulation, the law of sufficient reason is depicted thus: “For every substantive fact Y there are some facts, the Xs, such that (i) the Xs ground Y and (ii) each one of the Xs is autonomous” (Dasgupta 2016, 12). On lucid terms, this means, every event must have a reason or a cause. This is a principle that is present in the reflections of Anaximander, Archimedes, Cicero, Avicenna, Aquinas and even Spinoza. Assuming Aristotle’s classical logic were not treated as universal and absolute, this law too should have been added to make it four. At this point, it therefore should not call for surprise if critics direct their prongs at Chimakonam for adding three laws to the classical laws – no one took Leibniz seriously hitherto and then Alfred North Whitehead entered the fray!

Whitehead (1948, 182) argues that the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle are too stringent to allow for innovation and inventions. In his words: “We are told by logicians that a proposition must be either true or false, and that there is no middle term. But in practice, we may know that a proposition expresses an important truth, but that it is subject to limitations and qualifications which at present remain undiscovered.” In a latter page, Whitehead (1948, 186) reflects: “In formal logic, a contradiction is the signal of a defeat: but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress towards a victory. This is one great reason for the utmost toleration of variety of opinion.” For those who still insist that Chimakonam’s supplementary laws of thought are scandalous and subaltern, the fact that he is among the sound minds who have questioned the absurd sanctity given to these laws should put the matter to rest.

Chimakoman’s supplementary laws are: Njikoka, Nmekoko, and Onana-etiti. The law of njikoka states that “A is true if and only if A is true wedge-implies A and B is true. Here, the

variable A is said to be true only in the company of another or other variables, not in isolation” (Chimakonam 2019, 139). For Nmekoka: ‘C’ is or equals a complement of ‘T’ and ‘F.’ This ‘C’ is the third truth value called ezumezu or nwa-izugbe. Whereas Njikoka hints at individual identities within the group, Nmekoka lays emphasis on group power or identity through the convergence of individual elements. Onana-etiti, the third supplementary law employs a conjunction where Aristotle’s law of excluded middle involves a disjunction. The law states that “A could be both true and false or if a thing is equal to itself it can be unequal to or different from itself depending on context” (Chimakonam 2019, 140). Chimakonam arrives at these supplementary laws thus: “In loosening the laws of excluded middle and contradiction on the one hand and identity on the other..., I mitigated the characters of absolute difference and absolute identity thereby shaded determinism from bivalence and transformed the latter into trivalence” (Chimakonam 2019, 97). It is then clear why the laws endorse his trivalent logic system – Ezumezu.

A crucial point is worthy of explaining here for the sake of clarification and defense that this research aims. Chimakonam (2019) did not at any point, throughout his treatise insist that the classical laws of thought be rejected or expunged. His position on these laws is that they are incompetent to handle ideas in the African philosophical place hence some laws need to be invoked as supplements Ezumezu therefore announces itself as an original Africa-inspired system to mediate thought, theory and method both for Africa and non-African reflections. To be sure, Chimakonam argues that his logic grounds African ontology as disclosed in the reflections of Innocent Asouzu’s (2013) Complementary reflection; Chris Ijiomah’s (2014) Harmonious Monism; and Ada Agada’s (2015) Consolationism. In attempt to show that Chimakonam’s system is not restricted to Africa, Emmanuel Ofuasia (2019) has argued that Ezumezu has the capacity to mediate process philosophy, which was first codified by Alfred N. Whitehead (1978). Even when Whitehead is circumspect of formal logic and its classical laws of thought, he failed to develop a logic for his system as Aristotle had done. Ezumezu logic however has the capacity to fill this lacuna. Speaking on the main character of the system, Chimakonam (2019, 96) insists:

Ezumezu as a prototype of African logic studies values, meanings and understanding of logical language. Nothing is treated without content. It is both an art and science which studies the logical relationship among realities expressed in terms of propositions and symbols. Ezumezu therefore is a logical framework that can be used to explain and analyse experiences in African world-view.

It will be incomplete to end this rudimentary exploration of Ezumezu logic without patenting its relationship with the method of conversational philosophy – a latest trend and methodology in African philosophy. Conversationalism is a higher sophistication portions of the Socratic Method which can occur both at the micro (individual) and macro (cultural) levels which makes intercultural philosophy possible (Chimakonam 2017, 17). As a method, conversationalism may be perceived as a formal procedure used for gauging “the relationships of opposed variables in which thoughts are shuffled through disjunctive and conjunctive modes to constantly recreate a fresh thesis and anti-thesis each time at a higher level of discourse without the expectation of the synthesis” (Chimakonam 2017, 17). Conversationalism presupposes

relationship(s) between ‘*nwa-nsa*’ who is the epistemic agent that poses an idea which needs defending and revision, and ‘*nwa-nju*,’ who can be defined as an epistemic agent that questions the rigour and extent of the epistemic proposal from *nwa-nsa*. This interaction between these epistemic agents perceives a synthesis as anathema “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 (Chimakonam, 2017, 17). In this sense, each of ‘*nwa-nsa*’ and ‘*nwa-nju*,’ retain their distinct identities. This foray into conversationalism is essential to assist in refuting the proposal of critics that Ezumezu logic is similar to Hegelian logic. At this juncture, we now turn to the deluge of refutations and discomforts directed at Ezumezu logic by critics.

Ezumezu Logic and its Critics

Arrays of criticisms have surfaced to vitiate or mitigate the originality and applicability of the Logic as a method and criterion for African philosophy and studies. Whereas some of them are wide off the mark, owing to the failure to comprehend the core thesis of Ezumezu, some of them are mildly valid suggestive of a thorough engagement with the Logic. This is the true when one considers the assessment of Ezumezu by David Martens (2019).

In his paper, “Some conservatisms in African Logic” presented at the Third Biennial African Philosophy Conference at Dar es Salaam, David Martens (2019) seems to hold that even when Ezumezu is virtuous in some regards, it is too conservative in other ways. To make his point, Martens queries the three doctrines to the discourse on African logic by Chimakonam (2019) – the polemicists, the apologists and the system builders. The polemicists deny the possibility of African logic when the apologists “defend the idea of African logic at any cost including using Afrocentrist propaganda and making logic culture-bound” (Chimakonam 2019, 56). Martens seems to hold that Chimakonam’s self-ascription as a system builder – those who intend to construct a system of logic that can be African (Chimakonam 2019) is no different from the apologists since he is optimistic that a logic that is originally African is possible. On first showing, this argument seems valid. A deeper reflection however shows that even when Chimakonam may be treated as an apologist in a way, we can say that he is a ‘soft apologist’ since Ezumezu for him is not culture-bound but relativistic. This is what we meant when we hinted in the preceding section that Chimakonam’s logic is applicable to places African and non-African (Ofuasia 2019). In this sense, we maintain that he may not be situated rigidly within the apologist camp. The similarity between Chimakonam and the apologists may be discerned *only* from the conviction that there can be African logic. In addition to showing that Chimakonam does not situate properly in the apologists’ tent, it is imperative to relay that none of the apologists offered a system of logic that passes as philosophical logic, formal system and methodology. This is inclusive of the implicit admission by these apologists that the classical laws of thought are too sacrosanct and axiomatic to be revised. This is the sin that that has greeted the apologist exertions of African scholars such as Kazeem Ademola Fayemi (2010) and Edwin Etieyibo (2016).

Aside the assessment of the Logic by Martens (2019), the Logic has been argued by some to be nothing but the use of Igbo words and terms for garnishing the familiar Classical (Aristotelian) logic. Most find the supplementary laws as fraudulent and do not consider Ezumezu as a valid prototype of African logic that passes as philosophical logic, formal system and methodology. Unfortunately, most of them do not even have a copy of the work which they express resentment about. From these we can discern two overriding prongs that will now be the focus of this inquiry. We settle over these not only because they are intellectually sensitive but because they have been used as the main artillery for denigrating Ezumezu, hence the need for this clarification and defense.

One of the warrants leveled against Ezumezu is connected to the outlook that the third value of Ezumezu logic bears semblance with the synthesis in Hegelian logic. The second objection poses whether or not Ezumezu may be erected as a logic that speaks for the entirety of Africa owing to its Igbo inspiration. Specifically, this second portion speaks to the fallacy of passing one of the many species as the genus (Griffin 2007, vii). In the section that follows, we contend with each of these prongs and the attempt to restate the main thrust of Ezumezu to avoid further misconceptions and misrepresentations.

Assessing the Two Common Prongs against Ezumezu Logic

The first prong concerns with the semblance of the third value in Ezumezu logic with Hegel's synthesis. Perhaps a brief elucidation of Hegel's logic is pertinent for this prong to be understood. In Hegel's system, a thesis is confronted by an anti-thesis which ensues into a synthesis (Ofuasia 2021). This synthesis evolves eventually into another thesis which is confronted by another anti-thesis to form another synthesis on and on *ad infinitum*. One point to note in this Hegelian system is that when a thesis is confronted by an anti-thesis, both lose their individual and distinct identities in the synthesis. This is the character which the third value ezumezu (or 'C') in Chimakonam's logic displays for this strand of critics. It is on this basis that they are motivated to denigrate the Logic as possessing any form of originality if not rehearsing what is already replete in Igbo concepts.

One very helpful way of perceiving how this prong does not extend to Ezumezu is to see how the logic girds conversational thinking, which we already hinted at previously. The first two values are likable to two conversationalists – *nwa nju* and *nwa nsa*. The latter is a proponent when the former is the opponent (Chimakonam 2015) and both engage in serious intellectual interchange. From the Hegelian parlance, the one (*nwa nsa*) may be seen as the thesis (T) when the other is the anti-thesis (F). Where 'T' and 'F' engage in dialogical interchange, their individual identities are retained as they strengthened one another without evolving into a synthesis. At one point, the third value 'C' is a conjunction which underscores how each value has come to close in agreement but in other cases, it soon turns out as a disjunction where an improved *nwa nsa* is further queried by *nwa nju*. This is precisely what Chimakonam (2015, 469) means when he asserts that "In the end, it is possible for a viable synthesis to sometimes emerge, but it is to the production of new concepts that the main aim of conversational philosophy is targeted. Thus, while questions and arguments and the unveiling of new concepts

are central to the method, conversationalists do not actively hinder a viable synthesis where necessary.” Unlike the Hegelian system where the thesis is transformed into an anti-thesis, which implies a necessary conjunction, Ezumezu and conversational thinking employs a disjunction soon after the conjunction. The entire process which is underpinned by arumaruka involves “the reshuffling of thesis and anti-thesis, each time at a higher level without the expectation of synthesis” (Chimakonam 2017, 17), until they arrive at the benoke, a terminal point where “opposed variables cannot get closer” (Chimakonam 2017, 19). On this showing it is therefore lucid that in spite of the similarity between Hegelian dialectical pattern and conversational thinking aided by Ezumezu, this difference, which we have evinced is usually overlooked by critics (Ofuasia 2021). When the former praises and looks forward to a synthesis which evolved into another thesis to be confronted by an anti-thesis, for the latter, “synthesis is perceived as anathema” (Chimakonam 2017, 22). We now turn to the second objection!

This objection concerns the ethnic affiliation of the Logic as it employs Igbo terminologies for its use. Ezumezu suffered heavy attacks for being Igbo-inspired as it seeks to speak for the entirety of Africa as well. More, the underlying admission that classical logic is universal and the classical laws of thought are not only valid for all times and places but not revisable too, continues to make Ezumezu circumspect for these critics.

To this objection, we clarify by stating that throughout the treatise the Chimakonam (2019) was humble to admit that Ezumezu is open to refutation after proper application to African philosophy and studies. A similar position is redolent in Ofuasia (2019, 78) who submits: “it is my view that Ezumezu logic should be engaged in other African philosophic systems to see if it is original to them too.” What this means is that rather than vitiating the Logic on the grounds of its ethnic inspiration, critics are challenged to engage critically with the text, then apply its principal thesis to their local African culture to see whether or not it makes sense of how the peoples of the culture perceive reality. Upon his critical engagement with Yorùbá ontology via their ritual archive – the Ifá literary corpus, one the one hand and process philosophy, on the other hand, Ofuasia (2019, 78) takes the position that Ezumezu is suggestive in the theories, thoughts and methods of these philosophies. Unfortunately however, a similar engagement from critics concerning other culture philosophies both on the African continent and beyond has yet to emerge. It is on this showing that we propose Local Expansion of Thought (LET). LET challenges all the cultures and sub-cultures on the African continent especially to engage the logic that functions for their thoughts systems with or without Ezumezu as paradigm. Via LET, various logic principles and values will emerge and a general assessment of this will speak for the continent. Until this is done, Ezumezu currently speaks for the content as a philosophy of logic, formal system and methodology.

Conclusion

Within the preceding pages, we have been able to engage the popular objections that have been levelled against Ezumezu logic and show where these objections miss the mark. This study has also been able to admit that there are some elements of criticisms that have been raised against the System, yet do not vitiate its originality and methodology to African philosophy and

studies. As a result, we submit that there is the pertinent case of engaging the logic that girds the numerous cultures in Africa for a logical equilibrium to be attained. And this can only be achieved when scholars, return to their indigenous knowledge systems, interact with them to be sure of the laws of thought and the rules of logic that hold. When Ezumezu is Igbo-inspired, it will be imposing to conclude that it speaks for the entirety of the African continent. Even as we are tempted to draw such an inference, we hesitate to compare and contrast Ezumezu logic with any other available Africa-inspired system of logic that is discloses itself as a philosophy of logic, formal system and methodology. And unfortunately, none has come forward to testify as Ezumezu as done. We therefore suggest that Ezumezu may be engaged critically within the purview of other indigenous African cultures and thought systems in ways that it can improve beyond its present scope and focus.

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