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Grivas Muchineripi Kayange

Meaning and Truth in African Philosophy

Doing African Philosophy with Language

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Preface

The current proliferation of theories and schools in African philosophy seems to suggest that the question 'what is African philosophy?' has ceased to be problematic. Apparently, it has entered a phase of doing and demonstrating the content of this philosophy. In this book, I intend to contribute to this content by investigating 'meaning and truth' in African philosophy. This will be achieved through the use of techniques from analytic philosophy, more especially from the ordinary language approach to meaning and truth.

The book is organized into nine chapters, which are divided into three parts.

Part I consists of a way of doing philosophy of meaning and truth using ordinary language.

Chapter 1 investigates the philosophical framework for discussing issues of meaning and truth in African philosophy. It mainly reflects on issues of method. The analytic framework is selected as appropriate for the discussion of meaning and truth.

The second chapter, 'Pragmatic Semantics and Chichewa Proverbs', investigates the question of meaning (semantics) of Chichewa proverbs based on insights from the contemporary analytic philosophy. It is argued that a proverb is a special type of sentence/speech act whose meaning requires the consideration of a link between the literal/non-literal meaning and the way the utterance is used in a given context. In the context of use, focus is on different elements such as, speaker, hearer, speaker's intention, hearer's interpretation and context. The chapter further argues and demonstrates that proverbs provide an excellent framework for doing African analytic philosophy.

The third chapter, 'Meaning of Taboos Using Counterfactual Logic', studies the meaning of taboo expressions by departing from a consideration of their structure and use. While the chapter demonstrates that there is a strong presence and use of counterfactual logic in some Bantu languages, specifically the Chichewa language[1],

[1]This language is used by the Chewa tribes of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia (a Bantu group of people).

it argues that the study of these figurative expressions using the counterfactual framework offers a particular understanding of African philosophy and belief systems. The chapter demonstrates how to do African philosophy (with counterfactual logic) by studying taboos progressively from causal statements and conditional statements to counterfactual conditionals as they are used in the Chewa people's various modes of communication.

The fourth chapter, 'Doing African Philosophy with Metaphors', suggests a way of doing philosophy through a reflection on metaphors. The chapter develops three themes in sociopolitical philosophy.

The first theme investigates conceptual metaphors used in conceptualising the notion 'politics' in modern African political thought (particularly in Malawi). It is argued that this can help in understanding cognition and behaviour of political actors in Malawi.

The second theme focuses on metaphorical conceptualisation of women and men in Chichewa language. It argues that although women are regarded as very important in building the society, there is a tendency of conceptualising men in terms of women. The practice stigmatises women as socially inferior to men. This system of conceptualisation reveals how members of the society think and behave towards women in certain respects.

The third theme focuses on metaphorical conceptualisation in the context of different disabilities (misapplied conceptualisation). It argues that metaphorical/linguistic conceptualisation of disabilities in Chichewa language reflects and contributes significantly towards the misconception and marginalisation of people with disability.

The fifth chapter, 'Riddles, Meaning and Rationality/Logic', investigates issues of meaning and rationality departing from a study of riddles. It argues that riddles reveal some basic concepts of the Chewa people's logic. The structure of riddles and their use show that the Chichewa language speakers engage in critical thinking.

Part II deals with conceptual analysis of concepts, namely, truth and beauty.

Chapter 6 investigates, 'The Chewa Concept of Truth', through a reflection on the relation between statements and reality/facts. It argues that the Chewa people have a logical concept of truth, which is dependent of the relation between statements and reality, and the requirement of observation. It will be shown that for a sentence to be true, it must correspond to facts, and there must be ontological commitment supporting this relation.

Chapter 7 focuses on the concept of beauty in an African setting. It builds on the general objective and subjective conceptions of beauty and argues that Chichewa language shows preference towards a subjective conception. The chapter denies the moral conception of beauty as representative of African understanding of beauty.

Part III analyses the two opposing African systems, communitarianism (*ubuntu*) and individualism, through the study of language. While *ubuntu* is commonly known as African, the work will deduce that individualism is also present in African traditional thought. This will be shown through the study of language.

Chapter 8 explores *ubuntu/umunthu*[2] idealism in the African traditional context. It is argued that this idealism provides both ontological and ethical conceptions that are grounded on the idea of 'community'. Through the study of language, the chapter shows the loop holes in these developments and suggests a comprehensive conception of ubuntu that is based on virtue theory (moral and intellectual virtues).

Chapter 9 shows that while communitarianism can be deduced from the study of language, there are some expressions that show that individualism is also present in the African traditional context.

In order to avoid overcrowding the main content of this book, I have provided appendix I to deal with a special case of riddles. Appendix II is designed to deal with a special use of idioms and proverbs using the speech act theory.[3]

Zomba, Malawi Grivas Muchineripi Kayange

[2] *Umunthu* is a Chewa word which translates the term *ubuntu.* The concept *umunthu* may be approached based on the syntactic structure as a combination of the suffix *–nthu*, which is often argued by some African philosophers to mean 'being' or a 'thing', and *–u-mu* has *–mu*, which refers to a human being and *u* in front of *mu* suggests a way or mode of being, of something (in this case a human way). For instance, the substantive *Chitsiru* can be translated as a fool. Adding *u* to this word, it becomes *uchitsiru*, which means foolishness. Similarly, when we add the suffix *-nthu* to this human way, it becomes a way of being human. Approaching this concept in terms of semantics, it is important to look at how people are using it in Malawi. When a Chewa-speaking subject utters a statement that *x ali ndi umunthu*, with *x* being human, it means that *x* is a morally sound person.

[3] Chapter 1 is inspired by an article which was published in *African Journal of Cultural Studies* (Kayange 2014), while the third section of Chap. 5 by my book chapter in *Disability in Africa: Resource Book for Theology and Religious Studies* (Kayange 2017).

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

$\exists$	Existential quantifier
$\subseteq$	Subset
$\bigcap$	Intersection
$\Diamond$	Possibility
$\Box$	Necessity
$\sim$	Negation
&	Conjunction
$\forall$	Universal quantifier
$\cong$	Similarity
$\supset$	Conditional
$\equiv$	Biconditional
$\vee$	Disjunction
DPP	Democratic People's Party
FEDOMA	Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MAP	Malawi Against Physical Disabilities
MAPAD	Malawi Association for People with Physical Disabilities
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
PP	People's Party
UDF	United Democratic Front

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Part I
Figurative Utterances and Meaning

Chapter 1
Philosophical Framework for Doing African Philosophy

Abstract This chapter investigates the philosophical framework for discussing issues of meaning and truth in African philosophy. It mainly reflects on issues of method, focusing on the conflicting analytic (a modern form of empiricism) and continental (rationalism) frameworks, which are a benchmark of doing philosophy. It is argued that analytic philosophy reflects better the ordinary people's philosophy because of its focus on ordinary language use. The chapter uses both conceptual/logical analysis and the ordinary language/pragmatic approach in its discussion of meaning and truth. It further considers some philosophical works in African philosophy that build on this method.

Keywords Analysis · Method · Ordinary language approach · African philosophy · Analytic philosophy

In this chapter, the main objective is to indicate the philosophical framework that will be used in the developments on meaning and truth in African philosophy throughout this work.

Firstly, the chapter will show that finding an appropriate philosophical framework/method for developing issues of meaning and truth in African philosophy raises a lot of questions. Focus will mainly be on the conflicting analytic (a modern form of empiricism) and continental (rationalism) frameworks, which are a benchmark of doing philosophy. I will opt more for analytic philosophy as the best framework for discussing issues of meaning and truth in African philosophy, with a special interest on the Chichewa language speakers of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.

Secondly, the chapter will elucidate two pillars that will guide this study, within the analytic philosophy framework. These pillars include, conceptual/logical analysis and the ordinary language/pragmatic approach to meaning and truth.

Thirdly, the chapter will conclude by tracing elements of the adopted methodology in some of the writings that build a philosophy relative to meaning of concepts-words-sentences and truth in African philosophy. This section is designed to show

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the reader that the way of doing philosophy adopted in this work is not new. What will be modestly novel, is the focus on meaning and truth in African philosophy.

1.1 The Question of an Appropriate Framework

(1) Primarily, I would like to qualify African philosophy as a continuous battlefield of two conflicting philosophical traditions on how to approach issues of meaning and truth.

The first is the analytic tradition, which deals with issues of meaning and truth with a particular emphasis on language, logic and natural science. For instance, these aspects determine the meaning and truth of a sentence such as, 'Today is Friday' (see also Martinich 2001).

The second is the continental tradition, which emphasizes reason, concepts/ideas and history. For instance, the meaning and truth of a statement such as, 'There exists a being who is the principle cause', is determined by reason (Kearney 1994).[1]

Caught in the early debate of defining African philosophical identity, most of the African thinkers opted to build issues of meaning and truth on the orthodox methods from both analytic and rationalist frameworks. For example, following the analytic tradition, a good number of philosophers such as Gyekye, Wiredu and Hallen, have attempted to build African philosophy through the analysis of African languages and other systems (such as belief system) (Hallen 2006; Wiredu 1992; Gyekye 1992). Similarly, following the continental tradition, some philosophers such as Tempels and Kagame have attempted to reflect on collective thought and came up with meanings of concepts and theories representing the Bantu people (see Tempels 1959; Kagame 1976).

In an attempt to deal with meanings and theories of concepts such as person, being, cause, etc., different African thinkers have been comfortable with the categorization of frameworks into four, namely, ethnophilosophy, sage philosophy, professional philosophy and nationalistic ideological philosophy (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 89–98).

When one takes the effort to understand the four African frameworks as noted above, it is easy to realize that (a) there is not much that is new (particularly African) with reference to methods of discussing issues of meaning and truth, and (b) that there are further frameworks (philosophies) within the four noted above, such as communitarian approach and ordinary language approach to meaning and truth. All this makes it difficult to claim a unique method as encompassing the whole African philosophy.

Uncomfortable with some current schools of thought that generalize the community as a fundamental determinant of meaning and truth, such as *Ubuntu* idealism

[1] Note that there will be specific theories of meaning and truth such as referential theory, coherence theory and pragmatic theory, but the current concern, is the general frameworks.

(Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013; Metz 2014a, b) and Mbiti's communitarianism (Mbiti 1969), I think that it is safer to focus on African languages and use meaning. The advantage of this route is that it will open the researcher to appreciate different philosophies that are a consequence of a multiplicity of meanings, following from the use of language. In fact, this may help to avoid many fallacies that are in African philosophy, such as, "For Africans it is impossible to think of 'being' outside the community".

I am aware that doing philosophy with language may imply practicing a form of descriptive philosophy and not dynamic thought that creates meanings and theories. Although there is a kernel of truth in this, I still think that the descriptive task, which can be done by analytic philosophy can provide a better platform for understanding African philosophies. In fact, individual philosophers can create their personal philosophical theories of meaning and truth using descriptive philosophy as a point of departure.

The choice to focus on doing African philosophy of meaning and truth through the study of language qualifies this study as belonging to the analytic philosophical framework. The modern analytic philosophy may be seen as a school of thought that was officially developed in the twentieth century in Western Europe (Vienna and Berlin) to promote a philosophy of meaning and truth (Martinich 2001). These philosophers were mainly against most of the philosophical teachings suggested by Western idealism, mainly metaphysics, theology and normative theory of value. This philosophy started in a philosophical club of scientists, linguists, philosophers, mathematicians, logicians, etc. (Achinistein and Baker 1969). In this club, they were regularly meeting to discuss philosophical problems and attempted to suggest some solutions. They wanted to devise a new way of doing philosophy of meaning and truth based on, language, logic/mathematics and natural science.

I am aware of various infelicities that accompany the different developments in the analytic framework and also the improvements that have been done to correct some of its central documents. For instance, serious problems have concerned issues of scientific theories and meaning (representation). This has shaken the central claims that accompanied the early development of analytic philosophers, such as, the understanding of scientific theories as statements that represent facts, the claim that the concept of truth as correspondence to facts can be applied in science, and the interpretation/meaning of terms about the non-observable entities (Popper 1959). These and various problems have led to the birth of a multiplicity of approaches to meaning and truth within analytic philosophy. In some respects, this has led to the abandonment of the objective concept of truth as irrelevant in some circles of analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, the two approaches to meaning and truth that still stand may be summarized into, the formal or theoretical framework and the ordinary language framework.

While this work will lean more on the ordinary language framework, it will generally build on various insights from the general analytic tradition. Below are some of the central aspects that will guide this study.

1.2 Central Concepts from Analytic Philosophy

The analytic tradition that is guiding this study is based on doing African philosophy of meaning and truth through logical analysis and pragmatic/ordinary language approach. Interest to use this method comes from three related assumptions.

- The first assumption is that philosophical problems are a consequence of the misuse or misunderstanding of the meaning of language.
- The second assumption is that philosophy is the logic of meaning and truth.
- The third assumption is that meaning is determined by use of language.

The first assumption was discussed by different philosophers in the analytic tradition such as Carnap (1937), Wittgenstein (1922) and Ayer (1936). Carnap sees the problem of language mainly in the context of meaning in subjects such as metaphysics and theory of value (normative theory). For instance, Ayer points out that the abuse of language and meaning, would cause us to 'draw false inferences, or ask spurious questions, or make nonsensical assumptions'. For Wittgenstein, the problem of language is extended to the misunderstanding of its logic.[2]

(2) Given that philosophical problems are a consequence of the misuse and lack of clarity of language, doing philosophy necessitates the clarification of language. Clarification is meant at (i) eliminating pseudo-philosophy, and (ii) providing a proper meaning of concepts and language.

How do we clarify language? This clarification is done through logical/conceptual analysis, which is regarded as a proper method of doing philosophy. Martinich (2001, 1) comments on this way of doing philosophy,

> To use a general name for the kind of analytic philosophy practiced during the first half of the twentieth century, initially in Great Britain and German-speaking countries, and later in North America, Australia, and New Zealand, "conceptual analysis" aims at breaking down complex concepts into their simpler components. Successive analyses performed on complex concepts would yield simpler concepts. According to Moore, the process might lead ultimately to simple concepts, of which no further analysis could be given. The designation "conceptual" was supposed to distinguish the philosophical activity from various analyses applied to nonconceptual objects.

I will firstly comment on the method of analysis or logical analysis and then go back to the issue of language and meaning/truth, which necessitates a specific approach.

Analytic philosophy places a great deal of importance on the concept of analysis or 'logical analysis' (Russell [1924] 1956, 321–343; Wittgenstein 1922). This is primarily an old philosophical method (present in ancient Greek philosophy), which was revived by philosophers associated with analytic philosophy. For instance, analysis is a method that is associated with geometry in ancient Greek philosophy. However, in modern philosophy, the most significant use of analysis is developed by

[2]The assumption that philosophy is logic is commonly present in philosophers who are connected with analytic philosophy such as Frege ([1884] 1997), Russell ([1924] 1956) and Carnap (1937).

Descartes ([1636] 196; [1641] 1990), who was influenced by his training in geometrical analysis.

Analysis as a method is generally about breaking something into smaller parts (constituent parts) so that it becomes intelligible (see also Moore [1899] 1986, 59–80). This is often followed by synthesis, which is a method of construction (joining) of parts that fall in the same structure. It is due to this strong relation between analysis and synthesis that most of the developments in analytic philosophy will follow both logical analysis and logical construction, as it will be discussed further below.

Supporting the link between analysis and construction, Bertrand Russell (1924) 1956) in his work *Logical Atomism* argued that "The business of philosophy, as I conceive it, is essentially that of logical analysis, followed by logical synthesis." Analysis is utilized for different purposes, such as, the identification of simple constituent parts and first principles (Linsky 2007, 107). In the context of first principles the understanding is that knowing something is being acquainted with the first principles/causes. In this regard, simple constituent parts are fundamental in the understanding of reality, as they give the opportunity to know something and its structure.

Russell will further support the way of doing philosophy through analysis[3] and synthesis as he writes,

> Ever since I abandoned the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, I have sought solutions of philosophical problems by means of analysis, and I remain firmly persuaded, in spite of some modern tendencies to the contrary, that only by analysing is progress possible" (Russell 1959).

Russell in the *Philosophy of Leibniz* argues, "That all sound philosophy should begin with an analysis of propositions is a truth too evident, perhaps, to demand a proof" (Russell [1900] 1975, 8). He clarifies analysis with reference to complex ideas, whose definition is possible when they are changed into simple ideas. This transformation of complex ideas into simple ideas is what is called analysis. Similarly, Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* is based on the idea of analysis from complex to simpler elements (Russell [1903] 1963).

A further development of the ideas of Russell and Moore on the issue of analysis and logical construction may be seen in Wittgenstein's atomism (1922). Analysis is connected with the study and identification of atomic propositions, which according to him correspond to the atomic structure of facts (the world). Atomic propositions are therefore considered as giving a true picture of reality. The relation between the structure of a proposition and the structure of facts forms the relation of correspondence. Since this is the relation of atomic structures, the relation of correspondence may be considered as *isomorphism*.

Logical analysis is central in Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), who believed that the proper task of philosophy is logical analysis, as expressed in his *Philosophy and*

[3] See also Russell (1912).

Logical Syntax (Carnap 1937).[4] Carnap, through logical analysis concluded that metaphysics was meaningless due to its pseudo-claims that do not correspond to facts (Carnap [1928] 1967; [1931] 1959). He therefore concludes that, the statements of metaphysics are meaningless, and argued for its elimination together with normative theories. Writing on the triumph of logical analysis, Carnap writes,

> The development of logic has made it possible to give a sharper answer to the question of the validity of and justification of metaphysics. The researchers of applied logic or the theory of knowledge, which aim at clarifying the cognitive content of scientific statements and thereby the meanings of terms that occur in the statements, by means of logical analysis, lead to a positive and negative result... In the domain of metaphysics, including all philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields a negative result that the alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless (Carnap [1931] 1959, 60-61).

Similarly, Ayer in the early days of analytic philosophy, followed logical analysis through the use of verification. This was regarded as a criterion indicating whether a language was clear or not (Ayer 1936, 1974). For instance the statement that 'I have a soul', cannot be verified by appealing to facts, therefore it is meaningless. At the root of this problem, there is the influence of Immanuel Kant in the seventeenth century. Kant's problem regarded the difficulty of knowing objects beyond sense experience (noumena), known to him as noumenal world.[5] While in the time of Kant this issue led to the revision of traditional metaphysics (for instance the phenomenalists like Husserl[6] and others announced a shift towards conscious experience of what appears). In analytic philosophy it leads to the problem of truth and existence.

In African philosophy, Hallen indicates the centrality of analysis in analytic philosophy in the following words,

> Much of (Western) analytic philosophy is rightly identified with the analysis of language. This may involve the clarification of the meaning(s) of individual concepts that are of particular philosophical interest, such as "knowledge," "belief," "truth," and so forth. It may involve as well studying the kinds of justification given to prove, for example, that a certain piece of information is worthy of being described or classified as "knowledge," etc. (Hallen 2004).

The current studies in logical analysis attempt developing a systematic theory of this concept by clarifying different methods that are used. I will not enter into a detailed discussion of these philosophies, but I would like to note the classification

[4]The study of logic and mathematics in philosophy has since the beginning of logical positivism spread among many thinkers. One of the fundamental works which was considered by the members of the circle is *Principia Mathematica* developed by Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead. Note Bertrand Russell is regarded by many as one of the fathers of analytic philosophy. Today we have many works following this trend, in philosophy of mathematics and various branches of logic (such as first order logic, higher order logic, etc.).

[5]For further information see Immanuel Kant's famous works that are important in metaphysics such as, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998) and the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. These works explains further the above problems and tries to offer a solution.

[6]Husserl is a prominent figure who may be considered as a father of phenomenalism. His most famous work that is a pillar of phenomenalism was written in 1906–1907 was titled, *The Idea of Phenomenology* (Husserl 1964). See also (Husserl [1900–1] 2001).

given by Beany, which may shed further light on the subject of analysis (Beaney 2007, 1–29). Beany suggests three modes of analysis namely, resolutive analysis, regressive analysis and interpretative analysis.

In resolutive analysis, this is the process of breaking something into smaller parts (constitutive components) and making explicit its structure. An aspect of this analysis is done through decompositional analysis.

Regressive analysis regards going backwards to the fundamentals (or principles), so that something may be explained against this background. Commenting on this form of analysis, Reck wrote,

> This kind of analysis, or this sense in which something is accounted for in terms of something more fundamental, involves the going back to basic premises, principles or causes. Thus, a truth of Euclidean geometry or Peano arithmetic can be analysed by deriving it from the corresponding fundamental axioms. A somewhat different example is the way in which a physical phenomenon is analysed by explaining its generation in terms of fundamental forces and causal processes (Reck 2007, 35).

Interpretive analysis is where something is made sense of using a particular framework or theory (also known as transformative analysis).

(3) Related to the assumption that meaning is based on use of language, this work will build on the 'pragmatic/ordinary language approach'. The main interest is to focus on doing philosophy through the analysis of ordinary language approach. This approach shifts from the traditional consideration of meaning based on the relation between language and reality (denotation theory), by calling attention to other important dimensions that are required for meaning to take place, such as, context, speakers, hearers, intention and language.

Although the elements of pragmatic/ordinary approach to language will be specified further in this work, I will briefly indicate the three developments from where most of the insights will come from.

The first dimension of meaning using the ordinary language approach, was suggested by Wittgenstein (1952) in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*. This goes against the referential theory of meaning presented in his earlier work, the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 1922). Wittgenstein is suggesting that for meaning to take place, various factors enter into play. This include language and context of use. For instance, he discusses the idea of language in a context by considering a builder and his assistant (Wittgenstein 1952). In fact terms like 'brick' said by a builder to his assistant creates meaning between the two and communication takes place.

The second dimension is suggested by Austin (1962) in his *How to Do Things with Words* and later by Searle (1969). Austin also departs from criticizing the traditional referential theory of meaning (including the Wittgenstein's picture theory in the *Tractatus*), that is simplistic and misses out some important elements that make meaning possible. The mistake is primarily attributed to the traditional conception that all sentence state some affairs. He thus argues that some linguistic expressions are not statements in the sense that they correspond to reality. This gives birth to the speech act theory, whereby some expressions when they are uttered an act is performed (Austin 1952). For example, 'I pronounce you husband and

wife,' is performing the act of marriage. According to both Austin and Searle, meaning has to involve expressions, speakers, hearers, intention and context.

Lastly, the pragmatic approach has been developed further by Grice (1957), Sperber and Wilson (2008). This follows both Wittgestein's and Austin's dimensions, hence meaning is based on context. Similarly in this context, there are various players who are involved, such as, speakers, the speaker's intention to communicate a message, and the hearer, who decodes the intended message, etc.

1.3 Elements of the Adopted Framework in African Philosophy

African philosophy can be read based on insights from the analytic tradition, namely, the conception of meaning and truth as an endeavor constituting conceptual/logical analysis of language. For instance, the ordinary language approach has focused on what Africans are doing when they are using language, such as, the Yoruba language as promoted by Sodipo and Hallen (see Hallen 2006; Hallen and Sodipo 1997). Conceptual/logical analysis in African thought is mainly seen in studies that try to promote collective philosophy. In fact some of the philosophers who used this philosophy are Tempels and Kagame,[7] who studied the Bantu languages, Luba of Zambia and Kinyrwanda of Rwanda.

(4) Conceptual/logical analysis in African context: I argue that, when African philosophy is studied from its beginning, conceptual analysis and derivation of meaning from the use of language is fundamental. For instance, this may be demonstrated departing from the writings of one of the pioneers of Bantu philosophy, Tempels, in his Bantu Ontology. Tempels implicitly announces that conceptual analysis will be part of his development of Bantu collective ontology, as he writes on how to develop this philosophy,

> [a] comparative study of the languages, modes of behaviour, institutions and customs of the Bantu; we could analyse them and separate their fundamental ideas; finally we could construct, from these elements a system of Bantu thought. (Tempels 1959, 19).

It is through this 'comparative study of languages' (English and Luba), that a great deal of conceptual analysis takes place. Apparently, Tempels is encouraging the importance of drawing meaning from the ordinary people's use, rather than base it on literal English translation of the terms. This importance of conceptual analysis and drawing meaning based on the context may be firstly shown in his treatment of the concept 'man' as it is used in English and Luba.

> It seems to me incorrect to translate this word "*muntu*" by "the man". The "*muntu*" certainly possesses a visible body, but this body is not the "*muntu*". A Bantu one day explained to one of my colleagues that the "*muntu*" is rather what you call in English the "person" and not

[7]For example see, Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, (1959) and Kagame A., (1976).

> what you connote by "the man". "*Muntu*" signifies, then, vital force, endowed with intelligence and will. This interpretation gives a logical meaning to the statement which I one day received from a Bantu: "God is a great *muntu*" ("*Vidye i muntu mukatampe*"). This meant "God is the great Person"; that is to say, The great, powerful and reasonable living force (Tempels 1952, 36).

The passage clearly shows that the word '*muntu'* does not have its real meaning as it is used by the Bantu, when it is literally translated into English as meaning 'man'. Tempels justifies the importance of context with the expression "Bantu one day explained to one of my colleagues that the '*muntu'* is rather what you call in English the 'person'." He justifies further the importance of context as he underlines that the Bantu told him that 'God is a great *muntu'*.

Tempels comparative conceptual analysis and his reliance on deriving meaning from the use of words in a particular context may further be seen in his discussion of the terms in the following passage,

> A similar idea is found in the form of sympathy, "*wafwako*!" which we translate "you are dying"; and by reason of our mistranslation, we are quite unable to understand the Bantu and find them given to ridiculous exaggeration when they continually say that they are "dead" of hunger or of fatigue, or that the least obstacle or illness is "killing" them. In their own minds they are simply indicating a diminution of vital force, in which sense their expression is reasonable and sensible enough. In their languages, too, are words like "*kufwa*" and "*fukwididila*", indicating the progressing stages of loss of force, of vitality, and the superlative of which signifies total paralysis of the power to live. (Tempels 1959, 23).

Tempels in this passage is underlining the importance of context in translating terms like "*wafwako*!" which we translate "you are dying"." He argues against literal translation of similar expressions as problematic. Tempels seems to be defending the Bantu people as using a lot of metaphorical conceptualization in their discussion. He indicates this in the expression "they continually say that they are "dead" of hunger or of fatigue, or that the least obstacle or illness is "killing" them." If this is interpreted literally, according to him it leads to a misunderstanding of the Bantu people. He suggests that interpreting all this in context, it shows the diminution of vital force.

Whether one can agree or not with Tempels theorizing, there is a great deal of comparative conceptual analysis and building meaning based on the context. It is unfortunate that the evidence that is drawn from the use of terms in the Bantu context, leaves a lot to be desired. For example Tempels statement, "A Bantu one day explained to one of my colleagues that the "*muntu*" is rather what you call in English the "person" and not what you connote by "the man"." This does not provide enough evidence why the translation of '*muntu'* must be 'person'. Similarly, the link between 'person' and 'vital force' can be hardly justified based on language use.

Tempelsian comparative analysis and the dependence on ordinary people's use of language (context) was criticized and elaborated in some respects by different scholars such as, Kagame, (1976) and Kaphagawani (2004).

In fact Kagame wanted to present the collective ontology of the people of Rwanda known as Banyarwanda, partly through the analysis of their language called *Kinyarwanda.* Language analysis is therefore utilized in this case as a way of

doing philosophy finalized at providing a generalized system of thought representative of the Banyarwanda. It is through the analysis of language in relation to the continental development of metaphysics in the Aristotelian-Thomistic-Tempelsian tradition that he came up with four categories of being. Confirming these categories he wrote, "Everything there is must necessarily belong to one of these four categories and must be conceived of not as substance but as force." (Janheinz 1961, 100).

According to Kagame, the four categories of African philosophy are summarized into,

Muntu – 'Human being' (Plural: Bantu)
Kintu – 'Thing' (Plural: Bintu)
Hantu – 'Place and Time'
Kuntu– 'Modality'

The categories confirm that there is collective philosophy of being, relative to "human being", "things", "place and time" and the mode of being.[8] Through conceptual analysis, it is further concluded that being may be translated by the term "*-ntu"*, which is a common term at the end of the above four categories. Influenced by the Bantu Ontology of Tempels (1952), he interprets the concept "*-ntu"* as a vital force.

In a similar context of conceptual analysis, Kaphagawani (2004) reflects on Tempels use of language and attempts to compare his conceptualization with the developments in the Chewa philosophy. Kaphagawani starts by indicating that the notion of force is deduced from language as he writes, "Using Bantu or, to be precise, Luba expressions of greeting, sympathy, and hunger, Tempels concludes that every Bantu language contains words or phrases denoting a force, which constitutes "the integrity of our whole being." (Kaphagawani 2004, 335).

Does a comparative conceptual analysis between Tempels' analysis of meaning of Luba terms and the Chewa use of the same terms? For instance, he wonders why Tempels sees the translation of "*wafwako*!" as meaning "you are dying". Using some Chewa words that are equivalent to the Luba words, (2004, 335) argues,

> I find it quite baffling that Tempels regards it as a mistake to translate kufa as "to die" and kufadi as "to die indeed," for if there are words and phrases in Chichewa that admit of easy translation, kufa and kufadi must be among the easiest. To say "X akufa" in Chichewa is no more to regard death or dying as a process than when it is uttered in English that "X is dying." Similarly, to say "X akufadi" in Chichewa is not so much to specify the ultimate degree of loss of life as to demonstrate the degree of one's certainty about X's actual death. And to regard these dictions as expressions of degrees and intensities of force is to take too literally a mode of expression or manner of speech that is figurative.

The passage goes against Tempels claim of mistranslation of some Luba terms into English as noted above. is apparently comfortable with a literal translation of terms such as *kufa* and *kufadi*. The confusion made by the comparative conceptual

[8]Furthermore, the concept of 'categories' is taken from the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. This shows that there is still the desire to develop a system similar to Western continental philosophy, but at the same time the analysis of language was considered as central in this operation.

analysis of Tempels consist in mixing literal translation and figurative meaning as expressed in speech.

Apart from his engagement with Tempels and other philosophers using conceptual analysis, Kaphagawani has in several occasions developed his philosophy, through the conceptual analysis of Chewa terms and expressions, paying much attention to the meaning drawn from the ordinary use of language.

There are other important studies done on the concept of a person that dwell more on conceptual analysis, such as, the analysis of the Akan concept of 'person'. For instance, this method was used by Kwasi Wiredu (1987), who analysed the concepts '*nipadua'* (body), '*okra'* (life-giving element), and '*sunsum'* (element of one's personality). Similarly, Gyekye (1992, 101–122) analysed the same concepts, but interpreted *okra* as referring to the soul.

I will not go in details explaining further these and other studies that utilized conceptual analysis, however these suffice as a demonstration of the presence and importance of analysis in African philosophy.

(5) *Ordinary Language Approach in African philosophy:* A large part of African philosophy uses the ordinary language approach as an efficient way of building traditional philosophy (Hallen 2006; Sodipo 1973; Wiredu 1980). In fact in the examples on conceptual analysis above, such as in Tempels (1959) and Kaphagawani (2004), appeal to the ordinary language approach to meaning is clearly demonstrated. However, a clear declaration of the use of ordinary language approach in doing African philosophy was given by Hallen (2000), who declared himself as a proponent. Commenting this in Chap. 1 of his book, *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful: Discourse about values in an African Culture*, he writes,

> One of the convictions underlying much of this book is that the systematic analysis of ordinary, everyday language usage in non-Western, particularly African, cultures can prove to be of fundamental philosophical value. The methodological inspiration for this kind of analysis derives, most obviously, from ordinary language philosophy as enunciated by Anglophone philosophers during the mid–twentieth century. In my own case, how this inspiration came to be transferred to sub-Saharan West Africa is a story that perhaps deserves telling in some detail (Hallen 2000, 1).

Hallen acknowledges in this passage the usefulness of the ordinary language approach in doing African philosophy and that he adopted this method from the general context of analytic philosophy. It seems that Hallen is subscribing to the general ordinary language approach in analytic philosophy, such that, genuine African philosophy can be done only through a reflection on how language is used by Africans. He argues that the concept of analysis is central relative to meaning as expressed in the ordinary use of language and the meaning of concepts as they are used in common language. Commenting on this central doctrine, Hallen (2002) writes, "African philosophy, in so far as it may deal with the analysis of African languages (or meanings) and the evaluation of African beliefs expressed in these languages".

As a descendent of Austin's ordinary language approach, Hallen applied this method in different writings in Nigeria, mainly in his important volumes such as,

Knowledge Belief and Witchcraft (Hallen 1997) and *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful*: *Discourse About Values in an Africa culture* (Hallen 2000).

Hallen used the ordinary language method mainly in his study of Yoruba epistemology/metaphysics and ethics. For instance, this method is described relative to a study of the meaning of the concept 'person' in Yoruba language. Primarily, the method required that students go in the village and interview elders on a particular concept such as person. This was to understand the different parts of a person such as mind and body and how the concepts were utilized. This method differs from the traditional way of doing analytic method as Hallen required that the speakers of language explain how they were using concepts. Commenting on this aspect Hallen (2000, 11) writes,

> The most direct and immediate way for the philosopher of language to observe and to record ordinary discourse in whatever culture is concerned would be to *listen* to how people who use that language talk to one another in everyday situations. But for the most part that was not the case in my discussions with the *onísègùn.* For I was relying upon *them* to *explain* to *me* how people in everyday Yoruba life used the relevant terms—or, to take it even one step further, how people *should* use the terms if they were using the language correctly.

This method could work best if the individual conducting the research is not well acquainted with the language in use. However, if one has adequate knowledge regarding a particular language and how it is used, the direct method of interpretation can make more sense.

The use of ordinary language approach in Hallen may be exemplified in his study of epistemology departing from the concept 'knowledge'. In his work *Knowledge Belief and Witchcraft,* in chap. 2, he engages with the traditional conception of knowledge in relation to truth and belief. He thus discusses the meanings of the Yoruba language/culture using the similar notions, *imo* and *igbagdo*.

> The distinction made in Yoruba-language culture between "*ìmò*." (putative "knowledge") and "*ìgbàgbò.* " (putative "belief") reflects a similar concern about the evidential status of firsthand versus secondhand information. Persons are said to "*mò*." (to "know") or to have "*ìmò*." ("knowledge") only of experience they have witnessed in a first-hand or personal manner (Hallen 2004, 298).

While Hallen is dependent on meaning derived from the use of concepts by the Yoruba, there is a lot of conceptual analysis that is taking place in his works. Without over-emphasising the importance of meaning by focusing on the use by the ordinary people and the centrality of conceptual analysis, I would like to make some conclusive observations why the ordinary language approach is fundamental for genuine development of both individual and collective philosophy of meaning and truth.

Firstly, it has been shown that language brings a philosopher closer to the objective content of African philosophy, relative to a particular group of people. This is because meaning is primarily drawn from people's beliefs and use of different terms.

Secondly, concentration on how language is used helps philosophers to get rid of the biases that originate from individual reflections and generalize them to represent views of the African people.

Thirdly, focus on meaning based on ordinary language and how people are using it, helps a multiplicity of philosophical themes to surface in a particular context. For example, through the study of language one can easily encounter themes such as, communitarianism, individualism and idealism, considered as part of African philosophy.

Lastly, as meaning is dependent on context, one may realize that themes in African philosophy are also dependent on the framework of interpretation. For instance, communitarianism can be supported in a particular context and discouraged in another. Similarly, individualism can be supported in a particular context and discouraged in another.[9]

[9]For a further survey on method see Makwinja (2018).

Chapter 2
Pragmatic Semantics and Chichewa Proverbs

Abstract This chapter investigates the semantics of Chichewa proverbs using insights from contemporary philosophy of language. It is argued that the structure of different proverbs reveal a great deal of metaphorical conceptualisation from the literal and non-literal source domains to a targeted context of use. It is further argued that, using the use-theorists approach, utterance-use meaning is a consequence of the intention of the creator of a proverb, the speaker's intention and the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention in a particular context. The use of proverbs, suggests that they are a special type of speech acts that are used in communication.

Keywords Proverbs · Pragmatic semantics · African philosophy · Ordinary language approach · Speech act

Chichewa proverbs have been recently used by Kayange (2014, 220–233; see also 2002) and earlier by Kaphagawani (1998) as a mode of doing African philosophy. Kayange worked in the context of semantics, using insights from studies in the contemporary philosophy of language (Pragmatic theory) and argued that proverbs are a special type of speech acts. Kaphagawani used proverbs in discussing themes in African epistemology (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 241–244). In his development, he argued that, 'Chichewa, the language spoken by the Chewa people,[1] is littered with proverbs, the messages of which are indicative of the Chewa conception of knowledge' (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 241).[2] Other studies have focused on

[1]Chichewa proverbs are utilized among a large group of African inhabitants known as the Bantu. The Chewa people form part of this group, and they are mainly living in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique, see also the discussion of proverbs in Classberry (2010), Healey (2005) and Eybel (2005, 67–74).

[2]I am aware of some recent works that have utilized some insights from the speech act theory in their studies of proverbs, such as, K. B. Ashipu's "Proverbs as Circumstantial Speech Acts" (Ashipu 2003), but this work is limited to the Chichewa speaking people. It goes beyond the speech acts theory by offering a more general understanding of proverbs.

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building theoretical philosophy of the Chewa people using proverbs (Chidammodzi and Kaphagawani 1983).

This chapter is a further development of my earlier works (Kayange 2002 and 2014), in which I suggested investigating the meaning of Chichewa proverbs, taboos and other figurative expressions using insights from the contemporary philosophy of language. History of philosophical studies in semantics, shows that meaning may either be studied by focusing of the formal structure and interrelations of statements (Avramides 2000, 61) (formal theorists approach such as, Davidson 1984; Dummett 1975, 97–138), or through the consideration of language use (Austin 1962, 1971; Wittgenstein 1952; Grice 1957, 377–388; Searle 1969) (also known as use theorists).

This chapter will investigate proverbs in terms of both levels of meaning, namely, the utterance meaning level and the utterance use meaning level. Kayange (2014, 220–233) indicated that the first level of meaning concentrates on the structure of a proverb in relation to the world (see also Grice 1989; Kot'átko 1998, 225–239), while the second level of meaning concentrates on how an utterance is used, focusing on the speaker's intention and hearer's interpretation in a particular context (see also Grice 1957; Sperber and Wilson 2002, 249–290; Carston and Powell 2006, 341–360; Sperber and Noveck 2007, 184–212).[3] Below, in the first section, I will present some Chichewa proverbs and the sources used in collecting them. In the second section focus will be on understanding utterance meaning with respect to the proverbs. In Sect. 2.3, focus will be on utterance-use meaning of proverbs.

2.1 Sources of Chichewa Proverbs

The study follows from a collection of proverbs among the Chichewa speaking people of Malawi, in 1994[4] and 2012. This collection was done in two parts: (a) writing and (b) oral interviews (see Kayange 2014, 221–222). A questionnaire

[3]Note that Kayange (2014, 221) commented on the levels of meaning as follows, "A similar claim that there are levels of meaning was forwarded by Wiggins (1971) in the work, On Sentence, Word Sense, and Difference of Word-Sense. In this context, it is suggested that the first level is semantics, which considers the strict sense of an utterance. Wiggins takes the second level as pragmatics, which considers utterance meaning in relation to the speakers and the audience, with their intentions. This work will not adopt the division between semantics and pragmatics as different topics in the philosophy of language, which is not very clear in contemporary literature, given that pragmatics is also seen by some as semantics (Avramides 2000, 61–64)."

[4]In 1994 the information was collected and used to write a long paper at the Intercongregational Seminary (Now International Congregation Institute) for a diploma course. The collection continued in 2000–2002 in view of writing a Masters' degree dissertation in speech act theory. In 2011 and 2012 further collection was undertaken in view of writing the article, "Understanding the Semantics of Chichewa Proverbs in the Light of Contemporary Philosophy of Language" (Kayange 2014).

Table 2.1 Showing some common proverbs

Chewa proverb	English translation	Meaning
1. *Kalikokha nkanyama, ali awiri ndi anthu.*[a]	The one who is alone is an animal, two are human beings	This means that to be human is to collaborate with others.
2. *Umanena Chatsitsa dzaye kuti njovu ithyoke nyanga.*	Explain what caused a fruit to fall down and broke elephant's tusk.	You must explain the main causes rather than underlining the secondary ones.
3. *Mapanga awiri avumbwitsa.*[b]	Moving from one cave to the other, makes you wet.	Concentrate on one element rather than many.
4. *Ukawona amzako akukazinga maso nawenso kazinga ako.*	When you see friends frying their eyes, do the same.[c]	Learn from the people you find in an area.
5. *Kusadziwa ndikufa komwe*	Ignorance is death	Knowledge is life.
6. *Safunsa adadya phula.*	The one who doesn't ask ate bee wax.	Don't do things on your own, ask and things will be fine.
7. *Okawona Njanja adakawona ndi mvuu yomwe.*	One who went to see the lake so also a Hippopotamus.	Be open minded in life.
8. *Madzi akatayika sawoleka.*	When water is spilled no one can bring it back.	Fatal error is incorrigible.
9. *Ukaziputa limba.*	If you provoke a quarrel, make sure you are up to it.	If you have started something, finish it and be responsible.
10. *Nkuyu zodya ana zidapota akulu.*	Fig fruits eaten by kids gave elders stomachache.	Whatever a child does reflect the education he or she received at home.
11. *Tsabola wakale sawawa.*	Old pepper is not hot	New experience is always valuable for understanding issues
12. Mutu umodzi siunsenza denga	One head cannot lift a root.	It is important to work with others in order to achieve good results.

[a]In Chakanza (2000, 99), this reads, Kali kokha n'kanyama, tili tiwili n'tianthu (translated as 'What is by itself is a little animal, those that are two are human beings')
[b]This is similar to, *Ichi chakoma ichi chakoma pusi adagwa chagada*. It is also similar to Chakanza (2000, 279) which states that *pawiripawiri sipauzirika* translated as, 'You can't blow smoke into two holes at the same time'
[c]This is similar to, 'When you are in Rome, do what the Romans do'

was completed by 100 families,[5] in which participants were requested to provide three proverbs and their meanings. Focus group discussions were done on 40 participants in groups of six to seven, with reference to the oral interviews. Some of the commonly used proverbs, are listed in Table 2.1.[6]

A further study on literature on proverbs was carried out on various works. The major work was by Chakanza, who collected 2009 proverbs, metaphors and other

[5]This was done in three Malawian cities where the Chewa speaking people are found, that is, Lilongwe, Balaka, and Zomba. This research targeted 50 families in the village and 50 in the town.
[6]See also Kayange (2002, 2014).

figurative expressions. This work is a summary of the earlier works such as, Nthara (1958), Mphonda (1965), and Saffroy (1990). Another study that discussed the meanings of proverbs in relation to values in ubuntu theory was done by Kayange (2018). Using the ordinary language approach to meaning, individual and community-focus proverbs were compared in this work. Other studies that discussed proverbs are the literary works such as Mangani (1989) and Gwengwe (1967).

While acknowledging the different works on meaning relative to Chichewa proverbs, this work considered more the works that were collected by the author. This is important because the interest of this work was on how these proverbs are used in a particular context. Commenting on this aspect, Kayange (2014, 222) wrote,

> One of the main reasons for this is that a greater part of this work concentrates on what the people are doing when using the proverbs, and this is best achieved empirically, by interacting with the people rather than merely collecting the proverbs and meanings found in linguistic and literary works.

2.2 Utterance Meaning

What does it mean to say that a proverb as an utterance is meaningful? I respond to this question by discussing a proverb, (i) as an utterance, and (ii) as a bearer of figurative or metaphorical meaning.

(i) A proverb as an utterance may be primarily viewed as linguistically coded information that makes sense (Kayange 2014, 222–223); see also Sperber and Wilson (2002, 251). This coded information is used in communication between a speaker and a hearer of a particular language. An utterance may be spoken, put in writing form or gestured (Saeed 1999, 14–15; Grice 1989). For example, the proverb, (a) '*Mateyu wapambana masewero*' (Mateyu has won the game), is coded information that refer to a subject, Mateyu, who wins a game in a particular context. Similarly in a discourse a speaker may utter, (b) *Ndagopitamo ndilibe kutyola mkhwani* (I have just walked in the garden without picking pumpkin leaves). Among the Chichewa speakers, in one context this utterance may give information about someone who walked in a particular garden without picking pumpkin leaves, but in another context it may show that someone didn't say the fundamental details in a particular issue.

What kind of utterance is a proverb? In response to this question, a proverb is generally categorised as a figurative utterance. Bredin (1992) suggested an enlightening understanding of 'figurative' as a second level order language that is imposed relative to the first level order language. Bredin (1992, 69–70) defines first-level order in the following passage,

> The first-level order of a language consists in the rules and conventions that are employed by a competent speaker of the language. These are usually divided, for convenience, into four types: phonological, syntactic, semantic, and discursive, corresponding to the disciplines of phonology, syntactic theory, semantics, and discourse analysis (or text linguistics).

This shows that there are different types of figures presented by utterances (not only sentences). In fact, it is argued by Bredin (1992) that there are four figures that are dependent on the four first level order rules and conventions, which are, phonetic figures, syntactic figures, semantic figures and discourse figures. This is suggestive of the idea that figurative utterance may be said relative to phonetic figures, or any of the other figures above. For example a rhyme, has a pattern that determines the phonetic nature of words, hence a rhyme as a phonetic figure is a figurative utterance. Similarly utterances such as metaphor, proverb, hyperbole, meiosis, andirony provide a semantic figure, they thus qualify as figurative utterances that necessitates a figurative meaning.

While a proverb is categorised as a figurative utterance providing a semantic figure, in classical understanding, a 'figurative utterance' is generally defined in relation to a 'literal utterance'. There is an antonym between literal and figurative utterances whereby, the former refers to the standard or normative way of expressing bearers of meaning in a particular society (for instance, using declarative utterances), while the latter as shown above, constitutes a departure from the accepted norms (such as, proverbs, metaphors, and hyperbole) (Kayange 2014).[7] This seems to suggest that a proverb, departs from the literal conception of expressions.

In as much as one may accept this distinction, this seemingly orthodox understanding of utterances and their meaning creates difficulties mainly in the pragmatic approach to meaning, whereby it is argued that there is a sharp-line between the literal utterances and figurative utterances (Sperber and Wilson 2002, 249–290). Lycan (2013, 6) discussing about metaphor, rightly notes this sharp-line by indicating that, "Even if we discount uncontroversially dead metaphor, few human utterances are entirely free of metaphor; virtually every sentence produced by any human being contains importantly metaphorical or other figurative elements." This assumption is strengthened when one believes that ordinary language is substantially a fruit of metaphorical conceptualisation process, whereby utterance meaning is dependent on a transfer of sense from one context (domain) to the other (target) (see also Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1982; Lakoff and Turner 1989). For example in 'love is a journey', the domain of a journey is used to talk about love. Similarly, the Chichewa proverb "I have just walked in the garden without picking pumpkin leaves" suggests a transfer of information from the literal context where an individual walks in a garden without picking pumpkin leaves to the target context where an individual gives a discourse without saying the relevant aspects or details.

(ii) Based on the centrality of metaphorical conceptualisation in proverbs, where one domain (source) is used to discuss another domain (target), I propose considering utterance meaning in terms of metaphorical meaning. The source domain from where a proverb is developed, may be categorised as twofold. (a) The first is what

[7]Commenting on the differences between these utterances, Hugh Bredin (1992) noted that 'The distinction and the opposition were at least implicit in *Poetics* 21, where Aristotle differentiated between the standard or normal name for a thing, and various other types of name among which he listed metaphor.'

may be agreed as literal source, which tentatively yields literal meaning. (b) The second source is metaphorical domain, which yields metaphorical meaning. (c) The outcome meaning from these two sources, is transferred to the targeted domain where a proverb is used, hence requiring a metaphorical meaning.

(a) Building on the literal source, literal meaning refers to the 'strict meaning' of a proverb considered as a sentence about certain state of affairs (see on strict meaning, Avramides 2000, 62, see also Saeed 1999, 15–17; Kayange 2014, 222–224). For example, strict meaning in a statement, 'John kicked the ball', implies that there is a subject (John), the action verb 'kicked' and the object 'ball' (subject-verb-object structure) which represent how things are in the world (the state of affairs). The assumption is that a sentence represents the state of affairs through a proposition that lies behind it. A proposition may be understood as the meaning of a statement. For instance, 'John is a president' is a statement, whose proposition (meaning) is dependent on the utterance and context. Commenting on this aspect, Saeed (1999, 15) writes:

> Utterances are real pieces of speech. By filtering our certain types of (especially phonetic) information we can get to abstract grammatical elements, sentences. By going on to filter our certain types of grammatical information, we can get to propositions, which are descriptions of states of affairs and which some writers see as a basic element of sentence meaning.

I argue that some proverbs when filtered with respect to their source domain, lead to a proposition which is a bearer of meaning (message). For example, the proverb, *Wataya udzu womwetamweta* (He has lost already cut grass), may be viewed in the source domain as a statement, which has a proposition describing the state of affairs. The structure of this proverb as a source domain is comprised of – a person, has lost, already cut, and grass, which corresponds to the state of affairs. Of course interest is not in this mere correspondence to facts[8], but on the meaning of this source domain relation.

Further examples on the bearers of literal meaning in the literal source domain are as follows: A proverb, (x) *Kanthu ndi nkhama nyerere idakoka ngolo*[9] (Having a thing is working hard, an aunt pulled an oxcart), may be regarded as a statement that has a structure that represents the fact. The structure is comprised of objects such as 'a thing', 'aunt' and 'oxcart', related by the actions of 'working hard' and 'pulling'. Similarly, the proverb (y) *Ukawona amzako akukazinga maso nawenso kazinga ako* (When you see friends frying their eyes, do the same), has first a literal meaning. The structure of this description shows that there are different objects such as, a perceiving subject (in ukawona), mzako (neighbour), maso (eyes) and the action verb of

[8]Note that in the literal source, 'state of affairs' can be anything. On this aspect I concur with Bertrand Russell (1948, 159) who viewed a fact as "Everything that there is in the world I call a 'fact'. The sun is a fact; Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon was a fact; if I have toothache, my toothache is a fact."

[9]In the past the proverb was uttered as: Kanthu ndi nkhama phwiti adakwata njiwa, translated as; achieving something is working hard an ant had sex with a dove. I didn't find this in my research, but this is most probably because of the morality issues. People are hesitant to use utterances that have something to do with sex.

frying (gerund). Another example is the proverb: (z) *Pagule fumbi ndiwe mwini* ('during a dance, dust is yourself' or in Chakanza (2000, 267) 'For dust to appear during a dance, you yourself have to cause it'). Its structure describes facts through the elements such as, 'dance', 'dust', and 'you yourself'. This confirms that from some proverbs in the literal source domain, it is possible to abstract a proposition.

Although the literal source shows that there is correspondence between the structure of some proverbs and facts, a possible problem comes when the requirement of verification of this relation is introduced. Verification is required by some formal theorists, for example Dummett (1975), who rejects the truth-value emphasis and opts for verification conditions. For example in *x* above, the problem is that the given description, of an aunt pulling an oxcart is empirically impossible. Similarly, the situation in *y* of people frying their eyes is empirically impossible. The same applies for *z* where the literal translation that dust is yourself, is empirically impossible. This leads to the assumption that some proverbs, while they describe the state of affairs, the correspondence between utterance and facts is empirically impossible. In spite of this assumption, I contend that proverbs as utterances are not necessarily designed to target empirical validity of what is stated, interest is on transferring the meaning or message from a literal sense domain to a target domain.

(b) Some proverbs have as their source domain figurative or metaphorical utterances. These are complex given that their meaning requires interpreting the utterance further. For example, the proverb *Akulu akulu ndi mdambo mozimira moto* (The elders are a swamp where fire is extinguished) (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 241).[10] This is firstly developed from a metaphor, where in the source domain there is a relation between a swamp and bushfire. The message behind this relation is that bushfire stops being a threat when it reaches a swamp (this is because of the water that is in swamps). The target domain is the elders, who are a solution to difficult problems in the society. The analogy is that a swamp is similar to elders, bushfire is similar to problems, and extinguished is similar to solving a problem.

Another proverb which has as its source domain a figurative utterance is, *Mayankhayankha a pabwalo anatalikitsa sakhwi mlomo* (Many answers in the court made the aunt-eater's lips longer). In this description, the idea of court suggests that this is dealing with human beings. On the contrary, this is attributed by analogy to the aunt-eater. Similarly, 'responding often', which is expected of human beings is attributed to aunt-eater. The message behind this figurative utterance is arrived at through a consideration of the physical properties of an aunt-eater such as, long lips as linked with the mouth of a talkative person. In fact, a talkative person in Chichewa is said to have long lips (*munthu wa mulomo wautali*). Given that having long lips is taken as a defect, the message of this proverb is that one has to reflect before answering (it is not good to talk too much without reflection).

[10]The translation 'The elders are rivers where fire is extinguished' does not capture well the literal translation of this proverb. The term 'rivers' can be replaced by 'swamp' because the Chichewa term 'mdambo' can be considered as 'swamp'.

(c) Based on the literal source and metaphorical source domains, utterance meaning is achieved through the transfer of meaning to the target domain. For example building from literal source domain, transfer of message may be considered in the proverb *Ntchentche ya dyera idanka ndi maliro kumanda* (The greedy fly went with the corpse to the grave). The structure suggests that it belongs to the literal source domain, where a greedy fly goes with a corpse to the grave. While this could be empirically valid, what is fundamental is the message, which is prudence. This message is transferred to a different structural relation where an individual is attached to wealth without being considerate of others (target domain). This transfer of message from where a proverb was developed may be exemplified as below (Table 2.2).

There are similarities between the literal meaning of the utterance in the source domain A and the figurative meaning domain B, which justifies the transfer of meaning. For example, a greedy fly in A is similar to a greedy human being in B, going with a corpse to the grave in A is similar to the accumulation of wealth in B, and grave in A is similar to destruction in B. The use of this proverb in B may therefore be seen as metaphorical, hence calling for a metaphorical meaning or non-literal meaning (Kayange 2014, 224–225). Metaphorical meaning[11] is considered by Moran (2000, 248) in "Metaphor", in the following words: "In metaphor we interpret an utterance as meaning something different from what the words would mean, taken literally. Often we will want to say that a statement which is wildly false when taken literally is quite true when taken figuratively."

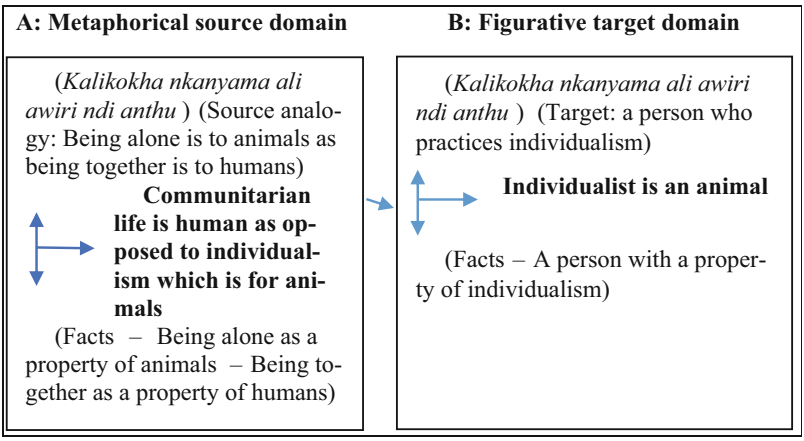
Another example of a shift of the message from a figurative or metaphorical utterance in the source domain to a target domain may be exemplified in a proverb, *Kalikokha nkanyama ali awiri ndi anthu* (The one who is alone is an animal and

Table 2.2 From literal source of a proverb to its figurative meaning

A: Literal source domain	**B: Figurative meaning domain**
Ntchentche ya dyera idanka ndi maliro kumanda (utterance represents – A greedy fly, going with a corpse, grave as destination) **Prudence** as message (Facts – A greedy fly, going with a corpse, grave as destination)	*Ntchentche ya dyera idanka ndi maliro kumanda* (utterance represents – A greedy human being, accumulates wealth, destruction) **Prudence** as message (Facts – A greedy human being, accumulates wealth, destruction)

[11] See Black (1962) for the most influential work in the context of metaphors and meaning. See also the work on metaphors in Sperber and Wilson (2008).

Table 2.3 Figurative/metaphorical source



those that are two are human beings). In the source domain there is a figurative utterance which shows an analogy as follows (Table 2.3):

There are similarities between the metaphorical source domain A and the figurative meaning domain B (target), in that A encourages communitarian life as a property of human beings and discourages individualism, which is proper for animals, while B discourages individualism by indicating that it is for animals and by implication supports communitarian life as human.

The discussion above shows that there are times when the message that is fundamental in a proverb is taken from the literal meaning of an utterance in the source domain (as in, a greedy fly went with a corpse to the grave), and in some circumstances it is taken from a metaphorical meaning of an expression in the source domain (as in 'elders are a swamp where bushfires are extinguished'). In the domain where this message is transferred, the proverb carrying this message is presented as a metaphorical expression since its meaning is originated from another domain. Therefore, utterance meaning for proverbs is metaphorical meaning, which is a consequence of the transferred message from the source domain to the target domain.

2.3 Utterance-Use Meaning

What does it mean to say that a Chichewa proverb has utterance-use meaning level? The basic idea in this section is that the specific meaning of a proverb is dependent on its use in a particular context (Austin 1962; Wittgenstein 1952; Kayange 2014). Understanding utterance meaning through its use, requires an investigation of the relation comprising of the (i) utterance and its intended message by its creator, (ii) the speaker's intention to communicate a specific message, and (iii) the hearer's

interpretation of the intended message by the speaker. It is for this reason that in Kayange (2014), I suggested using the pragmatic theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1952; Grice 1957; Austin 1962) in elucidating utterance-use meaning.

In the above relation, the idea of intention stands out as fundamental in understanding utterance-use meaning. In fact, in communication framework as suggested by the pragmatic theory of meaning, the recognition of the intention of a speaker by a hearer is fundamental in making meaning possible. Commenting on this centrality Sperber and Wilson (1995, 2002) wrote: "an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions (Grice, Studies in the Way of Words, 1989, Essays 1–7, 14, 18; Retrospective Epilogue)." I suggest building on the utterance-use meaning through the consideration of intentions and their recognition in three levels. (a) The first level considers meaning use focusing on the proverb creator's intention/message. (b) The second focuses on the expression of the speaker's intention/message. (c) The third focuses on the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention. My contention is that it is these three levels that make 'utterance-use meaning' possible with respect to proverbs (Kayange 2014, 225).

(a) Creator's intention/message refers to the conception that a proverb is an art work created by subjects in the community with a particular intention to communicate a specific message (the intended/message behind a proverb has a history). These artistic subjects are not known in the African traditional setting, and normally it is thought that they are the elders. It may be assumed that their intention may be clarified based on two elements, firstly they developed a proverb to express rationality and secondly, they wanted to deliver a profound and authoritative message using figurative language (Kayange 2014, 225–226). The intention of the creator of a proverb to express rationality, is shown through the creation of proverbs whose message provokes thinking (it is not straightforward) in the people hearing it. This is often done by presenting proverbs using figurative language, whose message requires a deep reflection. For example, the proverb *Akulu akulu ndi mdambo mozimira moto* (The elders are a swamp where bushfire is extinguished), provokes a lot of thinking using techniques in both analogy and metaphor. Similarly, a proverb such as, *Nkuyu zodya ana zidapota akulu* (Fig fruits eaten by children gave stomach problems to adults), calls for high level of thinking in terms of cause and effect. The cause in this proverb is the eating of figs by children, and the effect is the stomach problems that the parents experience. This is not an obvious causal relation, in fact the message is arrived at through metaphorical thinking and association.[12]

[12]Often, the creator does not expect the hearer to respond by indicating that this is the message.

The intention of the creator of a proverb to transfer a message to the users in a profound and authoritative way, is similarly seen in using symbolic language and attributing proverbs to elders.[13] Commenting on this intention, Kayange 2014 (226) wrote,

> Normally, the idea is that literal communication does not show the same depth in terms of transferring the message as is the case with non-literal communication. The use of figurative language shows how one is serious with what he/she wants to say. A message may be designed to do the following: to pass a verdict, to give orders, to create commissives, expressive and behabatives, or expositives, and by expressing it in terms of proverbs it becomes more powerful.[14]

There is a tendency among the speakers of Chichewa language to see figurative utterances as indicating intellectual rigour and authority. In fact a proverb is considered as having some authority because of its creators (elders). The common way of presenting proverbs in Chichewa ordinary language use, was first to announce that, '*Akulu akulu amati*' (Elders say), and after this declaration a proverb is stated. For example in *Akulu akulu* amati, '*Kutsutsa galu nkukumba'* (elders say that, 'Contradicting a dog is digging where it is continuously sniffing'). In this case the proverb '*Kutsutsa galu nkukumba'* gets its authority from the elders.

(b) The speaker's intention/message as a component of 'utterance-use meaning' may be considered by focusing on what he/she intends to communicate when uttering a particular proverb. This may be done by considering Grice's (1957) idea of non-natural meaning (figurative meaning), which captures the speaker's intention in relation to the utterance and the hearer. According to Grice (1957, 1975, 101 ff.), for a speaker's intention to be identified when a proverb is uttered, there are three aspects that must be present, namely, producing an effect on the audience, intending that the intention be recognised by the speakers of a language, and reflexive communicative intention.

Firstly, when A Chichewa proverb is uttered, the speaker intends to send/communicate a message. For example, uttering the proverb, *Ali dele nkulinga utayenda naye* (You can judge how a person is, after moving with him') in a conflict with a neighbour, the speaker intends to send a message, directed at producing an effect in the hearer. The intention/massage may be telling the neighbour in question, that he/she is untrustworthy. In a different context, the intention of the speaker may be sending a message of warning to an individual, for instance to be careful with a particular stranger. Commenting on the effect from this proverb I indicated that (Kayange 2014, 227),

[13]Note that sometimes in communication people play with the intonation of the voice as they try to show that they are serious in uttering a certain statement. In this context, the intonation is not necessary. The structure of a proverb itself reveals the seriousness to mean what it wants to mean.

[14]These are some of the things that Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) recommended as an indication of the illocutionary force of a speech act. It expresses the intention of the speaker of an utterance.

> The speaker of this utterance wants to have an effect on the behaviour of the hearer, to solve the problem first before rejoicing that it is over. This prevents the hearer from being ashamed in case the problem persists. When this proverb is uttered to a proud person, the intention of the speaker is to give advice, so as to make him be humble. The intention may as well be to criticize the hearer so that he can feel guilty of being proud.

Secondly, when uttering a proverb, the speaker intends that his/her intention be recognized and believed by the hearer. This recognition helps the speaker to induce belief on the hearer with regard to his (speaker's) intention (message). This seems to suggest that from a speaker's perspective, there is the understanding that a proverb as an utterance has a perlocutionary force (Austin 1962). According to Austin a perlocutionary force leads to 'consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons' (Austin 1962, 101). In this case, the speaker counts on this perlocutionary force and wants to induce the hearer's belief on his intention when it is recognised. For example a speaker may utter a proverb, *Linda madzi apite ndiye uziti ndadala*, (First wait for the floods to go and then say that you are blessed) with the intention of advising an individual to be cautious and not celebrate before the game is over. The speaker wants the hearer to recognise this intention and to induce a belief in him (about lack of cautiousness). Recognition is important as it implies that the speaker's message is having an impact on the hearer.

Thirdly, when a Chichewa proverb is uttered, the speaker intends that the recognition of his/her intention be part of the hearer's reason for believing the message (see also Kayange 2014, 227). For example, the proverb *Pati bii pali minga* ('Where there is a black spot there is a thorn'), when uttered by an individual in a court session, the hearer recognises the intention, and then uses this recognition as reason for believing the meassage, hence take action. The proverb makes the hearer suspect that some crucial information in a particular case is hidden (recognition stage). This produces an interest in them to probe further so that the hidden information is provided (probing is on the basis of the recognition of the intention). This helps the speaker to achieve his/her intention of desiring a further consideration of particular information. This indicates that there is reflexivity in the context of intention.

(c) Utterance-use meaning is possible when there is the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention. While in (b) above focus was on the speaker's intention, in this section, interest is on the hearer's recognition. Following Grice (1957), Sperber and Wilson (2002), this recognition is possible because utterance creates expectations in the hearers. This affect the hearer's interpretation of what is uttered (the message intended by the speaker), hence influence decision making. For example, when I am driving in Malawi and the oncoming car flashes lights twice (message), this creates expectations that where I am going there is speed-trap by traffic police, hence I recognise this message and decide to slow down. In fact, the intention of the car that flashed lights wanted me to slow down so that I avoid a fine from the traffic police.

Similarly, the expectations may be seen as a guide leading the hearer towards grasping the meaning that is intended by the speaker in uttering a certain proverb.[15] While there may be different expectations raised, the hearer recognises what is relevant, and the decision is based on this aspect. For example the car that flashes rights to me may raise the expectation that there is speed trap, or that my tire is flat, or that I have to slow down because there is an accident, etc. I therefore need to decide what is relevant mong these expectations. This calls for the centrality of the principle of relevancy which has to assist in grasping the relevant expectation hence make a decision based on this. The principle of relevancy in expressed as follows:

> [U]tterances automatically create expectations which guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning. Grice described these expectations in terms of a Co-operative Principle and maxims of Quality (truthfulness), Quantity (informativeness), Relation (relevance) and Manner (clarity) which speakers are expected to observe (Grice 1961, 1989, 368–372): the interpretation a rational hearer should choose is the one that best satisfies those expectations (Wilson and Sperber 2002, 250).[16]

In uttering proverbs, this suggests that it is required to specify what sorts of expectations are created in a hearer as per the message sent by the speaker. The expectations created by uttering a proverb, primarily follow the co-operative principle. According to Grice, this principle demands that people should co-operatively and mutually engage with one another during communication. This helps in achieving reciprocal understanding over the intended message in an utterance (Grice 1989). The idea is put by Grice (1975, 41–58) in the following descriptive way: 'Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.'

Apart from the cooperative principle, a proverb is further required to satisfy the four Gricean maxims of quality (truthfulness), quantity (informativeness), relation (relevance), and manner (clarity). The maxim of truthfulness relative to proverbs creates problems, if the truth required is based on empirical validity. It was indicated earlier that most of these proverbs require going beyond the empirically valid relation of correspondence between a statement and reality. In Kayange (2014), it was suggested that truthfulness be substituted by felicitous or infelicitousness of a proverb (see Austin 1962). A felicitous proverb is where the message given fits in a particular context. For example, the proverb *ukayendera mzengo usamati asakhwi afumbula* (If you go to the bush to get rafters, do not say, "look, the sakhwi mice pass here"), means that one has to stick to his/her objective in a particular situation. When this proverb is uttered where a person has lost his aim for doing something because of his interest on other things, it is a felicitous proverb. On the contrary, it is infelicitous when it is uttered in a context where an individual sticks to his/her

[15]This leads to the understanding of whether the speaker is intending to perform expositives, exercutives, commissives, etc. (This will be discussed further in Appendix II).

[16]A shortened version appeared in Proceedings of the Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics 2002 and a version of this article was expected in 2004 in L. Horn and G. Ward (eds), Handbook of Pragmatics (Oxford: Blackwell).

aim. The hearer is expected to recognize in part whether the proverb is felicitous or not.

The maxim of quantity that requires an utterance to be informative does not qualify in the context of proverbs because the content of a proverb is already closed ready for a successful communication between the speaker and the hearer. Based on insights from Searle, it may be said that a proverb has content which means what it wants to mean (Searle 1969).

The maxim of relation as expressed in relevance theory is the most important element. It requires the speaker who is using a proverb to use it in a relevant context. Relevancy is important because it determines the degree of how felicitous or infelicitous a proverb is. For instance, by pronouncing the Chichewa proverb, *Linda madzi apite ndiye uziti ndadala* (Wait for the current to go and then say that you are lucky), it is expected that the speaker is warning the hearer to be cautious. If this is uttered to an imprudent person it is relevant and felicitous, but when it is uttered to a cautious person, it is irrelevant and infelicitous. Similarly, pronounced in a context where there is danger, it is relevant and felicitous, while uttered where there is no danger it is irrelevant and infelicitous. When it is applied in this irrelevant context, a lot of questions are triggered in a hearer such as: is there any danger that I am not seeing? Does he think that I am imprudent? Is he saying for the sake of saying or is there a reason?

The maxim of relevance is an important platform as it requires the speaker to be clear and honest by using proverbs that are relevant and felicitous for communication to take place. The hearer is expected to believe the speaker that the stated proverb is relevant based on trust. A hearer does not only depend on this trust, but he/she analyses the whole situation in which the utterance is made. This creates a good background for the hearer to decide and accept the proverb as relevant for the situation in question. For example, when one utters the proverb, *Chete chete sautsa nyama*, *autsa nyama ndi suyo suyo* (Silence does not cause animals to come out during hunting, but noise does so), relevance may be determined by the situation where it is applied. For example Kayange (2014, 229) noted the contribution of situation in the following,

> If the context where the above proverb is pronounced is a game where any member can start and they are all hesitant with respect to starting, the hearer understands its relevance; here it will mean that it is an indication that anyone can start the game. The members playing the game now understand that we are in a situation of hesitation and we must decide that the game must start. This is deduced by the participants from the utterance and the context. In this case we have what is known as contextual implication. There may be other cognitive effects apart from the deduction of members that they have to start the game. There may be another assumption from the context that may imply that the members who want to play the game are in a situation of fearing each other. One may as well think that the context is suggesting that the game must be abandoned because no one is starting it. In this situation, the hearer will pick a more relevant interpretation that explains well the situation under consideration.

Apart from the analysis of the situation where it is applied, relevance is intrinsic to a proverb as an utterance. This means that it has relevance within itself, independent of where it is applied. In fact, hearing the above utterance, a native speaker of this

language has an image of the hunting practice where noise is sometimes needed to make animals run (hence chased and caught).[17] Uttering this proverb will therefore click in a person the importance of doing something in order to gain some results. Another important factor that will refer to the relevance of this proverb is history. An individual may understand its relevance in a particular context based on the past experience, where it was applied. The hearers' processing of a proverb is not very demanding because it is generally present in the memory of the speakers of the Chichewa language. According to Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber (2002), this search and centrality of expectations of relevance forms part of the cognitive features which are manipulated by communicators. These authors therefore have developed a theory of relevance in the context of the cognitive theory (Sperber and Wilson, 2002).[18]

The maxim of manner demands that a proverb be expressed in a clear form. It is expected that this requirement is already achieved in the formulation of a proverb, which is a finished product ready to be used in various situations.[19] Given that proverbs are in some cases complex as they rely on figurative language, the content must be clear. For example, in the proverb, *Akulu akulu ndi mdambo mozimira moto* (Elders are a swamp where bushfire is extinguished), the analogy between the domain of a swamp and bushfires and that of elders and problem solution, needs to be clearly linked.

I conclude this chapter by indicating that a Chichewa proverb as an utterance is a form of linguistically coded information. It is categorised as a figurative or metaphorical utterance. This utterance presupposes a relation between the source domain of an utterance and the target where it is applied. It has therefore been argued that a proverb has metaphorical meaning, which is dependent on the transfer of meaning from a source domain to the target domain. Lastly, using the use-theorists approach, the chapter argued for utterance-use meaning by considering the creator's intention, the speaker's intention in relation to the hearer's recognition in a particular context where the utterance is used. This relation completes the meaning of proverbs among the Chichewa speaking people. The use of proverbs above suggests further that they are a special type of speech acts. This will be discussed further in the Appendix 2.

[17]These stories are being forgotten because of the growing lack of interest in traditional culture among the new members of the society. This may be explained as a consequence of globalisation which is making them follow what is happening in other parts of the world and hence forgetting their traditional roots.

[18]This work will not develop the cognitive theory of Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber in relation to proverbs but will suggests some elements necessary in this context.

[19]None can question a proverb for clarity. If one fails to see the clarity the problem is not with the proverb but the level of rationality of the hearer. It indicates that the hearer is rationally inferior and needs to do something to improve.

Chapter 3
Meaning of Taboos Using Counterfactual Logic

Abstract This chapter studies the meaning of taboo expressions by departing from a consideration of their structure and use. While the chapter demonstrates that there is a strong presence and use of counterfactual logic in some Bantu languages, specifically the Chichewa language (This language is used by the Chewa tribes of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia (a Bantu group of people.)), it argues that the study of these figurative expressions using the counterfactual framework offers a particular understanding of African philosophy and belief systems. The chapter demonstrates how to do African philosophy (with counterfactual logic) by studying taboos progressively from causal statements, conditional statements to counterfactual conditionals as they are used in the Chewa people's various modes of communication.

Keywords Taboos · Counterfactual logic · African philosophy · Causal statements · Beliefs

What are the Chewa people doing when they are using taboos?[1] These are statements that are connected with belief in the sense that they purport that a certain action *x* when it is done by an individual, leads to effect *y*. For example a statement of the type, *munthu akakodzera pamphambano amadwala likodzo* (If one urinates at the cross-roads, he/she suffers from Bilharzias). Interestingly these statements are presented in different forms such as, as causal statements, conditional statements and sometimes as counterfactual conditions. It is due to these various forms that I thought that the best framework for discussing meaning and belief systems in this context is through the use of the counterfactual framework.

[1]Developed from a paper presented at Pretoria Logic and Philosophy of Science Colloquium in 2015.

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3.1 Counterfactual Framework

As is the case, the statements above were already studied by Chilshom (1946) in "The Contrary-to-fact Conditional". Similarly, Goodman (1947, 113–128), who is regarded as one of the pioneers, investigated this idea in the article, "The Problem of Counterfactual Conditionals." These statements are presented as of a form: *If that piece of butter had been heated to* 150^0 *F., it would not have melted*. Stalnaker (1968, 98–112) article, "A Theory of Conditionals," studied further the conditionals/counterfactuals with respect to how they are assessed, the issue of truth value, and related epistemological concerns. For instance, he indicated the logical problem of counterfactuals relative to conditional statements, a proposition similar to what this work will be advancing. He pointed out this problem in the following words:

> My principle concern will be with what has been called the *logical problem of conditionals*, a problem that frequently is ignored or dismissed by writers on conditionals and counterfactuals. This is the task of describing the formal properties of the *conditional function*: a function, usually presented in English by the words, "if then," taking ordered pairs of propositions into propositions (Stalnaker 1968, 98).

The work of Stalnaker has been influential in this investigation of the Chewa thought in African philosophy, because of the fact that, his article mentioned above, approached the issue of counterfactuals and other conditionals in a broader way by considering different relevant issues. For instance, he attempted solving two important problems that are also of interest in understanding counterfactuals in an African context. Firstly, he posed the *pragmatic problem* of counterfactuals, which is partly related to the idea of truth, and secondly, *the epistemic problem* of these conditionals (Stalnaker 1968, 99).[2] The former, considers the pragmatic relation between properties of the conditional function and facts, while the latter questions the actuality of counterfactuals, given that they are contrary to facts.

Apart from Goodman's and Stalnaker's influence, the study of counterfactual logic among the Chewa draws insights from David Lewis' ideas on counterfactuals. This philosopher advanced further the general theory of counterfactuals in his 1973 book, *counterfactuals.* Interestingly, the book developed a general analysis of counterfactual statements using possible world semantics of intentional logic (Lewis 1973, 1 ff.; 1986). Although Stalnaker also used the idea of possible worlds in 1968, apparently, the elaboration of Lewis became widely discussed in philosophical literature (Stalnaker 2003; Rescher 2007; Hall 2004). A study of the Chewa conditionals/counterfactuals can greatly benefit from Lewis' method of building counterfactuals starting from a consideration of ordinary statements in English language. Other insights will be drawn from his investigation of ordinary counterfactual constructions, the use of various counterfactual operators. My interest here is not to develop a Goodman-Stalnaker-Lewisian counterfactual theory but

[2]Note that Goodman (1947) also attempted to tackle these issues.

utilize some insights in understanding the counterfactual construction in the Chewa language, their logical structure and epistemic value.

In terms of methodology this paper builds on the belief that efficient philosophical reflection in African philosophy has to start from a consideration of African languages in general.[3] By underlining philosophy that builds on ordinary language, the paper builds in a context similar to that of Alexis Kagame, who studied the Bantu concept of being through the analysis of Kinyarwanda, an African language (Kagame 1956, 1976).[4] I share the belief that this is a fertile context for doing genuine African philosophy, given that language takes us back to our ancestors who were the sages (see also Masolo 1994, 95–96) and it reflects the present community in its different facets, given that language is dynamic. In order to avoid conditioning the study of Chichewa language by building on what I know as a Chichewa speaker, the study will employ an empirical method by collecting statements as they are used in ordinary conversation, and these will be studied in the theory of conditionals/counterfactuals. Apart from this element, I believe that the context of ordinary language use is fundamental for a thorough understanding of meaning of words and statements (see also Grice 1989; Sperber and Wilson 2002; Austin 1971; Searle 1969, 1979; Wittgenstein 1952).

In line with the above methodology, Sect. 3.3 of the chapter presents the Chewa causal statements,[5] which are a foundation of counterfactual conditionals in discourse, as is the case among the Chewa people. In Sect. 3.4, the paper argues that in everyday discourse between the speaker and the hearer, the causal statements in this context are utilized as conditional statements. In Sect. 3.5, the paper demonstrates that in some circumstances, the same statements are utilized as counterfactual conditionals.[6] [Given that the book has a chapter on the concept of truth, issues regarding counterfactuals and truth are discussed later in that context]. In the conclusion I indicate that when they are using taboos, they are transmitting social values and enhancing ethical compliance.

[3]The chapter shares in the assumption that African philosophy/philosophy in general may be considered as an issue of language/ordinary language, this idea is also reflected in some works in analytic philosophy such as, Austin (1971) and Wittegenstein (1952), Hallen Barley (2006), etc.

[4]Kagame's development was a different approach from that of Tempels (1959) who developed Bantu ontology based on a reflection of the idea of being and not necessarily, language.

[5]Interest was on this group of the Bantu speaking people given that they form a large group that spreads in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and other parts of Southern Africa. It was selected further because of the fact that Chewa language in widely spoken in the Southern part of Africa, such that, it is used even by other Bantu groups that are not part of the Chewa.

[6]The movement from causal statements to conditionals to counterfactual conditionals is not programmed but it is a consequence of the findings of research. When the Chewa speaking participants were asked to give statements that show a link between an antecedent and a consequence, they listed causal statements. When I observed the way they are used, in the communication between the speaker and the hearer, the utilized the conditional form. Finally, when some of the effects or consequents were experienced in the village, they utilized the counterfactual conditions in some circumstances.

3.2 A List of Taboos and Literal Understanding

In this section I present a collection of some common Chewa taboos/belief-statements that are used in ordinary language. These were collected from different sources such as, linguistic and literary works Schoffeleers (1975, 1997), van Breugel (2001), Amanze (2003), and personal collection of taboos.[7]

- *Kudya mango osakhwima kumabweretsa matsagwidi* (Eating immature mango leads to mumps)
- *Kudya chimanga chokazinga pamene chachiwisi chidakali m'munda* (Eating roasted maize when green maize is still in the garden leads to mumps).
- *Kudumpha musi umakhala osabereka* (Jumping over a pestle leads to impotence or infertility).
- *Kukodzera pa mphambano umadwala likodzo kapena umamwalira* (Urinating at the crossroads leads to birharzia or death).
- *Kuchotsa dzino osalitaya m'malo oyenerera, silimeranso* (Removing a tooth and disposing it wrongly it will not grow again).
- *Kukodza pamoto kumabweretsa likodzo* (Urinating on fire leads to bilharzia).
- *Kukhalira fuwa siudzakwatira, kapena siudzabereka* (Sitting on a cooking stone leads to failure to marry or impotence/infertility).
- *Kutakasa ndi mpeni umadwala chibayo* (Stirring with a knife leads to pneumonia).
- *Kugwira nazikambe (birimankhwe) amalavula moto* (Touching a chameleon it spits frames).
- *Kukhala kumbuyo kwa achikulire* (Standing behind elders leads to stupidity).
- *Kuyendayenda pamtunda pa diso ndi mwayi* (When the upper eyelid is moving leads to fortune).
- *Kukhala pafupi ndi azimayi akamapeta siubereka* (Sitting near women winnowing leads to impotence).
- *Kupha Chiswamphika mphika wakwanu umasweka* (Killing a preying-mantis, clay pot breaks at home).
- *Kuwonekera kadzidzi pakhomo kumabweretsa tsoka* (Appearance of an owl leads to misfortune).
- *Kukumana ndi gulo umapeza tsoka* (Meeting a salamander leads to misfortune).

The above expressions show a system of beliefs in that certain actions when they are performed lead to some unwanted consequences. The expressions show some common problems (such as diseases, issues of fertility, etc) and positive outcomes that are needed in the society (such as fortune). Although taboos and beliefs may be

[7]These taboos were verified by 100 in order to find out whether they were common and 86% of the participants indicated that they know them, with slight differences on what follows when a certain action is done.

about anything, it is interesting that the expressions above reveal that most of them are devised to encourage some ethical and social practices.[8]

It is important to note that most of the taboos are transmitted to children and are not generally believed these days by most of the younger generation.

3.3 Chewa Causal Statements

In utilizing the statements above, most of the Chewa speakers use them as causal statements. As is well known, causal statements acquired this name because of the fact that they state a link between a cause and an effect in a given situation. In other words, they state that an event *E* follows from an event *C*. In metaphysics, the claims of similar type are often studied under the different theories of causation, which focus more on understanding the concept of causation (see Shoemaker 1999).

Reasoning in a similar way, studies in African philosophy concentrated more on developing an African understanding of this concept, as was the case with Sogolo's article (1991, 117 ff.), 'The Concept of Cause in African Thought,' published in *Philosophy from Africa* (Sogolo 1991, 177–185).

In inductive logic, focus is more on the form of arguments that are categorized as drawing their conclusion based on the observed causal links as claimed by its statements in the premises (Hurley 1985, 385–405). For instance, from the repetition of *C* coming before *E*, it is believed and concluded that *C* causes *E* or that there is a high probability that *C* is a cause of *E*.

The interest of this work is neither the concept of causation as in metaphysics nor the causal arguments as in inductive logic, but the focus is on the collection of statements that reflect or claim a causal link between a cause and an effect, as they are used among the Chewa people of Malawi, as bearers of meaning.

The selected causal statements of this research are reported below (Table 3.1):

When the Chichewa language speakers are using taboos in this context, they are declaring their belief in causal link.

3.4 The Chewa Causal Statements as Conditional Statements

The objective of this section is to highlight the idea that the Chewa causal statements are often utilized as conditionals in the relation between the speaker and hearer. Following this claim, the chapter builds a Chewa theory of conditionals by reflecting on how these statements are used. Stalnaker (1968, 1) indicated that "A conditional sentence expresses a proposition, which is a function of two other propositions, yet

[8]Of course my interest in this work is no necessarily focusing on why focus is on ethical or not.

Table 3.1 Taboos as causal statements

Cause	Effect
Eating immature mango.	Suffering from mumps.
Eating roasted maize when green maize is still in the garden.	Suffering from mumps.
Jumping over a pestle.	Leads to impotence.
Urinating at the crossroads.	Bilharzia or Death.
Removing a tooth and disposing it wrongly.[a]	It will not grow
Urinating on fire.	Bilharzia.
Sitting on a cooking stone.	Impotence or failure to marry.
Meeting a salamander.	Misfortune.[b]
Appearance of an owl	Misfortune.
Killing a preying-mantis.	Clay pot breaks at home.
Sitting near women winnowing.	Impotence.
Stirring with a knife.	Pneumonia
When the upper eyelid is moving.	Fortunes.
Standing behind elders	Leads to stupidity.
Touching a chameleon.	It spits flames.

[a]The right way of disposing it is by throwing it in a pit latrine or on top of the roof
[b]Note that misfortune in most cases referred to death. This causal utterance is connected with the myth of the cause of death among the human subjects. It is believed in this story that at first God didn't want man to face death. One day he asked a chameleon to go and ask man whether it is ok for him to live forever as God wished or die. Man told the Chameleon that he wanted to live. A salamander was close to man when this message was delivered and it decided to run faster than a Chameleon and told God that human beings wanted to die. When Chameleon arrived, God had already set the destiny of man. This created enmity between a salamander and a human being (See also Breugel 2001: 37)

not one which is a truth function of those propositions." As is well known in elementary logic, these statements use a conditional function, "if. . .then. . ."[9] This can be easily expressed in logical terms (logical form), based on the relation of first order *material implication* between antecedent p and a consequent q. For example, *if* (p) one meets a salamander, *then* (q) he or she will face misfortunes. Symbolically represented as[10];

$$p \supset q.$$

It is this form of statements that I intend to present among the Chewa people of Malawi, as a way of doing a reflection in African logic. I am aware of the attempt to discuss conditionals in general by Ocaya (2004, 290–291) in the article, "Logic in the Acholi language," in the section on *implication*. Although this has been a brilliant move towards the development of the logic of conditionals in an African context, it is unfortunate that his article doesn't adequately achieve this, given that

[9]See also Rescher (2007).
[10]The symbol $\supset$ represents an implication, that is, *if*. . . .*then*. . ..

the author is attempting to discuss many themes of logic in a short chapter (approximately all elementary logic in few lines). Worthy mentioning in this work is the complexity of understanding conditionals because they follow into different categories. For instance, it is argued that some have no causal links, as in, "If your mother comes, then give her key." Some have a causal link as in "If you eat honey during a hunt when the sun is hot, then you get very thirsty," etc. (Ocaya 2004, 290). I am aware of such variations of the use of conditionals in the African and other contexts. Nevertheless, I limit my discussion to those conditionals that reflect a causal link as is suggested in Sect. 3.3 above.

To make the issue more concrete, let's consider some of the causal statements present among the Chewa, which are used as conditional statements in communication. Below are some examples:

Example 3.1
The Chewa causal statement: *Kudya mango osakhwima kumadwalitsa matsagwidi*, translated as, Eating immature mangoes causes mumps, is often used as: *ukudya mango osakhwima, umadwala matsagwidi,* translated as, If you eat immature mangoes, then you suffer from mumps. This suggests a normal form of conditionals symbolized by $p \supset q$ in the Chewa context.

Example 3.2
A transformation may be seen from a causal statement, *Kukodza pamphambano kumadwalitsa likodzo kapena kubweretsa imfa,* translated as, Urinating at the crossroads causes bilharzia or death, is transformed in use into a conditional statement: *ukakodza pamphambano umadwala likodzo kapena umafa*, translated as, If you urinate at the crossroads, then you suffer from birharzia or you die. This leads to a complex statement of the form,

$$p \supset (q \vee o).$$

Example 3.3
The causal statement: *Kunyera kutchire osakwilira, munthu wina amayika tsabola ndipo ntumbo umatuluka,* translated as, Defecating in the bush, another person puts red pepper and the anus swells. When this is used as a conditional, it is translated as; *Ukanyera kutchire osakwilira, munthu wina akayika tsabola, ntumbo umatuluka*, translated as, If you defect in the bush without covering the feaces, and when another person puts red pepper on the feaces, then your anus protrudes.[11] This suggests that the Chewa permits a structure of implication stating that,

$(m \supset p) \supset q$ or this may be expressed in the sentence $(m \,\&\, p) \supset q$.

What can be deduced from the above examples?

Firstly I argue that, the first example shows that the Chewa people follow the understanding of a conditional statement as it is discussed in elementary logic (see

[11]This consequence is when the anus swells and it becomes so painful.

Hurley 1985). This implies that it follows the conditions that apply when a conditional function is utilized in a complex statement. For example: the idea that a sentence is false if and only if the antecedent is true and the consequent is false (e.g. $p \supset \sim q$). The only thing that can be asserted is that, if the antecedent is accepted as true, the consequent is also true. In other words, this indicates that the truth of q is dependent on that of p, but not vice versa.

Secondly, from Example 3.2, the Chewa conditionals may be considered as reflecting a causal link that forms a holistic structure in the understanding of effects. This suggests that, if a subject wants to discover a cause of an effect, he/she is confronted with a multiplicity of causes. This is evidenced in the data presented in Fig. 2 above, where in (1) and (2) the effect is mumps but the causes are different. This may apply also to the causes, whereby a cause may be a causal agent for many other effects, hence creating a continuous structure of conditional statements. For example, taking independent effects q and m and the causes (1) as o, cause (2) as p, and cause b, each element will be related to many other causes and effects as demonstrated below (Fig. 3.1).

Thirdly, the fact that an effect has many possible causes further suggests that the Chewa understanding of conditionals excludes any argument that uses *modus ponens* and tries to deduce the antecedent from the consequent. As is known, this wrong inference that is also excluded among the Chewa is as follows:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c} p \supset q \\ q \end{array}}{Therefore\, p}$$

Briefly, the structure of Chewa conditionals suggests that it is wrong to deduce that *impotence* is caused by jumping over a pestle, because it is possible that it is caused by sitting on a cooking stone, or many other causes such as being, bewitched, etc.

Fourthly, Example 3.3, suggests a complex structure of causes giving room for a consideration of property-based approach to causation as suggested by Shoemaker (1998, 1999) as influenced by John Locke. In this approach it is believed that an effect follows from a cause because of a number of properties, some of which are more important than others. Building on Example 3.3, property-based causation (see

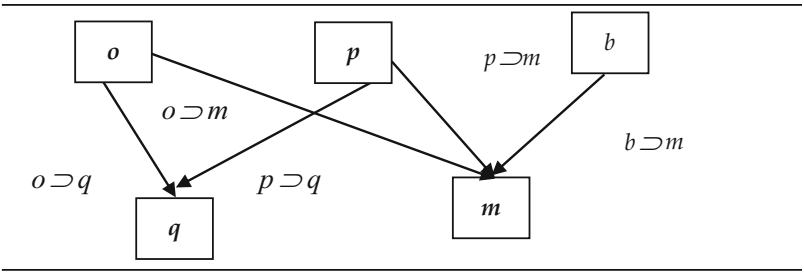

Fig. 3.1 Belief systems of multi-causes/effects

Rupert 2008) among the Chewa may be discussed by considering various objects involved as causes with their properties. For instance, the person (object) who does the action of defecating (property), person (object) who applies red pepper on the feaces (property). Other properties may further be seen in other objects involved in the antecedent, such us, red pepper (object) and its reaction on soft parts of a human subject (property), etc.[12]

Although the identification of causes with respect to a given effect is difficult among the Chewa, given that there is a multiplicity of causes, there are some circumstances where they claim that a certain specific relation between a cause and effect is the case. For example, they see a person who is impotent, then immediately they communicate this status as a consequence of jumping over a pestle. This violates the structure of conditionals with respect to the causal links; in fact, there is a possibility that this is caused by sitting on a cooking stone, etc. Why then do they conclude in this way? I argue that in most cases the reason is that they want to use that situation as an instrument to attain certain goals, such as, warning children against jumping over a pestle. The investigation of statements that claim the satisfaction of a certain link between cause and effect takes the speakers and the hearers back to the use of causal statements, but in some circumstances, they express their statements in a form of counterfactual conditionals.

3.5 The Chewa Causal Statements as Counterfactual Conditionals

The objective of this section is to discuss the claim that when the Chewa people are convinced that a certain consequence follows from the antecedent in the conditionals above, they often communicate them in terms of counterfactual conditionals. It is this element that suggests the presence of counterfactual logic in the language use among these people. As is well known, a counterfactual is in most cases a conditional statement in a subjunctive mood (see also Goodman 1947, 113–128). David Lewis in *Counterfactuals* starts this famous work by departing from an example of a counterfactual condition stating that, "*If Kangaroos had no tails, they would topple over.*" This according to him was suggestive of the fact that if there are some worlds like this physical world where Kangaroos have no tails, they are going to topple over (Lewis 1973, 1). Another example of a counterfactual condition from which insights may be taken for the purposes of this paper, is where it is expressed or transformed into a past subjunctive in Lewis' book, *Counterfactuals* (1973, 3) as follows: "*If we had been finished packing Monday night, then we would have departed Tuesday morning."* It is statements similar to this that the Chewa people utilize in the speaker and hearer relation in certain circumstances.

[12]Shoemarker divides properties into genuine (have more and real responsibility as causes) and non-genuine which affect the effect but are not fundamental for its occurance.

When the Chewa people are using the counterfactual conditions, they assume that there is a causal link[13] between the antecedent and the consequent. Below are some of the examples of the counterfactual conditionals in this context.

Example 3.4
This first counterfactual reflects the causal belief in the statement that *jumping over a pestle, causes impotence.* Assuming that there is Chikondi who is in a situation of impotence and is believed to be so because of the actualization of the antecedent, the following counterfactual is uttered:

Chikondi adakapanda kudupha musi (A), sakadakhala osabereka/gojo (E) (If Chikondi hadn't jumped over a pestle (*A*), then he wouldn't have developed impotency (*E*)). A statement like this is linked with the theory of causation because of the fact that the truth of its opposite implies the satisfaction of the relation of cause and effect. In other words, it implies that jumping a pestle causes impotency as claimed in the causal statements above.
The statement above may be expressed as suggesting the following form:

If *A* had not occurred, *E* would not have occurred.

Although the above statement is transformed into this causal statement, in the Chewa context this statement remains problematic given that there is room that E would still occur, as caused by other causes. This will be shown in the counterfactual in Example 3.5, below.

Example 3.5
This second group of counterfactuals is comprised of those conditionals that require various things to be the case in the antecedent for a certain effect to be the case. For example:

Akadapanda kuchotsa dzino, ndi kulitaya mosasamala, sibwenzi litakana kumera translated as If the teeth had not been removed, and if the removed teeth had not been thrown carelessly, then the teeth wouldn't have refused to grow. As it was indicated that counterfactuals claim a causal relation, or are a fruit of the belief in causal relations, this example leads to the understanding of counterfactual causation that,

- If *x* and *y* had not occurred, then either *E* would not have occurred, or *E* would have occurred but would have been caused differently.

Or better still,

[13]I am aware of problems with Lewis' theory of causation, such as, Hall, N. (2004) who was concern with the problem of considering the elements of transitivity and dependence together. This paper will not concentrate on these developments but attempt understanding what is happening among the Chewa people.

- If x then y had not occurred, then either E would not have occurred, or E would have occurred but would have been caused differently.

This reflects the idea that there are many properties that are sometimes believed to come together for a certain effect to be the case, hence suggesting further a property-based understanding of counterfactual causation.

Example 3.6
The third group of counterfactuals may be developed from the belief that an effect may be caused by different independent causes in separate instances. From this idea, let's combine two counterfactuals with the same effect bilhazia:

Akadapanda kukodza pa mphambano kapena akadapanda kukodza pamoto, sakadadwala likodzo, translated as, If x hadn't urinated at the crossroads or if x hadn't urinated on fire, then x wouldn't have suffered bilharzia. This counterfactual conditional suggests a causal relation of the form: $(m \vee p) \supset q$, whereby the consequent q would have followed from m or p. This disjunctive may be interpreted among the Chewa as an exclusive either or. This disjunction of causes may include many other causes that are believed to have led to bilharzias, which may be presented as, $B = \Sigma_n$ where B is for bilharzia, $C_{1\text{-}n}$ is a sum of causes.

In terms of counterfactual understanding of causation, the Chewa counterfactual conditional above suggests that,

> A set $\cup_1^n C_n$ causes E just in case, had C_1 not occurred, either E would not have occurred, or E would have occurred but would have been realized by any of the members of the set (either by C_2 or C_3, etc).

I emphasize that the disjunction in this context excludes the possibility of two causes leading to the same effect at the same time and in the same respect.

The three examples above suggest the counterfactual concept with some of the following characteristics.

Firstly, it may be deduced that the idea of necessary conditions for an effect to occur may be argued to be problematic in the Chewa understanding of causation. This is because of the fact that an effect can follow from anything, as is the case in example three. This begs the question in Example 3.4, which seems to say that jumping a pestle is a necessary condition for impotence, although this is a contingent statement relative to a specific situation.

Secondly, example two, above suggests a causal chain of events preceeding a particular effect.

Thirdly, the example three suggests that departing from an effect cannot be easily determined by a single cause given that there are many causes of an effect.[14] In spite of this, it is believed that the cause can only be determined in certain circumstances utilizing the Chewa notion of truth.

[14]For a further consideration of cause and effect in proverbs, see Chakanza 2000, 135, 492, 682, ff.

3.6 Conclusion

Although the study of taboos as counterfactual conditions has not added new knowledge on the structure of counterfactual logic, it has provided particularized experiences in this context. It may be concluded by indicating that the Chewa counterfactual conditionals, when they are used in ordinary language, they have a specific function that it plays in the society. I conclude by commenting on two functions that are common.

Firstly, Chewa counterfactual conditionals play an epistemic function, which is underlined by the speakers in their relation with the hearers.

(i) They are used as instruments to transmit the knowledge of social problems that are common in this context. This implies that the hearer's (normally children) who come to the knowledge of these counterfactual conditionals are automatically introduced to *social problems*, hence expected to take responsibility in avoiding or solving such problems.

For example, when the Chewa speakers are using counterfactual conditionals to children in their communication, they are transmitting the social problems that are considered as fundamental in their environment. This knowledge influences their thinking and ethical behavior in the village. Some of the social beliefs and problems that can be seen in the causal statements and their relative counterfactual conditionals, regard fertility/marriage, witchcraft, misfortune, diseases, etc.

By just listening to the counterfactuals, there is indirect learning of these problems. For example on the issue of fertility: the often appearance of themes concerning impotence, getting married to a witch/wizard, sexual problems, etc., in counterfactual conditionals, suggests that the problems of fertility among the Chewa are believed as fundamental. A person is therefore judged as successful in life when there is no impotence, no sexual failures, etc. The following quotation from Van Breugel (2001: 172), captures well the centrality of fertility among the Chewa and when it becomes problematic:

> As many have said before, in societies which have to maintain themselves in the face of diseases and high mortality rate, fertility is one of the most important values. This fertility is believed to depend on the right use of sex according to the traditions laid down by the ancestors. Anything which is thought to harm the fertility of a couple is seen as a crime against the whole group and against the ancestors who are believed to be the guardians of the traditions in the tribe. They protect and guarantee fertility and survival of the group as long as the members of the group follow the traditions. They punish and withdraw fertility if traditions are not followed.

Departing from this importance, when the Chichewa speakers are saying that, *Akadapanda kukhalira fuwa (A), sakadakhala osabereka/gojo.* This is translated as: If x hadn't sat on a cooking stone (*A*), then she wouldn't have developed impotency (*E*), they are indirectly communicating to the children by transmitting to them that impotence is a problem.

The confirmation of the above claim may be achieved by considering some literature on the Chewa traditions and customs. For instance, in the book by

Makumbi (1970, 1–8) titled *Maliro ndi Miyambo ya a Chewa,*[15] there are different issues indicating how children are valued among the Chewa. Their existence in the world, is followed by many observations that the whole community is requested to undertake, for the good of the child and every member of the community.

Similarly by uttering, *Akadapanda kudya mango osakhwima, sakadadwala matsagwidi.* If *x* hadn't eaten immature mango (*A*), then *x* wouldn't have developed mumps (*E*). They are suggesting that there is a disease known as mumps which is common and problematic in this context. Interestingly now, not many cases are found in this context, to the point that a thorough study of counterfactual conditionals related with this disease will certainly register few members who contacted this disease.

The counterfactual conditional, *Kadzidzi akadapanda kuwoneka, tsoka silikadawoneka.* If an owl hadn't appeared in the village (*A*), then misfortune wouldn't have occurred (*E*). This counterfactual suggests that misfortune is another common problem in this society.

(ii) Apart from awareness of social problems, they are used as a vehicle for transmitting *social values*. I argue that speakers of Chewa language who use counterfactual conditionals intend to indirectly transmit values present in their society. The value is presented as a hidden value. This implies that a child discovers the value as hidden in the opposite of the effect relative to a given counterfactual. For instance, they deliberately provide a counterfactual as a constative, which has a literal meaning (Searle 1979),[16] e.g. the counterfactual which was discussed earlier:

- If *x* hadn't jumped over a pestle (*A*), then *x* wouldn't have developed impotency (*E*).

This acts as a pointer that guides a child to discover the hidden meaning/value contained in the opposite of *E*. The child arrives at the hidden meaning based on the following process of reasoning:

- If *A* is the case, the effect is *E* which is a punishment, and then the opposite of the effect is a social value that is recommended in this environment. The child therefore concludes that it must be persuaded and achieved.

Children learn from this contrast that for the Chewa society fertility is a paramount value.[17] It may be concluded that, people by adopting a particular counterfactual, they want to: teach, scare, advise, etc. For instance, by saying that, *Akadapanda kukodzera pamphambano pa nseu, sadakhala osabereka.* If *x* hadn't urinated on a crossroads (*A*), then *x* wouldn't have developed impotency (*E*), they are trying to teach people good health values, they are scaring them that if they don't

[15]The book talks about the observances when a person dies and other important beliefs that are expected to be followed in the society.

[16]This has been discussed in sect. 3.4 above.

[17]See also van Braugel (2001, 264) who indicated that, 'fertility is the other paramount value for the community. Fertility is believed to depend, inter alia, on the observance of the mdulo taboos. . .'

follow this teaching, they will be punished, etc. When this behavior is avoided, it means that the children have been taught that there is a value when one does not urinate on the crossroads.

Secondly, the counterfactual conditionals strengthen the habit of associating objects (symbolic association) with different situations. The symbolic association may be discussed by building on some examples. For instance, in the counterfactual,

- *If x* hadn't *Jumping over a pestle,* then *impotence wouldn't have had occurred*, the effect (impotence) explains the object (pestle).

This explanation may be firstly claimed at the basis of the nature of the object. Secondly, it may be explained based on the symbolic gesture of *jumping*. *Ku*-'to' with the basic verb *dumpha*- 'jump' has different meanings such as, to cross, to miss, not considered, etc. In this context, jumping, symbolizes missing the target. Having children is the target that is wanted, and impotence is missing such target.

Similarly, an owl is associated with the night. This is because it is often seen at night. The witches bring misfortunes such as death. An owl is therefore also associated with death. It is associated with the witches because they are believed to move at night. For instance, when an Owl can appear in the village, and coincidently there is a misfortune in the village at that time. If this situation repeats itself in this village there is an automatic attribution of misfortune to the presence of an Owl. When times passes as it is the case with most of the Causal Belief Utterances, talking about an Owl becomes the same as talking about misfortune. There is a continuous association that takes place between an Owl and Misfortune.

Symbolic association may be further illustrated in the belief that, 'Urinating at the crossroads leads to bilharzia.' A spell from the witches explains the crossroads on the basis of another hidden belief that the witches and wizards meet at night at the crossroads. There is also a belief that a crossroads is a place where the evil spirits are taken and confused, that is, not to return to the village where they were. Apart from the graveyards, it is also believed that witchcraft is also practiced at the crossroads. Bilharzia gets its connection to the whole issue basically because of the nature of the action, urinating. This disease attacks the urinary system, and this could be a possible reason why it is selected in this belief.[18]

The presence of counterfactual conditionals is therefore a rich source of knowledge among the Chewa people of Malawi.

[18]It must also be noted that this disease was also one of the commonest in this area.

Chapter 4
Doing African Philosophy with Metaphors

Abstract This chapter suggests a way of doing philosophy through a reflection on metaphors. It develops three themes in socio-political philosophy. The first theme investigates conceptual metaphors used in conceptualising the notion 'politics' in modern African political thought (particularly in Malawi). It is argued that this can help in understanding cognition and behaviour of political actors in Malawi. The second theme focuses on metaphorical conceptualisation of women and men in Chichewa language. It argues that although women are regarded as very important in building the society, there is a tendency of negatively conceptualising men in terms of women. The practice stigmatises women as socially inferior to men. This system of conceptualisation reveals how members of the society think and behave towards women in certain respects. The third theme focuses on metaphorical conceptualisation in the context of different disabilities (misapplied conceptualization). It argues that metaphorical/linguistic conceptualisation of disabilities in Chichewa language reflects and contributes significantly towards the misconception and marginalisation of people with disability.

Keywords Metaphors · Conceptualisation · African politics · African philosophy · Gender · Marginalisation

What does it mean to say that a metaphor is meaningful? The Chapter focuses on doing African philosophy with metaphors using the framework of cognitive semantics. It argues and demonstrates that Metaphorical conceptualisation of language is the transfer of meaning from one domain to the other, and its use meaning constitutes its use as a vehicle of the philosophy of a particular group of people towards different issues in the society. Meaning of metaphors may also be seen in the behaviour of a particular group of people.

Doing African philosophy with metaphors firstly requires a determination of a theoretical framework from which this discourse will be grounded. I will therefore utilise the cognitive semantics as my framework, mainly because it easily accommodates the ordinary language approach to meaning, which is promulgated in this work.

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The chapter will present a general framework for discussing the meaning of metaphors in Sect. 4.1. It will be followed by the study of meaning through the consideration of the conceptualisation of the word 'politics' in Chichewa language, in Sect. 4.2. The third section will consider the issue of meaning through the study of conceptualisation and transfer of meaning relative to men and women. The last section will consider meaning transfer in the conceptualisation of morality based on different disabilities.

The sections in this work have been deliberately programmed to focus on problematic conceptualisation of terms and transfer of meaning. My interest is to provoke critical thinking in the African society towards certain issues, and call for deconceptualisation of terms and transfer of meaning. For example, I have discussed a problematic conceptualisation of politics, which leads to a way of doing politics that entertains different problems such as, warlike competition, bribery, fraud and corruption. Similarly, conceptualisation of woman focus is on the transfer of meaning that leads to marginalisation of women. Lastly, the conceptualisation in the context of disabilities leads to marginalisation of people living with disabilities.

4.1 Doing Philosophy with Metaphors in Cognitive Semantics

The study of concepts and metaphors in relation to ordinary language/speeches has in the recent years been adequately documented in both cognitive semantics/linguistics and cognitive pragmatics under the metaphorical conceptualisation and related fields (Malan 2008; [1] Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Grice 1975). In African philosophy, for example, Saskia Malan's (2008) work titled *Conceptual Metaphors in South African Political Speeches* focuses on metaphors in the conceptualisations that were used in five political leaders' speeches,[2] using both the cognitive or conceptual theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1992) and its further development in the blending theory (Fauconnier 1994, 1997; Fauconnier and Turner 2002). In these studies a metaphor[3] is seen as an expression of the type: 'Argument is War,'

[1]The scope of Milan's work is explained in the following passage: The aim of this study is to detect underlying conceptualisations of key issues and concepts of the early years of the democratic South Africa with special focus on the topics of racism, reconciliation, democracy, nation and the ANC. The paper also considers differences and similarities between conceptualizations, and possible clashes across parties and individual politicians (Malan 2008: 73).

[2]Malan (2008: 73) names these readers in the following: 'This theory is applied here to political speeches given between 1994 and 2001 by five prominent South African politicians of three major parties, namely the African National Congress (ANC), the New National Party (NNP), and the Democratic Alliance (DA): Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Frederick de Klerk, Tony Leon and Marthinus van Schalkwyk.'

[3]The classical view refers to the Aristotelian conception of metaphors, which is in this context seen as a way of making beautiful expression, which is often used in rhetoric for attainment of different

which implies developing a conceptual system where arguments are considered in terms of War (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 454; 1992). The system may have a set of war expressions such as, *I defended my point*, *I attacked his view*, etc.[4] A general understanding in the conceptual/cognitive theory is that a metaphor-based conceptual system influences the way human beings reason and act/behave (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 453–486; Malan 2008; Reddy 1969).

Conceptualization in cognitive approach to metaphor regards developing a 'conceptual system' departing from linguistic expressions that link two experiences, such that one is a *source* and the other is a *target* (Ortony 1979; Tarverniers 2002; Kayange 2016). Lakoff (1980; 1992)[5] explains this idea by illustrating how the notion of LOVE is conceptualised in terms of a JOURNEY.[6] This becomes a background for formulating a conceptual system in ordinary English language, where love is expressed in different statements in terms of a journey. For example, this conceptual system may have statements such as 'we have reached the crossroads,' 'we have reached a dead end,' 'we have passed through a high tide,' 'we have stopped for a while,' etc., (see also Lakoff and Johnson 1980). All these statements when uttered in the context of a relationship indicate that a speaker and a hearer are communicating using a conceptual system where love is conceptualised as a journey. The joining of the two (love and journey) on a conceptual level, makes love to be thought of as a journey.

Metaphorical conceptualisation is not only practiced in English language as exemplified above, it is also common in African languages. For instance, in the Chichewa ordinary language there exists a conceptual system that emanates from the understanding of LOVE (*CHIKONDI*) in terms of a JOURNEY (*ULENDO*). In this context a conceptual system created from this practice has expressions used in ordinary language, such as, '*Chidayamba kalekale*,' meaning 'it started a long time ago,' '*tipumule kaye,'* meaning 'let us rest,' or,' '*tiyime kaye,*' meaning 'let us stop,'[7] '*Chisapitilirenso koma chithele pano,*' meaning 'it should not go further, but it must end here,' etc. With regard to this conceptual metaphor the Chichewa language follows a similar pattern as the English language.

Another conceptual metaphor building on the source domain JOURNEY in the Chichewa language is DEATH IS A JOURNEY. Here the conceptual system has expressions such as, '*Watisiya*,' meaning 'He/she has left us,' '*Aulendo*,' meaning 'Those on a journey,' '*Wapita,*' literarily meaning 'He/she is gone[8],' '*Akadzala chinangwa*,' meaning 'He/she has gone to plant cassava,' etc. All these statements

effects. They were often seen as figurative expressions, although philosophers such Davidson (1979) questioned whether they have any hidden meaning at all (see also Moran 2000).

[4]Other studies include Bratoz Silva's discussion on metaphors of elections in Slovenia and United States of America (Bratoz 2012: 120–136) building on different political speeches.

[5]See also Lakoff (1993).

[6]See also Taverniers (2002: 6 ff).

[7]These two expressions are used when lovers have decided to take a break in their relationship.

[8]The word 'gone' is considered in the context above as 'dead.'

reveal a conception of life and death as a passage from one context to the next. This explains the importance of different stages in Malawian traditions; for instance, birth, initiation, marriage and death, which form a comprehensive conceptual system built on the idea of a journey.

In theory, the above discussion entails that the concept, which is conceptualized is a target domain and the other concept used to conceptualise it is the source domain. Journey is in this case a source domain and love or death is a target domain (see Ortony 1979; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989, 135).[9] This relation suggests the operations that occur in analogical inference, where similarities and dissimilarities between the source domain and the target domain are considered (Hesse 1966). A metaphor understood in this sense, may be considered as a special case of analogical relations.

Building on Hesse's language in *Models and Analogies in Science* (1966),[10] the comparison between the source and the target leads to the formation of three different sets of relations. Firstly, there is a set of those aspects that are shared by the source and target domain; secondly, the aspects that are (known to be) different; and thirdly a set of aspects that are not yet known to hold between the two objects. In a metaphor, the only relations that enter a conceptual metaphor are those of selected and relevant similarities. It is these relations that allow a subject to freely develop a conceptual system based on the source domain.

Understanding further the characteristics of the relation between a source and a target domain, Saeed (1999) argues that the relation is not symmetrical but asymmetrical. This relation is expressed in the following passage:

> Asymmetry, refers to the way that metaphors are directional. They do not set up a symmetrical comparison between two concepts, establishing points of similarity.[11] Instead they provoke the listener to transfer features from the source to the target. We can take the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY as an example: this metaphor is asymmetrical and the mapping does not work the other way around. We do not conventionally describe journeys in terms of life, so that it sounds odd to say *Our flight was born*. . . (Saeed 1999: 306).

This relation between a source and a target confirms further a form of analogy whereby focus is on the target. The source is a mere instrument, such that after using it, the speakers of a language abandon it. They continue using a conceptual system that originated from the source but they often don't remember the origin of the language they use.

In his theory of conceptualisation, Lakoff (1992) argues that in the context of metaphors, there is a principle that is used to direct how patterns of inference are developed in the relation between source and target domains. The idea that relates these two aspects is that of mapping from the source domain to the target domain. Mapping is generally a mathematical notion, and a commonly known example is the

[9]For a further survey on conceptualisation see also Grady, J., T. Oakley and S. Coulson. (1999).

[10]Another influential work in the study of models in science is Black's (1962, 25–47), *Metaphor. Models and Metaphors: studies in Language and philosophy.*

[11]The idea of similarity is clearly explained Goodman (1970).

isomorphic relation between two domains. This is a one to one mapping relation between elements of two sets A and B, where each element of A has an element of B which is its *relata*. In this case, the isomorphism requires that the metaphor 'DEATH IS A JOURNEY' has a set A of elements in the source (JOURNEY) and equally a set B in the Target (DEATH). In mathematics, isomorphism may be easily captured by the following description:

> Structures A and B structured by relations $R \subseteq A \times A$ and $S \subseteq B \times B$ respectively are isomorphic if and only if, there is a function $f: A \times B$ (this implies that there is a *bijection* or one-to-one-mapping) such that, $\langle x, y \rangle$ are elements of relation R if and only if $\langle f(x), f(y) \rangle$ are also elements of relation S (see Niiniluoto 1986, 23; see also Kayange 2008: 230).

Given that mapping between source and target in the context of conceptual metaphors deliberately focuses on some aspects and ignores those that are dissimilar, I suggest that the mapping relation that Lakoff (1992) was referring to may be formally captured by the notion of *partial isormophism*. This refers to the fact that the relation of isomorphism only holds for some elements of the source (JOURNEY) and the target (LOVE). This idea may be defined by the following: Two structures A and B are partially isomorphic *if and only if* there are subsets of A_1 element of A and B_1 element of B, which are isomorphic (see also Kayange 2008, 230–231; Costa and French 2003).

I am well aware of various further developments of relations and the conceptual systems revealed in metaphors, for instance, Sweetser (1990) considered the possibility of metaphors leading to the 'development of *polysemy* and cognate words in related languages' (Saeed 1999: 307). There are also other studies dealing with blending relations between a source and target domain for example. This blending is emphasised in the blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). Johnson (1987) also developed further the idea of a conceptual system built from metaphors by considering the image schemas that are thought to link physical experience and a higher cognitive domain such as language.

4.2 Doing African Philosophy with 'Politics Is a Tripping Game' Metaphor

This section focuses on the metaphorical conceptualisation and meaning in Malawi's political philosophy by focusing on the concept 'politics' and how it informs reasoning/understanding and behaviour in the political realm. In analysing language in cognitive linguistics, this section will be inspired by the ordinary language approach, which focuses on the meaning of concepts based on how they are used in a particular area (Wittgenstein 1952 and Austin 1962).[12] It will be shown that

[12]The approach of reflecting on African thought departing from ordinary language draws from general insights in the ordinary language approach in analytic philosophy of language. This builds on the belief that philosophical issues are dealt with by considering the way language is used in a

Table 4.1 Speeches

Speech/label	Number of Speeches	Number of languages used	Total length/minutes
A. 1964–1994	20	2	166.28
B. 1994–2004	10	2	75.36
C. 2004–2009	10	2	51.61
D. 2012–2014	10	2	66.71
E. 2014–2015	5	2	15.14
Total	**55**	**2**	**375.10**

politics in Malawi is metaphorically conceptualised based on a 'trip up game' as a source domain. This explains tendencies in Malawian politics of continuous attempts to make those in political authority trip/fail.

Firstly I will start by clarifying the ordinary approach that was adopted in this analysis. In order to understand the conceptualization of politics, I primarily employed qualitative methods in which speeches presented by Malawian presidents (1964 to 2015) were targeted. This method was used in order to (a) identify conceptual metaphor of 'politics' and the conceptual system that follows from it and to (b) discuss the political cognition and behaviour that follow from the conceptualisation in (a). The speeches by Malawian presidents were randomly selected and spread across the time frame. The speeches were then categorised in years, which were determined based on important political events that took place in Malawi (see Table 4.1). For instance, one of the categories was 1994 to 2004, a period that saw the advent of multiparty democracy in Malawi and the 10 year rule of the first president elected under this system.

After collecting and categorising the speeches, the first step was to isolate Chichewa language terms that were used by the presidents to mean 'politics'. The context and meaning in which the terms were used were also extracted in order to properly understand the terms in context. To this end, two methods were employed; the first method was Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1952) and Austin's (1962) ordinary language approach, which was used to study the meaning of 'politics' in vernacular language, particularly focusing on a Malawian perspective. Dictionary meanings were further consulted as one of the effective ways of understanding conceptualisation of 'politics' in the context of ordinary language use. The second method was the pragmatic approach as proposed by Grice (1957) (see also Sperber and Wilson 2008) and was used to study the speaker, hearer, context and literal meaning of the word.

The second step involved constructing a metaphor that represents the meaning of politics as abstracted from the previous step. Cognitive theory of metaphor and Metaphoric Pattern Analysis (MPA)[13] as proposed by Stefanowitsch (2006) were

context. For a further survey, see the works done by Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1979), Grice (1957, 1989), Sperber and Wilson (2002, 2008), Kayange (2014).

[13]The MPA is a "multi-word expression from a given source domain into which a specific lexical item from a given target domain has been inserted" (Stefanowitsch 2006: 8). The MPA uses a

used to analyse the structure of the extracted metaphor. The metaphor was then studied to capture the conceptual system derived from the understanding and use of 'politics' by Malawian presidents.

The third and final step involved identifying the political behaviour and reasoning among political leaders that reflected the conceptualised metaphor constructed in the previous step. This analysis is motivated by the understanding that metaphorical conceptualisation is reflected in the behaviour and reasoning of the society and people using a particular language (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

2. Building on the above results, I focused on use and meaning by responding to the question, What do Malawian presidents and politicians mean when they use the term politics? It was discovered in the research that presidents and politicians such as Bakili Muluzi, Bingu wa Mutharika and Joyce Banda translate the term 'politics' in the vernacular language as referring to *ndale* (trip). For example Bingu wa Mutharika (president from 2004 to 2012) during the installation of chief Tsabango conceptualised politics as a trip in the following passage from his speech:

> *. . .kalekale* 1994, 1995, 1996 *mafumu amachitidwa chipongwe nthawi imene mafumu amamenyedwa. Nthawi imene anthu amati mafumu sayenera kulowa mundale, ndine ndekha mtsogoleri mmodzi ananena kuti ayi mukulakwitsa chifukwa simukuzindikira kuti ndale sikukangana momwe tikuchitira kuMalawi kuno. Ndale malinga ndi politics muchizungu mukati politics ndi nzeru zoyendetsera dziko bwino.* Politics *sikutcherana, kuchitirana kaduka, kapena kuwononganga ayi.*

This may be literarily translated as,

> Long time ago in 1994, 1995, 1996 chiefs were mistreated and beaten. This period people were saying that chiefs are not allowed to do politics. I am the only leader who indicated that they were making a mistake because I argued that politics is not a conflict as is the case here in Malawi. Ndale is like politics in English, which means wisdom for good governance. Politics is not tripping one another, envying one another or destroying each other.

This passage indicates that though in ordinary use politics means a trip (tripping someone) this is not a true meaning of this term. It is problematic because it leads to a negative conception of politics as a game of making your opponents fail to deliver in their office. The passage shows that a proper understanding of politics is to view it as wisdom for good governance.

In a speech against donors on the issue of gay rights, Bingu wa Mutharika captured this concept in the expression, "*M'Malawi muno sitinamangeko munthu chifukwa cha ndale. . . Madonor ndikuwasiyira dala ndikuwatchera ndale*." (Bingu blasts donors on gays). This may be literarily translated as, "Here in Malawi we have never arrested anyone because of politics. I am purposely leaving the donors, I want to trip them up."

Kamuzu Banda utilised this term in a speech during mother's day in 1976 (17-10-76),

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linguistic corpus to establish metaphorical conceptualisations utilizing particular lexicons for their metaphorical and non-metaphorical use from the target domain.

> When I was in Gwero, (I repeat) women here back home, and the men and the youth gave the government in Zomba trouble. The country became ungovernable. That is why Ian Macleod ordered release and asked me to come to London for discussion. I went there, discussed political matters with Ian Macleod.

This was translated by Kamuzu's interpreter John Msonthi[14] as follows,

> *Ine ndili ku Gwero (Ndikubwereza) Azimayi kuno kumudzi ndi amuna omwe mpaka anyamata ndi atsikana adavutitsa kwambiri boma la atsamunda kuno. Atsamunda adalephera kuti nkulamuliranso dziko lino. Chifukwa chake malemu Ian Macleod adalamula kuti angondimasulako ku gadi anandiyitana nkundiuza kuti tikakambirane. Ndidapita,nkukambirana zandale ndi* Ian Macleod.

The interpreter of Kamuzu Banda conceptualised the concept 'political matters' as referring to trip up matters.

Apart from the above use, one of the best sources that provide ordinary meaning of concepts that can clarify further the notion of politics is the *Chichewa Dictionary*.[15] The Chancellor College *Chewa Dictionary*, (Paas 2015) defines the concept *ndale* as:

1. '*Chenjerero limene munthu amachita pandewu ndi mwendo wake kuti wina agwe*. [Translated as: A trick to make an opponent fall during a fight using a leg].
2. *Chenjerero limene munthu amachita polimbana akamayankula*. [Translated as: A trick in an argument done by a person during a debate with an opponent].

These two definitions suggest that 'trip' is not founded on the Western notion of politics but on 'tricks to trip up ones opponents.' This may be physical as in (1) above and in using linguistic techniques such as rhetoric in arguments. The intention is to deceive or defeat the opponent. This gives the understanding that politics is a set of tricks to trip up opponents or achieve what one wants. A politician becomes a person who has 'trip-up art' mainly in socio-economic and political realm (speech, actions, etc).

There is a third definition that was left aside in the dictionary definition above where *ndale* may be defined as:

3. *Chenjerero limene munthu amachita ndi mwendo wake kuti wina agwe pamasewero* [Translated as: A trick to make an opponent fall during a game using a leg].

This is similar to 1 above with the difference that making someone to stumble is applied in the context of a game similar to wrestling (Kishindo 1998, 252–280). This is commonly played by children as they compete to find out who can stand still. Standing still after a number of attempts to make you fall is regarded as a sign of

[14]He was the first well-known public interpreter of President Kamuzu Banda more especially between 1958 and 1979. He served later as a minister of transport and communications. John Tembo succeeded him.

[15]See *Chichewa-Chinyanja English Dictionary* (Paas 2004), *Chichewa Dictionary* (Chancellor College, Centre for Language Studies in Malawi 2015), *Wisdom of the People: Chinyanja Proverbs*, Chakanza 2000, and other literary works as is indicated in the references.

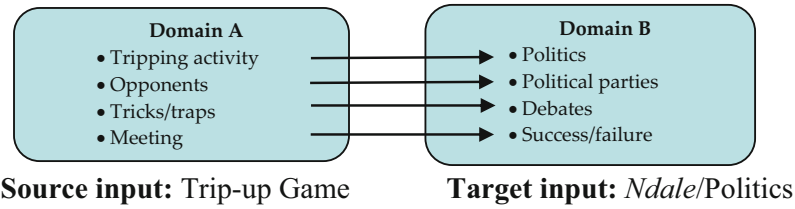
being strong and brave. It is clear that in all the three related ideas that are representing the term *ndale* above, this concept has a negative connotation. It is an obstacle to the proper functioning of things in the community. The translation of the English concept 'politics' into Chichewa term '*ndale*,' shows that culturally politics was incorporated in Malawian society as a negative practice where participants involve themselves in this activity to trip-up their opponents. I argue that the term *'ndale'* was proper in the fight against colonialism given that it wanted to show that the activity of politics was there to trip the white government. This implied that a person who wanted to do politics was to be prepared to trip the common opponent (the colonial government). Unfortunately after the fall of the colonial government this Chichewa term and its meaning became what Kishindo (1998: 25–27) discussed as 'stable terminology.'

3. The above discussion provides an understanding that in Malawian political discourse 'politics' is conceptualised in terms of tripping an opponent (*ndale*). This is suggestive of a metaphor that: POLITICS IS TRIP-UP (ACTIVITY).

Based on insights from the cognitive theory this may be formalized as follows:

In this model, there is a one to one *asymmetric mapping* of selected relevant elements belonging to 'Trip-up Activity' and 'Politics.' The mapping is unidirectional in the sense that it moves from the source to the target. The first item 'trip-up activity' represents the art of using trickery techniques with the objective of meeting certain ends. This is related to 'politics' in the target domain, which is generally the art of governance in a State. The second item, 'opponents' represents the person who uses tricks and his/her target such as human beings, animals, or anything. This is similar to political parties (for example, Democrat Progressive Party, Malawi Congress Party, and People's Party) or individuals in those parties who see each other as opponents. The third item, 'tricks' are obstacles that are in the 'trip-up art.' Tricks/traps are similar to debates by politicians as they govern the State. These debates are often understood as directed at finding fault in others and making them stumble. The last element indicates that one is expected either to win by trapping the opponent or lose (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Metaphor structure



The above formalisation justifies the use of elements or positions from trip-up activity in the context of politics discourse.[16] For example, there are elements of 'standing' (*kuima*) and falling (*kugwa*) in a trip-up activity. Standing and falling are often connected with metaphors that show direction such as up (standing) and down (falling) (Lakoff 2008). However, in this context they are associated with a position in the trip-up activity. It is common to use '*kuyimira pachisankho cha ndale*' translated as 'standing during political election' especially during political campaign rallies. During campaign period for the 2009 presidential elections, there was an expression 'Bakili Muluzi *ayimenso*' translated as 'Bakili Muluzi must stand again.' This referred to the idea that Bakili Muluzi must be a presidential candidate. Trip-up activity utilised in the context of elections is suggestive of the idea that elections are similar to wrestling and standing is being in the game. Of course standing may mean representing a party, but in the context of *ndale* it is an initial position towards victory. *Wagwa pachisakho chandale*, meaning that he/she was standing and has fallen down during political elections. Falling in this case is also connected with the idea of stumbling. *Wagwa pampando wa ndale*, literarily translated as he has fallen off the political chair (position). This is the language used to represent the loss of a political seat but the implication of this language is that one has fallen down due to the tripping activity. In some circumstances the expression *chipani chathu chagwedezeka* translated as 'our party is shaken' is used to indicate some difficulties in a particular party. This suggests that it has stumbled but not yet fallen. This first conceptual system suggests the understanding and reasoning about politics as an activity of continuously finding fault and consequently making opponents stumble and fall.

The activity of tripping others is further considered as an immoral activity. This understanding leads to development of another conceptual system where the concept *ndale* is utilized to refer to immoral actions. For example, when one utters the expression that, '*akuyankhula mwandale*,' literarily translated as 'he/she is speaking in a political way,' it is understood that the speaker is not straightforward and wants to deceive the hearer. Furthermore, when a Chichewa speaker utters '*chenjerani ndi x ndiwandale* (Beware of *x* he/she is political),' it means that *x* is deceptive. He can easily deceive, mislead, disturb or rob others. For example, in most of the election campaign speeches, politicians attack each other as immoral and deceptive. In 2009, Bingu wa Mutharika was viewed as deceptive by his opponents Chakuamba and Bakili Muluzi. The conceptualisation based on morality leads to a conclusion that politics is an immoral activity or the understanding that only morally weak or amoral people participate in politics (Table 4.3).

4. The speeches above indicate a number of incidents where politics in Malawi is practiced as an activity of making those in authority to trip. Tripping is either causing physical harm/or death or frustration. This anomaly of doing politics may be traced back in transition period (1958–1964) from the colonial government to the

[16]Evidence of this may be found in the speeches and letters noted above but also in ordinary use of language in Malawi.

Table 4.3 Woman–man metaphors

x is a Man (context)	y utters	Meaning
1. *x* at work	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Mamuna waulesi* (lazy man)
2. *x* argues	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Mamuna wolongolola* (noisy man)
3. *x* failing to complete duty *a*	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Mamuna wopanda mphamvu* (weak man)
4. *x* is backbiting *y*	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Mamuna wa miseche* (backbiting man)
5. *x* is afraid of *y*	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Munthu wamantha* (fear-driven person)
6. *x* is easily convinced by what is said	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	Munthu womvera zili zones (easy to convince)
7. x's arguments are without substance	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	Munthu woganiza mochedwa/mofooka/ kapena mosalongosoka (uncritical person)
8. *x* cannot be trusted because of behavior *b*	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Munthu wosadalilika* (untrustworthy)
9. *x* behaves like a child in context *c*	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Munthu wochita zinthu zopepela* (childish)
10. *x* has the habit of being easily disappointed	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Tsikana Wonyanyalanyanyala* (easily disappointed)
11. *x* is close-minded and proud	*x ndi mkazi* (*x* is a woman)	*Wonyada* (proud)

independent Malawian government. Imprisonment and torture were used as means of tripping up black politicians including Kamuzu Banda. This behaviour may be seen in a letter by Chipembere to Kamuzu Banda (25/01/61), which indicated that some white officers and their black followers wanted to eliminate him through poisoning. Unfortunately when Malawi became independent, the tripping politics reached its climax in Kamuzu's era. For example in the following speech, Kamuzu attempted to trip Chiume, Chipembere, Chisiza, Bwanausi, Chokani, Rose Chiwambo and others.

> I have mentioned about Chiume and Chipembere, Chiume, Chirwa, Chisiza Bwanausi are in Dar-es- Salaam now, Chokani is in Ndola in Zambia so too is Rose Chiwambo, they say they will come back but they know they are not coming back here. Deep down in their hearts they know that. But they have to keep on saying that trying to keep the morale of their so-called followers in Dar-es-Salaam. Because they are demoralized now.

In this speech he focused on both character assassination and attempted physical assassination of the young politicians who helped him to rise to power. The president incited the practice of eliminating those against him as manifested in his expression: "Chiume and Chipembere if they don't die from a spear. . ." These speeches came after Malawi's cabinet crisis of 1964, when Kamuzu Banda (Prime Minister) was criticized by other ministers for amassing and centralizing power to himself and

some few friends (see McCracken 2012, 249). In his speech of 8th September 1964[17] he indicated he felt attacked by the ministers.

From 1966 when Malawi became a republic to 1994 when the one-party government collapsed, the model of making others trip was apparently an official practice by the ruling government. Special prisons were built to make sure that all potential political rivalries were suppressed or transformed. Some of the prisons that were built include Mikuyu and Dzaleka[18] prisons.

Another well-known example of tripping tactics in politics is the Mwanza incident of 1983, where three ministers and a member of parliament were allegedly murdered by the government because of their critical attitude towards some of Kamuzu Banda's policies and practices. These included Ministers Dick Matenje, Twaibu Sangala and Aaron Sangala and Member of Parliament David Chawinga. The various incidents of making opponents trip through violent actions contributed to the downfall of Kamuzu Banda's regime and the rise of multiparty democracy under President Bakili Muluzi and his Democratic United Front (UDF).[19]

The new president will set precedence in Malawian politics of tripping former presidents. This is the practice whereby a president who has stumbled by losing the elections, is accused of various offences and is made to completely disappear from the political scene. Bakili Muluzi's government attempted to put his lost opponent and his possible successor John Tembo in prison. This was done by reopening the case of murder of the ministers and Member of Parliament who died in 1983. His new government accused the former President Kamuzu Banda, John Tembo, Cecilia Kadzamira, MacWilliams Kalemba and Augustino Likaomba as suspects in the murder case. In letters between Kamuzu Banda and his long time best friend Dr. Brody it is indicated that this case is unjust and politically motivated (the tripping strategy). In a fax dated 23rd December 1995 Dr. Brody wrote:

> The events of this day truly define for me the words, 'joy' and 'happiness'. The charges against you Sir, Mama and Honorable Tembo, were deplorable and represent political vengeance at its worst. Muluzi and his crowd have brought shame and ridicule against their so-called government and unfortunately, the Malawi nation that you single-handedly built with your incredible wisdom and leadership. [20]

[17]Banda, *Preceedings of Parliament*, 8 September 1964.

[18]The term Dzaleka comes from two Chichewa terms '*ndi*' in this context it represents I, and '*leka*' is a verb to stop. This is utilized to show that it is a place where a person learns because of various hardships and confesses that 'I will stop,' meaning he won't do it again.

[19]There are other external and internal reasons that led to the downfall of Kamuzu Banda's regime but focus of this work is on those tactics that reveal politics of making others stumble and disappear on the political scene.

[20]In a letter of 7th August 1997 to Dr. Brody he indicated that he was acquitted from the case as he writes: You will recall that the Director of Public Prosecution, on behalf of the State appealed against the High Court ruling which acquitted me and all those who were charged with me for conspiracy to murder in the Mwanza murders case. The Supreme Court of Appeal hear the appeal from 30th June to July 31st and I am pleased to inform you that the Supreme Court of Malawi dismissed all the four grounds of appeal. The appeal therefore failed in its entirety.

Bakili Muluzi heavily attacked John Tembo further in the campaign of 1999 at different rallies. Muluzi accused Tembo of being deceptive in order to trip him and said:

> John Tembo is a big crook, crook, *amene amakhala patali nkumachita zinthu iye ndikusadziwika koma atapanga ndiye* (a person who does things from afar without himself being known). John is a big crook and is a criminal. Silent killer, silent manipulator, *amapanga zinthu zosawonekera zinthuzo wapanga ndiye* (he does things but no one knows that he is the one responsible for such actions). *Ndikudabwa ena eti kumatsatira za a Tembo, zowona?* (I am wondering some are following John Tembo, is this reasonable?).

The tradition of tripping former leaders continued in the governments that followed Bakili Muluzi's government (1994–2004). These other governments include Bingu wa Mutharika's DPP (2004–2012)[21], Joyce Banda's PP (2012–2014) to the current Peter wa Mutharika's DPP (2014…).

Apart from this culture of tripping former presidents, the behavior of '*ndale*' as deception has been a common practice in most of these governments. This has been practiced mainly through various corrupt practices and continuous use of these practices as a means of tripping fellow politicians. For example, the UDF government, which was thought to bring a true understanding of politics in Malawi, surprisingly drew inspiration from the understanding of *politics* as tripping (and deception) of opponents.[22] In a letter, former President Kamuzu indicated how President Bakili Muluzi utilized deception to make him sell to the government his 2 properties in 14 days without his consent. If this was not done the government warned him that the properties would be bought by force.

In spite of the mega corruption scandals in the UDF government, opposition parties failed to make Muluzi stumble in the 1999 elections. It was only in 2004 that he decided to give his post to Bingu wa Mutharika given that he had served for 10 years; maximum number of years allowed in the constitution for one individual. His party, UDF won the elections. However, the new President, following the tripping strategy, abandoned UDF and established his own Democratic People's Party (DPP). Several attempts were made by MPs to trip up the President through impeachment on the grounds that he had crossed the floor from the ruling party UDF to his own party DPP. In order to trip him up, opposition parties wanted to trigger section 65 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi which states that:

> The Speaker shall declare vacant the seat of any member of the National Assembly who, at the time of his or her election, a member of one political party represented in the National Assembly, other than by that member alone, but who has voluntarily ceased to be a member of that party or has joined another party represented in the National Assembly, or has joined any other political party, or association or organization whose objectives are political in nature.

[21] First term was from 2004 to 2009, and the second term ended in 2012 with Bingu wa Mutharika's death.

[22] Apart from tripping others through deception there were still incidents where physical violence was allegedly practiced although in an insignificant level (on average).

The President was requested by his opponents to resign, hence fulfilling the aspect of stumbling and falling in the metaphor, 'Politics is a Trip.' The common people demonstrated against this type of politics. The President was saved because of his economic policies, which boosted Malawi's economy between 2004 and 2009. In the period between 2009 and 2012, the politics of tripping up the President was manifested in the context of 'Freedom-related debates.' This was done through the creation of debates around freedom, which were expected to eventually lead to tripping up the President. As reflected above, the opponents were not only the various political parties in Malawi, but also foreign nations, which used the tool of freedoms to trip up Bingu's regime. Two examples that helped in the attempt to trip the President include: the claim that he violated academic freedom and the argument that he violated the gay rights.

In his struggle to remain standing in the tripping activity, Bingu promised in a number of speeches that he was ready to deal with all corrupt individuals. He attempted to trip his former friend Bakili Muluzi and his assistant Ms. Whisky by threatening to put them in prison because of lacking accountability on government funds when they were in power. They were therefore prosecuted in 2009 for corruption offences related to misuse of public funds. This was to make sure that the former president had no chance of coming back to politics. This made the public to view Bakili Muluzi as an immoral subject who was corrupt and was never to be trusted. Tripping method was used in 2010 against Mr. Mkandawire and Mr. Chihana, who were accused in court of 'managing an unlawful society for running an organization to champion the interests of people of the Northern Region of Malawi' (Gloppen and Kanyongolo 2013: 122). In 2010 this method was used against the Vice President Joyce Banda,[23] who was in a conflict with the ruling party (DPP).[24] The media was substantially utilised in tripping her up with the intention of tarnishing her image and consequently make her stumble and fall in politics.[25]

Madam Joyce Banda became the President of Malawi in 2012 under DPP and she utilised the tripping method to break away from this party and formed the People's Party. She could have followed Bingu wa Mutharika to respond to a number of issues that were raised against her but unfortunately he died in 2012 before she became President. She further realized that her true powerful opponent was Peter Mutharika and used the same politics of tripping by putting him in jail in 2014. There were attempts to charge him for treason, but they failed to work and he was released. The President tried to use another strategy of helping the people by giving them gifts so that in turn they should keep her standing (in power). The common people were quick to understand that politics in Malawi involves deception because of the

[23]In 2012 after the death of President Bingu wa Mutharika, the Vice President Joyce Banda took over from him. She continued applying the tripping method in her politics. He put in jail the current President, Peter wa Mutharika with the intention of tripping him up.

[24]DPP stands for Democratic People's Party.

[25]Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation TV was mainly utilized for attacking President Joyce Banda when she was Vice President of the DPP party before becoming President in 2012.

concept *ndale* and they therefore accepted different gifts but in the end never supported her and she stumbled. The government of Peter Mutharika came into power in 2014 but it is trying to make sure that the former President Joyce Banda is prosecuted (see also Refiloe 2012). Apart from the element of seeking justice, this is part of the strategy to make sure that she will not come back to politics.

In conclusion, the investigation above has shown that the conception of Politics and the practices that are manifested in various presidential speeches in Malawi are problematic. They encourage a form of politics that is continuously focusing on how to make other politicians fail in their different projects. Politics done in this way hardly focuses on working on polices and their implementation given that time is wasted on fault-finding. When a person is given the opportunity to rule, there is a high chance of losing sight of one's policies and how to implement them as everyday politics is motivated by doing things that can help one to remain in power. Any political leader who seems to have a vision is frustrated by the whole political system as such a vision is misinterpreted as a strategy of trying to hold on to power. The spirit of being crooked that is behind the cognition of politics as tripping penetrates in various areas of life to the point that political leaders lack a moral foundation for their actions. This explains why a continuous system of opposition (see also Hussein 2009), corruption and hidden violence has crippled the political system of Malawi since 1964. I conclude by making the recommendation of President Bingu wa Mutharika in one of the speeches, who indicated that the conception of politics in Chichewa using *ndale* is defective and this word must be removed and replaced with a better understanding of politics. In fact with this conception of politics comes out clearly as the destruction of the *polis*. A politician is ready to destroy the resources of the nation using deceptive measures. I think that viewing politics as a form of responsibility to better the lives of citizens would be a better way forward for Malawi.

4.3 Doing Philosophy with 'a Man Is a Woman' Metaphor

5. Gender politics as expressed in Chewa language use in the ordinary context, reveal that there is substantial conceptualisation of men in terms of women and vice versa, 'A man is a woman' metaphor or vice versa. In African traditional culture as expressed in Malawi's society, women are considered as naturally made different from and dependent on men. There is a big division between what a man can do and what women are expected to do (roles). For example, women are attached to household duties. They need to make sure that the house is clean, they must cook food for their husbands, look after the children, etc. Although in Malawi there are

both matrilineal and patrilineal systems,[26] it seems that in both a man has more authority than a woman. In a matrilineal system, the uncle of a woman who has authority is the one who makes sure that he is responsible over all matters that concern his sisters and the whole society. Similarly in a matriarchal society it is a man who has authority.[27]

I collected some common expressions that are a source and expression of marginalisation in Malawi focusing on the Chewa language and the ordinary use of language.

6. Firstly I will discuss metaphorical conceptualisation of women in Malawi by building on ordinary expressions.

In the Chichewa language there are many terms that reveal the metaphorical conceptualization of a man in terms of a woman in different areas. This is founded on uttering to a man the expression '*Iwe ndi mkazi*' (you are a woman). The indexical (pronoun) '*Iwe*' meaning 'you' in this metaphor represents a particular man. For instance,

(i) 'Mr Johnston is a woman.'

When this expression is uttered in a context where Mr. Johnston is working, it may mean that,

(ii) Mr. Johnston is very slow.
(iii) Mr. Johnston is weak.
(iv) Mr. Johnston likes complaining

This is suggestive of the fact that in Chichewa language people freely use the term woman to represent any man who is weak (*Mwamuna waulesi*).

There are a number of situations where a man is conceptualized in terms of a woman depending on a particular action that is done in a given context.

For example:

Mr. Muchineripi *ndi Mamuna wolongolola* (Muchineripi is a noisy man).

Instead of using this expression, the following expression is used,

Muchineripi is a woman.

This is suggestive that his behaviour is conceptualized in terms of a woman who is in turn seen as noisy. Similarly,

Mamuna wamiseche (A man who backbites),

Is conceptualised in terms of a woman (*x* is a woman). An expression, '*Iwe ndiye ndi mkazi*,' utilized on this man suggests that backbiting is to women as it is to this particular man.

Similarly a man or a boy who is afraid (*Mamuna or mnyamata wa mantha*) is called a woman because of the identification of fear with women.

[26]Matrilineal is a social organised where power is founded on women. Mother is regarded as the most important power in decision making and other areas. On the contrary a patrilineal system of the society is where men are given more authority.

[27]In this study I will use the Cognitive Approach to metaphors as discussed in Chap. 5 of this work.

Sometimes instead of using a metaphorical expression which directly says 'you are a woman,' a simile is utilized. This simile is 'fear like a woman.' This simile still fits in the metaphorical structure that relates a man to a woman in different areas.

The conceptualisation above is further used to represent a man who is easily deceived[28] or listens to whatever is communicated to him without being critical.

A man or a boy who is easily disappointed (*Mamuna wonyanyalanyanyala*) is considered as a girl. *X* is a girl where *x* is a man or a boy is a metaphorical expression that is used to this man who is easily disappointed. A man who is proud is also referred to as a woman.

A problematic conceptualisation of a man in terms of a woman is also commonly practiced in the context of rationality.[29] For example a man who is not quick in thinking and taking a proper decision, *Mamuna woganiza mochedwa* (a man who is a slow thinker), is spoken of in terms of a woman. A man, whose arguments are weak or often commits fallacies is thought of and spoken of in terms of a woman. In Chichewa language we use expressions like, *woganiza mofooka* and *woganiza mosalongosoka* are used to refer to a weak thinker and disorderly thinker respectively. However any man who qualifies in these two categories is often conceptualized based on a woman, hence the application of '*Iwe ndiye ndi mkazi*.'

A man who cannot be trusted with responsibilities (*mamuna wosadalilika*) is similarly considered as a woman, hence conceptualized metaphorically in terms of a woman. This has a moral connotation in some circumstances. This is mainly referring to those situations where an immoral act has been committed by a person and people stop trusting that individual. In some instances it refers to the idea that women are incapable of doing things in a proper manner. A person who is not matured rationally does things like a child,[30] and because of this, the Chichewa language speakers conceptualise such a man as a woman. This conceptualisation just wants to underline the idea that women are not rational enough as compared to men.

I would like to argue that the Chewa people when they are conceptualising men in terms of women, they are,

1. playing a language game of generalising the properties attributed to women in a system of predication and interpretation using cultural generalisations (based on certain biased observations)
2. they are using analogical reasoning/metaphorical reasoning to apply the prejudices they know about woman to the domain of men, and,
3. they are expressing their beliefs/thought about women and vice versa men.

[28] *Munthu womvera zili zonse* -
Easily deceive

[29] There are various debates on rationality mainly in the philosophical field that deals with feminism. See for instances works of Simone de Beauvoir.

[30] The expression this is my baby (babe) applied to a woman may be argued as partly coming from the misconception of women as similar to young children in their behaviour.

7. The idea of generalisation through predication may be exemplified by simple consideration of the relation between properties and individuals/objects as observed in a particular area. For instance, the properties of being a WOMAN (W) and WEAK ($\underline{\text{W}}$), when attributed to women, the following generalisation sets a precedence for cultural acceptance that women are weak.

In the discussion below, I will use a simple generalisation inference to show what the language speakers are doing when conceptualising men in terms of women. The small alphabet letters *a, b,...* will be used for individual woman, W for the property of being a woman, $\underline{\text{W}}$ a property of being weak.

(i) *a* is a W and *a* is $\underline{\text{W}}$
(ii) *b* is a W and *b* is $\underline{\text{W}}$
(iii) *c* is a W and *c* is $\underline{\text{W}}$
(iv) All observed women are weak

Based on these cases, it is concluded that, all women are weak expressed as,

$\forall x\ [(\text{W}x)\ \&\ (\underline{\text{W}}x)]$.

This is a generalisation which can never be confirmed as true based on experience, as was already demonstrated by Karl Popper in the *Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959). In this perspective the above generalisation is falsified by the expression,

$\exists x\ [(\text{W}x)\ \&\ \sim(\underline{\text{W}}x)]$

Nevertheless, African experience of some weak women leads to the generalization that all women are weak.

The game of generalization may further be seen in both negative properties and positive properties (see the list below):

A. Negative generalisations on women

- A woman is weak
- A woman is emotional
- A woman is a backbiter
- A woman is Afraid
- A woman never appreciates
- A woman is proud
- A women is foolish

B. Positive generalisations of a woman

- A woman is patient
- A woman is smart
- A woman is caretaker
- A woman is loving
- A woman is beautiful
- A woman is faithful
- A woman is a giver
- A woman is a helper

- A woman is well-behaved
- A woman is orderly

2. Analogical thinking is utilised in this context in transferring the generalisations attributed to a woman to a man.[31] This may be exemplified in the statements below (∃ is the existential quantifier, *a* and *b* individuals, subscript *n* is any finite number of women that is observed, ≅ similarity, and = is identity):

(i) $\exists a_n$ (Wa_n) & ($\underline{\text{W}}a_n$)//property attribution to women
(ii) $\exists b_n$ (Mb_n) & ($\underline{\text{W}}b_n$)//property attribution to men
(iii) $\exists a_n$ ($\underline{\text{W}}a_n$) ≅ $\exists b_n$ ($\underline{\text{W}}b_{\text{n}}$)//similarity of properties

By analogical generalization,

(iv) $\forall a$ ($\underline{\text{W}}a$) ≅ $\forall b$ ($\underline{\text{W}}b$) in context $\underline{\text{W}}$//by analogy

By metaphorical conceptualization.

(*a*) = (b) in context $\underline{\text{W.}}$

Conceptualisation of men based on women in different areas reveals the way of thinking of some African individuals towards women in some respects. While it is considered as normal for a woman to be inferior, submissive, talkative, fearful, etc., it is considered as abnormal for a man to demonstrate the same properties. Although this is not directly intended to marginalise woman, in many areas it has led towards a misconception of women and marginalisation. I will give one example below to support this argument.

In the context of leadership, it may be argued that the metaphorical conceptualisation of women in Malawi has led to the tendency of excluding them in leadership positions.[32] It is the case that most of the elements that are attributed to a woman in general are not acceptable for a leader in the society. For instance, a leader is expected to be sober and rational in running the community.

On the contrary the above metaphorical conceptualisation leads to the understanding that a woman cannot be a leader because she is not rational or rational enough. A leader must be trustworthy in the community but in the conceptualization above a woman is identified with lack of trustworthiness, hence excluded from leadership positions. A leader is expected to be strong but women are on the contrary identified with fear hence they cannot lead the community.

Further women cannot be leaders because they backbite; they are lazy; etc. as indicated above. The conceptualisation above reveals further that a woman is inferior to man in different aspects. A real man in this society is not expected to have qualities that are attributed to women. I think that conceptualisation of men in

[31]I have discussed analogy in details earlier, I will therefore limit on demonstrating what is happening when using analogical reasoning in this context.

[32]This is different from the original setting when female figures such as Mangadzi were leaders in the Chewa society. There was a well-know female dynasty whereby different female leaders succeeded Mangadzi.

terms of women as discussed above is derogatory and it marginalises women in playing leadership and other important roles where men and women are involved.

4.4 Doing Philosophy with 'Misapplied Metaphors'

I define 'misapplied metaphors' as those that conceptualise moral and intellectual weaknesses in terms of physical disabilities. The metaphors often lead to a common ordinary language philosophy which marginalises people living with disabilities. I will build this conceptualisation system and argue that ordinary language requires cleaning up so that it can free human subjects from wrong conceptions of disabilities. Below some disabilities will be shown how they are conceptualized, and I will argue that this conception often leads to the marginalization of people living with disabilities.

8. Firstly, the ***Metaphorical conceptualisation of GONTHI***: The term *gonthi,* translated as 'deaf', is used in Chichewa language to refer to a number of negative elements in the society. Chichewa dictionary comments on the meaning of this concept as follows:

> '**gonthi**/kt/*dzi.*Mu-A- (zambi. *agonthi*), **1.** *munthu wogontha m'kutu*. **2** *mku.*: *munthu wosamvera malangizo*.'

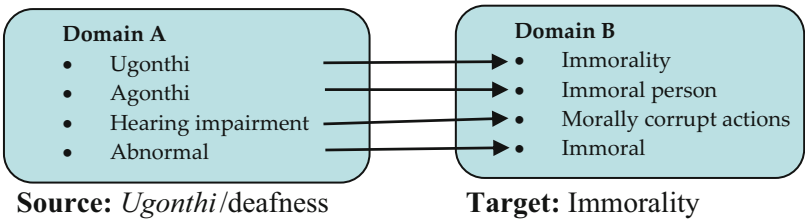
The first meaning refers to a person who is physically challenged given that he/she has hearing impairment. This is the original source of the term *gonthi* which has generated other meanings. In fact, the second meaning of this word is a consequence of metaphorical conceptualisation from the original source in meaning 1 to a totally different context of morality or ethics. In this ethical context among Chichewa speakers *munthu wosamva malangizo* translated as 'a person who does not listen to advice' is morally corrupt.

In some circumstances this is a person who does not follow the cultural code of ethics which delineates practices that are expected of a good person in the community, in this case, *gonthi ndi wosamva mwambo,* translated literarily as 'a person who does not listen to customs'. Because of the application of the term *gonthi* in this society, any person who is called by this name understands that his/her actions are morally unaccepted in the community. In short *gonthi* does not do the right thing. It suggests that a person who doesn't listen is stubborn in the sense that he performs some actions that are prohibited in a given community (Table 4.4).

The metaphorical conceptualisation of the term *gonthi* may be demonstrated by drawing insights from the cognitive theory of metaphors where concepts are developed in the target domain by building on the source domain. The term *gonthi* is conceptualised departing from its source term *ugonthi* which is deafness as follows:

The relationship between the source and target shows asymmetrical mapping from deafness (which I have translated with *ugothi*) to immorality. The second item *agothi* represents all people who have deafness and these are seen as similar to immoral persons. In this conceptualization, hearing impairment, which is a defect, is

Table 4.4 Conceptualisation of hearing impairment



considered as similar to morally corrupt actions that are committed by an immoral person. Lastly, hearing impairment is seen as an abnormal element in human subjects and it is considered as similar to immorality. In ethics, a human subject is good or is behaving normally when he is morally correct. This explains why an immoral person is seen as behaving in an abnormal way.

The conceptualisation above may be explained as influenced by: (1) the linguistic use of the term *womvera* to represent a morally correct person. In other circumstances it is said *womva mwambo*. The term *womvera* is coming from hearing given that it is translated as listening. This is why the issue of hearing impairment is connected with immorality given that it represents the absence of listening. (2) It is influenced by a cultural attitude towards disability as something abnormal and problematic.

Metaphorical Conceptualisation of BUBUBU: The concept *Bubu* (or *Bububu*) is fundamentally used for those with speech impairment. These are subjects who fail to speak properly or in some circumstances they cannot completely manage to speak. The origin of *Bubu* is the sounds that are produced such as [*bu*]. . . but without any specific meaning. In Chichewa a phrase '*munthu wosalankhula'* is sometimes used to represent this person. *Bubu* is sometimes used for a person who is not talkative (quiet person). Of course, this second sense is offensive, and often leads towards a conflict. The third idea that captures this term is in a moral context where it is used to represent a stubborn person (*wamakani*). This is a morally incorrect person who often goes against what is right and has no respect for others or what he is expected to do. In some cases, s/he is the one who cannot, in any way, listen to what others are suggesting or advising him to do. In the Chewa traditional culture, such a person is further regarded as someone who lacks good manners and has not yet internalized the compulsory, necessary cultural values of that particular community. For instance, such individual would not reflect the value of humility (Table 4.5).

In the discussion above, there is a metaphorical conceptualisation of *Bubu* from having the condition of failing to speak as a source domain to the moral context as a target domain. This implies that a conceptual system is developed in moral context which is based on the notion *Bubu*. Unfortunately, the condition of being a *Bubu* is regarded as abnormal or as defective, any action, in the moral context that deflects from the expected moral standards in a community, qualifies the person as a *Bubu*. This conceptualization may be exemplified by the following:

Table 4.5 Conceptualisation of speech impairment

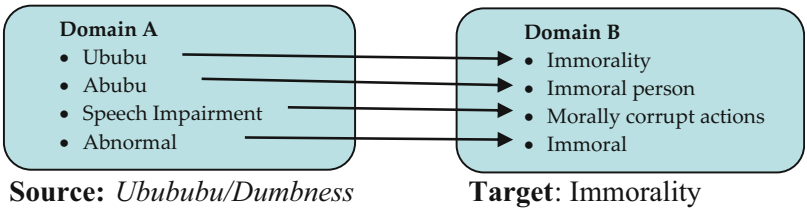
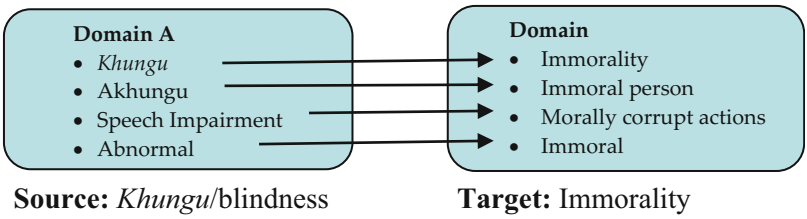


Table 4.6 Conceptualisation of sight impairment



In this relation, *ubububu* is representing the state of being dumb, which is seen as a disability. This is the source domain and it is related to the state of being immoral which is immorality. The relations in the source and target domain follow the same pattern as in the metaphorical conceptualisation of GOTHI above (Table 4.6).

Metaphorical Conceptualisation of KHUNGU: The concept *khungu* is used to refer to visual impairment. A person with this disability is said to be *wakhungu*, translated literarily as a blind person. In some areas in the central region, such as Nkhotakota, the term *masikini* is sometimes used to represent a person with visual impairment. I can speculate that the term *masikini* has something to do with the term *khungu,* which is an equivocal term, meaning both person with visual impairment and skin. This term is also used in the moral context to represent a person who has problems in making right moral decisions (and aesthetic decisions).[33] In some circumstances, it is used to represent not only wrong moral decisions but it covers also other decisions, for instance, in the context of aesthetics people use this term for those who fail to choose what is commonly accepted as beautiful. A person may therefore be called wakhungu because he/she is married to a person who is regarded by a good number of people as ugly (based on the cultural standards on what is beautiful in a particular context). In morality, a person who does things without reflecting and consequently makes mistakes by committing immoral acts is seen as *wakhungu* (blind person). This is extended to a person who has lost moral consciousness with respect to his actions (a person who has lost the sense of guilty).

[33]Aesthetic decisions are indicated here are mainly those to do with beauty or good taste.

In the diagram above the source domain is a physical disability *Khungu* that is seen as the same as immorality in the target domain. This suggests that the blind people are like immoral persons. The third element shows that sight is a defect among the persons with visual impairment and this is compared with corrupted moral judgment. The thinking is that when one sees he/she is capable of making proper judgment given that he/she can see what is happening. On the contrary a person with visual impairment has no proper sense of judgment of things given that sight is a problem. The last element is similar to the above discussion. It indicates that sight impairment is abnormal just as corrupted moral judgments are.

9. The metaphorical conceptualisation above reveals that the conception of disabilities leads to the marginalisation of people living with disabilities. This problem is primarily ethical in nature and constitutes the failure to recognize the equal status of human beings created by God (*Namalenga*).[34]

Marginalisation is an issue widely discussed by researchers in Malawi since its independence in 1964. The praxis of marginalisation is at variance with the claims of *umunthu* ethics, namely, that Africans respect one another and are concerned with the status of each person in the community. Such respect is embedded in African traditional religions, affirming that the life of a human being is sacred and a gift from God (Schoffeleers 1997).

The 2014 KIM Malawi Summary Report was focused on children with disability and how they faced different challenges including marginalisation. In 2010, NSO indicated that there were 4.6 million people with disabilities in Malawi and most of these were marginalized in the work environment to the point that many depended on public aid. In 2003, a study by SINTEF established that Malawi had increasing members of people with disabilities who were marginalised in various ways. One example is gleaned from the context of marriage. People with disabilities find it difficult to find a marriage partner. In 2002 a nationwide research titled *Transport and Mobility Issues and Concerns for People with Disabilities in Malawi* (see Khaula, Ghallanger, & Mulikita 2010) discussed how people with disabilities are marginalised in transport-related contexts. In some cases they have become victims of malpractice and negative attitudes by members of the public. The 2002 research was a follow-up to research undertaken in 1983, which reported on disability issues and suggested appropriate remedial policies.

Research into disability and the related ethical problem marginalisation has identified different causes of marginalization and proposed tentative solutions. Various factors contribute to marginalisation such as lack of awareness and cultural constraints. Many attempts in a quest for solutions have been undertaken. For instance, the government of Malawi introduced the Handicapped Person's Act of 1971, which was later elaborated by the Ministry for Persons with Disability, established in 1998. The Act was meant to provide assistance to people with disabilities and to solve problems related to marginalisation. Apart from elaborating

[34] *Namalenga* is used for God as understood to being the creator. It literarily means 'the one who creates.'

the Act, the Ministry also promoted 'full participation of people with disabilities in social life, development and equality.'

Other important attempts to deal with the problem of marginalisation of people with disabilities may be traced to the Malawi Constitution of 1995 and to the Disability Act of 2012. In addition to these legal provisions, organisations such as the Federation of Disability Associations in Malawi (FEDOMA), the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (MAP), the Malawi Association for People with Physical Disabilities (MAPAD), are working to eradicate marginalisation of the disabled in Malawi.

Despite the efforts undertaken by various entities, the marginalisation of people with disabilities remains a big problem in Malawi, in part because research on the marginalisation of people with disabilities has not been vigorously pursued. Crucial areas related to marginalisation that require more examination include language ad ethics. For example, terms like *gojo* or *sakwata,* referring to an impotent person, are offensive in nature. There is also stereotyping in the language used in public, thus violating the individual who has a disability or identifies with such a person. Similarly, the above discussion shows an extensive use of disability terms to represent immoral practices. Concepts such as *gonthi* (deaf), *chitsiru* (stupid) (van Breugel 2001), *wakhungu* (person with visual impairment), are freely used in a metaphorical sense to represent immoral acts or immoral persons.

Building on the metaphorical conceptualisation of disabilities, there are two important philosophical themes that explain further this process of developing terms in the ethical context using disabilities or persons with disabilities as a source domain: the consideration of sources that justify the act of inferring immoral elements from the source domain in the society and the consequences of marginalization.

(1) Justification of conceptualization from disability to ethics. In response to this idea I will concentrate on (i) Religious argument (ii) Naturalist argument.

(i) Religious argument

There are various religious and other beliefs towards persons with disabilities in traditional circles that act as a source of justification of the various conceptualisations in the moral context. The first belief connects disabilities with morality and witchcraft. It is believed that a good number of disabilities are not natural, but they are inflicted on a person because of committing some immoral actions. Owners of stolen property may decide to perform certain acts in retaliation to what was stolen and inflict a disability on the offender. In this case a person with physical disability (a crippled hand) is sometimes thought as a thief. There is a culture of suspicion towards the persons with disabilities with regards to the origin of their disability. There is also a big campaign by traditional Witch doctors and others who claim that they have powers to protect property from thieves and that they are capable of inflicting punishment through the creation of a disability. These adverts are socially encouraged and they are now advertised even in the main newspapers and radios.

Apart from beliefs that connect disability with immoral actions, there are various beliefs that correlate disability with the immoral practices of going against customs.

The thinking is that this practice affects the whole village and attracts punishment from the ancestors. Some forms of disability are seen as the materialisation of such punishments. For example, it is believed that a person who sacrileges the holy elements or other important places is sometimes punished with a form of disability. Although this disability can be of any kind, madness is the commonest form of punishment that is inflicted on such offenders. Disability is therefore seen as poetic justice applied by the gods or ancestors on an immoral person. The idea of disability as punishment coming from gods and ancestors parallels the biblical understanding of disability as a consequence of sin – an understanding which was common amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ. This same attitude runs amongst people in the Malawian traditional context, of which a larger population is of the Christian faith. Suffice it to say that the Chewa notion of *lunga lunga mpobadwa chilema chichitakudza* – meaning that one is born perfect, but disability comes afterwards – is derived from such an understanding.

(ii) Naturalist Argument

In this context the conceptualization of immorality based on disability is seen as natural; given that it is a tendency of human subjects to conceptualise terms used in different domains. Language as a whole may be seen in cognitive theory as a consequence of metaphorical conceptualisation. In this argument disability is a defect and it is similar to immorality which is also a defect in a different domain. These similarities may therefore be argued as a justification of building concepts in ethics describing immoral acts departing from disabilities.

Both arguments (i) and (ii) cannot be justified as grounds for the development of a conceptual system that sees the disabled as immoral. The religious argument is based on mere beliefs, and it is difficult to completely trust beliefs due to their inconclusive character in the context of validity. Since a belief can either be true or false, it cannot be a good basis for developing precepts or further building an act on it. Secondly, naturalist argument is also problematic given that whatever is natural is not necessarily ethical or good. Elementary example that shows the problematic state of nature is the survival rule where the weak overcome the strong more especially in the context of food chain. There is need for reason which puts some order in nature. As human beings it is important to correct our language formation process.

(2) Consequences of conceptualization

This second theme regards consequences that follow from the metaphorical conceptualization above. Some of these consequences include: (i) ethical, (ii) sociological and (iii) psychological consequences.

(i) Ethical consequence consists in the understanding that the disabled are ethically immoral subjects who are justly punished by their unethical actions.
(ii) Sociological consequence leads to the development of classes. The class of persons with disabilities as a class of incomplete and imperfect human beings. This is a class that must be pitied and heavily supported for it to survive. The other class of those without disabilities as a perfect class.

(iii) Psychological consequences regard self-conception of a disabled in the society. The self-acceptance of persons with disability is affected, given that one feels inferior. Such a person is likely to have guilty consciousness because he is going to regard his/her disability as a punishment, etc.

These and other consequences that follow from conceptualising immorality based on disability create an environment, which infringes upon the flexibility of the impaired persons, and make such a society an unjust society to people with disabilities.

I conclude by indicating that linguistic conceptualization in our culture, which builds on disabilities as a source and immorality as a target is incorrect and requires revision. This is based on a negative conception of people with disabilities as unwanted in the society. I suggest the following measures in dealing with language-based marginalisation of the disabled:

(1) There is need for re-educating the masses through ***civic education*** by letting them grasp that there is no link between immorality and disabilities.
(2) Use inclusive language in dealing with people with disabilities, avoiding unnecessary emphasis on disabilities. Avoid stereotyping them based on their inabilities or disabilities, address them as human beings and where applicable use their real names.
(3) Employ linguistic deconstruction by correcting our conceptual system, freeing it from elements that lead towards marginalisation of people with disabilities.
(4) Create a conducive environment where the disabled and those that are regarded as normal live together without stigmatising the disabled as those to be pitied in the society.
(5) Religious and other leaders must avoid any metaphorical use of disability in their daily use of language.

Chapter 5
Riddles, Meaning and Rationality/Logic

Abstract This chapter investigates issues of meaning and rationality departing from a study on riddles. It argues that riddles reveal some basic concepts of the Chewa people's logic. The structure of riddles and their use show that the Chichewa language speakers engage in critical thinking. The analysis of riddles further shows that through their use, individuals engage in problem solving.

Keywords Riddles · Problem-solving · Critical thinking · African philosophy · Problem solving

Doing African philosophy of meaning and truth with language requires a close inspection into riddles. This chapter investigates the meaning of riddles departing from the ordinary use of language. Riddles form part of the figurative utterances, which are used in everyday life. For the purposes of this work the following assumptions are fundamental:

The first assumption is that riddles are important in revealing the philosophy and culture of a particular group. In fact African philosophy can be developed further through a reflection on riddles, which are used in languages such as Chichewa.

The second assumption is that riddles have a complex logical structure, which accommodates different aspects of figurative utterances such as, analogy, metaphor and metonymy. An understanding of such a structure can help in clarifying formal issues relative to meaning and truth.

The third assumption is that the meaning of riddles is determined by their use in a particular context. The chapter will therefore focus on meaning by investigating the use of riddles among the Chichewa language speakers.

The chapter will firstly discuss the conception of riddles in general, by looking at some selected ideas in philosophy and language. Secondly, the chapter will investigate African philosophical studies on riddles. Thirdly, the study will identify some Chichewa language riddles and discuss their meaning based on their use. Lastly, the chapter will attempt to build a logic of riddles influenced by meaning of Chichewa riddles and other studies in both logic and language.

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5.1 Riddles

What is a riddle? Defining a riddle[1] is quite challenging in the academic circles because of its association with concepts such as, puzzle, enigma and metaphor. In fact most of these terms are used interchangeably with riddle. In spite of this fact, a riddle in most cases may be defined as a 'short metaphorical question' (puzzling question) that demand a solution from the hearer. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* argues that a riddle or enigma, is a form of metaphor. Commenting on this aspect Aristotle (Aristotle, Rhetoric 1984b, 1405b) writes,

> There was no name for what took place, but as in both cases there is a kind of application, he called the application of the cupping-glass gluing. And, generally speaking, clever enigmas furnish good metaphors; for metaphor is a kind of enigma, so that it is clear that the transference is clever.

Aristotle uses the term enigma (*Aenigma*), which was used in the Ancient Greek philosophy to refer to riddles. This reduction of a riddle into a metaphor, partly explains why most of the academics concentrated on metaphors rather than riddles.

In spite of the difficulties in clearly defining a riddle with the related terms, such as metaphor, analogy and metonymy, some medieval philosophers attempted to shape studies on the notion of riddle in three related fields of meaning. These studies determine issues of meaning with respect to riddles. Gruenler (2017) summarises these three fields of meaning into, vernacular field, theoretical field and theological field. Vernacular mainly focused on the ordinary use of riddles such as in literary works, folklore and oral communication. The theoretical mainly focused on theories taught in arts including grammar, rhetoric and dialectics. Theological field dealt with the use of language in the study of God and religion, in both literal and figurative senses.

In contemporary philosophy and language studies, different thinkers have focused on understanding the meaning, structure and functions of riddles in the society (Gruenler 2017).

As regards the function of riddles, most of the academics view them as an important source for understanding the culture of a particular group of people. For instance, Pepicello and Green (1984, 1) indicated that,

> For the folklorists and linguists who are serious students of what has been designated "a minor genre," the riddle, far from being merely the witty bit of entertainment it is commonly supposed to be, is, in fact, a complex linguistic and aesthetic structure that, when subjected to systematic and scientific study, reveals a great deal about the major human system such as language, culture, and art with which it is in extricably bound up.

[1] *https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/riddle,*
: conundrum, enigma." (Webster Dictionary 2018).

In line with the interest of this chapter, the citation shows that a study of riddles may assist in understanding 'major human system', which in this case may include, philosophy, culture, art, etc.

As regards the meaning and structure of riddles, there are different approaches. For example, one of the earliest works Jolles (1930) studies the structure of riddles in relation to myths. The basic argument was that the structure of riddles is inverse to the structure of myths. For instance, myths follow Answer-Question pattern, while riddles follow Question-Answer pattern. A myth is therefore a response to some hidden questions that people raise, such as, where did death come from.[2] A riddle on the contrary begs for an answer in a communication between the speaker and hearer of a particular language.

Most of the approaches have analysed the image of a riddle, ignoring the answer that corresponds to it in a particular context. For instance, a good number of scholars in 1950s and 1960s such as, Taylor (1951) and Georges and Dundes (1963) have all elaborated riddles focusing on the image, separate from the expected answers. This period is very important for studies that do philosophy with language because of the various changes that took place in different countries after the weakening of the Received View, promoted by adherents to analytic tradition.

In a slightly different approach from the early developers of riddles, the logic of riddles was suggested Elli Köngäs Maranda (1971, 189–232), who studied a collection of 1400 Finish riddles. Maranda focused on the interrelation between image and expected answer of riddles, including the alternative answers (possible answers). Commenting about riddles, Maranda writes,

> Thus, this paper is based on the view that a riddle is a structural unit, which necessarily consists of two parts, the riddle image, and the riddle answer. In a riddling situation, these two parts are "recited" by two different parties, a fact which has significance also regarding the functions of riddles.[3]

Following the Aristotelian tradition, Maranda argues for an understanding of riddles as a special type of metaphors. This is echoed in the following passage,

> As metaphors, riddles exhibit an identity between the *signans* and the *signatum* which is one of structure rather than one of content as it would be in metonymic thinking .... A peculiarity of riddle metaphors, as will be exemplified, is that the metaphor, in a large number of cases, works two ways : if A is like B, by a metaphoric "jump," this jump can be reversed, and a riddle will be found which illustrates that B is like A.[4]

[2]For example responding to the question what is the origin of death, Chichewa language suggests the following answer: in the beginning God wanted to find out from human beings whether they want to live forever or died at some point. A Chameleon took the message that humans have said that they want to live. On the contrary, lizard was not pleased with this decision, and decided to run to God with a different message. He reported that human beings want to die. Starting from that time, human beings die.

[3]Corresponding page number (9) http://www.uqac.ca/jmt-sociologue/pdf

[4]Corresponding page number (14) http://www.uqac.ca/jmt-sociologue/pdf

According to Maranda, riddles are divided into three groups, depending on their complexity. These groups include; simple riddles, which have one true term, one false premise and one true answer. The compound riddles have more than one term, false premise and true answer. The last group consists of 'string riddles', commenting on these Maranda writes (1971: 14), "in this case, the image consists of a list of terms, and the answer of another list of terms."

5.2 African Philosophy and Riddles

Developing African philosophy based on the study of riddles is not a common practice. This is evidenced by the fact that in the whole *Companion to African Philosophy* (2004), there is only a small paragraph by Ocaya (2004, 291), which mentions in passing the relevance of riddles in African logic.[5] In the same volume the notion 'riddle' with reference to African philosophy is mentioned by Kwasi Wiredu (2004, 21) in a non-committal manner. The same author in the *African Philosophy Reader* (376) recognizes in passing the important function of riddles in the following statement,

> In metaphysical matters they left little doubt of their sense of the presumptuousness of dogmatism, for their metaphysicians often spoke in paradoxes and riddles, purposely inviting individual speculative ingenuity. (Wiredu 2003, 276)

Similarly the work of Bruce Tanz (2009, 166), mentions riddles but does not engage them in doing African philosophy.

Why this negligence on doing philosophy based on riddles? This is probably caused by the fact that African philosophers in the past, focused mainly on demonstrating different theories that prove that an African is philosophical by nature. For instance, focus has been more on theories such as, the Bantu theory of being (such as Tempels 1959; Kagame 1976) and the *ubuntu* ethical theory, etc. Apart from theories, focus has been more on discussing different philosophical approaches in an African setting.

In philosophy of language, proverbs were more appealing to philosophers as a source of African philosophy to the point that most of them ignored other forms of expressions such as riddles. The fame of proverbs is echoed in the following passage by Bruce Tanz (2009, 166),

> For some, the key to finding an aspect of culture that is truly African and truly philosophical does not lie in the details or structure of language, but in higher level artifacts of language such as tales, riddles, songs, proverbs, and so forth. I wish to examine one of these artifacts, which has received attention from several philosophers-proverbs.[6]

[5]The author is referring to the notion of logical equivalence as contained reflecting the idea of equivalence.

[6]Interest on proverbs conditioned by the definition of philosophy, where it is defined as *philos* ('love') and *sophia* (wisdom).

Although different preferences of doing African philosophy are important, I would like to indicate that the study of riddles requires a serious consideration in the development of African philosophy more especially in demonstrating an African component of critical and abstract thinking.

The importance of studying meaning and rationality in riddles is due to the understanding that these are and were used in Malawi by elders in their communication and also they transmitted them to their children. Although they were utilized for the enhancement of critical thinking, they were also meant at helping the children to have fun when playing a game of riddles.

Children are normally put in two different groups. One group utters a riddle and the other group quickly reflects on the content and responds. When they fail to give a quick and right answer, the speaker is expected to say what the right answer is. The more right answers a group gets, the more it is qualified as a winner.

In the education system in Malawi, traditional riddles are used to enhance critical and abstract thinking. For example, *English Learners Book for Standard 8* has some riddles translated from Chichewa to English (Malawi Institute of Education 2009).

While the use of riddles in schools is appreciated, this chapter investigates the aspects of meaning and rationality/logic. Meaning is important because it responds to the objective of this manuscript but also the understanding in analytic philosophy that most of the problems of philosophy deal with meaning (language use and meaning). Rationality is fundamental for this work because most of the early problems of African philosophy were around the notion of rationality.

In philosophy in general, the existence of rationality among the blacks has been an old problem that affected the credibility of great thinkers such as Hume, Immanuel Kant and Hegel.[7] This problem taunted many thinkers during and after the early days of independence in many African countries.

The problem of rationality has been a main concern of the early crop of African philosophers who tried to argue and demonstrate that Africans and blacks in general were capable of thinking rationally. Some of the main arguments were forwarded to falsify the developments of Levi-Bruhl who was considered as a big enemy of African philosophy due to his affirmation that the blacks still have a primitive mentality (Bruhl [1910] 1985).[8] It seems that today this debate has lost its grip and philosophers have moved on to discuss different aspects of African philosophy.

5.3 Chichewa Riddles and Use Meaning

In understanding the meaning of riddles through the consideration of what people are doing when using them, the first important step was the collection of riddles. The riddles were collected from young students who participated in a game of riddles

[7]For example Hume questioned the possibility of speculation among the Negroes. The only black person that was excellent was as good as a parrot.

[8]See also (Levi-Strauss 1966).

(where a riddle is said and the opponent is expected to give an answer). Apart from this source, this work focused more on riddles that are being used in primary education in Malawi. As alluded to earlier, some of these riddles are contained in a number of text books that are used by teachers. In this practice I would like to thank primary school teachers in Zomba such as Mr. Stanley Mateya, who assisted me in collecting the commonly used riddles in Malawian schools.

Below is a summary of the riddles used in Malawi (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Showing common riddles

Riddle	English translation	Answer
I. Zungulira uku tikumane uku.	Go this way and we will meet that way	*Lamba* (Belt)
2. Ndili ndi nyumba yopanda khomo.	I have a house without a door.	*Dzira* (egg)
Nyumba ndi ya mzati umodzi.	My house has one holding pole.	*Bowa* (Mushroom)
3. *A mfumu anyamula madzi mkandodo*.	A king has carried water in a stick.	*Mzimbe* (Sugarcane)
4. *Kamwana kang'onong'ono ufiti tho*.	A small child but filled with witchcraft.	*Tsabola* (Red Pepper)
5. *Nyumba yanga yotsegula ndi chala*	My house is opened with a finger.	*Macheso* (Match box)
6. *Phiri lakwathu lokwera ndi manja.*	*Our home's mountain climbed with hands.*	*Nsima* (Hard porridge)
7. *Asilikali asanu amandiperekeza kunyumba.*	Five soldiers escort me home.	*Nsima* (Hard porridge)
8. *Chidziwe icho koma nsomba imodzi.*	A big dam but only one fish.	*Lilime* (Tongue)
9. *Alira atazimenya yekha.*	*x* cries after beating him/her-self.	*Rooster* (Tambala)
10. *Ndine mlendo wa m'mawa, sindiwoneka masana.*	I am a morning visitor, I am not seen during the day.	*Nyenyezi* (Star)
11. *Kulikonse ndiyenda ndimapita naye.*	Wherever I go he/she accompanies me.	*Chintunzithunzi* (image)
12. *Kamsale kanga kokoma kumtsinde kowawa pakati, kokoma kunsonga.*	My sugarcane tastes sweeter at the beginning of the stem, bitter in the middle and sweet again at the end.	*Dzuwa* (Sun)
13. *Amalira opanda matumbo.*	Cries without intestines.	*Ng'oma* (Drum)
14. *Ndinapita kwa a pongozi anandipatsira moni kunjira.*	I went to my in-law but I was greeted on the way.	*Galu* (Dog)
16. *Chikondi nyamata opanda mafupa.*	Chikondi is a boy without bones.	*Mbatata* (Sweet potatoes)
17. *Mwana mbu make mbu* (mphero).	A child is *mbu* (dirty) and the mother is also *mbu* (dirty).	*Mphero* (grinding stone)
18. *Ndimaluka phasa koma ndimagona pansi.*	I weave mats yet I sleep on the floor.	*Mawungu* (Pumpkin)
19. *Ndili ndi nyumba ndimayenda nayo kulikonse.*	I have a house; I go with it everywhere/I move with my house everywhere I go.	Kamba/Nkhono (Tortoise/Snail)

Riddles and the Game of Meaning: An analysis of the above riddles shows that the game of riddles is tantamount to a game of meaning transfer. In the traditional conception of meaning it was shown in the earlier chapters that meaning can either depend on the relationship between a statement and reality or a set of factors (such as, speaker, respondent, intention, and context). In this game of meaning transfer, it is dependent on the player 1 (speaker), player 2 (respondent), intention, agreement, description of a riddle, original context of meaning, and final context.

The meaning game of riddles is done in a dialogue style. The first step is the agreement to play this particular game by players. After the agreement is reached, the next step is to divide the teams into two (speaker's team and respondent team). The first player is the speaker, who pronounces the riddle. The second player is the hearer or respondent, who is expected to quickly respond by giving an appropriate answer.

The formula for pronouncing a riddle starts with the creation of a specific context through uttering the word, *ndagi* and the respondent says *gize.* The word *ndagi* may be translated as referring to 'riddle'. Some Chichewa language speakers prefer to say, *chilape,* and the hearer says *nachize*. The word *chilape*, may be translated as 'riddle', *nachize* (sounds like a Lomwe word) means let it come. This preliminary dialogue sets the context of meaning.

By pronouncing the word *chilape* or *ndagi,* player 1 communicates his/her intention to player 2 that, (i) what follows is a riddle, (ii) it requires a solution, and that (iii) that player 2 needs to transfer meaning from one domain to the other.

When the preliminary dialogue is set, player 1 is not obliged to continuously indicate that what is uttered requires an answer. The game becomes automatic. What player 1 does, is to provide a description of certain state of affairs. The intention is that the properties will lead player 2 to find a corresponding object in another domain. Of course there could be many corresponding objects, but the game restricts the required object. This restriction may depend on the already existing answers in the community, or what player 1 wanted.

Player 2 is in what I will call, context of interpretation and meaning shift. Interpretation is made possible by various factors. Firstly, the properties announced by player 1, with respect to the original context of description and meaning. Secondly, knowledge of different objects in other domains, which have properties similar or the same as those presented by player 1 with reference to original context of meaning. Thirdly, knowledge of riddles and their answers, through experience, is of great help.

Below are some of the riddles that are used in the game of meaning shift.

(i) *Zungulira uku tikumane uku* (Go this way and we will meet that way)

After observing all requirements of a riddle game, player 1 utters this expression in a game of meaning. It is uttered as a description of a scenario where an individual is giving directions to another to go around so that they meet at one point. It sounds like an order/command given to someone and the expectation is that it will be done as requested.

Player 1 further requests player 2 to transfer meaning from "Go this way and we will meet that way", to a different domain, whose answer is 'belt'. Player 1, knows the answer, but wants player 2, to get to it through a reflection on what is stated by player 1. The art that is required for player 2 is that of transferring meaning from one context to the next. This is aided by the property of going around something in different directions and meeting at a particular place. When the answer is given, the dialogue with respect to this riddle is closed.

Following a similar mechanism as above, when player 1 utters the riddle, *Ndili ndi nyumba yopanda khomo* (I have a house without a door) states how the state of affairs is. Of course the idea of a house in the ordinary understanding is that there is a door. This is a description that may be questioned as it deliberately distorts the common way of looking at a house. It seems that player 1 was influenced by the nature of the answer (egg), in developing this riddle.

Nevertheless, what is important are the properties in the description given. Player 2 in this case considers the properties as real, and interprets them relative to other objects.

Player 2 will transfer meaning from 'I have a house without a door,' to the context of an egg. The riddle is in this case descriptive of the characteristics of an egg, using figurative terms.

Another riddle following the above dialogue relation is, *Myumba yanga ndi ya mzati umodzi* (My house has one holding pole), gives an image of a Malawian traditional house which is round in shape, and is held in the middle by one strong pole. The statement therefore describes the state of affairs, although it may be argued that the description was influenced by the answer (mushroom).

The description about the house above, is transferred to mushroom. It is therefore, the meaning of this description that is transferred to a different context. In the description there is the property of being round, and a property of resting on one stem.

Below is an example of a Malawian traditional house (Fig. 5.1).

Nyumba yanga yotsegula ndi chala (my house is opened with a finger) (Match box), seems to make sense that there is a door in a particular house with this characteristic. However, it is the description that is important. There is the property of being a container (where things can stay, such as a house or a box) and there is a property of opening with a finger.

Phiri lakwathu lokwera ndi manja (Our mountain is climbed by hands) is also descriptive as one expects that there is a location where this state of affairs is the case. In fact player 1 in his/her description makes player 2 visualize a mountain where people climb using hands. This meaning is then transferred to food, and how people use their hands when eating.

Similarly, the proverbs below, are presented as a description by player 1, and requires transfer of meaning to the desired answer. *Asilikali asanu amandiperekeza kunyumba* (five soldiers escort me home) gives a scenario that can be true or false, hence descriptive.

Chidziwe icho koma nsomba imodzi (lilime) states a condition, which may be true or false, although it is contrary to the common expectation.

Fig. 5.1 Traditional house

Alira atazimenya yekha (cries after beating him/her-self) is descriptive of state of affairs hence true or false.

At second glance, considering that these descriptions require an answer, one realizes that they are implicitly questions. For example, the proper form of a riddle,

- *Ndine mlendo wa m'mawa, sindiwoneka masana* (I am a morning visitor, I am never seen during the day), is;
- What does the expression "I am a morning visitor, I am never seen during the day", represent?

Similarly, the utterance,

- *Kulikonse ndiyenda ndimapita naye* (Everywhere I go we are together) is;
- Name a thing that is always with me?

At third glance, after a response is given, one realizes that the answer is either true or false. The truth of the answer is dependent on the question uttered by the first speaker, and accepted interpretation content by both.

5.4 Formal Aspects of the Chichewa Riddles

In order to comprehensively understand the issue of meaning with respect to riddles, below is a formal consideration of African riddles in the context of philosophy and meaning.

5.4.1 I

Firstly, I will formalize the simple structure of a riddle in a dialogue affecting domains A (riddle domain) and B (response domain) (Table 5.2).

This diagram shows that in a riddle game, domain A has content, but Domain B has blank spaces, which need to be filled. It is similar to elementary Arithmetic where a student is questioned to fill in the blank space in the box 4 + 7 = □. The assumption is that the student has background knowledge of what 4, + sign and 7 are. The student is only expected to add and provide the answer. Similarly, at an elementary level, African riddles in Malawi require filling in Domain B, which is blank. This suggests that they are in a form of an equation.

In the riddle structure above, Domain A, shows a relation between utterance world (where two people are to go round and meet at one point) and the state of affairs. Both the speaker and hearer understand the correspondence relation between the utterance and fact.

Although the correspondence relation is obvious, the context where a riddle is pronounced, Domain A may be considered as a question:

'What does it mean to say, *zungulira uku tikumane uku*?'

The question is not explicitly expressed by the speaker, but the hearer is aware that the speaker is questioning and is expecting for a response. It is only when this response is given that a complete communication in terms of the riddle in question is achieved.

When a response is offered, a complete riddle has the following structure (Table 5.3).

In Domain B, the concept *lamba* translated as belt is inserted as a response. It is therefore a concept that is considered as representing the utterance in Domain A. A belt in this context may be understood as a carrier of meaning. The justification of its

Table 5.2 Structure of a riddle game

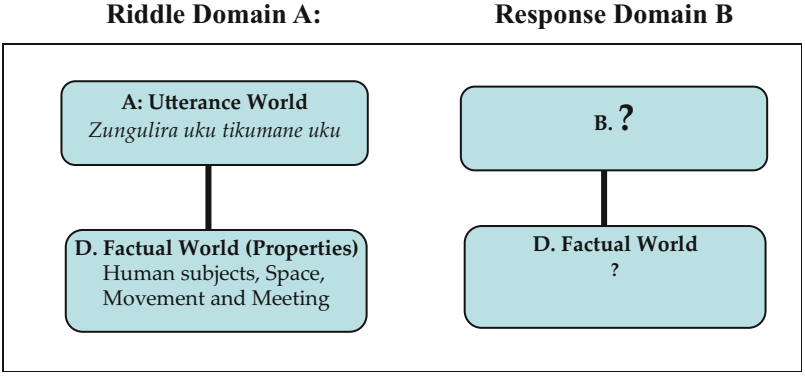
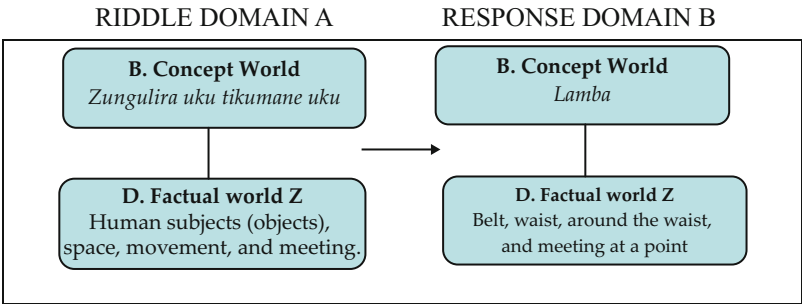


Table 5.3 Complete structure of a riddle



status as a carrier of meaning is given by the state of affairs. Thus a belt (its two sides) goes around the waist and meets at the front where it is tied.

Apart from the similarity of the state of affairs of a belt, the context and background knowledge of the riddle play a fundamental role determining the given answer. This background knowledge may include the fact that a belt goes around the waist. Furthermore in some circumstances one needs to know that there is a riddle where the answer is 'belt'. However this is not a necessary requirement, as most of the riddles require that the subject in question should think and come up with a reasonable answer. An individual also needs to know how to shift meaning from its original context to a corresponding context.

5.4.2 II

Secondly in formalising riddles I suggest theorizing on the the conceptualisation of riddles. The argument is that, while riddles seem to be conceptualised from the domain of what is uttered by player 1 to a response by player 2 (Riddle domain – Response domain), the formation of a riddle is inverse to this movement (Response domain – Riddle domain) (Table 5.4).

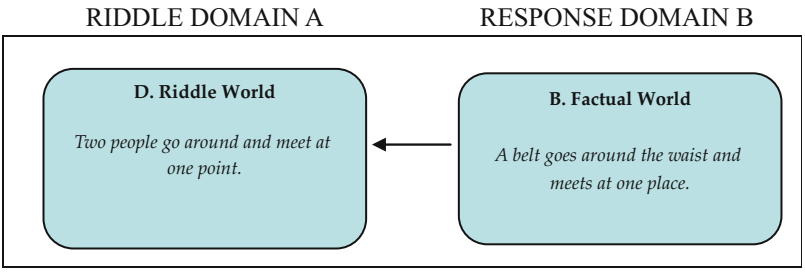
The conceptualisation of a riddle at a creation level, moves from the response domain, where particular state of affairs is the case. The response domain, where a creator of a riddle starts from, there is a fact, which may be seen as a relation of properties such as belt, going around, waist, and meeting at one point.

The sense of the factual world content in the response domain is transferred to the riddle world, and a new content is formulated. The content of the riddle world is highly dependent on the factual world content, which is in a response domain. This is fundmental since it helps the respondent to exactly figure out the answer.

A good example of a riddle showing this conceptualisation of a riddle from the response domain is,

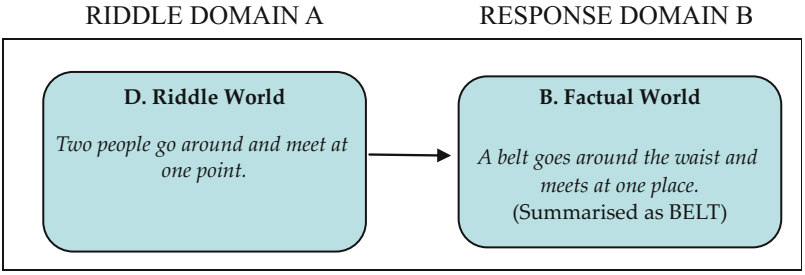
- *Myumba yanga ndi ya mzati umodzi* (My house has one holding pole)

Table 5.4 Conceptualisation from response world



Conceptualising from response world

Table 5.5 Riddle creator



The process of conceptualising this riddle starts from the response domain, where the factual world is that of a mushroom. One of the properties of a mushroom that has conditioned the riddle world, is that it has one stem. It is for this reason that the house in the riddle world has only one pillar (pole holding the round roof). This distortion of how a traditional house is, is therefore, justified by the factual world content in the response domain.

In a riddles game, the respondent is expected to reverse this conceptualisation from riddle world to a single object in the factual world (respondent domain). The conceptualisation is similar to what the creator of a riddle was doing, only that, now the process is inverse as above (Table 5.5).

5.4.3 III

Thirdly, I formalize a riddle as a special type of metaphor.

Riddle Metaphor *A* Is *B* and B Is A

A game of riddles (riddle utterance) suggests that domain A is spoken of in terms of domain B (as in A is B). Similarly, in the creation of a riddle, domain B is spoken of in terms of domain A (as in B is A) (Table 5.6).

The riddle *A* to *B* shows a one-to-one-mapping relation between the properties of a riddle utterance and the properties of the context of its answer. Although a relation in a normal metaphor is apparently asymmetrical, considering the relations above relative to the creation from *B* to *A*, suggests that A and B have selected set of identical properties.

For example, the selected set has the following properties (Table 5.7):

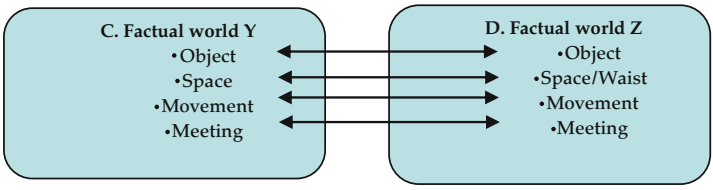
Focusing on object properties, space, movement and meeting, (in riddle response A to B and creation B to A) the relation is no longer asymmetric but symmetric. This symmetrical relation may be captured as follows:

$$(x)(y)(x = y \supset y = x)$$

I argue based on this aspect of identity and the asymmetric relation noted above, that a riddle that is completed with an answer reflects the relation of logical

Table 5.6 Riddle metaphor

A: Human being going around - Riddle ***B: Belt: Answer***



From B to A is a metaphor conceptualised when developing this riddle, while A to B is a metaphor conceptualised in terms of riddle – response pattern.

Table 5.7 Riddle and response domains

Riddle domain A	Response domain B
Object (Human subjects)	Object (Belt)
Space (ground)	Space (Waist)
Movement (*x* and *y* moving)	Movement (around the Waist)
Meeting (of *x* and *y*)	Meeting (of two parts of a belt)

When building on both domains, one deliberately ignores what is put in blackets, and sees the idenitity of properties.

equivalence. In this relation the two sides of the equivalence have the same truth value, hence a set of relations under consideration lead to,

$$A \equiv B$$

A similar reflection is given in the book chapter "Logic in the Acholi language" by Ocaya (2004, 19), who supports this link of logical equivalence in riddles as is expressed in the following passage:

> The notion of logical equivalence is easily seen by the Acholi in the context of certain kinds of riddle. They may be helpful in understanding the idea of equivalence. . . . A riddle of the kind in question is made up of an indirect description of an object (the problem). The object, when named, is the solution of the problem. In Acholi traditions it is generally acknowledged that the problem as set is equivalent to the correct answer given. For example, Akuri aryo ongolo nm (Two doves crossed the river) is equivalent to wang (the eyes). Here again riddles may help to see that the concepts of logical equivalence (and of identity) exist in the Acholi language. With adequate qualifications, riddles may be helpful in the interpretations of these concepts.

Unfortunately Ocaya did not demonstrate further on how this equivalence is reflected in riddles, as is the case in this chapter.

5.4.4 IV

Fourthly, a riddle may be considered as a special case of analogical reasoning. The logic of analogy or analogical reasoning is what is helping the speaker and hearer of a particular riddle to connect between the total properties of *A* and *B* above.

There is a link between analogy and the idea of metaphor above. The understanding is that the development of a metaphor builds on the idea of analogy with the difference that analogy as a concept focuses on both similarities and differences in the relation between *A* and *B*. Analogy recognizes that the different domains that are being utilized are different, though they have aspects that are similar. While a riddle as a metaphor above indicates that *A* is conceptualised in terms of *B* (as requested by the riddle), analogy indicates that *A* is similar to *B*.[9]

Symbolically the two related forms of logic may be presented as follows :

Riddle Analogy (Fig. 5.2)
A ∩ B represents the similarities between the two aspects, while, A - A ∩ B and B - B ∩ A are the dissimilarities. In this approach to riddles, interest is only on the intersection set AB. This intersection suggests and identity of properties between A and B as shown above.

[9]Analogy recognizes that in riddle metaphor, "*Myumba yanga ndi ya mzati umodzi* (My house has one holding pole)", there are two different domains with similarities and differences (riddle domain and response above as shown above).

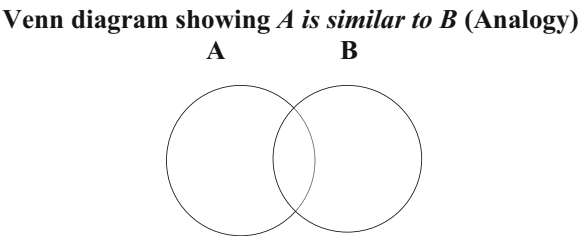


Fig. 5.2 Similarity Venn diagrams

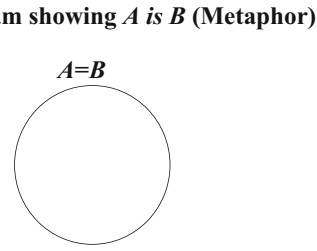


Fig. 5.3 Riddle metaphor Venn diagram

Riddle Metaphor (Fig. 5.3)
A* is *B therefore justifies the conceptualisation of A in terms of B as noted earlier. This is suggesting that a metaphor may be interepreted as a special case of analogy (the case of the intersection AB, as noted above).

5.5 Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by indicating that the use of *riddles* provides a better argument of the existence of rationality in the African context. I show that students at an early stage are introduced to critical thinking although this is in most cases done in a form of a game. It is similar to the puzzle game where participants are expected to find an answer to a particular problem.[10]

The structure of a riddle above reveals that in the African traditional context when people are using riddles they are engaging in a rational discussion. In other words, they are building a logical discourse using some logical relations and reflections. Although the development below will focus on African logic, some authors working in the Western context such as, Elli Kongas Maranda (1971, 10–13) build the logic of a riddle based on the logical concept of metonymy,[11] logic of metaphor and logic of analogy as important components in understanding a riddle.

[10]An area that can explain further issues of rationality in African traditional context are puzzles. See appendix

[11]This logic builds on *metonyms*. A metonym is considered as a word, concept, expression, etc., which is substituted by another. For example, in an expression 'Capital Hill say that it will investigate the case', the term 'Capital Hill' is used to represent the government of Malawi. It has substituted 'The Government of Malawi'.

Firstly, I would like to note that in the discussion above, riddles in African context were seen as introducing children to some skills that are used in elementary equation in Mathematics, where they fill in the missing part of the other side of the equations. I argue that by training students in developing and solving riddles children acquire algebraic skills. In fact when they find on their own that the answer to the riddle such as *Ndimaluka mphasa koma ndimagona pansi* (I weave mats but I sleep on the floor) is *Dzungu* (Pumpkin), they have learnt how to complete an equation.

Secondly, apart from the mathematical thinking which is gained in riddles, the logic of metaphors is central in the formulation and the completion of the relation between a riddle and the expected answer. This deals with a relation of similarity between two domains. For example, in the riddle *zungulira uku tikumane uku* (***A***) and the answer lamba (***B***), the logic of a metaphor may be elaborated as ***A*** is ***B***.

Part II
Conceptual Analysis: Truth, Beauty and Meaning

Chapter 6
The Chewa Logical Concept of Truth

Abstract This chapter investigates the Chewa concept of truth through a reflection on the relation between statements and reality/facts. It argues that the Chewa people have a logical concept of truth, which is dependent on the relation between statements and reality, and the requirement of observation. It is argued that for a sentence to be true, it must correspond to facts, and there must be ontological commitment supporting this relation.

Keywords Truth · Evidence · Ordinary language approach · African philosophy · Correspondence theory · Observation · Ontological commitment

The development of philosophy has been dominated by the quest of philosophers in defining and applying the concept of truth in different areas, such as, natural science, religion and law.

Attempts to define the concept of truth has led to the division of philosophers into two groups, those that support the objective concept of truth and those that defend a subjectivist concept. The former defines truth as a property of statements, which represent facts through the relation of correspondence. For example in philosophy of science, philosophers known as realists have claimed that truth is about scientific theories viewed as statements (syntactic view); whose validity or truth is ascertained by appealing to the facts (Putnam 1987; Van Fraassen 1980: 6–8 ff.; Giere 2006: 4–6).

The latter views truth as relative to the perceiving subject. Generally, a subjectivist view of truth regards truth by underlining the centrality of a perspective. Mostly, adherence to this conception of truth may be regarded as following protagoras' maxim, that man is a measure of all things, those that are and those that are not. This is sometimes represented by the understanding that 'what is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me.'

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In this chapter I discuss the Chewa logical concept of truth drawing insights from the Analytic framework.[1] This concept is important because it has been at the heart of most of the studies in the analytic tradition. The interest in this concept comes from its link with language, logic and natural science, which are fundamental in the developments in this tradition. In logic, it was primarily linked with the concept of logical identity. In natural science it has been connected with the tradition of how scientific theories represent reality. In language, it concerns the meaning of statements.

Below, I will firstly discuss the logical concept of truth in the analytic tradition. I will link it with Parmenides and Aristotle, as some of the early sources that inspired further developments of this concept. After this background, I will discuss the concept of truth in African philosophy. This will be followed by the presentation of the Chichewa language speaker's logical concept, through the study of language and its use.

6.1 Logical Concept of Truth in the Analytic Framework

In the early development of Analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, philosophers have been attracted by the relation between what is said and reality/facts. This interest followed the understanding that scientific theories are statements about the world (Popper 1959), and it was necessary for philosophers to have an adequate conception of this truth-based relation.

Analytic philosophers had a common dissatisfaction with the classical conception of this relation, which was deemed as unclear. This classical conception may be mainly traced from the writings of Parmenides and later in Aristotle. In the Fragments of Parmenides, this conception is connected with ontology. In the context of ontology, the discourse of truth is discussed in relation to what is affirmed or denied about being. Being can only be affirmed that is (true), in fact what is, is.

In the logical context, the idea of true is implicitly contained in Parmenides' principle of non-contradiction. This consists in the idea that it is impossible for being to be and not to be at the same time and in the same respect. Aristotle summarized both Parmenides' ontological and logical formulation of the idea of truth as follows:

Ontological version:

> To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is False, while to say what is that it is, or what is not that it is not, is true (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1011b, 26).

[1] I am aware of the existence of different theories of truth, but my interest is on analytic philosophy. In fact, philosophy has for a long time been accompanied by five theories of truth namely, correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, pragmatic theory of truth, semantic theory of truth and redundant theory of truth (Walker 2000, 309–330). For example, Coherence theory of truth has also been commonly promoted as it underlined the truth of a proposition as consisting in its coherence with other propositions.

Logical version:

Let us next say what this principle is: that it is impossible for the same thing both to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect (and let us assume we have drawn all the further distinctions that might be drawn to meet logical complaints) (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1005b, 20).

The main problem that was noticed with the classical conception of truth is that the relation of correspondence between statements and facts was not clarified (it was undefined). In order to clarify this, different versions of theories of truth were elaborated, such as Schlick's theory of correspondence to the facts, Ayer's truth and verification, Wittgenstein's picture theory and Tarski's correspondence theory of truth. Below I will briefly discuss aspects of Wittgenstein's theory and Tarski's theory, given that these were highly accepted, although the later defeated the former as the best theory of truth.

As early as 1922, Wittgenstein's picture theory of truth in the *Tractatus* argued for a relation of correspondence between the logical structure of a statement and the structure of the world (Wittgenstein [1922], 4.0141, 2.161, 2.17, 2.223, 3.11). There is a one-to-one mapping relation (isomorphism) between the atomic proposition and the represented structure of facts in the world. It is for this reason that atomic propositions are seen as pictures of the structure of facts which they represent. The notion of 'isomorphism' was therefore used to clarify what 'correspondence' meant in the classical theory of truth. Unfortunately the notion of isomorphism could not clearly explain how scientific statements represent, as they were considered as universal statements (Popper 1959).

Alfred Tarski suggested an alternative conception of truth as correspondence to the facts, which was accepted in the analytic tradition. He started from a desire to clarify the obscurity of the classical notion of truth as correspondence to the facts, by embarking on a mission to provide an adequate definition of truth that was materially and formally adequate.[2] Formal correctness is a requirement that refers to the structure of terms that are used in the definition of truth, while material adequacy is captured by the Tarki's *criterion T* (Tarski [1944], 341 ff.).[3] The criterion primarily indicates that truth is a property of declarative sentences and further it calls for the requirement of *T bi-condition* (. . .is true if and only if. . .).

The material adequacy and formal correctness attracted most of the adherents to analytic philosophy, including Karl Popper, who commented that one of the elements that made Tarski's theory of correspondence special is that, "Truth and falsity are essentially regarded as properties, or classes, of statements that is, of (unambiguously formulated) theories or propositions (or meaningful sentences)" (Popper [1972], 302). This love for Tarski's concept of truth may be seen in the following creed of Karl Popper,

[2]In analytic philosophy during the early days, philosophers of the Vienna Circle supported the idea of truth as correspondence to the facts. Different versions of this concept were developed by philosophers such as Schlick, Wittgenstein and Alfred Ayer.

[3]T represents truth.

> I accept the common sense theory (defended and refined by Alfred Tarski) that the truth is correspondence with the facts (or with reality); or, more precisely that a theory is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts (Popper [1972], 44; [(1963), 2002], 302–309).

Although the attempts to develop adequate theory of correspondence to the facts were apparently insignificant in analytic tradition literature, debates revolved more on the applicability of the logical concept of truth to scientific theories. A notable debate was started by Karl Popper, who consistently argued that this concept cannot be applied to scientific theories. His idea of scientific theories which was common in the analytic tradition in the early days, was that they are universal statements. For instance, Newtonian's theory of gravity or Einstein's theory of relativity were universal statements.

Karl Popper noted that there is a fallacy of generalization in science when it is argued that a universal statement is true. This comes in because one could expect infinite observations in order to qualify a universal statement as true. In practice what is needed is that finite statements are observed in experiments and then this is generalized to all reality, which is impossible. This made Karl Popper to comfortably say that scientific theories understood as universal statements are false (Popper 1959, 1963).

The other difficult problem for the theory of truth in the analytic tradition was that it was not clear on how to demarcate observable terms. In fact terms such as atom, were difficult to clarify in terms of observation.

Problems with the applicability of the logical concept of truth led to two main reactions. The first reaction was that the notion of truth is useless in science (anti-realism). It was argued that scientists are not after the truth. In fact they are good at manipulating reality by deforming it, for example, a planet is deformed into a point in space. Another reaction has been an attempt to develop the notion of partial truth or the logical concept of verisimilitude (approximation to the truth). I will not develop these notions in details, because the main interest of this work is to discuss the Chewa logical concept of truth.[4]

6.2 African Philosophy and the Logical Concept of Truth

Defining the logical concept of truth has been one of the main concerns of some professional philosophers in African philosophy (Kwasi Wiredu 1972, 1985, 1995; Kaphagawani [1998] 2000). There has been a twofold development, namely, speculative individual considerations of the logical concept of truth and an attempt to present ordinary people's logical conception of truth. The former represents an individual's reflection on the concept of truth, while the latter builds on a reflection of language, and suggests a common African conception of truth.

[4]For a further survey of partial truth and verisimilitude see Karl Popper (1963), da Costa and French (2003), and Kayange (2008).

A notable debate that developed on both dimensions of the notion of truth in the African context, revolved around Kwasi Wiredu's work, "Truth as Opinion" (1972) and "The Concept of Truth in the Akan Language" (1985), and related developments, which reflected on the Akan language (Hallen 2004; Oruka 1975; Kaphagawani [1998] 2000).

Firstly, literature on the notion of truth shows that in the early days, African philosophers speculated and attempted to give their own understanding of the logical concept of truth. In fact in its early days, African philosophy as propagated by Kwasi Wiredu forwarded a fallibilist conception of truth as representative of the Africans. The contention that there are many truths partly makes him to share in Karl Popper's epistemic position known as fallibilism. In his work 'Truth and Opinion', he argued that truth was a subjective opinion. By implication, Wiredu believed in the existence of a pluralist concept of truth (relativist concept), where there are many truths depending on the point of view. This pluralist concept is in strict sense the opposite of the logical concept of truth, which is also conceived as the objectivist concept of truth (Oruka 1975; see also Karl Popper 1972). This view does not depend on opinions, but on the abstract relation between propositions and facts.

Kwasi Wiredu's fallibilism is rooted in a continuous argument and denial of the objective truth/absolute truth as attainable. Absolute truth is unattainable given that it could presuppose total correspondence between statements and reality. In logic, this correspondence does not obtain mainly when one considers universal statements, such as, 'sugar dissolves in water'. This leads to a fallacy of ascertaining universal statements starting from a collection of particular statements. In fact absolute truth is difficult to know, even when we are there, it can still not be known with certainty. Kwasi Wiredu comfortably concludes that the objectivist concept of truth is incorrect and embraces subjective concept (1972, 17).

The weakness with Kwasi Wiredu's position is that truth is mixed with opinion, when in true sense truth is a property of statements. Odera Oruka (1975) joined this debate in his work *Truth and Belief* where he indicated that,

> It appears that in his eagerness to equate truth with opinion, Wiredu has confused what should be regarded as an incontestable fact in the concept of knowledge, namely, that it is only through belief or perception that truth is revealed, asserted or known to be the case with the highly disputable proposition that nothing is true outside beliefs – i.e. the truth of a proposition does not depend on any condition outside the mind (1975, 179).

In this passage, Odera Oruka sees Wiredu as confused by Barkeley's view, which is expressed by the idea that the truth of a proposition exclusively lies in the mind. This leads Wiredu to believe that for a proposition to be true it is to be opined.

On the contrary, Oruka argues that the genuine way that he needed to elaborate the notion of truth, is based on the expression, "knowing that entails believing that". His suggested theory of truth takes on board insights from the "coherence, universalist and self-evidence theories of truth" (1975, 183). He argues that for a proposition to be true, it must have a criterion, which must be fulfilled, otherwise it is false. Although he recognizes the rationalist criterion of deducing true statements from self-evident and necessary premises (axioms), he recognizes that the criterion of

truth can be anything as he writes, "A criterion of truth can be a moral norm, a scientific law, a necessary truth, a prophet's postulate, some consensus opinion or will of a military dictator, etc, etc." (Oruka 1975, 183). This leads him to pluralism, as he concludes that there are many truths and not one truth.[5]

Secondly, African philosophers have attempted to develop the philosophy of the ordinary people through the study of language use and meaning. In his study of the concept of truth, Wiredu uses a comparative approach between Akan terms and English words. He departs from a consideration of the concept of truth by providing a translation in the Akan language. In ordinary language, people use the term '*nokware*' to represent truth. On the other hand the term '*nkontompo'* represents lies. The term *nokware*, literarily translates into a combination of two words, namely, *ano* (mouth) and *koro* (one). Truth is, therefore, considered as having one voice.

In his comparative study, he argues that *nokware* is a cognitive context it translates as the English word truthfulness. This linguistic approach similar to Tempels' analysis of Luba terms in relation to English words, is further carried forward in Kwasi Wiredu's consideration of other terms that are translated by the term truth. Commenting on these other terms he writes,

> There are a couple of words in Akan which have the same significance as *nokware.* There are *ampa* and *ewom*. *Ampa* implies truth but it has the same excess of meaning over 'truth' that 'truthfulness' has. The word is a unification of phrase *eye asem pa,* literally 'it is a good piece of discourse'. *Ewom* literally means 'it is in it' (Kwasi Wiredu 1985, 177).

Apart from this translation of terms from Akan to English and vice versa, Kwasi Wiredu argues that the African understanding of truth offers a *moral interpretation of the meaning of truth* rather than only a cognitive interpretation as it is the case with the classical conception of truth. Among his reasons supporting the Akan focus on morality in the definition of truth, he argues that the moral concept of truth presupposes the cognitive concept of truth.

The other reasons provided by him are very weak, and do not necessarily provide adequate support for this moral concept of truth. For instance, he argues that this is a consequence of the fact that the Akan society is moral. It is not clear what it means to say that a society is moral. In fact if this means that this society is founded on morality, there is no reason why other societies may be excluded from the category of 'moral society', hence having their own moral concept of truth.

Kwasi Wiredu also contends that the notion of truth is ambiguous (1985). It is quite worrying that he ignores the effort done by philosophers such as Alfred Tarski who to an extent provided a materially and formally adequate notion of truth.

While the moral interpretation of truth seems to be an original aspect of his philosophy of truth among the Akan people, his attempts to show that the objectivist concept of truth is incorrect, leaves a lot to be desired. He argued that truth is represented by 'it is so'. According to him, the concept of truth is represented by "the phrase *nea ete saa,* a proposition which is so." He argues that while English has two words 'is true' and 'fact', the Akan uses the same concept for both true and fact, that

[5] See also (Oruka 1988).

is, *nea ete saa*. This consideration of terms misrepresents the logical concept of truth as he writes,

> The linguistic contrasts have some very interesting consequences for the theory of truth. Consider the correspondence theory of truth. This is supposed to assert something like this: '"p" is true' means '"p" corresponds to a fact'. What does this come to in Akan? Simply that '"p" *te saa*' which in truth is nothing more than saying that '"p" *te saa*' means '"p" *te saa*'.

Kwasi Wiredu argues that the Akan conception of truth in this sense is tautological since it is tantamount to *p* is *p*. Similarly, the classical notion of truth as correspondence to the facts, when formalized in natural languages, it may seem tautological.

He further argues that translating Tarski's 'Snow is white' is true if and only if 'Snow is white' becomes trivial when translated in Akan as it becomes, '"snow is white" is as things are *if and only if* snow is white'.

Reading these ideas in line with his earlier adherence to fallibilism, one may be attempted to conclude that Wiredu had a lot of biases with the objectivist concept of truth, thus, he deliberately made it irrelevant in the African setting.

In Malawi, Kaphagawani ([1998] 2000, 240–241) in "Themes in a Chewa Epistemology," attempted developing the Chewa notion of truth building on the ordinary use of language. It is unfortunate that he didn't adequately present this notion.[6]

6.3 Chewa Logical Concept of Truth

The Chewa logical concept of truth may be developed by primarily focusing on a comparative study of language. Similar to the development in the study of Akan concept of truth, I will start from a comparative conceptual analysis of the English term 'true' and its Chewa equivalent (translation). The term true is translated by two different terms, namely, '*choona*' and '*chilungamo*'.

1. The term *choona* is a combination of "*cho*", which literarily means "that", and "*ona*" meaning see. Combining the two words leads to the idea that *cho[w]ona* (some will say *choona* and others *chowona*), may be translated as *that which is seen*. Sometimes the word *zoona* is also utilized to mean that (the 'that' is plural), what is said is true.[7] The term *zoona* is most probably utilized in line with 'what is said' by a particular person. For instance, in the statement, *akunena zowona,* translated as, he/she is saying the truth, because of 'see', perception plays a fundamental role.

Truth in this context is normally captured by the word *chowona-di* (*chowonadi*). The *-di* added at the end, is generally utilised in the Chichewa language to show emphasis. This is often utilised to represent necessary truth or verified truth which cannot be doubted.

[6]Some of his ideas will be incorporated in my development below.

[7]The opposite of truth is *zonama* or zabodza.

Apart from the above understanding of the ordinary people, the online Oxford Dictionary by Steve Paas indicates that true is,

-onadi (e.g. *zinthu zowonadi*); it is a true story =*ndinkhani yoonadi*; 2. *–eni-eni*

While truth is,

Choonadi\zo-; he speaks the truth = *akunena zoonadi*; 2. The truth is = *China n'china*

Although Steve Pass is using the emphatic version with *–onadi*, normally the ordinary use of Chewa language uses this version in special cases, such as, with reference to biblical truth. For example in '*Yesu ndi njira ndi choonadi'* (Jesus is the way and the truth).

The second concept used to represent the notion of truth is the Chewa term, *chilungamo,* which means justice. This suggests that the terms justice and truth are in some respects used interchangeably in this context. In fact when the speaker utters, *Ndikufuna chilungamo chioneke*, (I want justice to be done), the speaker and the hearer understand that this term is utilized to represent 'that which is just'.

Similarly, when one utters, *Akunena chilungamo,* (He is saying the truth), it is understood that he is referring to the truth. It means that there is a relation of correspondence between what the subject is saying and the facts referred to. This implies that the term *chilungamo* can move from justice to truth, depending on the context of use. Being just in this context implies being truthful. *Chilungamo* may therefore, be translated also as truthfulness, depending on, the use.

The idea of translating *Chilungamo* with truth, may be a consequence of the conception of justice as equal measure. This implicitly means that there is correspondence between the two sides that are receiving the shares.

2. The Chewa theory of truth as perceivable correspondence between what is said and facts, and the conception of truth as justice may be investigated further in the various figurative expression. The idea of correspondence is traceable in the proverb,

- *Kumwamba ndi kumwamba, pansi ndi pansi* (The sky is the sky, down is down).

Chakanza (2000, 136) argued that this proverb represents the idea of truth among the Chewa speakers. Departing from a literal meaning of this expression, it shows that it has taken the traditional structure of the notion of truth.

- *A* is *A* (*Kumwamba ndi kumwamba*)
- B is *B* (*Pansi ndi pansi*)

This is a reflexive relation of identity whose rule is expressed in Klenk (2002, 354) as follows:

$$\frac{p}{/\therefore a = a}$$

This identity shows that a thing is what it is. It builds on the metaphysical principle of identity, which states that being is identical with itself (Leibniz 1889; Hegel [1807] 1977). The expression calls for correspondence between the subject

and its predicate by utilizing the same term/object in both sides of the equation. This type of identity calls for the tautological conception of truth (similar to 'a triangle is a three sided figure) (see Wittgenstein 1922 for a tautology).

Observation in Figurative Expressions: The aspect of observation is captured by various figurative expressions such as,

- *Kanthu umaona, chilungulira ndi nthenda* (a thing is seen (what is real is seen), nausea is a sickness).

This figurative statement suggests that what is seen can be confirmed as real (evidence). This partly echoes the philosophy of Berkley who argued that for something to be it must be perceived.[8] Failure to see properly, is represented by nausea in the expression, and it is considered as a sickness. This is equivalent to falsity. Truth, therefore, requires a perceived correspondence between what is said and what is a fact. The expression further means that it is important to avoid hasty conclusions that *x* is seen to be the case. This can be explained by the fact that, the Chewa people are aware that in some circumstances our eyes may deceive us, hence divert us from the truth.

The other expression that affirms the centrality of perception is,

- *Diso la lumbe lili m'kamwa, n'kulinga utaliwona* (you can only know that the eye of a night jar is in his mouth after you have seen in).

This proverb underlines that there are no exceptions in understanding the truth about something. Observation is central even in those cases that are beyond man's comprehension. A night jar is a very tiny living creature; it is difficult to see its different parts. Nevertheless, the proverb requires that any declarative statement about the elements of a night jar must proceed from experience (sight). Briefly, truth is only possible where correspondence to the facts is made possible by observable evidence.

An important aspect required in the pursuit for truth even in those cases that are difficult is patience. One of the proverbs calling for patience is,

- *Kuwona maso ankhono nkudekha* (seeing the eyes of a snail require a lot of patience).

For truth to come about, it is important for the members of the community to be patient in their observation. According to Chakanza (2000, 124), the proverb *kudzinga ngati mtiri, tionera mende kutha* (As quiet as a vlei rat, we will see the creek rat perishing), indicates this virtue of prudence in terms of truth. Truth, in this case, comes about with waiting/patience. This may be interpreted further as encouraging the centrality of the quality of evidence in dealing with complicated situations.

[8]Berkeley's famous expression that captures this idea of existence as determined by seeing is, *esse et percipi* (to be is to be perceived).

Prudence in observation may be further reflected in the figurative expression which states that,

- *Chidule chinagwetsa njati m'mbuna* (A short-cut made the buffalo fall into the game pit)

This confirms the idea that it is important to observe patiently, given that doing this in a hurry leads to trouble.[9] In the context of truth this leads to falsity.

Why this Insistence on Perception and Observation?

The Chewa people may primarily respond to this question by indicating that perception leads to true knowledge. One of such proverbs is,

- *Kudziwa mphafa ya buluzi n'kung'amba* (Knowing the liver of a lizard is dissecting it).

The invitation to dissect is calling for the centrality of seeing. When you dissect you see hence claim that you know. This underlines further that the idea of evidence is indispensable even in awkward situations like dissecting a lizard. This confirms that truth is hard to come about.

This proverb is suggestive of the traditional conception of knowledge as justified true belief.[10] A similar proverb that is commonly used is,

- *Ali dele nkulinga utayenda naye* (You can say that he/she is like this only after moving/walking with him/her).

It indicates that knowledge about the character of another person is only possible after experience. First-hand experience in knowing others is central in this cultural context.

First-hand observation in the context of truth is also important because it helps individuals avoid deception.[11] One of such proverbs in this regard is,

- *Kandimverere adakanena za maluwa* (The one who depends on what is heard from others, reported about the bees that gathered around some flowers).[12]

[9] Another proverb on patience: *Fisi akatola fupa sadyera pomwepo* (When a Hyena gets a bone he will not eat it right there)-refers to the importance of patience in revealing what is true.

[10] As is well known this conception of knowledge was questioned by Gittier.

[11] Another proverb on deception is, *Musamayese ndi masweswe, ndi dazi* (Do not think it is a mere rim of hair, this is baldness).

[12] The story behind this proverb is that the individual in question thought that the presence of bees on flowers meant that there was also honey. This person did not understand properly about bees and honey making process. For truth to come about, the individual needs to see by himself not just depending on the information given by others. This is indicative of the fact there is a certain degree of mistrust towards information that is given from others.

Individuals must observe on their own to avoid deception. They need to carefully take a step forward scrutinizing the information they see on their own.[13] People want to be sure that there is correspondence to reality.[14]

Perception is important because it helps individuals to have a clear understanding of the truth. This is expressed in the proverb,

- *Umanena chatsitsa dzaye kuti njobvu ityoke mnyanga* (Explain what made a fruit to fall and broke elephant's tusk).

Apart from perceiving the right facts, this expression also encourages the centrality of precision when one is presenting facts.

It must be noted that, when this proverb is uttered in a relation between the speaker and hearer, it may refer to different meanings depending on the context. For example it may refer to, 'go straight to the point', 'say the truth', 'focus on the cause', etc.

Maso ausiku adagona ndi wakhate (Night eyes, she/he slept with a leper). This shows that where perception is inadequate, the judgment is impaired. Things that should not happen begin to take place in such a situation. The use of 'leper' in this figurative expression comes against the traditional background of not allowing lepers to stay with those that were fine in the community. This was a way of stopping the spread of leprosy.

Maso aipitsa kamwa ikonza (Eyes makes something bad, but mouth correct). This shows that, although perception is important, it sometimes leads to a bad judgment.

Maso akhuta m'mimba muli njala (Eyes get satisfied while the stomach has hunger). This also shows that perception in some circumstances is subjective and cannot necessarily show the real situation of a person. This is similar to the figurative expression that states that, *Maonekedwe apusitsa* (Appearances are deceiving). This means that what one sees may sometimes be deceptive.

The other figurative expression in this context is, *Maso apatali mkango ukunga nyani* (Eyes from a far, a lion looks like a monkey).' Perception can lead to wrong judgment. For instance, a lion (a possible problem) is seen as a monkey. Another interesting expression that gives warning to subjective beauty based on perception is *Chikomekome cha nkuyu mkati muli nyerere* (A beautiful fig but inside there are ants). This shows that a person is good looking but is not good morally or in other areas. We therefore must go beyond appearance of things.

I conclude on observation by indicating that, although the Chewa people supports seeing in the context of truth, they are cautious that in some circumstances perception can be deceptive, as is expressed by,

- *Maonekedwwe aputsitsa* (appearances deceive).

[13]There is an interesting attitude in Malawi whereby individuals run towards any noise they hear so that they can see by themselves.

[14]This attitude is encouraging the fundamentality of doing research in order to come out with good results.

6.4 Formalising the Chewa Logical Concept of Truth

In the Chewa ordinary language, given a statement such as,

- *Ku Zomba kwagwa mvula yochuluka dzulo* (There was a heavy rainfall in Zomba yesterday).

The Chewa speakers say that this is true when it is observable as corresponding to reality. This correspondence is possible if the following conditions are fulfilled (Fig. 6.1):

(i) Utterance
(ii) Facts
(iii) Observation

Observation is central in the understanding of correspondence among the Chewa speakers. The idea of observation may be clearly understood departing from the literal meaning of truth among the Chewa speakers, where the word *choona*, was shown to mean 'what is seen' (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 240).

The terms utilized to represent the notion of truth in the Chewa language may be summarized as suggesting the following understanding of truth:

- A proposition *p is true* if and only if the claimed correspondence between a statement and facts is observable as such.

The relation that is claimed in this case can be perceived as is the case. The term 'observable' implies that the Chewa concept of truth requires witness or evidence *e*. This suggests that,

- The proposition *p* is true if and only if p/*e*.

This may be symbolized as:

- $p = t/e$ or
- $p = 1/e$

[note that t = true and 1 = true].

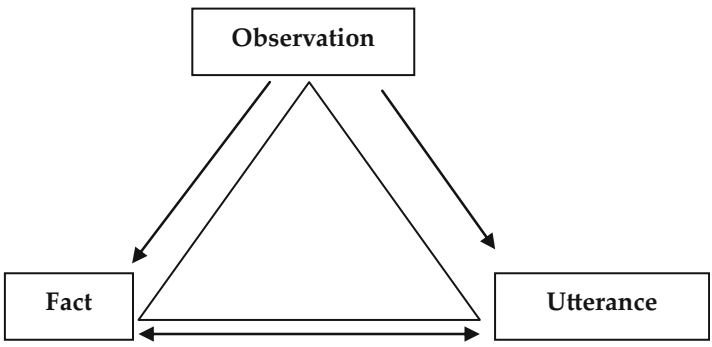

Fig. 6.1 Truth triangle

If it is false:

- $p = f/{\sim}e$ or
- $p = 0/{\sim}$e

[note that f = false and 0 = false].

There is therefore not only a relation between statements but there is an element of confirmation of that truth by human subjects.[15]

4. Truth and counterfactual approach: In the earlier chapter on Taboos and counterfactual logic, I argued that Chewa taboo utterances in some occasions are expressed as conditionals. In this section I would like to explore the idea of truth relative to such utterances. Before coming up with this development, it must be acknowledged that Robert C. Stalnaker in 1968, discussed the truth of counterfactual conditionals in relation to the possible words. He wrote that,

> The concept of possible worlds is just what we need to make this transition, since a possible world is the ontological analogue of a stock of hypothetical beliefs. The following set of truth conditions, using this notion, is a first approximation to the account that I shall propose: Consider a possible world in which *A* is true, and which otherwise differs minimally from the actual world. *"If A, then B" is true (false) just in case B is true (false) in that possible world* (Stalnaker 102).

Similarly, David Lewis (1973) discussed the idea of truth using the notion of similarity relative to possible worlds. These worlds are regarded as ways how things could have been different from the way they are. David Lewis sees these possible worlds as real entities, whereby our world is the actual world or the concrete state of affairs (1973), while others, such as Stalnaker (1968, 2003) sees them as sets of propositions, etc. For example, David Lewis argues that $p \supset q$ is true at world w:

- If there are p-worlds, then there is a p & q world closer to w than any p & ~q-world

These truths may either be universal truths (necessary truths) or contingent truths. The former deals with all statements that are true in all possible worlds and the later are true in some possible worlds and false in others. Using the necessity operator $\Box \rightarrow$ or $\Box \supset$ and the possibility operator $\Diamond \rightarrow$ or $\Diamond \supset$, these truths are indicated as follows:

The necessary true counterfactual conditional may be presented by:

- $p \Box \supset q$ is the case in all possible worlds.

The symbol $p\Box$ is utilized to indicate that it is the case (necessarily that p). The material implication indicated earlier in the presentation of the logical form of causal belief utterances, does not give a strong truth value like this counterfactual conditional, given that $p \supset q$ may as well be translated as ~$p \vee q$. The contingent truth may be presented using the possibly true conditional operator:

- $p \Diamond \supset q$ is the case in some possible world.

[15]Note that the notion above represents better the common idea of truth in this context although there are other concepts among the Chewa that represents the notion, 'truth.'

In the context of the Chewa people, the idea of truth relative to counterfactual conditionals may as well be discussed in the context of possible worlds, but firstly the ideas of possible worlds and truth needs a further re-elaboration relative to this context.

Firstly the Chewa idea of possible worlds: I argue that the Chewa people have an idea of possible worlds similar to David Lewis', but with the difference that a physically possible world requires not only the physical laws but also what may be called non-physical laws. The former are known as the laws of nature as claimed in natural science. The later are based on the belief in the spiritual world that is continually interacting with the physical world. The Chewa may therefore be seen as embracing a form of Cartesian dualism (belief in the existence of body and spirit) in the understanding of everything that exists or may exist. This gives the conclusion that the Chewa considers possible worlds as physically possible entities guided by laws of nature (which for them are physical and non-physical/spiritual). Some of the laws/principles that guide the Chewa people in understanding the laws that apply in the possible worlds relative to causation may be listed as follows:

(i) An object P at a space and time location A with a power y can cause an effect to an object M at space and time location B.
(ii) An object P at space and time location A can make N to come into being at space and time location z.
(iii) A relation A with causal property c and effect E can lead to a chain distant effects n at various space and time locations R_i, where i is an element of set I.
(iv) C causes E and C & E causes D at a distance.[16]

The Chewa idea of truth relative to possible worlds may be discussed as follows: $p \supset q =$ T/e at world w:

- If there are p-worlds, then there is a p & q world observed as closer to w than any p & ~q-world

Given that the truth is based on what is observed, the sentence of the form: $p \Box \supset q/e$ has no truth value in this context. In other words, the truth cannot be determined, given that it demands observation in all possible worlds that it is the case that p necessarily follows from q. In fact it is impossible to observe all x in all possible worlds, given that they are infinite. Probably, the idea of necessary truth may be considered in the Chewa metaphysics with respect to the *existence* of God, understood as *Namalenga*, translated as, creator, but this study did not find any counterfactual that discusses causation in relation to this.

The Chewa counterfactual statement with a possibility operator will thus be: $p \Diamond \supset q/e$, in some possible world. This indicates that it is true or false in some world, based on evidence e. Although the idea of truth can be discussed in this context, it is not interesting among the Chewa people given that counterfactuals are used for different ends in the society.

[16]Note that they symbol $\wedge$ is a conjunct joining C, E.

I conclude that the chapter has shown that the Chewa concept of truth is suggestive of a form of empiricism in the African context. In fact truth requires the aspect of observation, which may seem to arise from the demand for confirmation.

Chapter 7
The Chewa Concept of Beauty and Meaning

Abstract The chapter focuses on the concept of beauty in an African setting. It builds on the general objective and subjective conceptions of beauty, and argues that Chichewa language shows preference towards a subjective conception. The chapter argues against the contention that the moral conception of beauty is representative of African understanding of beauty.

Keywords Beauty · Objective beauty · Ordinary language approach · African philosophy · Subjective beauty

The objective of this chapter is to investigate the concept of beauty in African philosophy, specifically departing from the study of ordinary language.

The conception of beauty in the general philosophical studies is mainly influenced by two opposing views. Firstly the objective view, which holds that beauty is abstract and it exists in things. This is an objective view because beauty exists independent of a subject perceiving a particular object. This position was supported by philosophers such as Plato, Plotinus[1] and Russell.[2] Secondly, the subjective view, which contends that beauty is dependent on the perceiving subject. In this view, beauty is a consequence of individual judgment.

In African philosophy, the concept of beauty has often been approached based on two related views. Firstly, the subjective view, which as indicated above, is based on a judgment of beauty depending on subjective or communitarian perception. Secondly, the 'moral concept of beauty', whereby ethical standards that determine the characteristics of a 'good person' in the African society are underlined.

[1]This Plotinus provides an objective conception of beauty in his *Enneads*. Beauty is the communion of things with the Ideal-Form. According to him, beauty is instantiated where the perfect pattern and form (Ideal-Form) has entered, which is then mastered by reason. Everything that is outside the ideal from and reason is conceived as ugly (Plotinus, [3rd Century], 1952).

[2]Aesthetics is one of the fundamental areas of philosophy in traditional thought. It started from the ancient Greek philosophy where it was linked to sensory impressions. Whatever was perceivable had an effect over an individual, and this was the main concern of aesthetics.

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The chapter will firstly, consider 'beauty' in terms of objectivity and subjectivity building on studies in theoretical philosophy. This will act as a background for a further discussion of beauty in the African context. Secondly, some conceptions of beauty in African philosophy will be presented, where subjective and moral notions of beauty will be discussed. I will question a moral conception of beauty as a consequence of misrepresentation of the meaning and relation between 'beauty' and 'good'. Thirdly, the chapter will offer a subjective concept of beauty based on a reflection on Chewa ordinary language use.

7.1 Subjective or Objective Concept of Beauty?

(A). The objective theory of beauty as it appears in Plato and Russell confers the understanding that beauty is a universal. I define a universal as what is predicated of things. For example 'white' may be predicated of a shirt in "This shirt has a white color." Similarly, 'beauty' is predicated of many things. The belief in the existence of such universals constitutes what is known as metaphysical realism.

Plato's conception of beauty may be conceived departing from his theory of ideas (idea = *eidos*) or forms (form = *morphe*). A form may be understood as a universal, which is manifested or is instantiated in different objects. For example, beauty is a universal which is predicated of things such as, a girl (beautiful girl), land (beautiful land) and car (beautiful car). Commenting on this instantiation of forms, such as beauty, Plato wrote,

> That since beauty and ugliness are opposite, they are two things; and consequently each of them is one. The same hold of justice and injustice, good and bad, and all the essentential Forms: each in itself is one; but they manifest themselves in a great variety of combinations, with actions, with material things, and with one another, and so each seems to be many (Plato, Republic, 476).

The citation affirms that forms are things, and they manifest in things such as actions, material things, etc. It is this multiplicity of manifestation that makes a universal to appear many, although in true sense it is one, with different modes of being.

Plato explores the 'nature of beauty' in itself, in comparison with the 'apparent beauty'. 'Beauty in itself' (beauty *qua* beauty), is objective beauty which does not depend on subjective belief but on beauty itself. According to him, lovers of sounds, sights, etc., will focus on what appears, yet a philosopher will look for beauty in itself. The conception of beauty limited on what appears, cannot lead to true knowledge, but to a confusion between what is real (beauty in itself) and what appears.

> Now if a man believes in the existence of beautiful things, but not of Beauty itself, and cannot follow a guide who would lead him to a knowledge of it, is he not living in a dream? Consider: does dreaming, whether one is awake or asleep, consist in mistaking a semblance for the reality it resembles? (Republic 476, 212)

Through the experience of beauty in different things, one may get access into 'beauty in its nature' (beauty in itself). According to Plato, this beauty is described in the following terms, "it ever is and neither comes to be nor perishes, nor has it growth nor diminution" (Plato, Symposium, 211a). He continues affirming the objective nature of beauty by indicating that, this is not perspectival beauty, which may appear beautiful in one aspect and then ugly in the other. It is thus beyond the perceiving subject and time.

Plato's conception of objective beauty is summarized in the followed passage,

> [b]ut it exists in itself alone by itself, single in nature forever, while all other things are beautiful by sharing in that in such manner that though the rest come to be and perish, that comes to be neither in greater degree nor less and is not at all affected (Plato, Symposium, 211b).

It may be concluded from the above discussion that, (a) beauty is real and exists independent of our minds, (b) beauty is instantiated in objects, (c) that our knowledge of beauty is dependent on reason.[3]

Plato's objective concept of beauty was developed further by Russell (1967). In fact a form such as 'beauty' is viewed in Russell as a universal. A universal according to him, is a predicate or a relation. It exists independent of the mind, by subsisting or having being. For instance the relation, *x* is north of *y*. Being 'north of' subsists in reality. In fact we cannot say that being north of exists only in the mind. It subsists somewhere, although it does not exist in space and time.

The understanding that 'being' subsists may be viewed based on Russell's consideration of the relation between *being* and *existence.* Accordingly, universals have being as opposed to existence. They are not in space and time. The idea of existence instead refers to, that which is in space and time.

The world of universals is that of being. Being in the context of Russell, is unchangeable, rigid, and exact. It is delightful to mathematician, logician, metaphysician and all those who love perfection than life (Russell 1948, 1967).[4] It is not for those that trust their senses.

2. The subjective theory of beauty as it appears in philosophers such as, Hume and Kant, promotes the understanding that a human subject is fundamental in the judgment of beauty. Hume in his *Of Standard and Taste of Beauty*, builds this

[3]Note that in different writings such as, *Cratlylus, Paedo, Timaeus* and others, Plato will discuss beauty as a form. For example, in *Cratlylus*, Plato develops a dialogue between Socrates and *Cratlylus* where the form of beauty is discussed in a number of sections. The idea is to affirm the existence of the absolute/eternal idea, or form of beauty which is then instantiated in the particulars. Socrates asks an important question in *Cratlylus* 439c/d, "Consider, my worthy *Cratylus*, a question about which I often dream. Shall we assert that there is any absolute beauty, or good, or any other absolute existence, Or not".

[4]I will not develop further Russell's ideas because he acknowledges that Plato substantially solved the problem of universals, "Plato's 'theory of ideas' is an attempt to solve this very problem, and in my opinion it is one of the most successful attempts hitherto made. The theory to be advocated in what follows largely Plato is's, with merely such modifications as time has shown to be necessary (Russell 1967).

subjective theory by acknowledging that there are different perspectives of taste, such as, taste of beauty. For example commenting on the plurality of tastes, Hume (Hume [1757] 1910, 215) writes,

> As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless inquirer; so will it be found, on examination, to be still greater in reality than in appearance? The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same.

It is important to note that the mention of differences in the sentiments of men towards beauty and deformity, follows Hume's desire to underline that human perception on things is different. The fact that there are differences, does not allow for a comparison between wrong sentiments. In fact, some individual may pass judgment on a person *x* as beautiful, while another may judge the same as ugly. One of the reasons for this is captured by Hume's expression, "On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object."

Although individuals are excited by objects, Hume understands beauty as in the mind of the subject. He thus denies the possibility of building a theory of objective or real beauty.

> Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity is as fruitless an inquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter (Hume [1757] 1910, 218).

Hume denied that beauty is not a quality in 'things themselves'. He defends a subjective conception of beauty. Given that each individual perceives things from a particular perspective, Hume is suggesting that there are different perspectives of beauty. There is a relativist way of conceiving beauty such that different individuals can perceive the same object and come up with opposing judgments. Hume notes that one can perceive deformity and another person can perceive beauty. This shows that these judgments are influenced by the way that different individuals interpret information they perceive depending on different factors, such as culture and environment. (Hume [1757] 1910).

If an attempt is made to develop common principles determining beauty, there will still be difficulties given that some sentiments organs of certain individuals may still be defective. These differences in sentiments are an impediment towards the development of the idea of "perfect beauty".

The subjective view of beauty was also developed by Kant. For instance, Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* investigated the perception of beauty and the sublime in nature. His understanding of the concept of beauty is not very far from Hume, who inspired him in different areas of his philosophy. He holds a subjective concept of beauty. Referring to judgment of taste, he denies that this is a judgment of cognition and affirms that it is a consequence of subjective experience. He argued that the reference of representations of pleasure and pain, which are part of taste, cannot be

the signified object, but the feeling in the perceiving subject (Kant [1790] 1998, section 1).

> In the logical power of judgment one subsumes under concepts, but in the aesthetic power of judgment one subsumes under a relation that is merely a matter of sensation, that of the imagination and the understanding reciprocally attuned to each other represented form of the object, where the subsumption can easily be deceptive. (J, 5:291)

The concept of beauty, which falls under the aesthetic judgment is shown to depend on sensation. This qualifies any judgment in this regard as subjective.[5]

Apart from the subjective and the objective conception of beauty, a middle way can be considered through the modern theories in perspectival realism, which views perception as involving various factors. Some of these factors are expressed by the cognitivist view of science as including, the subject, the process of perception, the perceived object and other environmental factors such as light (see Giere 2003).[6]

7.2 African Philosophy and the Concept of Beauty

In African philosophy, different studies develop both subjective and moral conceptions of beauty. For example, in African Analytic tradition, one of the specific works that substantially builds on the concept of beauty among the **Yoruba** is Barry Hallen's work titled *The Good, The Bad and The Beautiful*. While he acknowledges the different forms of art and aesthetic discourse by renowned authors, he designs his work to focus on the universals, namely, good, bad and beautiful.

Using comparative analysis of language between English and Yoruba, he identifies the term *ewa* as a translation of beauty. Although in the earlier discussion the term 'beauty' as a universal was applied to different things, Hallen argues that among the Yoruba, it is mainly connected with a person. According to him, beauty is in some circumstances considered as a physical attribute of a person. In other respects beauty is considered as "good moral character" (inner beauty). He argues that physical beauty is considered as superficial as compared with inner beauty, which is generally appreciated (Hallen 2000, 115),

> But he or she may not have a [good] moral character (*ìwà*). The absence of [good] moral character (*ìwà*) will spoil his or her beauty (*ewà*). People will say he or she has beauty (*ewà*), but not character (ìwà). There are some people who are very rough [not particularly good

[5] I will not develop further the ideas of Kant given that the subjective view is substantially reflected in the presentation of Hume's ideas above.

[6] Giere's perspectival realism consists in the claim that scientists investigate and know things in a perspective (Giere 2003). Consequently, scientific theories, knowledge, etc. are all perspectival. For Giere, the term 'perspective' designates 'a way of constructing scientific models' intended at representing some aspects of the world. When constructing models, scientists utilise what he calls the general principles and the specific conditions. The general principles refer to the scientific laws (also known as empirical laws), such as Bernoulli's principle in fluid dynamics, etc.

> looking, rhetorically eloquent, or socially adept] but will have the character (*ìwà*) of a good person. Character (ìwà) and beauty (*ewà*) are mixed together (*papò*).

In this Yoruba conception of beauty, there is a mixture between personality (character) and physical beauty. Apparently, these two go together in the life of an individual. Personality is linked with following some accepted values (virtues) in the society. The essence of beauty in a person is the inner beauty, which is manifested in living the virtues. The vitues in question are both moral and intellectual virtues. Hallen chooses a moral interpretation and argues that beauty in this respect may be considered as a *moral attribute*. Hallen (2000, 116) noted that, "This notion of 'inner' beauty becomes more than metaphorical and itself takes on the character of a moral attribute."

Apart from Hallen, there are other thinkers who discussed the concept of beauty in the African context (Gelfand 1973). Gelfand carried out a conceptual analysis of the word beauty among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. For example, in the work titled *The Genuine Shona* (1973), the word for beauty among the Shona is either *Kunaka* or *Runako*. The word *Kunaka* is applied to human beings, animals and other things. The Shona according to Gelfand use *Munhu akanaka* meaning a beautiful person, but this may refer to both physical appearance and character of that person.

The idea of beauty related to physical appearance is similar to Hallen's definition of beauty among the Yoruba as a physical attribute, while character of a person to the moral conception. A morally good person (*munhu chaiye*) is according to Gelfand, a beautiful person. This explains why he uses *munhu chaiye* to refer to beauty. This beautiful individual lives the virtues that are recommended by the Shona society, such as solidarity, truthfulness (honesty), self-discipline, patience, pity, love and hard-work (Gelfand 1982).

Before conceptualizing the Chewa concept of beauty, I would like to clarify a commonly shared thesis that there is a moral concept of beauty, as inappropriate for such an understanding. While I am not educated in the Yoruba and Shona languages, I still find problematic the contention that there is a moral concept of beauty in African philosophy. This is apparently a consequence of an obvious and common misrepresentation of the relation between two universals, that is, 'beauty' and 'good'.

Why is a moral connotation of beauty problematic? Imagine we are analysing English language and we have the term 'good' in two different statements:

(1) John is a good person
(2) John is a good-looking person

In (1) good is predicated of the subject John with reference to his character. The discourse that can follow from this will be about, 'what makes a person good'. The society in this case will play an important role in determining what qualifies one as good.

In one scenario, one can be good because he is obedient to the community. Unfortunately, John will be obedient even in executing some of the traditions that are not morally good.[7]

In a second scenario, the society can agree that 'John is a good man', means that he is *virtuous*. The community can further determine what type of virtues are fundamental in qualifying a person as good. It must be underlined that virtues here imply both moral and intellectual virtues. If focus is moral, then we could talk about a morally good person. If the content is intellectual, then intellectually good person. If focus is the society, then socially good person. In both scenarios, it may be realized that 'good' is instantiated in different contexts.

If (1) is reduced to,

(3) 'John is good'

There are more problems with regards context of interpretation. Interestingly, I doubt if this modification will raise in one's mind that the referent is 'John's beauty'. However this will require a context. For instance the context can be football game, Chess game, farming, mathematics, etc.

Based on this consideration, I think that the proper discourse in Chichewa language or African philosophy is not 'good person' is a beautiful individual, but probably that the universal 'good' is highly regarded as compared to 'beauty'. When 'goodness' is there, and beauty is not there (as determined by a society), the requirement for beauty loses its value. Similarly, when beauty is there and 'goodness' is not there, the value of the interested individual is questioned.

In (2), interest is not moral but the instantiation of 'good' in the context of beauty. This is qualified by the introduction of 'looking' (perception) as noted earlier. Reference here is beauty in terms of physical appearance. Similarly, being good looking (beauty) is inferior to being a good person (morally and intellectually).

7.3 Chewa Conceptualization of Beauty

The Chewa people translate beauty with *kukongola*, which may as well be applied to a number of things. For example, *munthu wokongola*, refers to a beautiful person. *Galimoto yokongola* refers to a beautiful car. This concept has no moral connotation, as it refers to physical appearance. The opposite of *kukongola* is *kunyansa* (ugly), which is rarely attributed to a person.

Apart from conceiving beauty as *kukongola,* the term *-bwino* may in some contexts be used as beauty. For instance, the idea of beauty may be seen in the

[7]For example, in some of the tribes in Malawi, there was a bad practice of initiating young girls before 18 years through having sex with a matured man over 18 years. Imagine that John is 40 years old, he can be engaged in the practice of initiating young girls under 18. All the same, John will be regarded as a morally good man in this society.

expression, *Chinthu chowoneka bwino* (A good looking thing). When the idea of 'looking' (perception) is removed in this expression, then the meaning of the expression changes from a beautiful thing to a good thing (*Chinthu chabwino*). The removal of the element of perception creates a multiplicity of meanings, which then necessitates the importance of context, meaning, speaker, hearer and intention. For instance, if one says, *x* ndi *chinthu chabwino,* this may mean a useful/helpful thing, a good looking thing, etc.

It is the concept *–bwino* that creates further issues on how to interpret beauty in the Chewa context. When the reference is a person, *munthu wooneka bwino* means that the person is beautiful. This is the same as the expression *munthu wokongola*.

On the contrary, *munthu wabwino* means a good person and not a beautiful person. Sometimes it is said *munthu wa mtima wabwino* (a good hearted person).

This suggests that, when we say *munthu wabwino,* the context of meaning is fixed as a virtuous person. This goodness is not limited to moral goodness, but it extends to living both moral and intellectual virtues. *Munthu wabwino* means a virtuous man or a person of integrity. The assumption is that in this person there is both moral and intellectual completeness, given that he/she is living different virtues. For example, the person is, punctual during communal meetings, honest, friendly, supportive, etc.

Other concepts that are used for a beautiful person include: *Chiphadzuwa* (this means, 'what stops the sun from shinning'), *Nyenyezi* (star) and *Duwa* (flower). Some terms that are used as the opposite of beauty include, *Mkhwangwa* (axe) and *Mdagwi* (very ugly).

It may be concluded from the above figurative expressions that a Chewa concept of beauty is subjective. Firstly, the notion of observation plays a fundamental role.[8] The link between beauty and perception leads to both individual and social or cultural perspective of beauty. The former is difficult to discuss because there are a multiplicity of tastes that people have. The common English saying that 'beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder' perfectly summarizes this multiplicity of tastes and judgments.

Social or cultural perspective of beauty builds on how an influential group of individuals determine the meaning of beauty in a particular context. This perspective is then supported by most of the members of a society, as it sets standards of what is perceived as beautiful in a particular context. For example, societies keep changing on the instantiation of beauty in a woman. In the past, woman with big buttocks and with a big body structure was considered as maximum beauty, in Malawi and other parts of the world. This changed over the years when a slim woman became a measure of a woman's beauty in some societies. These are mere communal perceptions shared by some people, and cannot be generalized.

In the traditional Malawian society, beauty of a woman was made possible through making some body cuts (*mphini*) on the face and other parts. Apart from this practice, some tribes in Malawi such as the Lomwe, used to make a hole on the nose of a young girl, believing that, that practice was making her look more beautiful according to their standards.

[8]Note that the idea of observation/perception has already been discussed in Chap. 6.

Social perception of beauty in Malawi has further resorted to the understanding that physical beauty is important to *women and not men*. This gives pressure to women to adhere to the social perception of beauty in a particular area. On the contrary, the society perceives that a man must be ugly, as is expressed by the Chewa expression, *Mamuna azinyansa* (a man must be ugly). This makes men to be exempted from trying their best to transform their bodies and look beautiful. A man who is highly concerned with his beauty is considered as a woman. This seems to suggest that those who are concerned with beauty are like women-hence they are weak (and not men)[9]. The idea of making a subject beautiful by working on his/her body confirms that social element of beauty is subjective and focuses on *physical character/appearance.*

Given that beauty is determined by the perception of a particular group for a given purpose, leads to the understanding that beauty as a creation of the community is relative. This suggests exploring the idea of 'social perception of beauty' in terms of functional beauty. For example in discussing functional element[10] of art and beauty (Bitek 1986) in the study of aesthetics of the Acholi people gives an idea of functional beauty in relation to a woman, where the physical aspects of a beautiful woman are indicated. This woman has rounded buttocks and stiff and big breasts, has a reasonably big body. The perception is influenced by the belief that such a woman is fertile, hence can produce more children. This satisfies the desire for children which is present in different African cultures. These characteristics were also appreciated in Malawi mainly before 2000. Nevertheless all this shows a functional understanding of the conception of beauty.

7.4 Conclusion

In the above studies on language use done on the Yoruba, Shona and Chewa, there is a subjective conception of 'beauty'. This is due to the understanding that it is relative to a group of people who judge certain appearance or character as beautiful.

Looking at the conceptualization of beauty in the three languages above, Yoruba, Shona and Chewa, it may be argued that a theory of beauty has to consider three related aspects, that is, (a) subjectivity, (b) observation and (c) relativism. Subjectivity follows from the understanding that the central idea in these languages is the subject who determines the meaning of beauty. Perception comes from the understanding that beauty is a consequence of the process of perception. Thirdly, beauty is relative to individual perception and/or social perception.

[9]The issue of conceptualization of women and men was earlier discussed in Chap. 4.

[10](Gayle 1972) offers an interesting ground for the discussion of the idea of beauty although the characteristics suggested are connected with the idea of art in general. These three characteristics include the *functional aspect*, *collective aspect*, and *committing* aspect.

Part III
African Communitarianism (Ubuntu) vs African Individualism through Language

Chapter 8
Conceptual Analysis of Ubuntu/Umunthu and Meaning

Abstract The chapter questions the meaning of the concept *ubuntu/umunthu,* in African idealism. There are two idealist conceptions of this concept, namely, the radical communitarian conception which underlines communal relationships, and Ramose's conception of ubuntu as being becoming. In both versions of idealism the community relations are fundamental in understanding this concept. The chapter argues that this idealism provides problematic ontological and ethical conceptions that are grounded on the idea of 'community'. Through the study of language, the chapter shows the loop holes in these developments, and suggests a comprehensive conception of ubuntu, that is based on virtue theory (moral and intellectual virtues, community-oriented and individual-oriented virtues).

Keywords Ubuntu · Communitarianism · Ordinary language approach · African philosophy · Virtue theory · Universal.

Post-colonial African philosophy as practiced in the Southern part of Africa (such as Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa) created an ideological system known as ubuntu. Like any other ideology, ubuntu is claimed as a way of thinking and life of the *Bantu* people.[1] Different philosophers hold dissenting views as to the meaning of this concept. A group represented by Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) is considered as anti-ubuntu, while another group represented by Metz (2014a, b) and Ramose is pro-ubuntu. Anti-ubuntu philosophers view it as inadequate and call for its abolishment in the Southern Africa. Pro-ubuntu supports this ideology as adequate, and encourage its application in different fields.

Just as analytic philosophy has shown that idealism is mainly caused by misuse of language and meaning, I argue that ubuntu is an African version of idealism. This idealism was elaborated mainly as an ontological theory as well as moral-political theory. Its main focus is the communitarian nature of human beings.

[1]This work is using the word 'Bantu' to represent a group of people in the southern region of Africa (natives).

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Below, I will discuss ubuntu relative to the problem of meaning. I will indicate that the meaning of this concept was distorted by metaphysical and ethical preconceived views in most of the communitarian ideologists. This will be followed by a study of ubuntu through the ordinary use of language. I will discuss how people are using words and sentences, and build the lexical meaning, sentence meaning and figurative meaning.

8.1 Ubuntu Idealism and Meaning

By ubuntu idealism, I refer to the thesis that a Bantu individual is communitarian in his/her way of thinking and life in a society. When one looks at the communal dimension of African society, it seems that this thesis is undeniable. In fact, one sees unity in different situations, such as, during funerals, weddings and community building activities. Some parts of language such as proverbs and metaphors, seem to confirm further the unity that is seen in different ceremonies. Most of the African traditional socio-political systems apparently function under a strong collective spirit. The centrality of social capital in most of these functions unsurprisingly encourages a dogmatic conclusion that the Bantu people are communitarian in nature.

In its early development, ubuntu idealism was formulated based on two main theses, the ontological thesis and the ethical thesis.

1. The ontological thesis of ubuntu may be traced in the idealism of Desmond Tutu (1999). In his discussion of this concept, Desmond Tutu argued that,

> In Africa we have a word, ubuntu, which is difficult to render in Western languages. It speaks about the essence of being human: that my humanity is caught up in your humanity because we say a person is a person through other persons (Tutu 1999: ix).

The passage suggests the ontological foundation of ubuntu. As is well known, the term 'ontological' comes from 'ontology', a Greek concept, which means the study/science (*logos*) of being (*ontos*). It indicates that the concept 'ubuntu' refers to human essence,[2] defined in terms of togetherness ('others'). Desmond Tutu is, therefore, arguing that one's self-consciousness as a human subject is made possible through others.

Desmond Tutu's ontological assumption may be interpreted based on Hegel-Marxian conception of self-awareness and the requirement of relationships. His point in the citation above is not very far from Western idealism, mainly Hegel's idealism, which emphasizes the importance of the "other" for self-awareness to take place. The centrality of relations in Hegel's ontology is mainly exemplified in his

[2]Essence in Aristotle is described in the following passage, "First let us make some logical remarks about it. The essence of a thing is what the thing is said to be in its own right. For being you is not the same as being a musician, since you are not a musician in your own right; hence your essence is what you are in your own right." (Aristotle, Metaphysics 1029b: 15).

slave-master relation. A slave is capable of achieving self-awareness because he regards the master as the other needed for his/her self-consciousness (Hegel [1807] 1977).

On the contrary, the master ignores the slave as the other but considers him/her as an object, hence fails to achieve self-consciousness in the world. In fact, the conception that "we say a person is a person through other persons," is suggesting self-awareness similar to slave-master relationship.

The centrality of self-awareness through others in Desmond Tutu, becomes very close to Hegelian requirement of the other, mainly in the further interpretation of Hegel's idealism by Marx and Engel's (see also Marx and Engels 1939). In their attempt to build a class-less society where the other is recognized as such, they emphasized the centrality of the community, where every individual is equally important.

In clarifying further his idealism, Desmond Tutu argues that, "We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong.'" This is meant to further confirm the understanding that the essence of a person is granted through the community. It is belonging that qualifies a person as such, and not reason as represented by the Cartesian expression 'I think therefore I am'. This contraposition between belonging and thinking (reason) brings forth to life the Aristotelian contrast between conceiving 'man as a social animal' on one hand, and 'man as a rational animal on the other.'

Nevertheless, the comparison above leads to serious consequences.

Firstly, the comparison attributes rationality to the Westerners and deny it to the Africans (I think therefore I am). Similarly, it attributes sociality to the Africans and deny it to the Westerners (to be African is to be with others).

Secondly, the comparison provides a wrong context for comparing and contrasting philosophies, given that 'I think therefore I am' is in the context of epistemology (Descartes wanted to find a solid foundation of knowledge), while the 'I am human because I belong' is suggested as an ontological expression (essence). I argue that these two expressions are incomparable. One wonders why the reflections in epistemology and ontology are used as determinants of social identity of the Westerners and Africans.

It is clear that the idealism of Desmond Tutu, is influenced by the general dogmatic trends present in philosophers such as Tempels (1959) and Mbiti (1969:108–109). In fact both think that Africans are communitarian while Westerners are individualistic.

Endorsing this idealism, Metz (2007, 323) argued that ubuntu "means humanness, and it often figures into the maxim that a person is a person through other persons". Similarly, the idealists such as Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005, 2012) who subscribe to a Malawian version of ubuntu (umunthu) have defended the ontological thesis that to be is to be communitarian.

2. The ethical thesis regards the conception that ubuntu is a form of virtue moral theory, which underlines communitarian virtues. Desmond Tutu's idealism suggests this ethical theory as is reflected in the following passage,

> We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong.' I participate, I share . . . Harmony, friendliness, and communities are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague (Tutu 1999: 35).

The passage sets teleological ethics, designed to lead individuals towards the greatest good-*sumum bonum*, which is social harmony. This sets a pace to the understanding that a person with ubuntu is the one that cherishes the common good. Such an individual lives communitarian virtues such as solidarity and friendliness in his daily life.

Supporting Desmond Tutu's idealism, Metz and Gaie (2010, 273–290) contend that ubuntu as an ethical theory focuses on communitarian virtues while the Aristotelian virtue ethics builds on both community and individual virtues. In short, ubuntu is conceived as humanism from an African perspective.

Similarly, Malawi's idealism of Mfutso-Bengo (2016), Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005, 2012) accepts the understanding that ubuntu denotes the Sub-Saharan communitarian virtue theory (Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005, 2012).[3]

3. The conceptualization of ubuntu above, apparently ignored the ordinary language approach to meaning, and just depended on ideological interpretations of the African people. There is a strong sense of pan-Africanism,[4] which explains the centrality of building the African identity and community. In fact on its own, communitarianism is not only African, as it is practiced in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, it serves the purpose of uniting Africans under the same community banner.

Different academics such as Kochalumchuvattil (2010) have been concerned with ubuntu communitarian dogmatism. For instance in the Article, "The Crisis of Identity in Africa: a call for subjectivity," Kochalumchuvattil (2010: 108) writes,

> The first section of this article points to the African crisis in identity and considers the role of the *Ubuntu* philosophy in the recovery of the African identity and self-respect while at the same time arguing that it is insufficient in itself to consistently bring about the growth of freedom and responsibility that are the marks of true personhood.

It is argued that this lack of individuation is at the root of the African crisis of identity and the failure of the continent to sufficiently address its problems. The

[3] Although there are different concepts in African languages representing the Chewa term *umunthu*, such as *umuntu* in Zulu, *ubuntu* in Xhosa and Ndebele and *unhu* in Shona, they all represent a state of living communitarian values such as solidarity.

[4] Pan-Africanism in African philosophy is often attributed to various African early leaders, who led their nations towards independence. Some of the most important thinkers include Julius Nyerere (Ujaama), Senghor (renaissance) and Kaunda (Humanism). At the centre of their ideas is the possibility of building a union of Africans towards the liberation and promotion of the black race. At first this idea was quite general, as individuals focused on all black people in Africa regardless of their specific geographical position. Later this changed, given that Pan-Africanism was localized into nationalism. This made the idea of black nation to become fundamental.

prevalence of communitarianism in African society is identified as the main barrier to the process of subjective becoming.

In another article, "The End of Ubuntu", Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) argued that ubuntu as a way of life and as an ethical theory has reached its end. This is because some elites in South Africa misuse this idealism for their person interests.

While I partly agree with various critiques of ubuntu ideology, I emphasize that the communitarian interpretation of this concept has misrepresented the Sub-Saharan Africa's ethical/political theory by crippling any form of individualistic interpretation of this philosophy.

Instead of directly disputing communitarian dogmatism, I would like to interrogate the semantics of ubuntu as a concept and demonstrate that there exists multifaceted and complex meanings of this concept, which accommodate both individualist and communitarian interpretations. It is through a consideration of this multifaceted meanings that ubuntu ideology may adequately and meaningfully address some African problems.

An interrogation of this concept framed in semantics qualifies this chapter as based on analytic method, which focuses on doing philosophy through the analysis of language. I am aware that in the current studies on ubuntu ethical theory (such as, Metz 2007), has attempted to use the analytic framework, but he was criticized by different thinkers such as Romose (2007) and Futter (2015). One of their criticisms is that Metz's "methodology does not properly delineate the conceptual role of *Ubuntu* in African moral language" (Futter 2015: 1).

Although I may differ with Metz on how to apply analytic method, I fully agree and argue that the dogmatic version of ubuntu is in fact biased properly because of lacking an adequate consideration of language and how it is used. I further indicate that the very root of ubuntu dogmatism is due to the misuse of logic and language.[5] All this will demonstrate that the dogmatic foundation of ubuntu on the community is inadequate[6] and requires correction.

In interrogating the semantics of this concept, the content below is developed in three sections. Section 8.2 studies ubuntu by focusing on the 'Word Meaning'; Sect. 8.3 Sentence/Utterance Meaning and Sect. 8.4 on Figurative Utterance Meaning.

[5]See also Wittgenstein (1922: 9).

[6]Different philosophers have argued that ubuntu is inadequate such as, the first section of this article points to the African crisis in identity and considers the role of the ubuntu philosophy in its recovery while at the same time arguing that it is insufficient in itself to consistently bring about the growth of freedom and responsibility that are the marks of true personhood. It is argued that this lack of individuation is at the root of the African crisis in identity and in the failure of the continent to sufficiently address its problems. The prevalence of communitarianism in African society is identified as the main barrier to the process of subjective becoming.

Throughout this development the paper will unveil and correct distortions of meaning, which are responsible for ubuntu dogmatic slumber.[7]

8.2 *Umunthu* Word/Lexical Meaning

In use-theoretical framework understanding the meaning of the word umunthu is responding to the question, what are the Bantu speakers of Chichewa language doing when they are using this word?

Primarily the speakers of this language are manipulating what Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* calls signs (1922, 3.32) in order to come up with symbols, which are a mode of signification. Signs may be written letters/words or their respective sound (Wittgenstein 1952, 26). For instance, they are using a vowel such as *u* representing *u-sound* and the consonant *m* the *m-sound* to create signs. The word umunthu is therefore primarily a sign having three parts *–u, -mu* and *-nthu*. Meaning in this context becomes possible when these signs become symbols that denote a specific reality. Below I will focus on these three parts *-u, -mu, -nthu,* and their various combinations, *mu+nthu* (*munthu*) and *u+mu+nthu*).

In his study on *–ntu* in Kinyarwanda language, which is the equivalent of *-nthu* in Chichewa language, Kagame (1976) argued that *-ntu/-nthu* is a symbol which refers to being in general. [8] This implies that when the Chichewa language speakers are using *-nthu,* they are referring to being in general. I will call the symbol *-nthu* as an abstract lexeme. I prefer to use 'abstract lexeme' because for *-nthu* to be considered as a mode of signification requires going beyond how people are using it, and refer to its theoretical extension.

Using the symbol *-nthu* as denoting being in general, the speakers of Chichewa language add affixes (prefixes and suffixes) such as *mu-, a-,* and *ka-* to *-nthu,* turning it into classes of symbols. For example the prefix *chi-* is added to *-nthu* formulating the sign *chinthu,* which becomes a symbol denoting either a thing whose name is not known or it may as well mean a big thing. The mode of signification of the symbol *chinthu* is determined by its meaning in a particular proposition. Similarly, a prefix *ka-* when added to *-nthu*, becomes *kanthu,* which means either a small thing or a non-classified thing. This suggests that prefixes such as *chi-* and *ka-* when placed before *-nthu* are representative of a category of things. Similarly, *mu-* used as a prefix of *-nthu* represents a specific category of things (in this case humans).

In Chichewa language, the word *munthu* is used as a singular. Based on this use, it therefore refers to an individual human being (The plural for this term is achieved

[7] In my development I will focus more on the Chichewa notion *umunthu,* which is a native language which I use on daily basis.

[8] Kagame builds in metaphysics and develops four categories of being that are developed on *ntu*. *Muntu* is the first category for human beings, *kintu* (thing), *hantu* (place and time) and *kantu* (modality).

through adding letter "*a*" to *–nthu* creating a word *anthu* which means human beings).

Secondly, when speakers of Chichewa language are using the sign *munthu*, they are referring to multifaceted symbols which determine a diversity of meanings. This idea is similar to Wittgenstein (1922, 3.323) who gave an example of the sign Green representing different symbols as in the following proposition: 'Green is green'. In this case Green may either refer to a name or a quality (green as a universal).

Similarly, the sign *munthu* may refer to different meanings. For instance, implicitly the Chichewa Dictionary attributes various symbols to *munthu,* which leads to the following meanings: (1) person; (2) man/woman; (3) human being; (4) you (impersonal) /one, and (5) native. The fifth definition given in the dictionary is redundant because it uses the term native to translate the word *munthu*. This is due to the fact that a person, man, woman, etc may be a native (Paas 2016). Centre for Language Studies (CLS 2000) in *Chinyanja Dictionary* gave the following lexical meaning,

> *Munthu dzi. Mu-A- (zambi. anthu) cholengedwa chamoyo chamiyendo iwiri chimene chimaganiza ndi kuyankha zanzeru kuposa zokengedwa zones (CLS 240)* (Person *noun. Mu-A-* (plural persons) a living creature with two legs, which reasons and responds rationally as compared with other animals).

The definition provides a denotational description of a human being as an individual based on creation, the physical features (legs are considered as unique), the aspect of rationality (reason) and language (communication through speech). While the extension to physical features and language may be easily understood, the idea of creation requires a dogmatic attitude constituting the belief that humans were created by God or some powers. Similarly the idea of rationality requires abstract philosophical arguments to proving that human beings are rational animals.

Thirdly the sign *munthu* in Chichewa language is used as a root where further prefixes may be added, hence leading to different symbols and related meanings. For example, adding prefix *ka-* leads to *kamunthu,* which is a symbol describing the noun *munthu* as very small (a small and unknown human being).[9] Prefix *chi-* leads to *chimunthu,* which describes further the appearance of a person as being very big. Similarly when prefix *–u* is added, a new sign is umunthu, which is a symbol describing a state of a human being.[10] As a sign which refers to different symbols, *munthu* has the following extension: (1) personhood; (2) personality; (3) humanity; (4) human character and (5) human behaviour. Meanings (1) and (2) do not have a moral connotation while (2), (3) and (5) may have a moral interpretation (Paas 2016). Humanity instead is neutral it doesn't qualify as good or bad. For example

[9] *Kamunthu* is often offensive in the traditional context given that names are fundamental and show respect to a person.

[10] Generally in this language when *-u* is put in front of a noun, it connotes a state. For example adding a *u* on the noun *chidakwa* translated as a drunkerd we have *uchidakwa,* which is a state of being and acting as drunkards. The noun *nyamata,* which may be translated as a boy when *u* is added we have *unyamata,* which is state of acting as a boy.

good personality may mean virtuous character. Behaviour can be good or bad, hence reflects morality.

Nevertheless, the fact that it is a state of being suggests that *umunthu* is a universal. If we are to follow the Platonic understanding of concepts, then it may be considered as existing independent of the mind. If considered in the Aristotelian understanding then *umunthu* exists inseparable of human subjects.

In the current academic setting, when using the term *umunthu* it may refer to the notion of integrity. This is common in ordinary language discourse in Radios and TV stations in Malawi. This new meaning departs from the adoption of integrity as one of the pillars by the current President of Malawi Peter Mutharika (2014–2019).[11] Integrity required a Chichewa language term so that it could be communicated to the common Malawians and the term *umunthu* saved the purpose.

Although the translation of *umunthu* with integrity is commonly accepted in ordinary use of language, it is contrary to the Chichewa dictionaries translation of integrity. For example Paas in *Oxford Chichewa Dictionary* (2016), translates integrity as: (1) ungwiro; (2) chilungamo, (3) they must, act with integrity = azichita zinthu mwachilungamo; kusakaikitsa; (4) Ulemu."[12]

8.3 Umunthu and Sentence Meaning

What are the Chichewa language speakers doing when they are utilizing the term *umunthu* in an utterance/sentence?

Firstly when using the term *umunthu* in an utterance/sentence, the speakers of this language are intending to transfer a specific mode of signification of this word (as discussed above). In other words, they are instantiating the meaning of this concept in both the physical and abstract world. For example, the concept *umunthu* used in an utterance *John ali ndi umunthu* (John is human) denotes the instantiation of *umunthu* in John. *Umunthu* in this case exists or is an attribute of John. In an utterance *umunthu ndi wofunikira* (humanity is important) the referent is *umunthu* as an abstract universal existing independently of any object.

Given that *umunthu* has different modes of signification as indicated above, grasping the correct semantics of an utterance requires appealing to the pragmatic theory of meaning. In this theory, meaning requires consideration of different factors such as, utterance, the speaker, hearer, context and intention (Sperber and Wilson 2002; Kayange 2014). The utterance *John ali ndi umunthu* is primarily a carrier of linguistically coded information that has particular extension (meaning). When a

[11]President Peter Mutharika indicated that Malawi will have as its pillars for development three aspects namely; patriotism, hardwork and integrity.

[12]This concept when approached from the etymological meaning it comes from the Latin word *integer,* which means whole/complete. Completeness in this sense is not only the state of being moral through the practice of moral virtues but it also concerns the state of excellence in knowledge and other practical virtues.

speaker utters this statement he has an intention, for instance, in this case he/she wants to say that he has a good behavior or good character. The hearer who understands this language is required to recognize the intention of the speaker. Recognizing the intention requires clarity in terms of context of the symbol/mode of signification in which the sign umunthu is used. For example the sentence *umunthu ndi wofunika* uttered without a clear context may mean (1) humanity is important; (2) human (good) behaviour is important or (3) human character is important. However when the same sentence is uttered in an ethics class, the hearer will immediately know that it is referring to good human conduct.

Both word and sentence meaning above, reveal that the concept of *umunthu* is very rich in the sense that it captures the completeness of an individual as it focuses on different human dimensions. For instance personhood, covers the dimension of the essence of being human. Essence in metaphysics alludes to the defining characteristic of a thing. This meaning, therefore, has an element of the definition of being. This idea of a definition requires going beyond literal meaning of this concept by articulating an ontological theory that defines the essence of being in this context.

Personality and character instead will accommodate the dimensions of differences in individuals as influenced by attitudes, environment, values, self-conception, etc.

Humanity refers to the dimension of human dignity, which is a common condition that qualifies all individuals as equally belonging to the same category.

Lastly this concept has a strong ethical extension. This means that *munthu woipa* (a bad person) is the one without *Umunthu.*

8.4 Meaning of *umunthu* from Figurative Expressions

What are intellectuals and common people doing when using figurative expressions to refer to *umunthu*?[13]

Firstly, when most of the African intellectuals and common people are utilizing some figurative expressions regarding *umunthu*, their intention is to transfer the message that African people are communitarian in nature (their life is identified with communitarian virtues) (Tutu 1999; Metz 2007; Tambulasi and Kayuni 2012). For example some of the proverbs cited by intellectuals are reflected in the following passage,

[13] *Ubuntu/Umunthu* ideology thinkers (Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005; Mfutso-Bengo 2016) often defined the concept *umunthu* departing from the meaning of some figurative expressions. Figurative language is considered as one of the main sources of African traditional philosophy (Kayange 2014; Kaphagawani [1998] 2000). The belief is that figurative expressions such as proverbs and metaphors have been orally passed on from generation to generation and they reflect genuine African culture that is not contaminated by the Western thinking.

> In Malawian tradition, *umunthu* is portrayed by the following proverbs: *Mwana wa nzako ndi wako yemwe* [*ukachenjera manja udya naye*][14] (someone's child is your child [if you are clever you will benefit from him/her]); *Ali awiri ndi anthu ali yekha chinyama* (Those that are more than one are people and he who is alone is an animal). (Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005: 149).

When the first figurative expression in the citation is corrected as above, it is suggestive of valuing the community as a place where an individual can manipulate the relationships in order to fulfil personal interests. The manipulation aspect is coming in because of the last part that says 'if you are clever you will benefit from him/her'. Probably this explains why Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005) removed the last part so that focus should be exclusively on the importance of community/one family. Apart from this infelicitous case, important for this chapter is the proverb *Ali awiri ndi anthu ali yekha ndi chinyama*.[15]

The proverb above is also presented in the form *kalikokha nkanyama ali awiri ndi anthu* (The one who is alone is an animal but those that are two are human beings). The literal meaning of this figurative expression compares two different experiences by indicating that loneliness is the nature/experience of animals while community (represented by two) is the nature of human beings. This understanding is in line with the famous Aristotelian expression that, man is a social or political animal. It is concluded from the proverb above that the essence of *munthu* is being communitarian. *Umunthu* ideology following from this use refers to a state of living communitarian values.

Secondly some individuals and intellectuals when they are using figurative expressions they are denoting *umunthu* as founded on the individual and related virtues. Unfortunately every effort to develop this view has been frustrated by various African professors, leaders and reviewers most of whom are influenced by the communitarian dogmatism (such as Mbiti 1969 and Tutu 1999). On the contrary ordinary language proves them wrong as it has many figurative and non-figurative expressions that encourage individualist interpretation.[16]

There are two basic foundations of the communitarian dogmatism noted above.

The first root is Africa's problem of identity during colonialism. In their search for identity some Africans were influenced by the doctrine of socialism/communism, which underlines a political order founded on communitarian virtues such as solidarity and collegiality (See Nyerere 1966; Kaunda 1966). Generally this group of Africans acknowledge the existence of communalism/communism in Europe and argues for a similar system in the African traditional society (of course with slight differences).

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[14] I have completed this proverb with the content in [], because the authors omitted some words.

[15] *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (A person is a person through other persons).

[16] African individualism will be discussed in the next chapter.

The second root (which is related to the first above) is the ethnophilosophical communitarian dogma mainly developed by Tempels (1959) and Mbiti (1969). As indicated earlier, this dogma builds on the idea that the essence of being African is living in a community.

8.5 Conclusion

The above discussion clearly shows that when Chichewa language speakers are using the word *umunthu* they refer to different symbols and consequently meanings. This calls for the importance of considering the context in which this concept is used. It may be used in communitarianism when an individual chooses to explain moral correctness in relation to respect of moral or intellectual communitarian virtues such as solidarity, respect, mutual trust and collegiality. On the other hand, it may be used as a source of individualism when focus is on an individual and the related virtues.

The chapter demonstrated these ideas by considering word meaning of the notion *munthu* on which the concept of *umunthu* is developed. It was argued that this concept refers to the individual. The notion of *umunthu* was shown as referring (among others) to the state of being an individual and in some circumstances to good character of a human being, etc.

The chapter indicated that *umunthu* can refer to both the state of an individual (such as living moral virtues) and a universal with independence existence.

The chapter has demonstrated further that the use of this concept in utterances reveal that it can be utilized to refer to different situations, individual character, humanity, personhood, etc.

Lastly it showed that when figurative expressions referring to umunthu are used they also accommodate the communitarian and individual interpretations. The comprehensiveness of umunthu is suggestive of the need for an all-comprehensive theory that incorporates different insights discussed above. It further indicates the importance of revising umunthu ideology so that it can effectively build African individuals, freeing them from a distorted understanding and image of themselves as exclusively communitarian.

Chapter 9
Deducing Individualism in African Society Through the Study of Language

Abstract The chapter examines traits of individualism in ordinary language use in the African thought. Although it is commonly argued that individualism is Western, the chapter shows that, individualism was practiced by some Africans even before the coming of the Western colonialists. Through the study of language in the African context, it deduces traits of individualism relative to ownership of private property, self-realisation, self-awareness, etc. The chapter confirms the philosophical hypothesis that African thought has both communitarian and individualist orientations.

Keywords Individualism · Communitarianism · Ordinary language approach · African philosophy · Identity

Different African philosophers have deduced communitarianism from proverbs, such as *kalikokha nkanyama ali awiri ndi anthu* (Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005). I would like to show that in a similar way, individualism may be deduced from proverbs and language in general. Although there is a tendency of overemphasizing communitarianism in African Philosophy, it is the intention of this chapter to indicate individualism, through the study of Chichewa language. Discussing African traditional individualism is apparently a taboo, as most of the literature encourages communalism as descriptive of this society.

The common understanding of community-oriented philosophers is mainly to give a negative approach to individualism as something that is totally discouraged in the African society. I will demonstrate that the study of language shows that it is also possible to deduce individualism from the use of language in an African setting.

I am aware of different studies in African philosophy that have attempted to build a conception of individuality such as, Kisekka (2002), Kochalumchuvattil (2010) and Kaphagawani (1998).

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9.1 Individualism

Individualism refers to a philosophical position, which underlines the centrality of an individual.

Generally, modern individualism in theoretical philosophy is associated with Descartes, who placed the 'thinking thing', at the center of all sciences (center of knowledge).[1]

In the Anglo-Saxon philosophy, individualism is connected with classical capitalism and neo-capitalism (neo-liberalism). This is a socio-economic and political system, which is founded on individual freedom and individual ownership of property.

One of the earliest contenders of this thought was Mill in his work *On Liberty,* who underlined the importance of freeing an individual from the tyranny of the society. Later developments by neo-liberal thinkers focused on reforming life of nations from socialist oriented systems to individual-focus system (such as Von-Mises 1927; von-Hayek 1944; Friedman [1972] 2002; Nozick [1974] 1999). This new system promoted a free society of individuals, where free market activities (with less government control) were encouraged.[2]

In Africa, an attempt to introduce Western form of individualism was a failure due to the various forms of nationalism's, which dominated different countries. This was an important strategy used by African politicians in uniting the citizen's in the fight against the whites (colonials). African nationalists (pan-Africanists) developed a communitarian ideology that was very difficult for the Westerners to destroy.

This effort to encourage communitarian idealism started fading away with the introduction of neoliberal policies departing from the 1980s. The political set-up of most of the African nations manifested a lot of dictatorial elements, which made people desire an alternative system. The individualist principles that came with neo-liberalism provided a better alternative. This led to the introduction of reforms that were aimed at encouraging the individual and his/her freedom, against the dominant African oligarchies.

Although against the above background one may think that individualism is Western, I believe that this is not the whole truth. In fact, while communitarianism is stressed, individualism may also be traced in the African traditional context. This shows that individualism, which has dominated different parts of Africa, is not necessarily a consequence of Western globalisation, but it is also a result of traditional individualism embedded in African philosophy. Individualism was practiced by some Africans even before the coming of the Western colonialists. Defending this position requires a study of history or language, which demonstrates traits of individualism in the African society.

In the study of the Chewa people of Malawi, Kaphagawani ([1998] 2000, 173) attempted to show the place of individualism in the African traditional thought. In

[1]This has been mentioned earlier in the discussion of *ubuntu.*

[2]I will not develop further neoliberalism (see Harvey 2008).

fact he supports the idea of communalism, but at the same time acknowledges individuality in this traditional setting. According to him, the acceptance of communalism in the African context does not imply the denial of individual *qua* individuals. He thus argues that African communalism is aware of the ontological pluralism, which is an aspect of individualism. This is affirmed as summarized in the following arguments:

(A) 'We are' implies 'prior recognition of the individuality' of those that make part of the We.
(B) 'Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole is no doubt to forget the difference between individuals on the one hand and *sets* of individuals on the other.'

'We are', which is the central focus of communalism is argued in (A) as already implying the individual. In fact it is impossible for a community to be there without individuals. In (B) the difference between individuals and sets of individuals is emphasized as the case in African communalism.

In order to support the presence of individualism, Kaphagawani appeals to some Chewa proverbs on which individuality can be traced;

> For Africans, certainly the Chewa, are aware of this important difference as exemplified by the following expressions: *Chaona mnzako chapita mawa chili paiwe* (What your neighbor has experienced is gone, tomorrow it will be your turn); *mvula ikakuona litsiro siikata* (When the rain has seen that you are dirty, it does not stop pouring); and *Wanthu ndi mchenga saundika* (Human beings are like sand out of which one cannot make a mountain). All these proverbs and expressions reflect the Chewa's cognizance of the individuality of human beings (Kaphagawani [1998] 2000, 173).

The proverb *Chaona mnzako chapita mawa chili paiwe* (What your neighbor has experienced is gone, tomorrow it will be your turn), calls for individuality in relation to individual problems. It singles out the fact that any individual can be a victim of different difficult circumstances. Although this calls for the virtue of empathy, it encourages individual recognition of the circumstances.

The proverb *Mvula ikakuona litsiro siikata* (When the rain has seen that you are dirty, it does not stop pouring), gives a literal scenario whereby rain singles out one dirty person, and keeps falling targeting him/her. This underlines that an individual can go through persistent problems.

The proverb *Wanthu ndi mchenga saundika* (Human beings are like sand out of which one cannot make a mountain), gives a very good background for the discussion of individuality. It gives an analogy between sand and human beings. One of the characteristics of sand is that it cannot be heaped as a mountain. This property of failure to heap sand together is transferred to human beings to support the assumption that individuals are unique and they cannot be heaped together.

In a similar dimension of demonstrating the presence of individualism through the study of proverbs, Kayange (2018) argued for 'self-knowledge' proverbs, self-reliance proverbs, self-control proverbs and individual ownership proverbs. Below, I will focus more on ordinary use of language and argue for elements of individualism in African traditional philosophy.

9.2 Individualism from the Meaning of Proverbs

Individual and ownership of property: The heart of individualism, which can be traced in African traditional thought may be seen in the context of individual and ownership of property. The common proverbs that are fundamental for this individualist conception may be summarized in the Table 9.1 below:

1. The figurative expressions 1 to 4 above, support the importance of a conception of human beings that underlines the centrality of the individual in the society. In

Table 9.1 Common proverbs

Individual		
Chewa Proverb	**English Translation**	**Meaning**
1. *Chuluke chuluke ndi wa njuchi umanena iyo yakuluma*	Being many is for bees, you identify the one that stung you	Individual responsibility
2. *Anagwirizana malo okumana, koma anagona m'mitengo yosiyanasiyana,*	They agreed on where to meet, but they slept in different trees.	There are moments when each one is on his/her own.
3. *Andiyitana pakalowa njoka, pakalowa mbewa akumba okha.*	They call me when a snake has entered a hole, but when it is a mouse, they dig it out themselves.	Individual complains about the manipulation by the community when there are problems.
4. *Kufa saferana*	You cannot die for the other.	Appreciation of individualism rather than communitarian dependence.
Individual property		
5. *Chamwini ndi chamwini.*	That which is owned by an individual, is that which is owned by an individual	Individual ownership is good than counting on what is not yours.
6. *Chinthu chikatayika chimalira mwini*	When a thing is lost, it cries for the owner	Transfer of ownership when a thing is lost is not justifiable before making effort to take it back to the rightful owner.
7. *Kanthu ndi kako, kamwini nkamwini*	A thing is what you have, "that" which is with others is just a "that".	Don't count on what is not yours
8. *Kanthu n'kako, waona adakhuta thope*	What you have is yours, and whoever saw it got satisfied with mud.	What you have is yours and no one can interfere.
9. *Fodya wako ndiye ali pamphuno.*	Your snuff is what you have on your nose.	Count on what you have not on what belongs to others.
10. *Khasu liposa mako ndi tate.*	A hoe is more than your mother and father.	Individual hard work is better than dependence on the community.
11. *Kudya kwamzako sungamwere madzi.*	When you eat at a friend's/ neighbor's home, you cannot accompany the food with water.	Dependence on other people's property does not make an individual free.

most cases the individual is contrasted with the community. For example in 1, the proverb *Chuluke chuluke ndi wa njuchi umanena iyo yakuluma,* (Being many is for bees, you identify the one that stung you), also written as *Piringupiringu ndi wa njuchi, yoluma ndi immodzi*, (Wandering in large numbers is for bees, it is only one that stings), underscores the importance of the individual, mainly in the context of responsibility. It apparently accepts the existence of the community, but it shows that in times of trouble the individual is always remembered as a unique entity. The analogy is established here between the community and a group of bees. What is important in this context is not the community but the individual bee that has stung.

The figurative expression above, is parallel to the communitarian proverb that states that, *Kalikokha ndi kanyama, ali awiri ndi anthu* (The one who is alone is an animal, those that are two are humans). It is unfortunate that communitarian dogmatists have utilized the metaphor that loneliness is to animals as community is to human beings, to support their arguments (Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005; Khomba and Vermaak 2012).

The figurative expression 2, *Anagwirizana malo okumana, koma anagona m'mitengo yosiyanasiyana,* (They agreed on where to meet, but they slept in different trees), demarcates between communitarianism and individualism and affirms that they are both present in the African traditional society. While there is an agreement in the community, there is individualism at night, as each one takes his/her own way. The figurative expression does not judge communitarianism or individualism as good, but it just shows that there are moments when one becomes important than the other.

The expression 3, *Andiyitana pakalowa njoka, pakalowa mbewa akumba okha*, (They call me when a snake has entered a hole, but when it is a mouse, they dig it out themselves), is a critique towards communitarianism at the expense of individualism. It shows that the former tend to triumph when people are passing through difficulties and they want the community to do something for them. This reminds me of the use of communitarianism in African philosophy by different politicians such as, Nyerere (1966), Kaunda (1966) and Tutu (1999) who wanted to support African unity.

A very important individualist expression that is commonly used in Chichewa is *Kufa saferana* (You cannot die for the other). It shows that the community is instrumental for various issues, but when it is a question of death, each individual is on his own. The issue of solidarity, which is central in communitarianism is under scrutiny in this context. It shows that solidarity disappears when there are difficult issues to be dealt with. It is not the community that is responsible but the individual. In fact the community is telling the individual that when it comes to death or problems you are on your own.

2. The proverbs starting from 5 to 11 suggest individualism in relation to ownership of property. This is an important development in African philosophy because it is an indication of the possibility of a form of capitalism, In fact for capitalism, individual ownership of property is a fundamental component of this system.

The figurative expression 5, *chamwini ndi chamwini* (That which is owned by another individual, is that which is owned by another individual), supports the right to own property in an African context. This shows that the community has no right to what belongs to the individual. One wonders why an extreme African communitarian argues that everything in the African traditional society was held together.

The right to own property is further supported by the expression 6, which states that *Chinthu chikatayika chimalira mwini* (When a thing is lost, it cries for the owner). This expresses the understanding that even when something is lost, the rightful owner does not lose his/her right. In fact if any other individual finds a property that does not belong to him or her, it is suggested that the property be given to the owner. This is expressed through the idea that 'it cries for the owner'.

It is argued in the Chewa traditional context that 'property' is what you have. If something is not owned by you then it is advised that don't count it as a 'something'. In fact, figurative expression 7 supports this understanding by indicating that, *Kanthu ndi kako, kamwini nkamwini* (A thing is what you have, "that" which is with others is just a "that"). This line of thought is also supported by figurative expression 8, *Kanthu n'kako, waona adakhuta thope* (what you have is yours, and whoever saw it got satisfied with mud). Similarly, figurative expression 9, *Fodya wako ndiye ali pamphuno* (Your snuff is what you have on your nose), shows that you can only count on what you have.

Individual ownership of property is further supported by *kudya kwamzako sungamwere madzi* (When you eat at a friend's/neighbor's home, you cannot drink water). This relates the issue of property with that of freedom. It shows that depending on things that belong to others does not make one free. In fact, freedom comes when you are at home and doing your own things. The expression captures lack of freedom in saying that 'you cannot drink water'. It is only at home where one uses the property that he/she owns and finds freedom there.

While the value of the individual is indicated as important from 5 to 9, the community is shown in 11, *Khasu liposa mako ndi tate* (a hoe is more than your mother and father), as secondary in some respects. This expression shows that working hard in life is more important than the community.

Man is a measure of all private issues: The centrality of an 'individual' is seen in understanding/measuring private issues. Some of the proverbs that illustrate this include:

(i) *Kadziwa mwini mkhuto wa fulu* (only a tortoise by itself knows whether it has had enough food or not),
(ii) *Kadziwa mwini mpeni wamchiuno* (only the person in question knows that there is a knife hidden in his/her waist),
(iii) *Kadziwa mwini msampha wa m'chipeta* (only the trap-setter himself knows where the trap lies), and
(iv) *Waika phale watama mano,* (he/she who has put the potsherd ready, trusts his/her teeth).

Although in Kayange (2018) the above fall under self-knowledge, because of the emphasis on 'know', individualism is expressed in (i) in the centrality of self-

measurement. The community is hereby exempted from deciding on the course of action to be taken by an individual in a particular situation. It is the individual who has an important part to play, and say, this is enough. It is suggesting that in issues regarding pleasure it is beyond the jurisdiction of the community but it is up to the individual to decide in such matters.

The proverb, can further mean that while the community is there, but what is inside an individual cannot be seen by others. It is therefore the responsibility of individual to decide on such matters. In fact the figurative expression gives the image of a tortoise, which at times hides in its shell. The idea is that while an individual can come out of the shell and participate in the community, there are moments that he/she needs to go back and decide based on his/her understanding of issues.

In (ii) there is a line drawn between an individual and the community in what can be known by the former and the later. Similarly in this context, it is the individual who is aware of all the hidden aspects in his/her life. The proverb, therefore, suggests that a decision in such matter must be taken by the individual and not the community.

(iii) Alludes to issues that are hidden relative to one's life. While the community is important, the proverb acknowledges these hidden issues are better known and solved by the individual. This normally happens when the community members realise that they cannot deal with some issues, since they are very personal.

Individual as a central control unit of excess pleasure: In Chichewa language there are various figurative expressions that discourage too much relaxation as influenced by a pleasurable situation. In situations like these, an individual is given responsibility to decide to change his status. The understanding is that too much relaxation may invite danger. This is because an individual stops taking initiative in improving or progressing in life. Some of the proverbs that show individuality in this context include:

(iv) *Chimkonda cha nsikidzi chidanka ndi maliro kumanda*, (The bed-bugs' object of affection made them accompany a corpse to the graveyard),
(v) *Fisi akatola fupa sadyera pomwepo*, (when a hyena gets a bone, it doesn't eat it on the spot),
(vi) *Galu wofewerera adapita ndi goli* (a dog with an easy character went with its protective stick),
(vii) *Msipu wobiliwira udapha mbuzi* (fresh lush grass killed a goat), and
(viii) *Bongololo sadzolera mafuta pagulu* (A millipede does not smear oil on its body in a community gathering).

The idea in (iv) discourages individual attachment to different things in life, including the community. An individual is encouraged not to lose the self because of one's love for things. It is further against doing things out of habit. The proverb is implicitly underling the importance of reason. The image of a bed-bug also goes against dependence on others. In fact a bed-bug will depend on feeding blood. It is for this reason that it found itself destroyed together with the corpse in the graveyard. An individual is, therefore, encouraged to be independent rather than always depend on others.

The figurative expression (v) shows the importance of patience in an individual. It is against rushing in doing things. It seems the hyena wants to eat in a lonely place to avoid any possible danger where the source of food is found. It wanted to avoid community disturbance.

The figurative expression (vi) calls an individual to be strong in one's character. It warns against having a weak character as an individual, given that this may be regarded as a source of problems.

In (vii) it shows that some of the things that seem interesting to an individual are problematic, as they may lead to serious trouble. This may be regarded as a warning not to be deceived by appearances since they can run one into problems.

The expression (viii) shows that it is not good for the individual to show off in the community. It is sometimes good to do your things alone and in a lonely place.

The above discussion confirms that there are different ways of interpreting African philosophy. In fact there is also an individualistic way, depending on the context of interpretation of this philosophy. Further evidence of the possibility or presence of African individualism may be given through the study of indexicals and demonstratives.

9.3 Individualism Through Indexicals/Demonstratives in Proverbs

Apart from analysis of ordinary people's language use as above, individualism may be shown by identifying indexicals and their use in figurative expressions. In Analytic tradition, an indexical may be regarded as a linguistic utterance or concept, whose reference changes with context.[3] The commonly used indexicals/demonstratives in semantics include: the pronouns 'I', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'this', and 'that'; the adverbs 'here', 'now', 'today', 'yesterday', 'tomorrow', and 'actually'; and the adjectives 'my', 'his', 'her', 'present', 'past', and 'actual'.

Kaplan suggests two fundamental concepts namely, content and context. Content is understood as 'what is said'. Content with respect to a sentence refers to a structured proposition, which has individuals, properties and relations. The context refers to the agent, time, location and possible world. For example, an agent may be 'I', location 'here' or 'there', time may be 'now'. A possible world is instead how things are or may be different to the actual status.

An indexical has a meaning or character, which acts as a function from context to content. For example, the meaning of I is a function, whose value for a particular context is the agent, who is a speaker in a context. Similarly, the character of 'Now' is considered as a function whose value for a particular context is time.

[3] For example in understanding the change of reference of indexical I, it may be used in two different contexts, *(Speaker X): I am a boy* [Context_1], *(Speaker Y): I am a boy* [Context_2].

In terms of meaning and reference, an indexical may be seen as an instrument of direct reference to an object or individual. In fact they may be viewed as rigid designators in all possible worlds. In possible world semantics, the truth-value at *t* is determined by context and associated world.[4]

Chichewa language shows the presence of various indexicals and demonstratives which are used in everyday discourse. Some of the commonly used include; *Ine* = (I), *Inu* = (you), *Uyu* = (that), *Icho* = (that), *ichi* = (this), *Lero* = (Today), *Mawa* = (Tomorrow), *Dzulo* = (Yesterday) and *Tsopano* = (Now).

For example, the use of an indexical in an expression provides solid evidence of the individual in the Chichewa language. This may be exemplified by I in the following expressions;

(i) *ine ndekha* = I on my own/ only me;
(ii) *ine ndemwe* = I myself;
(iii) *ine ndili pano* = I am here;
(iv) *ine ndili bwino* = I am fine; and me;
(v) *ndipatse ine* = give me.

Similarly, figurative expressions are in some circumstances loaded with indexicals and demonstratives that supports the presence of elements of individualism in African traditional society. For example the indexicals may be identified in the following,

> *Chinthu chikatayika chimalira mwini,* translated as 'when a thing is lost, it cries for the owner' – Calls for indexical – *umwini* (Owner).

Kanthu ndi kako, kamwini nkamwini is translated as 'a thing is what you have, "that" which is with others is just a "that"' –the demonstrative 'that' refers to the individual.

Chuluke chuluke ndi wa njuchi umanena iyo yakuluma is translated as Being many is for bees, you identify the one that stung you – "*Iyo"* is a demonstrative that. All these provide solid evidence of the possibility of individual-based discourse in African philosophy.

9.4 Conclusion

The study has shown the presence of elements of individualism in the African society, which explains the existence of individual-focus thinking in some parts of African philosophy. The proverbs above have shown that in some perspectives, people prefer to promote individualism at the cost of communitarianism, and vice versa. This clearly shows that for African philosophy to fully represent people's way of life, requires the development of different philosophies. The too much insistence

[4]Refer to chapter 6 on the notion of truth.

on collective philosophy has tended to frustrate creativity, and has blinded many thinkers from seeing beyond their communitarian dogmatic slumber. For example, these different philosophies could be, the philosophy of I, philosophy of you, or philosophy of we, etc. This is important because the philosophy of I in the African context, can encourage individual responsibility among others. The philosophy of 'you' could become African philosophy of the other, and 'we' could become African communitarian philosophy, of course all these could be attributed to various thinkers, hence enrich African Philosophy.

Correction to: Philosophical Framework for Doing African Philosophy

Correction to:
Chapter 1 in: G. M. Kayange, *Meaning and Truth in African Philosophy*, Philosophical Studies Series 135,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01962-4_1

The book was inadvertently published with an incorrect spelling in the name "Gyeke", and also in the citation as "Gyeke 1992". It has now been corrected as "Gyekye", and the citation as "Gyekye 1992" on pages 4 and 13 of the book. The reference list has also been updated as follows:

Gyekye, K. 1992. Person and Community in Akan Thought. In Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, ed. K.W. Gyekye, 101–122. Washington, DC: CIPSH: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

The updated version of the chapter can be found at
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01962-4_1

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G. M. Kayange, *Meaning and Truth in African Philosophy*, Philosophical Studies Series 135, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01962-4_10

Conclusion

The use of analytic philosophy in this manuscript provides a rich framework for doing, understanding, elaborating and solving issues in African Philosophy. Although in a number of cases this philosophy is descriptive in nature, it gives a useful platform, which can be used for further development of modern African philosophy. In fact a number of current problems in Malawi are in this thought clearly seen throughout this study as rooted in some cultural traits which are continuously reflected in language use and meaning.

The above study shows that, while the context of doing philosophy is fundamental, the way of reasoning in African thought is not necessarily different from Western and other thought systems. For instance, the topic on riddles, meaning and rationality/logic has clearly captured some fundamental thoughts present in Western logic. Some of such truths include the principle of identity, which was promoted by Leibniz, inductive reasoning through analogy and metaphorical conceptualisation.

Another important aspect has been the concept of truth among the Chewa people of Malawi, which has revealed that African traditional thought has a strong orientation towards a form of empiricism. This is a context where truth as correspondence of statements to facts is fundamental, and evidence of this relation plays a crucial role.

Although my interest was not showing or comparing Western thought and African thought, it is clear that although the ordinary language theory of meaning was elaborated more in the Western World perspective, it explains well what people are doing when they are using language in an African context. It is amazing to see that different components of this theory also perfectly fits what is happening in Malawi in the understanding of meaning through the study of ordinary language use. Worth indicating in this work is the link between language and different modes of behavior that are common in Malawi. This has mainly been done by demonstrating metaphorical conceptualisation of politics and how this has influenced behavior of most of the politicians in Malawi.

The work has reduced African communalism to one of the perspectives in African philosophy.

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This study has focused more on building on the traditional culture, but for future studies an interesting area in analytic philosophy could be comparing the changes in language use and meaning in African traditional thought. Another area that will require further study is on changing behavior and attitudes of people by changing some forms of conceptualisations that marginalises the minority. Finally, another possible area of further studies is the development of African traditional logic through the study of riddles and puzzles.

Appendices

Appendix 1: A Special Case of Riddles/Puzzles

Apart from riddles, Chichewa language speakers also use puzzles, which demonstrate a higher level of abstraction. Puzzles are narrated by an individual to a group of participants (mainly friends). Similar to riddles, this is done in a form of a game, where one narrates a puzzle, and the rest try to come up with a solution. The solution require more time.

Puzzles are not about meaning and truth in terms of correspondence to what is narrated. However, they provide a background for deducing meaningful statements that follow from what is given. They require a demonstration of clear steps (statements) that are followed, and leading to a particular solution of the whole puzzle. Analysis and synthesis are important for attempting an answer to these puzzles.

I will not go in details discussing puzzles, but demonstrate the deduction of meaningful statements and a conclusion (solution) departing from some given conditions.

Trio-puzzle

The **first puzzle** that will be used is known as Mphale-Mbuzi-Hyena puzzle, which states that,

> Munthu amafuna kuwolotsa mphale, mbuzi ndi fisi. Amayenera kunyamula chinthu chimodzi ulendo uliwonse akuwoloka mtsinje. Akatenga fisi kupita tsidya lina, mbuzi idya mphale. Akatenga mphale kupita mbali ina fisi adya mbuzi. Akakhala kuti munthu ali pompo palibe chichitike. Kodi munthuyu apange bwanji kuti awolotse zinthuzi.

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The English translation goes,

> A person wanted to move Maize, Goat and Hyena from one side of the river to the other. This person was expected to carry one thing at a time when crossing. If he takes a hyena to the other side of the river, the goat will eat the bag of maize. If he takes a bag of maize, a hyena will eat the goat. (A hyena does not eat maize). When a person is with them they nothing happens. What are you going to do to cross the three objects without a problem?

Conditions Let *x* represent 'person', whose identity is not known, and the objects *mphale*, *mbuzi* and *fisi*, A, B, C respectively. The following are the conditions given in the puzzle.

I. Conditions for carrying properties A, B, C:

   (i) When crossing the river *x* can carry only one property at a time A or B or C.

II. Conditions for allowed combinations of A, B, C, in the presence of *x* in either side of the river:

   (ii) When x is not present, A can stay with C in any of the sides.
   (iii) When x is present in any side, any combination is acceptable (A, B; A, C; B, C; A, B, C).

III. Conditions for disallowed combinations

   (iv) When x is not available, A cannot stay with B, and B cannot stay with C on either side of the river.

Meaningful Statements Towards a Solution The solution is then worked out as follows (note that stones or sticks are often used in providing solution to the puzzle):

(i) B*x* is carried to the other side of the river (side 2). // thus A and C remain (side 1).[1]
(ii) *x* goes back to side 1 and crosses A to side 2 of the river. This means that side 1 has C, while side 2 has *x*, A and B.
(iii) *x* goes back to side 1 with B, hence side 1 has *x,* B and C while side 2 has A*x*.
(iv) C*x* is crossed to side 2, such that it has *x,* A and C while side 1 has B.
(v) *x* goes back to side 1, and crosses B to side 2, such that side 2 has *x*, A, B and C

Although the solution to the above puzzle is simpler as compared to other puzzles, it clearly shows the existence of abstract thinking towards the above solution. Since this is a game, what matters is getting the desired right solution. This experience brings personal satisfaction to the person who gets it right. Below, I demonstrate abstract thinking in a more complex puzzle:

[1]Where there is *x* represents the presence of *x* (B*x* means B is with *x,* similarly A*x* is A is with x and C*x* is C is with *x*).

Sesto-puzzle

The **second puzzle** is a family puzzle constituting three couples who want to cross a river/lake using a boat. The puzzle goes as follows:

> Mabanja atatu (azimayi atatu ndi azibambo atatu) akuyenera kuwoloka kupita kutsidya lina la mtsinje/nyanja. Malamulo oyenera kutsatilidwa ndi awa: Boti ndi lokwera anthu osaposera anthu awiri. Pasapezeke azimayi atatu ndi Bambo mmodzi ku mbali ili yonse ya mtsinje. Pasapezeke azimayi awiri ndi bambo mmodzi ku mbali iliyonse ya mtsinje. Mungachite bwanji kuti muwawolotse anthuwa?

It may be translated as follows,

> Three families wanted to cross a river/lake (three men and three women). The following conditions are to be followed in the process. A boat is only for not more than two people. The following conditions hold: Three women are not allowed to be with one man on either of the sides. Two women are not allowed to be with one man in either of the sides. What can you do to cross them to the other side of the river?

Conditions The following are the conditions suggested in the above story,

(i) The boat (B) allows for not more than two people ($B = 1 \leq 2$).
(ii) The three women (w_1, w_2 and w_3) are not allowed to be with one man (m_1 or m_2 or m_3).
(iii) One woman is allowed to be on one of the sides with three men.
(iv) Any two women (w_1 and w_3, w_1 and w_2, w_2 and w_3) are not allowed to be on one side with one man (m_1 or m_2 or m_3).

Solution The solution is worked out as follows:

(1) From side one, m_1 and w_1 crosses with the boat to side two.
(2) The boat is taken back to side 1 by m_1, while w_1 remains in side two. This implies that side 1 there are w_2, w_3, m_1, m_2 and m_3 and on side 2 there is w_1.
(3) From side one, w_2, w_3 takes the boat and crosses to side two. It implies that in side two there are w_1, w_2 and w_3, while in side two, there are m_1, m_2 and m_3.
(4) From side two, w_2 takes the boat back to side 1, where now there are w_1, m_1, m_2 and m_3. In side two there are w_1 and w_2.
(5) From side one, m_1 and m_2 takes the boat to side two, such that there are w_1, w_2, m_1 and m_2 in side two, while side 1 has w_3 and m_3.
(6) W_2 and m_2 takes the boat back to side one. Such that there are w_2, m_2, w_3 and m_3 are in side 1 while w_1 and m_1 are in side 2.
(7) M_2 and m_3, takes the boat to side two, such that there are m_1, m_2, m_3 and w_1, while w_2 and w_3 are in side one.
(8) W_1 takes the boat to side one, such that there are w_1, w_2 and w_3 in side 1 and in side 2, there are m_2, m_1 and m_3.
(9) W_1 and w_2 takes the boat to side two, where there are now m_1, m_2, m_3 and w_1 and w_2, while side 1 has w_3.
(10) W_2 takes the boat back to side one, and takes with her w_3 to side two, such that side two has m_1, m_2, m_3 and w_1, w_2 and w_3, while side 1 is empty.

The investigation of puzzles can be developed further as a separate research project. For the purposes of this work, it suffices to mention it, as done in this appendix.

Appendix 2: African Proverbs/Idiomatic Expressions in Speech Act Theory

In this appendix, I present an extension to Chap. 2, by demonstrating how philosophy can be done using African proverbs and idiomatic expressions viewed as speech acts. The Speech Act Theory is one of the frameworks used to discuss expressions/sentences that do not fall under the true or false category (Austin 1962; Searle 1969).[2] The main argument of the Speech Act Theory may be summarised as contending that when some expressions/sentences are pronounced, a certain corresponding act is performed. These sentences/expressions are considered as 'performative sentences' or performatives (1962). Austin (1962, 6–7) summarises these expressions as follows;

> The term 'performative will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions much as the term 'imperative' is. The name is derived, of course from 'perform', the usual verb with a 'noun action': it indicates that the issuing of an utterance is the performing of an action –It is not normally thought of as just saying something.

The main elaboration of the Speech Act Theory was provided by J. L. Austin in a series of lectures given at the Oxford University in the mid-1950s (around 1955). The ideas of this philosopher were summarised in a famous book titled *How to Do Things with Words* and they were developed further in the works of Searle (1989).

Arguing in the line of Austin, I would like to indicate that in African languages there are also many utterances that do not qualify as true or false such as metaphors, proverbs and taboos. Although the understanding of their meaning is complex, they are in some circumstances used as performatives. I will therefore focus on proverbs and demonstrate the particular occasions whereby they are used as performatives. This will help to clarify what people are doing when they are using proverbs.

In discussing proverbs as a type of speech acts, the first section of this appendix will provide some data that will be utilized in the development of this philosophy. The second section will consider African proverbs in the general theory of speech acts. The third section will focus on proverbs and the specific categories of speech acts. The guiding question throughout this presentation is, what are Africans doing when they are using proverbs?

For the purpose of discussing speech acts, below are some selected proverbs (Table 1).

[2]See also Ayer's reflection in (1973) "Has Austin Refuted Sense-data?" in Essays on John L. Austin, ed. I. Berlin et al., Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Table 1 Selected proverbs

Chewa proverb	English translation	Meaning
1. Mulimbalimba goli liri mkhosi.	You are firmly denying, but the slave stick is around your neck.	Denying while you are already caught.
2. Wagwa mbuna ya lundu, mankhwala a sowa.	You have fallen in a bottomless pit, there is no solution.	Helpless situation where change is impossible.
3. Mapanga awiri avumbwitsa.[a]	Moving from one cave to another makes you get drenched.	Concentrate on one element rather than many.
4. Ukawona amzako akukazinga maso nawenso kazinga ako.	When you see friends frying their eyes, do the same.[b]	Learn from the people you find in an area.
5. Nkuyu zodya ana zapota akulu.	The fig fruits eaten by children have constipated the elders.	Parents are responsible for their children's misbehavior.
6. Kufa n'komwe, tambala alira.	Death is death, a rooster will crow.	When time has come for something to occur there is nothing that can be done.
7. Chithupysa chosatumbula sichigonetsa tulo.	A boil which has not been lanced prevents one from sleeping.	A problem that is not solved is disturbing.
8. Madzi sayiwala khwawa.	Water never forgets its channel (path).	Deeply rooted relations or habits cannot be easily destroyed.
9. Ndagwira mwendo wanu.	I am holding your leg.	I am sorry.
10. Ndangodutsamo sindidatcholemo nkhwani.	I have just gone through but I didn't pick pumpkin leaves.	One has just introduced, but the real issue is not communicated.

[a]This is similar to, *Ichi chakoma ichi chakoma pusi adagwa chagada*. It is also similar to Chakanza (2000, 279), which states that *Pawiripawiri sipauzirika* translated as, 'You cannot blow smoke into two holes at the same time'.
[b]This is similar to, 'when you are in Rome, do what Romans do'.

Proverbs and the General Elements of Speech Acts

In the general Speech Act Theory, a proverb may be primarily considered in the distinction between constatives and performatives. A constative is a declarative statement that can be true or false, while a performative was indicated earlier as an utterance whose pronouncement leads to doing something.

Firstly I want to argue that a proverb is not a constative. While a constative utterance has a truth value (true or false), a Chewa proverb has no straightforward truth value. For example, an utterance such as, *'kalikokha nkanyama ali awiri ndi anthu* (The one who is alone is an animal and those that are two are human beings),[3]

[3]Malawian philosophers such as Kaphagawani (1998), and Tambulasi and Kayuni (2012) utilized this proverb in their defence of African communitarianism.

has no obvious truth value. In fact this proverb is an ideological interpretation of the meaning of 'being alone' and 'being with others' in the Malawian context. Being alone is interpreted as proper for animals and being with others as proper for human beings. Briefly, a proverb cannot, or rather it is not intended to be a constative.

Secondly, Is an African proverb a performative utterance? Firstly I would like to consider a proverb as an utterance. As argued in Austin (1971) and Searle (1979), utterances may be commonly considered based on the following basic acts, that is, (1) locutionary acts, (2) illocutionary acts and (3) perlocutionary acts (see Austin 1962, 108; Searle 1989, 535–558). I intend to argue that an African proverb as a performative may be primarily understood based on these categories.

(1) A locutionary act is defined by Austin (1962) as any utterance that makes sense in a given context.[4] In the Malawian context, I argue that a proverb qualifies as a locutionary act, given that when it is uttered it makes sense to the inhabitants. In other words, the speaker and the hearer are capable of making some sense out of the uttered proverb. For example, a person *x* in context *y* says: *Umanena Chatsitsa dzaye kuti Njovu ithyoke nyanga*, translated[5] as 'You have to say what caused the fruit to fall down leading to the breaking of an elephants horn'. There are three connected elements that can be traced in this utterance, hence qualifying it as a locutionary act in general, that is: (a) *phonetic act*, (b) *phatic act* and (c) *rhematic act*.

A phonetic act is satisfied when one pronounces sounds, and the outcome is what is known as a phone. It may be argued that by pronouncing a phone in this proverb, one performs an act. Uttering a sound in this proverb implies that person *x* is doing something. He is in the process of advising, judging, ordering, indicating, etc., but all this is done in an indirect way. It must be noted that the way sound is produced and emphasized has also an implication in the interpretation of the same.

When a phone is uttered, it reveals a phatic act, whereby the vocabulary is uttered depending on the combinations of the letters. The outcome is what is commonly known as pheme. In fact, the uttered proverb reveals that person *x* is using Chichewa vocabulary, depending on the combination of letters, as accepted by this the rules of this language. In the proverb above, different phemes may be identified, for example, *u-ma-ne-na* (you say), etc. This of course, taken as a unit of language is somehow meaningless. In the same line of thought, Austin (1962) indicated that a pheme may in some respect be seen as 'a unit of language' whose characteristic is that of being nonsense-meaningless. 'Nonsense-meaningless' echoes the idea of correspondence with certain facts, which was argued by Austin as inadequate in classifying all language.

Finally it may be argued that the proverb qualifies as a rhematic act. The outcome of this is what is known as a rheme. It is in this that meaning is grasped in a particular context. Our rheme in the proverb above is complicated, in the sense that in most cases, it contains two rhemes. The first one is that of the literal sense. The second is that of a specific interpretation, as given by the audience of the locutionary act.

[4] See also Martinich (2001, 434–438).

[5] From now onwards the short form trans., will be utilized to substitute 'translated in English as'.

(2) Illocutionary act deals with those utterances whose pronouncement implies performing an act. It is differentiated from the locutionary act above in the sense that, the former captures the 'act of saying', while the illocutionary deals with 'act in saying'. The act in saying may be reduced to uttering sounds that make sense in a particular context. 'Act in saying' captures the whole notion of performance, hence performative act.

I argue and hereby demonstrate that most of the proverbs used in ordinary communication fall under the illocutionary acts. For example, below I will analyse three concrete examples of such proverbs which are uttered in a form of idiomatic expressions.

(i) *Ife ndife amuna agona kuchitseko kotsegula* (We are men who sleep while the door is open).
(ii) *Bwera uwone chomwe chidameta nkhanga mpala* (Come and see what shaved a Guinea Fowl).
(iii) *Chiphaliwali chinding'ambe* (May thunder strike me).

In (i), I am declaring what I am. For instance in uttering (i) I am declaring myself as a strong man. In some circumstances, I am declaring that I am a winner and don't dare to come close to me. In other circumstances I am challenging my opponent.

If a person expresses (ii) above, he is inflicting fear in the other person. The fact that a Guinea Fowl is shaved is taken as a problem. It didn't want to go through that process but it was forced by external forces to do so. It is therefore the act of threatening somebody. In some circumstances, this may end up being a court case. This proverb is not a mere sentence, but a performance of an act, that is, the act of meaning what is behind this proverb.

Number (iii) may be clearly seen to have the form of a performative act. The act of saying that 'May thunder strike me', is promising. This utterance is accompanied by a gesture, in which one moves his hand on the neck as if he is cutting it. This form of promise is not just like 'I promise' as explicated in Austin (1962), it is something more. It is a promise in which the one promising confirms to the other, that his promise is felicitous. The promise is full of responsibility with respect to the one uttering.

The figurative expression 'May thunder strike me' is the same as the English saying that 'come what may'. This means that whatever the case, the promise is done and the interested party will keep his/her word. It follows that this cannot only be substituted by 'I promise' it is further accompanied by 'I am obliged to keep my word'. Saying (iii) is performing it. We can therefore conclude that some Chichewa proverbs and expressions have an illocutionary force.

(3) A perlocutionary act refers to a situation whereby an act is performed that will lead to some 'consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons' (Austin 1962, 101). I argue that some African proverbs qualify, and they are used as perlocutionary acts.

For example a proverb such as; *Linda madzi apite ndiye uziti ndadala* (First wait for the floods to go and then say that you are blessed), is used in some cases as a perlocutionary act. This is uttered in a context where one is jubilating while the task

at stake is not completed. For example, when a football match is not yet over but the winning side has started jubilating, this proverb is uttered in an advisory context. This suggests that when there is a task or a problem solve it first and then rejoice later. This attitude is good since it prevents individuals from being embarrassed that is, in case the problem persists, or the results change.

When this proverb is uttered to a proud person, it may be considered as advice to be humble and behave properly. It is warning the proud person to avoid being superficial and to be careful. It is further criticizing the proud individual due to his/her being inauthentic behaviour.

The utterance explained above will bring some effects, in the sense that the proud person will change his behavior and become humble (that is, if he/she is wise). In case he is not wise or open enough, he/she will be defensive and in some circumstances he/she may react negatively.

Briefly, this section has shown that proverbs qualify as a form of performative utterances in a general form. Apart from these discussed aspects, people use proverbs as performatives in many various occasions and ways. For instance, during traditional meetings, most of the elders use proverbs as performatives to show their intelligence in guiding the community. This is likewise the case in traditional courts, where the judges who are often the elders, use proverbs when performing some judgments to show their wisdom. They further want to influence the concerned subjects to realize the gravity of the committed crime (they want to provoke a perlocutionary effect). In other circumstances, proverbs can be used to show authority. In other circumstances elders use proverbs as performatives to show their authority passed on to them by the elders. In this regard, before pronouncing a performative it is preceded by the words,

Akulu akulu amati . . . (The elders say. . .),

In this sense it indicates that elders are a symbol of authority, invoking them increases the likelihood that the performative will be felicitous.[6]

Proverbs and the Groups of Speech Acts

The second argument is that African proverbs may be understood further based on the five groups of speech acts as suggested by Austin and Searle in their presentation of the Speech Act Theory (see Austin 1962, 150–163).[7] These groups include:

[6]This has a connection with our ancestors who used to utter proverbs. Given that proverbs are often used by the elders, they carry with them those elders' authority. The elders here may be extended to our ancestors who have a strong authority in our society. By uttering a proverb, it is the same as invoking them to be present in what is being said or experienced.

[7]Searle proposed five classes. Firstly the representatives, meant to commit the speaker to the truth of what is uttered. Secondly, the directives which are used by a speaker to make the hearer do something. Thirdly, the commissives, which are intended at committing the speaker to some future

Table 2 Verdictives

	Verdictives	English translation
A	*Wagwa mbuna ya lundu, mankhwala a sowa.*	You have fallen in a bottomless pit, there is no solution
B	*Ali kugwira ziputu.*	He/she is holding stumps (grass)
C	*Chete nkunena.*	Silence is speaking (consent).
D	*Wakhoma mutu wa kalulu.*	He/she has hit a hare's head.
E	*Kumanda msankira dumbo.*	Don't go to the grave because of envy.
F	*Mulimbalimba goli liri m'khosi.*	You are firmly denying, but the slave stick is around your neck.
G	*Nkuyu zodya ana zapota akulu.*	The fig fruits eaten by children have constipated the elders.
H	*Musawongole mbewa yopondaponda.*	Don't straighten a trampled mouse.

(i) Verdictives
(ii) Exercitives
(iii) Commissives
(iv) Behabitives
(v) Expressives

(i) The category of verdictives is developed from the term 'verdict', which is normally utilized in courts in passing a judgment. In an African context, I argue that, when people are uttering some of the proverbs, they are giving a verdict. Traditionally when there is a problem people go to the elders or those in authority (chiefs and their collaborators) to ask for help. Those in authority must pronounce a verdict after hearing all the parties, and this is in some circumstances done through the pronouncement of some proverbs/idiomatic expressions (Table 2).

Below I will comment on some of these proverbs showing the situations they are used as verdictives.

When a judge in a village court utters the expression,

> *Wagwa mbuna ya lundu, mankhwala a sowa* (You have fallen in a bottomless pit, there is no solution),

He/she is passing a verdict. This often happens when the person who is guilty appeals against the earlier verdict that was passed by the elders or village judge. By uttering this proverb the person knows that there is no way out given that he/she is once again judged as guilty.

Another example is when *x* and *y* go to the traditional judges for a hearing, a verdict may be pronounced through a statement such as:

> *x wakhoma mutu wa kalulu* (*x* hit the Hare's head).

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action. "Fourthly, the expressives illustrating a deposition or a state of one's psyche." Fifthly, the declarations which affect a change in a particular system.

This proverb is understood by both *x* and *y* that it is a verdict indicating that *x* has committed a crime.

Similarly, when a small boy has committed a crime against a neighboring family, the people gather under a tree to solve it. After hearing from both sides the elders may turn to the one who is wrong and say:

> *Nkuyu zodya ana zapota akulu* trans. 'The fig fruits eaten by children have constipated the elders'.

This is to tell the parents that their boy is found guilty. The parents are guilty too because they didn't teach their child well. This proverb may therefore be interpreted as the juridical act of exercising power.

Another verdictive is where a judge after listening to both parties pronounces the proverb that,

> *Njobvu zikamamenyana umavulala ndi udzu* (When elephants are fighting it is the grass that suffers).

This makes the conflicting parties understand that their involvement in a conflict is just accidental; the real problem is elsewhere between some celebrities in the community.

(ii) The second category of the exercitives has a similar derivation with the word exercitive which refers to giving orders. These are speech acts which focus on the exercise of power in a particular context (see Austin 1962, 150–151). Commenting on the exercitives Austin (1962, 150) writes; "execitives are the exercising of powers, rights, or influence. Examples are appointing, voting, ordering, urging, advising, warning, etc."

I argue that in uttering some proverbs those in authority are performing exercitives, that is, they are giving orders, arguing, advising, etc (Table 3).

For example,

> *pagwa bulu patelera* (Where an Ass has fallen, the ground is slippery),

Table 3 Exercitives

	Exercitives	English translation
A	*Kufa n'komwe, tambala alira*	Death is death, a roaster will crow.
B	*Chidziwe n'nchipande powomola*	A wooden spoon will know what to do when sharing food
C	*Chithupsa chosatumbula sichigonetsa tulo*	A boil which has not been lanced prevents one from sleeping.
E	*Chikuni cha utsi koma kufumula*	A smoky piece of firewood should be removed from the fire place
F	*Kulanga nyani nkumphwanya mutu*	
G	*Pusepuse ulandira mpeni*	If you play a fool you will get a knife
H	*Mbuzi ikakondwa malonda ali pafupi*	The best way to punish a monkey is to target the head.
I	*Saweruzika adanka nzoipa pa bwalo*	He-who-would-not-be-advised ended up exposing all his vices in court.

When a person who is in authority utters this proverb, he/she is warning or advising you to be careful. He is further influencing you in the judgment that you want to take. For example, there may be a problem that different people are trying to solve. The experts have tried to solve it, they have failed or it has cost their lives. A non-expert wants to try. When this proverb is uttered to him, he immediately knows the gravity of the problem given that experts have failed. He may decide to quit based on the information given by this proverb.

(iii) The third category, commissives, focuses on one's commitment to a certain action or condition. Austin (1962, 150–151) indicates that,

> [t]hey commit to doing something, but include also declarations or announcements of intention, which are not promises and also rather vague things which we may call espousals, as for example siding with. They have obvious connexions with verdictives and exercitives.

I argue that when some proverbs are uttered, Africans are performing commissives (Table 4).

Considering further these performatives, I would like to firstly focus on, 'I promise that I will never forget you'. In this situation, I may use a proverb, *Madzi sayiwala khwawa* (Water never forgets its channel). By pronouncing this, I am committing myself never to forget you just like water and its channel. This is a pure commissive given that it necessitates commitment.

Similarly, the idiomatic expression *Chiphaliwali chinding'ambe*'(May thunder strike me'), which was noted above, is a commissive, committing the speaker to what is promised. He is further underlining that it is true and certain, such that there is no room for doubt.

Lonjezo lidadulitsa mutu wa Yohane(A promise made the head of John to be chopped off) is promising and indicating further that you will commit yourself to the promise without exception. The idea is that not even life is going to be an impediment in this context. This may also be a warning against making rash promises.

(iv) The fourth category is termed by Austin (1962, 151) 'behavatives'. The main concern of these performatives are the attitudes of individuals in a particular

Table 4 Commissives

Commissives	English translation
Madzi sayiwala khwawa.	Water never forgets its channel/path.
"Gona nkuphe" sali patali/Ndikupha mawa sali patali.	"Sleep and I will kill you", is not far/I shall kill you tomorrow is not far.
Lonjezo lidadulitsa mutu wa Yohane	A promise made the head of John to be chopped off.[a]
Wakhate samunamiza nsapato	You cannot deceive a leper, that you will buy him/her shoes
Tonde akadula, sabwerera	When a he-goat cuts the tether, he does not come back

[a]This proverb has as its origin the coming of Christianity in Malawi in the late nineteenth century. It is referring to the biblical story regarding the death of John the Baptist. The king promised to give his daughter anything that she wanted after she had performed well in a dance. She requested the head of John the Baptist in a plate and the king kept his promise against his own wish to keep John alive

Table 5 Proverbs as behabatives

Behabatives	English translation
Ndagwira mwendo wanu.	I am holding your leg.
Nkhwani saotchera.	You cannot roast pumpkin leaves.
Pepani sapoletsa chilonda.	I am sorry does not heal a wound.
Mugone kutali ndi moto	Sleep far from the fire.
Kachepa alibe bwalo, ali ndi bwalo ndi kangachepe.	'It is small' has no court, what has court is, 'although small, it is'.
Bwerera alikonse	Come back goes both ways.
Jakete sapisira	A jacket cannot be tucked in.
Kachaje sikachepa, kachepa n'kamalonda	Something given for free is never small, what is small is what is bought.

society. I argue that in some circumstances, people perform expressive and behabatives with the proverbs (Table 5).

Below is an explanation of some of the behabatives above.

For instance, instead of saying 'I apoligise', I may use an idiom, *Ndagwira mwendo wanu* trans. 'I have held your leg'. Uttering this expression one immediately knows that I am asking for forgiveness. This is not a mere 'I am sorry', which may sometimes be said by a person who has done something unintentionally. This proverb shows that one acknowledges that he is responsible not merely accidentally, but he is guilty of an offense. It is pronounced to avoid a grave punishment that may follow.

Another figurative expression that qualifies as a behabative is *Mugone kutali ndi moto* trans. 'Sleep far (away) from fire'.[8] This is a sign of appreciation to somebody for helping you. The idea is that he must stay away from problems. It is expressing best wishes in life and invoking all good things to a person who has helped you.

(v) Lastly, the expositivites cover acts that are done in an exposition or articulation of an argument (expressions such as, I argue, I interpret and I reply). I argue that when uttering some proverbs, the African individuals are performing expositives (Table 6).

The above proverbs are mainly utilized in arguments, expositions, discussions, etc.

For example, an expositive such as 'I conclude' is captured by the expression *kuwomba mkota.*

In a discussion (after an exposition) when *Kutsutsa galu nkukumba,* (When you want to contradict a dog, dig where it is scratching) is uttered, is to argue for the need of evidence in support of particular claim.[9]

[8]In the traditional context, most of our forefathers and mothers had houses thatched with grass, and fire was sometimes seen as deadly, mainly when one is a sleeping close to it.

[9]This proverb refers to actual canine habits, during hunting dogs may indicate where a ground animal is hiding by scratching its hole. The hunters normally have to go and dig to verify whether the dog is indicating something valuable or not. The proverb is therefore instigating that you cannot contradict a person without verifying.

Table 6 Some of the expositives

Expositives	English translation
Kuwomba mkota	(To conclude)[a]
Ndangodutsamo sindidatyole mkhwani	I have just passed I didn't pick pumpkin leaves.
Kutsutsa galu nkukumba	To contradict a dog, you need to dig.
Kuchulutsa gaga mdiwa	Putting too much maize bran
Kuphera mphongo	(To emphasize the argued point)[b]
Kunena chatsitsa dzaye kuti Njobvu ityoke mnyanga	To say what caused a fruit to fall, that caused the elephant's tusk to break.

[a]This is not a literal translation of *kuwomba mkota.*
[b]This is not a literal translation but it is an approximate meaning of *kuphera mphongo*

Similarly an expositive, *Kuphera mphongo* when it is uttered means to strengthen the argument.

Although proverbs tend to fit in different classes of performative acts, they permit the possibility of being used in different classes. For this reason I suggest a further consideration of this characteristic of proverbs.

Proverbs and Homonymous Performative Acts

In this section I want to discuss the richness of African proverbs seen as performatives. This consists in the fact that a proverb utterance may be utilized to perform different acts at the same time. Using Aristotle's term 'homonymous', (Aristotle, *Categories,*1984c),[10] this relation may be captured by introducing the concept of 'homonymous performative acts'. In this regard, a proverb as a performative may be seen as a name representing homonymous performative acts. This means that a proverb has a wider range of meanings, which can be transmitted by a speaker to a hearer at once.

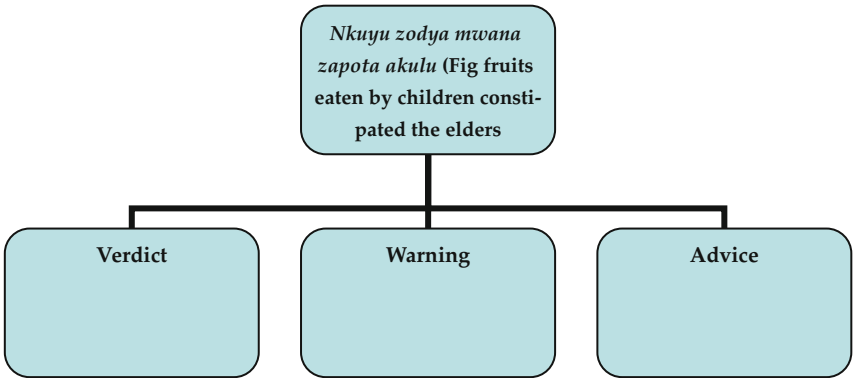
The structure of proverbs presented as homonymous performative acts may be illustrated by the following (Table 7):

The above proverb may be seen as a name representing a verdict. For instance, in case a child has misbehaved somewhere, this utterance may refer to passing a verdict that the child is guilty.

In a different context, the same name is used to warn the responsible child. Warning means that the child is being made aware of the fact that the consequences of his/her actions will affect also his/her parents. For instance, their image may be tarnished. This will come as people will accuse them of failing to teach their children

[10]When things have only a name in common and the definition of being, which corresponds to the name is different, they are called homonymous. Thus, for example, both a man and a picture are animals. These have only a name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is different; for if one is to say what being an animal is for each of them, one will give two distinct definitions.

Table 7 Homonymous performative act



effectively. This has also a negative connotation towards the skills of those parents and the entire community where the children are coming from. This may as well have economic repercussions as parents may be expected to pay a fine as requested by the court.

Uttering the proverb above may also be seen as advice towards parents. They are being asked to play an active role in what their children are doing.

Although the consideration of proverbs as homonymous performatives provides a richer spectrum for application, in some circumstances it poses a number of challenges in the identification of the scope of meaning intended by the speaker. For example in the above proverb, a hearer may imagine whether the speaker wants to advise, to warn or to pass a verdict.

Nevertheless, the problem above may be dealt with through the consideration of a number of elements.

Firstly, the problem of homonymous performative acts is addressed by the existence of background experience on how proverbs are generally understood. In most cases the hearers have experienced similar occasions where the proverbs were employed as performatives. This helps the hearer to decide which of the context applies to the current situation.

Secondly, the status of the speaker and the involvement of the members of the community determine the gravity of the committed offence. This generally conditions the choice of the intended meaning of the performative act.

Thirdly, the utterance of a proverb as a performative act is followed by a particular punishment that follows. This helps further to clarify the intended scope of meaning by the speaker.

I conclude by indicating that Modern African philosophy of language can still rely on proverbs as a fundamental tool in understanding what the African culture and thought is. In the above development, it has been argued that proverbs qualify as locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. It has been interestingly

indicated that some proverbs when they are uttered qualify as performative acts. Saying them is doing something. The appendix has shown that when proverbs are uttered, they are Assertives, (ii) Directives, (iii) Commissives (iv) Expressives and (v) Declarations. It is finally indicated that when an African utters a proverb, is aware of the meaning of the utterance and goes beyond by meaning what he is uttering. This has led to the suggestion that in the study of African proverbs, utterance meaning and intentional meaning are fundamental for the community to accept any uttered proverb as valid.

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