" SAGACITY IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY:
A CRITICAL EVALUATION "

BY

WAIRIMU M. /GICHOHI
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
PHILOSOPHY.
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

1996
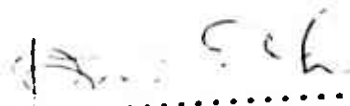
DECLARATION

THIS THESIS IS MY ORIGINAL WORK AND
HAS NOT BEEN PRESENTED FOR ANY DEGREE
IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY.

Signed...................... DATE:..................

WAIRIMU M. GICHOHI

(CANDIDATE)

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SUBMITTED FOR
EXAMINATION WITH MY APPROVAL AS THE
UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

DATE. 23·5·96 ...

F. OCHIENG'-ODHIAMBO

(SUPERVISOR)

DEDICATION

TO ALL THOSE WHOSE LIBERATION FROM
IRRATIONALITY IS NOT IN VAIN.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A B S T R A C T

This work attempts to evaluate the contentious issue among both African and non-African scholars about the existence or non-existence of African philosophy.

The first position to be taken on the question of African philosophy was expressed by European Scholars and especially anthropologists who argued that since African people were not as civilized as Europeans, they therefore had not developed thought systems to a level where they could be said to have a systematised body of knowledge that demonstrated the logical and critical approach of philosophy. Africans were therefore condemned as illogical, irrational and primitive.

However, African scholars have strongly refuted this Eurocentric view of Africa and demonstrated in their various works that Africa is not without critical thought as wrongly believed. Their contention is that African philosophy exists, both in its traditional and modern form. The various philosophical positions discussed in this work attest to this.

The general argument in this work is that there exists African philosophy and one form in which it is presented is philosophic sagacity. The arguments presented in sagacity in support of this are then critically assessed to see if they can stand the test as philosophy in the first place and African philosophy in the second. The question we are then left asking is, if African philosophy exists, in what ways is

philosophic sagacity a true representation of it and how
convincing is its position? It is my belief that the assessment
given in this work fully answers this question.

OPERATIONAL TERMS

The terms 'West' and 'Western' are used in this work to denote European mentality, culture and traditions, and are used synonymously with 'Europe' and/or 'European'.

C O N T E N T S

C H A P T E R   O N E

GENERAL   INTRODUCTION

Philosophy has a rather peculiar characteristic as a discipline. This peculiarity can be observed in the nature of the philosophical activity that seeks to understand philosophy both as the object of knowledge, seeking to find and establish its own self-definition as an activity and as the subject, that seeks to know and understand the nature and content of knowledge in every other field at the level of metaphilosophy.

The question of philosophy as an object of knowledge has often eluded many minds and no doubt left many more believing that the enterprise itself is an activity obssessed with futile attempts to know what it cannot know. The definition and purpose of philosophy has quite often eluded many minds. Some people, asked what they think of philosophy, will readily condemn philosophers as idlers who wear out their minds, and probably those of their hearers and readers in the seemingly endless discussions of the "whatness" , "howness", and "whyness" of everything and nothing. For the uninitiated mind, philosophy would appear to be nothing more than a way of "passing time" among idle theoreticians.

However, this misunderstanding of the philosophical enterprise is more a problem of ignorance about the nature of the philosophical activity and more so the failure to comprehend

the philosophical enterprise as a mental activity that is inseparable from normal intellectual engagement. This failure has quite often led some people to see philosophy as a pursuit for "special" or "abnormally" minded persons.

There is no doubt that the Eurocentric notion of philosophical and non-philosophical races has contributed to, and enhanced this misunderstanding of philosophy. The claim that only western (European) races were capable of engaging in critical and logical thinking made philosophy look like a concern for specific people and not others. But the basic nature of a philosophical engagement (and which the egocentric Europeans sought to hide) is that it is concerned with the rational or reasoning nature of man, and all human beings are also endowed with rationality which is realized through intellectual knowledge of essences expressed as concepts and ideas in the mind, and of relations of these essences expressed as judgements and reasonings in the mind. Thus, the first root of philosophy, and of philosophising is the rational nature of man. Philosophy, of necessity exists because man has a rational nature that enables him to engage in indepth inquiry of things.

Although all human beings are endowed with rationality and even ability to comprehend things to the most fundamental level, not all people are actively interested

in the rationalisation of phenomena in the manner of speculative philosophy. For many centuries people relied on traditions passed on from generation to generation but the modern man; driven by scientific inventions and discoveries is endlessly looking for reasons, foundations and justification of the knowledge available to us today as well as commonly held beliefs of our forefathers. Those who seek to rationalise these beliefs belong to the class of the so often misunderstood philosophers and they are few. Yet, those who dismiss such intellectual engagement are the majority who are simply satisfied with merely accepting and following what they see and hear, with no attempt to understand it or to seek justification for it.

In Africa, the problem of the philosophical enterprise has been compounded by forces both from within and without. The outside forces (Western specifically) first sought to portray African people as primitive and non-human and then used this to question their rationality. Once Africans were found to be wanting in characteristics found in Europeans, the next step was to try to annihilate black culture and replace it with the "superior" and "civilized" European culture. The justification for this often found its expression and support among European academicians whose work in turn was used as a point of reference by agents of European colonialism and imperialism. For instance, in Hegel's work, The Philosophy of History, we witness references to black people which are

meant to demean them and reduce them to a level where they could easily be seen as objects fit for subjugation. Hegel says:

> In Negro life the characteristic
> point is the fact that consciousness
> has not attained to the realization
> of any substantial objective existence -
> as for example, god, or law - in which
> the interest of man's volition is involved
> and in which he realizes his own being[1].

Hegel's thesis about Africa and those of his contemporaries were founded on outrageously racist opinion and the obsession to conquer and maintain a level of superiority over other (non European) races. Unfortunately such opinions were often used by subsequent European scholars to justify and enhance their incredulous theories aimed at maintaining the status quo, as used for example, in Lucien Levy Bruhl's formulations in his evolutionistic anthropology[2].

The views advocated by these scholars and the pictures they created of Africans became the popular European view through which interpretations about Africans were made. Thus, in Mudimbe's words, Africa - the European Africa specifically was invented, with illogicality and primitivity as its basic characteristic. The Africa thus invented became the focal point in the Western philosophical interpretations of a hierarchy of civilizations with Europe at the top and Africa at the bottom. The search for primitive cultures, especially in Africa, to sustain this hierarchy became a life-long commitment among some European anthropologists. The period of enlightenment and industrialisation found these

anthropological works as good sources of information for defining characteristics of "savagery" in opposition to enlightenment and civilization. The "Great divide" began to take shape, driven by the apparent epistemological locus through which non-western societies were contrasted with western epistemological standards.

The colonial period saw the suppression of Africa's historical existence where African traditions were forced to become the negative foil of European cultures. The possessive European desire to dominate Africa for imperialistic interest was often the overriding factor in the suppression and oppression of Africa, even though it was always pursued under the pretext of "civilising". Unfortunately this offensive domination of other cultures by European culture was not only wrongly justified through popular literature of the time (written by Europeans) but was also forcefully introduced in Africa through universalising the European culture and violently imposing it on the colonized people by annihilating that of the colonised.

Western philosophy played a crucial role in maintaining the status quo thus established. It became the mirror through which the Europeans looked at themselves and re-affirmed themselves as being 'better' and above all the epitome of humankind's civilization which all other cultures were to aspire to become. Any cultures that did not demonstrate a cultural similarity to Europe and especially as concerned

civilization from the European point of view, became the "other" - one which needed to be salvaged from primitivity and raised to the level of civilized societies. As Enrique Dussell has observed, Western philosophy (became) and has always been 'the philosophy of the centre' which designates the periphery and frames it as such[3]. It became the standard through which all other modes of thought were to be judged and to which they were to conform. Thus, through philosophy, a culture of domination was institutionalised and unfortunately, became the very embodiment of self-interpretation among the colonised, thus culturally disinheriting them.

Within the philosophical circles, the reaction to this subjugation of Africa led to a kind of rupture. African scholars began to question the validity of European knowledge on and about Africa(ns) which was being used to subjugate Africans. The onus for African scholars has been to re-establish the proper image of Africa. The first and foremost objective has been to establish that there is an African knowledge and then show how one can go about establishing the philosophical aspect of this knowledge. The starting point in this task was characterised by a rejection of the mythified image of Africa as created by Europeans. This was then followed by an assertion of the existence of an African worldview that is human and rational as any other.

Negritude is said to have been a powerful tool both ideologically and philosophically in the criticism of colonialism and Western power knowledge which sought to annihilate black

culture. The forceful nature of the negritude movement gave impetus to the criticism of the images created by anthropologists about Africa and the inherent preconceptions of non western societies. Thus, a post-primitive era began to take shape. Works which were sympathetic to the African culture began to emerge. The first work to emerge claiming to be African philosophy was by a Belgian Missionary Fr. Placide Tempels under the title <u>Bantu Philosophy</u>[4]. It is this work that more or less started off the so-called debate about African philosophy, and which is centred around the question of whether or not there is African philosophy.

The reaction to Tempels' 'Bantu Philosophy' within the question of African philosophy is mainly focused on the meaning and the major concern of African philosophy particularly in light of what Tempels presents as Bantu (African) philosophy and which was echoed by many African scholars and especially theologians. The question that many scholars who are engaged in this debate ask is whether African philosophy constitutes merely the implicit worldviews and interpretations of ethnic Africans. Some of the scholars are also concerned about the enterprise of collecting such worldviews and whether such recollection is of any philosophical importance especially if and when done without any critical assessment.

Africa's awakening to its place in the order of knowledge and its subsequent challenge to the Eurocentric myth of "otherness" has in no uncertain terms brought about a

re-thinking of the philosophical prejudices that sanctioned and justified European domination over other cultures. It has led to what Lucius Outlaw appropriately calls "deconstructive and reconstructive challenges" in African philosophy[5]. The deconstructive challenge is aimed at unmasking the Eurocentric parameters which were inherited from colonialism and which permeate the whole social structure of previously colonised African states. It is these inherent Eurocentric parameters that are at the centre of the continued intellectual domination of Africa and political and economic subordination of African countries by their former colonial masters. The reconstructive challenge on the other hand hopes to critically revitalize the historico-cultural African heritage which was systematically destroyed through colonialism and imperialism. It is an effort that probably has to think seriously along Ngugi wa Thiong'o's notion of "(d)ecolonising the mind"[6]. Thus, the philosophical discourse on Africa is focused on critically and reflectively re-thinking the African situation independently of Eurocentric parameters and categories. As Serequeberhan aptly puts it, "(t)he concrete resurrection of Africa, beyond the tutelage of Europe, requires - in all spheres of life - a rethinking of the contemporary state of affairs in terms that are conducive and congenial to the emancipation and growth of Africa and its diverse peoples. This then is the task of the African philosopher"[7] who must reorganise the thought of Africans in order to reconstruct its history and at the same time give a philosophical analysis of the actual problems that are facing Africa in the present day.

x   x   x   x   x

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the initiation of a heated debate on African Philosophy by Placid Tempel's celebrated "Bantu Philsophy,"[8] scholars, both from outside and within Africa, have attempted to tackle the contentious issue of African philosophy at various levels and from different perspectives. Questions have been raised as to whether there is anything unique about philosophy in Africa to warrant its "African Philosophy" label. Some scholars have agreed that there are certain aspects that are peculiar to philosophical knowledge in Africa, while others adamantly maintain that philosophy is universal and should therefore not be classified according to race or geographical region.

More contentious has been the question of whether Africans are capable of engaging in the rigorous mental activity that characterises philosophy. This contention emerges from the now well known Eurocentric view of philosophical and non-philosophical races contained in anthropological and historical works of people like Levy Bruhl and W.F. Hegel among others. Hegel, for instance, makes the following claim:" Africa is static, primitive and without a history, savage with no proper philosophy and is a culturally homegeneous continent"[9].

Many African scholars have denounced this Eurocentric interpretation of rationality based on race by offering case studies of what they feel atleast to the existence of Philsophically conscious people in Africa. One of these scholars is Odera Oruka, who in his ambitious project on indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy, has come up with a brand of African philosophy which he labels "Sage Philosophy" and which he uses to assert not only that Africans have great philosophical minds, but also that philosophy has always existed in Africa prior to the introduction of

Western value systems and modes of thinking in Africa.

The objective of this work is to establish the extent to which Odera Oruka's claim can stand the test of the ranging debate, by analysing and scrutinizing the philosophical basis of his "Sage Philosophy" using generally accepted philosophical parameters. "Sage Philosophy" is only one of the many works that have been produced in the recent past by African scholars to reassert the state and position of African philosophy, though some of these works have tended to be rather apologetic. The purpose of giving "Sage Philosophy" a critical review and appraisal is to carry the discussion on African Philosophy in general, and "sage Philosophy" in particular, further than where Odera Oruka leaves it. It is hoped that the issue raised in this work will put "Sage Philosophy" in a more clear persoective than it is in its present state.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adapted in this work revolves around the meaning of philosophy as a critical inquiry into things, and African philosophy as a contextual application of this inquiry.

Philosophy as a critical inquiry into issues aims at establishing a clear understanding of the <u>object</u> of the inquiry as a whole. It pays attention to the interrelatedness of things and their causal effect and atttempts to harmonize and integrate various aspects of human interests and activities into a comprehensive concreteness.

HYPOTHESIS

African Philosophy in general, and Sage Philosophy in particular have been offered by various scholars as show cases of serious philosophical inquiries. That hypothetical assumption here is that sage philosophy attempts to establish a comprehensive and concrete understanding

of the issue it raises thereby offering a body of knowledge that is philosophical .

The other assumption is that the individual sages cited in Sage Philosophy demonstrate a critical understanding of the issue they make comments on and that these comments amount to philosophical statements. This will be tested in this work.

OBJECTIVES

This work seeks to achieve two main objectives:

1. To put sage philosophy into a clear perspective vis-a-vis the debate on African Philosophy.

2. To critically evaluate the individual contributions of "philosophic Sages" to Sage Philosophy in particular, and African Philosophy in general.

JUSTIFICATION

Sage Philosophy is a relatively new approach in African Philosophy. Odera Oruka has been one of the first African philosophers to carry out field research on the contribution of African wise men to philosophical knowledge and have it published in a book form leading to the new approach called Sage Philosophy.

Few critical evaluations of this school of thought in African philosophy have been carried out. There is therefore need to

push sage philosophy further from where its mentors have left
it. This evaluation, it is hoped, will expose both the strengths
and weaknesses of sage philosophy, and eventually help it find
its place within the world of knowledge. Furthermore, there
is also need to highlight the important contributions that Odera
Oruka has made to the field of knowledge in general, and to African
philosophy in particular, through the Sage Philosophy project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although African Philosophy is still an emerging discipline
in the world's order of knowledge, a reasonable amount of literature
has already been published, particularly pertaining to the debate
that has fuelled interest on the issue.

Western anthropological and historical works offer us the
background information that can perhaps be credited for provoking
the debate that led to the whole question of African Philosophy.
Works such as G.W.F. Hegel's The Philosophy of History, Lucien Levy
Bruhil's Le Mentalite Primitive, Immanuel Kant on History by Lewis
White, offer some of the most blantant declaration of their perceived

primitivity and irrationality of non white races. It is such declarations

that may have led Placid Tempels, consciously on unconsciously,

to offer his Bantu Philosophy (1959) as an uplifting token for black

people. It is this work that ignited an unprecedented debate on African

modes of thought and whether these modes can actually be termed

philosophical. While people like Kant were clearly convinced that

black people had no place in the history of knowledge, he says:

"So fundamental is the difference between the two races of men

(black and white), and it appears to be as great in regard to mental

capabilities as in color" [10], Placid Tempels was more accomodative but

patronizing in his pronouncements on Africans. He syas; "Wisdom

of Bantu based on the philosophy of vital force is accepted by

everyone, it is not subjected to criticism, for it is taken by the whole

community as the "imperishable" truth" [11]. Elsewhere he further asserts;

"Only if we set out from the true, the good and the stable in native

custom shall we be able to lead our Africans in the direction of a true

Bantu civilization" [12]. These claims set an extremely reactive mood

among African scholars who felt that Placid Tempels' celebration of a

Bantu philosophy was no more than a furtherance of the existing Western

schemes to portray Africans as different from the rest of humanity and

consequently in need of civilization. Paulin Hountondji in African

Philosophy: Myth and Reality (1983) for instance argues that Tempels'

"Bantu Philosophy" was written basically for a non-African audience and

carried messages that simply aimed to perpetuate the predominant

European opinion on African and Africans as possible targets of

colonisation and transformation (p.48).

Other African scholars have stated their positions on this contentious issue. Odera Oruka's Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern debate on African Philosophy is a clear refutation of the views of Kant, Hume, Hegel, Tempels, and the like. In his work, Oruka sets out to demonstrate that in Africa, there exists wise men and women who despite their lack of modern formal education, demonstrate such critical thinking which is essentially philosophical. Oruka calls these people "philosophic sages" and says of them; "These sages have their own "elaborate" and argumentative reasons for their "doctrines" and views. Such reasons can, given the patience and dedication of a trained philosopher - inquirer, be extracted from the sages and can be written into philosophical literature" [13]. Sage philosophy offers us an interesting critique in chapter four and five of this work.

Other notable scholars on the issue of African Philosophy include Kwasi Wiredu's Philosophy and an African Culture (1980), On Defining African Philosophy (1981), "Formulating Modern Thought in African Languages: Some theoretical considerations", "The Akan Concept of Mind" (1983), "On an African Orientation in Philosophy" (1972), "How not to Compare African Thought with Western thought" (1977). Wiredu's general belief, is that traditional knowledge can contribute a great deal to the modern African search for an African Knowledge, provided such reappraisal is critical in its approach. He sees philosophy as helping to demonstrate the most basic and fundamental ideas which guide the actions of an individual or a group of individuals. The test of a contemporary African Philosopher's conception of African philosophy, he says, is whether it

enables him to engage fruitfully in the activity of modern philosophising with an African conscience.

Segun Gbadegesin's African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemprary African Realities (1991) is yet another noteworthy contribution to the growing literature on African Philosophy Segun believes that African Philosophy has a lot to contribute to the universal circle of knowledge and the African intellectual's task is to bring African philosophy to the level of the universal body of knowledge without losing relevance to the African context. He argues that contemporary African philosophers can learn a lot by probing into the philosophical foundations of traditional thought and the philosophical issues in the views of traditional philosophers, some of whom can still be identified, as in Odera Oruka's philosophic sages. But he cautions that such engagement should not be for its own sake but rather it should be undertaken with a view to shedding light on the resolution of contemporary problems.

Augustine Shutte too has put in some different perspectives on the debate on African philosophy. In his Philosophy for Africa, (1993) , he gives a background analysis of what he identifies as two senses of meaning in philosophy which seem to give rise to the two different approaches which have been adapted by differing camps of intellectuals on African philosophy. The first sense, he argues, emphasizes the universality of philosophical truth and even of the scientific philosophical method. Those philosophers in Africa who understand philosophy thus insist on the scientific approach. The second sense stresses the fact that actual philosophy is always produced in a particular culture and language develops particular sets of concepts to deal with particular intellectual problems that are felt to be important.

Those who interpret philosophy this way emphasize on its cultural context, hence use of traditional knowledge as background material.

Franz Crahay gives a notable statement of what he feels are the conditions which must be met before we can talk of an African philosopy. The first condition is that African philosopy must have individual critical thinkers. Secondly, African philosophy will have to relate itself to some known culture. Thirdly, African philosophy needs the invention of values to follow - attitudes, original linguistic resources, certain mental categories like symbolism that would launch it. Fourthly, African philosophers must loosen their mind from myth, and reflective knowledge must disengage itself from the mythical knowledge and rise to the critical level of knowledge.

Crahay takes issue with African intellectuals who adopt foreign trends and schools of thought whose theories give the picture of sympathising with the habits and characteristics of African thought. He argues that such theories should not be assimilated without subjecting them to a critical analysis. African scholars, he says, should instead reconstruct their own theories of knowledge within their own particularity.

V.Y. Mudimbe is perhaps one of Africa's most complex writers on the issue of African philosophy. In The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and Order of Knowledge (1988), he gives an extensive summary of various scholars who have written on and about African peoples, their history, literature, religion and philosophy. Mudimbe's analysis (in this work) of the historical background that brought about the much discussed issue of an African knwoledge and

the possibility of its ratioality is quite engaging. It is an insightful understanding of the problematic image that Africa has had to contend with ever since its first contact with the foreign world, especially the Western world. He argues that the creation of primitive societies by Western scholars and anthropologists was a kind of power game aimed at elevating European societies by contrasting them with the "other" societies that did not have characteristics of western value systems. It is these characterizations of societies that eventually led to both the physical and mental enslavement of Africans and the consequent attempts by the western societies to "civilize" Africans through colonialism.

John S. Mbiti's African Religions and Philosophy (1969) has been classified as an African's version of Tempels' Bantu Philosopy. Mbiti models his work along the Tempelsian methodology, argument, and conclusion. Mbiti's work is accused of making even more sweeping generalisations on African philosophy than Tempels, particularly on his interpretation of the African concept of time.

Tseney Serequeberhan has edited a remarkable book on African Philosophy (1991) in which various scholars who are considered to be an authority on African philosophy have contributed their ideas. Among the notable ones include Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka, Lansan Keita, Innocent Onyewuenyi, and others. Lansana Keita for instance, argues that research into traditional African thought systems has an important role to play in the social philosophies and technological orientations of modern Africa. In these critical times, he says, the African philosopher's contributions to African development in the areas of economic theory, political theory, historiography, anthropology, and other sciences of human behaviour should be of significance. He feels that

African philosophers should be concerned with the various problems afflicting Africa which need theoretical foundations upon which possible solutions can be approached, rather than enaging in academic debates for their own sake.This feeling is echoed by Tseney Serequeberhan when he says:

> To be sure, African thinkers can also reflect on their traditional "religious beliefs and myths". But if African thinkers are really to engage actual problems, then, it is clear that African philosophy has to - at some level or other - be concerned with the contemporary struggles and concerns facing the continent and its diverse peopels. For it is not the "beliefs and myths" of the peoples of Africa - in their intricate magnificence - that are mind boggling, but the concrete misery and political insanity of the contemporary African situations[14]

There is no doubt that there exists an expansive literature that either directly or indirectly relates to the issue of African knowledge in general and African philosophy in particular. The works reviewed here are those that directly relate to African philosophy as an ongoing concern. Other works will feature alongside those mentioned here in this thesis.

METHODOLOGY

The method employed in this work involves library research data collection, and analysis. Special reference is made to Odera Oruka's Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern African debate on African Philosophy, Acts Press, Nairobi, 1991, as the main text in this evaluation.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This work gives a critical survey of various views that have been posited on and about African philosophy. For purposes of scope and objectives, it does not seek to cover all the works that have been produced on the issue of African philosophy. It should also be noted that several works have also been produced in Franco-phone Africa but which are not readily availabe to the English speaking Africa particularly due to the problem of translation. The issues discussed in this work are confined largely to those works that are written in English including the few that have been translated from French to English.

The second chapter of this work is concerned with the definition of the term philosophy. An attempt is made to define philosophy first as originally understood by Greek thinkers and then as a term which is defined both in its narrow and broad sense. As a Greek concept, philosophy is seen as the search for wisdom, specifically the kind of wisdom that enables a person to use the knowledge he has wisely and for utilitarian purposes. In the definition a distinction is made between a person who may merely be knowledgeable but cannot be able to put that knowledge into good use and therefore lacks wisdom, and on the other hand, a person who not only has knowledge but also who knows and has the ability to utilise that knowledge for his own good and for the good of society.

The major questions that philosophy is interested in as far as humankind's search for knowledge is concerned are

also outlined in this chapter. These questions include:
the critical or epistemological question, the logical question,
the metaphysical question, the theological question and the
moral question. The role and relevance of philosophy or
the philosophical enterprise to the human society is also
highlighted. Philosophy, as is pointed out in this section,
can and has been used as a tool for formulating ideas and
theories which are then systematised as a body of knowledge
which can be used as source of reference in systems of
government, resolving problems, understanding nature and
in the general search for knowledge that can help in the
improvement of life. Philosophical inquiry can also be used
to affirm, judge, defend or condemn some of the beliefs
that we hold and through which we base our actions.

The thorny issue of the rationality debate and the
consequent categorisation of rational and irrational societies
(races) as witnessed in the Eurocentric myth of "otherness"
is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter three gives a critical analysis of the various
approaches, alternatively known as trends in African philosophy.
These approaches or trends are basically the various positions
that have been presented as attempting to define and show
what African philosophy is. These trends include the
ethno-philosophical approach, the nationalistic-ideological
approach, the professional philosophical approach, the
philosophic sagacity approach, which is also discussed in
greater detail in chapter four and five, and the hermeneutical

approach. An example or two representing each of these approaches is given and critically assessed at length.

Sage philosophy is the main concern in chapters four and five. Chapter four attempts to give a comprehensible definition of sage philosophy and also cites examples as given in Prof. Odera Oruka's book Sage philosophy. A selected analysis of issues that have been raised and discussed by the philosophic sages is given in this chapter. The reason for selecting particular issues for analysis is that not all the utterances by the sages can be said to be philosophical and some of those utterances were therefore seen to have no philosophical import. It was therefore necessary to select what was philosophically engaging and subject it to critical analysis in order to comprehend and come up with a clear understanding of the sage's point of view.

Chapter five gives an assessment of the criticisms that have already been given against sage philosophy. The merits and demerits of each criticism is assessed, showing its strength or weakness. Comparison between sage philosophy and other research works which have been produced along similar themes and methodology is made in an affort to bring out the true philosophical worth if any, of each work. These other research works that have been contrasted with sage philosophy include Marcel Griaule's Conversation with Ogotemmeli (1965) and Hallen B. and J.O. Sodipo Knowledge, Belief and witchcraft (1986). The methodology used in sage

philosophy is also given a critical analysis in this chapter.
Sage philosophy is assessed as an authentic trend in African
philosophy and the role it can play in enhancing development
in society.

A re-evaluation of African philosophy is the main concern
in chapter six. The possibility and conditions for the
affirmation of African philosophy are given and critically
analysed. The role of philosophy as a universal activity and
its particularity to the African context is assessed. The
thesis ends with concluding remarks on the current
state of African philosophy and a positive note about its future
progress.

N O T E S

I.   Hegel, The Philosophy of History p. 93.

2.   See in his works:

Les fonctions mentales dan tes societes inferieures

(1910)   and

La Mentalite Primitive (1922)

3.   Enrique Dussell, Philosophy of Liberation,
Orbis Books, 1985, pp. 1 - 8.

4.   Placide Tempels, "La philosophie bantoue (1945).

5.   Lucius Outlaw "African Philosophy: Deconstructive
and Reconstructive Challenges" in Contemporary
Philosophy: A New Survey, Vol. 5, African Philosophy,
Guttorm Floistad ed. Martinus Nijhoff, 1987, p.46.

6.   Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Decolonising the Mind,
Heinemann, 1987.

7.   Tsenay Serequeberhan, African Philosophy,
Paragon House, New York, 1991, p.23.

8.   Tempels,   Ibid.

9.   Hegel, Ibid. p. 99.

10.   See in Richard Popkins "Hume's Racism",
        The Philosophical Forum, Vol.9 nos. 2 - 3,
        1978, p.218.

11.   Tempels, Ibid p. 75

12.   Ibid p. 25.

13.   Oruka, p. 33.

14.   Serequeberhan, Ibid. p. 10.

CHAPTER   TWO

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY

2.1:   From the Greek Concept

THEAETETUS   :   Yes, Socrates, I am amazed when I think of such questions; by the gods I am. I find myself wanting to know what they can mean; and there are times when I become almost dizzy with the contemplation of them.

SOCRATES   :   I see, my dear Theaetetus, that when Theodorus called you a philosopher he spoke with a true insight into your nature. <u>For a feeling of wonder is what marks the philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder</u> (emphasis mine). He was not a bad genealogist who said that Irish (the messenger of heaven) is a child of Thaumas (wonder)

Plato, THEAETETUS.

The term philosophy comes from two Greek nouns <u>Philia</u> – meaning 'love' or 'friendship' and <u>Sophia</u> meaning 'wisdom'. The two terms therefore stand for 'love of wisdom'. The word philosophy is said to have been coined by Pythagoras in the 6th century B.C. Pythagoras was a Greek teacher who was respected and praised for his humility and clear-sightedness. He argued

that man can never attain absolute wisdom, but can, and shou :
only be a lover or seeker of wisdom without presuming to be
absolutely wise.

Pythagoras called his own reflective thoughts the Philia-
Sophia , love or quest of wisdom, hence, philosophy. The er::
"philosophy" therefore came to be associated with the love for
wisdom. But the love of wisdom which is called philosophy mu:
be seen as that which finds expression in the quest, effort ind
in striving to acquire, possess and retain wisdom. It is the
serious commitment towards pursuing that which is accepted as
constituting wisdom.

Wisdom however, should not be mistaken to mean the sar
thing as knowledge. A person may know a lot and still be unwise.
Wisdom involves knowing as well as the ability and conscious
effort or purpose towards putting what one knows into good use.
A doctor who knows all the various drugs and methods of treating
a particular disease but does not put this knowledge into good
use cannot be said to be wise. A person who possesses know lec
but misuses it is also not a wise person, neither is the one who
knows a lot but sits on that knowledge.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says in his book
Summa Contra Gentiles, "A man is to be called wise when he
knows what he has to do and plans and manages to do it well"[1].
Hence, wisdom involves several things: an end or purpose t

be attained; an appreciative knowledge of this purpose; an ability; an inclination, and a steadfast effort to achieve the known purpose in the best possible manner[2]. Thus, wisdom arising from the subjective self must find its meaning from the above. One who is wise must be aware of what it is he wishes to seek after, he must have the ability to acquire it and make a conscious effort towards acquiring it and must also be in a position to determine the best way(s) of acquiring it. Philosophy can therefore be said to be in search of all things worth knowing and working for and which attract the best efforts of the best minds and wills. This is to say that philosophy seeks the deepest of knowledge in totality.

2.2. As An Inquiry into Things

The term philosophy is often loosely used in casual speech. In many instances, we tend to attribute a "philosophic attitude" to the way people handle their lives every day. When faced with a serious situation that demands immediate action or response, a person may panic and lose control of himself or he may solve the crisis diligently and effectively. If one does the latter, we may attribute his response to a philosophical mind. Thus, we can say the person has faced the problem serenely without panicking, hence philosophically.

People tend to have a set of principles of conduct through which they operate under various circumstances. These principles

may sometimes develop to what can be loosely referred to as one's "philosophy of life". This is to mean that there are certain basic convictions that one goes back to when called upon to resolve an issue or a problem. Hence, the one holding such principles or convictions may be said to be philosophical in his approach.

Philosophy may be understood as an attitude of mind in the sense that it is an activity through which people interpret things with a critical but appreciative understanding, and at the same time see the interrelationship of things which makes them into a whole. Philosophy is thus the mental or intellectual activity which enables one to think clearly and consistently about things.

A philosophical person is critical about meanings in things. He makes an attempt to clarify vague and confused ideas so as to make those ideas as meaningful as possible. The philosopher is one who does not accept beliefs dogmatically but rather tries to establish the grounds on which those beliefs are held, not accepting to be misled into holding false ideas.

Philosophical thinking is not just an activity for its own sake. It should help in the revelation of nature so that the one to whom such revelation occurs gains a vantage point over the operations of nature through which he can harness it for his use or devise ways of living harmoniously with it. Philosophical pursuit for its own sake without relating it to the larger reality becomes sterile and unsatisfying. Philosophy should help one

apprehend the complexities of nature, discover oneself and establish meaningful relationships with other fellow beings.

The attitude of inquiry towards any subject matter is one of the factors that distinguishes philosophy. Though philosophical inquiry may be directed at anything in whatever field of knowledge, its aim is always to clearly understand the object of inquiry as a whole and as being of interest to man. This is to say that philosophy pays attention to the interrelatedness of things and their causal effect. It attempts to harmonize and integrate the various aspects of human interests and activities thus trying to apprehend things in their concreteness.

In its holistic approach, philosophy takes into account the human factor. Philosophy does not just seek to understand the nature of the world in its dynamic wholeness. It also inquires how man, with his limited sense organs and powers of interpretation can know the world as it really is. It involves the active human subject who seeks to know the nature and relatedness of the object - that which is outside man. Philosophy is therefore not as detached as science which sees the object of its study as different and independent of the subject studying it.

Since life constantly imposes on us the responsibility of making choices, it is imperative that we attribute value to things. For us to be able to discern which is of more value amongst a host of choices available to us, we need a well rationalised criterion. Philosophy then becomes an indispensable

tool of this exercise of choosing as we try to justify which of the choices is of more value to us than the other.

Philosophy differs, analogously that is, from science in respect of the kind of approach the two adopt in a given situation, in the kind of questions each raises, and in respect of aspects which each of them considers as being relevant. Whereas death may be of interest to a physiologist as an end to the physiological mobility of a human being, the same will be of interest to a philosopher in the interpretation of human satisfaction in life (happiness) and the question of life in the hereafter.

Philosophy as we have seen is interested in making inquiry into any basic set of related questions in any field of knowledge.

2.3: As a Science of Ideas

"Philosophy, like science, consists of theories or insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection"[3].

People often refer to terms such as "the philosophy of education," "the philosophy of art", "the philosophy of history" and so on. Reference to the term philosophy here suggests that the subject in question has formulated and arrived at a body of reasoned truths or conclusions which can be regarded as truisms. It may also suggest that such truths or conclusions are the background, the basis and the ultimate explanations of the thing to which they are referred as

'philosophy'. For instance, "the philosophy of history" may suggest that there are certain truths which form the basis on which history may be defined, explained and interpreted as a concretised system of knowledge from which we can discern certain constant patterns of expression.

In art, for instance, we can say that the beauty of a particular work of art can be interpreted through well reasoned paradigms which have for a long time been used and have come to be generally accepted as reflecting a true evaluation of any given work of art. Likewise, "the philosophy of education"suggests a body of reasoned truths, principles, or values which give meaning to the word education, showing its worth, and which indicates, in a basic way, the best means of achieving and imparting it. The "philosophy" of anything would therefore suggest the sum-total and system of reasoned truths which back it and give it meaning. The reasoned basis of anything therefore becomes its philosophy.

From the ongoing, we can say that the term philosophy is used to mean the effort and ability to acquire knowledge within a specific area or field of knowledge. The term therefore becomes restricted to some one phase of human activity or interest. It thus becomes a specialised or particularised way of interpreting things – hence, the philosophy of this and that.

Philosophy can be said to be a science of ideas in the sense that it seeks out ideas and systematises them into a body of knowledge. It inquires into all things knowable and takes on the character of a science in which man's ultimate effort is to interpret

and understand the universe. The object of philosophical inquiry encampasses all things that are naturally knowable to man and tries to interprete these things from their ultimate causes and effects. But what do we mean by saying that philosophy is a science of ideas?

Science, seen objectively, is a body of related data, set forth systematically, expressed with completeness and presented together with the evidence (proofs and explanations) which justifies and establishes these data as certain and true. Subjectively - as in philosophical thought - one may talk of a well rounded, systematic, evidenced and complete knowledge as held by an individual. How then is philosophy a science?

When we say philosophy is a science, we mean that it is a body of related data that is well reasoned, systematic, complete, evidenced and certain. We should here take note that evidence or proof does not necessarily mean experimental or laboratory evidence. Evidence must also be taken to mean reasoned or rational evidence as in the case of pure mathematics. It is also worth noting that laboratory data or experiments do not always amount to scientific evidence unless rationalisation has been employed to organise them into a harmonious order from which we can deduce conclusions with certitude. Likewise, we cannot test by laboratory devices the nature and value of reasoning nor the basic authority of conclusions which we draw by reason.

Philosophy is therefore a rational or reasoned science, and not a laboratory science. Though philosophy may make use of

conclusions drawn from laboratory experiments, it is in no way confined or hampered by the limitations of the sciences. It indeed sheds light on these sciences by focusing on principles that are fundamental in the understanding of certain phenomena. In comparing philosophy and other sciences, Cardinal Mercier says this;

> Philosophy does not profess to be a particularised science with a place alongside other such sciences and a restricted domain of its own for investigation; it comes after the particular sciences and ranks above them, dealing in an ultimate fashion with their respective objects, inquiring into their connections and the relations of these connections, until it finally arrives at notions so simple that they defy analysis and so general that there is no limit to their application. So understood, philosophy will exist as long as there are men endowed with the ability and energy to push the inquiry of reason to its furthest limit. So understood, it is a living fact, and it has a history of more than two thousand years[4].

We can therefore say that philosophy comes after and reflects upon other sciences. It seeks to establish and clarify with certitude the fundamental principles within which other sciences are founded and accepted as sources of knowledge. It uses reasoned proof or evidence to critically analyze the truths or truisms that characterise other particularized sciences. Through philosophical inquiry, one is able to have a fundamental grasp of some universal truths. Philosophy comes after and ranks above other sciences by drawing into basic unities or principles that constitute the vast world of knowledge which other sciences only deal with piecemeal.

Philosophy investigates everything that man is capable of knowing through the use of his intellect or reason by working on the data gathered through sense experience. Philosophy is therefore a human science, emerging from the human mental capabilities. Philosophy seeks the foundation for the edifice of human knowledge.

Whereas other sciences look for causes and reasons to evidence their data; philosophy seeks the last – the ultimate – or deepest causes and reasons. Philosophy is not satisfied with proximate causes, it seeks the root-deep evidence for its truths. It asks the question, "what ultimately is the reality of a thing?" It delves as deeply as the human mind can go in its investigation of reality, by attempting to unearth things actual and things possible, to their last discernible causes and reasons, as a means of discovering the ultimate explanation of reality, and enhance the numerous findings of the particular sciences.

2.4: The Essential Questions of Philosophy

> "Our subject is a 'collection of sciences',
> such as theory of knowledge, logic, cosmology,
> ethics and aesthetics, as well as a unified
> survey"[5].

Man, the world over, has a quenchless thirst for knowledge. Since time immemorial, man has always sought to know, to discover and possibly to conquer. The human mind is constantly asking questions and attempting to answer them in the most convincing manner. There is a genuine desire in man to collect data with their explanations, their justifications, their

evidence and proof in order to come up with a unified consistent system of knowledge.

The philosophical efforts of man have tended to give a meaningful answer to one or several other fundamental questions that arise out of the nature of the universe and the nature of man. There are certain universal questions which anyone professing to philosophize must be interested in asking or attempting to answer in one way or the other. We can mention here a few of such questions:

(a)   The Critical or Epistemological question:

The critical question is concerned with true and certain knowledge. On what basis, for example, can we trust human knowledge? Truth, in the light of human knowledge is a relation. It exists between two things; the mind (subject) and a reality (object). Truth exists when the mind forms a judgement that accurately squares with the reality upon which it is judging. When we know things accurately and factually, we have truth about them.

But why should we be concerned about the truth and certitude of knowledge? Knowledge as such, has value both in itself and as a means to an end. When we seek to know about something, we normally want to find the truth about that thing and possibly use that knowledge to make a decision. For that reason, we need assurance so that the knowledge we get about a thing is true and reliable knowledge for if it happens not to be true, then we shall be mistaken into making wrong decisions based on wrong information.

Throughout the history of mankind, theories, beliefs and opinions have tended to be relative, changing with times, situations and popular fashion. We have also witnessed diverse opinions and beliefs among great scientists and thinkers regarding certain realities and phenomena, all expressing differing points of view about the same things. This apparent diversity and relative interpretation of what has come to be regarded as knowledge gives rise to the critical question of the reliability of human knowledge. In the face of all those differing opinions and changing beliefs, can we trust that the human mind is really capable of discovering true and genuine knowledge or are we to contend that we can only make guesses at what we claim to know? How can we tell that what we claim to know or the knowledge someone claims to have is true knowledge?

We can test our beliefs or claims of knowledge by using three main tests of truth, viz: the correspondence theory, the coherence or consistency theory and the pragmatic theory. Through these tests of truth, we can establish to a certain extent whether the beliefs and opinions we hold are true or not and thereby determine if our claims to knowledge are valid or not, and therefore whether we can reliably make use of that knowledge or not

The Correspondence theory holds that truth is that which conforms to fact or agrees with the actual situation. Truth therefore would be the agreement between the statement of fact and the actual fact; or between the judgement and the environmental (situational) condition of which the judgement

claims to be an interpretation. Truth then, has to do with the claims or assertions that we make about things. Our claims of knowing something or some reality can be tested as true or false by verifying with the factual state or reality of what we claim to know about. If the claims we make agree with fact, then our claims are true, if they do not agree with fact, then they are false.

The correspondence theory is important in judging the various theories, beliefs and opinions held by people. This is so because one can verify for themselves (if in a position to do so) whether the prevailing claims to knowledge are true or not and if this knowledge is reliable or not. This way, we can be in a position to accept or dismiss any claims without risking the possibility of being misled.

Critics of this theory however feel that it makes a serious assumption about our judgement of reality. The theory of correspondence seems to assume that our sense data are always clear and accurate and that they disclose the nature of the world just as it is. But the critics ask, on what basis can we know for sure that our interpretation of phenomena constitutes a factual understanding of it? We can say that our knowledge of reality is limited within our powers of perceiving it and therefore we tend to believe in what our minds understand and accept as reality or fact.

Our knowledge of any reality is therefore confined to our sense data and when we claim to make judgements that

correspond to reality, we are not in a position to explain that reality outside or independently of our mental perception. There are also areas within which the correspondence theory would not seem to be relevant simply because there are no objects outside the area of human thought with which we can make comparisons to see or test whether what we hold corresponds with reality. For example, our understanding of meanings, relations and values such as those found in mathematics, logic and ethics has no objects outside our mind which we can use to verify whether what we hold correspond to reality. How then can we verify the truth of such beliefs? Perhaps the coherence or consistency theory might offer us a way.

The Coherence theory basis its truth in the consistency or harmony of all our judgements. A judgement is true if it is consistent with other judgements that are known or accepted to be true. Hence, a true judgement must logically cohere with other relevant judgements. For us to know the truth of something, we must judge it according to what we have already discovered to be true. Coherence theory demands that there be at least an inner or formal consistency in what is under consideration. Mathematics, for example offers a system of judgement which is made consistent by established definitions and axioms which may be used to develop a geometry which is implied by them and which is also consistent with them. Consistency is also upheld by certain formal laws of thought, like the law of contradiction which holds that we cannot say something "is" and "is not" at the same time.

The truth of our claim must either be one or the other and not both at the same time.

Some critics of this theory argue that it does not offer a concrete proof of testing truth because one can, and people do construct coherent systems which are true as well as false. How can we then be able to distinguish between true consistent systems and false consistent ones? Is there a way we can clearly delineate consistent truth and consistent error using this theory? To accept this theory, it seems, we have to grant that coherent truth simply implies inclusiveness and orderliness as well as consistency in the claims and judgements that we make.

The coherence theory is said to be too formal and rationalistic, dealing mainly with logical relations between propositions. For this reason, it appears not to give us an adequate system of testing truth in our everyday practical experience. In real life, problems arise differently and sometimes suddenly and we have no time to refer back to our previous judgements of similar cases. There ought to be, it seems, tangible situations and events with which we can test the consistency of our judgement upon them. But even then, such judgement(s) may not always be relevant in solving our daily problems.

The pragmatic theory or the test of Utility is thoroughgoing in its empirical interpretation of experience. For the pragmatist, the test of truth is utility, workability or

or satisfactory consequences. According to this approach, there is no static or absolute truth. Rather, truth is what happens to a judgement. In other words, truth is established in the process of our experiences.

William James, a pragmatist says this of truth, "true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we can not"[6]. What this means is that what we hold as true can only be so if we can put it into good use and get positive results from using it. Otherwise if we cannot put into use our ideas, or knowledge, or if we can but end up with negative results, then those ideas are not true. John Dewey, another pragmatist says this about pragmatic truth:

> That which guides us truly is true -
> demonstrated capacity for such guidance
> is precisely what is meant by truth....
> The hypothesis that works is the true one,
> and truth is an abstract noun applied to
> the collection of cases, actual, foreseen
> and desired, that receive confirmation in
> their works and consequences[7].

Hence, an idea, a theory or a hypothesis is true if it works out in practice or if it leads to satisfactory results. Workability, satisfaction, consequences and results are therefore key words in determining true ideas or true knowledge from a pragmatic point of view.

Pragmatism, however, runs into problems because of its relativistic approach to truth. From a pragmatic point of view, an idea may hold true because it works for one person or in a given situation but the same idea will be false if it fails to

work for another person or in a different situation. What this implies is that truths are as many as they seem to work for different individuals and for different situations. Pragmatism may not be offering a genuine measure of truth in the sense that there is a possibility that even untrue ideas or beliefs may lead to what one may wish to view as satisfactory results. This gives the impression that truth can exist hand in hand with false beliefs. But this appears absurd. We cannot therefore declare with finality that all beliefs which work are true.

Having looked at the various ways in which we can test the truth of our knowledge, one may wish to ask which of these theories holds the best and most reliable way of verifying the truth of our beliefs. Harold Titus says this of these theories.

> Each of these separate theories of truth may be so stated that it seems to include the truth of the other theories... the theories supplement rather than directly contradict each other[8].

Further on Titus summarises our method of testing the truth of our knowledge as follows:

> Truth is the faithful adherence of our judgements and ideas to the facts of experience or to the world as it is; but since we cannot always compare our judgements with the actual situations, we test them by their consistency with other judgements which we believe are valid and true, or we test them by their usefulness and practical consequences[9].

Hence, we can test and verify our knowledge by using all the three theories of truth as when and where each of them applies. We have therefore seen that the critical or epistemological questions of philosophy involves our knowledge of things

and the ways in which we can test the truth of that knowledge so as to be able to put it into proper use.

(b)   The Logical question

The logical question seeks to establish the correct procedure in thinking and reasoning out things. It investigates the process or function of reasoning, pointing out what makes it a correct, legitimate and justified process. In this question, we study the operations of the mind or intellect and how these operations help us to reason correctly by formulating some procedure which we can call the 'laws of thought'. This kind of study Is what we know as formal logic or dialects.

In this process the mind goes through three stages of operation viz: the forming of ideas, judging, and reasoning or informing.

During the first operation, ideas are formed, that is, worked out, by the abstractive power of the attentive mind working on the findings of the senses, as held inwardly in the imagination. The forming of ideas, or apprehension, is the mind's basic operation, which it excercises by means of attention and abstraction.

In the second operation, the mind compares the ideas or concepts acquired in the first operation, in an attempt to establish likeness and differences, and to pronouce upon its findings. This is called judging and is the basic process of thinking. The judgement so made becomes a thought. When the mind judges or pronounces in such a way as to square with fact, its judgement is true, otherwise its judgement is false.

The third and final operation of mind is reasoning or inferring. Reasoning is the process of thinking things out. This is the most complex operation of the mind and is a roundabout or mediate way of reaching a judgement that cannot be made immediately. It is an operation of the mind in which the relation of two ideas as agreeing or disagreeing, is inferred from their respective relation to a common third idea. in this way, the mind is able to employ correct procedures of reasoning in order to come up with sound judgements.

(c)   The Metaphysical or Ontological Question

The ontological question deals with the issue of reality in its most general, most abstract and most profound meaning. It is the question of being, that is, being as-such or being in its non-material nature. This question seeks to investigate the nature, properties and classification of being.

As a study, the science of non-material being is called metaphysics- which literally means "after-physics". The term 'physics' here means "nature(s) or essences of things. Metaphysics encompasses both ontology - the theory of the nature of ultimate reality, and cosmology - the study of the development of the universe as an orderly system. Ultimate realitieis such as causes, first principles and substances are studied through abstraction in an effort to explain what lies beyond the physical universe that we have come to know through sense data.

Such questions as the origin, nature and purpose of universe constitute an important part of the metaphysical question and in the efforts to understand and answer it, a rigorous and critical reflection must be employed. Hence, we find that everywhere in the world, human beings are always interested in and have always asked questions about the universe. Philosophy has often come in to offer some opinions or theories regarding the nature of the universe, the causal theory of the universe and several others are examples of philosophers' attempts to understand the nature of the universe.

As a science of non material being, metaphysics is interested in abstracting essense of beings either as spiritual substances or as bodily things which are stripped of materiality by abstraction; it may also be any being, substantial or accidental, which exists or has influence in the field of bodies and non-bodies alike and hence is not limited to the material. Ontology - the science of being - is only one part of the metaphysical question. The other parts or concerns of this question include theodicy - the study of non-material real infinite Being, and Criteriology - the study of universal or realities present to real knowledge.

(d)   The Theological question

The theological question is concerned with the existence, nature and operations of God. It attempts to answer or give proof to the notion that there exists a first efficient cause and the last final cause of all things. The belief in God or gods is widespread among humankind and sometimes it tends to

occupy a very central place in the religious practices of the people. The question of the existence of God as a supreme being is therefore of great importance in the understanding of not just the universe but also the purpose of human life. Several arguments have been offered, and refuted as well, for belief in the existence of God. One of the arguments, the cosmological argument is based on the principle of sufficient cause. By this we mean that the world is an effect or a by-product of some making. Hence, it must have had a cause, outside itself, which is sufficient enough to account for its existence. This argument holds that we experience a series of causes until we come to the first caust or a self- existent being. We can therefore assume that this first cause is non-material since it exists beyond and above our material world, as the starting point of everything else .

This argument runs into problems because it fails to adequately explain the nature of what it refers to as the original cause. If we are talking of a series of causes, we ought also to show what caused the first cause. But this consequently would imply that the causation is ad-infinitum and therefore there is nothing like a first cause. One may also wish to ask if everyting must have a cause then why should we stop somewhere and call this point 'God'? David Hume[10] offers criticisms against this argument which are helpful for further reading.

Another argument for the existence of God, the ontological argument, revolves around our mental perception of a perfect being. This argument was first mooted by St. Anselm in the middle Ages[11]. St Anselm's idea of God can be summarised in a nutshell, "that which none greater can be conceived"[12]. This

perception sees God as that idea, concept or whatever we may call it, which we are capable of perceiving as the most perfect, over and above everything else.

The contention in this argument is that it leads us into assuming that God is only an idea in the mind and it is therefore difficult to prove His existence, since there is no reality from which we can deduce this existence. We cannot deduce the idea of a being from that idea itself of the being. We need at least some reality from which we can qualify and possibly quantify the perfection of a being at its highest level. This argument therefore still begs the question. Notable thinkers such as John Hick, Gaunilon, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant and Bertrand Russell[13] have discussed and given critiques of these arguments in their respective works which I am not in a position to go into at this stage.

The teleological or design argument holds the view that there exists such a well planned order and progress in the universe that there must be an immanent intelligence and purpose behind it. This immanent intelligence we call "God". Hence, God is said to be the supernatural force behind the ordering of the universe. The problem with this view is that just as the other arguments, it still begs the question. How, for instance, do we infer the existence of a transcendent God from the assumption that the universe is orderly? And on what basis can we say for sure that the universe has a purposeful order while in fact there is a probability of disorder and even chaos

in the universe? These and others are some of the difficulties that arise in this argument.

The theological question of philosophy is also concerned with the concepts of a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and other qualities that are generally attributed to God as a power unto himself.

(c)   The Moral or Ethical question

The ethical question is concerned with concepts such as right and wrong, good or bad, and duty in relation to human conduct and humankind's conscious and deliberate activities of life. It asks and attempts to answer questions such as, "What is the end or goal of human actions?" What are the norms of human conduct and what are the properties and consequences of human acts"? A human act may be interpreted in terms of a thought, word, deed, desire, or even an act of omission, which is performed by a human being who is responsible; that is, when a person knows what he or she is doing and does it willfully.

The moral   question also attempts to establish why human beings ought to act in certain ways and not others, and for what purpose should human beings seek morality. The issue of a satisfactory or happy life is also of concern here. The moral question is of great importance, even to people who are unphilosophical for it raises questions that touch on the daily interaction between individuals   and at the same time gives   a meaning to these

interactions.

So far we have seen that there are certain questions which are universal, so to speak, and which ought to interest or capture the attention of anyone claiming to be philosphizing regardless of the geographical location at which such activity is undertaken. The importance of this assertion lies in the fact that human beings are really the same, albeit with differing abilities, and the universe, even though it does manifest itself in different ways to different people, does elicit certain responses from human beings which can be said to converge at a certain level of inquiry. Hence, human beings owing to their rationality which puts them above other forms of beings, are bound to ask questions about the universe or the environment within which they live.

Is Philosophy of any importance?

It has been noted that all fields of study as we know them today were once all studied under philosophy before they developed their own methods of inquiry to become autonomous. Philosophy, or the love of wisdom therefore, can be said to have been the foundation from which other disciplines developed. Philosophy has been of great importance to individual persons, to human social systems and to all the particular sciences as well. It is through philosophy that individual thinkers like Plato, Machiavelli, K. Marx, Nyerere and several others found a good base on which to express political ideas which they thought were important in successful governing. Philosophy on many occassions has been

used as an avenue of formulating norms of conduct as in ethics, systems of government, in resolving puzzling phenomena and even in the discovery and understanding of the operations of the universe. All this has been made possible through the rational inquiring nature of philosophy.

Social life can be improved through the philosophical formulation and interpretation of the knowledge and truths which are fundamental to social order, sound economic policies and agreeable political systems. Most ideologies are based on what some individual philosophical thinker thought was the ideal social system. Communism, socialism and democracy, among other ideologies were all founded on individual philosophies but have gone a long way in determining the social structures that a given State wishes to adopt and how such structures may influence good governance or bad rulership.

Philosophy helps both the individual and the society at large to realise their full capabilities in the search of a meaningful life. Individuals may initiate personal effort towards understanding and interpreting certain fundamental realities within the human environment. But such knowledge would be of no use unless it is disseminated and given meaning within a social context. Thus, philosophy must serve the purpose of enlightening not just the individual but the larger society as well.

Philosophy, through reasoned principles may affirm, defend, judge or condemn the various basis on which the particular sciences are founded, as not giving a true picture

of reality. Philosophy helps to analyse and point out mistaken notions and claims which other sciences may hold, without losing sight of the important contribution of those sciences to certain and reliable knowledge. Even as it criticises, philosophy aims at correcting and clarifying the not so clear basis of belief in other sciences.

2.5: Philosophy and Eurocentrism

"(So) fundamental is the difference between the two races of men [black and white], and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capabilities as in color [14].

The idea of attributing rationality and therefore philosophy to some races and denying it to others has been propagated for some time and can be attributed to racism. Racism finds its classical expression in works of some European Scholars such as Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and Levy Bruhl[15] to mention just a few. Christian Neugebauer gives a good analysis of Hume's and Kant's racism[16].

Hegel's claims about the state of culture in Africa can be summed as follows:

"Africa is static, primitive and without a history, savage with no proper philosophy and is a culturally homogeneous Continent".

He further asserts that Africa "is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it - that is in its northern part - belong to the Asiatic or European world"[17]

The claims made by Hegel in his philosophy of history about Africa are no more than a glorification of the European spirit as opposed to the African spirit. This is propagated through his (Hegel's) categorical exclusion of Africa from the historical process (as evidenced in his theory) through which, according to him, the human spirit fulfils itself. If Africa therefore is not part of this process, then it means Africa is static and is in essence, at the extreme opposite of Europe, as its (European) antithesis.

Hegel's contentious view is no more than a mental disposition which seeks to demonstrate a European self-affirmation in opposition to other races. It is an attempt to portray non-white races as culturally and intellectually inferior to white races. As Lucius Outlaw points out:

> This orientation to Africa so poignantly expressed by Hegel was widely shared by many of its earliest European visitors (explorers, missionaries, seekers after wealth and fame, colonizers etc), whose travelogues and "reports" served to validate the worst characterisation as the European invention of Africa and Africans out of the racism and ethnocentrism infecting Europe's project in its encounter with Africa as a different and black other[18].

Hegel's philosophy of history contains one of the most blatant declaration of European ethnocentrism on paper. His contention no doubt must have given impetus to the debasement of non-white races, and especially Africans, and which was used as a springboard for justification of imperialistic and colonial adventures in Africa by Europeans.

The racism of Hume and Kant shows clearly in their contention that Africans, in virtue of their blackness, are precluded from the realm of reason and civilization. Witness Hume's declaration, for example:

> I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to whites. There never was a civilized nation of any complexion than white[19].

According to Hume, it is only those with white skins who possess the faculty of rationality and by virtue of this, only they can lay claim to civilization.

Kant on the other hand, while commenting on the differences between black skinned people and white skinned ones says this:

> (So) fundamental is the difference between the two races of men [black and white], and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capabilities as in color.
> .... this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid[20].

It is clear that in their denial of rationality and civilization to the black people, these 'flag-bearers' of European ethnocentrism were using race, and the issue of complexion as the dominant factor in deciding who is rational and civilized and who is not. No doubt a refutation of such unwarranted racism would be appropriate in order to expose its contradictions and ridiculousness, but the scope of this work does not allow me to do so at this point.

European ethnocentrism found a fertile ground and reached its peak in the field of anthropology, a venture purposely designed by Europeans to study non-European peoples and cultures as its foil. Anthropology found its support and blessings in colonialism and imperialism. The anthropological venture (as undertaken by Europeans) was more precisely devoted to portraying non-western people as 'savages', 'inferior', 'primitive', and 'irrational' - as opposed to the rational and 'highly cultured' Europeans[21].

Lucien Levy Bruhl is an exemplification of this anthropological trend. Bruhl devoted his entire life and career to demonstrating the radical disparity between the nature and quality of mind of the European and that of what he called 'primitive mentality' which he attributed to non-European peoples and cultures. Levy Bruhl claimed that Western societies emerged from the mediterranean civilization which had already developed a rationalistic philosophy and positive science, whereas 'primitive' societies were governed by a mentality completely different and opposed to the European one.

Levy Bruhl bases his argument on the assumption that mental operations are sociologically determined and culturally bound (rational for Europeans since sociologically they are supposed to be at the highest level of civilization) and that the principle of identity, the notions of causality and the conception of time were features exclusively belonging to

western oriented logic and which were wholly inaccessible to the minds of the 'primitives'. It was for this reason that Levy Bruhl went on to categorise non-European societies as being pre-logical[22].

It is apparent in Levy Bruhl's work that his aim was to establish <u>rationality</u> as a prerogative of western civilization and as an attribute of the white man which set him apart - over and above the rest of humanity. The description of non-European races, and especially Africans as being irrational, primitive and pre-logical was used as an excuse and as a basis to colonize and christianize Africans so that they may be "civilized" like the white man.

Levy Bruhl's work is essentially an affirmation of what Hegel set out to achieve in his philosophy of history - that is, to demonstrate the culture of black people as the antithesis of western cultures by claiming that western (European) societies are marked by a rationalistic culture while non-western (African) are marked by pre-logicalism and primitivity Levy Bruhl expresses this view thus:

> The two mentalities which are face to face are so foreign to each other, so divergent in their habits, so different in their means of expression! The European employs abstractions almost without thinking, and the simple logical operations have been rendered so easy for him by his language that they cost him no effort. With the primitives, thought and language are of a character almost exclusively concrete.... In a word, our mentality is above all 'conceptual', the other barely so[23].

Rationality, as Bruhl claims is therefore given naturally to Europeans and we are meant to believe that even the most uneducated European is endowed with excellent logical thinking since as Bruhl puts it, "the simple logical operations have been rendered so easy for him by his language...". Thus, as long as one's language is classified as being of a European race, then one has no problem with rational thinking. Of course we are aware that language alone does not qualify one to be a logician nor does it make one a rational critical thinker. We are also fully aware that the European societies that Bruhl is praising so much as the epitome of rational thinking were all once primitive, or traditional so to speak, before they developed into industrialised and science oriented societies. Even most of the European language(s) that Levy Bruhl takes so much for granted as being naturally endowed with logical structures are merely a combination of several borrowed words, some from Greek, others from Latin languages and cannot therefore be convincingly credited exclusively to some specific European race.

It is also not the case that African languages lack logical coherence that is required for one to be able to think or argue rationally. This has been well documented in Kwame Gyekye's 'The Akan Conceptual Scheme', in Segun Gbadegenin's 'The Yoruba Concept of a Person'[24], among other several works on and about African thought systems. The views about non-western societies given impetus by commentaries (always negative) of early explorers and travellers[25] no doubt dwelt on creating negative images of African peoples and as of Africa being inhabited by exotic, nude, cruel and mentally

retarded people[26].

These negative images and commentaries later formed part of a series of cultural oppositions between European and non-European people (Africans for this matter), and were used as the basis on which human beings began to be classified (through European standards) as being civilized or uncivilized, rational (and therefore philosophical) or irrational (unphilosophical). Humanity was consequently split into two epistemological camps, one (western or European) which was characterised by scientific knowledge owing to its rationality and therefore demonstrating philosophical thinking; and the other, African, which was pre-logical, showing no systematised knowledge hence unscientific and consequently incapable of any philosophy.

A philosophical interpretation of the hierarchy of civilizations was thereby established. The European one being at the top and the African one at the bottom. Anthropologists, missionaries and colonisers alike put a rubber stamp on this notion and wasted no time in searching for primitiveness, barbarism and paganism among Africans as characteristics of disparity between European culture and African culture, and as features who's mission (Europeans) was to eradicate. We might want to ask ourselves why if two societies are different from each other, then one of the two societies must decide that theirs is the more superior and therefore the one worth adopting. Unless of course we can find convincing utilitarian value in such

a notion, then we can only say that the idea is based on purely ethnocentric chauvinism, and a misguided feeling of superiority.

The western academic circles seem to have borrowed a leaf from this European attitude of self-righteousness. It is the European scholars who until recently gave rationalisation to the belief that Africans were irrational. These intellectuals managed to establish an epistemological paradigm which sought to portray Europe as being the epitome of rational philosophical knowledge from which all other societies were to be judged as lacking philosophy. Rationality and philosophy was therefore basically attributed to and as belonging only to European societies and none other. It is with this picture in mind that we try to understand and interprete the question of African philosophy and the amount of debates and interest it has initiated.

N O T E S

1.   See Paul J. Grenn, AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY, B. Herder Book Co., New York, 1943, p.3.

2.   Ibid.

3.   Joseph A. Leighton, THE FIELD OF PHILOSOPHY, fourth edition, Appleton Century - Crofts, Inc., New York, 1930, p.4.

4.   Cardinal Mercier D. MANUAL OF MODERN SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY, New York, Heder book Co., 1917, p.2.

5.   Roy Wood Sellars, THE PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1926 p.3.

6.   William James, PRAGMATISM, Longmans, Green and Co., Inc., New York, 1907, p.35.

7.   John Dewey, RECONSTRUCTION IN PHILOSOPHY, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1920, pp 156- 157.

8.   Harold Titus, LIVING ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY, Second edition, American book Co., New York, 1954, p.230.

9.   Ibid.

10.   See the following works:

David Hume (1711 - 1776) DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION.

Bertrand Russell, WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN, 1957.

David Hume, A TREATISE ON HUMAN NATURE, T.H. Green, ed., Longmans, London, 1874 Vol. I.

Rene Descartes, MEDITATION II in PRINCIPLES
OF PHILOSOPHY, translated by John Veitch,
La Salle, Open Court, 1941.

11. This argument is found in chapters 2 - 4 of St.
Anselm's PROSLOGIUM, Translated in Sidney Norton
Deane, THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE LIBRARY,
No. 54, La Salle, Open Court, 1939.

12. Ibid.

13. See the following works:

John Hick, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, Engelwood
Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1963, p.20.

Immanuel Kant, CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, translated
by N. Kemp Smith, Macmillan, London, 1933, Chapter 3,
Section 4.

Bertrand Russel, HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY,
Allen and Unwin, London, 1946, pp.859-860.

14. In Richard H. Popkin, THE PHILOSOPHICAL FORUM,
Vol.9, nos. 2 - 3, Winter-Spring, 1977 -78, p.218.

15. See for example the following works among others:

G.W.F. Hegel, THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY, New
Yorky Dover Publications, 1956, p.99.

Lewis White, B. ed., KANT ON HISTORY, Bobbs-
Merill, 1963, p.3.

Lucien Levy Bruhl, LA MENTALITE PRIMITIVE, fourth
edition, Paris, 1960.

16. Christian Neugebauer, "Hegel and Kant: A Refutation
of their Racism" QUEST, PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSIONS,
Vol.V, No.I, June, 1991, pp.51ff.

17.   Op.Cit.

18.   Lucius Outlaw, "African 'Philosophy': Deconstructive
       and Reconstructive Challenges, CONTEMPORARY
       PHILOSOPHY: A NEW SURVEY, Vol.5, African
       Philosophy, Guttorm   Floistad, ed. Martinus
       Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p.18.

19.   Richard   H. Popkin, "Hume's Racism", in THE
       PHILOSOPHICAL FORUM, Vol.9, nos. 2 - 3, Winter-
       Spring, 1977-1978, p.213.

20.   Popkin, Ibid, p.218.

21.   Anthropology was often encouraged by colonisers as
       a source of information which could be used in the
       attempt to penetrate African cultures so as to destroy
       them in the attempt to "civilize" them. Such information wa
       also useful to the colonial administration on how to
       handle Africans.

22.   Lucien Levy Bruhl, LES FONCTIONS MENTALES DANS
       LES SOCIETIES INFERIEURES, Paris, 1910.

23.   L. Levy Bruhl in Paulin Hountondji, AFRICAN
       PHILOSOPHY: MYTH AND REALITY, Hutchinson and
       Co. Publishers Ltd., 1983, p. 13.

24.   See for example the following works:

       Kwame Gyekye, AN ESSAY ON AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL
       THOUGHT: THE AKAN CONCEPTUAL SCHEME,
       Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

       Segun Gbadegesin, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY:
       TRADITIONAL YORUBA PHILOSOPHY AND
       CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN REALITIES, Peter
       Lang, New York, 1991.

Alexis Kagame, LA PHILOSOPHIE BANTOU-RWANDAISE
DE L'ETRE, Brussels, 1956.

25.   For example J. Bruce's expendition into Ethiopia
in 1970 and Mungo Park's journey through the
River Nile in 1795 from which stories of 'savages'
living in a 'dark' continent were recounted to a
European audience.

26.   See V.Y. Mudimbe, THE INVENTION OF AFRICA,
Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, p. 13.

SOME APPROACHES IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

3.1:   A   Background

There were and still are many and varying philosophical

efforts, some fruitful, others largely futile and fable.

There are multitudes of theories which are not true

philosophy at all, and which in general character, and in

their speculative and practical conclusions, are false and

harmful to minds and souls[1].

Having said that European ethnocentricism   apportioned

rationality and philosophy to western societies and categorically

denied it to non-western ones and particularly African societies,

the question we are left asking is,   Can we then talk of African

philosophy and what would we mean by calling it so ?   Is there

any knowledge arising out of and within African thought systems

that can be said to have any or some philosophical import?   If

any such knowledge does exist, on what basis can we call it

African philosophy?

The issue of the nature of African peoples, their history,

literature, religion and philosophy has been expressed in many

ways in the various discourses that have been written by both

African and non-African scholars and anthropologists alike, in

what V.Y. Mudimbe classically describes as 'The Invention of

Africa'. In his book of the same title (1988)[2] Mudimbe revisits

the historical background that brought about the much discussed

issue of an African knowledge and the possibility of its

rationality. Mudimbe's analysis gives a very insightful

understanding of the problematic image that Africa has had to

contend with ever since its first contact with the foreign world, especially the western world.

Mudimbe's argument is that most of the early discourses on Africa were mere creations of what their writers imagined and speculated to be the nature and history of African peoples. Christian Neugebauer believes as much when questioning Kant's source of information for his racist characterisation of black people. Neugebauer says, "Concerning scientific experience, Kant does not give us any empirical evidence (or experiment) to prove his experience. He just sums up the prejudices of the various academic circles of his time, with hardly any reference"[3]. The early anthropological works as presented by European scholars then represented an invented image of the particular cultures they purported to be studying or describing.

The creation of primitive societies can thus be understood as a kind of power game emerging from European ethnocentricism whereby Europeans credited themselves with knowledge and civilization, thereby raising themselves above others through the assumption that the others had no knowledge and neither were they civilized. By contrasting themselves (Europeans) to others (non-European) those advocates of European superiority were hopefully trying to reaffirm their knowledge (and therefore themselves) by denying the same (knowledge) in other societies. This contrast was supposed to be a mark of distinguishing Europeans from others.

As Mudimbe argues, stories about other societies and particularly African societies, as well as commentaries about their difference (from western ones) were aimed at asserting the European history and power knowledge by denying it to others. Missionaries, anthropologists and colonisers alike were all witnessing to the same episteme of European superiority and their efforts and discourses were all aimed at providing models which Africans were to adopt or be converted to. Thus, in their attempts to radically transform indigenous African societies to both western and christian standards, they established and imposed a mentality of opposing cultures based on the myth of superiority and inferiority which sought to completely suppress African traditions by replacing them with European culture.

Thus, the discourses on and approach to African knowledge were based on two types of mentalities; 1) Western - rational and functioning according to principles of logic and inquiring into causal determinations and relations, and, 2) The "other" (African) - primitive, pre-logical, completely dominated by collective representation (ethno) and strictly dependent upon mystical participation, the very opposite of western mentality. Most of these discourses have been basically concerned with the discrepancy between European knowledge and African knowledge and their aim is to describe this difference and classify it into opposing levels of human thought and culture, one with powerful conquering knowledge, the other lacking even in the most basic systematised form of knowledge.

Owing to the same forces that gave them impetus, that is, the need to assert themselves in opposition to others through colonialism and evangelization, the instruments behind this power game, viz: missionaries, anthropologists and colonizers, began to raise certain issues and ask fundamental questions regarding the best ways to approach and understand Africans fully in an effort to make their missions more fruitful and successful. Out of this emerged a more accommodating attitude towards Africans and their worldviews as an option towards devicing more reliable methods of forcing Africans to abandon their way of life.

It is within this transformed anthropological orientation that a Belgian missionary, Fr. Placide Tempels, embarked on a study of the Baluba of Central Zaire (then called Belgian Congo) in the 1910s and came up with what he called 'Bantu Philosophy'. This work was first published in French as "La Philosophie bantoue" in 1945[4]. Fr. Tempels work was the first to radically deviate from the position of classical anthropology founded on the notion of primitive mentality among non-European cultures and whose paradigms and survival depended on maintaining the status quo. Tempels' work was radical in the sense that he called for a recognition of the rationality of the so-called primitive societies thereby refuting the Hegelian and Levy Bruhlian theories of a black primitive mentality when such theories were being used as rationalisation of the oppression of black people at the time.

Even though Fr. Tempels' work may be best understood as arising from the need to understand Africans better and therefore be in a position to transform them through "civilization" via western cultural indoctrination and christianisation, it is nevertheless basically the single most thought provoking work that was to emerge regarding the question of African philosophy. No doubt, it has influenced and shaped the so-called debate about African philosophy.

Fr. Tempels hoped to present his "Bantu Philosophy" to colonialists of good faith as a possible aid to building a christian bantu civilization. His work, no doubt, expressed his disagreement on the then popular belief among European colonisers that Africans were backward and at the same time served as some kind of political manifesto for a new policy in the civilising mission. Tempels' argument was based on two simple premises: 1) that all human behaviour depends on a system of general principles - 2) if Bantu are human beings, then there is reason to seek the fundamental principles underlying their behaviour or their basic philosophical system. This is what he set out to do.

As scholars and missionaries as well began to grapple with Fr. Placide Tempels' 'new found knowledge', the question of African philosophy began to take centre stage within Africa as various scholars either affirmed or expressed their amazement at what Tempels was suggesting. From then on, African philosophy became and still is an issue of discussion

by both African and non-African scholars, particularly those in the field of philosophy. It is important for us at this point to look at Fr. Tempels work and its implications.

3.2:   Ethnophilosophy

In the attempt to define African philosophy ethnic qualifiers have been used to designate the philosophical perspectives of African peoples. African philosophy has been presented by some scholars as being the traditional (communal) 'philosophic' worldviews of the people. 'Ethnophilosophy' is a term which was first used by Paulin Houtondji[5] to label the works, mostly of anthropologists and theologians, in which African philosophy was being presented as and identified with traditional communal beliefs and practices. The ethnophilosophical position seem to claim that African philosophy is or was basically folk philosophy whereby the community philosophized as a whole group. Fr. Placide Tempels' 'Bantu Philosophy' belongs to this category and is henceforth used as the point of reference.

We will begin by looking at what Tempels thinks and says about bantu mentality. Tempels' general contention is that the Bantu (and by extension Africans) have a philosophy with its own internal coherence. This is based on the hierarchy of "forces" which runs downwards from God (at the top most) and the supreme incarnation of vital force, through man (including the dead ancestors and the living as well), to the animals, plants and the non-living objects. Tempels' position

here is that the Bantu have an ontology in which being is

conceived as "Vital force" and the universe (of the Bantu)

is experienced as an interrelation of these forces within the

whole realm of existence. This sort of interpretation of the

universe among the Bantu is thus said to be philosophical.

Tempels puts it this way:

> What has been called magic, animism,
> ancestor- worship, or dynamism - in
> short, all the customs of the Bantu-
> depend upon a single principle,
> knowledge of the Inmost Nature of beings,
> that is to say, upon their Ontological
> Principle. For is it not by means of this
> philosophical term that we must express
> their knowledge of being, of the
> existence of things?[6]

While explaining further on the understanding of

"force" among the Bantu and the central role this concept

plays in their interaction, Tempels observes:

> I believe that we should most faithfully
> render Bantu thought in the European
> language by saying that the Bantu
> speak, act, live as if, for them, beings
> were forces. Force is not for them an
> adventitious accidental reality. Force
> is even more than a necessary attribute
> of beings: Force is the nature of being,
> force is being, being is force[7].

Tempels does seem to agree that the Bantu have a philosophical

basis for their beliefs. But while scrutinized further, this

philosophical aspect is radically different from western

philosophy. The reason Tempels gives for this disparity is

that Bantu philosophy is basically derived from communal beliefs

and practices based on the notion of vital force as opposed

to the individualistic, logical and reflective nature of western

philosophy. Bantu philosophy is then uncritical as everybody

here is that the Bantu have an ontology in which being is

conceived as "Vital force" and the universe (of the Bantu)

is experienced as an interrelation of these forces within the

whole realm of existence. This sort of interpretation of the

universe among the Bantu is thus said to be philosophical.

Tempels puts it this way:

> What has been called magic, animism,
> ancestor- worship, or dynamism - in
> short, all the customs of the Bantu-
> depend upon a single principle,
> knowledge of the Inmost Nature of beings,
> that is to say, upon their Ontological
> Principle. For is it not by means of this
> philosophical term that we must express
> their knowledge of being, of the
> existence of things?[6]

While explaining further on the understanding of

"force" among the Bantu and the central role this concept

plays in their interaction, Tempels observes:

> I believe that we should most faithfully
> render Bantu thought in the European
> language by saying that the Bantu
> speak, act, live as if, for them, beings
> were forces. Force is not for them an
> adventitious accidental reality. Force
> is even more than a necessary attribute
> of beings: Force is the nature of being,
> force is being, being is force[7].

Tempels does seem to agree that the Bantu have a philosophical

basis for their beliefs. But while scrutinized further, this

philosophical aspect is radically different from western

philosophy. The reason Tempels gives for this disparity is

that Bantu philosophy is basically derived from communal beliefs

and practices based on the notion of vital force as opposed

to the individualistic, logical and reflective nature of western

philosophy. Bantu philosophy is then uncritical as everybody

agrees with everyone and no one criticises the commonly held

beliefs. Tempels himself says;

> Wisdom of Bantu based on the philosophy
> of Vital force is accepted by everyone,
> it is not subjected to criticism, for it
> is taken by the whole community as the
> "imperishable" truth[8].

Tempels' argument is based on a communalistic

interpretation of a philosophy that demonstrates a collective

worldview. For him, the philosophical aspect lies in the

rational manner in which the Bantu interprete both the world

of the visible and the invisible.

Odera Oruka (1990)[9] argues that this portrayal of

African philosophy is a misguided attempt (sometimes deliberate)

to deny Africans characteristics that are attributed to a

philosophical mind in the strict sense, namely, Logic and

individuality. European philosophy, he says, is taken for

granted to be individualistic - as a body of (reflective and

critical) thoughts produced or formulated by individual thinkers.

In contrast, communality as opposed to individuality, and emotion,

as opposed to logic, is brought forth as the essential attribute

of African philosophy.

Tempels' objective and the reasons arising from his

accommodative attitude is well summarised in the following

passage:

> A better understanding of the realm of Bantu
> thought is just as indispensable for all who
> are called upon to live among native people.
> It therefore concerns all colonials, especially
> those whose duty is to hold administrative
> or judicial office among African people; all
> those who are concerning themselves with
> a felicitous development of tribal law; in
> short, it concerns all who wish to civilize,
> educate and raise the Bantu. But, if it
> concerns all colonizers with good will, it
> concerns most particularly missionaries[10].

Further on he adds:

> Only if we set out from the true, the good
> and the stable in native custom shall we be
> able to lead our Africans in the direction
> of a true Bantu civilization[11].

Tempels' spirit can clearly be seen as one driven by the desire

to transform the Bantu so that they may be raised to the level

of the white man. In order to portray the Bantu beliefs as

coherent and therefore capable of being orderly and civilizable,

Tempels had to first acknowledge, and then demonstrate that

the Bantu were human beings. And since humanity pressuposes

rationality, Tempels had to oblige and credit the Bantu with rational

thinking, and therefore a philosophy albeit one which lacked the

rigorous dialectic nature of the philosophical discourse found in

western philosophy.

Even though Tempels had to grant that the Bantu

worldview was philosophical in a sense, he was never quite

able to delink himself from the European mentality of seeing

Africans as children who needed to be held by the hand and told

what to do. In spite of having affirmed that the Bantu are

philosophical in their interpretation of the universe, Tempels

makes claims to the effect that the Bantu themselves are not

even aware of their own philosophy, thus, they merely
practice it unconsciously. He says:

> We do not claim, of course, that the Bantu
> are capable of formulating a philosophical
> treatise, complete with an adequate
> vocabulary. It is our job to proceed to
> such systematic development. It is we
> who will be able to tell them, in precise
> terms, what their inmost concept of being is.
> They will recognize themselves in our words
> and will acquiesce, saying, "You understand
> us: You now know us completely: You "know"
> in the way we "know"12

The project and burden of expressing and
demonstrating the Bantu philosophy therefore becomes that of
the white man, since the Bantu are incapable of doing it!
Tempels does not think that the Bantu vocabulary is enough
to express a coherent philosophical discourse, and yet, it is
within this same language that the Bantu ontology (which
he finds coherent) as explained through the notion of "Vital
force" is expressed. What Tempels' claim amounts to is the
idea that the Bantu are capable of conceiving of some reality
but they have no, or very limited vocabulary to express this
reality.

Tempels is therefore suggesting that it is upon him
(and his European civilizers) to philosophize on behalf of the
Bantu since, one would assume, Tempels is thinking on the
same line with Levy Bruhl, that the European language is
naturally endowed with adequate philosophical concepts while the
Bantu one is not. The Bantu must therefore surrender their
knowledge to the white man who's work is to express it so that

finally all that the Bantu can do is to nod their heads and say, "Yes, that is our philosophy". The folly of this contention will be discussed in a short while.

It is apparent that Tempels' use of the term "philosophy" in reference to Bantu worldview is so loose that it appears both ambiguous and contradictory. He talks of western philosophy as being personal, rigorous critical reflection of things, hence, scientific. Bantu philosophy on the other hand is to him, collective and uncritical. Yet, for him, both the Western and the Bantu interpretations are philosophical in nature. So what criteria does Tempels use to pass one worldview which is individual, critically reflective, and another which is collective and uncritical as both being philosophical?

It does appear misleading to pass Bantu worldview as philosophical while at the same time presenting it as a collective communal philosophy which is based on recollections of oral traditions and yet this contradicts the premise that philosophy is an individualized critical reflection of things. To use Plato's maxim, "the multitude cannot be philosophic" as Tempels wants us to believe. It is therefore important that if Tempels does believe that the Bantu have a philosophy, then he must be able to show us cases of individual critical analysis of things among the Bantu.

There are two distinct disclaimers we can make about Tempels' 'Bantu Philosophy'. One, even though Tempels' work

does give us an insightful analysis of behaviour and mental disposition that is characteristic of a greater per cent of Bantu people, these manifestations do not of necessity amount to a philosophical interpretation of the universe. Unless one individual example can be given of a philosophical Bantu person, a general and communal worldview cannot be passed as the philosophy of a group of people. Bantu philosophy is therefore not philosophy in the proper sense because it is uncritical (everybody agrees with everyone) and collective (accepted by everyone) as opposed to the individualistic and critical approach to issues of philosophy proper. 'Bantu philosophy' is therefore in simple terms, a worldview.

Secondly, Tempels' claim that it is upon him to express the Bantu philosophy and the people will simply agree with him that what he expresses is their philosophy cannot go unchallenged. At best, Tempels' treatise would seem to be just a collection and analysis of a peoples' oral tradition (the Bantu) and their interpretation of the universe. Tempels merely observes these traditions and makes a report on them. He cannot claim to represent the position of an individualistic critical assessment of those traditions, he is not a Bantu himself. But even if he were a Bantu in any case, he cannot be representing the philosophy of others in his treatise for a philosophical activity belongs to the individual engaging in it and one cannot possibly be thinking on behalf of others.

Unfortunately, many early African scholars, and especially theologians were quite taken in by Tempels' interpretation of African worldviews as being philosophy. A notable Kenyan theologian, John S. Mbiti was soon to add his version under the title African Religions and Philosophy (1969)[13]. Mbiti models his work along Tempelsian methodology, argument and conclusion but even goes further than Temples by making rather sweeping generalizations. While Tempels talks of a Bantu philosophy to refer to a group of people characterised by shared linguistic structures, Mbiti talks of African philosophy to refer to (apparently) all African peoples as represented by a handful of East African ethnic communities amongst whom he conducts his research. Witness, for example, his own claim;

> In this study I have emphasized the unity of African religions and philosophy in order to give an overall picture of their situation. This approach does not give room for the treatment in depth of individual religious and philosophical systems of different peoples[14].

Thus, whatever Mbiti gives as representing African religions and philosophy must be true to all African peoples! One of the glaring aspect of generalisation in Mbiti's work is what he calls "the African conception of time", which he contrasts with western conception of time. He says the western conception of time is linear, consisting of three phases viz: past, present and future. The African conception of time, on the other hand, consists of only two phases, namely, past and present, with the future element being almost non-existent. Africans, he asserts, hardly conceive of the future beyond two to three years. Mbiti contends that in the West, time moves from past to future while

in Africa time moves from present to past.

It is important for us to look at the implications of this claim. First, if Africans do not think in terms of a far future, then they cannot be said to be able to plan for the future. But if we are to grant this where would we place the role of African prophets? The prophets by definition are those who talked about and predicted what was to happen in future and warned their communities to prepare for such eventuality as they may have foreseen. How then did these prophets conceive of future events, coming from communities that had no conception of the future as Mbiti argues? It has also been established that indeed numerous African ethnic communities do have words that express the future and concepts which indicate that they did conceive of a distant future[15].

Other scholars who present African philosophy from the Tempelsian point of view and who therefore are said to be producing ethnophilosophies include Alexis Kagame, R. Horton, E.A. Ruch. It has been pointed out that the mistake that these scholars make is that they produce ethnographies which they go on to label as philosophy and even go further to claim that these ethnographical data constitutes African philosophy. As Odera Oruka aptly puts it, ethnophilosophers, or those who follow Tempelsian tradition of collective philosophy,

"View philosophy as implicit in the collective and basically religious experience of everyone rather than as the explicit thought or rational argument of anyone in particular; and it regards African philosophy as fundamentally different from

Western philosophy in 'meaning, logic
and content' because of their very
different respective mental orientations[16].

The communalistic outlook of ethnophilosophy has
made it be construed as falling outside the mainstream of
philosophy as an individualistic critical and reflective activity.
Since it is more or less derived from oral traditilions,
ethnophilosophy is seen as lacking the authenticity, for example,
of written philosophy. It has been argued that traditional thought
(in all societies for that matter) lacks in logic and epistemological
foundations which are regarded as the bedrock of philosophy.
Hence, traditional thought, and collective worldview as
presented by ethnophilosophers cannot be philosophy per se.
At best, it may be used as subject- matter for philosophical
reflections, by individuals.

Some critics also dismiss ethnophilosophy on the basis
that it focuses its attention on mythical thought which it
presents as philosophy. Odera Oruka says this about it:

> One great shortcoming of ethnophilosophy
> is that it is derived not from the critical
> but from the uncritical part of African
> tradition[17].

Elsewhere he adds, "What in all cases is a mythology
is paraded as 'African philosophy"[18]. Ethnophilosophy therefore
fails to rigorously analyze the conceptual schemes it claims to
elaborate and therefore cannot be credited as being philosophical.
We shall have a look at a more detailed analysis of this position
in chapter six.

3.3: Nationalistic- Ideological Philosophy

The African liberation struggle was and still is a movement that hopes to truly liberate Africa from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism from its former colonial powers and more recently from the economic enslavement of African countries by the industrialised world.

The efforts that were made and are still being made by African statesmen, scholars and politicians towards freeing Africa from the politico-economic dependence on western countries have been expressed variously in several works. The calls made by these statesmen are based on the urgent need for African people to work together and positively re-establish their socio-politico-economic position in the world order as an initiative towards the attainment of a truly free and independent African society.

The nationalistic-ideological works of these gallant African statesmen call for the establishment of a solid foundation upon which a clear social theory can be expounded in the effort towards creating a genuine humanistic social order which is vital for the re-appraisal and re-affirmation of a truly African system of life which is independent from former colonial masters. Kenneth Kaunda,[19] for example, advocates for a system that takes into consideration the sanctity of human beings as the center of focus. For him, material development must be made subservient to a human being. He envisages three aspects of "Self-help" through which individuals must be made to fully participate in development

3.3: Nationalistic- Ideological Philosophy

The African liberation struggle was and still is a movement that hopes to truly liberate Africa from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism from its former colonial powers and more recently from the economic enslavement of African countries by the industrialised world.

The efforts that were made and are still being made by African statesmen, scholars and politicians towards freeing Africa from the politico-economic dependence on western countries have been expressed variously in several works. The calls made by these statesmen are based on the urgent need for African people to work together and positively re-establish their socio-politico-economic position in the world order as an initiative towards the attainment of a truly free and independent African society.

The nationalistic-ideological works of these gallant African statesmen call for the establishment of a solid foundation upon which a clear social theory can be expounded in the effort towards creating a genuine humanistic social order which is vital for the re-appraisal and re-affirmation of a truly African system of life which is independent from former colonial masters. Kenneth Kaunda,[19] for example, advocates for a system that takes into consideration the sanctity of human beings as the center of focus. For him, material development must be made subservient to a human being. He envisages three aspects of "Self-help" through which individuals must be made to fully participate in development

and in the attempt towards self-realisation. These tenets include:

An individual must grow in self-confidence as a starting point. This according to Kaunda is because a confident person is one who understands himself better and is therefore in a better position to actively contribute to the good of his family, community and to the nation.

The individual must strengthen his or her spiritual well being because it is this strength that will enable him or her overcome any forces of destruction and disruption such as corruption, bribery, drunkardness and all other forms of hooliganism.

The individual who attains such strength and self-confidence therefore finds the physical burden less and is able to help develop his nation to limitless bounds.

Kaunda's philosophy is built around the concept of humanism. For him, development and real achievement can never occur unless it begins at the individual level. The individual must attain his own development first, through self appreciation and actualization before he can meaningfully participate at the national level. Certain convictions come out very clearly in Kaunda's philosophy. He strongly believes in the equality of human beings. He supports this by arguing that all human beings have certain things in common wherever they are – they believe in existence, in spiritual beings, in life after death and

in communalism.

His interpretation of humanism is at once empirical, pragmatic and fundamentally spiritual. He advocates for a system that appreciates people for their worth as persons and not as merely tools of exploitation. He loathes a situation where value for humanity is only measured in terms of their productivity, thereby creating a category of useful and useless people. Kaunda is convinced that people must map out their destiny even within the community, hence, the notion of "humanity incooperate" whereby people are envisaged as realising their personality within a communal context.

Owing to his philosophical convictions, Kaunda believed that leaders must be ready and willing to go where people have decided. He loathed a situation where leaders make their own decisions and push them through the throats of their subjects. He was fond of expressing this through the proverb "one finger cannot pick up a louse" - meaning that one person, however powerful he is, cannot lead a multitude by himself effectively. Kaunda therefore does appear to advocate for a participatory government where joint decision making is the rule as opposed to dictatorship and authoritarianism. Indeed he sums up his idea of participatory democracy in a biblical illustration, "where there is no vision people fall".

Kaunda's brand of humanism appears to be strongly based on the bible. As the bible advocates, people should not be judged by their membership to one race or another. For

Kaunda, each man, woman and child is unique and each is endowed with ultimate worth and dignity. He feels that people should be guided by the truth - of the biblical nature - in whatever they do. In the final analysis, one is judged as a moral person depending on how one truthfully serves humanity and how much his or her decisions and actions are centered on human well being.

It would be interesting to pursue Kaunda's philosophy of humanism further but the scope of this work cannot allow it. It is clearly a philosophy which has both merits and short comings that are of important philosophical inquiry. For example, how can we interprete his notion of equality of all human beings in the light of the apparent inequalities in real life? Is his idea of equality merely a metaphysical one? Does communalism presuppose equality as he proposes? Do all people as he assumes, work for the good of human well being? And how practical or to what extent can his idea of participatory democracy work? These and several other issues that come up in Kaunda's philosophy can only be adequately addressed in a different forum. For now, we will briefly look at Nyerere as another example of this approach to African philosophy.

Julius Nyerere's most notable ideas are contained in Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism (1968)[20]. For the sake of brevity, only a summary of the underlying assumptions in Nyerere's notion of Ujamaa will be given. These assumptions are: that traditional Africa was basically communalistic and therefore

Kaunda, each man, woman and child is unique and each is endowed with ultimate worth and dignity. He feels that people should be guided by the truth - of the biblical nature - in whatever they do. In the final analysis, one is judged as a moral person depending on how one truthfully serves humanity and how much his or her decisions and actions are centered on human well being.

It would be interesting to pursue Kaunda's philosophy of humanism further but the scope of this work cannot allow it. It is clearly a philosophy which has both merits and short comings that are of important philosophical inquiry. For example, how can we interprete his notion of equality of all human beings in the light of the apparent inequalities in real life? Is his idea of equality merely a metaphysical one? Does communalism presuppose equality as he proposes? Do all people as he assumes, work for the good of human well being? And how practical or to what extent can his idea of participatory democracy work? These and several other issues that come up in Kaunda's philosophy can only be adequately addressed in a different forum. For now, we will briefly look at Nyerere as another example of this approach to African philosophy.

Julius Nyerere's most notable ideas are contained in Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism (1968)[20]. For the sake of brevity, only a summary of the underlying assumptions in Nyerere's notion of Ujamaa will be given. These assumptions are: that traditional Africa was basically communalistic and therefore

security for the well being of the individual was taken care of through communal sharing. He says:

> ... when a society is so organized that it cares about its individuals, then, provided he is willing to work, no individual within that society should worry about what will happen to him tomorrow if he does not hoard wealth today. Society itself should look after him, or his widow, or his orphans[21].

Nyerere therefore advances the theory that the traditional African setting was such that the individual was rich or poor if and only if the society was. In his view of Ujamaa as the basis of African socialism, Nyerere interpretes socialism as an attitude of mind – a disposition of considering wealth, both individual and collective, only in terms of its use to the service of other fellow men.

Concerning the direction which independent African countries should take, Nyerere holds that the modern, post-colonial Africa can be built by borrowing from the spirit of familihood and communalism of traditional Africa. He does however observe that socialism is not dogmatic and should not therefore be forced. He feels the marxist radical approach to socialism is not relevant in modern Africa. Marxism conceives of development of man only in terms of material development but Nyerere considers development as the development of man as a whole. He says:

> ... the development of men, and the development of peoples, demands that the world shall become one and that social justice shall replace the present oppressions and inequalities[22].

out a system of government that can serve best the interests and aspirations of its people.

It is instructive here that these works basically constitute the ideological and nationalistic convictions of their authors in their approach to the problem and possibility of emancipating the African people from political, economical and socio-cultural enslavement by the western world. Even though most of the individual authors do not claim to be writing philosophical works, it is clear that their interpretation of problems facing Africa - neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, poverty and social injustice, is in a way critical and attempts to offer solutions. The works certainly do offer a truly engaging discourse on politics as they try to expound, explore and critically examine what possible measures can be taken to improve the state of African societies.

3.4: Professional Philosophical Works

Several African scholars and academicians have contributed considerably to the philosophical literature on African problems, issues,and worldviews since the Belgian Missionary, Placide Tempels, first came up with "Bantu Philosophy". Majority of the scholars whose writings constitute what can be termed as professional philosophy are trained mainly in western scholarship and are therefore familiar with the philosophical paradigms of the science-oriented philosophy of the West.

These works are basically the philosophical reflections on and analyses of African conceptual systems and they discuss philosophical issues both at the universal level and its particularity to the African context. The philosophy thus produced is professional, "precisely becasue it is technical philosophy having professionally trained philosophers as its managers"[24]. The practitioners of this approach to philosophy affirm and emphasize the centrality of critical rationality in the activity of philosophy as a discipline. This is evident in their works. Scholars whose works belong to this group include Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji, Odera Oruka, William Abraham, among other upcoming scholars whose work form a reservoir of professional philosophical literature.

Kwasi Wiredu in one of his works, <u>Philosophy and An African Culture</u> (1980) makes a critical analysis of philosophy both within an African context and philosophy from the Western point of view. In the same work he tackles the important question of the role of philosophy in Africa, arguing that the (African) philosopher must be the torch bearer in the propagation of new (critical) ways of thinking in the endeavour to cope with the demands and expectations of industrialization and modernization that characterise the world today. He says the philosopher;

> (M)ust let his voice be heard on the question of what mode of social and political organisation is best suited to our conditions, and he must take active part. indeed he must lead in

And further,

> I would say, then, that what the
> African philosopher can do for his
> society is in principle no different
> from what philosophers in other
> cultures can do for their societies.
> The function of philosophy elsewhere
> is to examine the intellectual foundations
> of our life, using the best available
> models of knowledge and reflection for
> human well-being[26].

Wiredu's theory of truth as opinion is a truly engaging discourse. For him, "an established fact is simply an opinion felt to be secure from some individual point of view or set of points of view"[27]. We shall leave Wiredu for the time being.

Paulin Hountondji's <u>African Philosophy: Myth and Reality</u> (1983) is one of the most critical analysis of the issue of African philosophy and especially the ethnophilosophical position. Hountondji advocates for the strict scientific approach to African philosophy and says any work that does not meet this criterion is not philosophy at all. To avoid repetition, we shall discuss in greater details the works of these professional philosophers, including those of Odera Oruka in the chapters that follow.

Unlike ethnophilosophy, professional philosophy can be said to be engaged in the proper philosophical enterprise, that is, as a rigorous, critical and logical reflective individual inquiry into things. But whereas we can grant that professional philosophy is philosophy proper and African philosophy as well in the sense that it is written by African philosophers, we must not take it as representing the one and only authentic

philosophy in Africa. It is not necessarily true that philosophical thought in Africa only began with the emergence of professional philosophers on the continent. To imagine so would imply that the mind of the Africans was a tabula-rasa as far as philosophical thinking was concerned before the first modern African scholars took up philosophy as a subject of study. Odera Oruka has argued, as we shall see in the next chapter, that there were and still are traditional thinkers who went beyond the commonly held beliefs to reflect upon them and question their foundational basis and validity.

Some critics of this approach argue that it cannot represent an 'authentic' African philosophy (though produced by African scholars) particularly because it relies heavily, in its method, on western parameters in the categorization and criticism of what it deems to be African philosophy. It is therefore seen as only enhancing what is popularly accepted as a tradition of rigorous philosophical inquiry belonging to western cultures.

However, two responses are given to counter this criticism. Firstly, there are those who argue that Western philosophical thought has its root in ancient Egypt (which is in Africa). The bone of contention here is that such philosophical works arising from ancient Egyptian thinkers are basically the heritage of black Africa[28]. The implied argument here is that credit should go to Africa as having been the cradle of those great philosophical works which are wrongly credited to Greek scholars who are said to have looted them from Egypt.

In The African Origins of Civilization (1974), Cheik Anta

Diop summarises the above view as follows:

> Ancient Egypt was a Negro Civilization
> .... The moral fruit of their civilization
> is to be counted among the assets of the
> Black world. Anthropologically and
> culturally speaking, the semitic world
> was born during protohistoric times
> from the mixture of white-skinned
> and dark-skinned people in Western
> Asia... all races descended from the Black
> race, it followed that the first great
> human civilization, one from which Greeks,
> among others, borrowed much, was a black
> civilization[29].

The issue whether Egyptian civilization and philosophical

tradition makes the rest of African naturally philosophical is one

that someone may wish to raise. We will however leave it for the

time being. The important thing to bear in mind is that the

argument advanced by proponents of this view is that the

philosophical tradition is not necessarily western in origin, but

rather can be traced back to Egypt. But we should also remember

that European philosophy as we know it today, though having

gained a lot from the Greek thought, was much more influenced

by early science, poetry and myth and also by prevailing social

conditions of their societies at the time. What the proponents of

this view do not clearly tell us is whether this glorified Egyptian

philosophy was not just a systematized but fairly uncritical folk

philosophy. Even as we seek to glorify our past, it would appear

at least important that we must show good reason why it deserves

our praise.

The second response advances the argument that knowledge and rationality are values found in all human races and it is therefore incorrect to attribute them to only one race and deny them in other races. Development in philosophy and logic is therefore of necessity, not an exclusive reserve of the European mind, as Odera Oruka argues, "they are available for any student of philosophy and are relevant in African philosophical development as well"[30]. As long as the person who pursues professional philosophy is well grounded in his argument for or against African thought system(s), then his work(s) qualify to be philosophy, and African philosophy regardless of whether he uses western parameters, Aristotelian logic or not.

3.5:   Philosophic Sagacity

The issue of Sage philosophy was raised by Dr. Taaita Towett way back in 1959[31]. Later, in the early seventies, Professor Odera Oruka gave it a philosophical import that raised it to the level of a serious philosophical movement.

The general claim of this approach is that in Africa (indeed in any society), traditional or contemporary, there existed and still exist wise men and women who despite their lack of modern formal education, demonstrate such critical thinking which is essentially philosophical and distinct from the general narrative description of cultural tradition, customs and laws.

Philosophic sagacity is our main concern in chapter four and five.

3.6   Hermeneutical Approach

Colonialism in Africa considerably interfered with the pre-colonial traditional African socio -political set up and cohesion. The colonizers and missionaries alike set out to destroy African cultures which they labelled "barbaric" and replace them with "civilized" western oriented values and christianity. Their main aim was to change the African context and transform it according to both European and Christian standards.

Colonialism and imperialism not only succeeded in alienating Africans from their traditional setting, but also, and more seriously, at placing Africans within a conflicting cultural context, by mixing values adopted from both the European culture and traditional culture, which soon gave rise to value identity crisis among Africans.

After independence, many Africans, and especially the elite group, found themselves in a compromising situation where they had to make decisions using values acquired from a double heritage. On the one hand there was the dominating traditional values that were, in several ways, in direct conflict with European values acquired through cultural indoctrination during the interactive period of colonisation and western education. Due to this indoctrination many African scholars have so often tended to rely and draw heavily on western power knowledge whereby they conceive their own identity and express it through the standards of, and in opposition to western (European) parameters. Within the scholarly and

academic circles then, the western philosophical models have tended to be the "ideal" way of measuring and judging African cultural beliefs.

With emerging criticisms against the ethnocentric self-styled western 'ideal' standards of superiority over other cultures, more and more African scholars have began to view the western power knowledge as just another ethnocentric myth created to advance the image of western societies. Armed with this new found realization of the dubious attempt at categorizing other societies as different and therefore below standard, African scholars and especially those within the philosophical circles have began to seriously re-define and re-affirm the African epistemological position which has so often been denied. This effort is particularly geared towards self-affirmation in the reconstruction of a knowledge and culture that is authentically African in nature and content. This reconstruction at the same time attempts to answer questions that are pertinent in African theory of knowledge such as, "who is an African and how can he/she best express him/herself and through which epistemological grids?

Innocent Onyewuenyi in "Is there an African philosophy" says: "The re-discovery of African philosophy has influenced African scholars in writing about African personality or what the French-speaking Africans call Negritude.... [this philosophy] is "a philosophy of unity and complete encounter of all things and beings..."[32]. The hermeneutical philosophical approach within

the African context attempts to resolve problems of an identity crisis particularly within the African epistemological paradigms in which Africans are trying to present their own understanding and interpretation of the universe using parameters which are familiar to the African mental framework.

The central focus of interest here is to make use of authentic African thought patterns in order to explicate and discuss theories of knowledge which are at the same time universally acceptable and particularly useful to the African context in light of African social, cultural and historical experience as the basic premises of knowledge[33]. In this way, the purposeful aim is to produce a more African - oriented philosophy which is both authentic and universal in appeal and at the same time, one which has practical relevance to Africans themselves.

The hermeneutical approach within African philosophical circles is however a trend which is still in the making.

N O T E S

1. Paul J. Glenn, AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
    B. Herder Book Co. New York, 1944, p.17.

2. V.Y. Mudimbe, THE INVENTION OF AFRICA,
    Indiana U.P., Bloomington, 1988.

3. Christian Neugebauer, "Hegel and Kant: A
    Refutation of their racism" in QUEST, Vol.V.
    No.I, Schambach and Willem Storm, June 1991,
    p. 62.

4. Placide Tempels LA PHILOSOPHIE BANTOUE,
    Presence-Africaine, 1945.

5. Paulin Hountondji, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: MYTH
    AND REALITY, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press
    1983.

6. Placide Tempels, in the English translation
    BANTU PHILOSOPHY, Paris, Presence Africaine.

7. Ibid p. 35.

8. Ibid p. 75.

9. Odera Oruka, TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN
    PHILOSOPHY, Shirikon, Nairobi, 1990, p.15.

10. Tempels, Op.Cit., p.24.

11. Tempels Ibid p. 25.

12. Ibid p, 36.

13. John S. Mbiti, AFRICAN RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHY, Heinemann, London, 1969.

14. Ibid p. Xii.

15. Odera Oruka Ibid pp. 8 - 9.

16. Oruka "African Philosophy": A brief personal History and current debate", in Floistad G. P.63.

17. Ibid. p. 15.

18. Oruka, "Mythologies in African Philosophy", EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL, Vol IX, No. 10, Oct. 1972.

19. Kenneth Kaunda, HUMANISM IN ZAMBIA, 1974

20. Julius Nyerere, UJAMAA: ESSAYS ON SOCIALISM, O.U.P., Dar-es-Salaam, 1968.

21. Nyerere, Ibid p. 3.

22. Julius Nyerere, FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT, O.U.P., Dar-es-Salaam 1973, p.217.

23. J. Nyerere, SOCIALISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, Government Printers, Dar-es-Salaam, 1967, p. 12.

24. Odera Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy in Tseney Serequeberhan, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon House, New York, 1991, p.49.

25. Kwasi Wiredu, PHILOSOPHY AND AN AFRICAN CULTURE, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1980, p. 52.

26. Ibid., p. 62.

27. Ibid p. II5.

28. See the following works:

Cheik Anta Diop, THE AFRICAN ORIGINS OF CIVILIZATION: MYTH OR REALITY,Lawrence Hill and Company, New York and West Port, 1974.

L. Keita, "African Philosophical Tradition" and H. Olela "The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy" both in R.A. Wright, ed. AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, University Press of America, 1977.

29. Anta Diop, Ibid, p. XIV - XV.

30. Oruka, TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Op.Cit. p. 20.

31. Taaita Towett, "LE ROLE D'UN PHILOSOPHE AFRICAN" Presence Africaine, 1959.

32. Innocent Onyewuenyi, "Is there an African Philosophy?" in T. Serequeberhan, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon house, 1991, p.45.

33. The possibility of this approach is critically assessed by V.Y. Mudimbe (1988).

25.   Kwasi Wiredu, PHILOSOPHY AND AN AFRICAN CULTURE,
        Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1980, p. 52.

26.   Ibid., p. 62.

27.   Ibid p. 115.

28.   See the following works:

        Cheik Anta Diop, THE AFRICAN ORIGINS OF
        CIVILIZATION: MYTH OR REALITY,Lawrence   Hill
        and Company, New York and West Port, 1974.

        L. Keita, "African   Philosophical Tradition" and H. Olela
        "The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy" both
        in R.A. Wright, ed. AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, University
        Press of America, 1977.

29.   Anta Diop, Ibid, p. XIV - XV.

30.   Oruka, TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY,
        Op.Cit. p. 20.

31.   Taaita Towett, "LE ROLE D'UN PHILOSOPHE AFRICAN"
        Presence Africaine, 1959.

32.   Innocent Onyewuenyi,   "Is there an African   Philosophy?"
        in T. Serequeberhan, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon
        house, 1991, p.45.

33.   The possibility of this approach is critically assessed
        by V.Y. Mudimbe (1988).

CHAPTER FOUR

SAGE PHILOSOPHY

4.1:   The project and its objectives.

The research project into traditional thought systems was initiated in 1974 under the title"Thoughts of traditional Kenyan Sages" . The project then had two main objectives:

To help substantiate or invalidate the claim that traditional African peoples were innocent of logical and critical thinking, and,

To identify persons of traditional African culture capable of the critical, second-order type of thinking about the various problems of human life and nature; persons, that is, who subject beliefs that are traditionally taken for granted to independent rational re-examination and who are inclined to accept or reject such beliefs on the authority of reason rather than on the basis of a communal or religious consensus[1].

If the project could then establish that in traditional African societies there were men and women who were critical in their thought and practice,then such findings, it was hoped, could help African philosophers clarify the position of African philosophy in a number of ways:

First, this would help counter the ethnophilosophical claim that Africa is characterised by philosophical unanimity. The individual sage is therefore expected to come out clearly as an independent, rigorous and critical thinker.

Secondly, it would provide an example of individual cases which would challenge the Eurocentric view that philosophy can only be a "written" enterprise - and that a tradition without writing is incapable of philosophy. The central claim of the project in view of this is that in spite of their illiteracy, traditional African peoples did have philosophers in their midst in the form of critical sages, and in spite of lack of written texts, this philosophy did exist just as the Socratic form of philosophy.

Thirdly, the results of the project could be used to object to the racist oriented categorization of what and who is philosophical, arising from the implicit belief that philosophy is an activity of some races and civilizations and not others. In which case, sayings and utterances of some Greek sages like Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Socrates, among others are accepted as philosophical but those of African sages are anything but philosophy[2].

4.2:   What is Sage Philosophy?

Odera Oruka classifies Sage philosophy as a trend among other approaches to African philosophy which can be liberally used to identify philosophy in the strict sense from philosophy in the broad all-embracing sense within African philosophy. This clarification he says, may help in invalidating the claim that some particular sense of philosophy is the authentic African

philosophy while philosophy in any other sense is foreign to Africa.

Sage philosophy, according to Odera Oruka, consists of the expressed thoughts of wise men and women in any given community and is a way of thinking and explaining the world that fluctuates between <u>popular wisdom</u> (well-known communal maxims, aphorisms and general common sense truths) and <u>didactic wisdom</u> (an expounded wisdom and a rational thought of some given individuals within a community)[3]. In Kenya, such sages have been identified as being deeply rooted in the traditional rural setting. Their own outlook and cultural well-being, it is argued, remain basically that of traditional rural Africa in spite of the apparent but partial influence of the moral and technological culture from the western world. The popular wisdom referred here is often seen to be conformist but the didactic wisdom is seen to be at times critical of the communal set up and popular wisdom. Thoughts of individuals may be expressed as written or unwritten sayings and arguments. In traditional Africa, most of what can be passed as sage philosophy remains unwritten, perhaps due to the problem of illiteracy . But it is to be noted, as argued in the next chapter, that literacy is not a pre-requisite to philosophical thinking.

4.3:   <u>Two distinctions of Sagacity.</u>

The thoughts of the sages interviewed in Kenya were established to be on two distinctive levels. Firstly, there were those sages who's thought, though found to be well informed

and quite educative, did not appear to rise above commonly accepted beliefs or go beyond celebrated folk-wisdom. Such sages, though wise in the ways of their people, seemed incapable of applying individual critical objections to those beliefs. These sages were therefore labelled folk sages — because of their mastery of popular wisdom at the first order level of philosophy.

On the other hand, there were also sages who clearly understood the cardinal beliefs and wisdom of their communities, but more than that, they were able to make independent critical assessment of the folk beliefs which other members of the society often took for granted. Thus, their thought was said to be at the second order level of philosophy. These sages were therefore called philosophic sages, as their thought was said to be a reflection on and rationalized evaluation of what is given in the first order, as folk-wisdom.

The first group of sages is therefore seen to produce what may be termed as "culture philosophy" and the second group produce knowledge that is rationally critical, hence philosophy. Sages are said to exist in all cultures and classes, among both literate and illiterate societies. They are among the custodians of the survival of their respective societies. The society uses the ideas of the sages as "power houses" to defend and maintain its existence in the world of inter-societal conflict and exploitation. A sage is said to have two abilities; one, he has insight and two; ethical inspiration. As a wise

person, the sage employs his insight for the ethical betterment or improvement of his society.

Odera Oruka argues that whereas a philosopher may be a sage and vice verse, many philosophers may lack the ethical commitment and inspiration found in sages. He supports this by giving the example of the Sophists, the first teachers of western philosophy who specialised in teaching people how to twist ideas to win arguments regardless of the question of truth. The thoughts of a sage proper, Odera says, are grounded in truth and wisdom, and can only suppress the truth if wisdom demands so in order to save a situation. Hence,

> A person is a sage in the philosophical
> sense only to the extent that he is
> consistently concerned with the
> fundamental ethical and empirical issues
> and questions relevant to the society and
> his ability to offer insightful solutions
> to some of those issues[4].

A.S. Oseghare[5], argues that sagacity presupposes wisdom of a practical nature. He observes that sagacity and knowledge are not necessarily synonymous. Although sagacity does involve knowledge acquired through the years, a sagacious person may be said to be one who possesses the ability to put knowledge of a practical nature into good use, among other things[6]. In this view then, sagacity is a much more broader concept which encompasses knowledge. The philosophic sage then, in Orukian sense, is not only one who is knowledgeable and wise but his thoughts express and defend themselves as philosophical counsellings on various issues of nature and human life. The philosophic sage is therefore in a position to offer advise

on fundamental moral and metaphysical issues that arise within

the realm of knowledge as reflected in communal beliefs but

interpreted at the individual level by the sage himself.

4.4: The Philosophic Sages: A Selected Analysis.

The analysis given in this section is on selected ideas

and concepts that are deemed to be philosophically engaging

as presented and argued by the noted sage philosophers. These

ideas and concepts include 'God', 'Wisdom', 'freedom', 'punishment',

'law' and 'equality'.

On the Concept of God

Paul Mbuya Akoko advances the concept of a unitary

universal God contrary to the popular belief among the Luo that

they had their own god, and so did the other communities.

Akoko says:

> ... the European concept of God and our
> [notice the generalization in the term
> "our"] own concept are basically the same
> for there is only one God if there is God
> and there is God. Although the Luo
> recognized one Nyasaye they were wrong
> to think that "tneir" God (Nyasaye) was
> different from the God of the Europeans.
> Thus we had as a result of this incoherent
> thinking among the Luo, a situation in which
> other tribes thought that they too had their
> "own" God[7].

Akoko offers an argument for the unitary nature of God

by claiming that nature itself is uniform and therefore it is

God who takes care of this uniformity. For him, the existence

of many gods would have resulted in "pulling" the universe

in different directions[8]. Akoko's belief in a unitary God appears

to be based on two assumptions. The first assumption can be compared to the teleological argument for the existence of God[9]. The teleological argument postulates that the universe is orderly and operates according to such well designed principles that can only be attributed to an extremely intelligent being. This being is then reffered to as God. For Akoko, the uniformity of nature itself warrants not only the existence of God, but a unitary God as well. Akoko cannot conceive of a situation where many gods would be existing in the universe, for as he reckons, "they would pull the universe apart".

Akoko's contention disqualifies the possibility of many gods existing as a peaceful complementary body of forces, each playing its part to keep the orderlines of the universe going. For Akoko, only a unitary God is able to maintain order in a vast universe as the one we know. But we may point out here, as was pointed out in the case of the teleological proof of God, that the orderliness of the universe, or uniformity of nature as Akoko puts it, does not conclusively prove the existence of God, not least a unitary one. It merely begs the question.

There is a way in which one may want to understand Akoko's belief in a unitary God as opposed to a pantheon of gods, depending on what one conceives to be the nature of God or gods. If we grant that the unitariness and therefore the supremacy of God gives Him the powers and legitimacy to control the universe in such a manner that order or uniformity is maintained, then we may accept his all-encompassing power to

effect such control. On the other hand if we only want to interpret the concept of many gods from human characteristics as constituting mini "super powers" all fighting for loyalty and control of the universe, and hopefully the ultimate "seat" of supremacy and in the process causing chaos and threatening the order in the universe, then we might accept that many gods cannot indeed keep the universe orderly.

It is instructive that when one conceives o f a unitary supreme God, all possibilities of such a God being evil, mischievous and chaotic are dismissed, but as soon as one thinks or a pantheon of gods, all pretentions to godly attributes such as benevolence, mercifulness and so forth, are promptly shed off and quickly replaced with the notion of several evil and mischievous little gods who are out to cause chaos. We are yet to demonstrate that many gods (depending on what attributes we give them) are incapable of keeping the universe orderly and that a unitary God is the only one capable of doing so.

Akoko's contention that the Luo belief in a communal god, one who belonged only to them as opposed to a God for all peoples, was wrong, would imply therefore that such a belief was inconsistent with reality and was in contradiction to the notion of a supreme unitary God. But we might want to ask whether the role of God changes when one stops conveiving of God as a communal god and begins to see him as a supreme unitary God. If the new conception of God as a unitary one does not

in any way change peoples attitude towards him, then we may argue that the traditional view of God, in spite of its apparent inconsistency with the view of God as a unitary being, was still correct as far as the people were concerned and as far as it served its pragmatic and utilitarian purposes. The apparent inconsistency would therefore be only a theoretical one.

Akoko agrees that no one can really know or does know the true nature of God. But he equally affirms that God exists and rules nature. At least attributes of this rulership should help us understand the nature of God and therefore the operations of nature. It would have been interesting to hear in what ways Akoko thinks God rules over nature.

Oruka Rang'inya demonstrates a highly critical abstraction of the concept of God. Witness this:

> God however, has no likeness of a man.
> God is like air or wind. But God is also
> the same thing as moral goodness. God
> is not a concrete object; He has no
> substance. God is the idea of goodness
> or power that man seeks to attain....
> God is a very useful idea, without
> which evil would be permitted and
> practiced everywhere. But God is
> not a body. God is useful and we
> honour useful things even if they
> are non-bodily[10].

From the above account, we have a glimpse of what Rang'inya thinks God is from the attributes he gives Him. Rang'inya's comparison of God with air and wind as an entity which is intangible but whose presence is greatly felt indeed

demonstrates an insightful ability to rationalise the concept

of God. He contends that God possesses all the qualities

that men would like to achieve such as goodness and power.

This concept of God, as Rang'inya demonstrates,is the driving

force behind peoples' moral conduct. It is the idea of God that

shapes behaviour and guarantees fairness and justice among

people, "... God is a very useful idea without which evil would

be permitted and practiced everywhere....". The utilitarian

aspect of belief in God cannot be overemphasized.

Rang'inya's concept of God as just an idea seems to

go against and above the common Luo belief that God resided

in the sun and moon, hence the personification of God in those

phenomena. Rang'inya argues that the Luo were quite wrong

in thinking of God in physical terms. The question of God's

existence as a reality does not seem to bother Rang'inya and

in fact, he maintains that God is simply an idea in peoples

minds, but a useful idea.

It is obvious here that other than being quite well

informed on the Luo religious practices and the belief in God,

Mzee Rang'inya is able to rise above such beliefs and give

them a rational scrutiny, demonstrating why people held such

beliefs, why they were wrong in believing so. Rang'inya does

in fact offer his own critical explanation of why anyone ought

to be religious or why people ought to believe in God. For

him, religion is useful for its practical utility, it offers individuals

a sense of security - as even for the thief who prays to God

to help him not be caught in the act. The mysteries of
religion and belief in God was certainly one that many people
especially in traditional society would not have dared to discuss
about. Indeed, even in modern society many religious people,
especially christians can never seriously and critically question
the existence of God. Mzee Rang'inya however, is able to
overcome such conformity imposed through the fear of the
unknown to critically question such concepts and offer his own
(certainly unpopular) view of what he thinks God is. Rang'inya
therefore gives variables of the idea of God which the common
(Luo) person may appear unlikely to think of or to entertain.

There is however, a way in which Rang'inya's
understanding of God does appear to be contradictory. For
instance he says, "It must be noted however, that God lives
in the wind. Thus, He is everywhere. It is therefore quite
wrong to personalize Him. He is an idea.... in peoples mind".
Earlier on he says, the Luo worshipped the sun and the moon"
as the abode of their God. I think... the Luo were quite wrong
to think of god in physical terms"[11]. Apparently Rang'inya does
not seem to realize that arguing that God lives in the sun and
moon as the Luo did or that he lives in the wind, as he himself
does both amount to personifying the concept of God and
therefore attempting to actualize his existence in physical terms.

By saying that God lives in the wind and at the same
time contending that God is only an idea (a useful one) in
peoples mind, Rang'inya is trying rather unsuccessfuly to
actualize a purely mental concept. There is a way in which

we can conceive of God in a particular form. But this
conception can only be basically confined in our minds, there
is no way it can get out of our mind to reside in the wind!

It is important to note that both Akoko and Rang'inya,
though coming from the same community, have their own way
of interpreting the idea of God, though Rang'inya's
interpretation is much more rationally critical than that of
Akoko. Whereas Akoko merely accepts that no one is able to
know the true nature of God, Rang'inya readily offers attributes
which he thinks characterise what people commonly associate
with the idea of God and rationalises why people tend to believe
than otherwise. And this, as Rang'inya shows, is because of
the instrumental value that believing in God has both for the
individual and the society as a whole.

M'Mukindia Kithanje's interpretation of God as heat
and cold is a rather interesting one. He compares the idea
of God as the fusion of the male's seed (which is hot) and the
female's egg (which is cool) which ushers forth a living being.
He thus argues that this act of fusion which creates life is
itself God. It is hard to imagine why and how Kithanje
conceives of God within the biologically processes of procreation.
Perhaps this process is still a mystery to Kithanje and it is
this mystery that he seeks to characterise as Godly. There is
no doubt that the fusion of male seeds and the female eggs
that Kithanje describes is a marvelous one but to equate this
fusion with God needs much more explaining than Kithanje cares
to give us.

On Wisdom

M'Mukindia Kithanje gives a rather engaging account of what he thinks wisdom is. Indeed, his understanding of wisdom is a very insightful and critical one for it gives and explains the necessary conditions that must be fulfilled before someone can attain wisdom. First, he gives a definition of a wise person thus:

> A wise person is one who knows that
> the world belongs to three people - God,
> man and woman. Once one has this
> knowledge, he can live harmoniously in
> society. But in any given society, only
> a few are endowed with such awareness.
> It is these few who use their insight
> to reflect on the problems that afflict
> society, coming up with novel solutions
> to salvage the rest of us[12].

Kithanje's view of a wise person agrees with the attributes we earlier gave to a philosophic sage, that is, one who uses his insight and moral standing for the improvement of society. The wise person then, as in Kithanje's view is one who must rise to the calling when society is afflicted with ills and give guidance to the rest of people on how to go about solving these problems.

According to Kithanje, all people are born with the potential to become wise, but certain factors limit majority of people from attaining wisdom fully as they grow up. He cites two major factors that act as hindrance to the attainment of wisdom. The first factor is external and the other one is internal. One of the external factors he refers to as

hungers. He gives three main types of hunger. The first hunger he talks of is disease. Diseases cause suffering to people and tend to impair an individual's physical well-being, which is required for the cultivation of serious thought and consequently wisdom.

Illness also to a large extent impairs the proper development of the brain especially if it is not treated early enough or adequately And since wisdom is an expression of sound intellect and healthy body, the presence of illness will naturally affect one's use of his intellect. Kithanje is therefore right when he argues that serious thinking which is an integral part of wisdom can only be cultivated within a healthy and properly functioning body. When one falls sick, the functioning of the body becomes incoordinated thus leading to unclear thinking. Even very wise people tend to lose their intellectual power when they fall sick and only regain their wisdom when the body recovers from such illness. Disease, according to Kithanje, is therefore a great hindrance to the attainment of wisdom.

Kithanje clarifies the other hunger as the hunger of ears and eyes. What one sees and hears may sometimes, to a large extent, influence one's thinking and conduct. This is more so among people who do not question what they see or hear, accepting to believe everything on face value. The influence of public opinion is usually a result of believing in what we hear and see without trying to find out the truth for ourselves. Majority of people delight in following popular

views and this is precisely why they fail to become wise.

A wise person, in Kithanje's view is one who does not take what he sees or hears for granted. He is one who does not follow popular beliefs blindly. A wise person is expected to cultivate a critical rationalised way of interpreting events around him and acting only from a properly informed position. The wise person is he who seeks truth amongst the myriad of beliefs that are commonly held and appearances that are deceptive to the eyes. The man who lets his ears and eyes mislead him is thus a truly hungry person, and he is far from attaining any wisdom.

The third type of hunger according to Kithanje is the hunger of the stomach - the real hunger. This, he says, arises from poverty or greed. Nutrition is certainly central to the proper development of the body and also helps one to keep away from opportunistic illnesses. Adequate food and proper feeding is necessary in the formation of a strong body and fully developed brain through which thinking is processed. It is therefore important that one who seeks wisdom must also know that his body has to be nourished. Energy is consumed when one engages in a rigorous intellectual activity.

According to Kithanje, all these hungers tend to work against the true pursuit of wisdom. In order that one may attain wisdom and be respected as a wise person among his people, he must first of all conquer or rid himself of all these hungers and only then can he realize and actualize his full potential to

think wisely. We may also add that wisdom is certainly required in the constant efforts of avoiding these hungers.

The internal factors that Kithanje thinks prevent somebcdy from attaining wisdom are in the form of fear. These fears are expressed thus:

People might regard my knowledge as hearsay and persecute me for it;

People might not listen to what I tell them, and so I fear to tell them;

If I abandon professional employment in the free pursuit of wisdom, how would I meet my daily needs - food, shelter and clothing?[13].

These fears become a hindrance to free expression because they inhibit the desire to offer wise counselling or advice to others. A person suffering from such fears cannot therefore develop his potential wisdom and resigns himself to "getting lost" in the masses. He can only echo what others have said since he finds it safer as he can easily deny that what he says is his own opinion. No doubt, such fears may be attributed to personality problems and lack of confidence in oneself. Rightly, as Kithanje observes, wisdom has no room for people who are not confident of what they believe in and what they would like to say. Kithanje is right when he says such fears greatly limits one's chances of attaining true wisdom.

However, Kithanje does grant that there are a few people who manage to overcome these hungers and fears to demonstrate a truly reflective analysis of events around them. Such people he calls the 'born-wise' and says of them:

> The wise... are always concerned
> with what happens around their
> society: such people are characterized
> by very deep meditation. When
> something happens, they seek to
> understand why it has happened,
> what led to it, be it good or bad.
> They are concerned with what may
> follow, and this they try to make out
> from their experience[14].

Such wise people among the Meru, Kithanje adds, were guided by three major concerns as they tried to solve problems:

> Where were we? (past)
> Where are we? (present)
> Where are we going? (future)[15].

Their interpretation of the interconnectedness between the past, present and future helped them guide society in the right direction and give meaning to what was happening around them. The unwise, on the other hand, are only interested in the here and now. They just want to eat enough for now without caring about others or the future. They are guided by greed and selfishness since their lack of wisdom does not make them see far into the future nor are they able to learn from past experiences.

Thus, Kithanje has a clear grasp of issues at hand when he talks of wisdom, rationally explaining the conditions under which true wisdom can be attained and what one may or ought to do with that wisdom once attained. We may however

want to point out that a person who does not suffer from these external and internal impediments is not of necessity a wise person. We know of very rich healthy and bold people who are not wise at all by Kithanje's or anybody's standards. Kithanje's contention is be understood as outlining factors that may hinder one who is already truly seeking wisdom, one who understands the need for it and is ready to pursue it to its highest level possible.

Simiyu Chaungo equates wisdom with truth and creativity. For Simiyu, wisdom, as embodied in truthfulness and creativity is the source of all (good) things in the world. From Simiyu's point of view one does not have to go to school in order to be wise. He gives the example of Mumia Nabongo who never went to any school but who demonstrated such wisdom in his leadership. Simiyu maintains that without wisdom, man would be useless, in the sense that other people can easily mislead him or take advantage of him. This notion of wisdom compares favourably with Kithanje's view that a person who does not question what he sees and hears is likely to act from hearsay and lose sight of truth. Simiyu's view of a wise person being an asset to his people also agrees with Kithanje's position that a wise person is one who is concerned with what happens within his society. For Simiyu, a wise person is one who is truthful and creative thereby helping his people to solve problems. Simiyu however contends that wisdom is freely found amongst people in society while Kithanje maintains that only a few people are able to attain true wisdom in society.

On Freedom

Oruka Rang'inya's concept of freedom   is equated with economic well-being and having many sons who can defend one in time of war. The type of economic freedom envisaged by Rang'inya is one where a person is able to have enough food for himself and his family, and also have surplus food to feed other members of the community. Securing a good job, especially with the government, is also seen by Rang'inya as a symbol of freedom, but only in as far as this job enables one to feed himself, and possibly his family. Hard work is another way in which one can acquire wealth and therefore be able to free himself and so is good conduct and respect for others.

Rang'inya therefore interpretes freedom from a materialistic point of view. For him, a person is only free when he is able to provide for himself and his family, but those who depend on others for their food are not considered to be free. He feels that one must liberate himself from hunger before he can talk of being free for hunger is one of those weapons   that   can be used to humiliate the essence of a human being, reducing him to a beggar.

Akoko, on the other hand, understands freedom in a more broader sense. A person, for him, is free when he is able to choose what to do without hindrance from others. However, he points out that it is not possible for one to be truly free as there are checks and balances in society that limit what one can do. Even a president, he argues, is himself not free to do as he

pleases because his Cabinet is there to limit his actions. Akoko's view of freedom is therefore a relative one. As he argues, even when people choose what to do with their own property there is always the government or some other people who come in to impose some kind of limitation.

Man, from Akoko's point of view, cannot therefore attain absolute freedom. He is, in many ways, chained by the very society he lives in. Akoko's view of freedom as encompassing material well-being tallies with that of Rang'inya's. However, Akoko maintains that just being wealthy alone does not give one absolute freedom because one has to still rely on the activities of others in attaining and maintaining that wealth. Thus, the will of the others is also taken into account in the concept of freedom. Akoko summarises it as, "there is no person who can be said to be completely free such that he could do anything without restraint"[16].

On punishment and law

Mbuya Akoko's and Oruka Rang'inya's account of law and punishment is clear about retributive and capital punishment. From their perspectives, the Luo had no provision for capital punishment. An offender either had his property seized from him or was merely chased away from the community to a far away land. Even those found guilty of capital offence were never sentenced to death.

We might however wish to ask in what ways an offender could be deterred from commiting similar offences by merely being chased away from the community.Whereas such an act may have had punitive consequences on the offender, it may not have had any preventive measures on the part of serious offenders. For instance, if somebody killed another due to violent dispositions, he was likely to be chased away and end up in another community where he could commit the same offence. It would appear that this system of punishment was more interested in punitive and retributive measures rather than preventive measures.

Mbuya Akoko introduces a rather interesting aspect of punishment whereby an offender would be given a drug to make him ill for some time. Mbuya then explains that this time when the offender becomes incapacitated would give the elders an opportunity to reform the offender. To me it would seem like such kind of punishment was not just aimed at dehumanising an individual (even if he is an offender) but also seems to contradict the purpose for which it was intended.

Firstly, it is difficult to imagine that dehumanising a person is a likely way of reforming him. Under the influence of drugs, notice how Mbuya puts it, "The drug could also make a person very ill for a considerable long period of time"[17], a person is very unlikely to have a clear distinction of right and wrong or even have the ability to conceive of a common good towards which his actions could be directed. Under such circumstances, how could the offender be reformed when his humanity had been considerably eroded by drugging? One might also want to ask how the elders were able to determine that the person had finally reformed while he was still on

drugs so that they could now administer the antidote to bring him back to his normal self.

This form of punishment appears rather drastic compared to the popular belief (which Akoko himself describes) that in traditional Africa punishment was mainly in the form of compensation and restitution as opposed to retributive or inflicting pain or direct suffering on the offender. According to this system, the wronged person was compensated by being given material goods seized from the property of the offender. In that case, both the offender and the offended were given a fair hearing without either losing or being given unnecessary severe punishment. But if an offender could be drugged to become seriously ill for a long time as Mbuya says, then it is likely that the person himself and his family and relatives would suffer loss and pain as they took care of the person and had to contend without his contribution to the family welfare. Perhaps the incomprehensible nature of this kind of punishment arises because Mbuya does not clarify to what type of offenders and under what circumstances the punishment was administered.

It would have sufficed if Mbuya explained why the Luo did not encourage capital punishment even under serious offences. Neither does Rang'inya throw any light on the issue. According to him, it is only a stranger who could be speared to death in revenge if he killed a Luo. In reference to killing people as capital punishment for murder, Rang'inya merely observes, "The custom did not provide for discretionary judgement by elders in this kind

of situation and the reason for this is not immediately clear"[18].

It would seem that Rang'inya too accepts this position without questioning it or understanding why it is taken. Rang'inya appreciates the fact that the modern style of punishing people is much more progressive than the traditional Luo one in the sense that the modern one punishes only the offender as an individual whereas the traditional one punished both the offender and his family as in seizing his property and leaving members of his household to suffer. He feels there is no justification at all in punishing people who's only offence is to be related to or to be belonging to the family of an offender.

N O T E S

1. Odera Oruka, ed., SAGE PHILOSOPHY, ACTS Press, Nairobi, 1991, p. 17.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid   p. 33.

4. Ibid. p. 3.

5. Antony S. Oseghare, Ph.D, Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1985, p.67.

6. Ibid.

7. Oruka, Op.Cit. p. 137.

8. Oruka, Ibid,

9. Cf- Chapter Two (2.4) Section (d) for Criticisms of this argument.

10. Oruka Op.Cit. p. 37-38

11. Ibid p. 120.

12. Ibid p. 129.

13. Ibid p. 130.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid p. 143.

17. Ibid p. 144.

18. Ibid p. 124.

CHAPTER FIVE

SAGE PHILOSOPHY: CRITICISMS

5.1   On Literacy and Oral Traditions.

A social anthropologist, Jack Goody (1977)[1] points out that
literacy has certain important potentialities and consequences in the
transmission of knowledge.   Among these potentialities and
consequences, he argues, is that literacy allows a kind of
consistency that oral culture cannot and does not demand.   It is
therefore easier to point out inconsistencies in a written work than
in oral communication.   But we can immediately detect a problem in
this kind of argument.   One, it is not clear whether   Goody talks of
consistency in terms of argument, style of writing or simply in view
of the ideas that one holds either   within   the same   work or
across several works.   If it is a question of consistency in
propagation of ideas, then we can point out (and there exists
enough evidence) that ideas can be as inconsistent in written form
as they are in oral form.   The very fact (which Goody himself
admits) that we are able to point out such inconsistencies in literary
works because it lays itself bare to us is enough evidence that a
work does not of necessity become consistent because it is written.
The important point to note here is that ideas are rendered consistent
through a logical mental process long before they are even written
down and their consistency or lack of it can therefore be traced
back to the intellectual capacity of the one who holds them.   The
fact that one may or may not be able to express their ideas
consistently in written form is more a question of language
proficiency than mental capability.

To argue that oral culture cannot and does not demand consistency is to view such cultures as being value and context free. This view would seem to therefore suggest that knowledge in predominantly oral cultures was a mere recitation that had no direct relevance to the concrete and tangible issues that such cultures sought to resolve. This argument too is mistaken in the sense that interpersonal communication and transmission of ideas in oral traditions was purposely aimed at achieving certain goals and ends and if the communication of such information was inconsistent, then the end result would have similarly been inconsistent and ineffective. This would therefore mean that oral traditions (owing to their inconsistency as Goody argues) operated on a more or less trial-and-error basis. There can never be a more mistaken view.

The instrumental value of oral communication alone demands that it be consistent otherwise nothing much would be achieved in progression. Of course we are not arguing that oral traditions were not inconsistent at all. The fact is that oral transmission has a tendency to modify what is being said depending on the point of view of whoever is saying it but, so does the written form of transmission. All we are saying is that for oral traditions to have achieved a well defined social structure, they had to maintain at least a given standard of consistency in their transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other that could easily be tested by the already existing body of knowledge. In the same way, the written mode of transmission can only attain its consistency

by drawing from an already existing body of knowledge, whether oral or written. It suffices to say that we acquire more knowledge by merely interacting with others and communicating with them orally than we do from reading books.

Literacy, it is argued, is more advantageous than oracy in terms of its capacity to preserve information in large volumes for a long period of time. This is tenable. The human brain, though endowed with an enormous capacity to acquire knowledge, can only retain a limited amount of the knowledge acquired at specific times. Thus, the human mind keeps reviewing and refining the knowledge acquired regularly, retaining only those ideas that are appealing to its intellect and dropping those that are not. The capacity of the written form is that it retains everything that has been written down from the outmoded and misleading theories to the most recent challenging discoveries about our universe. It is certainly important that we should write our ideas down because in this way they become available to a much greater audience than we might otherwise have reached if the ideas remained in our mind or were transmitted to a handful of people orally. The written form also gives us a much more critical approach than we are willing to employ in oral exchange. Perhaps this may be because the assertions made in writing are more readily available for us to quote as evidence whereas we may not exactly remember all the claims made orally or that the person who makes them can easily deny having said so.

Thus, the written texts enable us to refer back to theories of long standing authority in our effort to re-discover our universe. It is true also that many peoples' ideas would hardly be known beyond their immediate circle of friends were it not for the technological advancement in writing. It is no exaggeration that we know more about Nyerere's political beliefs than we do about his illiterate contemporaries on the same issues that Nyerere raises. This is no doubt due to writing. Oracy is certainly limited by the memory capacity of each individual and its inability to reach a larger audience.

Our problem, however, and particularly in sage philosophy, lies in the question of associating literacy with rationality, a position which tends to argue that logic and rationality is more likely to be found in literate societies than in oral ones. This tendency to associate literacy with rationality has particularly been observed in western (European) discourses which seek to categorise differences in thinking between members of different cultures. Many European writers on this topic are largely concerned with establishing the proverbial "great divide" based on literacy and rationality in order to classify differing societies into opposing categories such as logical/pre-logical, primitive/modern, magical/scientific. Brian V. Street argues that what led to categorising the so-called "primitive" peoples as pre-logical was often a misunderstanding by ill-informed Europeans on the structures and thought processes in these cultures. The European conceptual basis of understanding other cultures, Street argues, was too different and ethnocentric to take into account the apparently highly developed conceptual schemes among

the people they (Europeans) labelled as being primitive. The

question of some societies being pre-logical as a result of non

literacy is therefore simply a myth. Street further observes:

> ... anthropological evidence suggests that there
> is scientific and non-scientific thought in all
> societies and within all individuals. (European)
> observers have simply failed to remark the
> scientific nature of so-called "primitive"
> peoples and have perhaps overstated the
> "scientific" nature of thinking in their own
> societies[2].

The position taken in sage philosophy is that literacy is

not a pre-requisite to philosophical thinking and all that is required

is that a person is able to demonstrate a critical and reflective

analysis of the issues he seeks to understand. For this reason

then, we can grant that even in traditional African societies which

were predominantly illiterate, there existed men and women who showed

a philosophical interpretation of their worldviews. These philosophic

sages, as Odera Oruka calls them, were able to subject the folk

wisdom of their own communities to criticism and correction, pointing

out mistaken beliefs and offering alternative views. Odera observes,

> These sages have their own "elaborate" and
> argumentative reasons for their "doctrines" and
> views. And such reasons can, given the
> patience and dedication of a trained philosopher-
> inquirer, be extracted from the sages and can
> be written into philosophical literature[3].

The outcome of the sage philosophy project has to an

extent been able to demonstrate that the ability to think critically

and logically is not necessarily tied to literacy as argued by some

scholars. Odera Oruka argues that literate discourse is not a

necessary   condition for a philosophical discourse. For him, the

only condition is that the philosophic sage is able to engage in a critical, evaluative and coherent thought. Oruka opposes those who argue that writing ought to be a necessary condition for philosophical thinking on the basis that such people would therefore be precluding traditional African thought systems as not being in a position to offer us any critical thought since they were predominantly illiterate.

P.O. Bodunrin, though acknowledging that philosophic sagacity does succeed in showing that critical or philosophical thinking is not tied to literacy however, still maintains that the burden of proving African philosophy lies not in the issue of whether an illiterate society can have philosophical individuals but rather whether Africa has been able to produce a tradition of organized critical reflection of the type the trained philosophers and the sage are trying to create. Bodunrin observes, "Even if writing cannot be a precondition for philosophy, nevertheless, the role of writing in the creation of a philosophical tradition cannot be under-rated"[4].

The argument that Bodunrin advances appears to imply that our understanding of what philosophy is should follow from the observations we have made of western philosophy, that is, philosophy as a body of critical knowledge, produced through a tradition of reflective and analytical written discourses. Thus, if we want to prove that philosophy does exist in Africa, then we ought to do so by giving examples of a tradition of (written) critical discourse by individual Africans. Bodunrin argues that

the contention of those who deny African philosophy does not lie on
the basis that a whole race cannot philosophize but rather on the
basis of the absence of a traditon of organised critical reflection.
He says,

> It is one thing to show that there are
> men capable of philosophical dialogue in
> Africa and another to show that there
> are African philosphers in the sense of
> those who have engaged in organized
> systematic reflections on the thoughts,
> beliefs and practices of their people.
> Even if writing cannot be a precondition for
> philosophy, nevertheless, the role of writing
> in the creation of a philosophical tradition
> cannot be underrated[5].

Further on he adds,

> ... writing is not a prerequisite for philosophy,
> but it is doubtful whether philosophy can
> progress adequately without writing. Had
> others not written down the sayings of
> Socrates and Buddha, we would today not
> regard them as philosophers, for their
> thoughts would have been lost in the
> mythological world of proverbs and
> pithy sayings[6].

The absence of such written philosophical tradition
means that Africa, in view of Bodunrin's contention, is therefore
having a late start in philosophy. We can therefore only wait
until we have produced enough of such works before making
claims to a philosophical tradition. Odera Oruka strongly
objects to Bodunrin's views by pointing out that the European
denial of philosophy in Africa is not merely a denial of a
tradition of written critical discourses but more so a denial of
rationality among African (black) people. And this certainly
ought to be obvious to any one who has encountered works by
Hegel, Kant, Levy Bruhl and others[7]. Indeed Prof. Oruka

observes that the negritude movement emerged precisely because of the denial of reason to Africans by Europeans and the association of emotion and intuition with African thought systems[8]. Oruka rightly argues that the European denial is much more fundamental than what Bodunrin postulates. He says,

> It denies to Africans not just the "existence of a traditon of organized critical reflections on the thoughts, beliefs and practices of their people"; it denies the possibility for a reflection of any kind (i.e., for any critical use of reason). In other words, the African or black man's mind is claimed to be incapable of any serious rational discourse[9].

It would therefore appear that anyone who thinks sage philosophy is merely asserting that illiterate societies are capable of philosophising would be missing the whole point in the debate on African philosophy. Prof. Odera Oruka makes his objectives in the sage philosophy project rather explicit: He wished to invalidate the claim that traditional African peoples (read "primitve" people from a European point of view) were innocent of logical and critical thinking. There is too much anthropological literature claiming to demonstrate such views as shown in chapter one in this work. The individual sage philosopher is a foil to the ethnophilosophical position of a communal philosophy. The African sage, as a critical reflective person, stands as an example to prove that philosophical inquiry is an attribute of all rational people irrespective of their race. Hence, philosophic sagacity goes beyond the mere attempt to prove that literacy is not a precondition for philosophical thinking. Sage philosophy is not just the critical thought of an individual African person but in it

we are able to understand (in a critical way) a great deal of the systems of knowledge that maintained the social structures of our past traditional culture. Indeed when Europeans deny Africans rationality the implication is that knowledge in the African context was intuitively acquired and that there was never any need to rationally justify such knowledge. But Oruka Rang'inya and M'Mukindia Kithanje as philosophic sages leave us in no doubt that the belief systems of their respective communities were not only rational in their interpretation of the universe but also that individuals did rise above these beliefs to question their validity and basis as the two sages do.

Prof. Oruka is therefore right when he points out (to counter Bodunrin's position) that the denial of rationality to Africans of necessity denies them a tradition of philosophical discourse. For how could one produce a tradition of rational critical discourse when he is said to be illogical, irrational and primitive? "To deny reason to a people is to deny them the possibility for a 'serious philosophical dialogue' and as a consequence a tradition of organized reflections on their beliefs and society"[10].

Perhaps the explicit burden of trying to prove the existence of African philosophy through the project of philosophic sagacity does seem to undermine its own achievements. Odera argues that to say Africa is having a late start in philosophy since there are no written records of her past philosophical activities is to wrongfully limit the sources from which we could detect traces of such activities. But my feeling is that the sage philosophy project is more concerned with proving the existence of some philosophical

thinking among traditional African people rather than engaging such thoughts to formulate a sound theoretical basis for the beliefs thus held. It is true that if indeed our traditional beliefs do have philosophical foundations then they may offer us good basis on which we can theorize but it is also the case that we can also theorize upon non philosophical beliefs and come up with a well rationalized discourse.

Bodunrin, as with Oruka and Hountondji, recognizes the fact that traditional African belief systems can offer us a sound foundation and possible source of a truly philosophical discourse. He says,

> The African philosopher cannot deliberately ignore the study of the traditional belief systems of his people. Philosophical problems arise out of real life situations[11].

Hountondji also argues that,

> ... there exists a considerable body of oral literature; esoteric or exoteric, the importance of which we are only beginning to suspect. We must have the patience to study it, analyse it, investigate its logic, its function and its merits[12].

Oruka's position is that philosophic sagacity (the critical reflective thought of traditional African sages) is the approach to an African philosophy best equipped to "give an all-acceptable decisive blow to the position of ethno- philosophy"[13] Concerning the availability of the critical reflective thought of traditional thinkers as a body of knowledge, Oruka contends,

To exist as a philosopher it is not
necessary that one's thoughts must
progress or be available to the future
generation... lack of knowledge of one's
or a peoples philosophy is not proof
of the non-existence of such a
philosophy....
Sufficient for the existence of a
philosopher is that one's contemporaries
recognize one's philosophical ability
and practice[14].

There are several observations we can make from the ongoing. First, from Odera Oruka's point of view, traditional African beliefs can not only offer us a foundation upon which we can engage in philosophical discourses, but more importantly, among traditional African people, are to be found philosophical sages whose thoughts were critical and reflective. Thus, we have, as an added advantage, philosophical knowledge too in the form of traditional African sages. For Bodunrin and Hountondji, the philosophical nature of individual traditional sages is not apparent, and they'll rather grant that beliefs arising from such systems can only be used as material for philosophising.

The underlying feeling here is that traditional systems need not necessarily be philosophical for anyone to use them as material for philosophical inquiry. Indeed, the sage philosopher is not critical because he lives in a community that has critical belief systems. Theophilus Okere observes that African traditional beliefs must not of necessity be philosophical for them to be of interest to a philosopher. The philosopher may use them simply as material source on which to philosophize as a further elaboration and development of African philosophical questioning. He argues that even the

most prolific philosophers relied heavily on the non-philosophy

in their philosophical inquiry. He says,

> [W]hether it is a Plato from Greek
> antiquity, a Hegel from modern
> philosophy, or a contemprary
> philosopher like Heidegger... the
> conclusion is the same, namely, that
> their thought is inscribed by the
> non-philosophy which is their own
> · cultural background, especially by
> their religious beliefs and myths[15].

The African professional philosopher may therefore use

traditional beliefs as source material for his philosophical

enterprise to come up with a critical individualistic theory of

such beliefs.   However, the project of sage philosophy takes on

a different approach and it is this approach which has made some

critics question its authenticity. Bodunrin, for instance feels

that we cannot strictly speaking attribute the product of this

project to the sage alone because it is a joint effort between the

sage and the trained philosopher. He says,

> The product of the joint inquiry
> of the traditional sage and the
> trained philosopher is a new
> phenomenon. Both inevitably
> enter the dialogue with certain
> presuppositions. What they come
> out with is a new creation out
> of their reflections on their
> beliefs previously held by
> them[16].

Bodunrin then poses the following questions, "Whose philosophy

is thus produced? The Sage's or the trained philosopher's

(interlocutor)"? And "What does the philosopher (trained)

succeed in doing - as far as challenges for the African

philosopher are concerned?". In response to Bodunrin's

questions, Oruka agrees that the product that comes out of

the sage and philosopher is a shared one, for each of them helps the other to explicate ideas, the philosopher more so taking the lead to help the sage give birth to his otherwise implicit ideas. Thus, the outcome becomes a joint creation of the two and not a sole responsibility of the sage. Odera observes that even as we grant this, we should not think it peculiar because, as a matter of historical fact, many philosophers owe their philosophical work to those who inspired them and provoked them to take the line of argument they did in their work. A philosophy does not lose its authenticity simply because it is a product of two or more people. Indeed, if history is anything to go by, all philosophical works owe their origin to ideas and realities outside the one who holds them. It should also be noted that the trained philosopher (interlocutor) does not impose his ideas on the sage but rather only points out certain inconsistencies or contraditions, leaving the sage free to clarify his position or retract his claim. However, perhaps the subsuming role of the trained philosopher is much more felt in the condensing and systematising of the ideas of the sage into their proper categories within the framework of knowledge. It is the trained philosopher who (with his already acquired conceptual schemes) organises the ideas of the sages into a comprehensible body of knowledge. No doubt the role of the trained philosopher in the production of sage philosophy cannot be underrated. In the final analysis it is the trained philosopher (the interlocutor) who decides and determines what amounts to philosophy or non philosophy in whatever the sage postulates.

the sage and philosopher is a shared one, for each of them helps the other to explicate ideas, the philosopher more so taking the lead to help the sage give birth to his otherwise implicit ideas. Thus, the outcome becomes a joint creation of the two and not a sole responsibility of the sage. Odera observes that even as we grant this, we should not think it peculiar because, as a matter of historical fact, many philosophers owe their philosophical work to those who inspired them and provoked them to take the line of argument they did in their work. A philosophy does not lose its authenticity simply because it is a product of two or more people. Indeed, if history is anything to go by, all philosophical works owe their origin to ideas and realities outside the one who holds them. It should also be noted that the trained philosopher (interlocutor) does not impose his ideas on the sage but rather only points out certain inconsistencies or contraditions, leaving the sage free to clarify his position or retract his claim. However, perhaps the subsuming role of the trained philosopher is much more felt in the condensing and systematising of the ideas of the sage into their proper categories within the framework of knowledge. It is the trained philosopher who (with his already acquired conceptual schemes) organises the ideas of the sages into a comprehensible body of knowledge. No doubt the role of the trained philosopher in the production of sage philosophy cannot be underrated. In the final analysis it is the trained philosopher (the interlocutor) who decides and determines what amounts to philosophy or non philosophy in whatever the sage postulates.

5.2   A Comparison with ethno-philosophy and Griaule's "Ogotemmeli"

Didier Kaphagawani has argued that philosophic sagacity is a second order activity to ethno-philosophy. In this case, philosophic sagacity cannot exist without ethnophilosophy. From Oruka's point of view, philosophic sagacity is the individual rational critical inquiry by the sage into the commonly held beliefs of the community. Indeed, the philosophic sages like Rang'inya and Kithanje do demonstrate such critical reflection. Oruka distinguishes philosophic sagacity from ethnophilosophy and culture philosophy. Culture philosophy, he says, consists of the beliefs, practices, myths, taboos and general values of a people which govern their everyday life and are usually expressed and stored in the oral vocabulary of the people. Ethno-philosophy. on the other hand, is a written work of some scholar claiming to offer an objective description of the culture philosophy of a people. He further on adds that in historical order, philosophic sagacity antedates ethno-philosophy but is second order to culture philosophy. Thus, although ethno-philosophy can produce its own philosophic sagacity, philosophic sagacity can exist and has existed without it[17].

Oruka grants that philosophic sagacity is dependent on ethno-philosophy only if one equates ethno-philosophy with "culture philosophy" like Kaphagawani does. But he argues that the two are different as defined above. Perhaps one ought to

clearly understand the claims of ethno-philosophy before summarily tying it up with philosophic sagacity. Ethno-philosophers claim to be doing philosophy on behalf of others, so to speak (refer to Tempels, 1959, p.36) Thus, whatever is produced by ethno-philosophers constitute what that particular scholar understands of the particular community he is purporting to represent in his philosophy. It may not always be the case that such a scholar gives an accurate description of the belief systems of the community he makes a report on. Neither does the scholar concerned admit of encountering individuals with critical understanding of the belief systems of his people. The under - lying claim of ethnophilosophy is that everyone agrees with everybody. Ethno-philosophy merely denotes general communal beliefs that are neither rationalised by the people nor questioned by anyone. It is assumed that no one in the community is capable of rising above and criticising such beliefs. Even the scholars who present such beliefs do not pretend to be rationalising them or to explicate their validity, they merely seek to describe them.

Philosophic sagacity on the other hand is a critical analysis within the belief systems themselves by individual sages. The approach in philosophic sagacity does not seek to rationalise the position of the ethno-philosophers. In fact, philosophic sagacity offers the ethno-philosopher something he may not have expected given his general assumption of communalistic belief system. It is worth noting that the ethno-philosopher's assumption does not grant the existence of the philosophic sage. We cannot therefore quite claim that

philosophic sagacity owes its existence to ethno-philosophy. On
the contrary, both ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity derive
their material of inquiry from culture philosophy, but the philosophic
sage offers an individualised critical assessment of culture philosophy
as opposed to the ethno-philosopher who merely describes culture
philosophy.

Lansana Keita's objection to Oruka's argument that philosophic
sagacity differs from ethno-philosophy because of its critical and
personal thought does not seem to me to be serious. Perhaps
Keita wants to argue that ethno-philosophy too must have had its
origin in an individual thinker or a restricted group of thinkers.
Keita, like Kaphagawani equates ethno-philosophy with culture
philosophy. The distinction we have just given will suffice. He
says that,

> Clearly, any belief system must have
> been first initiated by an individual
> thinker or a restricted group of
> thinkers before becoming a generally
> accepted belief system. And such
> beliefs ... must have been founded
> on critical analyses of existing
> belief systems[18].

Although Keita is trying to raise an objection, it would
appear that his view is not in any way contradicting Oruka's.
If he grants that belief systems are changed by individual thinkers
like he does, then he is in essence admitting that there were
individual critical thinkers in traditional Africa. This is precisely
Oruka's position. But if Keita is arguing this way in order to
show that ethno-philosophy too is founded on individual thought,
then he has failed to understand the general claim of ethno-philosophy.

If again he wants to equate ethno-philosophy with culture philosophy as defined by Oruka, he has too failed to understand that culture philosophy constitutes popular wisdom which people merely accept and hold without questioning it. As soon as an individual begins to question culture philosophy, the inquiry ceases to be culture philosophy and becomes philosophic sagacity, the critical and reflective thought of an individual sage.

Marcel Griaule's work, <u>Conversations with Ogotemmeli</u>[19] is basically concerned with giving a general but comprehensive outline of Dogon cosmology. Griaule's efforts, like Tempels' sought to demonstrate that Africans too had an elaborate, complex interpretation of the universe, a system of thought that was based on some philosophical understanding of the world. According to Griaule, the system revealed by the old sage Ogotemmeli, belongs to the preserved and higher degree of knowledge and wisdom - a detailed knowledge of the general principles that chain all things together as a single but complex phenomenon. It entails a cosmology, a metaphysics and a religion.

Though we may grant that Ogotemmeli is certainly a wise person in the beliefs of his people and therefore a sage, Odera Oruka maintains that Ogotemmeli is not a sage in the second order sense, that is, he is not a philosophical sage. This, Oruka argues, is because Ogotemmeli merely recites faithfully the culture philosophy of his people, the Dogon, without making any efforts to rise above those commonly held beliefs to question them and criticise them. Thus, Ogotemmeli is simply an expert in recounting and explaining cultural beliefs which have been handed down from one generation

to the other. The sage philosophers of Orukian sense are also knowledgeable in the belief systems of their communities, but unlike Ogotemmeli, they rise above these beliefs to question and criticise them, sometimes even offering their own convictions in place of those they think are misleading.

Whereas Griaule's role is to simply listen and record what the old sage Ogotemmeli says, the interlocutor in sage philosophy provokes the sage and sometimes even points out inconsistency in the sage's argument thus helping in the polishing and clarification of ideas. From the critical engagement between the sage and the interlocutor, a system of reflective, well reasoned ideas is born. Thus, Griaule's work remains at the level of traditional/folk communal wisdom, the product being basically ethnography.

Sodipo and Hallen have tried to present their own brand of African philosophy but which critics argue is only a clever reproduction of culture philosophy. The two scholars in their research selected as their informers the Yoruba "Onisegun" (masters of medicine), herbalists, 'native' doctors, with whom they held discussions on the concept of a person[20]. The ideas that emerge from this research are as divergent as the informers are, but the scholars merge and systematise them to form a consensus on the concept of a person and which is then taken to be representative of the thoughts of (every) ordinary Yoruba. Odera Oruka grants that the two scholars are right when they call the product of their research a representation. But, Oruka argues, it is this representative nature of their work that

disqualifies it from being philosophical in the second order sense, that is, as the critical, reflective inquiry of one individual person. The various ideas in the Hallen-Sodipo approach are not credited to any one individual, rather, they are presented as a general description of the concept of a person among the Yoruba. Such representation, Oruka maintains, cannot be philosophic sagacity. It remains at the level of culture philosophy which Oruka prefers to call 'Cultural Prejudices'. He grants however, that the work might be some other form of sagacity.

5.3   The methodology

The methodology employed in the philosophic sage research would appear to be similar to the socratic dialogues. But Socrates' method was basically interrogative (the maieutic method) which employed irony to bring out the various facets of the particular issue that was under discussion. In the sage project, the trained philosopher (interlocutor) tries to engage the informant (the sage) in a dialogue on various issues that are relevant to life and culture of the community. In this dialogue, some of the sages (those who are considered to be philosophic) are said to go beyond mere recitation of the beliefs and practices of their people, to offer reasonable criticism of some of those beliefs and practices. Hence, the interlocutor hopes to get an 'expert' understanding and explanation from   the sage, of the issues being discussed. The procedure in the methodology of philosophic sagacity is summarised thus,

A conversation with the sage is
supposed to flow freely and should
not be conducted in the form of the
dry question- and answer style.
The researcher introduces a topic to
the informant (a sage), whereupon the
informant is allowed to talk or
philosophize freely about the topic.
He/she is guided so as to emphasize
the importance of such a topic to
the life and culture of the community.
The researcher is free to raise objections
and challenges to the points made by the
informant. The two are supposed to
discuss as partners in an argument.
The so-called academic training or
superiority of the researcher should
not be allowed to dictate the style of
the discussion. The informant is free
to alter the topic raised or even raise
and discuss the topics of his/her
own special interest[21].

There is a way in which Oruka compares the method used in philosophic sagacity with that used in the socratic dialogues. But Bodunrin objects to this comparison arguing that there are certain aspects in the philosophic sage method that do not quite compare to the socratic dialogues. For instance, in the sage project, the sage is more or less assumed to be illiterate and therefore innocent of scholarly philosophy. On the other hand, the interlocutor is literate and is familiar with the conceptual categories of philosophy as understood in the West.

In the socratic dialogues the interlocutors are said to have been Socrates' contemporaries and intellectual peers. They were not some illiterate old men as is the case with philosophic sagacity. They were well informed persons who were throughly familiar with both the written and oral traditions of their people. Among them were the etymologist Euthyphro

(<u>Cratylus 396d</u>) after whom Plato named Euthyphro, orator
Gorgias (<u>Symposium</u> 198C) and mathematician Theaetetus[22].

Bodunrin further argues that there is reason to believe
that the Athenian <u>Agora</u> where these Greek "Sages" met to
exchange views was more or less like an "intellectual
corner" where Greek traditional cultural beliefs were brought
under scrutiny. Thus, their philosophical dialogues were
elaborately developed to bring out a clear understanding of the
issues they brought under scrutiny especially the concepts
of justice and piety.

In philosophic sagacity, the interlocutor acts as a lead to
the illiterate sage in an effort to bring out of the sage certain
convictions whose argumentative presentation could be considered
philosophical. Hardly is there any indepth discussion of the issues
at hand to harmonise the diverse facets of those issues.

It is also clear from the socratic dialogues that several
people were simultaneously engaged in the discussion of any given
topic. In the introduction to the first section in William Boyd's
<u>Plato's Republic for Today</u> (1962), it is said,

> It was a diverse group of people that
> Plato assembled for the story
> background of the discussion. They
> were all Greeks but drawn from
> different parts of the Greek world.
> .... They were of all ages... and
> very different views were held
> by them.
>
> ... the younger men, though lacking
> in firm and definite opinions of their
> own, had sufficient knowledge of life

> to be able to take an intelligent part
> in the debate between them. And all
> of them enjoyed listening to Socrates
> as he questioned and expounded,
> whether he was dealing with
> abstract subjects like justice or
> political subjects like the
> constitution of cities...23

Thus, the socratic dialogues were much more than dialogues. They were discussions by a diverse group of people all with differing views but each of who's contribution was a great enhancement of the understanding of the issue at hand. Each person's point of view brought a fresh look at the problem being discussed and this took the discussion to a deeper level. It is also apparent that in the discussions it is Socrates who takes centre stage. His role is to bring out the important points and steer the discussion towards a given direction. Even though the interlocutor in philosophic sagacity does try to lead the sage towards answering questions according to the already pre-established framework of the former, it is emphasized that the interlocutor must not impose his style of discussion (even though this would lead to more fruitful revelations) and therefore the interlocutor merely records what the sage says without developing it further through a rigorous discussion.

The method used in sage project is more or less a one-to-one type of dialogue where several points of view are neither adequately nor conclusively discussed. Only occassionally does the interlocutor interject to offer his own opinion about the claims made by the sage but even then the differing views of both the sage and the interlocutor are not

to be able to take an intelligent part
in the debate between them. And all
of them enjoyed listening to Socrates
as he questioned and expounded,
whether he was dealing with
abstract subjects like justice or
political subjects like the
constitution of cities...23

Thus, the socratic dialogues were much more than dialogues. They were discussions by a diverse group of people all with differing views but each of who's contribution was a great enhancement of the understanding of the issue at hand. Each person's point of view brought a fresh look at the problem being discussed and this took the discussion to a deeper level. It is also apparent that in the discussions it is Socrates who takes centre stage. His role is to bring out the important points and steer the discussion towards a given direction. Even though the interlocutor in philosophic sagacity does try to lead the sage towards answering questions according to the already pre-established framework of the former, it is emphasized that the interlocutor must not impose his style of discussion (even though this would lead to more fruitful revelations) and therefore the interlocutor merely records what the sage says without developing it further through a rigorous discussion.

The method used in sage project is more or less a one-to-one type of dialogue where several points of view are neither adequately nor conclusively discussed. Only occassionally does the interlocutor interject to offer his own opinion about the claims made by the sage but even then the differing views of both the sage and the interlocutor are not

pursued to a logical conclusion. For example, when Simiyu
Chaungo is asked to clarify how the sun, which he equates with
God, could have created man, he simply cites the utility of the
sun; but instead of pressing for more explanation, the interlocutor
merely observes, "that is interesting"[24] and moves on to the next
question. What is interesting about the sun creating man?
Perhaps it is more absurd than interesting at least from a
philosophical point of view; and this is what the interlocutor
ought to seek out and have it clarified.

Thus, the real philosophical convictions of the sages
fails to come out clearly due to the narrowing of the discussion
of issues to merely a question and answer format instead of the
rigorously provocative and in depth analysis of the various points
of view that the sages raise. This itself i s a serious limiting
factor in the realization of the true philosophical nature of the
sages.

In his criticism of philosophic sagacity, Prof. Masolo
argues that the method used in the project raises questions about
the originality of the answers obtained. He maintains that in
situations where the discussion is on concepts, the issue becomes
much more complicated than in direct questions such as "Where
is Nairobi?" Prof. Masolo argues that there is a probability that
in the case of conceptual questions the answeres may easily
be pre-determined by the manner in which the questions are set
and designed. Thus, "[a]lthough the answeres may come directly

from the interviewee, they may still fall within the bounds of a world conception of the person who framed them"[25]. This he says, can be observed for example in Socrates' maieutic method in which Socrates set out <u>a priori</u> the issue(s) of discussion and what he wanted to achieve through those discussions, namely, to show the people the way to a virtuous life. The point Prof. Masolo is trying to raise is that the interlocutor in philosophic sagacity may have pre-determined and framed his questions in such a way that the answers the sage gives could only follow from those questions. And indeed there exists enough evidence to show that the issues raised in the project were pre-determined and set within the already existing conceptual categories of the interlocutor. This is evidenced from the fact that the same issues are raised in the dialogues with all the sages and the questioning follows almost the same pattern with all the sages.

Of course the interlocutor may wish to point out that raising the same issues with all the sage gives him a chance to point out similarities, differences and inconsistency in the points of view raised by all the sages regarding the same issues but the point being raised here is that by hand picking the kind of questions to ask, the interlocutor is giving the impression that he may be seeking out particular answers which only those kind of questions can elicit. And by doing so, the interlocutor may only be trying to advance (albeit indirectly) his own understanding of certain concepts.

One, in favour of philosophic sagacity may wish to point out that the type of issues raised in the discussion are not basically the main concern of the project but rather the philosophical manner in which the sages are able to discuss or make comments about such issues. But some critics have pointed out that some of the answers given by the sages fall short of philosophical thinking and border more closely to clever or merely intelligent observations of phenomena. For example, Prof. Masolo argues that Paul Mbuya's statement about women, though independent of the communal chorus of general Luo beliefs about women, "is a statement of common sense, but hardly anything more.... It is an intelligent statement of a man who observes and notices events and facts around him, probably with some alertness and acumen which the majority of the people in his community lack"[26] Prof. Masolo raises the question as to whether or not a statement or opinion becomes philosophy merely because it is clever or non-mediocre as in the case of Mbuya's. Prof. Masolo maintains that though Mbuya's statement is clever and outstanding within the socio-cultural environment of Mbuya's own life in relation to most of his contemporaries, this alone does not suffice to give it a philosophic attribute.

It would appear even to a casual reader that some of the samples given as being philosophical in the sage project are not convincingly so. One may wish to give an example of Simiyu Chaungo's contention that all suffering including illness is a result of man's laziness. Indeed he names problems such as famine, wars, illness, death, and inquiry, among others as emanating from man's laziness. One need not go in to a detailed

account of how natural disasters such as earthquakes may bring about several of the sufferings cited above that have nothing to do with man's laziness to see the absurdity of Simiyu's argument. To me such a statement would appear to be made without much insight, and does not even amount to clever or intelligent thinking. There are many other such examples that leaves one questioning the real philosophical nature of some of the opinions presented by the said philosophic sages. Perhaps a rigorous scrutiny of the utterances of some of these sages might bring out the shortcomings of this noble project and hopefully at the same time construct a true philosophical discourse out of the apparent unphilosophical opinions of the sages.

5.4   Sage Philosophy as African Philosophy

We have earlier in this chapter made a distinction of two types of sages, that is, the plain sage, so to speak, who is wise only in the sense that he or she is able to accurately give an account of traditional beliefs but does not rise above this mere recital to critically question those beliefs, and on the other hand, the philosophic sage who is rationally critical and rises above the commonly held beliefs to scrutinise and question the basis on which those beliefs are founded. The philosophic sage is at will to offer alternative views on the beliefs so held by the community.

Sage philosophy then, can be construed to mean a system of thought of the various critical reflections of the individual sages. It consists, as Prof. Odera says, of the expressed thoughts of wise men and women in any given community. It becomes a way of explaining the world. Thus, sage philosophy is a body of thought, a way of interpreting the universe from the point of view of the various individual sages. How then does sage philosophy constitute African philosophy?

Prof. Odera Oruka says that philosophic sagacity has a stronger claim in the search for an African philosophy than professional or ideological -nationalistic philosophy. The reason he gives is that the latter are suspected of smuggling Western techniques into African philosophy[27]. It is, he argues, the approach to an African philosophy best equipped to "give an all-acceptable decisive blow to the position of ethno-philosophy"[28]. In his criticisms of philosophic sagacity, Lansana Keita has

raised the question of what Prof. Odera Oruka could possibly be having in mind when he talks of "Western techniques". It seems important that this question should be adequately answered because it appears to play a crucial role in determining what can easily be accepted as authentic African Philosophy and what on the other hand must be put under scrutiny before being accepted.

If we are to assume, as Keita does, that by "Western techniques" Prof. Oruka means writing and probably conceptual categories, then we would be admitting a criterion that raises serious issues. If we accept that philosophic sagacity is more authentically African by the mere fact that the said sages are not trained in western education, then by extension we would be admitting that professional philosophy on the other hand, is much more limited in its claim as African philosophy for the simple reason that it uses techniques acquired from Western philosophical tradition. If we are to accept this position, it would mean that even a critical analysis of sage philosophy itself by a professional philosopher loses much of its authenticity since the philosopher must inevitably use those "foreign" techniques. Yet, it would appear like we are unnecessarily overstating the question of authenticity as being almost synonymous with "uniqueness". This in effect, tends to imply that contemporary African thought can not possibly be a source of authentic African philosophy since it has already been exposed to and influenced by foreign modes of thought and is likely to use all the "Western techniques" at its disposal. This to me is a wrong view, and the contradiction that it

raises ,particularly with regard to philosophic sagacity, is serious because professional philosophy has to use the same acquired techniques, not only to record the thoughts of the sages, but also to classify those thoughts according to categories which are already pre-established by the philosopher and which he himself has certainly acquired from elsewhere.

The authenticity of philosophic sagacity, first as philosophy proper, and secondly as African philosophy would have to satisfy the skepticism of advocates of philosophy as a science of ideas and who in a sense, seem to admit only those philosophical enterprises that demonstrate the critical analytic method of the sciences. No doubt, only professional philosophy can so far demonstrate such a characteristic. If we insist that philosophy in the proper sense can only be thus, then it would seem that philosophic sagacity in its original form has a long way to go.

The position taken in presenting sage philosophy as an authentic and acceptable approach to African philosophy tends to raise certain issues. For instance, this position would appear ambivalent in light of defining philosophy (as advocates of scientific approach do) as being culture-neutral as a universal discipline. In this ambivalence is the persistent problem of defining philosophy as observed above. Can sage philosophy claim a uniqueness and at the same time present a universal approach to philosophy?

However, philosophic sagacity must be given its due credit. It does certainly in an original way open a critical discussion of our traditional cultures which hitherto have been misrepresented by cultural revivalists as having been all good. There is enough evidence from the accounts given by the sages that African traditions were not always positive. Indeed, many other scholars have observed, but not critically analysed (until recently) the authoritarian nature of the traditional social structures. Prof. Kwasi Wiredu's view of this has already been documented, and briefly brought to light elsewhere in this work. By criticising the very traditions that they have themselves grown within and even helped to sustain, these sages give us important pointers to a tradition which we have often tended to take for granted. The philosophic sages then can play a very crucial role in our efforts to reappraise and revive our traditional cultures as one of the options in our search for solutions to present day problems. As contact persons, the sages would be in a position to discuss with us the merits and demerits of particular traditional beliefs and under what circumstances such beliefs were held.

The philosophic sage, as Prof. Odera has observed, no doubt has an important role to play in rural development anywhere in Africa and in Kenya in particular. His rationalised wisdom and his ability to endear himself to the people should give the philosophic sage the role of positively transforming rural people towards thinking critically (as Prof. Wiredu observes) as a starting step towards achieving development. When people begin to think

philosophically they are able to accept new ideas which they can adopt according to their own needs. The philosophic sage ought then, to be the rural contact person of the professional philosopher by his proximity to the rural person and his knowledge of life among rural folk, as the two try to establish a critical way of looking at things among their people for faster development.

N O T E S

1.   Jack Goody, THE DOMESTICATION OF THE SAVAGE MIND, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

2.   Brian V. Street, LITERACY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, p.26.

He cites the following anthropological works to support his claim: E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1930)
                      Edmund Leach (1954,1976)
                      Michael Polanyi (1965)

3.   H. Odera Oruka, "The Fundamental Principles in the Question of 'African Philosophy'", in SECOND ORDER, Vol. 4, No.2, 1975.

4.   H. Odera Oruka, SAGE PHILOSOPHY Nairobi. ACTS Press, 1991, p. 169.

    Ibid.

6.   Ibid. p. 176.

7.   See the examples given in Chapter Two, Section 2.5.

8.   See For example the arguments postulated in the following authors:

Leopold S, Senghor, Negritude .
Aime Cesaire, Return to my Native Land,   Paris, Presence Africaine, 1956.

9.   H. Odera Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy", in Tsenay Serequeberhan, ed., African Philosophy, Paragon House, New York, 1991, p.57.

10.   Ibid., p. 58

11.   P.O. Bodunrin (1981) "Which Kind of Philosophy
       for Africa?" in A. Diemer, ed., PHILOSOPHY
       IN THE PRESENT SITUATION OF AFRICA,
       Wiesbaden, p. 173.

12.   Paulin Hountondji, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: MYTH AND
       REALITY, Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1983
       pp 168 & 178.

13.   H. Odera Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy",
       INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY, 23,
       1983, p.384.

14,   Ibid. pp.383-393.

15.   Theophilus Okere, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: A HISTORICO-
       HERMENEUTICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CONDITIONS
       OF ITS POSSIBILITY, Lanham University Press of America
       1983, P. XIV.

16.   P.O. Bodunrin, in Odera Oruka ed., SAGE PHILOSOPHY,
       ACTS, 1991, p. 168.

17.   Ibid   pp 6- 7.

18.   Ibid., p. 202.

19.   Marcel Griaule, CONVERSATIONS WITH OGOTEMMELI:
       AN INTRODUCTION TO DOGON RELIGIOUS IDEAS,
       Introduced by G. Dieterien, London . Oxford University
       Press, 1965.

20.   Hallen B. and Sodipo, J.O. AN AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY:
       THE KNOWLEDGE-BELIEF DISTINCTION AND YORUBA
       THOUGHT, University of Ife, 1981, p.1.

21. Oruka, Op. Cit. p. 60.

22. Ibid., p. 168.

23. William Boyd, PLATO'S REPUBLIC FOR TODAY, Heinemann, London, 1962, p.1.

24. Oruka, Op. Cit. p. 116.

25. D.A. Masolo, HALF A CENTURY OF PHILOSOPHY: PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICA SINCE 1930s, Forthcoming, p. 313.

26. Ibid. p. 309.

27. Oruka, 1983, p.384.

28. Ibid.

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: A RE-EVALUATION

6.1   The Problems of definition

The problem of defining African philosophy is inextricably tied to the meaning of the term philosophy itself. It is rather difficult to give a straight and simple definition of what philosophy is, but the definition given in chapter one in this work might give some insightful understanding of the term. However, there seems to be agreement that certain characteristics do distinguish a philosophical work from a non-philosophical one. One of the main characteristics of philosophical activity is that it involves critical reflection. A philosophical activity seeks to establish a system of fundamental beliefs through critical reflection of already existing beliefs. It must, in the process articulate those ideas in a coherent, sensible system of knowledge whether orally or in writing.

Philosophy as such seem to be more an activity – mental activity– rather than a spontaneously produced body of knowledge. As a mental activity it involves deep and critical thinking at the individual level. This critical reflection may be undertaken in any field of knowledge and need not be confined in any specific area. Philosophy as a critical reflection of things is said to be a universal experience. Although various peoples have presented very diverse opinions and interpretation of the universe as part of philosophizing, it is apparent that such views hardly ever agree nor can they be said to constitute a uniform body of knowledge. This is perhaps why references such as British philosophy, German philosophy, African philosophy etc, would appear to be misleading if taken

to be a body of knowledge common to and accepted by all the people who constitute the race so denoted. Such references can only be used to loosely refer to different works belonging to different individuals who happen to belong to the group of people referred to either by racial or geographical location. Innocent Onyewuenyi says that each culture has its own way of establishing order among various phenomena of the surrounding world, and tracing their unity by reducing them to their simplest elements. This is what he calls the philosophy of a people. He says, "How each culture traces the unity of these themes, synthesizes or organises them into a totality is based on each culture's concept of life, namely the interrelationship between objects and persons and between persons and persons themselves"[1]. This, he argues, is the basis on which we call a philosophy European, African, Asian, American, etc.

Some scholars have argued that while it is readily accepted and taken for granted that references such as British philosophy, American philosophy, etc, do refer to some philosophical work that can be credited to the British or Americans, an objection is immediately raised when the term "African philosophy" is introduced. It has been observed elsewhere in this work that the assumptions made on such terms are misleading. The ordinary British or American person is as innocent of philosophy as his or her counterpart say in Asia or Africa. We cannot therefore say that American or British philosophy refers to the way all Americans or British interpret their surroundings.

The objection to African philosophy in my view encompasses two main problems. The first problem arises from the rationality debate triggered by the Eurocentric myth of rational and irrational races. This myth, as we have already said elsewhere in this work, claimed that rationality, critical analysis of things, and by extension philosophy could only be found in white races and was wholly lacking in Africa. The second problem arises from the way some scholars were later to respond to the above claim. Tempels, and his followers, wishing to show that Africans were not wholly irrational as earlier argued, produced what they thought represented an African philosophical perspective. What they claimed to be African philosophy was essentially a communal worldview, innocent of any critical reflection. This second claim (as counter claim to the first) created yet another problem in African philosophy, and a serious objection orginally initiated by Paulin Hountondji and whose objection was that if African philosophy was what Tempels was purporting it to be, that is, an uncritical communal worldview where everyone agreed with everybody, then it was not philosophy at all, for philosophy, as Hountondji understood it, could only be an individual, objective and critical analysis of things, as in science.

The first objection to anything going under "African philosophy" was originally expressed by early anthropologists. For instance, the British anthropologist Robin Horton's first claims were that not only was there no African philosophy because (for him) African thought lacked logic and epistemology, but that there was no possibility of an African philosophy coming into being

now or in the future. His argument was that Africans could

only have traditional thought and that was the best they could

be credited for. Africans, as far as Horton was concerned have

no logic, no critical systematic analysis of any reality, and therefore

no philosophy. He says,

> ... all the terms which follow "of" in the
> various "philosophies of" refer to ways of
> using language to get a grip on the
> world which are not in themselves
> philosophical... it must in principle be
> possible to have "philosophy of" African
> Traditional Thought[2].

Horton's argument that Africans lack logic and epistemology

means by extension, an African is illogical and has no grasp of the

reality around him. Hence, an African cannot philosophize, not

even on his own traditional thought. But if he at the same time

grants that there can be a "philosophy of" African traditional

thought then it means someone else has to do the philosophizing,

since Africans themselves are incapable of it. Horton's contention

merely echoes Tempels' feelings, that it is the work of Europeans

to philosophize on African world views and on behalf of Africans.

The problem of such a view has already been discussed in chapter

three of this work. Perhaps Horton expressed his views too soon.

One might want to know what he thinks of works by African

scholars such as Prof. Kwasi Wiredu and Prof. Odera Oruka among

others.

In an answer to his own question, "Do we have an African

philosophy?" H. Maurier says, "The answer must surely be:

No! NOT YET![3]. At least Maurier, unlike Horton, does give

allowance that there may exist African philosophy in the future. But the inherent hesitation in his answer cannot go unnoticed. For him, and many others, the reason why African philosophy did not exist was due to lack of written evidence of it. In his view, philosophy of necessity develops alongside literacy. It is evidenced by individual contribution to its enterprise and this evidence can only be accepted when and where it is recorded. But Africa lacks in any recorded philosophical enterprise, and because she has no such evidence to show to the world, then one should not talk of African philosophy until such a time when Africans are able to produce philosophical discourses which are recorded for all to see and to be judged as being philosophical or not.

Maurier's claim can however be challenged by the position taken in Odera Oruka's project in sage philosophy. If we are to grant that there existed sage philosophers, in the absence of literacy, then we can easily dismiss Maurier's contention. In spite of such objections to African philosophy, many African scholars have demonstrated that Africans too are capable of engaging in philosophical thinking in their interpretation of phenomena and life. Many works have been produced by Africans themselves discussing various issues, both at a universal level and within an African context all demonstrating a critical and reflective nature. Whether these works amount to what we refer to as philosophy is a question to be judged elsewhere but the fact is that the activity undertaken by such scholars is certainly an individualistic and critical one. The approach in which our African scholars have opted to adapt in their search for an African philosophy is our

next interest.

6.2 Two Approaches

Augustine Shutte (1993)[4] identifies two senses of philosophy which seem to give rise to the two different approaches over which some African philosophers have locked horns. The first sense emphasizes the universality of philosophical truth and even of (the scientific) philosophical method. Those philosophers in Africa who understand philosophy thus insist on the scientific approach. The second sense stresses the fact that actual philosophy is always produced in a particular culture and language and developes particular sets of concepts to deal with particular intellectual problems that are felt to be important.

The first approach essentially sees philosophy as being inextricably bound up with science, in fact as being scientific. This is the view held by mostly professional African philosophers. Prof. Kwasi Wiredu for instance says,

> I take science to be the crucial factor
> in the transition from the traditional
> to the modern world. All developing
> nations are endeavouring to improve
> their living standards through the
> application of science, and any
> philosophy not thoroughly imbued
> with the spirit of science cannot
> hope to reflect this[5].

For Wiredu, the scientific method is important as the paradigm of all good intellectual activity and especially the philosophical one. He is convinced that the philosopher cannot

ignore the role of the scientific method in his search for knowledge and truth: "If a scientific outlook is an urgent necessity at the practical level of national life, it is hardly reasonable to exempt the philosopher from the need to evince similar qualities in his abstract meditations"[6] The modern African philosopher should therefore, according to Wiredu, "acquire a training in methods of scientifically oriented philosophical thinking of the type evolved where scientific and technological advance has been greatest"[7]. By so doing, the African philosopher would be in a position to help his society catch up with the technologically developed countries by fashioning out a trend of scientific thinking which is important in the utilization of resources for proper development.

This approach may be correct in its grasp of philosophical truth as being universal. It is also right in its observation that scientific knowledge has greatly helped in development, especially in the technologically advanced world. However, it may be wrong in some of the assumptions which it tends to take for granted. One of the problems of this approach is that it tends to equate philosophical thinking with science. The inherent claim here would therefore be that whatever science has invented toward technological development can therefore be directly related to philosophical thinking. But if we are to accept philosophy as simply an undertaking that systematises ideas both new and previously existing, then it is rather questionable to equate it with science. It is also rather obvious that when it comes to the level of implementation, technology becomes

much more than just an issue of rational thinking. In fact, there is likelihood that to achieve what mankind has achieved with technology has often required that man overlooks the noble aspect of philosophical reasoning.

The other problem with this view is that it risks portraying technological development as something that humankind should devote all its energies on. This view tends to show science as a limitless source of knowledge on which we ought to focus our attention as philosophers and scientists. Technological science is here presented as being the only one able to bring salvation to the miseries of humankind. But scientific knowledge has already begun to demonstrate that it is not all that human-friendly as we take it to be. One need only think of the threat of nuclear war, environmental degradation and several other threats to human life that have all been made real through scientific thinking. If we as African philosophers are to blindly follow scientific methods that lead us to help develop technology that does not take into account a mode of interpreting and harnessing our environment in a way that guarantees a more balanced human good, then we will have seriously failed our societies. We must be wary of a scientific technological culture that tends to destroy what cannot be replaced.

There is one other aspect that advocates of the scientific method in philosophy do not seem to fully understand. The scientific method (as used in natural sciences)deals with knowledge arising from phenomena as objects of experimentation. At the level of experimentation (the method itself) the scientists can afford to be value-free, more so because they are not sure of the outcome of

ignore the role of the scientific method in his search for knowledge and truth: "If a scientific outlook is an urgent necessity at the practical level of national life, it is hardly reasonable to exempt the philosopher from the need to evince similar qualities in his abstract meditations"[6] The modern African philosopher should therefore, according to Wiredu, "acquire a training in methods of scientifically oriented philosophical thinking of the type evolved where scientific and technological advance has been greatest"[7]. By so doing, the African philosopher would be in a position to help his society catch up with the technologically developed countries by fashioning out a trend of scientific thinking which is important in the utilization of resources for proper development.

This approach may be correct in its grasp of philosophical truth as being universal. It is also right in its observation that scientific knowledge has greatly helped in development, especially in the technologically advanced world. However, it may be wrong in some of the assumptions which it tends to take for granted. One of the problems of this approach is that it tends to equate philosophical thinking with science. The inherent claim here would therefore be that whatever science has invented toward technological development can therefore be directly related to philosophical thinking. But if we are to accept philosophy as simply an undertaking that systematises ideas both new and previously existing, then it is rather questionable to equate it with science. It is also rather obvious that when it comes to the level of implementation, technology becomes

much more than just an issue of rational thinking. In fact, there is likelihood that to achieve what mankind has achieved with technology has often required that man overlooks the noble aspect of philosophical reasoning.

The other problem with this view is that it risks portraying technological development as something that humankind should devote all its energies on. This view tends to show science as a limitless source of knowledge on which we ought to focus our attention as philosophers and scientists. Technological science is here presented as being the only one able to bring salvation to the miseries of humankind. But scientific knowledge has already begun to demonstrate that it is not all that human-friendly as we take it to be. One need only think of the threat of nuclear war, environmental degradation and several other threats to human life that have all been made real through scientific thinking. If we as African philosophers are to blindly follow scientific methods that lead us to help develop technology that does not take into account a mode of interpreting and harnessing our environment in a way that guarantees a more balanced human good, then we will have seriously failed our societies. We must be wary of a scientific technological culture that tends to destroy what cannot be replaced.

There is one other aspect that advocates of the scientific method in philosophy do not seem to fully understand. The scientific method (as used in natural sciences)deals with knowledge arising from phenomena as objects of experimentation. At the level of experimentation (the method itself) the scientists can afford to be value-free, more so because they are not sure of the outcome of

the experiment. Thus, the scientist is "detached", so to speak, from his object of knowledge. Philosophy, on the other hand, deals with the systematisation of (mostly already existing) ideas in order to come out with new meanings or a different interpretation of knowledge. Ideas essentially are value laden. They are full of meanings and it is these meanings that the philosophers seek to bring out. But the meaning of ideas can only be understood within a given context, and it is this context that the philosopher finds himself inextricably bound up with. In such circumstances it is difficult for the philosopher to adapt the experimental-laboratorian method of science. He (the philosopher) cannot afford to detangle himself from the cultural particularity of the ideas he purports to systematise, even as he tries to bring out their universality.

Shutte. attempts to trace this scientific approach back to the Anglo-American analytical school which he argues "... developed hand-in-glove with science, especially the natural sciences, and has been deeply influenced in its aims and values and methods by science and the environment and culture that science and technology have produced"[8]. Consequently, he says, this school has come to see philosophy either as an aspect of science, or else just as philosophy of science, a second-order activity having science rather than the real world as its object of study. The Anglo-American analytical school of philosophy, Shutte contends, is the most influential in the world today but has failed or seem unwilling or unable to engage with the human issues that arise in Africa, and in particular in the present South African situation. Its influence on African philosophers particularly those who have been schooled

in it is immense.

Shutte argues that this school tends to see philosophy as merely a tool of organising scientific ideas and methods, instead of giving its own brand of knowledge. Consequently, it loses touch with experience and the world itself. And more importanty "it loses touch with action and the world of values"[9] since it has acquired the "value free" nature of science. As emphasis is laid on the scientific approach in philosophy, the "two most important parts of traditional philosophy, metaphysics (our overall view of the world or reality) and ethics (our fundamental system of values) are abandoned."(Shutte, ibid).

Shutte feels that the Anglo-American analytical philosophy inculcates a rather general view of the world and values. He says it is materialistic, liberal-capitalist, utilitarian and atheist. This sort of approach, he argues, is inadequate or fails to provide an understanding of our own humanity of the kind traditionally aimed at by philosophy - the kind of understanding thatenables us to give some objective answer to our most pressing question concerning meaning and value. This failure, he says, is the reason why this brand of philosophy has so far been of little help in the struggle in South Africa.

The second approach to African philosophy, that is, from a cultural point of view is best expressed by Kwame Gyekye. Gyekye argues that philosophy is a conceptual response to basic human problems at different epochs[10]. He thus defines African philosophy as "(a) philosophical discourse that critically interacts

or communes with African cultural and intellectual experiences, with African mentalities and traditions, will be African"[11]. For Gyekye, a philosopher works within a context which is temporal as well as spatial. This context includes the history that has formed him as well as the contemporary social and political environment. For this reason then, Gyekye says, "the starting point, the organising concepts and categories of modern African philosophy (should) be extracted from the cultural, linguistic and historical background of African peoples, if that philosophy is to have relevance and meaning for the people, if it is to enrich their lives"[12].

Gyekye feels that it is necessary that contemporary African philosophy should be in continuity and grow out of traditional African thought, if at all it has to achieve anything as an intellectual response to a particular context. He maintains that philosophy should be "extracted" from these traditions, and the traditional conceptions must be given "adequate philosophical formulation, articulation and analysis by modern African philosophers"[13].

One of the most serious shortcoming of approaching philosophy from a culturalistic point of view is the sense of relativity it creates. If philosophy can only meaningfully be produced within a given cultural context, then truth takes on a cultural meaning as well, and there will be in existence as many truths as there are cultural contexts. The notion of a universal philosophical truth becomes a myth. We would have to grant that each culture represents its own brand of truth no matter how each truth is different from culture to culture. Incidentally this attitude of seeing

truth as being relative to each culture is a common phenomenon in the world. We perhaps all know the objectives behind some countries colonising others, and we probably can "justify" why each country must adapt an ideology "appropriate to its people and cultural values". We have good examples of rulers driving their countries into abject poverty in an effort to fashion out a system that is "genuinely African". Behind all this is the belief that each culture (or country) holds the key to the true understanding of things and only its point of view is said to offer a genuine truth value. However, if we are to assume that this approach is able to retain the critical reflective nature of philosophy, then we may grant that it is also capable of coming up with some"objecitve truth" which might be acceptable to other cultures too for its objectivity in interpreting things, particularly those values that appear to be universal to all human beings.

The positive aspect of this approach is that it is able to shed off some of the strictly objective experimental scientific method. This approach appreciates that ideas, and thought systems for that matter, are influenced by their cultural context and are in fact aspects of culture itself. If advocates of this approach can maintain a critical analysis of these ideas, then they may still be able to separate useful from irrelevant knowledge in traditional cultures, and, hopefully, take it back to the people as a more meaningful and useful body of knowledge. We are not claiming here that the scientific approach does not produce a body of knowledge that can be useful to the people, no. All we are saying is that the approach is too artificial in articulating its context and may

end up producing knowledge that is of no immediate relevance
to the people, or one which might turn out to be impractical. In
Africa today we have a host of serious problems that require
immediate action and which must be tackled from their root cause.
The African philosopher cannot afford to indulge in methods that merely
see the problems at their superficial level. He must be ready to
get immersed into the context that give rise to those problems.
Philosophy, especially within the African context must never be
used as a mere tool of convenience with hardly any particular value
in itself.

The starting point for the African philosopher then becomes
the acceptance of one's cultural context. It is within this cultural
context that the philosopher has been brought up, has mastered
its conceptual schemes and categories and is therefore able to
formulate a truly philosophical enterprise aimed at clarifying,
improving or even simply outlining for comparison the kind of
knowledge that his culture offers. It is certainly deceptive for
an individual to believe that he or she can philosophize on ideas
that are culturally or context free. The truth of such ideas
would be difficult to test and they would remain at the level of
purely mental imaginations.

There is a way in which we can adapt the two approaches
in our search for an African philosophy that is relevant to our
context. The scientific method certainly has its positive side
but only if it does not lose touch with its object of analysis, that
is, knowledge from a particular context. It should also not lose
sight of its noble objective - to study, interpret and enrich

existing systems of knowledge by giving them a new tool of self-criticism. The cultural approach must also adapt a critical appraisal of the culture it purports to study. It must not merely reproduce ethnography under the cover of philosophy and claim to be engaged in a critical reflective activity.

6.3 Some Necessary Conditions for an African Philosophy

The objection to ethno-philosophy as representing an African philosophy was raised in an earlier chapter but it is worth revisiting here. Prof. Paulin Hountondji, as one of the most serious critic of ethno-philosophy argued that if African philosophy is nothing more than traditional communalistic worldviews as claimed by ethno-philosophers, then philosophy can not be in existence in Africa. The reason being that, philosophising is an individual affair and involves critical rigorous and reflective analysis of things. It does not constitute commonly held beliefs, about which everybody agrees with everyone without questioning.

We may here make the observation that ethno-philosophers follow the culturalistic approach to African philosophy, without being critical in their interpretation of the cultural worldviews that they present as philosophical. Hountondji, on the other hand, advocates for the scientific approach to African philosophy, and feels that African philosophy can not be produced by any other method.

The inherent implication in the ethno-philosophical position on African philosophy is that there is a thread of unanimity that

runs across all African communities in which all knowledge becomes a common possession of everyone. Hence, ethno-philosophy thrives on the myth of a primitive unanimity in which, among non-Western societies, everyone always agrees with everybody else. In that case, in such societies there can never be individual beliefs or philosophies but only collective systems of belief. Ethno-philosophy then uses the term "philosophy" to designate each of these belief systems.

Hountondji has pointed out that ethno-philosophy emerged out of a specifically dominant politico-ideological persuasion. Tempels' "Bantu Philosophy" for instance, and whose general theme was unfortunately taken up and echoed by a number of African scholars, was written basically for a non-African audience. Whatever message it carried then was simply to perpetuate the predominant Europe opinion on Africa and Africans as a possible target of colonisation and transformation. Hountondji observes that African scholars, without understanding the underlying objective of Tempels' work, blindly took up the tune invented by Tempels and went to great lengths to perfect it. He says,

> African intellectuals wanted at all costs
> to rehabilitate themselves in their own
> eyes and in the eyes of Europe...
> they were only too happy to discover,
> through Tempels' notorious Bantu
> Philosophy, a type of argumentation
> that could, despite its ambiguities
> ... serve as one way of ensuring this
> rehabilitation. This explains why African
> authors, in various tones and moods,
> struck up the Tempelsian theme, whereas
> they should have been mindful of the
> massive and blinding fact that the
> Belgian missionary, by his own admission,
> was addressing not them but the
> European public[14].

Hountondji contends that <u>Bantu Philosophy</u> was addressing itself to two problematics, one, that of the "mission to civilize" and secondly, the "heightening of the soul" both of which are inseparable. Thus, "the theoretical objective of <u>Bantu Philosophy</u> is entirely contained in this double problematic, which itself finds meaning solely in the ideological problematic of triumphant imperialism", and "every such theoretical project, every attempt at sytematising the world-view of a dominated people is necessarily destined for a foreign public and intended to fuel an ideological debate which is centred <u>elsewhere</u>.in the ruling classes of the dominant society"[15].

The reason why African (scholars)allowed themselves to be taken in, Hountondji says, is because they perceived only the second aspect, the "heightening of the soul", precisely the African soul, without relating it to the first aspect, "the mission to civilize" which incidentally was the more dominant aspect. In the effort to rehabilitate the image of the African, African scholars who followed Tempels' themes missed or failed to fully grasp the centrality of the two aspects in the conspiracy to dominate and control them. These scholars then chose to address themselves to a European public. In their descriptive discourses of African civilization to Europeans, they hoped to secure respect for African cultural originality - but on Europe's own terms, Hountondji observes,

> In the circumstances it was inevitable
> that they should have ended up by
> inventing, as a foil to European
> philosophy, an African 'philosophy'
> concoted from extra-philosophical

material consisting of tales, legends,
dynastic poems, etc., by aggressively
interpreting these cultural data,grindinq
them down to extract their supposedly
'substantive marrow', turning them over,
again and again, in order to derive from them
what they could not, cannot and will never
yield: a genuine philosophy[16].

From Hountondji's contention we can see why ethno-philosophy

has been rejected as a true representation of African philosophy.

No doubt, a lot of time and effort has been spent producing

works which are now said to constitute ethno-philosophical

material . The scholars of this approach were certainly convinced

that their pursuit was a genuine and sincere one, especially in

light of what the African was then going through as a result of

colonisation and cultural imperialism by the West. But for all

their efforts, their work has been dismissed as philosophical

enterprise in futility. In Mudimbe's view, these African

intellectuals, in an attempt to assert Africanism and the existence

of an African knowledge, have ended up being trapped by the

same western power knowledge they are rejecting. They were

simply amplifying the same Western mentality that sought to set

them apart as being different and therefore needing to be

"processed" so as to bring them to the level of European

civilization[17]. Hountondji, too,feels that advocates of ethno-

philosophy have remained prisoners of the same European myth

of'otherness'and this is why "... they have taken it into their

heads to define a specific African philosophy, a world-view

common to all Africans, past, present and future, a collective

immutable system of thought in eternal opposition to that of

Europe"[18].

On his part, Hountondji advocates for a demythification of the African culture from what the West has invented about it. This demythification, he says, should sustain a critical re-interpretation of an African history. He maintains that we must break away from the anthropological, historical and ideological discourses that have been invented to characterise Africans. Hountondji admits that African philosophy does exist, but certainly not in the form in which ethno-philosophers present it.

In his definition of African philosophy, Hountondji first takes into account the universality of the term "philosophy" throughout its possible geographical applications. For him, this universality must be preserved, even in the understanding and interpreting of philosophical works of individuals in the various geographical locations. Hountondji gives two senses of philosophy in which African philosophical literature rests. The first sense is the popular (ideological) use and the second is the strict (theoretical) use of the word 'philosophy'. The popular (ideological) use of the term sees philosophy as any kind of wisdom, individual or collective, any set of principles presenting some degree of coherence and intended to govern the daily practice of a man or a people. In this vulgar sense of the word, everyone is naturally a philosopher, and so is every society. In the other stricter sense of the word, one is no more spontaneously a philosopher than one is spontaneously a chemist, physicist or a mathematician, since, "philosophy, like chemistry, physics or mathematics, is a specific theoretical discipline with its own exigencies and methodological rules", and "philosophy

is a theoretical discipline and therefore, belongs to the same genus as algebra,geometry, mechanics, linguistics etc"[19].

In the first sense then, African philosophy would constitute the sort of rationalised world-views of traditional Africa as presented by ethno-philosophers. But these would only pass as what Prof. Odera Oruka calls philosophy in the "debased" sense of the term.

Hountondji's rejection of philosophy in the popular (vulgar) sense does not appear to be based on (strictly speaking) a serious refutation of this philosophy nor on a clear exposition of philosophy in the strict sense. His rejection seems to simply rest on the apparent difference between the popular sense and the strict sense of philosophy. He does not offer a serious argumentation to reject philosophy in the popular sense other than simply saying it is not philosophy because of its communalistic nature and generalising tendencies. He says,

> ... if we want to be scientific, we
> cannot apply the same word to two
> things as different as a spontaneous,
> implicit and collective world-view
> on the one hand and, on the other,
> the deliberate, explicity and
> individual analytic activity which
> takes the world-view as its subject[20].

It would then appear like the only mistake ethno-philosophers do, in Hountondji's view, is to give the label of 'philosophy' to their work. Whatever they produce may be knowledge, even useful knowledge, but they should not call it philosophy. Yet, in his position of what constitutes African

philosophy, Hountondji grants that even material produced by
philosophers in the popular sense of the word are part of African
philosophy. He says, "African philosophy does exist therefore...
as a literature produced by Africans and dealing with philosophical
problems"[21]. But he does not qualify whether such material is
philosophical because it follows the scientific method of inquiry
or simply because it is produced by an African. Though
Hountondji acknowledges the contradiction likely to arise from
this position, he still gives the impression that our only concern
in defining African philosophy should be merely to recognise the
existence of that literature as philosophical literature, whatever
its value and credibility may be. Essentially what we would be
acknowledging is what it is and not necessarily what it says.

On what African philosophy is Hountondji says, "(b)y
'African philosophy' I mean a set of texts, specifically the set
of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their
authors themselves"[22] and further on,

> In other words, speaking of African
> philosophy in a new sense, we must
> draw a line, within ethno-philosophical
> literature in general, between African
> and non-African writers, not because
> one category is better than the other,
> or because both might not, in the last
> analysis, say the same thing, but
> because, the subject being African
> philosophy, we cannot exclude a
> geographical variable, taken here as
> empirical, contingent extrinsic to
> the content or significance of the
> discourse and as quite apart from any
> questions of theoretical connections[23].

In other words, the only important condition for a work to be called African philosophy is that the author must be African in origin, in geographical terms. It is not necessary that the work has an African focus. But this definition is wanting in some respects. First, the fact that an African may write anything and classify it as philosophy would not automatically qualify it as philosophical. The declaration of an author that his work is philosophical is not the only condition needed to pass it as philosophy. Otherwise ethno-philosophy (in spite of the criticisms hurled at it) if written by Africans would then automatically qualify first as philosophy and then as African philosophy. We would like to believe that Hountondji is not admitting pseudo-philosophy simply because it is produced by an African and the author thinks or imagines that what he has produced amounts to philosophy. The work(s) hopefully must be judged by its critical, reflective and rigorous analysis of the issue(s) it discusses, and only then can it be labelled philosophy, and African philosophy by whatever other criteria one wishes to use.

Hountondji's definition of African philosophy appears to limit it to texts only written by Africans themselves (as defined by geographical and racial accident) on whatever they choose as their focus. From this point of view, the work of a non-African scholar who chooses to make a critical analysis on certain aspects of African culture would not qualify to be called African philosophy. By this extension, Tempels' Bantu Philosophy is not African philosophy even if it were more than just ethno-philosophy. Yet, there is reason to believe that a non-African

can make significant contribution to the African philosophical literature if what he writes on has an African focus and is interpreted within an African context. Thus, there appears to be a shortcoming in admitting works produced by Africans but whose focus, paradigm and methodology is all Western as African philosophy but at the same time refusing to admit works by non-African scholars whose focus and content for all practical purposes is African oriented.

Franz   Crahay's [24] criticism of ethno-philosophy needs consideration in our attempts to define what is not African philosophy and what it ought to be. According to Crahay, Tempels' usage of the term 'Bantu Philosophy' arises from the confusion of the lived with the reflective, or the confusion between the vulgar and the technical sense of the word "philosophy". For Crahay, philosophy must be defined as, "an explicit, analytic, radically critical and autocratical, systematic and open reflection, at least in principle, that is made on experience, its human conditions, on meanings and values that it reveals"[25]. Philosophy then becomes a discourse of reflection of the subject on his object of experience. It makes reasoned judgement as rational discourse. Commenting on Tempels' <u>Bantu   Philosophy</u>,Crahay says,

> Now what R.P. Tempels exposed and interpreted is no more nor less of a world vision: the vision of a world perceived and lived as an anthropocentric network of vital forces in the constant interaction. This world vision is generally coherent, carrier of moral, of a religion and of a tradition of wisdom. But it is not philosophy at all[26].

This rationalization of the material collected from the field (as Crahay refers to Tempels' work) only takes a distance away from the language or experience of which it intended to be a faithful voice carrier, because it gives beginning to reflection. Nevertheless, neither the voice-carrier nor the voice-carried becomes critical. They remain on the level, not of examination, but of description[27]. Crahay maintains that a number of conditions must be met if we are to talk of a Bantu or African philosophy.

In the first condition, the Bantu must have specialists, individual critical thinkers, philosophers of this system, be they indigenous or foreign. This, Crahay believes, can only possibly emerge from a good system of teaching in the modern African Universities where cultural anthropology and African philosophy should build roots of this critical philosopher emergence.

As a second condition, the Bantu or African philosophy will have to relate itself to some known culture as India has, Crahay argues, founded its own philosophy based on a certain selected Western tradition. The instauration of a Bantu Philosophy, as a third condition, needs the invention of a sort of values to follow – attitudes, original linguistic resources, certain mental categories like symbolism that would launch a Bantu philosophy. These inspirations, forms, schemas and symbols, put to work within precise philosophical problems, would start off a philosophy of life or logos that would be accorded some data of contemporary scientific problems. The question of myth brings in the fourth condition in the realization of Bantu philosophy. Crahay argues that the mind must loosen itself from myth, and reflective knowledge must

disengage itself from the mythical knowledge and rise to the critical level   of philosophy.

Crahay takes issue with African intellectuals who adopt foreign trends and schools of thought whose theories give the picture of sympathising with the habits and characteristics of African thought. He sees as pitiful the haste with which African intellectuals superficially adopt and assimilate such theories and methods without subjecting them to a critical analysis. This haste, he says, leads to errors of perspective. It leads African scholars to ignore the historical background of the theories they adopt. African Scholars should instead reconstruct their own theories of knowledge within their own particularity.

Thus, for Crahay, a Bantu or African philosophy could be realized if the above conditions are fulfilled. Furthermore, he says, African originality   must not be kept at the margin of universal civilization but must integrate itself into the universal civilization as a contribution to this whole of which it legitimately makes part.

The conditions given by Crahay are in no mean way important in our attempts to relaunch and carve out an African philosophy that is accepted at the universal level and at the same time practical at the cultural level. Crahay agrees that the philosophy so produced must be individual and critical. But he contends that this can only emerge from professionally trained philosophers. It is these professional philosophers who are then called upon to give an exposition of a philosophy that is culturally and authentically African. But whereas this philosophy is supposed to demonstrate a unique

cultural aspect, this uniqueness must at the same time be able to merge with universally acceptable philosophical traditions so as to raise it to the prevailing standards of philosophy as a universal enterprise.

Crahay feels that an African philosophy must have a theoretical grounding that is practical and relevant to the African context. It ought to be geared towards the search for a philosophy of life that seeks to solve problems. But for this to be realized, African philosophers have to rise above the level of mythical knowledge to the level of critical and reflective thought. They must be ready to engage their world-views into a rigorous, critical analysis, opening them up for questioning so that the true philosophy in them may be separated from mere myths that have no grounding.

In the process of doing so, African intellectuals have to avoid what Hountondji refers to as "being prisoners of the same myth(s)" that have been invented by some foreign trends and schools of thought. They must not let themselves be taken in (as they did with Tempels' Bantu Philosophy) without subjecting the theories offered by the West to scrutiny and critical analysis to find out whether their grounding is correct or not. Adopting such theories wholesale without scrutiny has led African intellectuals to make wrong conclusions and to lose the proper perspective of issues that are important in the search for an African knowledge.

Above all, Crahay observes that authenticity and originality in approach to African issues should never be a measure to keep Africa "at the margin of universal civilization".

Instead, this originality must find its place and be integrated into the universal civilization as an important contribution to the whole in which it legitimately belongs. The African intellectuals must therefore find a way of bringing African knowledge to the universal circle of knowledge, instead of wrongly portraying it as uniquely different and therefore lying outside the 'whole'. African philosophy ought therefore to take its rightful place within the universal body of knowledge by contributing knowledge that is universally acceptable but at the same time relevant to the African context.

Segun Gbadegesin agrees with this position in his view of African philosophy. He says,

> ... African philosophy is first and foremost a philosophical activity and is addressed to issues relating to African realities - traditional or contemporary.
>
> ... it satisfies any or all of the following:
>
> (i)   it focuses on African conceptual systems,
>
> (ii) it deals with problems and issues African in nature,
>
> (iii) it is based on contemporary African experience
>
> (iv) it is a comparative study and analysis of African realities vis-a-vis other regions of the world[29]

Segun takes a philosophical activity to mean that which is marked by a critical reflection on its subject matter. Contemporary philosophers, he says, can learn a lot by probing into the philosophical foundations of traditional thought and the philosophical issues

in the views of traditional philosophers, some of whom can still be identified, as in Prof. Odera Oruka's philosophic sages. But Segun cautions that such engagement should not be for its own sake but rather it should be undertaken with a view to shedding light on the resolution of contemporary problems. Thus, African intellectuals must avoid the problems envisaged by Arthur Murphy when he observed that "(t)he trouble with professional philosophy has not been its lack of popular success, but its actual irrelevance to the conditions of life...."[30]. More than just prescribing what African philosophers ought to do, Segun goes further to give a brilliant analysis of issues relating to both traditional and modern African realities in his book African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African realities. An analysis of this work would no doubt be a worthwhile one, but it is inappropriate for me to undertake it in this particular work.

6.4 The Philosophical enterprise and its Relevance to Africa

The relevance of philosophy both within and outside academic circles in Africa has always been a contentious issue. This is more so because for a long time Africa has been suffering from a host of socio-economic maladies and emphasis has consequently tended to be laid on training personnel whose knowledge would be of immediate use in the search for solutions to the problems facing Africa . When philosophers have been called to demonstrate their usefulness to the society in light of this, they have often been seen to be engaging in a basically luxurious academic activity. But is it the case that philosophy has no relevance to Africa? In

order to answer this, we shall first make note of the understanding people have of philosophy. Lansana Keita gives us good analysis of the enterprise called philosophy and whether it has any function or pragmatic use.

Keita observes that the ontological meaning of philosophy fails to fully explain philosophy because it presupposes that philosophical ideas should be examined only from the standpoint of their intellectual content. From this viewpoint, philosophy is seen as an embodiment of ideas or thought for its own sake. Keita's position is that the pragmatic question about philosophy gives us a fuller understanding of philosophy in general, that is, if we are to understand philosophy as a human product with its particular historical emphasis. If we are to grant this, then the potential historical role of philosophy in Africa becomes clear to us.

In Orthodox Western philosophical circles, Keita says, philosophical writings are regarded first as examples of exercise of reason for its own sake - pursuing answers to eternal questions such as "What is truth", "What is good","What is existence" etc.[31] Keita argues that philosophers are considered as being great or distinguished if their philosophical works offer the contemporary society in which they live(d) some pragmatic value (whether psychological or material). Thus, Plato may have been regarded as a great philosopher than Protagoras, and Kant rather than Wolfe, for what they offered their particular society through writing. For Keita, "philosophical thought, like any human product derives its value according to its perceived usefulness" (ibid)

Keita proposes to define philosophy as "any set of ideas which seeks to construct an ontology appropriate for a given age or era" (ibid p.145), hence, philosophy is a set of ideas that seeks to explain the world in terms coherent, understandable and empathetic to interested parties, groups or classes in society. And in the process of propagating these ideas, skepticism, criticism, probing epistemological questions are used as tools to replace one ontology or world-view with another, or to defend a received ontology from the criticisms of others. Keita feels that one of the reasons why Marx is still unpopular in the West is because his writings are not perceived as being in the interests of the intellectually and economically dominant classes there.

Keita's thesis is that Western philosophy as a whole is in reality a construction, a device which served and serves practical social needs. Philosophy in the west first sought to offer a general intellectual support for societies greatly influenced both by Greek thought and Christian doctrine. A conciliation between economic interests and technological pursuits led to the validation of the usefulness of organised empirical knowledge. This resulted to the supersession of philosophy by empirical science as a means of understanding and exploiting nature. From this, two dominant postmedieval schools of thought - rationalism and empiricism prepared the ground for the theoretical foundations of modern science. Subsequently, the theory of modern scientific methodology was increasingly applied to all modes of human experience. All facets of human behaviour were subjected to scientific analysis.

From the ongoing, Keita maintains, professional African philosophers can learn something. That the function of philosophy in the West can be seen as being instrumental in shaping the ideological and technological outlook of those particular civilizations. The construction of a European philosophy was a self- conscious effort by Europeans to utilize the most complex products of human thought to fashion a self-interested civilization. Hence, theoreticians of a philosophy in an African context must attempt to construct a modern African philosophy with the notion that its formulation would be geared toward helping in the development of a modern African civilization. This is more so because technological advancement (to which the philosopher ought to contribute) is seen as an important ingredient of any successful civilization. Humanity can live more harmoniously with nature if human beings seek to know the workings of nature and nature itself and by developing sophisticated tools that are used in its exploitation. Society may provide training centres where its members are instructed on knowledge of the natural world, which in turn is used in maintaining social order. Keita holds that such instruction may be given on two levels, at the level of knowing the natural world and of the applications of different forms of technology in this world, and secondly, at the level of giving relevant value judgements and cultural assumptions necessary for the maintenance of the society in question. He contends that historical research shows that a society's value judgements are ultimately determined by knowledge of the natural world and the application of this knowledge to forms of technology. The African philosopher must therefore pay attention to these observations, and establish how he can best contribute to the development of his own society.

The function of philosophy should thus be to help in the imparting of knowledge of the natural and social world to assist in the constant discussion of the optimal set of value judgements and cultural assumptions that social individuals must make to take the fullest advantage of the sum of scientific knowledge available (Keita ibid. p. 147). Therefore a useful approach for African philosophers would be to regard philosophical activity as engaging in theoretical analysis of issues and ideas of practical concern. But, in modern society, it is the social and natural sciences that discuss ideas and issues relevant to practical concerns. Hence, philosophical practice in Africa should be concerned first with the analysis of the methodology and content of the social sciences, for it is the methodology of research of a given discipline that determines the orientation of research in that discipline and the kinds of solutions to problems ultimately proposed. (Ibid).

But by this position, we hope, Keita is not suggesting that philosophy cannot have its own subject - matter and methodology (approach) which can still be relevant and of practical use to society. The role of philosophy and an African philosopher is thus summarised:

> In these critical times, the African philosopher's contributions to African development in the areas of economic theory, political theory, historiography, anthropology, and the other sciences of human behaviour should be of significance[32].

Keita also feels that research into traditional African thought systems has an important role to play in the social philosophies and technological orientations of modern Africa.

He is opposed to scholars producing philosophical works merely for apologetic purposes. He says that the object of producing works which are merely geared towards proving to others that "Africans knew how to think consistently before colonial times" and that "African world-views were not inherently irrational" does not help much in the understanding of the complexities involved in the current transformations taking place in African societies. He thinks African scholars should not be wasting precious time engaging in purely academic debates for their own sake while there are so many problems afflicting Africa and which need theoretical foundations upon which possible solutions can be approached. This feeling is echoed by Tsenay Serequeberhan when he observes;

> To be sure, African thinkers can also reflect on their traditonal "religious beliefs and myths". But if African thinkers are really to engage actual problems, then it is clear that African philosophy has to - at some level or other - be concerned with the contemporary struggles and concerns facing the continent and its diverse peoples. For it is not the "beliefs and myths" of the peoples of Africa - in their intricate magnificence - that are mind boggling, but the concrete misery and political insanity of the contemporary African situations[33].

Prof. Kwasi Wiredu's position is that there is a lot that philosophy can do for Africa. Though he does acknowledge the significant contribution that traditonal knowledge can make to the modern African search for an African knowledge, he cautions that there would be no philosophical interest in a recovery and presentation of traditional ideas that is not critical in its approach.

Analysis and exposition, he maintains, are necessary preliminaries to the critique of concepts in the African world-views and without the critique, the analysis is not worthwhile, as it would have no direct interest to philosophy. Wiredu maintains that technological development should be the central project of black Africa today and this is essentially a philosophical project. Development, he says, is to be measured by the "the degree to which rational methods have penetrated through habits... the quest for development ... should be viewed as a continuing world - historical process in which all peoples, Western and non-Western alike, are engaged" From this point of view, modernization is not simply the "unthinkingly jettisoning" traditional ways of thought and adopting foreign habits. Rather, it is "a process in which Africans, along with all other peoples, seek to attain a specifically human destiny"[34]

Wiredu feels it is important that philosophy in Africa should seek to contribute towards the presentation of communalism in African societies while at the same time trying to shed off the authoritarianism that seems to go with it. For him, the African philosopher must endeavour to go beyond the descriptive project of ethno-philosophy as they engage with problems of contemporary Africa. The test of a contemporary African philosopher's conception of African philosophy, he says, is whether it enables him to engage fruitfully in the activity of modern philosophising with an African conscience.

Prof. Wiredu sees philosophy as helping to demonstrate the most basic and fundamental ideas which guides the actions of an individual or a group of individuals. In this case, philosophy should be seeking to show the most important aspects of such

ideas and to give good reasons in their support. He compares

our Contemporary African situation today with the days of Marx; and

says today Africa is even much more revolutionary than Europe

during the time of Marx. This revolution, he says, is reflected in the

way we are seeking political and social systems that are best suited to

the rapid development taking place and in the way in which we are

trying (sometimes rather unsuccessfully) to reappraise, change

and adopt our traditional culture under the pressure of modern

conditions of foreign influence and racial discrimination.

A truly committed philosopher ought to help his fellow men

overcome these problems by steering them in the right direction.
The African philosopher according to Wiredu, must let his voice be

heard on the question of what mode of social and political system is

best suited to our conditions. This might help avert some of the

disastrous ideologies which are being pushed down the throats of

ignorant Africans. Of course the problem the philosopher faces here

is that there are extremely few leaders who are willing to listen to

philosophical counsellings, let alone implement what may be suggested

by the philosopher. We can only hope that some day a philosophical

person might find his way to leadership and hopefully show others

the importance of thinking philosophically.

The African philosopher, Wiredu feels, must also take an

active role as a leader in the reappraisal of oral traditional culture.

He says it is important that a philosopher takes up this role because

many Africans have, in their endeavour to defend African culture,

done the very opposite through misguided notions of what they

purport to be defending. Perhaps Wiredu here has in mind the enterprise of ethno-philosophers. It requires a real philosophically minded person to be able to study African traditional culture in order to reappraise what was good in them and try to merge it with other good values that we keep collecting from other foreign cultures. It is the work of the African philosopher to clarify for his countrymen the difference between an ideology as a set of ideas adopted for the good of society, and an ideology as a 'set of dogmas' to be imposed by the government with force when deemed necessary. The African philosopher should never sit back to watch as things go wrong. He should offer his ideas which are well rationalised. Wiredu advocates for a philosophy which would help Africans to realise themselves as rational beings. He observes that "a man can lose his soul by being prevented to think for himself or being rendered unable to think for himself".

The African philosopher then should show the way to thinking critically about the abstract ideological discourse. The duty of the philosopher here is to promote the positive sense of ideology, that is, as a set of ideas, on which a good society can be founded. The role of the philosopher in this case is to speed up peoples way of thinking critically so as to avert any wrong decisions which might be made and have adverse effects. The more Africans begin to think philosophically and constructively the more problems can be solved. The African philosopher can help restore the confidence Africans had in their culture before colonialism. What was ideally good in African cultures can he highlighted as a source of pride for the Africans. But cultural revivalism as Wiredu calls it, requires a rational reflection

on its consequences. We should not just aim at reviving what our forefathers held without even trying to understand its basis. We ought to revive only that which can help us in our contemporary situation. There is a need today, Wiredu holds, for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate backward aspects of our culture from those worth keeping. It is the work of the philosopher to carry out this analysis. The African culture needs to be defended rationally by looking at what our ancestors left us and then supporting it after philosophically reflecting on it.

Considering the many problems facing Africa today, it is quite clear that the African philosopher has a very major and important role to play. As Wiredu has put it, the task of the African philosopher is to examine the intellectual foundations of African life using the best available modes of knowledge and reflecting them for the well being of the Africans.

N O T E S

1. Innocent Onyewuenvi "Is there an African Philosophy", in Tsenay Serequeberhan, ed. AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon House, New York, 1991, p.38.

2. R. Horton, "Traditional Thought and the Emerging African Philosophy Department: A Comment on the Current Debate" in SECOND ORDER, Vol.VI, No. I, Jan. 1977.

3. H. Maurier, "Do we have an African Philosophy?" in AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, R.A. Wright, ed. University Press of America, 1979, p.l.

4. Augustine Shutte, PHILOSOPHY FOR AFRICA, University of Cape Town Press, Rondebosch, 1993.

5. Kwasi Wiredu, PHILOSOPHY AND AN AFRICAN CULTURE, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p. 32.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Augustine Shutte Op.Cit. p. 7.

9. Shutte,Ibid.

10. Kwame Gyekye, AN ESSAY ON AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. p.39.

11. Ibid. p. 211.

12. Ibid. p. 42

13. Ibid. p. 41

14. Paulin Hountondji, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: MYTH AND REALITY, London, Hutchinson Publishers, 1983 pp.48-49.

15. Ibid. p.49.

16. Ibid. p. 50 .

17. V.Y. Mudimbe, THE INVENTION OF AFRICA, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983.

18. Paulin Hountondji Op.Cit. pp 51 -52.

19. Ibid p. 47.

20. Ibid p. 63.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. p. 34.

23. Ibid. p. 64.

24. Franz Crahay, "Le' de' Collage" Conceptuel:
Conditions d'une Philosophie bantou," in
DIOGENE, No.52, 1965,
See pp 63-74. See also translated parts in Masolo, Ph.D.
1979 .

25. Crahay Ibid. p. 63.

26. Ibid. p. 65.

27. D.A. Masolo, "History of 'African Philosophy'" Ph.D.
Thesis, Gregorian University, Rome, 1979, p. 108.

28. Crahay, Ibid. in Op.Cit.

29. Segun Gbadegesin, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Centemporary African Realities, Peter Lang, New York, 1991, p.22.

30. Arthur Murphy, "Life and Philosophy" Cited in Marcus G. Singer, ed. AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY, Royal Institute of Philosophy, Lecture Series 19, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 324.

31. Lansana Keita, "Contemporary African Philosophy: The Search for a Method", in Tsenay Serequeberhan, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon House, New York, 1991, p. 144.

32. Ibid. p. 149.

33. Tsenay Serequeberhan, AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, Paragon House, 1991, p. 10.

34. Kwasi Wiredu, op. cit.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this work we have been trying to understand the subject of philosophy both as a universal engagement and its particularity within a given context. We have discussed the general and strict meaning of the term philosophy and analysed its relevance to the human society. We have shown that the inquiring nature of philosophy helps the individual to rationally interpret phenomena so as to establish a reliable basis of knowing it. This knowledge may then be systematised and used within a social context.

We have also in a fundamental way refuted the Eurocentric notion than rationality is to be found only in some specific races and not others. Our basis of this refutation lies in the fact that rationality, as we have argued, is one of the main faculties that differentiates human beings from animals and for this reason then, all human beings naturally have this faculty. Hence as long as we are talking of human societies, then we have to grant that all the members of these societies are rational. By extension, they are also capable of a rational philosophical inquiry. For this reason then, African thought systems can make a claim to some philosophical knowledge. It is therefore imperative that we grant the philosophical aspects of these thought systems.

On the other hand, however, we have also denied that African philosophy constitutes what ethno-philosophers purport it to be. We have argued that communal

African worldviews do not constitute a philosophy, not least an African philosophy if we are to accept them as mere communal beliefs which have not been reflected upon and which are accepted by everyone without any question. By rejecting the ethno-philosophers' view of African philosophy, we contend that African philosophy needs to be given a much more serious approach and presentation than these philosophers propose. Instead of reducing African philosophy to a dogmatic system of worldviews, we need to establish it as a rational and well reflected body of knowledge.

As a starting point, the project of sage philosophy was seen to be partly engaged in this challenge but at a higher level it may provide a basis for philosophical inquiry into African thought systems. Though philosophic sagacity in African philosophy may be seen to constitute some individual philosophical reflections of each sage, we have argued that such reflection must not merely aim to present some rationalised euphorisms without making any attempt to rigorously analyse their basis in an effort to establish their true philosophical worth. The African philosophic sage has to overcome not only the inherent socio-cultural biases in the said thought systems but he/she must at the same time demonstrate the value of traditional knowledge in light of the influence that foreign cultures have had on African peoples. The philosophic sage then becomes the authority on whom the modern professional philosopher can rely in the task of reappraising African knowledge and in the effort to re-establish the lost glory of Africa and its cultural heritage.

S E L E C T E D B I B L I O G R A P H Y

ABRAHAM, W.E. The Mind of Africa,
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962.

ALLIER, R. The Mind of the Savage 1927.

ANYANWU, K.C. "Scientific Attitude and African Human
Experience" in Thought and Practice,
Journal of Philosophical Association of
Kenya, Vol.3, No.2, Nairobi, 1976.

ANYANWU, K.C. and E.A. Ruch, African Philosophy, Catholic
Boook Agency, Rome, 1981.

APOSTEL, L. African Philosophy: Myth or Reality, E. Story
Scientia, Belgium, 1981.

APPIAH, K.A. In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy
of Culture, Oxford University Press, Oxford,
1992.

AUGE, M. The Anthropological Circle, Cambridge University
Press, Cambridge, 1982.

AWOLOWO, Obafemi , The Problem of Africa: The Need for
Ideological reappraisal, Macmillan, London, 1977.

AWOLOWO, Obafemi, Voice of Reason, Fagbamigbe Publishers,
Akure, 1981.

AYER, A.J. The Concept of a Person, Macmillan,
London, 1973.

AYER, A,J,   The Revolution in Philosophy,   London,
               1956.

BA, SYLVIA,   The Concept   of Negritude in the Poetry
               of Leopold Sedan Senghor, Princeton
               University Press, New Jersey, 1973.

BELL, Richard,   "Narrative in African Philosophy", in
               Philosophy, Cambridge, July, 1989.

BERNAL, Martin,   Black Athena (The Afro asiatic Roots of
               Classical Civilization of Ancient Greece,
               Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1987.

BETHELEZI, M. Gatsha, "The Legacy of African Humanism",
               Natural History, 12:2, 1984.

BIDNEY, David, "On the Concept of Culture and some Cultural
               fallacies" in F.C. Gamst and E. Norbeck,
               Ideas of Culture: Sources and Uses, Holt
               Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1976.

BLACK, Max,   Language and Philosophy, Cornell University
               Press, New York, 1966.

BLOCKER, Gene,   "African Philosophy" in African Philosophical
               Inquiry, Vol.I, No.I, January, 1987.

BODUNRIN, P.O. "The question of African Philosophy" in
               African Philosophy, Tsenay Serequeberhan,
               Paragon House, New York, 1991.

BODUNRIN, P.O. "Philosophy: Meaning and Methods"
               Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies,
               (IJHS) No. I, April, 1981.

BODUNRIN, P.O. Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives, University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife, 1985.

BOYD, W. Plato's Republic for Today, Heinemann, London, 1962.

BRELSFORD, V. Primitive Philosophy 1935.

BRELSFORD, V. The Philosophy of the Savage, 1938.

BRUHL, L.L. La Mentalite Primitive, Fourth edition, Paris, 1960.

BRUMBAUGH, Robert S. The Philosophers of Greece, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1981.

CABRAL, Amilcar, "National Liberation and Culture" in Return to Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral, Monthly Review Press.

CABRAL, Amilcar, "Weapon of Theory" in Revolution in Guinea, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969.

CESAIRE, Aime, "Culture and Colonisation" Presence Africaine, 1964.

CESAIRE, Aime, Return to My Native Land. 1956.

COHEN, R. "Marxism in Africa - The Grounding of a Tradition" in B. Munslow, ed. Africa- Problems in the Transition to Socialism, London, 1966.

COLLINGWOOD, R.J. An Essay on Metaphysics, Gateway, Chicago, 1972.

CRAHAY, Franz, "Conceptual Take-off: Conditions for a Bantu Philosophy" in Diogenes 52:55-78, 1965.

CROSLAND, Maurice, The emergence of Science in Western Europe, Science History Publications, New York, 1976.[2]

DAVIDSON, B. The Africans, Longmans, London , 1969.

DAVIDSON, B. Can Africa Survive, Atlantic-Little, Brown and Co.,Boston, 1974.

DAVIDSON, B. Africa in Modern History Books, 1985.

DERRIDA, Jacques, Margins of Philosophy, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982.

DEWEY, JOHN, Reconstruction in Philosophy, Henry Holt & Co. New York, 1920.

DIOP, Cheik Anta, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, edited and translated by Mercer Cook, Lawrence Hill, Chicago, 1974.

DIOP, C.A. The Cultural Unity of Negro Africa, Presence Africaine, Paris, 1959.

DIOP,C.A. Great African Thinkers Vol. I, I.V. Sertima (ed.) Transaction books, 1987.

DU BOIS, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk, Chicago, 1903

DUPRE, W.   Religion in Primitive Cultures: A Study in Ethno-
Philosophy,   Mouton, Paris, 1975.

EBOUSSI-Boulaga, F. "Le Bantu Problematique" in
Presence Africaine, No.66, 1968.

ELUNGU, E.P. "Philosophy and Problems of Education in Africa"
in Teaching and Research in Philosophy,

UNESCO, Paris, 1984.

EVANS-Pritchard, E.E.   Theories of Primitive Religion,
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972.

FANON, Frantz,   The Wretched of the Earth., Grove Press, Inc.,
Chicago, 1963.

FANON, Frantz,   Black Skin White Masks, Grove Press,
Inc., Chicago, 1967.

FANON, Frantz,   Towards the African Revolution, H.
Chevalier,Trans   Grove Press, 1967.

FASINA, O.   "Response to Historico-Philosophical Aspects
of Different Concepts of Colonialism" in P.O.
Bodunrin, (ed.) Philosophy i.: Africa,
Ibadan, 1985.

FINNEGAN, R.   "Literature Vs Non-Literacy: The Great
Divide?" R. Horton and R. Finnegan, eds.
Modes of Thought, Faber   and Faber, London,
1973.

FLOISTAD, G.   Contemporary Philosophy Vol. 5,
African Philosophy ,Martinus Nijhoff Publishers,
Netherlands, 1987.

FORDE, D. ed., <u>African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples.</u> Oxford University Press, London, 1954.

FORTES, M. and G. Dieterlan, eds. <u>African Thought and Systems,</u> Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, London, 1965.

FOUCAULT, Michel, <u>The Archeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language.</u> Harper and Row, New York, 1972.

FRANKFORT, Henri, <u>Before Philosophy</u>. Penguin, 1951.

GBADEGESIN, Segun, "Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective" in <u>Ultimate Reality and Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding,</u> Vol. 7, No.3, 1984, pp 165 - 178.

GBADEGESIN, S. <u>African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities.</u> Peter Lang, New York, 1991.

GEISS, Immanuel, <u>The Pan-African Movement,</u> Africana Publishing, New York, 1974.

GLENN, P.J. <u>An Introduction to Philosophy</u>, Herder Book Co. New York, 1966.

GLUCKMANN, Max, "Social Beliefs and individual thinking in tribal Society" in Kwame Gyekye, <u>An Essay on African Philosophical Thought.</u> Cambridge University Press, 1987.

GOODY, Jack, <u>The domestication of the Savage Mind</u>, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

GRIAULE, M. <u>Conversations with Ogotemmeli</u>, Oxford University Press, London, 1965.

GYEKYE, K., "Philosophical Relevance of Akan Proverbs" <u>Second Order</u>, 6(2): 45-53, 1975.

GYEKYE, K. <u>An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme</u>, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

HALLEN, Barry and J.O. Sodipo, <u>Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft</u>, Ethnographica, London, 1986.

HALLEN, Barry, and J.O. Sodipo, "A Philosopher's Approach to Traditional Culture" <u>Theoria to Theory</u>, 9(4) pp 259-272, 1975.

HALLEN, Barry and J.O. Sodipo, "Robin Horton on Critical Philosophy and Traditional Thought", <u>Second Order</u>, 6(1), 1977.

HARRIS, Leonard, <u>Philosophy born of Struggle</u>, University of Iowa Press, 1983.

HARRISON, B. <u>An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language</u>, Macmillan, London, 1979.

HART, W.A. "The Philosopher's Interest in African Thought: A Synopsis", <u>Second Order</u>, I(1), 1972.

HEGEL, G.W.F. <u>The Philosophy of History</u>, Dover Publications, New York, 1956.

HICK, John,   Philosophy of Religion, Engelwood Cliffs, Prentice-
Hall, 1963.

HORTON, R. "Tradition and Modernity Revisited" in Martin
Hollis and Steven Lukes, eds., Rationality
and Relativism, Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp 201 -260.

HORTON, R. "African Traditional Thought and Western Science"
Africa, 37, Nos. 1 & 2, 1967.

HOUNTONDJI, P.J.   African Philosophy: Myth and Reality,
Indiana University Press, Bloomington,
1983.

HOUNTONDJI, P.J.   "Comments on Contemporary African
Philosophy" Diogenes 109-130, 1970.

HUNNINGS, G.,   "African Traditions and Scientific Creativity"
Malawi Journal of Science 1, 1972.

HUME, D.   Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,
(1711-1776).

HUME, D.   A Treatise on Human Nature,   T.H. Green,
ed., Longmans, London, 1874.

HUTCHINSON, J.A.   Living Options in World Philosophy,
University Press of Hawaii and the Research
Corporation of the University of Hawaii,
Honolulu, 1977.

IRELE, Abiola, "Culture and the National Idea", African
Philosophical Inquiry,   Vol.1, No.2, 1987,
pp 123-139.

JAHN, Janheinz, <u>Muntu: The New African Culture,</u> Grove Press, New York, 1971.

JAMES, George, G.M. <u>Stolen Legacy,</u> Philosophical Library, New York, 1954.

JAMES, William, <u>Pragmatism,</u> Longmans, Green and Co. Inc. New York, 1907.

JUNOD, H.P. <u>Bantu Heritage,</u> Hortors, Johannesberg, 1938.

KANT, Immanuel, <u>Critique of Pure Reason,</u> Translated by N. Kemp Smith, Macmillan, London, 1933.

KARP, Ivan and C.S. Bird, <u>Exploration in African Systems of Thought,</u> Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1980.

KAUNDA, Kenneth, <u>Some Personal Reflection:</u> <u>Africa's Freedom,</u> G. Allen and Unwin books, 1964.

KEITA, L. "The African Philosophical Tradition", in Wright, ed. <u>African Philosophy,</u> University Press of America, 1977.

KEITA, L., "Two Philosophies of African History - Hegel and Diop" in <u>Presence Africaine,</u> 91,1974.

KUCURADI, Ioanna and Evandro Agazzi, eds, <u>Philosophy and Cultural Development,</u> Philosophical Society of Turkey, Ankara, 1993.

LEIGHTON, J.A. <u>The Field of Philosophy,</u> Fourth edition, Appleton Century Crofts, Inc., New York, 1930.

LEWIS, White B. ed. Kant on History, Bobbs-Merill, 1963.

MAKINDE, M.A.   African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional
Medicine, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1988.

MAKINDE, M.A. "African Cultures and Moral Systems:
A Philosophical Study", Second Order
(New Series) Vol. 1, No. 2, July, 1988,
pp 1-27.

MASOLO, D.A.   History of 'African Philosophy'. Ph.D,
Thesis, Gregorian University, Rome, 1979.

MASOLO, D.A.   >Half a Century of Philosophy: Problems of
Philosophy in Africa Since 1930s, Forthcoming.

MAZRUI, A.A.   World Culture and the Black Experience,
University of Washington Press, Seattle and London,
1974.

MAZRUI, A.A.   The African Condition,   Cambridge
University Press, 1980.

MBITI, J.S. African Religions and Philosophy,   Heinemann,
London, 1969.

MBITI, J.S. Introduction to African Religions, Heinemann,
London, 1975.

MBITI, J.S., Concepts of God in Africa, Heinemann, London
and New York, 1970.

Mc VEIGH, Malcolm,   God in Africa,
Cloude Stark, 1974.

MEMMI, Albert,   The Colonizer and the Colonized   Beacon Press,
1965.

MERCIER, C.D. Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy,
Herder Book, New York, 1917.

MOMOH, Campbell, "African Philosophy: "Does it Exist?"
in Diogenes, 130, 1988.

MOMOH, Campbell, "Modern Theories in African Philosophy",
Nigerian Journal of Philosophy, I, (2), 1981.

MOORE, G.E. Philosophical Studies, Routledge and Kegan
Paul, London, 1922.

MUDIMBE, V.Y. The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and
Order of Knowledge, Indiana University Press,
Blcomington, 1988.

NEUGEBAUER, C.M. "Hegel and Kant: A Refutation of their
Racism" in QUEST Vol. V., No.1, June, 1991.

NEUGEBAUER, C.M. "Ethno-Philosophy in the Philosophical
Discourse in Africa: A Critical Note"
QUEST 4(1), 1990.

NKRUMAH, Kwame, Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism,
International Publishers, New York, 1969.

NKRUMAH, Kwame, Consciencism Philosophy and Ideology
for Decolonisation. Monthly Review Press,
New York, 1964.

NKRUMAH, Kwame, A Hand Book of Revolutionary Warfare,
Pan American Books, London, 1968.

NYERERE, Julius, Ujamaa: The basis of African Socialism,
        Oxford University Press, Dar-es-Salaam, 1968.

NYERERE, Julius, Freedom and Unity, Oxford University Press,
        Dar-es-Salaam, 1968.

ODERA ORUKA, H. "Mythologies as African Philosophy"
            East African Journal 9(10) Nairobi,
            October, 1972.

ODERA Oruka, H. "Fundamental Principles to the question of
        African Philosophy", in Second Order,
        Vol.IV, No.I, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1975.

ODERA Oruka, H. Punishment and Terrorism in Africa,
        Second Edition, Kenya Literature Bureau,
        Nairobi, 1985.

ODERA Oruka, H. Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy,
        Shirikon Publishers, Nairobi, 1990.

ODERA Oruka, H. The Philosophy of Liberty, Standard
        Texbooks Publishers, Nairobi, 1991.

ODERA Oruka, H. and F.D.A. Masolo, Philosophy and Cultures,
        Bookwise, Nairobi, 1983.

ODERA Oruka, H. et-al The Rational Path, Standard Text Book
        Publishers, Nairobi, 1989.

ODERA Oruka, H. ed. Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers
        and Modern debate on African Philosophy.
        ACTS Press, Nairobi, 1991.

OKERE, Theophilus, African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical
        Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility
        University Press of America, 1983.

OLELA, H. "The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy" in
R.A. Wright, ed. African Philosophy, University
Press of America, 1977.

OLELA, H. From Ancient Africa to Ancient Greece,
Atlanta, 1981.

ONYEWUENYI, I. "Is there an African Philosophy?"
Journal of African Studies, Vol. 3, No.4,
1976/77.

ONYEWUENYI, I. "A Philosophical Reappraisal of African Beliefs
in Reincarnation", International Philosophical
Quarterly, 22, 1982.

OSEGHARE, A.S. The Relevance of Sagacious Reasoning in
African Philosophy - Ph.D. Thesis, University
of Nairobi, Kenya, 1985.

OUTLAW, Lucius, "Critical Theory in a period of Radical
Transformation", Praxis International,
July, 1983.

OUTLAW, Lucius, "African Philosophy: Deconstructive and
Reconstructive Challenges" in Odera Oruka, ed.
Sage Philosophy, ACTS Press, Nairobi, 1991.

PARRAT, J. "Ethno-Philosophy - Fact or Fiction" Malawi Journal
of Social Science, 5, 1976.

PASSMORE, J.A. A Hundred Years of Philosophy,
Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1970.

PATRICK, G.T.W. Introduction to Philosophy,
revised edition, Surjeet Publications,
Delhi, 1978.

P'BITEK, O.   African Religions in Western Scholarship,
                East African Literature Bureau, Kampala, 1970.

P'BITEK, O.   Africa's Cultural Revolution, Macmillan Books for
                Africa, Nairobi, 1983.

P'BITEK, O."Fr. Tempels Bantu-Philosophy", Transition
                13, 1967.

PLATO,   The Republic, Translated by H.D.P. Lee, Hazell Watson
           and Viney Limited, Britain, 1974.

POPKIN, Richard H., "The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism"
           in Warlton and Anton, eds., Philosophy and
           The Civilizing Arts, University of Ohio Press, 1974.

POPKIN, Richard H., "Hume's Racism" in The Philosophical
           Forum Vol. 9, Nos. 2 - 3, Winter-Spring,
           1977-78.

QUINE, W.V.O.   From a Logical Point of View,
                  Harvard, 1971.

RADIN, P., Primitive Man as Philosopher, 1927.

RAWLS, J.   A Theory of Justice, Harvard University Press,
              Cambridge, 1971.

RAY, B.C.   African Religions, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey,
              1976.

RUCH, E.A. "Is there an African Philosophy?" in Second
            Order, Vol.III. No.2, July, 1974.

RUSSELL, B.   History of Western Philosophy, George Allen
             and Unwin, London, 1974.

RUSSELL, B.   Why I am not a Christian, 1957.

RUSSELL, B.   An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth,
             George Allen and Unwin, London, 1980.

SELLARS, R.W.   The Principles and Problems of Philosophy,
             Macmillan Co. New York, 1926.

SENGHOR, L.S.   "The Spirit of Civilization or the Laws of
             African Negro Culture" in Presence Africaine,
             Nos. 8-9-10, June- November, 1956.

SENGHOR, L.S.   "Constructive Elements of a Civilization of
             African Negro Inspiration", in Presence
             Africaine, 1964.

SENGHOR, L.S.   On African Socialism, translated by Mercer
             Cook, Praeger, Inc., New York, 1964.

SENGHOR, L.S.   "Negritude and African Socialism"
             in African Affairs, No.2, 1963.

SEREQUEBERHAN, T. ed. African Philosophy Paragon House,
             New York, 1991.

SHUTTE, A.   Philosophy for Africa, UCT Press,
             Rondebosch, 1993.

SINGER, Marcus G.,   American Philosophy, Royal Institute of
             Philosophy Lecture Series, 19: Supplement
             to Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

SODIPO, J.O.   "Philosophy in Pre-Colonial Africa" in
             Teaching and Research in Philosophy:
             Africa, UNESCO, 1984.

SODIPO, J.O., "Philosophy in Africa Today" in Thought and Practice Vol. 2, No. 2, Nairobi, 1975.

SOGOLON, Godwin, "Options in African Philosophy" Philosophy, 65, 1990. pp 39-52.

SOGOLON, Godwin, "Popper's Hermeneutics and African Thought" QUEST, Vol. II, No.2, Dec. 1988.

STANILAND, H.S. "What is Philosophy?" Second Order, 7, 1978.

STREET, Brian V. Literacy in Theory and Practice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

SUMNER, Claude, Ethiopian Philosophy Vols. I-5, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (1974, 78, 79, 80, 83).

TEMPELS, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, Presence Africaine, Paris, 1959.

THAIRU, Kihumbu, The African Civilization, Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1975.

TITUS, Harold H. Living Issues in Philosophy, Second edition, American Book Company, New York, 1953.

TOWETT, Taitta, "Le role d'un Philosophe Africaine", Presence Africaine, 27/28:108-128, 1959.

WAMBA-Dia-Wamba, E. "Philosophy in Africa: Challenges of the African Philosopher", Mawazo, Vol. 5 No.2, Dec. 1983.

WILLIAMS, Chancellor,   The Destruction of Black Civilization,
                 Third World Press, Chicago, 1974.

WILSON,   Brian, ed.   Rationality Basil Blackwell, 1970.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   Philosophy and an African Culture,
                 Cambridge University Press, New York, 1979.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "Universalism and Particularism in Religion
                 from an African Perspective"   Journal of
                 Humanism and Ethical Religion,   Vol. 3, No.1, Fall, 199

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "On defining African Philosophy" in Tsenay
                 Serequeberhan,   African Philosophy,
                 Paragon House, New York, 1991.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "How Not to Compare African Thought with
                 Western Thought" in R.A. Wright, ed.
                 African Philosophy, University Press of
                 America, 1977.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "On an African Orientation in Philosophy"
                 Second Order,   Vol.1, No. 2, 1972.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "Philosophical Research and Teaching in Africa:
                 Some Suggestions" in Teaching and Research
                 in Philosophy: Africa,   UNESCO, 1984, pp 31-54.

WIREDU,   Kwasi,   "The Akan Concept of Mind", Ibadan Journal of
                 the Humanities, No.3, Oct. 1983.

WRIGHT, Richard A. ed. African Philosophy: An Introduction,
                 University Press of America, Lanham, 1984.