"A CRITIQUE OF THE CULTURE OF PHILOSOPHY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICA."

By

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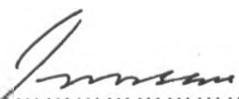
DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other University

Signed... 2/10/07

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This work has been submitted with my approval as the University supervisor

.... 4/10/2007

Prof Joseph M. Nyasani,
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sons Brian, Bradley and daughter Blessings without whom life had lost meaning. Their continued nagging made me struggle, and this, is the FRUIT of their nagging.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

This work set out to understand and explain the challenges that face the development of philosophy in Africa. In particular, the focus is on the crisis and dilemma on African identity which has impacted adversely to the development of a culture of philosophy in Africa.

Our problem is that, attempts at creating a culture of philosophy in Africa is predicated on an understanding of who is African, and what is Africa. But it is at this definitional level that we find an ambiguity of usage and application of concepts that are fundamental to defining Africa and philosophy.

Compounding the problem is an equally ambivalent perspective and meaning of African culture which is conceived and made reference to in unitary yet there is multiplicity of cultures warranting the term African cultures. The latter makes it even difficult and problematic to define a unitary philosophy based on this singular view of Africa, not because all Africans shared a common ecology, nor a common historical experience, or faced a common threat from imperial Europe, but because they belong to the Negro race.

Our general objective was to appraise the available literature and practice of philosophy in Africa in order that we may formulate a scheme or paradigm that would have African culture, present or future, as the basis for understanding the practice of philosophy. More specifically, we sought to identify the challenges that confront and subsequently impede the

development of philosophy and propose possibilities for the future of African philosophy and the potential that arises there from.

In our attempt to demonstrate that African culture can provide an alternative basis and centre for grounding the practice of philosophy in Africa, we chose to understand philosophy as a continuous history of open ended debate in which the search for truth is permanent. To assist our understanding of the cultural bias in which philosophy in Africa finds itself, we adopted the ideological method by which we sought to demonstrate the impact of ideology and other idiosyncratic biases on the conception, meaning and nature of philosophy in Africa.

This research came up with the following conclusions among other findings;

1. That, discourse and literature in African philosophy is conceived in and from a western cultural perspective.

2. That, the impact of ideology on the conception of meaning in ideas and claims on Africa and African peoples, their thinking, techniques of knowledge creation and validation cannot be underestimated.

3. That, the development of a culture of philosophy in Africa is hindered by challenges that are;

   a. Methodological

   b. Linguistic

   c. Theoretical

   d. Participative

Arising from the above, we are compelled to recommend that there is a serious felt need for research in interpretive understanding of concepts and categories that influence the practice of philosophy in Africa. As presently constituted, and given the prevailing theories and methodological approaches within African philosophy, *viz*, ethno-philosophy, professional philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic-ideological, literary-artistic, and hermeneutical, one is left in no doubt that the interpretive capacity of the hermeneutical approach has not been harnessed to the maximum. Our recommendation is influenced by the fact that, this approach can perform both the Anthropological task of collecting data as well as the Philosophical task of analysis and interpretation. The result would be to abandon ethnology and sage methods as avenues though which we get to cultural data on African philosophy. This future research will thus bridge the gap that has perennially existed between the data collected for philosophical analysis and interpretation purposes. Here, we stand a chance of removing the cobwebs of Anthropology in African philosophy.

From the research we further recommend that the study of philosophy be made available at two levels:

1. To begin at Primary school to include children's philosophy
2. All students pursuing higher education to have a compulsory study of critical thinking and basic philosophy.

This will increase the cultural awareness of the African students and in particular the peculiar nature and position of the African culture.

Secondly, it will increase students' ability to reflect on and critically articulate issues arising from within their social and cultural environment. But more important the study of Philosophy will avail the learners a broader perspective of looking and interpreting their world.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Discourse on African Philosophy is normally problematic and perhaps controversial. At times it is complicated by factors that are neither within the controls of Philosophy as a discipline or Africa as a continent. At other times it is a show of academic might, while in other times, it is based on academic racism.

Be it as it as it may, it has been observed that, the nature and course of Philosophical discourse in Africa has been dictated by two main factors: Western discourse on Africa and the African response to this.[1] Perhaps of notice is the fact that much of the dialogue in African philosophy for a long time has been taking place between African professional Philosophers and not only their Western counterparts, but also among missionaries and anthropologists. This may partly explain why in Western discourse, African philosophy is used as a kind of an African *Weltanschauung,* in which African cultural curiosities are perceived, described and analyzed not as rational systems but as exotic and primitive exempla. And all these were meant to show a difference in thought process between the West and Africa.[2] Western culture is presented as dynamic, open and scientific, while Africa's is static, closed and mystical in its explanation of the world and reality.

Thus, from inception, discourse and ideas on and about Africa have been taking place outside the structures of Africanity. Subsequently, Africans

started participating in a discourse that seemed arranged not to benefit them. After all, since Africans had a problem conceptualizing rationality, it was only fair to extend the rationality project to Africa so that Africans could grasp and come to terms with their position on the human scale of civilization. The latter is determined by values like ability to think logically and critically as well as appreciate the value for science. One can infer from this that the West represented by their philosophers, missionaries (theologians), and historians had the tools of constructing and interpreting for Africa reality in a rational manner, the Western way.[3] In Africa, only a few educated in Western universities, and by extension, ways of Western thinking could cope with the rigor of philosophy and science. As away of looking at and interpreting reality, philosophy was perceived to be alien to Africa. Thus, the conjunction of philosophy and Africa was a contradiction.[4]

Consequent to the foregoing, a sympathetic literature on and about Africa and Africans was born with two main functions. The first was to assist Africans by rehabilitating them to the level of humanity.[5] The second was to demonstrate that though Africans are human, they are different, the Other, who does not share the values of civilization with Us. And through colonialism, Africa was to be redesigned into Africa into a fundamentally European construct.[6] We thus note that ideology created African identity and by extension defined meaning for Africa, and Africans. Through this struggle for the control of identity the West not only invented Africa's primitiveness but also proposed methods for her civilization.[7]

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But challenges of an imposed discourse of identity led Africans into questioning the validity of European claims on Africa which challenges gave birth to efforts aimed at "de-constructing, de-centering, de-mythologizing, de-ideologizing and de-hegemonising Western produced knowledge by creating and empowering *an* alternative discourse".[8] (*Emphasis ours*) The major question and focus was to create an alternative centre upon which discourse on Africa would be conceived, processed and analysed. Major among these challenges are the stolen legacy theory,[9] and pluralism.[10]

These two pushed African philosophical discourse to a level of recognition. Their most fundamental claim was that it is possible to talk about an African philosophy given Africa's historical past and present sociological realities.

The foregoing not withstanding, and even within this new discourse, questions of identity still face and continue to present a challenge to African culture. As is the case today, Africa has moved to a second level discourse where philosophical investigation has taken roots without the establishment of a culture of critique, one that should provide content for this investigation. Africa's cultural diversity has not given way to a coordinated first level discourse on which philosophy will critique, improve and modify in the process of informing a history of philosophical thought that creates great and important paradigms in culture. The presence of these paradigms is what philosophy is all about; critical landmarks in a people's history of thought.[11]

Today, questions abound regarding identity and participants in African philosophy. For instance, how does philosophy relate to culture? Is this

relationship fundamental in determining the nature of philosophy? Did Africa skip a stage in its cultural development, a stage that was critical for the development of philosophy? Can this account for the predominance of mythologies in Africa's description of reality and her subsequent explanations of the world even as she struggles to embrace science? Can one credibly claim that African Philosophy lacks a compelling cultural ideology, arrogant enough to create an epistemological focal point for an African philosophical discourse, a vehicle that can successfully deliver African thought? What concepts, theories and experiential realities that can credibly deliver African thought? One has to bear in mind these and other related questions since they influence and impact adversely on the development of a culture of philosophy in Africa. The way these questions are handled equally determines the outcome of the efforts aimed at producing ideas in and on Africa, while significantly pointing the right future for this discourse.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

From the discussion above, one can comfortably isolate and assert that the main problems found in the practice of philosophy in Africa are two fold:

1. The problem of language

That the language of African philosophy is alien to African culture yet it claims to describe reality within this culture.[12] Much of what is described by some of the participants in African philosophical discourse does not reflect the sociological experiences found in Africa. If we take Tempels as an example, his use of concepts like *vital force* in the stead of *being* to describe the basic

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ontological reality does not capture any reality experienced in Africa. Equally, Mbiti's use and definition of time in Africa and his idea of lack of the concept of future for in African and the claim that Africans lack the concept of future in their time reckoning is difficult to harmonize with the ordinary day to day African linguistic behaviour. Tempels and Mbiti seem to provide very simple solutions to perennial and complicated conceptual issues. The problem here is that language in African Philosophy formulates schemes and categories of description unknown to Africa and Africans. We wish to interrogate this.

2. Participants in Discourse on African Philosophy

Discourse in African philosophy has been pursued and continues to be pursued amongst Europeans; between Western academics, missionaries, anthropologists and travellers on the one hand and professional African Philosophers on the other. The target audience in each case is to explain African realities to the West. Africa and Africans are thus not direct beneficiaries of this discourse. This is an obstacle to the establishment of a culture of philosophy in Africa since these practitioners discourse at the level that is completely outside the cultural confines and definitional value of Africa. But a more serious consequence of this is that, this discourse is imposed on a subservient population who do not understand the world and reality so identified and which forms the basis for discourse in African Philosophy.

The consequence of these two is that Africa and Africans do not benefit from the practice of Philosophy in Africa.

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Thus, attempts to solve the problem of identity in African philosophical discourse reveal that:

1. Much of the claims about Africa's ability to certain values considered human and civilized are based on Western categories and value system.

2. Most of the active claimants and participants on discourse in philosophy in Africa are either non-Africans or use concepts and linguistic categories that are alien to African sociological experiences.

3. Arising from 1 and 2, the target audience in African Philosophy is Western, not African.

4. Any attempt by some African scholars has not equally helped the situation. Many have simply joined in and continue addressing a Western audience in a language that is only understandable to the West not Africa.

All these imply that, much of the discourse within Africa Philosophy does not situate itself on an African cultural category, human and sociological realities and experiences. This, in our view is disturbing if not worrying and the situation should be arrested and rectified.

A look at oriental philosophy reveals that it has developed its own systems of knowing and validating reality it has reengineered. In this way it has remained true to the demands of its culture. It is this symbiotic relationship between culture and philosophy that seems to have a problem in Africa. This work will investigate into this lack of a link between philosophy and a culture to sustain the same for African philosophical discourse. We are claiming here that the lack of a compelling cultural ideology is responsible for the low level of

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development of theoretical (technical) philosophical discourse in Africa. This work seeks to present a critique of the African philosophical discourse that is not underpinned by a language that defines its values and history.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to appraise and seek possibilities of situating the practice of philosophy in Africa within some defined paradigm of an African culture, present or future, so as to make philosophical discourse in Africa be appreciated by an African audience. This is a demand that arises from the need to explain and explicate the pertinent issues involved in African cultural history that present a hindrance to the development of a critical and rigorous philosophical discourse in Africa. More specific the aims of the study are:

1. To identify obstacles that impede the development of philosophy in Africa.

2. To evaluate primary texts relating philosophy to Africa in a bid to demonstrate the significance of these texts on the meaning, nature and place of philosophy in Africa.

3. To explore on the possibilities for the future of a philosophy in Africa.

4. To demonstrate that African culture can provide an alternative centre of discourse upon which African philosophy can be founded for a future of philosophy in Africa.

1.4 Justification of the Study

The trend of research in African philosophy has tended to focus on the general perspective as to call into question the meaning and nature of philosophy in Africa. To this extent many works seem to respond to specific and particular questions that are definitional in nature. These are questions that equally demand of philosophers the need to explain their position on the meaning, nature and practice of philosophy. It would seem that though African philosophy is in its infancy, struggling to mature in a hostile environment, in its short history of existence it has managed to grapple with some basic literature that is fundamental for its maturity some of which is pushed out of the mainstream to the periphery.[13] In a significant way however, these issues have equally misdirected the course of history in African philosophy and impacted negatively on the establishment of a culture of philosophy in Africa. Some issues under discussion include the meaning of Africa and African, and its place in the world cultural arena; others touch on the meaning of African philosophy, method and categories of operations within African Philosophy. There are also questions of qualification and parameters to determine who qualifies as an African Philosopher; and whether this necessitates a demand of a unique African Philosophy. An inspection of these concerns reveals that, some are important and fundamental. Others are redundant, while others are rhetorical. In general, the efforts and focus within African philosophy has been misplaced and at times misdirected. Issues under inquiry in some quarters may be perceived to non-issues. This should not be a problem. In philosophy the issues that demand attention vary from time to time.[14] But common to these is the demand to explain the nature of reality, its dynamic and complexities but

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with particular focus on humanity, nature and God. African philosophy need not be the exception.

At this point, one can single out H. Odera Oruka, Kwasi Wiredu, and D. A. Masolo among others as individuals who have devoted some energy discussing issues in African culture.[15] Standing out is the Odera-Wiredu exchange. They address philosophical concerns that hinge on cultural universals and particulars, raising issues that run across cultures and the basis of cultural fundamentals and whether or not this assists or impedes intercultural dialogue and communication. These discussions form a very important substratum on which to base an African philosophical discourse which this work hopes should assist in the development of an African Philosophy. One may be interested in understanding how in particular cultures relate to reality both in this theoretical schema and at a practical level. However, it would be useful to point out that these works fails in a fundamental way to explicate the critical elements of culture and how these elements relate to the cultivation and subsequent development of philosophy in Africa. Masolo's effort in this area may be termed significant but still inadequate.[16] It fails to address the most fundamental question particularly as it pertains to the critical dimension of culture and its relation to philosophy in Africa and how this has assisted in the development of a culture of philosophy.

The present study takes off from the premise that, the nature and dynamics of culture constitute an important basis for the overall development of a philosophy. If philosophies world over have assumed a significant level of

cultural development through which fundamental questions are raised concerning the nature of reality, then a critical appraisal of these general beliefs constitutes their philosophy.[17] This would imply that, a culture of critique may be necessary to conception, generation and development of philosophy. This study will further assume that, it is this transformation in cultural discourse that generates demand for constant debate and explanation. This is what constitutes a history of discussion of and on the ideas so produced that present an open-ended discourse. In turn, this creates a culture of philosophy. The lack of knowledge on this has necessitated this study, and this is the gap that the present study seeks to fill within African philosophical scholarship.

The justifications for this study thus lies in the fact that philosophical discourse in Africa is hindered by obstacles that hinge on the relationship between culture, and the practice and development of philosophy in Africa. It is arguable whether indeed African culture has undergone the requisite revolutions other cultures in the world have, that resulted in the production of new ideas that stand radically opposed to existing cultural pillars.[18] Questioning, affirming and refuting existing ideas, values and institutions has been the task of philosophy over the ages. It is the seeming lack of all these that is in question within African culture.[19] The need for a philosophical assessment of culture, results from the danger that, with increased anthropological activities in Africa, a strong cultural discussion may take place to the detriment of a critical cultural analysis. Thus, the need to understand African cultural dynamics arise from the fact that African

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philosophy might get swallowed into activities that are anthropological in nature where philosophical duties of analysis, speculation and prescription is sacrificed at the altar of anthropological description and explanation. Philosophy is driven by the desire to create and rearrange societal knowledge bank while anthropology is driven by the desire for functional explanation. In this case the spirit of debate may remain un-exposed as many would-be-philosophers in this culture will be content with explaining the elements of a 'system' rather than initiating a history of ideas both within and outside the system.

The quest to identify these impediments and the process of defining the possibilities of establishing an alternative epistemic centre will lead to a refocused debate on issues that relate to African development just like other philosophies world over have done over time. Plato's *The Republic*[20] is a direct response to the social and political challenges in Greece and Athens in particular. Because, it was too metaphysical to be applied, Aristotle in *Politics*[21] set out to build a socio-political structure on concrete moral realities and not speculative metaphysical epistemology as Plato had done before him. The question at the centre of this study therefore is how a critique of culture will give impetus to a philosophy that, while remaining relevant to the general principles of philosophy, will similarly remains relevant to the demands of contemporary Africa. This research is therefore important and relevant in filling this academic lacuna.[22]

1.5 Scope and Limitation of Study

This study is concerned with the theoretical and practical dimensions of philosophy, and its practice in Africa in which the members of the philosophical circle have defined the limits of its application. Here, it should be noted that, philosophy is an individual effort. It is individuals who produce ideas for social consumption. Perhaps the greatest challenge for philosophy in Africa is that, there seem to be very little activity in terms of discourse among and between African philosophers themselves. This field seems to be an area in which both experts and non-experts contribute ideas. It is like a game of soccer without clear rules on when one is off side and when one is on side. This controversy regarding rules seems to have its genesis in the nature of African culture. A casual survey of other cultures world wide reveal a phenomenon that is completely lacking within African culture, a capacity for self-transforming and regenerating society's values and thought. European culture benefited immensely from the 17th–18th Century European renaissance. Japan on the other hand, benefited from the Meiji revolution, while China's Mao Ze Dong initiated a revolution that radically and profoundly changed Chinese culture. Philosophers in Africa are engaged in anthologies that document the 'nostalgic mystic African past which hopelessly lacks a coherent system of logical explication, expression and consistency.[31] Because of this, African culture has remained submissive and uncritical. This in turn has handicapped a great deal the development of a critical philosophical discourse in Africa.

This study is limited to the literature and works so far produced by individuals in the African philosophical field, both experts and non-experts. The starting point is that, in its technical form, African philosophy has certain rules that are binding on the actors. These rules should be made explicit and categorical, defining and indicating those who qualify and those who do not qualify.[23] The former should be isolated and whatever they have produced constituted the true and correct African philosophical literature from which work is extracted to form a discourse on African philosophy. The importance of this discourse is to define and confine the study to works that are clearly defined as philosophical using the parameters so formulated elsewhere in this work.[24] These included works of individuals like Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, Anthony Appiah, Dismas Masolo, Henry Odera Oruka, Kwame Gyekye and Vincent Mudimbe to name but a few.[25] Reference is made to philosophical works outside the African philosophical arena, but purely for purposes of analytic comparison. Here, we have in mind issues in the history of philosophy as conceived by outstanding thinkers among others, Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Descartes, Kant, and Bertrand Russell.[26]

This research is limited to the elements of African culture and philosophical criticism of the same in an elevated way, which go beyond the descriptions and explanations as is the practice in social sciences that seek to expose elements within African cultural values and institutions, as well as descriptions of forms of sociological experiences. It focuses on individual works renowned and recognized for their contribution to the practice of

philosophy in Africa and how these works and individuals have contributed to the establishment of a culture of philosophy in Africa.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Culture: etymologically this is derived from a Latin word, *cultura*, meaning "to cultivate." In general it refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance. This definition is simplistic in the sense that different definitions of "culture" reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. In some cases the term *culture* indicates artifacts in music, literature, painting and sculpture, theater and film. It has become common to identify culture in terms of consumption and consumer goods as in high culture, low culture, folk culture, popular culture to name but a few instances. But equally the term culture to the general processes which produce such goods and give them meaning, and to the social relationships and practices in which such objects and processes become embedded. Here talk of culture will includes technology, art, science, as well as moral systems.

As a philosophical concept we include this definition but wish to cover all expression of human social life including habits, philosophy and socio-political organization. Thus, culture in this work will be used to indicate, define, and incorporate the habits of a people, modes of social expression, speech, and all moral codes including likes and dislikes. Our claim is that culture is the focal point of any civilization. That to display certain philosophical claims and habits, culture plays a fundamental role. We want to

argue that culture forms a unique human capacity to classify human experiences, encode, and decode such classifications and hand these abstractions to the later generations.

Culture can broadly be divided into two;

- Uncritical elements which consists in belief systems, religious beliefs and experiences, myths, folklore, customs, superstitions, legends and palavers. These elements reproduce themselves but more importantly they form the basis for social order.

- Critical elements: These consists of thoughts of individuals viz sages, poets, prophets, and scientists among others. The critical element of culture seeks to illuminate on the uncritical trying to create abstract reality out of the concrete world of both human and social experiences. It is here that real meaning of cultural symbols lie. But equally, here lies the philosophical part of a society.

Culture of philosophy: In this study, the phrase culture of philosophy will be used to mean the cultivation of a habit of inquiry, asking questions, seeking and offering alternatives to what is available in society. This is cultivated over time and has a defined tradition, values, concepts of operation, as well as a code and rules that are recognized by the actors within that culture.

Philosophy of Culture: This is a theory or the spirit of a given culture. We argue that a culture of philosophy seeks more importantly to interrogate and justify or modify cultural beliefs and practices. A history and philosophy of culture describes and analyses the theory of culture trying to define problems,

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significant landmarks within a culture. Here in lies the fundamental assumptions and reasons that underpins a given culture. Thus it provides the basic believes, values and practices that constitute a particular culture. At higher level, philosophy of culture defines the creative objects, philosophical foundations of culture it is the self consciousness of culture. Philosophy of culture can and does often transcend the mythos of a culture by question their bases.

Culture philosophy: Constitutes ideas and beliefs that underlie and justify it. This is the justification of cultural practices.[27] But it can also involve questioning of these cultural believes, practices as away of providing justification and grounds for these cultural practices.

Paradigm: Refers to a thought pattern that is used in explaining and predicting behavior. It is an ideal representing a class of elements with similarities. In this study, a paradigm will represent claims that present similarities in explanatory ability in the way reality is perceived and presented.

Philosophy in Africa: Represents a body of philosophical ideas, oral or written on Africa, or by Africans.

African Philosophy: A body of philosophical ideas, oral or written, that claim to present a philosophical standpoint from an African perspective. In this study this phrase will assume the position that an African trained in the discipline of philosophy is necessarily an African philosopher and what he or she produces is African Philosophy. Thus, the conjunction of philosophy and African equals to African Philosophy. But note that an Africanists (non–Africans) can

contribute to the generation of African Philosophy, though he/she is not an African Philosopher. Here, African Philosophy assumes a definite methodology that is explicit to the practitioners. Thus, it falls within the *genre* of disciplines. In essence these two are one and the same.

Hermeneutics: Refers to discourse of interpretation. A hermeneutic is defined as a specific system or method for interpretation, or a specific theory of interpretation. In a broad sense hermeneutics may be described as the development and study of theories of the interpretation and understanding of texts. In its broad sense, the term is used in contemporary philosophy to denote the study of theories and methods of the interpretation of all texts and systems of meaning. The concept of "text" is here extended beyond written documents to include oral, human behavior and experiences, artistic works, including language and patterns of speech, social institutions, and ritual behavior (such as religious ceremonies, political rallies, football matches, rock concerts, etc.). This inquiry into the meaning and import of these phenomena, through understanding the point of view and 'inner life' of an insider, or the first-person perspective of an engaged participant in these phenomena. In practice hermeneutics involves cultivating the ability to understand things from somebody else's point of view, and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlook. This practical dimension makes hermeneutics become a process of applying this understanding to interpreting meaning, which may be either historic or contemporary.

In this study, we shall use the term to mean a process of applying this understanding to interpreting the meaning of written texts and symbolic

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systems and artifacts, such as art or sculpture or architecture, which may be either historic or contemporary to African sociological and human experiences.

Deconstruction: A school of philosophy that originated in France in the late 1960s, the term denotes a particular kind of practice in reading and, thereby, a method of criticism and mode of analytical inquiry. There is tendency to confuse the term with destruction. But according to Barbara Johnson, "Deconstruction is not synonymous with "destruction." It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means "to undo" a virtual synonym for "to de-construct." If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."[28] In philosophy, deconstruction is used to denote the application of postmodern ideas of criticism, or theory, to a "text" or "artifact" and in the process undermine the frame of reference and assumptions that underpin that text or artifact.

Postmodernism: Refers to a variety of different theories that arose out of the philosophy called 'phenomenology' and the sociological outlook influenced by the linguistic theory 'structuralism.' Ryan Bishop defines post-modernism as an eclectic movement, originating in aesthetics, architecture and philosophy.[29] Postmodernism espouses a systematic skepticism of grounded theoretical perspectives.

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On the overall, this it adopts a skeptical attitude to many principles and assumptions that have underpinned Western thought and social life. Amount these assumptions which constitute modernism include a belief that human progress is inevitable and that reason leads humanity forward in uncompromising way. But more important is that the present civilization is superior to past in knowledge and technical sophistication. As a critique of science it is based on two assumptions: epistemological and ideological. First, that given the subjective nature of studying man and society, this and this alone precludes the possibility of science discovering *objective truth*. Second, since objectivity is an illusion, science according to the ideological argument, subverts oppressed groups, females, ethnics, third-world peoples by categorizing and reducing them into dominant groups that are easily intelligible from the perspective of the dominant.[30]

Postmodernist literature tends to concentrates on the tensions of differences and similarities erupting from processes of globalization: the accelerating circulation of people, the increasingly dense and frequent cross-cultural interactions, and the unavoidable intersections of local and global knowledge.

Postmodernists are suspicious of authoritative definitions and singular narratives of any trajectory of events.

Pluralism: A postmodernist claim that argues against absolute truth and positions. It instead encourages plural interpretations of texts, and situations.

1.7 Literature Review

Ordinarily the demand for literature review in a study of this nature is unwarranted. Our claim is based on the assumption that much of what is contained here-in is an attempt at analysis from which conclusions are drawn. The danger therefore will be that in analyzing available and literature relevant to this study, there is a real temptation to draw conclusions which have the effect of pre-empting the arguments presented in subsequent chapters. Our caution is that the entire study is based on claims made by others. In this study we attempt a philosophical analysis and speculation on what these authors actually mean and what they ought to have said and meant.

Having made this cautionary statement, one would indeed be constrained to mention some important works that are useful and which have given this study the impetus either due to their claims on the meaning, nature and task of philosophy, or due to their inadequacy in addressing the problem we now confront. It is our considered view that the existing literature on philosophy in Africa deals with the question of definition and identity.

However, one argument that should not escape our attention is that indeed literature on philosophy in Africa is divided into two, and that this division is based on two important and related events;[31]

1. Western discourse on Africa
2. African reaction

If this claim is granted then, literature on philosophy in Africa can be classified in three broad categories and will take roughly the following shape;

a. That which denies philosophy in Africa *any* identity.

b. That which allows for a slow evolution of African thought until such a time that the African mind *will one day in the future* attain a philosophical capability.

c. That which allows for plural existence in which philosophical thought in Africa exists and can validate its own truth just like philosophical thought elsewhere exists and can validate its own truth.

d. The fourth and last is clearly distinct and questions the claims by the West, especially Greece, as having pioneered philosophical thought and from which all others benefited.

But perhaps works that may warrant mention here are two. The first one is Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*,[32] and the second Henry Odera Oruka's *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*.[33] In the case of Tempels, the available literature in philosophy African is either in support or stands in opposition to his claims. For Odera Oruka, the identification of the six trends or theories has remained integral to subsequent African philosophical discourse. One much of the other all literature in African Philosophy revolves around the question of definition and identity.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

There are two theories that are useful and relevant in this study:

a) Paulin Hountondji's theory of philosophy as history

b) The broad and narrow meanings of philosophy.

1.8.1 Philosophy as History

According to Paulin Hountondji, philosophy is a history of constant, sustained and free discussion that is characterized by successive revolutions of dialectical movements.[34] Thus, for philosophy to exist, just like all other disciplines, it requires some special conceptual ability on the part of the practitioner.[35] The mere ability by an individual to describe ideas produced by others is not adequate enough to qualify one as a philosopher. More than this ability to engage in discourse on ideas about man, God, and the universe one should be able to have a meta-language through which discourse on philosophy is conceived and interpreted. Language in philosophy creates a different reality that uses special concepts and terminological symbols and categories that are specific and unique to the discipline. This is possible because it facilitates the creation of a legacy of a discursive tradition, one that enables the practitioners of the discipline to communicate. African philosophy cannot escape this reality. It must seek to internalize the existing philosophical and theoretical traditions through affirmation and refutation. This includes the use of specifically created concepts through which is seen to explaining reality. This is the essence of any philosophical work.

A reading of the history of African Philosophy reveals that, the discipline has yet to create a tradition within which philosophy in Africa is to be discussed. It lacks a culture. Unlike the history of philosophy which has established a rigorous and theoretical method, and a strict conceptual categories, African philosophy seems to be confined to the level of describing African world view and existential experiences as it were akin to what social scientists in Africa

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do. The demand of this theory is that, African Philosophy should move to a higher level discourse that is analytically creative in which history is conceived and created through a system of sustained discourse, and not a description of systems of culture. A lot of literature in Africa that claim philosophy is in fact sociological and anthropological or low level historical. Our aim is to discourage the careless use of the term philosophy in reference to description of general worldviews when referring to Africa.

The significance of this theory is that it allows for contents of African Philosophy to be provided by African culture. The style however is to consider the essence of this culture, its conditions and possibility of existence and its general articulation of philosophy as a theoretical activity that eschews mere empirical data that is devoid of significance. The product will be an African philosophy that will have carved out a niche in the general philosophical discipline just like other systems of philosophy the world over. This will have the effect of creating a special area of study African Philosophy which will be but an instance within the general and universal philosophical enterprise seen in terms of universals and particulars, just like a beautiful pot is an instance of Beauty, in which the answer to the question what is a beautiful pot is sought in the essence, and conditions of possibilities of existence as well as the general nature of Beauty in its conceptual latitudes.

This is an example of the dialectical process of history, which gives birth to philosophy as a critical discipline. By adopting this theory, African Philosophy will have become a critical and analytic endeavour reflecting on reality, within an African cultural environment. Thus, African philosophy will have moved

out of the 'closed system' structure where its truths are general for all within the system. It will have created a history of debate, one that is carried out within generations and which does not cease with the end of the generation. It is a continuous history. The thinkers in each generation are totally responsible for whatever they say and do. They take part in the unfolding and discovery of truth and are called upon from time to time to attest to its validity as well as defend their truth claims.

Within this theory, philosophy does not have absolute truth and the search for truth becomes a continuous exercise in which truth is affirmed and refuted, where evidence is subjected to different validating categories and criteria and any new truth that is arrived at is of higher validity than the preceding. For Hountondji, the search for truth in philosophy becomes an infinite exercise, an open ended process that is endless. [36]

Evidence from the history of science points to the fact that the moment philosophers are able to account for every positive truth in the universe, that particular line of inquiry shifts its focus to formulating theories and explaining the methods of the newly created science which becomes a statically closed system in which reality is relatively stable hence explainable. This becomes a science. The task of an African philosopher as opposed to an empirical scientist is to put forward theories and truths that are more valid than the previous ones, and this makes the search for philosophic truth be truth itself. We are claiming here that since this is true of philosophy in general, it should apply to African philosophy as well. Philosophy in Africa has been conceived

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Africanism, relevant then as it should now. For sage philosophy, it is a traditional African culture that is proto-type.

1.8.2 Two senses of Philosophy

The second theory holds philosophy as having two distinct senses which distinguish and influence uses and application of the term. These are: the 'narrow' and 'broad' meanings of philosophy. Thus, each of these senses confers a different interpretation to the word philosophy.

The broad (ideological/popular/vulgar/general or simplistic) sense conceives philosophy as some kind of wisdom, either individual or collective that presents some degree of coherence in its attempt to understand, explain and interpret reality.[37] This boils down to conceiving philosophy in terms of the general wisdom, cultural in outlook or at best a general perspective by an individual or group of individuals towards Man, God, and the Universe. This is the uncritical wisdom, the untested sayings of individuals or groups of individuals that however give the society its basic shape. It is a kind of ideology. From this perspective, everyone is a philosopher in the same way every society is philosophical. All that it demands is for one (or group of individuals) to hold views that will help them live with and in some specific environment, both social and natural. This is where Okot p'Bitek's dictum that philosophy is culture celebrated in the village fits. [38]

Following this line of thought, African Philosophy has for along time been mistakenly defined in opposition to Western philosophy. The former being

perceived as a unique way of thinking that is radically un-European. It is less critical, less analytic and of course it lacks the individual and rational inputs that characterize all philosophies world over. It floats on and belongs to an entity called society. And all the individuals are buried within society. The result is to have an African philosophy without African philosophers.

The 'narrow' (theoretical/specific/strict/technical/academic) meaning on the other hand holds philosophy as a theoretical discipline devoted to detailed, complicated and sophisticated argumentation.[39] It holds that, as an academic discipline or way of looking at and interpreting reality, philosophy should curve out a niche for its practitioners. The membership is determined by the attainment of certain skills that constitute and define the rules that enable the members to interact and communicate as philosophers. In this regard, Hountondji adds that, "Philosophy belongs to the same genus as algebra, geometry, mechanics and linguistics."[40] It is a self-reflective discipline, conscious of its being alive, and more important, individuals own up to being authors of particular ideas in the system and the search for truth is the *raison d'etre* for the exercise. Accordingly, since the idea of unconscious algebra, geometry is regarded as absurd; there is no convincing reason to present an idea of an unconscious philosophy. Such a philosophy lacks an explicit discourse and known history of individuals associated with its practice.

What is of interest particularly for this study is the fact that, the popular or vulgar (ideological and broad) sense of philosophy exists for every individual and every society. It has existed from time immemorial and this is what gives

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sense and meaning to a people's culture. But this existence does not preclude philosophy in its technical sense, a philosophy that will ask questions on the assumptions of these unconscious philosophies of life – the non-critical worldviews. It is philosophy in its technical sense that is the concern of this study. It is possible that, this is just but one way of conceiving philosophy. Be it as it may it is generally acknowledged that the meaning and nature of philosophy has been and is still a controversial subject. It is therefore not uncommon to find individuals who conceive philosophy differently yet, they agree that the activity they are engaged in is philosophy. These individuals, it would seem, have no doubt as to what they are doing whether in ordinary discourse or when they are reflecting on everyday experiences and reality or in their professional endeavours.

Though this may be granted, philosophy as an activity has a definite meaning, a clear method to all who engage in the activity such that it is possible to point out and demarcate the boundaries between what is, and what is not philosophical. This is very clear as attested to by the history of philosophy. It is a method of understanding reality.

The immediate advantages of these two theories will be to have a perspective of philosophy in Africa that is critical and logical in as much as it will be systematic and theoretically relevant to the needs of our time. It will be the product of a systematized, critical and logical mind of known individuals. As written literature, it will create a history of discourse, which will be sustained

by criticisms and counter-criticisms. This will in effect give direction to academic philosophy in Africa.

Secondly, these theories will help focus and concentrate on the identification of individuals who regard knowledge production as a noble exercise, and that this is attributed to them and them alone.

Critics may be quick to point out that those who hold this view have a colonized conception of philosophy. They may also point out that, holding this view is tantamount to unquestioningly accepting Western parameters as objective, absolute, and with universal applicability. They may argue that, this has distracted African thinkers from creating a purely and uniquely African Philosophical thought, and that, this is philosophic colonialism.

These are all genuine concerns. But who said there is something peculiarly and essentially Western about logic, rationality, systematic thinking, and criticality? As a theoretical discipline seeking to contribute to human knowledge, the essential nature of philosophy is singularly unitary, objective and of universal relevance in as far as it remains that, a theoretical discipline. It should be discourse on cultures, which make its contents unique. But philosophy, while remaining culturally relevant should retain its illuminating power on all cultures in a bid to understand the general trends and principles underlying reality in every culture

1.9 Research Hypotheses

The general and guiding theme in this study revolves around the practice of culture in Africa and the culture subsequently established by the practitioners. In other words, has philosophy in Africa taken cognizance of African culture? Who has determined the course of the practice of this philosophy and how has African cultural values and language responded to this challenges? Our main concern is the fact that Africa has not developed a philosophical tradition based on and defined by her cultural values is cause for concern. That this is related to and has affected the practice and course of philosophy in Africa and the kind of culture and tradition it established. It equally has determined and prioritised the issues of concern in African philosophy. This has adversely affected the practice of philosophy in Africa precisely because this discourse is exogenous to Africa and her cultural and philosophical priorities. It is a discourse imposed on Africa; it is colonial, imperialist, domineering, and serves no good purpose for the future of African philosophy and the African philosopher. The research will therefore seek to test the following hypotheses;

1. That, philosophical discourse in Africa is hindered by challenges that are cultural in nature.

2. That, the language of African philosophy is an impediment to the development of philosophy in Africa.

3. That, the development of a theoretical and culture of philosophy is predicated on the presence of a culture of critique.

4. That, philosophy is always conscious of the cultural concerns of the society.

1.10 Study Methodology

For any philosophical study, one must bear in mind the fact that, it concerns itself more with a second order discourse than empirical data gathering. Thus, the methodological framework will be one of conceptual analysis, in which assumptions are critically examined, with a view to extracting and understanding the underlying meaning.

In the history of philosophy, most thinkers concern themselves with certain definite issues that are perceived as pertinent, urgent, important and fundamental. The approach and emphasis always depend on personal interest including ideological and idiosyncratic inclinations, intellectual orientation, the social conditions of one's time and the historical epoch within which one is philosophizing. To this extent, many philosophies are designated cosmological, social, and epistemological as well as moral moving towards human self-actualization. This study will adopt this method. The question to be asked will hinge on the kinds of issues that are confronted in African Philosophy. Are these issues of a theoretical nature or practical issues of culture? What ideals constraint African culture? And what obstacles hinder the achievement of these ideals? What recommendations should African Philosophy propose for African culture? The central concern here will be with problems of definition, of terms and concepts as they are used in philosophy and their appropriation on and adoption in the sociogeny of the African historiographical thought. But more specifically the collection and analysis of data will concentrate more on how philosophy is perceived and taught in Africa. Focus will be on selected institutions that offer philosophical courses

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and the main themes of emphasis. Besides this, two methods are relevant to this study, namely, the social science perspective and the ideological method.

1.10.1 The Perspective of Social Science

With anthropological tools, it will be important to examine the various elements of African culture and their significance in the creation of a philosophy. Here, claims made by and empirical data collected through anthropological, sociological and historical activities will be considered, discussed and analyzed.

1.10.2 The Ideological Method

This perspective will shed light on the nature and impact of ideology on philosophy. Hence, culture and African philosophy will be analyzed within some set specific programmes and guiding theoretical ideals. To this end, the role of ideology in culture and how its impact on the possibilities of philosophy in Africa will be considered. To this end, efforts will be made to extract a meaningful cultural basis for the definition and creation of an ideal social setting in which African philosophy will be in service of African society. It is worth noting that African philosophy is set and predicated on an ideological pedestal, in which the West determines the epistemological framework within which discourse on African philosophy should be conducted. Value concepts such as primitive, underdeveloped have been used to describe and analyze contents in African philosophy. This is critical for our major task is to deconstruct and seek ways to de-centre this epistemology. The significance of this method is to help in elucidating and demonstrating the

impact of ideology on the development of a philosophy in terms of value conception on meaning of ideas and claims on Africa and African peoples, their thinking, institutions, and general societal transformation.

1.11 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that the initial discourse on African Philosophy was premised on an ideological and racial ground and that this has misdirected efforts aimed at building a body of knowledge on African philosophy. This has, to a large extent, contributed to the underdeveloped nature of philosophical discourse in Africa both in terms of development of a theory that should guide practice and the subsequent methodological experimentations. The effect of these has been to divert off the main issues at stake so that African Philosophers have now created straw men with whom they exchange critical punches when the real argument is left to lie fallow. It is obvious that this has been disastrous to African philosophy.

It then becomes important to pay attention to every comment coming from both Africans and Africanist scholar on whatever topic under discussion since ultimately it is African culture that is in focus. Let each point he appreciated and be either accepted on its merit or rejected for lack of it. But one challenging issue is that, for a pre-requisite establishment of a philosophical discourse, it is imperative that the issues of theory and method should be addressed. It is disheartening to find works that claim to offer an African challenge to European thinking being written by non-Africans. For practical philosophical discourse in Africa amongst African Philosophers, Africans are

faced with the challenge of theoretically exposing African culture and its relationship to the people in Africa, society at large and its institutions and all other social processes. African Philosophy can only take its rightful place in the world if it is founded on an African culture that is understandable and explainable, a culture that has a clear system of predictable values. This will in turn arise out of a culture of critique.

Our claim here is that, philosophy is a discipline with a rigorous method, complete with categories of operations, a conceptual framework, cognitive categories and concepts that have a definite meaning for those who use the language of philosophy. In Africa however, this disagreement has not only taken the definitional dimension, but attempts have even been made to question the ontological status of an African Philosophy. It is doubtful whether such a body of knowledge exists in the first place. The demand for existence of an African thought that qualifies as philosophical is a question that calls attention to dynamics of African culture.

This attitude has raised concern among African thinkers in general and researchers in African philosophy in particular. Subsequently, there have been attempts to look for characteristics that define Western culture, define these, and on their basis, seek their complement/negations in Africa. This has led to the invention of a unique African culture that provides the basis for this unique African way of thinking.

This dichotomous perception and interpretation of reality has given rise to a particular school of thought, which seeks to create a razor sharp but very important distinction between the strict and broad meaning s of philosophy. At the first level, this distinction should help in understanding the nature and task of philosophy. But at another level this distinction is meant to serve an ideological purpose and thus "lies at the core of the debate over African Philosophy". [41]

One escape route out of this controversy is to concede that African philosophy has a short history, and that with time it should mature. It is a philosophy 'born of struggle' in the war of domination of one race by another. This is important and should be kept in mind. At the centre of this project is the claim that African philosophy is a theoretical discipline and therefore our concern will be individuals who have contributed or are contributing to its creation, its processes and possibilities of existence, as well as those who are actively contributing to a critique of nature and dynamics of culture in Africa in a way that second level discourse is brought into being. Whether these individuals' efforts be seen in the 'broad' or 'strict' perspective, and whether their efforts be designated as unique since they arise out of a unique mode of thought, and whether African philosophy be perceived and defined in relation to philosophy in the West are all questions that are fundamental to this study. Our hope is that these theories will help us in achieving our set objectives. These and others have very serious implications and they are the concern for this research.

NOTES

[1] D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p.1

[2] See early works on African studies including works by, E. E. Evans Pritchard, R. Baron, Lucien Levy- Bruhl and more recently Tempels, Kagame and Mbiti among others.

[3] R. H. Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe and J. O' Baur eds., *Africa and the Disciplines*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 116-117.

[4] F. Ochieng Odhiambo, *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy, 1997, p. 1

[5] Mudimbe, V. Y., *The Invention of Africa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 1988, pp. 1, 5, 7,9-10,18-23.

[6] Ibid., p. 1

[7] Ibid., p. 10

[8] D A Masolo, op cit p. 22

[9] See Gorge James, The Stolen Legacy. San Francisco: Julian and Richardson Associates, 1985; Bernal Martin, Black Athena(The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization): The Fabrications of Greece. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1987;Olela Henry, From Ancient Africa to Ancient Greece: An Introduction to the History of Philosophy, Georgia, The Black Heritage Corp., 1985 among others.

[10] See for example Aime Cesaire, *Return to My Native Land*. Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956; L. S. Senghor, *On the Road to African Socialism*. Paris: Presence Africaine, 1961. J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi and London: Heinemann Education Books, 1974. Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan, eds., *Modes of Thought*. London: Faber and Faber, 1973; Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959.

[11] Robert H. Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe and Jean O'Barr eds., *Africa and the Disciplines*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, p.122.

[12] Hountondji op. cit pp., xviii, 34, 55-70

[13] Robert H. Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe and Jean O'Barr eds., *Africa and the Disciplines*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 113,122,133.

[14] See F Ochieng-Odhiambo, "The Significance of Philosophic Sagacity in African Philosophy," a PhD dissertation, Department of Philosophy University of Nairobi, 19904, p281

[15] See Henry Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy*. Nairobi and Kampala: Heinemann education Books, 1997, pp 191-195, H. Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo, eds. *Philosophy and Cultures*. Nairobi: Book wise 1983, pp 44-51, Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*. New York: Cambridge University press, 1980, , and Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: an African Perspective*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 1996

[16] Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo, eds 1983, op. cit pp 44-45

[17] Ibid. pp 1, 3, 5.

[18] Ibid pp132-136

[19] P. Hountondji, African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, 2nd ed , Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp 71,75,84-89.

[20]See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee. London: Penguin Books, 1956.

[21] See Aristotle, *The Politics*, New York: OUP, 1962

[22] Hountodji op cit., p. xix

[31] See Joseph M Nyasani, "The State and Status of African Philosophy: Some Critical Reflections". (A Paper presented to the *International Symposium on Philosophical Dialogue*

and Exchange Within Africa and Asia, Nairobi: August 19-22, 1985), pp 2-4, P. Hountondji, op cit. pp 59-60.

[23] See Joseph M Nyasani, "The State and Status of African Philosophy: Some Critical Reflections". (A Paper presented to the *International Symposium on Philosophical Dialogue and Exchange Within Africa and Asia*, Nairobi: August 19-22, 1985), pp 2-4, P. Hountondji, op cit. pp 59-60.

[24] We have tried to define philosophy using the universalist view and our argument is that subscribing to universalism need not necessarily imply submitting to foundationalism. We claim here that culture peculiarities and differences affect the content of philosophy.

[25] The works of these individuals are many and varied. In one way or the other these tend to define the history of African philosophy.

[26] Reference to these is seen as important since their works define the history of Western philosophy. Though varied in their conception of and method of philosophy these are all agreed and subscribe to a universalist view and the demands of rationality, explicitly or otherwise.

[27] Odera Oruka, Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, op cit. p39
[28] Barbara Johnson, The Critical Difference (1981), p45.

[29] Bishop, Ryan, Postmodernism. *In* DavidLevinson and Melvin Ember (eds.), Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology. New York: Henry Holt and Company, *1996*.

[30] Spiro, Melford E. Postmodernist Anthropology, Subjectivity, and Science. A Modernist Critique. In Comparative Studies in Society and History. V., 1996, pp.759-780
[31] D A Masolo, African Philosphy in Search of Identity, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p1
[32] See Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosphy, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1969.
[33] Henry Odera Oruka, Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, Nairobi, Shirikon Publishers, 1990.
[34] Paulin Hountondji, African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, op cit, pp 71-74.
[35] Ibid., p71
[36] ibid., p72
[37] Hountondji op. cit p 46
[38] Okot P'Bitek, "On Culture, Man and Freedom", in H.Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo, b eds., Philosophy and Cultures, op cit p106.
[39] Kwasi Wiredu, Philosophy and an African Culture. op .cit p32.
[40] Hountondji op cit p 47
See also J.M. Nyasani The Metaphysics of Cosmos and Related Issues of Metaphysics. Nairobi: nn. 1999, pp 1-8
[41] Gail Presbey, "Broad and Strict Distinctions Proposed by Claude Sumner Regarding Ethiopian Philosophy", op cit pp 1-2

CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTS IN AND THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY

2.1 The Concept 'Philosophy'

There are many works that tend to address the question of the meaning and nature of Philosophy. Virtually all the introductory texts deal with this in one way or another. What is however interesting is that each writer gives it a different answer. While some address the classical meaning and nature of philosophy as love of wisdom, others address the scientific theories and their evolutions in human thinking over time. Others simply address ideas in particular epochs of human history.[1]

In this work, we attempt to revisit this question for purposes of removing any doubt as to the idea of philosophy in use in this study. We begin from the premise that philosophy is a thoroughly theoretical discipline but with a lot of practical application on human thinking and institutional values, both individual and collective. We also want to say that we are very sympathetic to the analytic tradition in philosophy since we hold the view that language has the power to create reality. If this is granted, then our use of words and concepts bear heavily on our conception of the world and of course the nature of reality.

Whether indeed culture has impacted adversely or otherwise on the nature of Philosophy worldwide, is all a question of the way words are used to describe what reality is for that particular culture, since meaning is dependent on use

of, and conceptions that words give to objects within a given setting. As a discipline and system of human inquiry, the conception of philosophy differs from one individual to another, one group of philosophers to another depending on ones perspective and orientation.[2] One way of conceiving and understanding philosophy is to argue that it is both a method and object of human knowledge. To many it deals with the nature of reality in its complexity and vicissitudes. Here the entire reality is the object of philosophy. To others it seeks to define reality by critically analyzing the elements that constitute it. Here, it is a method of appraising and understanding reality, its nature content and dynamics. In the former, one would be interested in seeking, discovering and establishing a definition for philosophy as well as understanding what it entails, its nature and methodology. In the latter one is concerned with seeking to inquire into the nature and content of knowledge in other spheres of human inquiry. Areas of interest would include questions such as:

- How do the Sciences, Biology, Physics, Psychology and Economics among others interpret reality?

- What kind of worldview does religion present to human beings?

- Is there an objective and true way of interpreting the world?

It may seem from the outset that the task of philosophy is to interpret and explain reality in a manner that gives meaning to phenomena, human relations both in their moral and non-moral dimensions. It is the task of philosophy to reflect on life, nature and reality, seeking to understand and provide general justification to the universe.

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It is at this point that many observers condemn philosophy and consequently philosophers as idlers bent on passing/wasting time by seeking to know what cannot be known. And this is a misconception that philosophy has had to endure over time. Writing in Editorial of *Thought and Practice: the Journal of Philosophical Association of Kenya*, the editors noted that:

> It seems that too often philosophical reflections have the tendency of getting lost in speculations only. It must be for that reason that many, even intelligent people, consider philosophy a luxury, or as a kind of irrelevant and confusing intellectual gymnastic.[3]

That many have considered philosophers a group of confused individuals always out to discuss irrelevant and confusing stuff is not in doubt. This can very easily be attributed to the theoretically loaded content of philosophical discussions. But one can still blame philosophers for this state of affairs for it is them who have refused to open up their discipline on an interactive basis where other disciplines and fields of human inquiry feel comfortable and relevant in the face of philosophy. But also to blame are "even the intelligent" that fail to notice the bearing of philosophical reflections on their own disciplines.

Perhaps the more serious problem that bears on the critique of philosophy and culture in Africa is the fear of theory. Scholarship is primarily viewed in two perspectives; on the one hand, it is seen as a purely theoretical business for an exclusively chosen few with the sole task of thinking abstractly. On the other, it is a tool for problem solution. At its extreme end these may be seen as contradictory, in which one excludes the other. Little effort is made to reconcile the two. This is the basis of the sharp dichotomy and subsequent

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classification of academia between the practical and theoretical disciplines. The danger with this and particularly for Africa however, is the half measured solutions that only address the problem without trying to understand its theoretical underpinnings and how this bear on the available solutions, both, real and possibilities. As of today, philosophy in Africa is generally assumed not to be very useful. The argument goes that, it has yet to achieve any mark in terms of transforming human life and society in general. And subsequently, it has very little relevance to the cause of development in Africa. But Engineering is relevant, Architecture is useful, and Medicine is mandatory. All these have a demonstrated practical value that philosophy seems to lack. So everybody competes to show the relevance of his or her discipline to the realities and problems in society. All disciplines except Philosophy and of course religion become Scientific in nature. But we wish to differ and we shall adduce evidence to support our position.

2.2 Thought and Practice in Philosophy

In its strict sense, and taking cognizance of its theoretical dynamics, authentic philosophy is about thought and practice; it is about reflections on human experiences and practice; it is about examining the underlying values, analyzing the various thought patterns and clarifying issues that might seem mystifying, alienating and even confusing. For that matter, philosophy, though heavily seeming theoretical, does witness reflections on the basic human, social and institutional values, seeking to understand their relevance to the practical problems of life. It is not just about knowledge *per se*, but knowledge in its practical sense; wisdom. Socrates, the respected ancient Greek

philosopher held that man could never attain absolute wisdom. That one can only attempt to pursue wisdom and this is the essence of process of knowing. One should seek to acquire it, possess it, retain it, and perhaps have it completely as one's own. This is all that constitutes philosophy for the un-initiated. For the uninitiated mind, philosophy as love of wisdom becomes the sole and major meaning of Philosophy. But to be wise does not necessarily mean that one is a philosopher. And the reverse is also not the case. To be a philosopher simply implies that one has the patience to slowly and painfully try to understand and explain the fundamental principles underlying the reality in the universe, human and social institutions. But this should not be taken to mean that understanding the nature of reality is the sole right of philosophy. It is actually a task all human beings engage in from time to time, but philosophers take it as their professional duty and obligation to understand, explain and interpret this in a way that goes beyond the specialized sciences, both natural and rational.

However, to a philosopher, philosophy as love of wisdom indicates a serious commitment to the pursuit of that which constitutes the essence of reality, a continuous search for the meaning of truth and nature of reality. This is not just theoretical, but has a serious practical dimension to it. In wisdom, an activity must have a purpose that ought to be attained. The actor (one who possesses wisdom) has knowledge of this purpose, if not, one is aware of its presence, its course, mode and even dynamics of presentation. And more important, there is a steadfast effort in seeking to achieve the declared purpose in the best possible manner. That is why in all its endeavours, philosophy is

critical about meanings, trying to clarify vague and confusing ideas in a bid to render them meaningful within discourse. And here we have a first hand experience on the role of philosophy. Many consider the use of the word wisdom in the west to be very generous indeed as opposed to other world cultures. In fact to say that that Socrates and Thales were the first Philosophers because they were considered wise has been challenged on a semantic pedestal. Odera Oruka holds that just because of their simple utterances these two were first and foremost sages; that they were in possession of wisdom that was just beyond the average in the society.[4] James Gould observes that ideally philosophy is a system of beliefs that are held either by individuals or group of individuals concerning some fundamental issues about man, God and nature.[5] It may be on love, the nature of the good life, on life and death, value for money and generally duty to others, to self, to country and, even the role of government in society. He argues that *individuals through interaction with society form these ideas.*[6] Towards this end, then we are saying that it is individuals who form ideas that constitute philosophy. It needs therefore to be emphasized that philosophy as a discipline is the business of individuals. It is these who appraise social reality, accepting and rejecting ideas by providing a rational justification for these. Society only consumes ideas whose production is a joint effort of the interaction between the individual, nature and society. But the responsibility is to the individual to *own* the idea, whose truth can be challenged from time to time. Philosophy is the product of thought and thought is a human activity.

It is this development of thought through *personal initiative* that makes philosophy *an activity that rests entirely on the individual.* The individual has

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to initiate (or invent) a challenge that either confirms or confronts the general beliefs in the society. This is what modifies buttresses and/or sustains the existing social values and cultural beliefs.

Whether ones' philosophy is sophisticated as Hegel's or Kant's, or elementary as is the case of Mbuya Akoko[7] the sage, enduring or changeable, it constitutes *a thought system*, an invention, a *personal interpretation* of the universe that cannot be developed by anybody on your behalf. One cannot tell another to think. The initiative and subsequent ownership of the idea must be individual. The initiative or challenge could be on questions that are commonsensical, as to whether the sun will rise again tomorrow or not, whether marriage is desirable or not. It could also be on sophisticated issues as Democritus theory of atoms, which looks at an obvious problem but makes interesting clarifications that were hitherto unknown in society. Democritus invented new truth through his claims on the indestructibility of atoms: that in death, personality and senses disappear, but atoms live on forever. In some places this is common place.

Whichever way one looks at it, the concepts that we use have a personal coloration and therefore invoke different notions when uttered just as values mean different things to different people. Since philosophy is an invention of thought, philosophies may differ from person to person, and, society to society depending on the range and intensity of influence certain individuals have on their societies. But in general Philosophy reflects on what can be seen as ordinary issues of life and the universe may include but not limited to:

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- What do the term /concept mean?

- How is it used in that particular context, and what is its implication to meaning and significance?

- How else can it be rendered in discourse for ease of communication?

- Why hold a particular belief, 'X' and not 'Y'?

- What is the basis (ses) for holding a given idea?

- What is the significance of holding belief 'x' for society in general and me in particular?

2.3 Analytic Pragmatism

The discipline of philosophy has become increasingly concerned with the analysis of language to discern the meaning of words and concepts as they are used in discourse. To this extent, philosophical maturity consists in individuals' personal reflections on the workings of the universe, the nature and elements in the cultural spectrum which all amount to one's reflections on experiences for the purpose of seeking answers and solutions that underlie truth, meaning and principles which guide to human life.[8]

In an essay on "The Fixation of Beliefs", Charles Sanders Pierce identifies four methods through which we become tied to certain beliefs that eventually turn out to be our philosophies.[9]

Method of Tenacity

Using this method, beliefs are fixed in accordance with the environment or one's personal relationship with it. This is a kind of folk system of thinking:

folk (or culture) philosophy. Take the Luo in East Africa for example. It is claimed that they have a particular attachment to fish and water perhaps because of the proximity to great landmass of water, Lake Victoria which is within their environment. The Luhyas of Western Kenya attach a lot of importance to chicken and derive a lot of beliefs from the same. The point for philosophy is to extract the underlying principles that can be able to explain this behaviour. Whether it evolved with society over time or is a function of the environment. Similarly, using this framework one can very comfortably explain the Kalenjin's and Maasai's attachment to cattle in the Rift Valley. Our claim is that once a folk system of thought arises, philosophy should be able to push thought to the next level, where rationale is provided for the existence and persistence of theses believes.

Method of Authority

Here beliefs are fixed in accordance with one's admired authority of a person, institution, theory or principle which in one's view seems to explain the world in a much more realistic way. Many Christians have for instance based their beliefs on authority of Jesus. They have even defined and developed a moral code based on Christ-like morality -Christian morality. In African thought this should cultivated. We are yet to tap the utility of the authorise that exist in society due of perception: since they are Africans they have very little to offer in terms of wisdom.

Method of intuition

This fixes beliefs in a priori basis. Beliefs are held in a way that experience alone cannot adequately explain their origins. It is claimed that depending on one's power of intuition one gains knowledge and rationalizes beliefs without making reference to experience or reason.

Method of Science

Here beliefs are held because of some sound reasoning that accompany a painstaking observation of phenomena, which seeks order out of disorder. A thorough and critical analysis of the evidence observed is key in deriving certain conclusions, which then become the guide to life, a philosophy from which all other explanations arise. Scientific method seeks to understand and explain a supported claim concerning the nature of the world.

Pearce's observation is important from a casual and ordinary point of view. But one needs to note that as a mental activity, philosophy is inseparable from normal, ordinary human intellectual engagement. It should not be seen as a lofty exercise that is engaged in by some special, even abnormal groups of people, a kind of *EXCLUSIVE INTELLECTUAL MEMBERS CLUB ONLY!* And this can only be blamed on philosophers who want to build a niche for themselves by running away from ordinary social and natural reality by asserting lofty claims in the name of Philosophy.

This may not make a lot of sense. Let us keenly look at the implication of the foregoing. Philosophy is concerned with the human rational faculty. Its main

engine is the human faculty of thought, and its destination is society: its basic values, social processes, institutional structures, and principles of operation. Thus, for human beings more than possessing the urge to know are endowed with a rational capacity to question, to enquire and to wonder which ultimately leads them to seeking answers and solutions to the many problems found in the universe both empirical and otherwise. This is realized through intellection and expressed as concepts and ideas in the mind as well as reasoning through making judgment about humanity, God and the world. Hence, one can say that all the above conjures to saying that philosophy is an attempt to understand reality but more than that justify it. We are hereby claiming that it is not just enough to ask questions as a way of beginning a philosophy. One should be capable of asking questions of fundamental essence about reality, things and states of being.

By merely putting forth a proposition into interrogative form does not stimulate the mind enough to struggle after belief. Philosophical discourse presupposes the existence of a real and living doubt without which all discussion is idle. Yet, this is where much of the literature in African Philosophy is disadvantaged.

2.4 Philosophy as a Science of Ideas

Philosophy can be conceived as a body of rationally reasoned truths or certain conclusions that can be regarded as truisms. Truisms constitute basic and fundamental principles which are discoverable by carefully explicating the elements of nature and reality. Since this may sound pejorative, (from

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philosophy conceived as a well reasoned and justified positions) it forms a basis upon which reasoned and well justified positions can be taken. This is because philosophy operates on the basis of certain basic principles that are obvious and necessarily true but which must be discovered, analyzed and explained in order that they have meaningful bearing on human experiences and reality in general. It would be useful to consider some of these laws and principles considered basic but forming a springboard for rational philosophic activity.

The law of identity

This principle states that everything is identical with itself. Take any statement P. P must be stated in such a way that it is identical to itself in terms of truth-value. For instance, let P stand for: *'All human beings born in Nairobi are Kenyans'*

This statement should be read as thus, *that if there are any things called human beings and they are born in Nairobi then these human beings must be Kenyans (All S is P).* In other words it is not possible to find human beings born in Nairobi not being Kenyans, (implying that the intersection of S and Non-P is an empty set. Schematically expressed, (S∩ ̃P= 0). And it means simply that. If it is true then it's implicate is also true. In purely logical terms, this principle may be rephrased, as any statement of the form P, is P. Thus the statement P implies P is true always and everywhere. This has the implication that every statement of the form P > P is a tautology.[10] In all circumstances where this applies it is a necessary truth, as the truth table below will reveal. It is useful to bear in mind that we are confining our attention to complete and

non-elliptical statement formulations, those that are not contingent to either social change or otherwise.[11]

Probability Space	Statement P	Conditional Statement P> P
1	T	T
2	F	T

It is important to note that the theoretical and logical requirements of philosophy are to explain what lies behind this principle. That, unlike a tautology which exhibit similar truth value characteristics, the later is purely defined in terms of a conjunction ('and'), and a disjunction ('either ... or ...'), in which case it excludes a conditional ('if ... then....'). Ordinarily to infer P from   P → P (read as: if P then P) commits the existential fallacy since in the latter (P →   P) there is a condition (a hypothetical probability) that if P then P, not an assertion that there indeed exists a P.   It is only a hypothetical statement that if there is a P then P is the consequence.

Though this may be the case in its implicative form, a conditional statement still remains the best illustrate of the principle of identity. The logical meaning of a conjunction is defined as being true only when the two conjuncts are true. Thus, the statement,' *Brian is a boy and Bradley is a boy*', ordinarily read as both Brian and Bradley are boys can only be true if It is the case that Brian is a boy, and Bradley too, is a boy. If it turns out that *one of them is NOT* a boy, our statement will be false. Taking one of the conjuncts in the above statement

and by conjoining the conjunct to itself would be to state a necessary truth, a tautology, as in the statement hereunder: *'Brian is a boy and Brian is a boy'*. In all its instances of truth value where the statement *Brian is a boy* is true, then the compound statement 'P and P' will be true as in the table below.

Probability Space	Conjunct 1, P	Conjunct 2, P	Conjunction P · P
1	T	T	T

Here then, the technical function of Philosophy comes in use. That whereas in ordinary discourse, a tautology is simply a redundant or repetitive statement in philosophy its use is restrictive and serves a much more defined role than otherwise language may avail to ordinary human discourse.[12] Consider the disjunctive statement below:

Either Tom Mboya was assassinated or it is not the case that Tom Mboya was assassinated.

Let P: *Tom Mboya was assassinated.*

Then ~P will read as '*It is not the case that Tom Mboya was assassinated.*'

When we conjoin our two statements by use of a disjunction (either... or... operation), our compound statement would symbolically look like this:

P V ~ P, *which* is read as, either P or not P.

If we assigned truth-values to our atomic statements 'P', and '~P' we would have a scheme like the below.

Probability Space	Statement, P	Complement ~P	Disjunction P v ~P
1	T	F	T
2	F	T	T

When you look at the fourth column, we have a situation where either way, when 'P' is true or P is false or vice versa, our disjunction is true. Symbolically we have a statement that is true whatever the substitution instance. It should be observed here that the sentential connective either ... or ... may be confusing in its technical use as a philosophical tool of analysis. There are two distinct senses of the phrase 'either... or....' It can be understood in a strong sense, also known as the exclusive sense, (latin = *aut)*, and the weak sense, also known as the inclusive sense. If one were invited for dinner on the promise that one will be served with either, rice or ugali, it would not be false if one is served both rice and ugali.

On the other hand, if one observed that Bradley is either Tanzanian or Ugandan, it would not be proper to say that one can be Tanzanian and Ugandan at the same time. One must be one or the other. It would be false to say he is Ugandan and Tanzanian.

The first example is a case of inclusive usage of 'either ... or ...', while the second is a case of exclusive usage. A disjunction in its inclusive usage merely demands that *at least one* of the two disjuncts is *the case* (that it should be true). The question as to whether both are true is left unanswered since in

their both being true, the principle of one being true is achieved. An exclusive disjunction however asserts that for sure *only one* of the two disjuncts is the case. That, they *cannot both be true*. Philosophical logic ordinarily interprets the *either... or...* in the inclusive sense. Thus, the truth of one does not excludes the truth of the other. This is to avoid the clumsy nature of stating some facts as is the case in many legal documents, which use the disjunction and conjunction in the place of a single sentential placeholder. For example, *"This offence carries a fine not exceeding KShs. 100,000/- or /and jail term of not less than ten months"*. This is a statement that is open to abuse under what is known as judicial discretion.

The Principle Excluded Middle

This a principle holds that any statement 'P' is either true or false, that is, can either be affirmed or denied, and cannot be neither at any given time.[13] This principle ordinarily tries to exclude the third factor in discourse by asserting that any given predicate must as a rule be affirmed (belong to a given subject) or denied (not belong to a given subject). Schematically: *'S' must either be 'P' or not 'P'*. Thus: *S is either P V ~P*. The S in the example above example cannot be neither true nor false, nor, can it be both. For example;

Let P: Kenyans are good athletes. Then, the statement

All Kenyans are good athletes when it is true then its contradictory, *No Kenyans are good athletes* must be false. Consider the traditional square of opposition and how it distributes truth values between the four categorical statements.
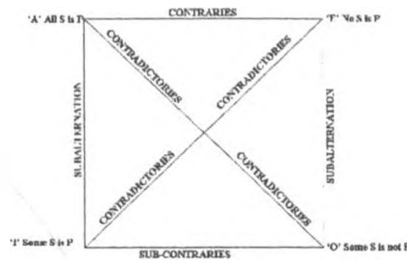
Similarly the statement, *'Bradley is a boy'* cannot be true when it is also true *that Bradley is not a boy.* He has to be one or the other with a total exclusion of the third or middle ground. It would be interesting to point out that just like the principle of identity, the logical truth functionality of this principle, that is, any statement P is either true or false is a tautology. Thus, its schematic presentation would be: P V ~P, read as either P or not P. Consider the diagram below:

Probability Space	Statement, P	Complement ~P	Disjunction PV~P
1	T	F	T
2	F	T	T

The Principle of non-Contradiction

This is a principle of thought, which holds that any given statement P cannot both be affirmed and denied at the same time in the same circumstances. In essence, this principle does not allow the same predicate to be affirmed (belong to a given subject) and denied (not belong to a given subject) at the same time. Its symbolic presentation would look like this: S cannot both be P and not P. Thus: P · ~P and a statement of this form is a contradiction and thus always false in all the possible substitution instances as shown in the table

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below. Let P: *'Blessings is a Kenyan'.* ~ P (read as not P) will be, *'It is not the case that Blessings is a Kenyan.'*

This will lead us to the statement P · ~P, read as 'Blessings *is a Kenyan and Blessings is not a Kenyan.'* Obviously this is false. On the truth table, this may be presented as follows.

Probability Space	Statement P	Complement ~P	Conjunction P• ~P
1	T	F	F
2	F	T	F

From our understanding of a negation or denial of any statement P is that, if P is true, its denial ~P, is false, and if P is false, its denial P, is true. Ordinarily a conjunctive statement is such that both conjuncts must be true for the conjunction to be true. In column three (3) not P is false, and in column two (2), P is false. Hence in both cases, P and not P are false.

But since Philosophy has a technical way of talking about the world, the same statement may be shown as:

Probability Space	Statement P	Complement P	Conjunction ~(PV~P)
1	T	F	T
2	F	T	T

In terms of truth value the two tables above have similar though expressed differently. Thus the later appears as a tautology but since everything in the brackets is negated using Demorgan's theorem we are able to remove the brackets hence end up with P.~P.

These three principles of thought are seen to be so fundamental that clear discourse is impossible without mastering them, implicitly or explicitly. The task of language usage clearly belongs to linguists. However, the task of clarifying the extent to which words can apply is the work of philosophers. But it should also be noted that not all people who use language and clearly understand these principles do not find them problematic. They have been objected to on many accounts and fronts. Although it is important that we point out that many of these criticisms arise from a misunderstanding of their application[14]. For instance, the statement *'Moi is the President of Kenya'* was true in 1980, but false today, 2004. So it is possible to object and point out that clearly the statement *'Moi is the President of Kenya'* can both be said to be true and false if we consider the different times it is being made. Then it was true, but today it is false. This consideration may be true. But clearly here, the principle of identity has been misapplied.

The statement *'Moi is the President of Kenya'*, is a partial formulation or an elliptical statement. This is an example of statements whose truth value change with time, what may be referred to as elliptical or incomplete formulations or contingent statements and therefore not covered under these principles. Logic as an important tool of philosophical analysis is concerned

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with complete formulations or non-elliptical statements, in which case the statement, '*Moi was the President of Kenya in 1980*' is true today as it was in 1980. When we confine ourselves to non-elliptical formulations, the principle of identify applies unshakably.

The principle of excluded middle has been criticized on account of allowing for a 'two-valued orientation'! That, things are either one, or the other, with the middle ground completely excluded. For example the statement '*this pen is black*' and, the statement '*this pen is blue*' cannot both be true in the same instance. But, note that one is not the denial, or contradiction of the other. Thus, they cannot both be true, but both can be false. The linguistic usage here of the word contradiction does not capture the essence of the principle since all that one would be saying is that '*this pen is black*', and also that '*this pen is blue*'. Since both can be false, they are said to be opposed by contriety. The two are contraries. This leaves us with the denial/contradictory of '*this pen is black*' as; '*It is not the case that this pen is black.*' Thus, the principle of excluded middle will always be true when the terms in a statement are completely unambiguous and precise.

Finally, the principle of non-contradiction has been objected to on grounds that there are real situations when contradictory or conflicting forces are at work, as in the Hegelian or Marxian dialectics. For instance, the capitalist may seem to be in conflict with the labourers. The former demanding more profits and the later, more wages. And here is a clear case of conflict or so to speak '*contradiction*' so it is argued. But strictly speaking neither is a denial or

negation of the other. Therefore, none is contradictory to the other. A contradiction is thus intended to cover only those situations where a statement is denied or negated, and not mere opposition as ordinarily we have in language. Once more, if understood in this sense, the principle of contradiction holds.

2.5 Fundamental Questions in Philosophy

In the above discussion we have been trying to demonstrate that the controversy in conceptualizing philosophy and its practice is primarily a question that is tied to the very subject matter. Strictly speaking, philosophy begins by not knowing whether it has a proper object of study or not. Because it does not formally start from the possession of an object, it tends to delve into everything else in a theoretical manner. But it is here that one comes to appreciate the dynamics of philosophical ideas and method, and how these relate to the practical world of values, institutions, and human experiences.

One will observe therefore that the strict separation between a problem clearly formulated beforehand, and its later solution, which is basic to all sciences and all natural attitudes of life loses its primary meaning when looked at from a philosophical standpoint. Science defines and attempts to explain laws of nature as they govern behaviour. Here science assumes the existence of these laws and takes them for granted. This scientific exercise takes off from observation, experimentation and verification. Again science assumes the accuracy of the tools used in these observation, experimentation and verification. These are taken for granted. Philosophy on the other hand begins from the point of view of fundamental investigations into the principles

underlying these scientific assumptions. It asks questions about and investigates the basis of these scientific claims and conclusions. This may explain why philosophy has been first and foremost a perennial re-vindication of its object, an energetic illumination of it, a constant constitution and re-constitution of its object.

It only becomes clear to a philosopher after one finds one-self philosophizing that one has been under serious labour to be able to reach the point where one could begin to philosophize. And this is true whether one deals with obtaining rigorous evidence or rising to transcendental intuitions. In this exercise, one sketches and outlines the figure of the problems. Suffice to note that it is possible for one to have begun from a purely subjective intellectual perspective. However, this may not necessarily mean that this is the formal beginning of his philosophy. In fact if we grant that the nature of the problem determines the origin of principles, in philosophy this origin is also the end! Thus, throughout this process, philosophy does not evolve, neither is it enriched with new characteristics, rather these characteristics become more explicit and continually appear as aspects of its recreation in the course of its development. And here lies the nature of philosophy: it is the very process of its own constitution.

The typical philosopher is the inquiring man or woman. Some questions are simple to answer. Others provide a puzzle for the human mind, yet others have answers that are sought far and wide. Samuel Huntington puts it thus; "some questions are profound but irrelevant; some are relevant but not

profound; yet some are irrelevant and superficial"[15]. Philosophy seeks to address questions that are of ultimate relevance, profound and fundamental to humanity, nature and God. These are:

The Epistemological Question

This concerns man as an inquiring animal and it mainly deals with the origin, nature and validity of knowledge. But more precisely, it concerns the question of truth and certitude. Some of the issues addressed include:

- On what basis do we trust human knowledge?
- What is truth? And, how should we define what is true?
- What it knowledge? And, what can the human mind know?
- What is knowing? And, is knowing the same as believing?

The Logical Question

This seeks to establish the correct procedure in thinking and reasoning. The logical question involves an inquiry into the process as well as functions of reasoning, pointing out correct from incorrect, legitimate from flawed reasoning. Its essential nature is to define parameters used in reasoning. Reasoning we, want to argue is integral in defining human beings, and there is no way one can claim or exclude another from this process. The object of reasoning is to find out, from the consideration of what we already know, something else which we do not know. Consequently, reasoning is good if it be such as to give a true conclusion from true premises, and not otherwise. Thus, the question of validity is purely one of fact and not of thinking. Here,

Logic has established an analytic method which on the face of it contradicts scientific facts, but for those equipped with tools of logic, find no problem.

Theological Question

This is concerned with the existence, nature and operations of God or gods. It deals with knowledge of God and how this is apprehended by the human mind. For instance that it is possible to rationally provide evidence on the existence of God and argue out a case for the same.

The Moral Question

It is concerned mainly with the language of morality in its attempt to understand the dynamics that go into defining good and bad, as well as, right and wrong. Here the main task of philosophy is to seek to establish the principles of human conduct. Most people in most societies have a similar moral sense. That, human beings in virtually all societies share certain basic values concerning what is right and wrong, good and bad among others. For instance murder is evil, and that certain basic social institutions are desirable. Many are agreed that, there is need for some form of family. Arising out of these some questions become fundamental questions that bear on human life, for example:

- What is a happy life?
- And what constitutes happiness?
- What is the purpose of life?
- What defines good and bad, right and wrong?

- Is good an independent value unto itself or is it tied to human achievements?

The Metaphysical Question:

This is concerned with reality in its most general, abstract but most profound sense. It deals with the question of existence of that which is – the real – being as it is since most metaphysical inquiries have a speculative bend, metaphysics tends to deal with reality that goes beyond the physical nature of things as is perceived by the senses. It is concerned with the nature or essence of things, their causes and first principles as in;

- What is time and space? Are these objective categories with an independent reality, or are they categories within which the human mind is made to operate?

- What is the constitution of the universe?

- What is the origin, nature and purpose of the universe? And, does it have an end?

- And, is there a possibility of existence of any other universe besides the one we are immediately aware of?

2.6 Conclusion and the Dilemma of Dichotomy

The foregoing constitutes some of the fundamental questions in Philosophical enterprise. They are questions about man, nature and God. In one way or the other they are issues f discussion in virtually all societies – within different cultures at different times.

It would be difficult then to make a claim that certain cultures are not subject to these fundamental questions that concern human life. This is our idea of philosophy.

But before we move to the next chapter, it would be useful to say a word or two concerning perceptions concerning the nature of philosophy. This is because in an attempt at definition distinctions have been made between 'narrow' and 'broad' meanings of philosophy[16]. This distinction is useful for philosophical discourse across cultures since much of it rests on a confusion of categories, but significant all the same.[17] In this thinking, there is a claim that philosophy can be used in two distinct senses. And that each of these senses confers a different interpretation to the concept philosophy. These are the broad/popular/general, or simplistic sense and strict sense. The later also passes as the academic connotation which views philosophy as a theoretical discipline with a clear methodology, logic of operation, a perspective and language through which it interprets the world and reality.

The broad (ideological/popular/vulgar/general or simplistic) sense conceives philosophy as some kind of wisdom, either individual or collective that presents some degree of coherence in its attempt to understand, explain and interpret reality[18]. This boils down to conceiving philosophy in terms of the general wisdom, cultural in outlook or at best a general perspective by an individual or group of individuals towards Man, God, and the Universe. This is the uncritical wisdom; the untested sayings of individuals or groups of individuals that however give the society its basic shape. It is a kind of

ideology, or strong belief. In this view, everyone is a philosopher in the same way every society is philosophical. All that it demands is for one (or group of individuals) to hold particular views that will help them live with and in some specific environment, both social and natural. This is where Okot p'Bitek's dictum that philosophy is culture celebrated in the village fits.[19] Following this line of thought, African Philosophy has for along time been mistakenly defined in opposition to Western philosophy. The former is a unique way of thinking that is radically un-European. It is less critical, less analytic and of course it lacks the individual and rational in-put that characterize all philosophies world over. It floats on and belongs to an entity called society.

The 'narrow' (theoretical/specific/strict/technical/academic) meaning on the other hand holds philosophy as a theoretical discipline devoted to detailed, complicated and sophisticated argumentation.[20] It holds that, as an academic discipline, philosophy should curve out a niche for its practitioners. The membership is determined by the attainment of certain skills that constitute and define the rules that enable the members to interact and communicate as philosophers. In this regard, Hountondji adds, "Philosophy belongs to the same genus as algebra, geometry, mechanics and linguistics."[21] It is a self-reflective discipline, conscious of its being alive, and more important, individuals own up to being authors *of particular ideas in the system* and the search for truth is the *raison d'etre* for the exercise.

Accordingly, since the idea of an unconscious algebra, geometry and mathematics is regarded as absurd, there is no convincing reason to present an idea of an unconscious philosophy. Such a philosophy lacks an explicit

discourse and known history of individuals associated with its practice. It also lacks a specific theoretical model through which systematic knowledge is investigated. It lacks clearly formulated concepts and a methodology that gives the discipline a unique logic of investigation and existence.

What may be of interest particularly for this study is the fact that, the popular, vulgar or (ideological, and broad) sense of philosophy exists for every individual and every society. It has existed from time immemorial and this is what gives sense and meaning to a people's culture. But this does not in any way contradict nor negate the existence of philosophy in its technical sense, a philosophy that will ask questions on the assumptions of these unconscious philosophies of life – the non-critical worldviews. It is philosophy in its technical sense that is the concern of this study. It is possible that, this is just but one way of conceiving philosophy. Be it as it may, it is generally acknowledged that the meaning and nature of philosophy has been and is still a controversial subject. It is therefore not uncommon to find individuals who conceive philosophy differently yet, they agree that the activity they are engaged in is philosophy. These individuals it would seem have no doubt as to what they are doing whether in ordinary discourse or when they are reflecting on everyday experiences and reality or in their professional endeavours.

Though this may be granted, philosophy as an activity has a definite meaning, a clear method to all who engage in the activity such that it is possible to point out and demarcate the boundaries between what is, and what is not

philosophical. This is very clear as attested to by the history of philosophy. Our claim therefore is that, philosophy is a discipline with a rigorous method, complete with categories of operations, a conceptual framework and concepts that have a definite meaning for those who use the language of philosophy.

In Africa however, this disagreement has not only taken the definitional dimension, but attempts have even been made to question the ontological status of the discipline in Africa. It is often doubtful whether such a body of knowledge exists in the first place. The demand for existence of an African thought that qualifies as philosophical is a question that calls attention to dynamics of African culture.

This attitude has raised concern among African thinkers in general and researchers in African philosophy in particular. Subsequently, there have been attempts to look for characteristics that define Western culture, define these, and on their basis, seek their complement/negations in Africa. This has led to the invention of a unique African culture that provides the basis for this unique African way of thinking.

This dichotomous perception and interpretation of reality gave rise to a particular school of thought, which seeks to create a razor sharp but very important distinction between the strict and broad meaning s of philosophy. At the first level, this distinction should help in understanding the nature and task of philosophy. But at another level this distinction is meant to serve an ideological purpose and thus "lies at the core of the debate over African

Philosophy".[22] This is our concern in the next chapter. Some of the remarks may be common place but have impacted negatively to the growth of philosophy as a discipline in Africa with some confusing it with religion while others think it is a study in anthropology.

NOTES

[1] See for example, John Kekes, *The Nature of Philosophy* London, Basil Blackwell, 1980; pp. 3-6; Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, New York: Pocket Books pp xxv-xxviii; J.M Nyasani, *The Metaphysics of the Cosmos and recurrent Issues of Metaphysics*, Nairobi, 1996 np pp.1-8

[2] Ibid

[3] *Thought and Practice: the Journal of Philosophical Association of Kenya*, Vol.1 No. 1, 1974 p. v,

[4] Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, pp 40-41].

[5] James A Gould ed., *Classic Philosophical Questions*, New Jersey Prentice Hall, 1998
[6] Ibid, 55
[7] See H.Odera *Oruka Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate On African Philosophy*, op cit.
[8] Gould, op cit 1998: 55.

[9] Charles Sanders Pierce *The Fixation of Believes pp 45-48*
[10] I.P.Copi and Carl Cohen *Introduction to Logic* pp372-374
[11] ibid p373

[12] Copi and Cohen, op cit. p372
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Samuel Huntington, *Civilization and the Making of a New World Order* p. 56
[16] See H. Odera Oruka *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*, Nairobi Shirikon Publishers 1991 pp4-11 DA Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, Nairobi, Heinemann, pp59-60; Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, pp32-33; Gail Presbey "*Broad and Strict Distinctions proposed by Claude Sumner Regarding Ethiopian Philosophy*" New York Marist College unpublished paper)
[17] Hountondji, op cit p46
[18] Ibid
[19] Okot P'Bitek "On Culture, Man and Freedom" in H Odera Oruka and DA Masolo eds., *Philosophy and Cultures*, Nairobi, Book wise 1983 p106

[20] Kwasi Wiredu *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p32
[21] Hountondji, p. 47
[22] Gail Presbey op cit pp1-2

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PARADIGMATIC PROBLEMS IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

3.1 The Birth of African Studies

Contemporary African Philosophy is closely associated with the creation of Africa. The intellectual atmosphere of the time infused with a sense of drama from sensational reports coming in from the voyages of explorers like John Speak, David Livingstone, and Mungo Park among others pioneered and thus helped in the birth of African studies.[1]

It is therefore not far fetched to claim that the development of anthropological studies and missionary activities in Africa greatly influenced in shaping the idea of Africa. But it is also within the same missionary activities and anthropological studies that myth and myth making on and about Africa is anchored.[2]

The emergence of Africa as a distinct taxonomical category in the European mind was essentially an aspect of the dialectics that created the need for self-definition leading to a definition of the *"other"* and, the rise and development of African consciousness. This consciousness, a creation of people who were aware of themselves as "Africans" was essentially a reaction to the forces of history spreading from Europe to other parts of the world, the Far East and by chance Africa.[3]

The creation of an African awareness would therefore be best understood from certain events that are closely connected, namely;

1. The experiences of slave trade and slavery.

2. The discovery of the new lands and demand for labor and new markets for European factories and merchandise respectively.

3. The process of colonization and forced occupation of Africa by Europeans.

4. Finally, African nationalist struggle (for emancipation) and the spirit of Negritude.

The fourth and last event qualifies as the precursor in attempts by Africans to define who they were and their existential position in the world. It provides a clear purview and roadmap within which African effort to redemption lay.

Africans who were captured during the era of slavery and slave trade were lumped together as *Negros*, not *Yorubas, Fantes, Bambara* as they knew themselves. This is the myth of the rise of the Negro race[4]. With time there emerged an American Negro consciousness revealed through various black thinkers and activists in America among them, Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B Du Bois. These gentlemen marked the first phase in the struggle for self-determination for American Negros. This Pan Negroism resulted from the growth of American Negro consciousness and it was instrumental in the development of African nationalism and the creation of the Panafricanist movement as we have come to know it today and of course the role it played in liberating the African both in Africa and diaspora[5].

At the forefront of the emerging African consciousness was an anti colonial struggle started in Africa by E.W. Blyden (1832 – 1912), a native of St. Tomas Islands, West Indies who settled in West Africa.[6] Blyden belonged to a group of first black intellectual to discuss at length the conditions of the black man – or the 'African conditions' as it is often referred to[7]. It is he who inspired the idea of the 'African personality,' an idea that later found its way into the writings of Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas, Leopold Sedar Senghor and significantly Kwame Nkrumah. It is this idea that paved the way for the Negritude movement that played a great role in shaping African intellectual history.[8]

From the 1920s, African scholars began to interrogate the African intellectual landscape and civilization. They began to reconstruct and restructure in a new fashion fragile genealogies that bear witness to historical vitalities which until then seemed invisible to students of African studies. Armed with new tools, African intellectuals began to find new space of civility and meaning. These were the positive efforts.

Others began to forge a commonwealth that embodies the negativity of savagery and madness, an exercise that was similar to the prophetic celebrations executed by early missionaries, explorers and anthropologists of European decent. Mbiti and the entire ethno-philosophical company represent these negative efforts.

However what was encouraging is the fact that both these efforts complemented one another in the sense that the negative efforts opened further the wounds that African cultures had suffered giving rise to further attempts to correct the picture. Suffice here to note that these attempts to unearth the truth about Africa and Africans have witnessed a marked methodological shift and theoretical transformations as a result of text translation which have opened up new avenues of interpretations that are now producing scientifically credible discourse by men and women trained in interpreting and extracting meaning from cultural symbols and images. The works of Mudimbe, Wiredu, Odera Oruka, Ochieng Odhiambo, Masolo, and Hountondji among others all fall in this category.[9]

The idea of African personality was to become the natural historical feature that confronted the mythical African image that had been created by the west, the image of the savage. It did not matter that Africans were not one people culturally. The affront was to "Africans". The response had to be "African" and the face of African society had to be affirmed. Major themes that sought to reconstruct and reengineer African culture were founded with the sole purpose of vindicating the Negro race. And this was in the face of aggressive and dominating western culture of imperialism; capitalism and Christianity all which sought to annihilate African culture.

The 18th and 19th Centuries saw the idea of the savage Africa, gradually but formally wedded into the cultural thought and explanatory framework of social experience in the western world. Mudimbe[10] shows interesting examples of this process by exemplifying the European presentation of

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Africans as the model *Other*, who lack an independent identity and consequently structures of operation since these can only be derived from the colonizing *Same and Centre*, Europe. Mudimbe says,

> it is possible to use three main keys to account for the modulations and methods representative of colonial organization: the procedure of acquiring, distributing, and exploiting ... the colonies; the policies of domesticating natives; and the manner of managing ancient organizations and implementing new models of production. ... three complementary hypothesis and actions emerge: the domination of physical space, the reformation of native minds, and the integration of local economic histories into [a] western perspective.[11]

All these define parameters and values that constitute civilization, development, progress, and even morality. This same imperialist ideology defined processes of control over not only African space but also led to dependence and underdevelopment[12]. But it is also from these that we derive a dichotomizing system that represent paradigmatic oppositions in which what is traditional is opposed to the modern; oral is opposed to written; subsistence economies against highly developed economies[13].

Way back in the 15th century European sailors had been bringing to Europe African artifacts – an assortment of objects imposed with mystical qualities and laced alongside objects from other regions of the world in curio displays that was channeled through internal contradictions of its own discourse.[14] In the 18th century, these objects some of which would not have been categorized as art in their original context entered the realm of primitive and savage art. In the 19th and 20th centuries saw efforts to transcend the representations of western art and this together with innovators like Braque, Derain, Matisse and Picasso borrow from, and helped to bring African aesthetics into new perspectives hitherto unknown and therefore uncategorized in the western

world.[15]   All these had nothing to do with objective aesthetical standards but the demands of race ideology. It was an ideology anchored on a supposed scientific and empirically objective truth that defined European hegemony.

Historian Basil Davidson[16] has illustrated how entrenched this race ideology had become by 20th century. He cites a Ghanaian writer's recollection of an argument in which the Ghanaian was engaged in a conversation with a European mining expert.

> *After he had spoken of 'native' bush-path, nature canoes, native river, native wines and nature gold, I asked him to explain to the world in what respect native gold and other native things particularly differed from those found in other parts of the world, but he could not; for the arbitrar[sic] of always describing in Africa everything non-European as a native had downed on him by that time.[17]*

With this background in mind, the 20th century saw a rapid growth in an African intelligentsia which told Africa's a story, as it is at least. This period witnessed an epistemological transformation in which knowledge about Africa began too order itself in accordance with a new model. The models of primitivity and the myth of evolutionism persisted but a new way of relating to African object became anchored on new epistemologies that defined the world differently. These new epistemologies according to Mudimbe are functionalism and later succeeded by structuralism.[18] These laid the groundwork for Africanism as a unique genre of knowledge in the world. For the first time the African story was being told from an African perspective greatly contributing to the entrenchment of Africa as it stand today in scholarship and other social discourse.[19]

As the African intelligentsia grew and traversed the world, so did its discourse grow, to include the historical experiences by other peoples in diverse

circumstances, the surging labour movements in Europe, the Indian independent movement, and the raw Negroism in the Americas.[20] These experiences coupled with exposure to the ways of colonialism shaped an increasingly more articulate political rhetoric and a more effective political activism by blacks around the world.

The period between the world wars saw a shift in African nationalist thought, from the more humanist call for racial equality, to the more narrow demand for political independence.

Based on this new found epistemological rupture and by the time of the 6th Pan African Congress held in 1945 in Manchester, new and more radical nationalists had joined the struggle for African liberation and its identity, which, had been enslaved in western cultural categories and definitions. On the political front we had Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, Akintola from Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah, from Gold Coast (present day Ghana), Gamal Abdel Nasser from Egypt, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. These were demanding nothing short of total withdrawal of European powers from Africa[21] While on the literary and cultural front; we had Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and significantly Jean-Paul Sartre through his powerful essay 'Black Orpheus'

Events leading to and during World War II left no ambiguity in the minds of those intent on defining and liberating African culture and by extension defining Africanity and consequently African Identity. It was Africa for Africans: Europeans were to scram out of Africa in the same way Europeans

scrambled for Africa. It is in the definition of this identity that theoretical issues in African philosophy came to the fore and were laid bare. No one could put it better than Mazrui when he observes that;

> *"Anyone who did not subscribe to the vision of putting Africa back together again was something short of a true nationalist".* [22]

As the social and political forces galvanized and took shape, the emerging African leaders were preoccupied and concerned with the management of complex problems arising out of future independent African states and the means of economic liberation. [23] But even here camps representing western ideologies emerged signifying African over reliance on western models of perception an event that also casts doubt on African nationalists' ideological commitment.

As these social and political forces galvanized, it became clear that a way of interpreting these forces and grounding them in a historically meaningful framework of thought be found. And contemporary African Philosophy in its bid to define African culture and identity is a tool in this process. Its birth was a result of racial confrontation, economic exploitation and cultural subjugation. Its existence is to serve the same and clear the misinformation surrounding African identity through serious, systematic and a well thought out philosophy for Africa, a philosophy that is grounded on an African epistemology and ways of knowing but one that does not suffer from the afflictions of racial subjectivism.

The history of African Philosophy becomes therefore the history of the dialectics that shaped Africa. An attempt to grasp African Philosophy in a frozen timeframe could only result in frustration: it may even be more pointless than the attempt to grasp the European mythical Africa.

To be fair then, one can only attempt to understand African Philosophy within the context of the identity crisis that shaped it and the forces that swept the continent from 1900 through the present; forces that demand the articulation of African identity within an appropriate framework of meaning.

The shaping of Africa has been the result of mutually supportive interplay of not only social, political and economic events but also moments of intellectual developments, which have not quite settled into a steady and predictive pattern. One can only assert paradoxically that African Philosophy has been involved in the historical creation of Africa, which in turn has made African philosophy meaningful with a distinct body of knowledge that today creates a framework for meaningful discourse.

3.2 Paradigms of Defining Africanism

Categorizing philosophy along cultural lines such as Greek, African, and Indian among others is a tricky affair that may require elaboration. Sometimes it becomes difficult defining and delineating what is African and what is not. In the face of cultural interactions over time and with the effect of slavery and slave trade in mind, it becomes difficult to clearly place cultures like Haitian, Cuban, Martiniquean to name but a few. It is not clear whether these are

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Occidental or Negroid cultures. But because philosophy is ordinarily regarded as a universal method of appropriating different issues and ideas, this cultural classification of philosophy more or less is a reflection of recognizing the application of this universal method and activity to different situations and therefore the activity itself should be seen to be fundamentally depended on cultural factors, ideas, categories and systems. Here we are making a claim that philosophy does not grow in a vacuum. It is dependent on culture for its discursive contents and in turn it modifies the elements of culture through critique and analysis. This is an important relationship which should not be underestimated. To do this would not only have philosophy denied its critical style and ability, but also have a contextual philosophy.[24] Maboma,[25] attempts to present an argument that is itself not very new in which there is a distinct metaphysical attitude that prevails in European, Indian, Mongolians and African thought system. He observes that;

> *European thought is oriented towards clarity and logic. By implication this thought is analytic systematic, and scientific in character. Indian thought is oriented towards mysticism and teleology. Japanese and Chinese thought is oriented towards harmony and equilibrium. That these tend to be aesthetical in orientation. In Africa, there is a powerful reflection of symbolism and transcendentalism in thought.[26]*

This is an exercise similar to Leopold Sedar Senghor's attempt at portraying the emotive nature of African thought viz a viz the logical nature of western thought. A similar effort was by the Immanuel Kant. In all these arguments one is saying that differences between races is provided for by nature, and by extension Africa's inferiority is given by Mother nature. That therefore, racism is hereditary and is a function of biology. This is a thought that was particularly popular in 18th and 19th century Europe. It was born out a particular thought environment through which it flourished and was

sustained[27] It would be important to point out that the epistemic systems of defining African Philosophy have ignored the very fundamental nature of the relationship between philosophy and culture. One factor that seems universal about philosophy is the tendency to have philosophical discourse taking place in a specific worldview, or a system of meaning that makes it possible for judgments to be meaningful, significant, and coherent[28]. A system of meaning comprises a complex pattern of beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and dispositions carried out and continuously modified in the socialization process. A worldview then is a perspective that comprises shared meaning that is reflected in:

1. Language and use of Symbolism of culture

2. Institutions in existence

3. The general patterns that people's lives take

Where as this may seem representative discourse in every other culture, on this score Africa's seems to be treated differently. The myth around African culture and the paradigms that created and defined Africa have remained colonial in nature, style and content. A proper philosophical appraisal of African culture that takes cognizance of contemporary tools of analysis is lacking.

Unlike the first crop of African philosophers who grew up and attended village schools thereby confronting colonial experiences head on, contemporary students of Philosophy in Africa are strangers to culture as is experienced and expressed in African villages. They want to go a long with ordinary themes

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that do not raise controversies because they were not schooled in theories of rebellion. They refuse to engage postmodernist theories in deconstructing old myths about African culture. They fail to provide alternative myths of interpretation for a new Africa. For these the Africa that mattered was colonial Africa. Many still embrace the old order where the west has the final solution to interpreting problems in African culture.

Either, we in the African philosophical world are weak or are afraid of initiating new models that can challenge even briefly scientific myths about the world. But challenging existing normative values of interpretation remain the major challenge to African philosophers.

3:3 On Defining African Culture

In attempt at defining the identity of African Culture, many writers have tended to look at the 'African' as a cultural unity that presents a kind of collective unit, a sort of collective representation for all that would qualify to be called Africans. This tends to negate the diversity of cultures that are found in Africa ranging from Bantu, hamites, nilotes and even nilo-hamites. Among the Bantus, there is a *possibility* of similarities in cultural traits, a feature completely lacking among the nilo-hamites who are as diverse as Africa itself: some are Lake-rivers nilotes, others, plain, while others are highland. Yet, even this is with riddled problems that bear on the nature of the present project.

The question of what is and who is African has been defined by two major paradigms; Western perception and African response. These paradigms have defined the history of African philosophy to the extent of determining its future discourse and even sub-themes and sub- paradigms of definition. Consider the following:

The Paradigm of Primitivity

What is Africa and Africans has to do with whom and what is African from a Western perspective. The Africa that comes to mind is the enslaved Africa, the black (evil) man; a place of tribal wars. This is the Africa whose idea was invented by the West situating Africa within the *paradigm of primitivity*. This paradigm draws heavily from Western imperialism in which Europe informed and gave Africa its identity. Through this paradigm it is can be argued that Europe Africanized Africa.[29] To define African, one has to fall back to the various works and pictures created by western anthropologists, historians, and missionaries who worked in Africa before its opening to the western world.

The Paradigm of Darkness

The paradigm of primitivity seems to draw from the fact of European ignorance on the geographical nature of the African continent. This fallacious argument held that if it is not known by the West, which represents light then, its opposite is darkness. This situates Africa in *the paradigm of darkness*. Africa was a dark continent and its black people signified evil. For many this was a geographical fiction. Its climatic, ethnic and linguistic differences were so diverse that they could not constitute a unity. Geographically it was simply

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a peninsular large enough seated at the southern tip of [our continent] Europe.[30] Thus, European cartographers created a map vested with so much authority that an identity was imposed on Africa by the map makers. Europe through mapmaking named all the continents deciding where one continent ended and the other started. The aim of this paradigm was to Westernize Africa.

The Paradigm of Consumption

The third is the *paradigm of consumption*. This paradigm asserts that, the West invented a primitive Africa for the West's own consumption. This paradigm defines Africa's primitivity and ways and means of rehabilitating Africa to the level of humanity. The two major tools of consuming and rehabilitating Africa were colonialism and Christianity. These two were used as racist tools of humiliating Africans and generally black people in the world so as to give credibility to white supremacy. African institutions were judged on a Western scale. African values were rejected on the basis of how they do or failed to meet standards formulated by the West. That African gods and religions were relegated to animism. African culture on the other hand was seen as a non-culture. All these efforts were to show the supremacy of Western culture and civilization over African. In the final analysis African culture, values and institutions were to be annihilated at the altar of western culture, values and civilization. The west had created an Africa for its consumption.

The Paradigm of Africana Gloriana

The fourth is the paradigm Africana *gloriana*. This paradigms defines Africa in glorifying moods by rejecting everything western and glorifying everything traditionally African. It romanticizes African past even when this seems anachronistic. Many fell for Tempels' ethno philosophy and had to assist in defining Africa's primitivity signified by magic as an antithesis to western civilization signified by science. The great works by Aime Cesaire could easily fit here alongside the thoughts of Langston Hughes, Sedar Senghor and Julius Nyerere among others.

The Paradigm of Denial

This paradigm has its origins in the 20th century European renaissance that created an intellectual atmosphere that hostile to Africa which in the process denied Africa science, history, poetry, religion and philosophy. The paradigm of denial came at a moment when Africans were awakening to the realization of marginalization and that something needed to be done to correct the situation. As a result the paradigm has affected the nature of research, syllabi and curricular on Africanism that included definition of African identity. It has defined and determined areas of priority, including what Africans are trained in and the academic disciplines seen as important and relevant.

From the above, it is clear that cultural Africa has many problems which arise from the different paradigms that have been used to define African culture and identity. And this is traceable to an ambiguity imposed Western categories

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and standards that do not have immediate bearing on African realities and social environment.

The need for defining and situating African culture is indicative of a crisis, a crisis of identity. This cultural crisis is closely linked to the existence of definitions of Africa by the occidental culture. In *Parables and Fables*,[31] Mudimbe offers lucid constructions of these discourses on Africans. That, throughout the Parables, fables, myths and metaphors, there is a distinctive absence of rigor and violent dichotomization and atomization of life, and the question of identity, of genesis and destiny. There is no distinction between self-other, orifices and oracular, life and death, old and young. The dichotomy of Black and White, God and Satan, Good and Evil as competing dominant forces is absent. This in effect leaves us with a possibility of a self-organizing system witnessed through the complexity and complementary theories in which reality is revealed as binary; plant and animals, day and night, pleasure and pain, but without claiming that one is superior to the other.

The challenges arising from European conquest by Arabs /Turkey caused the Western culture to coin fables, myths and metaphors to define itself in a vigorous way. Europe found a basis for self definition, to create an identity that saw them through this crisis. Unlike them Africa had a defined identity until Europeans dressed as explorers, missionaries and colonialists arrived on the shore. And their arrival significantly transformed the novel African culture into a culture in crisis.

The arrival of the Europeans in Africa witnessed a violent disruption of the African culture. European mission in Africa was to exploit, degrade and abuse; deceive and engage in all other forms of treachery. And this was clothed in a language of love and Philanthropy. Traditional life was disrupted, so was the traditional epistemic systems that guided the social processes in Africa before the arrival of the whites. The old axis was "considered [as] superstitious, satanic, devilish and hellish! Africa and African culture was characterized as savage, philological and mystical. It represented the *other* of civilization.

3.4 Shifting Paradigms

A paradigm shift to the accidental occurred but disguised as modernity. Westernization became what is modern and consequently good.[32]. Mudimbe observes;

> *The conjunction of the politics of missionary integration with techniques of manipulating symbols of divine Power signifies a reordering of a social map .... Every reality ... intermingled in a quiet serious "historical drama"... indicates the universalization of the Western paradigm made intelligible and familiar by the colonial library ..., development equals extension of the capitalist mode of production, while education and social norms necessarily assume the profundity of western experience, and religion means conversion to Christianity.[33]*

We have many modernist methods of inquiry some which are irrationally modernist. Deconstruction is one such a method that employs a form of irrationality that seeks to challenge existing norms and bring about contrariness that seduces those who seek to escape from certain realities deemed as dull. Some present even anarchistic epistemologies like Paul Feyerabend which has challenged the claims of science even though briefly.

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But one advantage they all have over traditional methods of inquiry is that they posit competing truth claims in which no single truth claim has a greater interpretive value than another. Let African truth claim engender its own system of validating its truth while using universally acclaimed philosophical principles and theories. So long as these truth claims do not claim absolutism, this, should qualify as philosophy. In this way the Occidental, Oriental and Negroid can all claim and embrace fluid and multiple perspectives and typically refuse to privilege any 'one truth claim' over the other.

African cultural crisis was aggravated by this self-other relationship. The arrival of the authoring west seemed to mark the beginning of a process of violent relationship of the history and culture of Africa and Africans.

The history and identity of Africa and Africans henceforth derived from its relationship with the west. The tools of definition were similarly defined by the relationship between the colonists and colonized. And these tools among them, anthropology, Christianity, linguistic and science were cons pricked with the aim of strengthening the accidental paradigm. Mudimbe says;

> *Western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a western epistemological order ...My own claim is that thus far, the ways in which they have evaluated and the means used to explain them relate to theories and methods whose constraints, rules, and systems of operation suppose a non epistemological locus.*[34]

It now appeared that the values, perception and attitudes in the Western culture were different and even contrary to those in Africa. Europe and European culture set out to author Africa according to the "objective values"

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and standards of the West. This is both in physical presentation and representations as well as in discourse that defined Africa and Africans. African Philosophy then became a major victim in this cultural violence. It suffices to say that even today, any ideological or cultural relationship between philosophy in Africa and the west, still does and continues to harm African thought. And this creates more demand for disengagement from European defined categories of operation that is based on a Western epistemological order. It is a relationship of theft, alienation and enslavement. It represents danger, brings shame and fear, and is a harbinger of death,

That today discourse on African cultural identity is a shallow field where people engage in discourse on traditional Africa that is taken to be the prototype culture that defined and represented Africa, is defining and representing Africa, and will define and represent Africa to eternity. What is interesting in all these discourse however is that there is nothing African about them beyond their object of study; the culture, religion and other activities associated with blacks both in Africa and the diaspora.

African thinkers must go beyond de-burgeoning and de-westernizing African studies and create a paradigmatic shift that will see Africa and African culture being defined using categories and conceptual systems that depend on African epistemological order. As Mudimbe puts it, we should now be concerned with

> *"the norm, content and style of Africanizing African scholarship and discourse on Africa since it is these that will inform values and conceptual systems that will be the basis of defining African culture."*[35]

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The task is more urgent given the socio-political and economic trend that Africa is taking. Attempts at unifying African socio cultural and economic interests through African Union (AU) are welcome. The creations of think tank bodies such as The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to spearhead Africa's developmental agenda are welcome too. What is disappointing is the model adopted by African leaders, that of European Union (EU). The point here is that, so long as Africa still domesticates solutions to global problems, then no initiative will come out of Africa's efforts to develop technologically. And this leads us back to depend on Western value system of judgment and epistemological order. Yet, all attempts at imposing an alien discourse on Africa as panacea has failed. A discourse that originates from and is based on African epistemological order will assist in not only transmitting social and institutional values or ideologies, but also create the same for Africa. And this is the task for African philosophy today.

In modifying and reconciling Africa culture with modern scientific and technological realities, it becomes useful to interrogate and confront Africanism at the base. We are thus called upon to ask tough questions about the content and functions of African culture on the one hand, and the relationship between philosophy and culture on the other. This should not mean lapsing into some unique Africaness of parochial and pseudo-scientific methods. We have said before that science, logic, rationality are not a preserve of some specific culture and do not stand in contradiction to myths, fables, metaphors and other forms of oral discourse.[36] That therefore, it was not decreed that all the former belong to western culture, while the latter are

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preserved for African culture. The task of philosophy is to interrogate symbols of culture and extract the underlying meaning and explain its significance, whether this be written or oral is another matter.

3.5 Conclusion

As history has shown, the paradigmatic conflict between European and African cultures always tends to favour the accidental, the dominant *same* at the expense of the 'insignificant' *other*. African thinkers should be aware of the paradox of parochialism and universalism. It is a paradox that presents a real dilemma for contemporary African thinkers for it seems to present only two options out of the current cultural crisis Africa finds herself. Either one goes inwardly African, and parochial, or outwardly universal, and risks being labelled a slave to European and Western mentality and categories of thinking.

The African thinker has to break from the patronizing and controlling western structures of thinking and defining the world. But he should also not turn into the narrow structures of the *other* created by the West. This contemporary African thinker has to break beyond the polarization in initiative where we seek to exploit rather than escape.

NOTES

[1] Melville Herskovits *The Myth of the Negro Past* xvii; Mudimbe V Y *Invention of Africa*, 1988, pp 175-179; 27-30; 64-65; 72-76

[2] V Y Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 38-41, 43

[3] V Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1988, 83-85; J P Sartre, '*Black Orpheus*' in L S Senghor *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1948; 1976: 17; Raymond Mitchell, *African Empires and Civilizations*, 1945, p45

[4] M. Herskovits, op cit., 1958: 2-3; 5

[5] Kestloot L, 1965; Shepperson 1960, Damas 1979, 247-254

[6] Mudimbe 1988:98

[7] Lynch 1978ppxv-xxii; Senghor 1967pp249-250; Masolo 1995 p12

[8] Senghor, op cit p67

[9] See Works by professional African Philosophers who have contributed immensely on discourse I African philosophy among them, Mudimbe, Wiredu, Odera Oruka, Ochieng Odhiambo, Masolo, and Hountondji

[10] Mudimbe The Invention of Africa op cit

[11] Ibid, p2

[12] Ali Mazrui, Politics and drama: Some areas of comparison : International Conference on Cultural Diversity and National Understanding within West African Countries, 14th-18th December, 1970, University of Ife, Institute of African Studies (Ile-Ife, Nigeria) 1974

[13] V Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* 1988 op cit, p4

[14] See Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press,

1994, pp xii, 5-13

[15] Ibid

[16] See Basil Davidson, *Which Way Africa?*, Middles Essex, Penguin, 1971

[17] Ibid, 15

[18] V Y Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* op cit, 38-39

[19] Basil Davison, 'The Fact of African History' in *Africa South, 1958, II: 44-49*

[20] Masolo, *Africa in Search of Identity*, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, 1995,

pp122

[21] Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, op cit, 90, 92, 93-95; Bontinck, 1980pp 604-607.

[22] Ali Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana*, 1967:51

[23] Mudimbe, 1988 p90

[24] Odera Oruka, *Practical Ethics: In Search of an Ethical Minimum*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1997, pp191-195; 196-210; DA Masolo, 'Philosophy and Culture: a Critique' in H.O. Oruka, *Philosophy and Culture*, Nairobi, Bookwise 1983; Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp1-15

[25] Presence Africaine. Vol, 2 No 30 1935, pp12-35

[26] Ibid

[27] See E.C Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1997, pp38-48, 29-30, 101-110; DA Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, 1995, pp24-27

[28] Wiredu, *Philosophy and an Africa Culture*,1980, pp1-10

[29] Ricardo Rene Laremont and Tracia Leacock Seghatolislami *Africanity Redefined: Collected Essays of Ali Mazrui*, Vol.I, Trenton New Jersey: AfricaWorld Press 2002, p38.

[30] Ibid p44

[31] Mudimbe V Y , Parables and Fables ----

[32] Mudimbe Parables and Fables; pp4, 6, 9

[33] Ibid p. 8

[34] Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* p x

[35] Ibid, p23

[36] H.Odera Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*, Nairobi, Shirikon Publishers, 1991,pp2-11

CHAPTER 4

THE CULTURE OF PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICA

4.0 Introduction

Philosophy is an integral part of the dynamism involved in cultural growth. In terms of the subject matter, methodology and conceptual framework, philosophy is a universal discipline that is not easily confined to particular schemes and cultural specificities.

The demand for philosophical inquiry and analysis arises from the need to interrogate cultural elements providing justification for their existence and relegating to the fringe of social dustbins those that are found to be out of tune and step with the prevailing social realities and demands. Philosophical investigations are routinely tied to claims of analytic mode of reasoning that encompass logical argumentations in which claims are defined and inferred on the basis of rational and procedural consideration, standards and parameters.

Thus, the relationship between philosophy and culture is symbiotic and complementary in nature. On the one hand, philosophy acts as the intellectual *askari* to culture through careful interrogation of its elements. On the other, culture provides the active ingredient and content for philosophical discourse upon which analytical processes are undertaken. This exercise many a times is undertaken on a culture that appreciates the power of critique. To this extent it has been argued that African culture lacks the dynamism that provides force for

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critical analysis and evaluative power. According to Mazrui, African culture wants to Westernize without necessarily modernizing.[1] Yet the latter is an important factor in storing and increasing the intensity of the core functions of philosophy to culture.

In this chapter we want to demonstrate that the symbiotic relationship between philosophy and culture is to the benefit of both but with a perquisite establishment of a certain history of discursive efforts in that particular culture which then constitutes the culture of philosophy for that particular community. In the case of Africa in particular, these efforts were pioneered and driven by forces external to its culture to the extent that much of the culture of philosophy in Africa is based on alien concepts and categories of perception. The reality generated to a large extend does not reflect the African world. More important is the lament that had philosophy in Africa benefited from a culture of critique that is a product of Africans' effort at questioning, and rationalizing cultural values, schemes and norms, then perhaps the landscape of the history of African philosophy would have been different. The fact that this is driven and determined by foreign is disheartening.

4.1 African Philosophy in Western Scholarship

From another perspective, African culture has drawn little attention from African academics save for the works of missionaries, colonial settlers, and to a lesser extend anthropologists and historians all who talked about African culture from a perspective that was only useful to the West.[2] In the process, African culture has been done a disservice since their interest was largely focused on

how African culture fell short of values found in the Western schemes of appraisal and analyses which confirms the widely held view by the West that African culture is inferior This assumption was then useful in the service of Western project, partly the West's civilizing mission and the other being colonization and exploitation.[3]

If it is borne in mind that culture is a dynamic phenomena then it would be foolhardy to grant and even seek to utilize the stereotypic paradigms that define and characterize African and Western cultures on the basis of magic and science.[4] At best this may present polarities of perception in which one culture arrogates itself the task of defining another without seeking the permission of the defined.

To be fair to the culture of philosophy in Africa, most of the professionals in this field are more at ease with European culture of philosophy than the general understanding and discussion of African culture. To understand the relationship between philosophy and culture in Africa and the extent to which discourse in African philosophy has been or has failed to be faithful to its culture, one has to engage in the exercise of deconstructing and demystifying Eurocentric claims and theories and their effect on African cultural history. Few scholars show an understanding of what is Africa and what is African. In chapter two, this project attempted to explain this fact. We continue to recognize the fatal nature of our paradigms but we also recognize the agony of discussing Africa and Africanism outside any clear paradigms however bad they may be and the attendant controversy. This is the reason for the controversy and debate surrounding the

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nature of African philosophy. From here, one can then move further and attempt a definition of a conceptual framework that will present a tradition of philosophy in Africa that is culturally relevant. To accomplish this, one has to fall back and categorize literature available in African philosophy. Professional philosophers in Africa have different object for study. Some concentrate on Africa, her culture and people while others seek to compare thought across cultures.[5] Others are purely African philosophers of Western culture and philosophy.

Of course one would expect a Greek philosopher to know more about Socrates than, say, an African philosopher- since Socrates is Greek. By the same standards one might expect Gyekye to know more about Plotinus than, say, Jurgen Habermas- since Gyekye and Plotinus are both African, whereas Habermas is European. When discussing the culture of philosophy in Africa, it is important that we establish one common denominator among all participants. We should be able to demonstrate an ability by the participants to support their claims about ancient, traditional and contemporary African philosophy by citing sources by progressive indigenous African scholars. It may also necessitate that we use a functional universalist approach. But what would this imply?

This will demand that we find common denominators, in terms of principles/tenets/doctrines pan-geographically among innumerous cultures- Oceanic, Amerindian, African at both micro and macro levels. It may be useful to point out that though often trashed, a notable number of other ethno philosophers believe, seek and find common denominators pan-geographically in terms of expressions of the (syllogistic) reasoning that upholds these

principles/tenets/doctrines. We call this reasoning, that which upholds principles like that of *karmic* (from *karma* in Indian thought) order, unity in diversity and countless others, the supernal or perennial- philosophy. The supernal philosophy is universal, though it is of course first expressed chronologically in ancient Africa tens of thousands of years before any ethnic group other than Africans even existed. So, we have the morphosis of language through which to define, talk and express our world without necessarily negating other cultural value and of course without necessarily creating an inferior and superior culture.[6]

Our point here is that, the metaphysic that underpins African thought is presented as an overview of what is contained along the lines of a contemporary translation of most ancient traditional African cosmologies as opposed to exoteric mythologies, magic and other fictitious creations by the West. This ties in with Kwame Gyekye's call of "universal truths" and "contingent truths." [7]

It is not surprising then that the myth of a superior Western culture was crafted by European explorers, historians, anthropologists and Christian missionaries in a bid to claim power over the weak and uncivilized African. This hegemonic culture assumed that tools of civilizational analysis are created to serve a universal and objective philosophy, one whose interest was in the service of the Centre, Europe, but whose application would spill to other cultures in a relevant way. It imposed a reality on African culture that could not and cannot be borne out by the evidence of an African cultural heritage and history as we know it. It is this reasoning that makes Hegel, Kant and Hume, among others, to deny

Africa a culture of philosophic tradition.[8] But again it is the West that claims to create the same philosophic tradition for Africa, one that relies on a monolithic conceptual framework, founded and defined by the Western world.

In the final analysis, this makes other cultures and in particular African fail to define her ontological reality without reference to the West. This is the literature that defines the culture of philosophy in Africa.

4.2 Pioneering African Studies

Though the work of Aime Cesaire,[9] can claim pioneering efforts, it is Tempels[10] who defines and underpins the differences in philosophical conceptions and traditions between the West and Africa that take the place of honour for being the first piece of work to credit Africa with a philosophy. Tempels' efforts represent a radical departure from existing tradition since in it we find an effort to elucidate and chart a distinctive philosophical tradition in Africa.[11]

It is however important to point out that more than any other phenomena, slavery, slave trade and racial oppression, Africans, united through experience awoke to the need to articulate a black philosophy. In this, many questioned the validity of Western claims on Africa. But more interesting was the articulation of Black or Afro-American thought.[12] In Francophone Africa, Negritude had taken root through the discursive efforts that questioned European superiority and the demand to redeem African historical past. These efforts saw the birth of African Philosophy as a distinct discipline, a term that encompassed various writings and discursive documentations that sought to elucidate, interpret,

analyse and synthesize African philosophical ideas and experiences. Therefore, it is in documenting African cultural and social history, cultural experiences while critiquing imperialism and European arrogance in scholarship that African philosophy was born.

But even this effort was not without controversy. Cesaire's *Return to My Native Land*[13] has been accused of eulogizes and glorifies African emotion at the expense and alter of European reason. That, the book is usually interpreted as representing African thought system is an understatement. But the importance of the poem lies in its thinking content which is both political and poetic. It evokes political passion and irony. Its images evoke both physical and sexual tones of oppression.[14] Whatever one reads in this poem, in the final analysis Cesaire is declaring independent for African thinkers who are confined to thinking within a colonial world.[15]

Frantz Fanon has observed and rightly so that colour is important in understanding the twin issues of colonialism and mind of both the colonized and the colonizers.[16] In exploiting colonized Africans, and in subjecting them culturally, the white colonizers are out to shape and define African reality. It is this culture of oppression that African philosophy set out to understand. And it is the process of this understanding that a culture of philosophy in Africa was created. D. A. Masolo reads two important meanings in the concept 'return' in the title *Return to my Native Land*:

1. *That, it signifies returning to the dignity, personhood or humanity of the black people and their historicity. Here then return turns negritude thought into a rebellious, consciousness, and awareness of how manipulation of power relations and history has shaped race relations.*

2. *That return could also signify the regaining of conceptual space in which culture is a field and process of alienation and domination, as well as a rebellion and self re-finding.*[17]

Looking back at Tempels' work, a culture of Philosophy could probably not have been created by Africans since Africans do not have a Meta language through which to describe their thought experiences.[18] If the Whiteman was God send to talk about African thought, then equally, it is he who was to create a culture of philosophical history upon which the African could be understood and categorized.[19]

4.3 Themes in African Philosophical History

Twentieth Century revolt by black intellectuals created a demand for a redefinition of humanity. But it is more a problem for the blacks to deconstruct and explode the Whiteman's racial myth as it is for the white man. It is the Blackman's burden to undo all knowledge that is in existence concerning African philosophy and culture. This means that African Philosophy is built on a culture of redefining African reality using concepts, categories and a framework that recognises African values and meanings both symbolic and in action. It is about defining the role of the Blackman on the basis of a civilized and a human ideology. This means that African philosophy thrives on rejecting the cultural assumption that what the West has for long defined as qualities of civilization are but the West's own subjective interest in manipulating identity and maintaining White supremacy.

If the foregoing is granted then one would want to say that the culture of philosophy in Africa arose out of a historical accident in which the West

invented, described and talked about Africa in a particular way and Africans responded in a specific way.[20] Thus, the historical moments in African philosophy can be delineated as follows;

1. The denial phase
2. Evolutionary phase
3. Stolen legacy
4. Pluralist phase

The first three have a determinate historical period, and are as controversial as African philosophy itself. The last is significant in the sense that it has to a large extent defined the course of African philosophy as we know it today. In its wake, it gave birth to the four trends commonly associated with philosophy in Africa, viz, ethno-philosophy, professional African philosophy, Nationalistic–ideological, and philosophic sagacity or its precursor sage philosophy. Note that in actual, fact these theories are six in number and not four as is popularly claimed. The two that are rarely talked about are Hermeneutics and Literary Artistic. Each of these in a way claim to provide a distinct methodological framework for African philosophy that is acceptable and reliable.

Denial Phase

This theme is founded on the works of G.W.F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant and David Hume among others.[21] Its basis is the assumption that some races are clearly incapable of a philosophy while others have a clear advantage when it comes to the practice of philosophy and consequent production of ideas. Here, Africans are seen as a people without the ability to reason hence lacking in a philosophical tradition.[22] 18th rationalist thought in Europe held that underlying

the hierarchical order in nature is a principle of superiority established by God. That all that humans are to do is to discover this and explain it accordingly. Thus, the fact of White superiority and Black inferiority is a principle of nature. It cannot be violated. To this extent not everything is within the immediate reach of all humans. Some have a higher capacity, others, low. Africans have a low capacity to exercising some values that are considered noble, good and useful to humanity. Fundamental to these is rationality. That, the providence by itself endowed to the Africans a low capacity to reason, while the Whites were generously endowed in all the credible and desirable qualities and values including reasoning, which is the prerequisite to philosophical activity; Carl Von Linne categorises primates as follows:[23]

1. **Class 1** has the Wild man with four footed, hairy but mute.

2. **Class 2** the American who is copper coloured, choleric and erect but more important he is regulated by customs (read, lower level laws). He is obstinate, black, thick and straight haired with wide nostril and a harsh face.

3. **Class 3** defines the European, fair, gentle blue eyes that are inventive. He is governed by law.

4. **Class 4 and 5** defines Blacks who are sooty, melancholy, haughty, and covetous with loose garments, flat nose, tumid lips, negligent, crafty, indolent, and governed by opinion and caprice.

On the other hand, Kant's African was 'quite black, a clear proof that what he said was stupid – non-philosophical since he belongs to a race that has a natural disposition to immorality.'[24]

The overall assessment is that this phase had nothing concrete in terms of establishing a culture of philosophy in Africa since there was none. It saw nothing philosophical about the Black race and dismissed it as that.[25]

Evolutionary Phase

This invented and defined the nature of an African mentality that was primitive but with a capacity to evolve into a complex being complete with values of civilization. In its rudimentary paradigm, which borrows heavily from Darwin's theory of evolution, it claims a uni-lineal scale of values that define each stage of human development. That there are stages through which all human societies must pass through from the primitive to the most complex, lower point of civilization to highest stage of human civilization. This scale of values defines a people's moral consciousness, religious and political maturity, as well as technological progress. The lower one's society is on this scale, the les civilized it is, and the converse is true. By implication therefore, African's primitively is merely temporary and not a permanent feature that defines this society. Given time, Africa will move out of the traditional set up and achieve civilization, a stage that will usher in science, historical progress, advanced moral consciousness and all that is associated with modernity. For evolutionists, Christianity represented the peak of human civilization to which all must aspire.

In this phase, Philosophy in Africa was conceived as a strict discipline and conscious human exercise complete with a method and theoretical framework paid very little attention to the object of its study, African culture. This created situation where Africans could not identify with or participate in philosophical

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discourse on Africa, but it also created a situation that perpetuated continuous discourse on Africa by aliens who paid little regard to the indigenous thought systems and patterns.

Stolen Legacy

This marked an interesting point in the history of African philosophy where a breed of scholars questioned the validity of European claims about Africa's innocence in utilizing logic rationality and science. In their attempts to trace the history of African societies, there were found many aspects of modern science, technology and culture that seemed to reflected African history. We shall dedicate some pages to this discourse not because of its assumed credibility but that it forms an interesting twist to the history on African philosophy. We shall here provide a short presupposition to the claims by the theory and short analysis of the same.

In principle, the claim that Ancient Egypt is the true source of the intellectual achievements usually associated with Ancient Greece and by extension that which characterise the Western world, in philosophy, politics, and religion is quite old and is traceable to African-American intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century.[26] The views of the more recent works by black authors such as Cheick Anta Diop, George James and Martin Bernal, and which form the core of the claim by stolen legacy theorist can be summarised into three points, namely that;

1. The foundations of philosophical knowledge are African[27]

2. This philosophical knowledge was actually stolen by the West[28] It is then argued that one of the consequences of this 'theft' is "for centuries the world has been misled. ... Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have been falsely idolized as models of intellectual greatness..."[29] For these authors and for a number of other black intellectuals, it follows that,

3. Greco-Roman civilization is a black civilization as is Western [30]

These claims **1, 2** and the conclusion **3**, are highly speculative and seem to rest on particular presupposition that is not substantiated by any known documentary evidence. Of the main claimants, George M James has through speculative tendencies tried to put together data and ideas that are coincidental in both cultures and this he claims to be the basis of Greece having stolen African culture and civilization. This presupposition we want to call, **P**, and holds that Egypt as the first major world civilization, must have had a philosophic tradition akin to the one in Greece. However, even if **P** is true it would be difficult that **2** follow as opposed to the notion that, Greek ideas were only influenced by experiences gleamed from their travel to Egypt by Greek visitors. To prove that Greece 'stole' her philosophic legacy requires written proof that Greek philosophers took their works verbatim from the earlier Egyptian sources. This may among other things the production of an Egyptian version of *the Republic.*

Since none of these authors have produced an Egyptian version of any one of the Ancient Greek philosophic works, all that can be inferred is to suggest the possibility of certain philosophic ideas that might have originated from Egypt and were later incorporated into Greek works like *the Republic.* By implication

at best one can infer that Greek philosophic works were influenced by Egypt.[31] Influencing is not equivalent to stealing. Similarly, one can infer that Aristotle, as Plato's student and because of his access to the Library at Alexandria is supposedly influenced by Egyptian thought.[32] This is fine and is an acceptable habit in all traditions, cultures and in particular scholarship. This is the drive of scholarship, creating new ideas out of old ideas and using this to chart way forward for the growth of knowledge.

From the foregoing, it may seem that Greek philosophers could have been influenced by many other factors which does not limit it only to earlier Egyptian ideas that might have come their way through trips to Egypt or information from other travellers to Egypt. This, in and of itself is not evidence that these Greek philosophers were formally educated in Egypt. The often peddled argument that Socrates did not record his teachings so as to keep them away from the public, is hardly evidence enough to suggest that he was educated in the Egyptian mystery system which demanded that knowledge be highly secretive. This is obviously countered by the fact that Socrates regularly philosophised in public. So, the only evidence that the Greeks stole Egyptian philosophy is Egyptian influence. However, this is hardly "stealing" because philosophers always create new ideas and styles of philosophy only after being influenced after responding to earlier ideas or works of others.[33] Perhaps an example will suffice to demonstrate our point. The linguistic style of philosophy that originated with G E Moore and Bertrand Russell at the beginning of the last century was originally a reaction to the challenges by Hegel's metaphysics.[34] Our claim here is that being influenced and using the

influences of earlier ideas does not only require challenging or countering those ideas. One can therefore claim a work and its ideas as one's own if the formulation is unique. For example, the book by Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic*[35] is one of the philosophical masterpieces of the 20th century. But this book simply draws heavily from E G Moore and Russell to the extent that one can say without the fear of contradiction that it was written by them in because of the nature of its logic and analysis.[36] But as yet no one has claimed that Ayer stole his ideas from Russell and Moore. At this point the words of Blaise Pascal come to mind 'Let no one say that I have said nothing new; the arrangement of the material is new'[37]

The lack of any conclusive evidence that the Greek philosophers committed plagiarism logically means that **2** above is false. But by the twist of logic the stolen legacy theorists seem inclined to deny original authorship to the Greek philosophers (and thereby show that in fact **2** is true). One way is as George James does, to demonstrate the lack of biographical information on the Greek philosophers suggest that they might not even have existed.[38] The second being the claim that Aristotle might have stolen works from Alexandria library and claimed authorship for himself.[39] We want to deny that any of these sounds plausible as there is no direct evidence to suggest this is true.

At best this type of conjecture betray the biases and prejudices of those who put them forth because they lack factual information and use hypothetical claims to explain authorship. One may be inclined to think that the stolen legacy theorists are subsisting on racial bias in which black persons of African descent are credited with pioneering world civilization and consequently all the intellectual

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achievements of our time. This thinking is as ethnocentric as that which denied Africa reason and logic. The stolen legacy theorists have actually erected their own ethnocentric project in which Africa instead of Europe is the centre of world. "Like the science, history and literature that he critiques, Diop too, ends up inventing a new Africa."[40] Perhaps what is of interest to this project is that, this phase does not alienate African philosophy from its object. However, its validity and credibility has been questioned in many quarters as we have tried to demonstrate above.

Even if its credibility passed without question, its reliability as a conscious effort about a culture of philosophy in Africa could still be doubted. But more important is that this does not solve the question of existence of a culture of philosophy in Africa. Furthermore, even if it were true that Western philosophy was stolen from Africa, what this theory achieves is a mere effort to show that once upon a time, there existed philosophy in Africa. And indeed this is not very progressive. It does not assert the existence of African philosophy as discourse on man, God and Nature in Africa, a discourse with defined parameters, interlocutors, men and women who claim certain ideas as their own and in which reality is affirmed and refuted in a theoretically continuous history of a debate. It is the latter that claims to create a culture of philosophy.

Pluralism and African Thought

The culture of philosophy in Africa proper can be traced the work of black Africans and Africanists in the diaspora especially with the publication of *Return to My Native Land*.[41]

When Aime Cesaire coined the term Negritude, it was meant to capture the historicity of the black man. It stood for the dignity and personhood of the blacks, whose humanity had been denied and annihilated by history. In a significant way Aime Cesaire was emphasizing a plurality of cultures in the world. This cultural pluralism is based on a principle and belief that each culture contains its own unique and incommensurable truth and worth, and as such cannot be subordinated or elevated as inferior or superior to another. That, if this was granted, clearly no culture could stand above another as a judge of its values. In its expressive form, negritude advocated for value pluralism, pluralism that is built around acceptance of diversity without ranking them as superior or inferior. Pluralism posited a world where Europe and African were different epistemologically and ontologically. Participants here include among others Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon Ezekiel Mphalele, Kofi A Busia and Alioune Diop, to name but a few.

Because of this, Negritude became a powerful tool that served two important functions. In the first, it helped Africans understand conditions responsible for their subjectivity. In the second, it made the black man conscious of how manipulation of power relations had shaped perception and the subsequent interpretation of race relations to the extent that:

(a)   Inferior Africans were to be dominated

(b)   Superior Europeans were to conquer and dominate over the weak in the world in their mission to civilize.

(c)   Black was evil, bad and therefore to be shunned. The near Blacks moved to Whiteness the more human they became, and,

(d)   There was only one civilization, universal to humanity that was to be spread if possible by use of force among the primitive peoples.

If (a) through (d) were myths imposed on the identity of the African, Negritude then served as a tool that contained the seeds of resistance, important uniting ideas of common origin and a significant rallying point of all black people in the world. More significantly, in Negritude lay the seed of pluralism and the acceptance of the *other* as equal. As a reaction to European domination, Negritude created a rebellion against European culture domination and the subsequent asserting of African's humanity.

These efforts in placing African studies on the world literary map were supplemented with an equal effort by the Pan Africanist movement of W E B Dubois in the Americas.[42] Following the experiences of slavery and slave trade, together with the pains of colonialism and imperialism, Pan Africanists not only created a tool for black solidarity, but also sought to assert an African history that had been denied, destroyed and annihilated. Here-in lay an ideological message for the existence of a human other, another with a culture, history and values that defined the course of their history. The message was

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that, it was time for the blacks to be left on their own to chart their own historical destiny. In these movements lay not only the precursor to literature and discourse that later emerged to respond particularly to European value judgments, but also constituted literature around which Blacks identified with their history. This response was two fold:

(a)   To correct the image of the Negro by asserting universal values that would express black personality.

(b)   To give the black man equal rights in the world, equal rights that would remove social segregation, political and economic oppression as well as cultural discrimination.

The contribution of Aime Cesaire, Senghor and Fanon

For Aime Cesaire, Negritude was the sum total of values that characterize the black world (sic). It is what makes the black race proud. It gives the Black man in the world an identity. It asserts a difference.

Senghor on the other hand saw negritude as the whole complex of civilized values; cultural, social economic and political that characterizes the Black peoples. He claims that Negritude is the awareness, defence, and development of African cultural values, the warmth of living in and participating in a natural, social and spiritual harmony that characterize the cosmic rhythm of nature.[43]

If these claims by these two are granted, then, the effect will be to make Black/White dichotomy real. This will in turn allow us to affirm the

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misconception that Blacks and Whites differ fundamentally in cognitive perception and mental structure. The sorrow state in which this takes the culture of philosophy in Africa is to create a sympathetic strand of thought that while taking this assumption for granted, it goes ahead to explain these differences in discourse and cultural forms of experiencing reality. Perhaps the easiest and most popular method of explaining this is to fall back into biology. The basis of this argument is that, each race has hereditary psycho – physiological traits that are unique to itself. This tie in with Senghor's famous dictum that: Europeans reason rationally, white Africans reason emotionally (Reason is Greek while emotion is Black).[44] That, therefore reason and emotion constitute two genres of reasoning! This is absurd. This brand of Negritude is too limiting for a culture ad society that is besieged. It is more useful to interrogate the existential thoughts of Fanon as these lift Negritude to a more ideological pedestal than otherwise seen.

Frantz Fanon was particularly concerned with two issues:

(a)   the social condition of the Blackman

(b)   Decolonization and the formation of the Modern African State.

Fanon's contribution to Negritude is largely contained in his psychological analysis of the black – white relationship. For him, racial relations are responsible for all the psychological problems of the Blackman. Colonialism hurts the Blackman both at the materialistic level as well as the psychological level. The latter being an extension of capitalist attitude of industrial Europe. Significant is Fanon's critique of discourse on Africa by Senghor and Jean Paul Satire. In defining Negritude, Senghor portrayed it as a collection of

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black values devoid of historical meaning and significance. Here Negritude perceived as static ontologically and is only an escape from the struggles that characterize race relations in history. Fanon views this as limiting the possibilities of Negritude as a movement and what it is capable of achieving for the Black man. On the other hand, Sartre thinks that Negritude should aspire towards black freedom by standing opposed to European racism. Equally, this is limiting the boundaries of Negritude.

For Fanon, Senghor and Sartre fail to recognize the dialectical process that will achieve and sustain the black man's freedom. History not only defines both one's identity but also projects this identity into the possibilities that the future has to offer. It is not only a dialectical process, but equally the surge towards self assertion typified by historical interracial relationships and consciousness of the other. This identity for Fanon is not achieved statically but is the outcome of a struggle towards freedom, which is a continuous struggle. This is what defines the social context and history of the Blackman.

This discourse on Negritude by focusing on the history and existential conditions of African society and the Blackman contributed in a significant way in the creation of a culture of philosophy in Africa by positing the its goals, means, and substance.
For Fanon, these goals must take on a violent revolution that will eventually overcome the dead souls of the old Negritude and restore full the African self.

The Challenges of Pluralism and New Discourse on Africa

One can summarise the significance of pluralism on African philosophy as follows:

1. That, it rehabilitated Africans to the position of human beings by proclaiming existence of a complex culture (Senghor)[45], by seeking to end oppression and colonialism through giving negritude a new lease of life (Fanon)[46] and by transforming African thought into a political tool and philosophical criticism of colonialism (Sartre).[47]

2. That, it gave rise to an intellectual atmosphere that was sympathetic to African traditional socio-cultural situation to the extent that it set out to discover and unearth groundwork for a philosophy among the primitive. This in turn led to the invention of a traditional Africa that was prototype, representative and ready for use in comparison with Western science.[48]

3. And finally, due to the claims of pluralism, a view that due to the plurality of cultures in the world, European civilization is high on the hierarchy of scale of merit, values, science, and technological advancement including social organization.

4.5.0 Theories in African Philosophy

The discussion on how African philosophical landscape looks like is a reflection of the way various thinkers have attempted to define and situate African philosophy. This is easily understood if one were to look at the theories in African philosophy. These theories cover and determine in a significant way the not only the culture of philosophy but equally the direction

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history of African philosophy takes. Suffice to say that again these theories are defined by the two significant events that have all along determined discourse on African philosophy namely;[49]

1. Western discourse on Africa

2. And, the Africa reaction to the same.

But equally the theories attempt to cover the theoretical, paradigmatic, and methodological issues involved in African philosophy. A discussion of these theories is an attempt at defining in various ways the meaning and nature of African philosophy, if not the perennial question of concern in the history African thought. On the overall, discourse on African philosophy raises two broad perspectives and interpretation. The first is where African philosophy is defined in opposition to Western philosophy. The implication being that there are certain values found in Western philosophy that are totally lacking in African philosophy. So African Philosophy is radically Un-European. The second is where African philosophy is defined from a universalist perspective. Odera observes:

> The expression 'Africa Philosophy' often calls forth the question "what is African philosophy?" In an attempt ... to demonstrate examples of African philosophical thought, various proposals and findings have sprung up.[50]

In his book *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*,[51] H Odera Oruka has identifies six theories in Africa philosophy. Of these, four are significant,[52] while two are minor and subsidiary to the discourse on African philosophy. The six are as hereunder;

1.   Ethno philosophy

2. Professional African philosophy

3. Sage philosophy

4. Nationalistic-Ideological

5. Literary- artistic

6. Hermeneutics in African philosophy

4.5.1 Ethno Philosophy

This theory is traceable to one Belgium missionary, Placide Franz Tempels. It is actually believed in intellectual circles that Tempels initiated the serious talk about African Philosophy as we know it today.[53] Ethno-philosophy is a system of thought that deals with collective worldviews of diverse African peoples as a unified form of knowledge and is based on myths, folk-wisdom, and the proverbs of the people. It is custom dictated that require communal consensus. This is a theory that defines African philosophy by assuming that it is structurally and methodologically different from Western Philosophy. African philosophy is unique and that this can be demonstrated. It considers Africa philosophy as the set of values categories and assumptions that are implicit in language, rituals, and beliefs of African peoples in their collective nature. The assumption by most if not all ethno-philosophers is that every culture is organized around some defined set of philosophical principles that are implicit in its language, beliefs and practices regardless of whether this is explicitly stated by any member of that culture. Placide Tempels and Alexis Kagame in particular hold that the linguistic categories of the Bantu people reflect their metaphysical categories and shape their view of reality.

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Besides Placide Tempels, ethno-philosophy has found expression in the works of J S Mbiti, Alexis Kagame, Marcel Griaule, among others. In some instances, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius K Nyerere, Cheick Anta Diop and Leopold Sedar Senghor are also included. The later group presents an interesting dimension to the culture of philosophy in Africa. That where as the Tempels' group pioneered discourse on African philosophy; they have received an unfair amount of criticism which apparently the latter group has been spared. The former have been accused of smuggling anthropology and religion into African philosophy in their bid to show a difference. The latter in showing a difference have strangely been seen as champions of African cultural values, and dignity. These are the cultural nationalists out to redeem Africa from the bondage of Western imperialism.

So what is the contribution of ethno philosophy in creating a culture of philosophy in Africa? One has to go back to the perennial issues concerning racial determinism in African philosophical history and thought. The ethno philosophical assumption that there is a difference between Western and African thought had a number of implications to discourse and general landscape within African philosophy.

Many are scholars who identify and describe theses showing the essential differences between the two mentalities, classifying them into distinct camps, on the one hand, a powerful and conquering West, and on the other, African submissive, mystical and almost lacking in *logos*. The former was seen as prototype Centre that defines every other reality and values including but not

limited to reason, logic and science. For this group, Christianity was seen as the pick of Western civilization.

Other scholars began to raise issues regarding how best to study the African with a view to accepting them as humans, know them, understand their ways, accommodate them and then force them to abandon their primitive ways.[54] This category allowed Africans to steadily move towards civilization through education and conversion. But the pioneering work by Tempels takes credit for all efforts and attempts at exposing and bringing African studies into academic circles.[55]

4.5.2 Professional African Philosophy

This consists of works by trained scholars of philosophy in Africa. It also includes works and writings by Africanists and Black Africans in the diaspora. Most of these reject ethno philosophy as an approach to the study of Africa philosophy. They hold that philosophy is a universal discipline and that for any piece of work to qualify as philosophical, it must meet the criterion and conditions acceptable in philosophy, among them, that it must be critical, self reflective and logical. But they also acknowledge that it is possible to have great dissimilarities in philosophical priorities and traditions that are occasioned by differences in culture. On the overall, universalists grant the existence of African philosophy as a body of works that include production by African in any area and tradition acceptable philosophy.

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Some of these are very hostile to ethno-philosophy as it were.[56] This is seen in the way they propose radical approach to the practice of philosophy in Africa. In particular Paulin Hountondji's definition has been cited as the most radical of them all. The demand that African philosophy should be 'set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophic by their[sic] authors themselves',[57] has been seen as creating unnecessary and extra qualifications to the practice of philosophy in Africa. In fact as to the present project, Hountondji has this to say;

> For us [,] African philosophy is a body of literature whose existence is undeniable, a bibliography which has grown constantly over the ...years.'[58]

In Hountondji's words, his goal is to;

> [C]ircumscribing this literature, to define its main themes, to show what it's problematic has been ... and to call it into question. These aims will have been achieved if we succeed in convincing our African readers that African philosophy does not lie where we have long been looking for it, in some mysterious corner of our supposedly immutable soul, a collective and unconscious world view which it is incumbent on us to study and revive but that our philosophy consists essentially in the process of analysis itself, in that very discourse through which we have been doggedly attempting to define ourselves – a discourse, therefore, which we must recognise as ideological and which it is now up to us to liberate, in the most political sense of the word, in order to quip ourselves with a truly theoretical discourse which will be indissolubly philosophical and scientific.[59]

In this seminal work, Hountondji in a significant way defines the course of Africa philosophy. Subsequent scholars have been haunted by this ghost of universalism, just like the present project is. But it is in the title that we find the authors main contribution to discourse on African philosophy. In *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*,[60] Hountondji grants that Africa philosophy exists both as myth and reality. Ethno philosophy constitutes the myth in African philosophy. The real African philosophy then is constituted by;

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1. Written texts whose,

2. Authorship must be African, and which

3. Authors must qualify work as philosophical (note that here, the authors' intention is paramount in determining African philosophy).

On these criterion of qualification is based the rest of the story about African philosophy, a demand on tradition of critical literary works produced and reflecting on the African existential situation.

Following this, many African philosophers have argued that traditional philosophy in Africa should not be taken as paradigmatic in defining African philosophy just in the same way no one in their right mind can hold traditional Western philosophy as being the model for contemporary Western philosophy.[61]

The overall contribution of professional African philosophers has been immense at all levels; methodological, style, language, critique, and in the creation of a history within African philosophy.

4.5.3 Sage Philosophy

This theory, traceable to Henry Odera Oruka is a reflective system of thought that is based on the wisdom of African sages. Oruka first introduced philosophic sagacity to the international community in 1978 during that Commemoration of Dr Antony William Amo Conference held in Accra Ghana[62] According to him,

> *Sage philosophy 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 popular wisdom and didactic wisdom.... While popular wisdom is often conformist, didactic*

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wisdom is at times critical of the communal set up and popular wisdom.[63]

The gist of this theory is the claim that though there may not have been professional philosophers in the academic sense, traditional Africa had sages who fulfilled both the professional and social functions associated with philosophy. Sage philosophy as it was originally known has since transformed into Philosophic Sagacity with the argument that the latter is both philosophically and linguistically credible. The difference between sage philosophy and philosophic sagacity is that the former includes both philosophic sagacity and folk sagacity, while the latter is limited only to the didactic views of the individual thinker.[64] By implication we are saying that the thoughts of the folk sage are confined to social conventions and interpretation of the culture but rarely engages in the critique of the culture. On the other hand philosophic sagacity tends to be critical, reflective and attempts to justify (accept or reject based on personal rational considerations, in the process modifying and adjusting cultural practices) the various cultural beliefs and practices. Its main task is to bring back the normative dimension of philosophy. The major player in its current form is Fred Ochieng Odhiambo and Oriare Nyarwath.[65] In the earlier version, besides Odera Oruka, we had number players who included but not limited to Anthony Oseghare, Gail Presbey, and Patrick Maison Dikirr. Many of these are in one way or the other associated with the Nairobi school in African philosophy.[66]

We want to mention here that the distinction that is often made between folk and philosophic sage is not that water tight.[67] Perhaps this is explained by the

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fact that many a times people do not understand that what is seen as folk wisdom was once the didactic wisdom of a respected sage before it lapsed into common knowledge. Similarly one may want to point out that all philosophers are not didactic on everything in society. One may be very good at moral matters while quite ignorant on matters knowledge.

Technically this theory is the least talked about within academic circles.[68] But strangely, it is the most criticised theory after ethno philosophy. This can possibly be explained by the fact that many commentators flip over it and take it for granted that it represents African wisdom thus not warranting a comment.

4.5.4 Nationalistic Ideological

This has its basis in the presupposition that a true philosophy for Africa is found in the works and theories of various African political theorists who formulated ideologies for liberating Africa. Thus African culture and consequently philosophy can only be revived on the basis of a truly free, independent, and humanist society. That therefore, the nature and definition of African philosophy is to be found in a clear social theory for independence and the creation of a genuine humanistic social order. The main players here included Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Ben Bella, Sekou Toure, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Kenneth Kaunda among others. Our own observation here is that by insisting and emphasizing African, they sought to define and create an African philosophy that was very unique, hence the claims of a unique African Socialism by J K Nyerere[69] This is a keen to the

efforts of ethno philosophers and no wonder it achieved very little. In these two works, the authors overemphasized those factors that make Africans unique and therefore different. That in African Socialism, one can find an African contribution to universal civilization because they are speaking from a unique and peculiar position which is interpretable by them and them alone.

The efforts by this theory to cultivate a culture of philosophical thought in Africa have to be appreciated by making reference to the many works produced by the African political authors of Africa. But again this is only through the definitional framework provided by Hountondji. The point is that many of these works not only lack the basic philosophical discipline of analysis, logic and critique, but also failed to create a history of discursive efforts on conceptual realities on and about Africa. Instead these works besides throwing ideological concepts here and there in a bid to score political goals, concentrated and limited their efforts on the existential position of the African and the liberation of Africa. Suffice to add that many a times these efforts were not crystallized into a clear social theory defined by objective principles that qualify all statements as theories.[70]

The foregoing forms and continues to form the core and gist of the culture of philosophical discourse in Africa. By the time Odera published his seminal paper 'Four Trends in Current African Philosophy'[71] the emphasis was on the four. But he later talked of two others: Hermeneutics and Literary artistic. These two, particularly the last have received very little attention. We however wish to observe here that the hermeneutical theory in African

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philosophy seem to be performing above average and that the future of African philosophy lies here. Below we shall attempt a short outline of the two theories seen as insignificant players in the story of African philosophy.

4.5.5 Hermeneutics in African Philosophy

Hermeneutics derives from the name Hermes, the messenger god of ancient Hellas. Hermes is supposed to have been the interpreter of god's message.[72]

This theory conceives African as consisting in African myths, worldview, religion, proverbs, poetry, and all other oral or written literary works. Here, the emphasis is on the fact that philosophy is culturally determined, and that it is a form of wisdom. This seems to go beyond the traditional view that philosophy is the love of wisdom. But equally this means that philosophy takes lived experiences as its starting point and since the lived experiences of most Africans revolve around the struggle to cope with cultural, political and economic imperialism, then African philosophy should seek ways and means of liberating Africans from these through interpretation. African philosophy thus consists in understanding African myths, worldview, religion, proverbs, poetry, and all other oral and written literary works. But equally these in and of themselves own are not useful. Their relevance is predicated on their ability to contribute to achieving this liberation goal for African peoples and society. Reading into this theory one is surprised at the apologetic nature of its claims and assumptions:

1. That, all the research and literature on African Philosophy has used the wrong approach and methodology.

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2. That, these researches have failed to understand the exact nature of philosophy as the study of wisdom within or of a given culture in this case, African. Wisdom ought to be extracted from the interpreting values in African culture. That trying to understand the significance and value of what is oral as well as the written is the first step in the production of philosophy in Africa.

3. Therefore, given that philosophy is the study of human wisdom and European philosophy is the study of European wisdom, it then automatically follow that African philosophy becomes the study of African wisdom.

The basic assumption by hermeneiutists is to give human beings the interpretive power through which significance is created. Note here that texts is not limited to written, but includes oral from which this wisdom is extracted. We wish to make some remarks and observations concerning these assumptions and the claims to African philosophy. First, the theory is not clear on the meaning and nature of wisdom. Wisdom is used in such a loose way that it becomes difficult to pinpoint exactly what African or European wisdom means in each instance. By assuming that wisdom is defined solely by use of cultural parameters, and that particular cultures give forth a specific and unique form of wisdom applicable within that cultural environment, this theory deprives philosophy of its essential nature: application of reason in understanding the natural and social environment. This limits in a big way the effectiveness of philosophy as a human rational exercise that is not confined and limited to cultural demands and peculiarities. This does not in any way

deny the cultural relevance in shaping the course of a philosophy. Wiredu holds that we are all children of our culture.[73] But equally this does not give culture the sole right to determine philosophical ingredients and tools like logic and rationality.

In the course of this research, we have all along maintained the argument that holding the view that philosophy is the work of pure reason contemplating upon eternal truths within and relevant to a particular culture is perverted if not misguided. Truth is neither White nor Black, European nor African. If truth were to be subject to the contingencies of culture it would reduce philosophy to the relativity of shifting human opinions. Again, we are not here denying the role and influence of individuals in the development of a philosophy. World over, the course and direction that a philosophy takes is determined by the ability and effectiveness with which philosophers within that culture are able to reflect on existing knowledge, values and forms of knowledge confirming, rearranging and rejecting those that have ceased being relevant.[74] Exposing these and seeking their relevance to the demands of changing cultural behaviour is the goal of philosophy.

The above comments not withstanding, the works of Tsenay Serequeberhan, Marcien Towa, Okonda Okolo, Frantz Fanon, V Y Mudimbe, and to a lesser extent Lucius Outlaw and Lansana Keita would all claim belonging to this category. What is interesting is that apart from Tsenay the rest do not proclaim their link to this theory.

4.5.6 Literary Artistic

This is the least recognized theory in African philosophy and of course the least discussed of the six. It is a view which conceives African philosophy in terms of productions by African literary writers who engage issues cultural as well as perennial question of the relationship between Western culture and traditional Africa, in which the former is the conquering and dominant while the latter subservient and subjective. The claim here is that writing about African societies using the literary tools of fiction and drama portrays the truth about African peoples, culture and thought pattern.

This may sound far fetched but clearly fiction should not find its way in African philosophy. Let fiction and drama form a different genre of works in African literary efforts, but not specifically African philosophy. Philosophy is about taxing the mind to produce ideas on and about the universe, man, and God. And its speculative metaphysics should not be confused with fiction. This must take cognisance of the development of culture, science and technology. Though fiction works may deal with man, God, and the universe, the rigor of philosophical inquiry is lacking in these efforts. Suffice to add that we are not in anyway excluding and denying literary scholars the benefit of philosophical honour. All that we are saying is that a few of these who rise to the level of philosophy should be recognized for their efforts as philosophers and not as literary writers.

4.6 Conclusion

The overall goal here was to establish the players and their works on African philosophy. We sought to establish the course of philosophical discourse in Africa its influence on the culture of philosophy in Africa and the possibility of its future. We established that a culture of philosophic thought is a recent development that was occasioned by rebellious discourse by Africans as a way of reacting and countering the Western imperialism and cultural domination. We have argued that philosophy in Africa originated and has developed through a cultural framework that is alien and that an indigenous us philosophy in Africa require a cultural basis that is African both in values, interpretation, and the possibility of creating an epistemological basis for this interpretation. In the next chapter we seek to explain the future possibilities available for African philosophy.

NOTES

[1] See Ali A Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics*, Nairobi Heinemann Education Books, 1990, pp4-8

[2] See J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, 1969;E E Evans Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937; EE Evans Pritchard, *The Nuer Religion*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1974; Robin Horton, 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science' in Daryll Forde, ed., *Africa: Journal of International African Institute*, Vol.xxxvii, No 2

[3] See V Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp 2-7; Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, New York, Routledge, 1994, pp55-57

[4] See Robin Horton, and Ruth Finnegan, eds., *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*, London, Faber and Faber 1973, pp 357-370; Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp38-40

[5] See Kwasi Wiredu, op cit., pp1-16; Anthony Kwame Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992; D A Masolo, 'Philosophy and Culture: A Critique,' in H O Oruka and D A Masolo, eds., *Philosophy and Cultures*, Nairobi, Bookwise Limited, 1983, pp 44-51; H Odera Oruka, 'Ideology and Culture', in H Odera Oruka and D A Masolo, eds., *Philosophy and Cultures* op cit, pp57-62

[6] See Carl Jung, "Answer to Job" in *Psychology and Religion: West and East, Vol 11*

[7] See Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay o African Philsophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p42

[8] Se G W F Hegel, Lectures on the *Philosophy of World History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp99-100; Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze ed., *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader*, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, pp 38-44; 65-68; 109-112

[9] Aime Ceasire, *Return to my Native Land*, Trans., Anna Bostock & John Berger, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1969

[10] Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1953

[11] F Ochieng Odhiambo, *African Philosophy: an Introduction*, Nairobi, Consolata Institute of Philosophy, 1997, p44; D A Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p46

[12] Ibid p3

[13] Cesaire Op cit

[14] D A Masolo *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, op cit p2

[15] Ibid pp1-2

[16] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, London, Penguin Books,1978, pp19-20

[17] Masolo op cit pp1-2

[18] Tempels op cit pp 21,24, 29

[19] Ibid p29

[20] F Ochieng-Odhiambo, *African Philosophy*, Op cit, p44; D A Masolo, African Philosophy in Search of Identity, Op Cit., p1

[21] See G W F Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* op cit. The book by Emmanuel Eze is particularly interesting and has a collection of very useful articles on this. See Eze E C *Race and Enlightenment* Op cit

[22] Eze Op cit., especially chapters, 1-5

[23] Carl Von Linne, 'The God Given Order of Nature' in E C Eze ed., Race and Enlightenment Op cit p13

[24] Immanuel Kant p 39

[25] See Hegel, Op cit pp99-100

[26] See Jackson Kennel, *America is Me: The Most and Least Understood Questions about Black American History*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1997, p17

[27] See George M James, *The Stolen Legacy*, San Francisco, Julia n Richardson and Ass., 1988,pp 9-21;75-76; Henry Olela, *From Ancient Africa to Ancient Greece: An Introduction to*

the History of Philosophy, Georgia, The Black Heritage Corporation, 1985, p89; D. A Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, op cit., pp20-21

[28] In the interest of brevity the ideas of these three authors will all be considered roughly analogous and analyzed as one central argument, the stolen legacy. Similarly we shall focus on what we consider the fundamental claims of the stolen legacy. For elaboration, the reader should consult George G James *the Stolen Legacy*, op cit and more relevantly, Martin Bernal, *Black Athena (The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization): The Fabrications of Ancient Greece*, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1987.

[29] Ochieng Odhiambo Op cit p30.

[30] Odera Oruka *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*, Nairobi, Shirikon Publishers 1990, p78

[31] Ochieng–Odhiambo Op cit p28

[32] Ibid, pp33-34.

[33] Oruka 1990 p43

[34] Oruka Trends p43.

[35] A J Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd ed, London, Gollancz, 1946.

[36] Rogers Ben, *A j Ayer, : A Life*: Chatto and Windus, London pp1999, p118

[37] Ibid

[38] G James Stolen Legacy Op cit., pp83-130

[39] ibid., pp112-117

[40] Masolo op cit p19

[41] Aime Cesaire in England, *Presence Africaine*, 1956

[42] See D A Masolo *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, p1

[43] Ibid pp 24-27

[44] Ibid

[45] Ibid

[46] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Books, 1978

[47] Jean Paul Sartre, "Orphee Noir" in Senghor L S ed., *Anthology of Poems from Black Africa and Malagasy*, Paris, University of Paris Press,1948

[48] See P Tempels *Bantu Philosophy*, Op cit.; J S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Op cit ; E A Ruch, "Philosophy of African History", in African Studies, vol 32,1978, pp113-136

[49] See D A Masolo *African philosophy in Search of Identity*, op cit, p1

[50] Odera Oruka Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, Nairobi, Shirikon Publishers, 1990, p 13

[51] Ibid

[52] Odera pp 13-20

[53] D A Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, op. cit. p46; Ochieng'–Odhiambo, *African Philosophy: an Introduction* Op cit, p44

[54] Tempels Bantu Philosophy, op cit., p24

[55] D A Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* op cit, p46; F Ochieng-Odhiambo, African Philosophy: An Introduction op cit., p44

[56] P Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality.*, London, Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1983 p33

[57] p33

[58] Ibid

[59] Ibid

[60] Paulin Hountondji Op cit p 43

[61] Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980

[62] Ochieng Odhiambo, 'the Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity', *Philosophia Africana, vol. 9, No. 1* p1

[63] H Odera Oruka, ed., *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, ACTS press, 1991, p33; H Odera Oruka, *Practical Ethics: In Search of an Ethical Minimum*, Nairobi & Kampala, East African Educational Publishers, 1997, pp181-182

[64] In a way this distinction is superfluous. One can't be didactic in all matters of life. In some cases we tend to forget that folk wisdom is a result of sagacious thinking and much of what is actually passes as folk wisdom was once a result of serious philosophical thinking that got enveloped by new trends in emerging knowledge techniques.

[65] See works by F Ochieng –Odhiambo The Significance of Sagacity in African Philosophy, a PhD dissertation University of Nairobi, 1994, The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity, op cit; The Evolution of Sage Philosophy op cit among others.

[66] These are a group of scholars associated with the Department of philosophy, University of Nairobi who strongly supported the Sage philosophy project and researched on the same. They are either Odera Oruka's students or research associates or partners.

[67] Odera Oruka, 1991 pp33-36

[68] Ochieng Odhiambo 'The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity' *Philosophia Africana*, vol.9, No. 1 March, 2006 p17

[69] See J K Nyerere, *Ujamaa Essays on Socialism*, London, Oxford University Press, 1968; *Man and Development*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Publishing House, 1974

[70] Note that Nyerere and Senghor are outstanding here. They made efforts to crystallise their works into some known and coherent system of thought. See J K Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays: on Socialism* , Dar es Salaam, Oxford University Press, 1968

[71] see H Odera Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary* use notes on p21

[72] Tsenay Serequerberhnam, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, New York, 1994, p1

[73] Kwasi Wiredu *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, op cit p36

[74] Ibid p 1

CHAPTER 5

FUTURES AND POSSIBILITIES IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

5.1 Introduction

In this work we have traced the problems of philosophy and culture in Africa to works of missionaries and anthropologists who worked in Africa during the colonial period. However the major link between the two is found in Fr Tempels work, Bantu Philosophy. [1] To be more precise, Tempels' book sought to redeem and in any way end the 'controversy' over the existence of a philosophy among the primitive cultures in Africa. Although it is widely agreed that Tempels takes the honour for "having brought forth the first piece of literature concerning 'Bantu (African) Philosophy' into academic philosophical discussion," this has created controversies that have thrown African philosophy in disarray. The discipline and its professionals are so divided that it is not clear what each means by African philosophy. This in turn led to lack of a clear way forward for the future of African philosophy. But the important thing is that he 'discovered' a philosophy among the primitive Bantu cultures getting the honour (again) of being the first scholar or serious European to stand up against the 18th and 19th Century European rationalism and logocentricism.

Tempels' work was followed by two other important landmarks in African philosophy, Paulin Hountondji's African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, and, V Y Mudimbe's The Invention of Africa. [2]

Oruka's four trends is useful in that at least it identified possible framework in which a discussion on African philosophy was to take place. Today the question is what the possibilities of a future are in African philosophy. In this chapter, we look at possible scenarios that the future of African philosophy presents given its current form and content. In doing this, Tempels work though discredited and much maligned, and H Odera's trends become the reference point for classifying African philosophers and their works. It is important to understand from the outset that this question does not call for a demonstration of rational power. It does not seek to show whether one African philosopher is better than another or whether Africans have the same rational power as Europeans. To reduce this question to the rationality debate hence level of comparison in assuming that those who developed a philosophy or philosophies are better than those who did not or have not. The existence or non-existence of Philosophy does not and cannot establish rationality as a prerogative of any one culture. Here we are purely concerned with whether there is any discernible contents of discussion around which the future of African philosophy will crystallize and sustain its discourse.

In the six theories discussed in chapter five above, we noted that not all were concerned with the problematics of definition. Equally, we argued that not all are regarded as having equal explanatory power of authoritatively talking about African philosophy. Four of these address the definitional problem, namely; ethno philosophy, professional African philosophy, Sage philosophy and, hermeneutics. Of the remaining two, literary-artistic, pays little attention to the contents and nature of philosophy while Nationalistic-ideological does

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not bother with the question of definition. Instead it takes for granted the existence of an African philosophy that has a specific duty of dealing with socio-political problems and issues as they arise in African sociological history. Its definite objective is to seek to gain for Africa and the African a genuine freedom based on a real humanistic theory in postcolonial Africa.

Granted the above, it follows that, the four theories have the duty of defining and demarcating the future of African philosophy including its possibilities of existence in form, content, method and even style. Included here are questions on the role of professional philosophers in Africa, the continued interference from Anthropology and Religion, and the question of the unfinished business by White scholars with regard to African culture. In our closing remarks we want to focus on the evolution of sage philosophy and of what benefit this has to the future of African philosophy. What are the possibilities of sage philosophy driving African philosophy into the future? And what does this future potent for the cause and course of African philosophy?

5.2 On the Meaning of Philosophy

Our idea of philosophy again becomes relevant here. We argued that philosophy as a discipline inquires into the nature of reality and the justification of beliefs both at individual and social plane.[3] From this we concluded that discourse on philosophy can be handled at two levels. On the one hand the term Philosophy can be used in a lower /weaker sense. This refers to any kind of belief(s) held towards man, nature and the universe.[4] This sense holds philosophy as a kind of wisdom individual or collective set of

beliefs presenting some degree of coherence for the purpose of confronting and controlling the activities of man and society. The point here is that every one of us is a philosopher just like every society is philosophical. Having said this, it need not be gainsaid that African culture has contributed immensely to the rise of philosophy or philosophies among Africans.

The second sense, the academic or strict sense of the term holds philosophy as a specific theoretical discipline complete with concepts, exigencies and methodological rules for use. It is this second sense that creates controversies and it is this that necessitated this research in the first place. Our task here is to seek to understand why philosophy in the second sense seems to be problematic especially in philosophical circles. We are here arguing that to project and make statements about the future of African philosophy; we must accept and demand that the future of philosophy in the world be predicated on conditions that overcome its limits. This is more so for Western philosophy which must accept and admit the existence of other possibilities of thought qualifying as philosophical.

To this extent African philosophy can not develop in isolation from other world philosophies. The demand of a unique African philosophy must be done away with. In the face our new tradition in African philosophy any argument that supports radical incommensurability will have to be modified. We want to grant some degree of differences only on matters of basic conceptual practices and modes of inquiry based on a given philosophical tradition not on culture. As African philosophy establishes tradition, we want to talk about cross

traditional and cultural references to a common subject matter and to truth about that subject matter which ideally is independence of the conceptual vocabulary, theories and justificatory practices of particular traditions.[5] We are proposing an African philosophy that is defined broadly but remains specific to the demands and changing roles of its primary African culture and which culture allows practitioners to create traditions of interpretations without limiting conceptual applicability of these interpretations to itself. But at the same time this philosophy must seek to deal with and understand the main issues about the commensurability of philosophical traditions that make up the discipline philosophy. Among these issues, one has in mind methodology, specific matters of creating philosophical traditions, ethical, metaphysical and epistemological traditions and concomitant issues of philosophy.[6] Take note that left to the level of uncritical, communal worldview where everybody agrees with everyone else, then African philosophy ceases to be philosophy, it becomes popular wisdom, it becomes a tradition that refuses to allow for the creation of contrary traditions that seem to stand against its principles of explanations.[7]

It is with this in mind that we seek to propose that African philosophy that is a result of individual's objective and critical analysis of reality, a kind of comprehensive understanding of the universe, a commentary on humanity, and God but more important an African philosophy that recognises and confronts the black man's existential conditions the quest for the creation of a truly humane society. This definition makes African Philosophy a theoretical discipline and field of human inquiry and not just an activity. This will get us

out of the quagmire one finds himself when confronted with the question is there an African Philosophy? More often than not the answer is normally sought by juxtaposing and opposing African Philosophy to Western philosophy which has the consequent of creating a unique thought system that system that is radically un-European. This tends to make African philosophy un-European as consequently making African philosophy to be thoughts and beliefs produced by this unique way of thinking[8]. The result has been to make European philosophy look critical, rigorous and logical, while African philosophy is intuitive, mystical, a kind of religion acceptable to all the people in the Africa, a demand that is not made of Western philosophy. But a very serious consequence arising out of the foregoing is to make European Philosophy a theoretical discipline of human inquiry with clear concepts and categories, assumptions, methods and conclusions about reality while African philosophy remains away of life, a collective philosophy which can only be lived. In any case, the former is written, the latter is oral.

At this point one may want to ask the question; what is the purpose and role of writing down ideas? Is written philosophy superior to oral philosophy?

5.3 The Challenges of Ethno Philosophy and the Future of Philosophy in African

As pointed out above, to many who are outside the field of African philosophy, and the legacy of denigration that portrays Africans as incapable of abstract thought, the question that immediately comes to mind is , *'Is there an African philosophy?'* This legacy is often reinforced by the demand that to have a philosophy, there must be a tradition of writing. By implication, where

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here were theologians, anthropologists and colonial administrators who sought to explain African culture to the European audience. Equally we saw that this way of defining and explaining African philosophy was taken up by Black Africans who felt attracted to its principles, which more importantly sought to show the difference between Africa and the West. But we are also saying that structurally, human mind operates on the basis of certain defined principles that are biologically determined and this has nothing to do with whether one is Black, White Pink or Yellow. What we are willing to concede is that the environment can create differences arising out of acquired values that are transmitted through language and local experiences and the differential interpretations given to the world and reality around us. This is not fundamental but an accident. No White man chose to be born in particular environmental conditions in the same way no African chose. The point is that biology is not responsible for intellectual superiority or inferiority. Given this theory, the future of Africa philosophy lies elsewhere. This way of explaining African philosophy is loaded with problems that are detrimental to a future of any philosophy. It is ethnocentric and limited in its purview. Below we discuss some difficulties associated with Ethno philosophy which in our view cannot carry the banner of philosophy in Africa into the future. These are in one way or another related to the 19th century European logo centric thought that defined everything African from the perspective of the West. Now that this thinking is no longer useful, it follows that ethno philosophy is dead. Among these are European Chauvinism, scepticism, incommensurability, and perenialism.[9]

European Chauvinism

Martha Nussbaum 1997 divides chauvinism into two, descriptive and normative. In descriptive chauvinism, ethno philosophers recreated African thought system and traditions in the image of the West which looked familiar and comprehensible. Here the assumption was that African philosophy constructs responses and answers in similar way as Western philosophy. The lack of this led the West to dismiss Africa as a place of philosophical unanimity and lacking in critical inquiry, because at least Africans were not pursuing the same kinds of virtue analysis both in critical and practical thinking.

On the other hand normative chauvinism consists in the tendency by the West to believe that Western their tradition is the best and in so far others are different they are inferior or have a mistaken view of reality. Ethno philosophy relied on criterion that was too tradition depended to make decisions on and concerning Africa thought. This robbed it of its credibility and defensibility, especially with the new trends in knowledge. What we observe here is that ethno philosophers refused or were unwilling to re-look at their own philosophy in the light of African realities. Ideally the claim here is that unless philosophy is done following the parameters of the West then it cannot be considered as philosophy. Tempels definition of African metaphysics as depended on dynamic principles while Western was static is a classic example.[10] To date when many Europeans visit teaching departments of Philosophy in Africa they expect to be told about African culture not philosophy. The latter, they believe is absent.

Scepticism

Although not a problem for philosophical inquiry, ethno philosophical scepticism consisted in narrating the views of Africa ethnic groups and suspending judgement about claims to their adequacy. We are willing to accept that not everything African is philosophical. We equally want to say that not everything said and written about Western philosophy is philosophical. This fact has been ignored by ethno philosophers particularly when it comes to comparing African culture and Western Science.[11] Ethno philosophers claimed that Western practices and values were defensible while African traditions were out rightly wrong and should be replaced. Today's thinking is that conversation across cultures will burn away certain redundant claims about the world while refining and confirming the truths of others. This is where the future of African philosophy lies; in proclaiming new truths, confronting European prejudices and correcting the image of a colonized Africa. In this a new body of knowledge will emerge upon which future African philosophers will discourse and create a history.

Incommensurability

This has to with the claims of incompatibility and inability of concepts in one tradition being wholly translated into another tradition. In its radical sense it holds that questions and answers in one tradition cannot sustain meaningful statements in another tradition. The assumption here is that words refer to objective reality out there, such that certain philosophical models differ from others in a fundamental way that one can not reconcile them. The point we are trying to advance is that some forms of life may be so far from a person's

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experience and philosophical tradition that it becomes difficult for one to see the merits in another tradition or view for that matter. We are equally relying on the fact of recognizing the existence of radical difference in basic concepts and modes of inquiry. Even when this is granted ethno-philosophers tried to understand African cultures simply by predicating African concepts to the perceived meanings and values of Western interpretation. They assumed that it was impossible to have cross traditional reference to some common realty or subject matter and to truth about this reality or subject matter. The death of ethno-philosophical ability to interpret African values is remedied by hermeneutical theory which so for seeks to understand Africa as Africa without any value preconception and prejudiced biases. Here we are not looking at Western and African traditions as rivals but as having different interpretive powers and if these converge well and good, if not so be it. We think just like Alasdair Macintyre,1991, that this can be possible even if the two traditions have no common or shared philosophical believes or methods.[12] We tend to interpret Macintyre as saying that the sharing or lack of a common denominator for two cultures does not establish whether one culture is rational or not. It falls outside the rationality debate. Yet ethno philosophers erroneously situated it within the rationality debate in which Africa thought was low on the hierarchy while Western thought was superior in logic and rationality.

Perenialism

In many discourse presented as African philosophy, ethno philosophers chose to present a prototype view of a system of thought that was static and not

subject to change. This system was closed from outside world and their truths were absolute. It is useful to note that ethno philosophers overlooked the fact that any philosophical tradition has a present as well a past that gives validity to the present interpretation. Where as traditional thoughts of various philosophical systems are formative, they provide the basis upon which much of the distinct evolution of the later philosophical tradition thrives.[13] The ethno philosophical focus only on Africa's past assumed falsely that this is the perennial issues of discourse in African philosophy. We know that philosophical traditions evolve with new thinking and rearrangement of old ideas, replacing old ways of interpretation. What ethno philosophy has done to African philosophy is to create perennially monolithic and static discourse upon which anything African and philosophical is based.

In the end one can still object to our claims above and counter by saying that after all it is ethno philosophy that gave birth to African philosophy, and that one can't talk about African philosophy without reference to ethno philosophy. This may be true but only partially. These thinkers appropriated African knowledge for specific purposes, which we want to say here was neither philosophical nor rationally defence within the tenets and principles of philosophical realm. Ethno philosophy concentrated on *the what* and not the cardinal question of philosophy which is *the why*. Answering *the why* gives philosophy the *raison detré* to exist as a body of rationally conceived and defensible claims about the world as well as justification for human actions. This focus on the past tends to divert attention from the critical focus that

evaluates practices relative to their contribution to Africa' cultural, political and economic liberation which is the future task of African philosophy.

5.4 Sagacity and the Future of Philosophy in African

The question of the future of sage philosophy is not in question according to Odera. It is indeed very promising and it what forms the basis of a future philosophical discourse in Africa[14] As an approach to the study of African philosophy, sage philosophy belongs to the thoughts of Henry Odera Oruka who first introduced it into academic circles in 1978,[15] during the commemoration of Dr Anthony William Ammo, the celebrated African philosopher[16] who lived and plied his philosophic trade in Germany. Sagacity derive from the word sage, ordinarily meaning wise men and women who profess certain skills that goes beyond what the ordinary men and women in society do.

This is one of the theories advanced by H Odera Oruka in his bid to grapple with the meaning and nature of philosophy in Africa as a reaction to the alienating discourse from the West. To be sure today it is seen as the most authentic way forward to discourse on African philosophy. It is one theory that has come to be embraced both by critics as well as admires as.[17] It would be useful to revisit this briefly.

Odera defines sage philosophy as consisting in 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 popular wisdom well known

communal maxims, aphorisms and general common sense truth) and didactic wisdom (an expounded wisdom and a rational thought of some given individuals within a community).'[18] The point here is that whereas popular wisdom may be conformist, didactic wisdom surpasses communal historians by subjecting the society's claims to rational and critical evaluation. It would be impossible to do an analysis of the possibilities of Sage philosophy in the future of African philosophy without understanding what Odera wished to achieve by the use of this theory.

The Challenges of Sage Philosophy

The overall aim was to demonstrate the existence in Africa individuals capable of philosophic thought or existence of individuals with ability to serve the community in the normative sense, not necessarily individuals schooled in logic and epistemology but who are able to explain the world in a way that satisfies metaphysical principles in accordance with epistemological realities of their society or societies. Specifically, sage philosophy aimed at:

1. To identify individuals in traditional Kenya, Africa, who are wise in the didactic sense and thereafter put their thoughts in writing. If this is achieved, it will demonstrate the existence of an African philosophy as the expounded wisdom and rational thought of given individuals within the community.

2. To mediate between ethno-philosophy on the one hand and professional philosophy on the other. Professional African philosophers were accused of smuggling into African philosophy Western tools of philosophizing. They were accused of making

demanding that were far and above the criterion used in assessing Western philosophy. Ethno philosophers on the other hand were accused of advocating philosophical unanimity where it was possible to have an African philosophy without African philosophers, a position that is not philosophically credible.

3. To put down the views of various sages with a view to coming up with to coming up with a systematised Kenyan national culture which result were to be used as baseline survey for a possibility of an African culture. This was in our view a direct reaction to the parallels between Western and African thought systems in which the two were taken as representing a homogeneous part and that one represented one polar of reality while the other represented the remaining polar. In part this is what messed the entire project as noble as it looked. It has to be borne in mind that this was European project through and through; to understand and be able to explain African culture and its relationship to African thought and behavioural patterns. This, in essence was a colonial objective that would serve the West more than Africa. It is our contention that Odera had fallen into the trap of engaging African culture to the benefit of the West. We shall make some remarks on this later on in this chapter.

4. To assist African intellectuals in researching on, understanding, tabulating and exposing elements of African culture. That there was a need for African elites to know their past and this was only possible by tabulating the views held by the various wise men and women in the community who could claim expertise on traditional principles that

defined society and guided human action. That many traditional practices suffered the risk of dying in the face of Christianity and Western science meant that traditional African life was to suffer a natural death. Really, to date, it baffles one to hear of ancestor worship, when saints are equally used to intercede on behalf of the living. The former is primitive and should be abandoned, the latter civilized and in line with Christian moral and theological values. Equally, it does not make sense to talk about the body and blood of Jesus Christ when celebrating the Holy Mass, while we chide traditional priests of offering heathenish sacrifices to the dead! Either way, one must be a vampire to imagine drinking the blood of another being, leaving or dead. Equally one must be a cannibal to imagine partaking the body of another being, leaving or dead. The point here is a question of misrepresentation. African religion is not founded on a scientific theology and therefore it is assumed that it cannot explain its practices. On the other hand, Christianity is founded on clear scientific principles that can be rationally explained. These and many others are the issues of concern for the African philosopher who wishes to define horizons for its study.

The question is, can these carry philosophy in Africa into the future? An analysis of these together with other issues considered problematic will follow.

Methodological issues in Philosophic Sagacity

We want to begin by saying that the very idea of sage philosophy is a threat to the future of African philosophy. Methodologically, sage philosophy is helplessly inadequate. In various published papers on sage philosophy, Odera Oruka proposed various criteria foe identifying a sage and more specifically how to distinguish a folk sage from a philosophic sage, as well as criteria for wisdom and non wisdom.[19] Odera explains the mode and procedure for interviewing these traditional philosophers and the attendant precautions to be taken by the practicing sage philosopher. But these do not seem to add up to any philosophically credible product worth the name. In the first place, the professional philosopher or any other person intent on practicing sage philosophy must provoke debate.[20]

The problem with this approach is the risk of inviting techniques of social science where individuals ask leading questions and in which question and answer sessions take a predetermined course because the researcher wishes to control the outcome of the interview. This is un-philosophical and these results can be challenged on various philosophical grounds. Perhaps the more serious problem is on the exact role of the professional interviewer here who in our case is a trained philosopher, and the other is a community philosopher, the sage. The trained philosopher is equipped with all the tools of philosophy including a specialized language with which he or she talks about the world in a specific way which includes specialized concepts, and their analytical as well as existential implications. On the other hand world of the community philosopher, the sage is defined and dictated by the localized conditions of his community within whose values and principles guide his interpretive ability.

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The former's is wide and comprehensive in nature while the latter's limited to one's natural environment. The fear we are driving at is that many philosophers in the course of their practice tend to see the world as it is dictated by their training and theoretical formations which differ fundamentally from the sage who is limited by his or her limited and localized conceptual categories.

The subsequent concern then moves to the question of ownership. As Peter Bodunrin has demonstrated, sage philosophy does not in any way tell us whether indeed there is a philosopher in Africa or not. He says;

> It is one thing to show that there are men capable of a philosophical dialogue in Africa and completely another to show [that] there are African philosophers in the sense of those who have engaged in organized systematic reflection on thoughts, beliefs, and practices of their people.[21]

The point that Bodunrin is raising here is whether by showing that one can withstand a philosophical dialogue we are saying that that person is a philosopher. Philosophy besides being about having dialogue also tests the ability of individuals to generate, organize, arrange or rearrange knowledge about reality or some aspect of reality.[22] It is about producing knowledge, ideas, and talking about the world in a particular and specific way that goes beyond what ordinary sciences do.[23] A close examination of the sage's product shows that they do not add anything new to the existing societal bank of knowledge. That in fact they are just labelled wise or simply knowledgeable about the claims, beliefs and standards used by their societies to define and evaluate reality both social and natural.

Problems of Distinction

One solution to this controversy is the distinction made, again, by Odera Oruka, on both the meaning and functions of a folk and philosophic sage which distinction is also challengeable due to its faulty conception of the idea of wisdom. Odera holds that the dividing line between the two lies in how each of these appropriates societal knowledge and wisdom.[24] Thus, a folk sage is person versed in the traditions, beliefs, and practices of the community, their application and value including the different techniques of knowledge generation, validation and appropriation. At best let us call this person the historian of society ad community values. He or she can interpret the culture of the community. These are individuals who equally defend very strongly societal knowledge base whenever it is threatened. But we must remember that these are individuals who deal with *the what question* not *the why question*. They are individuals who operate and are confined at the conventional historical wisdom within their culture.[25] A philosophic sage on the other hand demands that one is thoroughly informed of and not only aware of the various theoretical and practical implications of the cultural practices and the various knowledge claims by the society, but that one should equally be rational and critical enough to carefully make observations and pass independent judgements that recommend beliefs, customs and knowledge claims that that can be validated by reason and rational criteria. These are individuals who Odera Oruka says give rise to second order discourse that has philosophical value.[26]

However, this strict and sharp distinction does not help the cause of sage philosophy and subsequently Africa philosophy. Allowing this would mean that folk sages are left at the lower echelon of philosophy through and through, while philosophic sages are always philosophic on all matters of the world and reality. This assumption is not does not always hold. There are issues and on which the mind exercises its dispensation to be critical but very stupid when it comes to others.

But a more serious short coming for sage philosophy is that, this distinction is viable only on theoretical grounds but very hollow in practice. If anything we still find both the folk and philosophic sage plying their trade at the community level, implying that sage philosophy just like ethno philosophy heavily relies on the community to philosophise. This sacrifices the important role played by the individual in philosophical productions. Here we are sympathetic with the Sunday Oseghare's observation that;

> ... the fundamental question here is not whether this or that sage philosopher is an African Plato: The relevant and **most important** question ... is **whether** the sage's contribution is **sufficiently philosophical** such that the efforts provoke and generate further discussions **which create a paradigm in the way reality is perceived and interpreted** [27] (Emphasis ours)

The issue of whether certain ideas are philosophical or not is not settled by reference to and identifying an individual or individuals who think like Plato, or Immanuel Kant, and parade him or her as an Africa philosopher. Plato, Immanuel Kant or David Hume for that matter in and of themselves do not constitute parameters of what is or is not philosophical. The parameters are existents outside the practitioners such that these standards set and act as a

framework within which to define what is or does not constitute philosophy. These parameters are independent of the individuals but constitute a pool of values from which philosophers draw their rules of the game. This is sorely ignored by sage philosophy.

Sage Philosophy: From Odera Oruka to Ochieng-Odhiambo

An interesting dimension has emerged in African philosophy in which it is claimed that everything African and philosophical in all that is philosophical and African is reducible in Philosophic sagacity. This view originates from Fred Ochieng Odhiambo.[28] Ochieng Odhiambo argues that the concept of philosophic sagacity is actually not new, since Odera himself used it in his early works.[29] He identifies three stages in the evolution of sage philosophy; Pre-1978, 1978-19, and 1984-1995. The first period, pre-1978 saw the use of sagacity to mean philosophy in its normative sense, not technical and theoretical sense. Here there existed African philosophers in the same way Socrates was a philosopher without writing anything down or expressing serious opinion on discourse about nature and reality. The period 1978-1984 forms the second phase, and 1984-1995 form the third and final phase.[30] In all these stages it seems that Odera was too preoccupied with situating African philosophy among black Africans. This far, Odera neither made efforts at reconciling the inconsistencies in the project, nor even recognized them, a point that is partly responsible for the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the sage philosophy.

The Pre 1978 era, Odera was solely concerned with rebutting ethno philosophy and sought to demonstrate that African mythologies should not be substituted for African philosophy.[31] The 1978-1983 period was confined to explication the notion of Sagacity in African philosophy. Sagacity in African thought is used to distinguish it from traditional wisdom that looks at African philosophy from a collective participatory level. In this case sagacity is the critical initiative of responsible individuals.[32] It is useful to point out that this period witnessed softening of heart towards ethno philosophy as it is seen as 'one' of the trends or theories that define African Philosophy. As a theory therefore, ethno philosophy is acceptable as having an explanatory power concerning the nature of African philosophy. 'It has an important role to play in African philosophy'.[33] This statement Odera also makes of Sage philosophy; that This, has been a very painful statement for some of us committed to creating a critical philosophy as theoretical discipline with not only the normative function but also critical, epistemological and logical functions of philosophy.

The Post 1983 witnesses another shift by Odera from philosophic sagacity back to sage philosophy. In a paper, sagacity in development,[34] a clear meaning is delineated with regard to philosophic sagacity. He uses sagacity to specifically imply the wisdom of *named specific* individuals.[35] The point here is that it is this period that Odera makes attempts at distinguishing the various usage of the word sagacity as a way being at the core of the future of the practice of African philosophy. A careful reading of these efforts reveals two issues regarding the relationship between philosophy and sagacity in African

philosophy. First, it can refer to popular wisdom in which the community claims ownership and that it is a product of no particular individual responsible for its truth claim. This could be written or oral. Second, the term sagacity can be used to refer to the didactic wisdom of known responsible individuals who claim ownership of the ideas, can rationalise and defend its truth claim. Here in lay African philosophy since to recognise and affirm African wisdom is to logically recognise and affirm the existence of individuals in Africa who hold this wisdom hence pointing to the existence of African philosophers. The issue is now to identify these philosophers. More, the issue is to seek to create a history of discursive thought on African peoples, cultures, history and societies. This task has been left to contemporary thinkers, both Africans and Africanists, trained and committed to the cause and future of African philosophy.[36] This task has predictably been taken over by professional African philosophers some who were very critical of Odera one, two and three[37]

The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity

Fred Ochieng Odhiambo has introduced what he calls shades of philosophic sagacity that can easily claim to swallow everything African philosophical discourse within it. It should however be pointed out that the reduction of African Philosophy into sagacity is possible only from the Socratic sense in which Philosophy has a basically normative function since anyway the normative sense of philosophy cannot be isolated from the sagacity.[38] This sense of philosophy has logic and epistemology functioning as mere tools to analyse and evaluate the personal, social and community goals of philosophy

of mainly prescribing *the what* and *how one ought to act* both in the personal and the collectivity. This sense divorces philosophy in its critical sense and grants philosophy as tool of looking at the personal and community values, goals and objectives.

Borrowing heavily from Odera and Barry Hallen-Sodipo projects, Fred Ochieng-Odhiambo identifies three aspects as defining the current studies in philosophic sagacity and by extension defining the future discourse on Africa philosophy. These are; Academic, Cultural-Nationalism, and Epistemic.[39]

Academic Aspect

This represents the intellectual confrontation between ethno philosophy and professional philosophy on the question of definition and nature of African philosophy. Technically one can argue that this was an easy escape route that provided the then budding African Philosophers with a punching bag in the absence of any credible philosophical literature of the moment. The immediate impact of this shade has been to leave a trail of literature that is so critical of ethno philosophy to the extent of making unrealistic demands concerning the nature of African philosophy.[40] Ochieng Odhiambo does not even seem to realise the equivocal nature of the term philosophy in this period. One thing is that he has never stated his stand on the credibility of ethno philosophy where sadly sage philosophy seems to taking African philosophy. This idea in sage philosophy of over relying on the community to create a philosophy is absurd. The future of philosophy in Africa lies in individuals who are critical about the elements of culture and its dynamics whether this ties in and agrees with what

is culturally accepted is another matter. This demands that the African philosopher be critical on and about African cultural values and be able to talk beyond cultural confines, a level that elevates one to a philosopher qua philosopher, not a pseudo philosopher that sage philosophy seem to be recommending. All the critiques of ethno philosophy between 1970-1980 period would fall here. But more significantly Ochieng Odhiambo works beginning with his doctoral thesis and all the subsequent publications are focussed on the academic angle.[41]

Cultural Nationalism

This shade of sagacity is concerned with post independent African societies, especially the question of the negative impact of Western culture on Africa. According to Ochieng Odhiambo, the second phase or era in Odera's research on sage philosophy underpins this thought.[42] Reading Odera's "The Philosophical Roots of Culture in Kenya"[43] gives one the feeling that Odera's intention was to define the fundamental principles that underlie cultures of Kenya. Though not clear what Odera aimed to do here can easily be classified as culture philosophy. This is another instance of equivocation on the term philosophy as it is used in the phrase philosophy in Africa. This effectively takes over the duty previously performed by ideological nationalistic theory. It advocates African Nationalism, at the local cultural level, national and continental in which there is a 'progressive modernizing of African ideologies, values and institutions, within the framework of African culture.'[44] Gail Presbey's works on Africa philosophy has tended to lean towards sage philosophy. She can easily be interpreted as championing this aspect.[45]

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Epistemic Aspect

This aspect is concerned with storing traditional knowledge in African through the interpretive ability and assistance from trained researchers. The focus here is on traditional cultural themes, practices, their forms of knowledge creation generation and validation as well as techniques involved in appraising moral issues in society. This aspect of philosophic sagacity is involved in the generation and sustaining discussions on African themes through texts that reflect this reality. Sages are engaged on ethical as well as empirical issues as they occur and influence social practice. At best this aspect can qualify African moral philosophy. [46] The trouble with this aspect is its over reliance on mythologies. It is not clear what aspects of myths have cognitive value and which ones do not.

Going by the above one realizes the emptiness of philosophic sagacity. It lacks the liberative spirit that will unchain African philosophy from the structures of Western literary imperialism. As it is conceived and structured the movement from sage philosophy to philosophic sagacity was simply about semantics. It lacks the philosophical drive and power of generating and infiltrating the lives and literary disciplines in Africa. It is this that will change the course of Philosophy in Africa to focus on Africa by African and for Africans. This leads us to a discussion on hermeneutics.

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5.5 Hermeneutics in African Philosophy: Challenges for the Future

Here our fundamental problem is to seek to understand the perennial question of the relevance of the theoretical vocation to the practical needs and requirements of a postcolonial Africa. In Africa, the challenges are both of theoretical and practical nature. The future of philosophy in African can only be relevant if it can be appropriated and utilized to engage the conundrums of socio-political existence of post colonial Africans. This will give meaning and create relevance in African philosophy. It will revitalise the theoretical study of philosophy which will in turn support the practical realities of African societies. We discussed the general assumptions of hermeneutics. Here we seek to demonstrate that this s holds the key to the future of philosophy in Africa.

Discourse of Horizon in African Philosophy

Tsenay tackles two compelling themes in his work, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*.[47] The two are;

1. The enigma of present day realities in post colonial Africa. By this Tsenay, is decrying the state of affairs that stand in sharp contrast with the promises and expectations that followed the struggle and attainment of nominal independence by Africans. The realities of an independent Africa are that the gap between the hoped for ideality of African peoples and the lived African realities are worlds apart. The lived realities are harsh, characterised by unending crises, endemic poverty, political decay and social maladjustment.

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2. The second theme is concerned with the theoretical imperatives that these harsh conditions bear on the practice and orientation of contemporary African philosophy. In other words, how African philosophy fares in the future will entirely depend on how it struggles and confronts theses African existential conditions.

The historical antecedents of the present conditions in Africa are such that Europe violently destroyed indigenous cultures, negated the historicity and humanity of the indigenes, and modelled Africa, on the basis of an alien historicity and specific instruments of the colonial conquering power. The modelled Africa wore the gowns of Western civilization, adopted political entities and forms of social organization that reflected this historicity.

At independence Africa inherited theses institutional structures, the political and normative theories that were alien to the metaphysics of African societies. This struggle for independence was therefore only half won, since the institutions of oppression about which the struggle revolved remained intact. In turn, these colonial residues helped in creating maladaptive social institutional frameworks and subsequently sustained the continued political, cultural and intellectual subordination of Africans to the hegemonic West, making Africans susceptible to Western metaphysical traditions and values. The net results were to have African values, metaphysical and material life to be influenced and shaped by European categories. This is a state of unfreedom.[48] Since this state of unfreedom is deeply rooted African experience of colonial domination, it becomes not only necessary to

interrogate this, but also offer remedial alternatives that will rid Africa of the same. This requires a critical re thinking and remodelling of the African social realities out of the current confines of Eurocentric frameworks that deny Africa an independent existence. For Tsenay, this is the theoretical imperative for African philosophy. But this unmasking and rejection of maladaptive social, cultural and intellectual institutions singularly are not the raison deter for the African philosopher.[49] The African philosopher should confront and reflect on the lived experiences of the African peoples giving the contemporary African new dimension and perspectives of defining, working out new concepts and self images that are in consonant with human and emancipatory hopes for Africa. What does this mean?

5.6 Conclusion

We have raced the journey of African philosophy. We have established that there are very serious and fundamental flaws in the way African philosophy is placed, both at theoretical level and practical level. Left at this level would imply philosophy in Africa does not stand a chance of projecting into the future and yet it is mandatory that it does. One false approach that has tended to propel philosophy in Africa into the future has been hijacked by anthropology and claims to new attempts to understand African culture. Just like discourse on African philosophy was hijacked at inception in the name of exposing elements of African culture, theological and anthropological activities have to a large extend invaded departments of philosophy in African institutions and are now firmly in the drivers' seat. They are charged with moving African philosophy into the future. This must be resisted at all costs.

NOTES

[1] Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris Presence Africaine 1959

[2] Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, 2nd ed.*, Bloomington nd Indianapolis , Indiana University Press, 1996; V Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, Bloomington and Indiana, Indian University Press, 1988;

[3] See: Pauline Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myths and Reality* (London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1983), p. 47; Henry Odera Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary Africa Philosophy.* (Nairobi: Shirikon Publishers, 1990), p. 50-52; Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Jay M. Van Hook, "African Philosophy: Its Quest for Identity", in *Quest* 7 (1993).

[4] Kwasi Wiredu, op. cit. p. 13

[5] See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* , Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p24; Richard Shweder 'Post Nietzschean Anthropology : The Idea of Multiple Objective Worlds' in *Relativism : An Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed., Michael Krausz, Notre Dame , University of Notre Dame, pp45-7

[6] See David Wong, *Three Kinds of Incommensurability in Relativism, : Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed., Michael Krausz, Notre Dame, Notre Dame University Press, 1989, p89

[7] See Hountondji op cit p72; H Odera Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy* op cit p13

[8] Research started at the University of Nairobi on Sage Philosophy with the aim of identifying individuals in traditional Africa who are critical independent thinkers, who guide their thoughts and judgment by the power of reason an in born insight.

[9] This perspective is borrowed heavily from Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: a Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997,
pp45-46

[10] See Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1959, pp44,49

[11] See Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan, Ed *Modes of Thought: Thinking in Western and Non Western Societies*, London, Faber and Faber pp13-61; Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 37-50

[12] Macintyre Alasdair Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucius and Aristotle about the Virtues, in *Culture and Modernity: East –West Philosophic Perspectives*, ed., Elliot Deutsch Honolulu University of Hawaii Press, 1991; 104-123

[13] See Wiredu, *Philosophy an and African Culture* op cit pp100-101

[14] H Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy: In Search of an Ethical Minimum*, Nairobi, EA EP, 1997, pp184-185

[15] F Ochieng Odhiambo, 'The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity,' in *Philosophia Africana*, vol.9, No.1, March, 2006, p17; H Odera Oruka, Sage Philosophy,: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy, Nairobi ACTS Press, 1991, p18

[16] Dr William Ammo was born in Axim, South West Ghana, in the 18th century. His philosophical career took place in Germany between 1730 and 1740.For a brief biography, see Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, pp111-114; see also F Ochieng Odhiambo, The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity, op cit p31

[17] Strangely, sage philosophy or philosophic sagacity is only vibrant among very few scholars at or closely connected with the Department of Philosophy, University of Nairobi. Though many students both at undergraduate and post graduate have written on the topic, these works have yet to see the light of publication. But one can consult H Odera Oruka, ed., *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, Nairobi, ACTS Press, 1991,(one may also refer to its European edition, Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill Publishers, 1990; H Odera Oruka, 'Four Trends in Current African Philosophy,' in Alwin Deimer, ed., *Philosophy in the Present Situation in Africa*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978; O Odera Oruka , 'Sagacity in African Philosophy,' in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.23, No. 4 (Dec-1983); F Ochieng Odhiambo, *The Significance of Philosophic*

Sagacity in African Philosophy (PhD, Thesis University of Nairobi,1994); Gail Presbey, 'The Wisdom of African Sages', in *New Political Science*, Vol. 21, No 1 1999, DA Masolo, 'Narratives and Moral Perspectives: Conversations with Luo Sages' in *Sapina: a Bulletin of the Society for African Philosophy in North America, (An African Practice of Philosophy)*, vol. X, No. 2:1997:249-64, Sunday Oseghare, *Relevance of Sagacious Reasoning in African Philosophy,((A PhD Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1985)*.

[18] H Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*, op cit p33.

[19] Ibid pp 33-34

[20] See Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*, op cit, pp35-6; Kai Kresse Sagacious Reasoning : Henry Odera in memoriam, ,Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997, p107

[21] Peter Bodunrin, The Question of African , in *Philosophy, 56, Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, April,1981:161-179

[22] Our interpretation may seem to contradict that of Fred, Ochieng Odhiambo. But in all honesty, Ochieng Odhiambo chose to see Bodunrin in the negative, a premise which he subsequently based all his arguments. See F Ochieng Odhiambo, The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity, op cit. p 18. The Reader is alerted to check with the general assumption of His PhD thesis titled The Significance of Philosophic Sagacity in Africa, op cit 1994.

[23] Odera Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*, Nairobi, Shirikon Publishers, 1990, pp4-5.

[24] H Odera Oruka, Sage Philosophy op cit, pp33-34

[25] Ibid, p48

[26] Ibid p45

[27] See Odera Oruka, Sage Philosophy, op cit p41; Kai pp104-105; Anthony Sunday Oseghare p198; F E A Owakah Sage Philosophy: Obstacles and Challenges to Philosophical Discourse in Africa,' 3rd Odera Oruka Memorial Lectures UoN, 1999, p8

[28] Besides Odera Oruka, Fred Ochieng Odhiambo is perhaps the single most contributors to sage philosophy. He however argues that by calling this theory Philosophic sagacity there is something seriously philosophically credible that is retained that was previously lacking in sage philosophy. See F Ochieng Odhiambo, 'The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity' in *Philosophia Africana*, Vol. 9 No. 1 March, 2006; F. Ochieng-Odhiambo, *The Significance of Philosophic Sagacity in African Philosophy*, (PhD Thesis, University Of Nairobi, 1994), F Ochieng Odhiambo, The Evolution of Sagacity: The Three Stages of Oruka's Philosophy, in *Philosophia Africana*, Vol. 5, No 1 March,2002

[29] F Ochieng Odhiambo The Evolution of Sagacity: The Three Stages of Oruka's Philosophy, op cit p25

[30] Ibid

[31] H Odera Oruka, 'Mythologies as African Philosophy', in *Sagacious Reasoning: Odera Oruka in Memoriam* Frankfurt, Peter Lang, A Grnnes, &Kai Kresse, eds p34; see also Odera, *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*

[32] H Odera Oruka, Four Trends in Current African Philosophy, in *Contemporary Trends in African Philosophy*, op cit p48 H Odera Oruka , Sagacity in African Philosophy, 1983, pp41, 48

[33] Ochieng Odhiambo Evolution of Sagacity: The Three Stages of Oruka's Philosophy op cit p34

[34] H Odera Oruka, 'sagacity in development in H Odera Oruka ed , *Sage philosophy*, op cit pp 41

[35] ibid p57

[36] See DA Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, op cit., p194

[37] See F Ochieng Odhiambo 'the evolution of Sage Philosophy', Op cit pp26-31, 34

[38] ; F. Ochieng-Odhiambo, "The Significance of Philosophic Sagacity in African Philosophy", (PhD Thesis, University Of Nairobi, 1994, p87

[39] See Fred Ochieng Odhiambo The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity op cit. pp17-20

[40] See Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, op cit pp45-7

[41] See Ochieng Odhiambo all publications by OO

[42] F Ochieng Odhiambo, The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity, op cit p21

[43] H Odera Oruka, unpublished research proposal presented to the ministry of education, Kenya, 1976, p9

[44] F Ochieng Odhiambo, The Tripartite in Philosophic Sagacity, op cit p21

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[45] See among others, Gail Presbey, 'The Wisdom of African Sages', in *New Political Science*, Vol. 21, No 1 1999. Equally Gail Presbey has engaged in a lot of research on African sages whose results are yet to be published.

[46] There has of late been a lot of interest generated by the desire to collect and analyse the works of famous poets among the Swahili speaking communities at the Kenyan coast. I am aware of efforts by DA Masolo and Kai Kresse in particular. I am eagerly looking forward to this.

[47] Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, New York & London, Rutledge, 1994

[48] ibid 56-58

[49] Ibid 62

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings and Conclusion

In this chapter, we wish to summarise the important finding that arose out of this study as well as present recommendations arising from the study.

In the present study, we sought to address and examine the problem of identity in African philosophical discourse and the challenges that confront the establishment of a culture of philosophy in Africa. Based on our findings, we sought to speculate on the futures and possibilities available for African philosophers.

From our analysis we have noted that as presently constituted, African philosophy is poorly equipped for this onerous duty of serving Africa, African culture and African peoples. The definitional problem has preoccupied a fair share of the African philosopher's time at the expense of more important issues that would contribute to the development of philosophy in Africa. Yet, this is an existential question, beyond which nothing other than asserting the identity and resolving the theoretical and methodological problems will save the day for philosophy in Africa. We noted further that when confronted with European racism and the dilemma in which African philosophical discourse finds itself in, the African becomes apologetic.[1] African philosophers should address and confront critical issues that add value and revitalise the weaknesses within African culture[2], avoid discourse of confrontation, assert

and mediate emancipatory possibilities through interpretive ability of African cultural values, categories and symbols. On the contrary, a culture of philosophy cannot take off arising from the challenges that face discourse on philosophy in Africa. Having said this, we came to the conclusion that;

1. Discourse and literature in African philosophy is conceived in and from a Western cultural perspective.

2. The impact of ideology on the conception of meaning in ideas and claims on Africa and African peoples, their thinking, techniques of knowledge creation and validation cannot be underestimated.

3. The development of a culture of philosophy in Africa is hindered by challenges that are;

    a. Methodological

    b. Linguistic

    c. Theoretical

    d. Participative

Methodological Challenges

The six theories in African philosophy have served their duty as guide and frame of reference for discourse and studies in African philosophy. But clearly, there is no attempt at transcending the basic claims as presented by Odera Oruka. This has had the effect of limiting there theoretical basis and in the process undermined the development of theoretical efforts in African philosophy.

Linguistic Challenges

From the study, we noted that language in African philosophy is alien to the sociological and human experiences in Africa. That this language formulates schemas, concepts, and linguistic categories that are unknown to Africa. Through this it presents a reality that is unknown to Africans. So long as this language is not based on an African cultural and epistemological axis, Africa and Africans will not benefit from the practice of this philosophy.

Theoretical Challenges

Due to linguistic problems, philosophy in Africa has moved to a level where individuals want to develop a critical discourse without having cleared the theoretical huddles. Thus, philosophy in Africa is moving to second level discourse without establishing and distinguishing as a human theoretical effort separate from African culture which ought to form the basis and provide raw material for the African philosopher. The danger is increased anthropological and theological activities which easily pass as philosophy. Addressing this theoretical problem is paramount and fundamental for the African philosophy.

Challenges of participation and participants

As is presently constituted, it is not clear who qualifies to comment on philosophical matters in Africa and who is not. This study analyzed texts that claim philosophical relevance to Africa. Our conclusion is that anyone can arrogate themselves philosophical competence when matters of philosophical interest arise. Our study has demonstrated that besides this having a historical genesis, the desire to identify who an African is and what constitutes African

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culture and thought patterns has contributed to this situation. Thus, Western travellers, missionaries, explorers interacting with Africans on completely different duties find it very comfortable and take it as their secondary duty to explain the nature of African mind and society. This tends to blur the findings of the expert, since the expert and non-experts generate information and hence discourse on African philosophy. We further discovered that in Africa, there is a serious confusion between philosophy, ideology but most importantly religion and religious practices. This calls for concerted efforts by both trained professional philosophers and men and women in society who are able to handle second level discourse to create awareness on the speculative and prescriptive value of philosophy and in particular how this will impact positively on African culture.

6.2 Recommendations

Arising from the above, we are compelled to say that there is a serious felt need for research in interpretive understanding of concepts and categories that influence the practice of philosophy in Africa. As presently constituted, and given the prevailing theories and methodological approaches within African philosophy, *viz*, ethno-philosophy, professional philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic-ideological, literary-artistic, and hermeneutical, one is left in no doubt that the interpretive capacity of the hermeneutical approach has not been harnessed to the maximum. It is this that holds the future for Philosophy in Africa. As a specific system hermeneutics deals with the development and study of interpretation and understanding of texts and systems of meaning. Text here extends beyond written documents to include

oral, human behavior and experiences, artistic works, including language and patterns of speech, social institutions, and ritual behavior (such as religious ceremonies, political rallies, football matches, and rock concerts). The problem of identity in African studies and culture in general is traceable to the misinterpretations that subjected African identity and reality to conceptual understanding that do not reflect African sociological and historical realities.

We argue here that inquiry into the meaning and import of cultural and social phenomena, through understanding the point of view and 'inner life' of the an insider, or the first-person perspective will serve to correct the sociological and historical mistakes that Africa and African studies have been subjected to. In practice hermeneutics involves cultivating the ability to understand things from somebody else's point of view, and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlook. This practical dimension makes hermeneutics become a process of applying this understanding to interpreting meaning, which may either be historic or contemporary.

Our emphasis on hermeneutics is borne out of the fact that besides sage philosophy few if any in African philosophical practice know its fundamentals. Suffice to say that the essence of hermeneutic engagement is to deal with introspective attitudes that are intrinsically grounded in issues of human existence, by reflecting on and discussing matters that are specific within a socio-cultural and political environment. This, for African philosophy would mean the indigenization of philosophical awareness within the confines African cultural history. But this can only be done by understanding the

parameters that define and underpin Western hegemonic paradigms. This should be recognized to avoid accusations of projecting African racism. To do this is in essence to define and interpret African values that are part and parcel of the duty of hermeneutics endeavour.

Our recommendation is influenced by the fact that, this approach can perform both the anthropological task of collecting data as well as the Philosophical task of analysis and interpretation. The result would be to abandon ethnology and sage philosophy approaches as avenues though which we get to cultural data on African philosophy. This future research will thus bridge the gap that has perennially existed between the data collected and the subsequent analysis and interpretation this data is subjected to. Here, we stand a chance of removing the cobwebs of anthropology in African philosophy.

A number of policy issues have also arisen in the process of our study. We thus wish to recommend that the study of philosophy be made available at two levels:

1. To begin at Primary school which will should among other activities include children's philosophy

2. All students pursuing higher education to have a compulsory study of Critical Thinking and basic courses in philosophy.

Our recommendation is influenced by the knowledge that if and when satisfactorily handled, the study of philosophy will foster critical and analytic skills, and the spirit of inquiry which is a prerequisite for the establishment of

a culture of critique which in turn will lay a basis for founding a critical discourse that will encourage discursive and reflective efforts. This will increase the cultural awareness of African students and in particular the peculiar nature and position of African culture.

Secondly, it will increase students' ability to reflect on and critically articulate issues arising from within their social and cultural environment. But more important the study of philosophy will avail the learner a broader perspective of looking at and interpreting their social-political environment. Our experience in the study of philosophy shows that it defines a people, their cultural perspective, and a justification of their social and existential realities including articulating this to the world. It not only states who they are but also explains them to the world by providing a rationale for their culture, history and human as well as social experiences

In our efforts to project on the possibilities of the future of African philosophy one has to confront certain fundamental questions that are specific to an African philosopher much of which are cultural in nature. Among this is the question philosophy and development in Africa. In this era of technology transfer, Africa appropriates technology developed elsewhere under a different value system. Analysis and the impact of technology to on values is one are philosophy can serve African peoples by formulating and recommending values that are not culturally offensive but equally modifying African culture to abandon anachronistic values and practices in keeping with changing technological trends in the world.

This literature will enrich Africa's process of emancipation and the medium for the same. We recognize that the colonial state was established through the instrument of force of violence or threat of it. Similarly the process of redeeming Africa from Western hegemony was processed through violence or the threat of it. But equally the colonial state was a very complex project. The African philosopher has a duty of appropriating these hegemonic paradigms and praxis, not because they are inherently superior, but for the purpose of understanding their logic and epistemic value. The problem for the African philosopher is to prescribe the best method available for freeing Africa and thereby moving into conditions of genuine humanity for all races in the world. In other words philosophy in Africa should found systems of equilibrium that lead to global justice and in which Africans participate as both generators and consumers of knowledge, subjects and objects of study.

As we conclude our remarks should not be misconstrued to be advocating for a stable system of thought for Africa, one that is objective and applicable both in the public as well as private life. Equally we should not be misconstrued to be advocating for a philosophy that will provide only rational answers to the questions of life and existence. African philosophers should not reinvent the wheels. Lessons from the history of Western philosophy should be used as guides to future discourse on philosophy in Africa. In its theoretical nature philosophy dose not reach fixed and settled conclusions on any subject under investigation. If Nicholas Rescher's warning is anything to go by, then,

> *"We look in vain for one consolidated and generally conceded item of philosophical knowledge ... one philosophical fact on which the community has reached consensus."*[3]

Equally cautionary is Ludwig Wittgenstein voice that philosophy does not change the world; it "leaves everything as it is."[4]

For the future of African philosophy, it may become necessary to focus our philosophical investigations and consequently application in the resolution of cognitive, normative and practical issues of African social concern.

In spite of the various shortcomings of the hermeneutical theory, methodological or otherwise, the African philosopher should seize and apply cognitive accounting in the public arena. Philosophy is about raising consciousness which makes aware of various problems as well as issues that bear on us individually and collectively. The African philosopher should bring this valuable tool of analysis to reason and carefully reflect on the practical problems of life and existence for the African of 21st century and beyond. This will make these issues sufficiently clear for effective appropriation. Note that, besides advocating for prescriptive efforts, the African philosophers should also be equipped with methodological tools necessary for regenerating African societies. Let them delineate issues; let them clarify problems; pinpoint the questions that must be addressed, and let them examine what sort of considerations that must be taken into account. This reminds me when I joined college; my professor always warned that as a philosopher, when you meet a contradiction, you must make a distinction. This is the duty of the future African philosopher.

NOTES

[1] See D A Masolo *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* op cit p26; See further discourse on Negritude. In particular, Aime Cesaire *Return to My Native Land*, Op cit

[2] See Kwasi, Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, op cit pp1-3

[3] Nicholas Rescher "Is Philosophy a Guide to Life?" in *The Applied Turn in Contemporary Philosophy* ed. Michael Bradie & Thomas Attig , Bowling Green,BGSU, 1983,p3

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* vol. 1 Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1968, p69

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