

The Relevance of Odera Oruka's Political Thought to Early Twenty-First Century Kenya

(Abstract)

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The late Prof. Odera Oruka recognised that while his sage philosophy project was important as a liberating venture, African philosophers had other important facets of inquiry to attend to. In particular, he called for more African philosophers to delve into political philosophy, and led by example, spending considerable time and effort grappling with strategies for improving the quality of governance in African countries. This paper employs the analytical and critical techniques of philosophic inquiry to identify insights from Oruka's political philosophy that can be used to formulate a sound rationale for Kenya's democratisation. It also identifies shortcomings in Oruka's political thought, and suggests ways in which current and future philosophers could remedy them. In particular, the paper critically examines the key concepts of liberty, democracy, nationhood and justice as conceived by Oruka, and argues that a major deficiency in his thought relates to the inadequate attention that he gave to the issue of inter-ethnic relations in Kenya.