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Abstracts

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Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Civilisation of the Universal

Kahiudi C. Mabana

One among the concepts strongly defended by Léopold Sédar Senghor is what he called the civilization of the universal, which forms an essential component of his thought. This concept has been thoroughly commented and, at times, wrongly or controversially interpreted. My approach consists of a personal reflection on the backgrounds of Senghor's thought. First of all I will deal with Senghor's conception of Negritude and what it implies in terms of black identification, recognition of Africa as birthplace of races. Then I will examine the civilization of the universal as defended by Senghor and its link to the thought of Father Teilhard de Chardin, a French palaeontologist. Finally I will present the passionate debate on his work and thought. Senghor was among the African writers and thinkers probably the most admired, the most awarded throughout the world, but also the most criticized and hated.

The Concept of Active Consciousness in Marcien Towa

Cheikh Moctar Bâ

It is a question of seeing through the study of certain philosophical positions of Marcien Towa how philosophical activity is an experience of freedom, an active consciousness in motion. Indeed, in Marcien Towa, freedom is the result of a process of rediscovery of self that animates the subject aware of its existence in the world. The unveiling of the essence of me is a necessity or an imperative whose effectiveness is the result of questioning the essence of the self that is reborn from its treating myself as a goal, as a consciousness of freedom. This is where there is reconciliation of the self with itself, the advent of a new subject that can take care of themselves as free and autonomous entity and that supports his destiny.

The African Aesthetic Experience: Current Situation and Philosophical View

Issiaka-P.L. Lalèyê

Thanks to the current communication and information technologies, it is now possible to create a virtual space where a sincere dialogue could take place between African and non-African philosophers. All of them were educated to free thinking and to respecting the freedom of their interlocutors. This is the way how they will be able to build not only a *philosophia africana* but also the African philosophy.

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Transcending Cosmopolitanism

Mogobe Bernard Ramose

In general, discussion about cosmopolitanism is predicated on the assumption of community either already existing or yet to be realised. A common feature of this assumption is that community represents the boundary of "us" inclusion and exclusion of "the other". Accordingly, the strife to reach out to "the other" constitutes the quest for the cosmos – order – and its realisation is cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is thus based on the ontology of opposition tending towards synthesis. The thesis defended here is that the ontology of boundary as a coupling point and not a moment of the exclusion of "the other" is a necessary reaffirmation as well as complement of "us". This ontology, supported by polylogue among the peoples and cultures of our planet, is the means to transcend cosmopolitanism and constitute a planetary human community.

Ubuntu

Munyaradzi Felix Murove

In this article I am arguing that the concept of Ubuntu which means humanness was articulated against a situation of the dehumanization that was meted to the Africans during the eras of slavery and colonialism. It is further argued that since Ubuntu implies character qualities such as compassion, kindness, courtesy and respect for other persons, the ethic of Ubuntu remains indispensable to the reconstruction of post-colonial African societies. Ubuntu is indispensable to the post-colonial African quest for an identity in the spheres such as the public sector and the business sector because Ubuntu is mostly valued as the ideal for human conduct in all spheres of life. Lastly, I have also argued that because of its relational worldview and individual ontology, Ubuntu connected with the concept of Ukama implies that human existence cannot be separated from the generality of existence.

Attempts to create an Inter-ethnic and Inter-generational 'National Culture' in Kenya

Gail M. Presbey

The challenges of building community based on a common identity that also respects differences has two different kinds of chasms to cross. There is the division of ethnic groups, and there is also the generational gap. Given recent problems of ethnic violence that broke out during the December 2007 elections, can contemporary Kenyans build community, coming to common understanding with others on issues such as value and identity? This is not a new problem. It has often been expressed as the need to develop a common Kenyan "national culture." After a survey including Okot p'Bitek, Frantz Fanon, Bethwell Ogot and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's contribution to the topic in the context of the 1960s and 70s, I will then go on to discuss the contribution of Kenyan Philosophy professor Henry Odera Oruka, who was greatly influenced by the ongoing discussions regarding national culture when he began his sage philosophy project – a project he clearly described as being able to play a role in the creation of Kenyan national culture. I explore some of Odera Oruka's unpublished work on this topic. Chaungo Barasa has continued this project. I move on to survey how current academics in Kenya are working to describe and forge national values as a meaningful alternative to Kenyan government ongoing endeavors to promote culture as a tourist commodity.

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Return to the Source: Asres Yenesew and the West

Messay Kebede

This paper discusses the ideas of Asres Yenesew, who was a leading clerical scholar during Haile Selassie's reign. Frustrated by the marginalization of Ethiopia despite the preservation of its independence, Asres identifies the introduction of Western education as the main culprit and derives the economic satellization of Ethiopia from the cultural ascendancy of the West. As a remedy, he proposes a return to the source by which alone Ethiopia can again recenter itself and make choices in accordance to its interests. He supports his proposal by expounding the empowering forces of some important components of the traditional system of social organization and cultural beliefs. The paper underlines the revolutionary message of Asres's discourse, but also shows how the timidity of his political stand singularly diminished its resonance.

Solidarity and Human Insecurity: Rethinking Solidarity from the Point of View of Africa

Tanella Suzanne Boni

The practice of family solidarity is a fact in African societies even if the people are facing all kinds of risks from an early age, before they exert their activity to take charge. There is lack of civil protections as "social security" which covers individuals from illness and other risks thus transforming African societies into scenes where violence and social insecurity reigns. Under these conditions, the freedom of the individual is in question as well as the protection of citizens, taking into account the risks to life, work, education, health, other environment. The social role to be played by the rule of law is also in question. But the bond of solidarity is primarily ethical. It binds one human to another, beyond the laws and social institutions.

Black Feminist Me: Answering the Question 'Who Do I Think I Am'

Kristie Dotson

In this paper, I offer a partial picture of my conceptual location as a US black feminist, professional philosopher and, by doing so, illustrate one of the ways Africana philosophy is being shaped and engaged. I offer a portrait of my conceptual location by identifying a value shared by some 'anti-theory' black feminists and some Africana professional philosophers in the US that ultimately recommends a consistent engagement in black feminist/philosophical praxis.

Black Existence in Philosophy of Culture

Lewis Gordon

This article examines an Africana philosophy of culture of black existence through, after offering a critique of a theodicy of textuality and social reality, exploration of the construction of "problem people," of people whose existence, marked by blackness, has been treated as a challenge to reason and the search for knowledge in the modern world. As Africana philosophy raises concerns of philosophical anthropology, philosophy of freedom, and a metacritique of reason, it offers, as well, a case for the central importance of philosophy of culture in modern and late modern thought.

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A Study in Africana Existential Ontology: Rum as a Metaphor of Existence

Clevis Headley

This paper investigates the idea of rum as an ontology of life. More specifically, it explores the rum as metaphor in the context of Africana existential ontology. Here it is argued that rum drinking can serve as the basis for understanding and conceptualizing certain basic structures of human existence in the Caribbean mode of existence. In pursuing these tasks, ontology is not construed as the study of the kinds of entities that exist; rather, ontology is given an existential twist in the sense of focusing on patterns of human existence, as well as practices that are indicative of human creative agency.

The Multiple Politics of Philosophy in Africa: Emancipation, Postcolonialism, Hermeneutics, and Governance

Nkolo Foé

The purpose of this paper is to present some recent main evolutions which affected Philosophy in Africa. These evolutions are marked by the decline of ideals which emerged during the Bandung era. Such ideals concerned Liberation and Emancipation, Progress. This supposed the future affirmation of Africa as a strategic pole of power. In this perspective, Philosophy and social sciences had an important role to play. There was a consensus on the fact that philosophy could be an instrument of liberation and emancipation and a major factor of social, cultural and political change.

But new paradigms emerged with globalization and its cultural logics known as postmodernism/postcolonialism. For instance, this conducted some thinkers to substitute hermeneutics, interpretation and language to the theories based on the intelligibility of the real and the necessity to transform it. This explains on the one hand the delegitimation of some main categories of modernity such as Reason, History, Nation, State, Emancipation, Progress, etc., and on the other hand, the affirmation of new alternatives on terms of Desire, Fluidity, Hybridism, Diversity, Ethnicity, all crowned by the theory of Empire. In this paper, I try to confront these recent trends in African Philosophy and the earlier trends which emerged from the fight against colonialism and imperialism in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

African Philosophy: The State of its Historiography

J. Obi Oguejiofor

Departing from Charles Taylor's statement that philosophy is inescapably historical, the paper tries to examine several attempts to write the history of African philosophy. It notes that contrary to the experience of many other regional philosophies there is yet no comprehensive history of African philosophy which takes full account of its the different spectrums and periods. A good number of authors who have tried to recount the history of African philosophy have dwelt only on aspects or periods of that philosophy thus precluding the advantage of presenting African philosophy as a coherent whole. An examination of the weakness and the strong points of some of these works leads to the assertion of the necessity of comprehensive history of African philosophy, as well as a weighing of the possible reasons why no serious attempt have been made in that direction. Writing such a work will be the last complement of the History of Africa.

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Textures of African Thought: Analyticity and Apologia

Sanya Osha

The debates concerning what ought to be the nature and orientations of African philosophy are long drawn-out. These debates reflect the different conceptual approaches to the invention of contemporary practices of African philosophy between Anglophone and Francophone modes of philosophizing. This article reflects on these differences as well the continuing problems of creating modern African philosophical traditions. In doing so, it demonstrates why some methodological presuppositions are inadequate in grappling with some forms of sociality and the more general dilemmas of modernity and also applauds the efforts of some contemporary African thinkers who have adopted a multidisciplinary approach to overcome internal discursive limitations within the field.

One More Story: Racial Relations and Stereotypes in Brazilian Literature

Paulo Vinícius Baptista da Silva

The article deals with race relations in Brazil, analyzing how adult and children's literature in Brazil has worked to maintain and update the "Prospero complex". The article is guided by the hypothesis that the main challenge is to mover narratives, literature and textbooks to go beyond the homogeneity of a single story based on white as representative "natural" of the human species that discursively places the "other" as "deviant"; from the hegemony of the white hierarchy for plural discourses. In Brazilian literature racial hierarchies are largely profuse and profound. The analysis of "the Negro as an object" indicates the presence of some striking black characters as the few characters with a tendency to subordination and inferiority. The alternatives are linked to the "black literature" that demonstrates richness and strength but at the same time this literature is maintained as "marginal." In children's literature the process is very similar, observing continuous forms of hierarchy of whites as superior and blacks as inferior. The article discusses the production of alternatives and other new literary discourses and the need for teacher training.

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