

African Philosophy and the Search for an ‘African Philosopher’: The Demise of a Conflictual Discourse

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Abstract

There are varying and contending reasons why there comes to be “African Philosophy.” Part of these reasons, as Kaphagawani posits, is premised on the challenges by anthropology, and the political factor as a derivative of the experience from colonialism (Kaphagawani, 1998:86). These challenges, as Kaphagawani asserts, gave birth to the postcolonial search for identity in Africa. Following Kaphagawani, Masolo contends that “as part of the dominant themes of postcolonial theory is the issue of “identity”. But due to the fact that methodological separatism and disciplinary unity cannot exist side by side, and because, in the quest for re-subjectivizing Africa, we cannot have an identity that is peculiarly African; hence, identity is impossible” (Masolo, 1997, pp. 283-285). Nonetheless, there tend to be agreement among scholars of another school on African philosophy like Achebe, Outlaw, Cesaire, Soyinka, Makinde, Cabral, Oladipo, Irele, and so forth, that “the Western discourse on Africa and the response to such discourse” (Masolo, 1994, p.1) gave birth to various writings by some Africans on social and political issues.

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These issues, they assert, are sufficient to establish philosophical discourse in Africa. These issues, they say, are necessary to affirm the existential status of African philosophy. However, both schools fail to recognize the fact that any scholar need not necessarily be of African descent or blood, or reside in Africa before such scholar(s) should begin to write meaningfully on issues and some problems in African philosophy. This is possible in as much as there is an adequate understanding of the subject under discussion in African social, political or cultural condition. Nevertheless, it is this failure or weak-point that I shall explore in this paper.

Key Words: *Africa, African, African Philosophy, African Philosopher, Tribe, Race, Identity*

Introduction

The late twentieth century appears to be marked by a deep intellectual discomfort about the ways in which Western thought generally has succeeded in framing an understanding of the world of the Africans. This disease was aimed into concluding that the African understanding of their own world was not in existence prior to the Western invasion and the various aids they brought to Africa. One symptom of this disease revolves around the current philosophical debates which see either a dramatic end to, or a winding down from the Western concept of 'modernity' and discovery of what the Western thought calls 'others'. Thus, there was no 'modernity' in the 'others' as the Western thought seems to have explained and it was their contact they think, actually brought 'modernity' to the 'others'.

As a result, this study will afford us the opportunity to embark on an expository and short history of African Philosophy. It will further afford us the opportunity to have the understanding of who, in my perspective, qualify as an African philosopher. My argument will be based on the notion that anyone concerned with truth and accuracy about African philosophy should avoid using the term "African", "tribe" or "race" in characterizing who qualifies to participate in African philosophy and who qualifies to become an African philosopher. Also, one should be able to accept the fact that it is not

a matter of sufficiency that anyone who desires to write on topical and problematic issues in African philosophy does not need to be an 'African' by blood or race. This is not an attempt to deny the importance of cultural identity of Africa, various cultural identities within Africa, and African people found within that context. It is also worthy to note that it is not an attempt to deny the importance of the writings of anyone who is not an African by birth and origin on issues pertaining to the development of philosophy in Africa. This analysis will be accepted if and only if the writings of anyone who is not an African duly represent the social, political, cultural, scientific, and philosophical situations or conditions of the Africans.

A Short and Critical History of African Philosophy

Marlene Van Niekerk contends that "in the light of the history of anthropology and its mode of othering – which constitute a rationalization for the phases of colonial oppression – it ought not to be surprising that the debate about the term "African Philosophy" is an ongoing affair" (Niekerk, 1998, p.73). He further asserts that "it is debated precisely because the term "African Philosophy" also denotes an instance of essentialist or typological othering: it is a term that assumes "that there is a way of thinking or a conceptual framework that is uniquely African and which is at the same time radically unEuropean" (Niekerk, 1998, p.73). Niekerk concludes that this is how Oruka formulated the problem of essentialist or typological othering in a paper delivered at the 1978 symposium on "Philosophy in the Present Situation in Africa." Niekerk says that the term "others" which continues to be fiercely criticized is a sign that the time is long past that the "Other" and "their thinking" could be "arrested" and "held up" by the West as objects of study (Niekerk, 1998, p.73). For him, the terms "African Thinking" and "African Philosophy" would certainly not have had such a negative resonance if they did not have a history (Niekerk, 1998, p.53). It is from the basis of this history that many African scholars thought that the term "African Philosophy" started.

In line with Niekerk's analysis, Biakolo contends that "the relations between the knowing *subject* and its *object*, in any account of the epistemological process, have occupied the Western philosophy from the time of Plato, and most especially with the advent of both Cartesian

and Lockean empiricism. Although in the field of philosophy, the central concerns have been with the individual subject as such, it was not long before the influences of these interpretations of subject/object relations began to make themselves felt in the much younger discipline of anthropology” (Biakolo, 1998, p.1). However, in consonance with the pattern of growth and development of the new science of culture, Biakolo says, the determining factor here was “race” (Biakolo, 1998, p.1). What Biakolo is trying to analyze here is the way the anthropological understanding of the subject/object relations and differences has set out the method in which the West has come to use to carry out a study on the Africans and the way Africans have come to be seen as objects of study rather than being a subject that studies. This has also affected the manner in which Africans have also come to see or acknowledge themselves in relation to the Western attributes and cultural understanding. According to Biakolo, this anthropological attitude reveals ingenuity; but this (ingenuity) goes further to confirm the political project behind the Western construction of the cultural paradigms of the “Other” (Biakolo, 1998, p.1).

In his work, *“What is African Philosophy”*, Kaphagawani espouses the understanding of the way African Philosophy started (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.86). Following Wiredu, Kaphagawani maintains that “though “gathering momentum”, African Philosophy is, as accepted by philosophers in Africa, still in its embryonic stage” (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.1). Kaphagawani creates an understanding of allowing many flowers to blossom since we only want to promote debates, critical analyses, and self-criticism when grappling with the numerous issues in contemporary Africa which are amenable to philosophic traditions and not just to create traditions. He pointed out three evils that must be eschewed in order for constructive analyses, possible debates and critical analysis to come out of Africa, and these evils, Kaphagawani called them the names, *authoritarianism* (permanent control of all aspects of life, politics included that ensues people to do things against their will), *anachronism* (systems or principles outliving their suitability and utility), *supernaturalism* (the tendency to establish

supernatural foundations for a natural code of conduct) (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.86)

On the question “Why African Philosophy”, Kaphagawani highlighted the issues or conditions that gave rise to African philosophy. He maintains that the question “What is African Philosophy?” has preoccupied scholars in Africa for several decades now for basically two reasons. Firstly, the attempt to falsify certain anthropological thesis by Levy Bruhl, which denied Africans south of Sahara properties of ratiocination and its cognates due to the apparent primitiveness of these people’s mentality. That is, anthropologists of a Levy Bruhlian persuasion presented Africans as incapable of evolving a “scientific and reason-oriented culture.” Secondly, this centres on the colonization of Africa which led to post-colonial quest for an African identity. The way the Europeans colonized Africa led to the destruction of the mental culture of the Africans, and it is still making Africans to look for post-colonial identity. For Kaphagawani, the anthropological challenge and the colonial challenge are the factors which resuscitated or motivated, for good or ill, philosophers in Africa to ask the question, “What is African Philosophy?” (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.86)

As acknowledged by many philosophers or scholars in Africa, it can be seen that the history of African philosophy can be traced to the colonial dispensation and the evils it brought on Africa. In another way, the post-colonial quest for a separate African identity as different from the identity given by the West’s paradigm also contributed to the history of African philosophy. Thus, as pointed out by Kaphagawani, the quest for the post-colonial identity is solely responsible for this protracted dispute on the question of “Why African Philosophy”. The second reason for the debate or the dispute on the question of “Why African Philosophy”, Kaphagawani traced it to the very nature of the discipline of philosophy itself.

In other to understand and trace the origin of African philosophy, scholars like Kaphagawani, Bodunrin, Makinde, Oruka, Okpewho, Mudimbe, Kagame, Oladipo, Moses Oke, and a host of others acknowledged the types of philosophical frameworks which Africans used in identifying the different ways of doing African philosophy, and the theories of remaking

Africa. These methodologies they refer to as ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic-ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy. These are what they call, the approaches of doing African philosophy which the quest of identifying African philosophy has made these philosophers to recognize. Furthermore, he identified the classification of African philosophy into two different schemata. These classifications represent the four-rung Orukan framework which Okpewho and Nazombe serves as the founding philosophers. The classifications are “tradition-preserved”, “tradition-observed”, “tradition refined” and “tradition revised”. Apart from these classifications and ways of doing African philosophy, there are two fundamental assumptions/notions which underlie the knowledge of how to do African philosophy. These two ways Oladipo calls the ‘traditionalist’ and the ‘modernists’ understanding of African philosophy, while Hallen calls them the ‘culturalists’ and ‘universalists’ distinctions to doing African philosophy. They are what Oladipo and Hallen indirectly calls their theories of remaking Africa.

In addressing the four trends to doing African philosophy as different from the two assumptions by Oladipo and Hallen, Kaphagawani sees ethno-philosophy as a conception that sees African philosophy as communal thought . . . as opposed to seeing it as a body of logically argued thought of individuals. Ethno-philosophy is premised on the assumption that “there is a metaphysical system, and an ideology, embodied in the traditional wisdom, the institutions and the language of Africa” (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.89). For him, many anthropologists are attracted to this approach because of the conceptual problems that is embedded in it. They are the problems of authenticity and the problem of differences, which are attracted to ethno-philosophy. Philosophic sagacity, for Kaphagawani, is quite different from the ethno-philosophical approach. It underscores the thoughts of individuals in a community. It is a second-order philosopher, as conceived by Oruka. Nationalistic-ideological approach is a method which tries to evolve a new and, if possible, unique political theory based on the traditional African socialism and familyhood. Professional philosophy, on the other hand, sees what passes as African

philosophy as that which only is “engrained with argument and criticism” (Kaphagawani, 1998, p.95).

The critical understanding of the views of the philosophers that I have considered, is that, how do we understand their reportive tendencies which they gave in the light of what may actually be the original historical understanding of Africa? Secondly, can we say that the presentation of the historical condition of Africa is exactly the way these philosophers have given them to us? Thirdly, can we subscribe to the fact that there were no traces of philosophical tendencies in Africa before the Western anthropological study or invasion of Africa? If we subscribe to the fact that the West invented African orientation concerning philosophical discourse, it will suggest that there was no philosophical discourse in Africa prior to the European invasion, and that the anthropological study of the European anthropologists discovered Africa out of no-where. Similarly, does Africa still need to dwell on the post-colonial quest for an identity despite the fact that there are many cultures evolving in Africa?

Some of the questions raised above have been addressed by Makinde in his work “*African Philosophy: The Demise of a Controversy*” (Makinde, 2010). Makinde’s aim is not to replicate the tendencies of starting African philosophy all over again but to start doing African philosophy because there is genuinely African philosophy. For him, there is logic of modus ponens already embedded in the Yoruba oral language which signifies a philosophical tendency. Thus, we should no longer dwell on the question whether there is African philosophy or no African philosophy, but we should start doing it.

1. Varying Claims on Who Qualifies to be an African Philosopher

Varying discussions have ensued between philosophers in Africa and outside of Africa which has shown different views with respect to how to do African philosophy, and who qualifies to become African philosopher. If these varying discourses were taken as genuine, whose analysis amongst them will lead us to the authentic view concerning who qualifies to do African philosophy, and who qualifies to become African

philosopher? The exact answer that is needed or required, I think, will be difficult to assert. However, the provision of qualification, to begin with, has placed certain impending restrictions on any opinion that tend to differ on who qualifies as an African, and from the African perspective. There is another view which sees things from another perspective on who qualifies to do African philosophy. This view places a fundamental difference from who genuinely qualifies to become African philosopher. But this genuineness is difficult to arrive at. Here, the restriction is on who is an African, who is a non-African, who qualifies to do African philosophy, and in the final analysis who is to be called an African philosopher. No restriction should be adequate or sufficient to prevail upon who to help situate the African contextual problems. Thus, becoming an African philosopher, I think, is more paramount than being an African or doing or partaking in African philosophy. From the conceptual or literal point of view, doing African philosophy may be different from being an African philosopher. However, the aim of this study is to be able to help situate who qualifies to become an African philosopher. At the end, the study may suffer from a slippery slope or suffer from straw-man fallacy, but in any way that it may take, the attempt is worth paying the price.

1b. On the Question, Who Qualifies to be an African Philosopher?

Following Hountondji, in his work, *Ethnophilosophy and Its Critics*, Appiah contends that “by ‘African philosophy’ I mean set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans themselves and described as philosophical by their authors themselves” (Appiah, 1998, p.109). This description, I think, knowingly sidesteps what has been one of the cruces of philosophical debate in post-colonial black Africa. Appiah maintains that as we have puzzled over whether philosophers who happen to share a continent should for that reason be classified together, we have wondered, too, what sorts of intellectual activity should be called “philosophy” (Appiah, 1998, p.110). Appiah’s claim has helped in streamlining the qualification for doing African philosophy, and who qualifies to become African philosopher. I may, in a way, have to think that Appiah’s analysis renders Barry Hallen who have enormous works written concerning African discourse

in philosophy as unAfrican, while Oladipo, Makinde, Irele, Abimbola, Gbadegesin, Nyerere, and some other African philosophers of African descent as African philosophers. In any way that one may decide to look at it, it may be impossible to run away from slippery slope.

In trying to address the question “who is an African philosopher, or who qualifies to become an African philosopher”, we are left with no choice than to start by seeking to clarify the issues; “who is an African”, “what is philosophy” and “who ought to participate or write on contentious issues in African philosophy.” Perhaps, if we are able to understand these issues, we may conclude, in a way, to have an understanding into the nature of who qualifies to do African philosophy, and who qualifies to become African philosopher? We must be careful in making sure that we are not employing the European paradigm in ensuring that we get a definition for philosophy, Africa, and an African philosopher. We need to be careful that we do not get a European definition for who is an African. If John Stuart Mill had lived in Africa and wrote his work ‘*On Liberty*’ in Africa, ‘*On Liberty*’ would be by a ‘naturalized criterion’ or a ‘natural criterion’ qualifies as a work in African political philosophy. Perhaps, we may not want to answer it that way. Answering this question that way suggests the following; would thousands of books published every day in Africa (by African publishers) qualify as African philosophy? What ought to be the answer to the question who qualifies to become an African philosopher? It will be left to rigorous philosophical analysis.

It would be difficult to give an exhaustive analysis of who qualifies to become an African philosopher. This is premised on the nature of the problems that may be said to be embedded in such discourse. What is required in setting out who becomes an African philosopher (which is not really about the exhaustive study of the historical facts of the past or the attribution of people with “African-ness in them”) is a critical discourse in which reason and argument play a significant role. This is because we cannot, however, characterize philosophy simply as the discourse that applies to our folk beliefs based on the techniques of specific logic and contextualized reason. This is predicated on the view that academic philosophy has come to be defined by a canon of subjects as well as by its argumentative method. I am not trying to assert that every culture does

not have their views about what it is to have something related to concepts so peculiar to that culture alone. Nor am I saying that no culture has specific social norms as different from the other. Every culture has had views about what it is to have something different from others. Thus, there is, then, in every culture a folk philosophy (which may involve having folk scientific-empirical orientation and facts), and implicit in that folk philosophy are all (or many) of the concepts that academic philosophers have made central to their study in the West. Of course, there might not be in every society people who pursued a systematic critical conceptual inquiry, but at least in every culture there is work for a philosopher, should one come along to do.

There are many reasons for supposing that the task of knowing who is an African philosopher or who should be seen as African philosopher might be difficult. Many, besides for doubting that every society would come, without exogenous intervention, are said to take up the project. Nonetheless, there has been an exogenous intervention which has left people with Western philosophical training. Because they are Africans rooted at least to some degree in their traditional cultures, and, at the same time, intellectuals trained in the traditions of the West, they face a special attention. They may choose to borrow the tools of Western philosophy for their work. But if they wish to pursue such conceptual inquiries in the thought worlds of their own traditions, they are bound to do so with a highly developed awareness of the challenges of Western ideas. The only difference between philosophy in Africa and in Germany, or France or Britain is the format of the practice, but the theory and practice of the works done in Africa and elsewhere is conceived as closer to the traditions that remain strong in those regions or countries or continents.

Whoever qualifies to become an African philosopher should remember to share, of course, a vocabulary of key words that belongs to the language of the philosophical tradition – truth and meaning, and such a vocabulary should become a referent and a tradition to follow. Does this mean or suggest that African philosophy cannot or should not or ought not to be done using a foreign language? A conclusion based on necessity is somewhat difficult but easy to assert. This is because almost, except few

African countries were colonized and foreign language has also become part of their representative identity. For an outsider to become an African philosopher, this fuss may seem preposterous: what is at stake, after all, is only the right to label “philosophy”. The claim to philosophy is the claim to what is most important, most difficult, and most fundamental anywhere in the world. And the enduring power of that claim is reflected in the commonest response from any inquisitive philosopher, be it French, or a German, or an American, or an African in his/her nativity. What Appiah points out, is the fact that “orality is inconsistent with the philosophical tradition of writing and it is also inconsistent with the demands of what Althusser calls “science”: writing liberates the individual mind “to make innovations that may shake the existing established ideas and even overthrow them completely” (Appiah, 1998, p.129). Appiah’s comment may help us in situating who qualifies to do African philosophy and who should become an African philosopher, as different (but not necessarily opposing) to/from who is to do African philosophy or who is an African.

However, to associate “African” in addressing the universal nature of the terms and concepts that are to be used and analyzed in philosophical discourse is to create an avenue for incoherence. In this respect, to associate “African” with philosophical or certain dispositions like the following; a stranger (non-African by birth) fails to qualify to do African philosophy, an African who has virtually no clue about philosophical dispositions should not do African philosophy, and an African need not be dogmatic about whatever he/she portends to be worth discussing as African philosophy, is to promote a myth of primitive African timelessness, obscuring history and change (which is not a permanent thing but the most common thing around in the world of man). Also, attributing “African” to whoever will or may qualify as an African philosopher is to create an implication of primitive savagery. Using “African” to distinguish philosophers instead of philosophical tools and critical analysis is to create an image of ethnic conflict. Furthermore, using “African” is to substitute a generalized illusion for a detailed analysis of particular situations. This does not represent an avenue to say or conclude that an Igbo part of Nigeria is the same as the Yoruba part of Nigeria, or with Swahili, or Bantu parts of Southern African, but in as much as we desire to deal with complexities, recognizing

the tools of philosophical tradition helps in advancing philosophy. Lastly, to use the term “African” to whoever may desire to write on or in African philosophy is to primitively recognize the usage of the word ‘tribe’ and its importance, and this may not help in formalizing what ought to become part of the issues to be addressed in African philosophy. It may, also, not aid the continuous development of African philosophy.

1c. African Philosophy: An African, and an African Philosopher

The problem of who is an African and whether Africans by residence or by birth has the sole right to do African philosophy may not have been resolved in this study. The study may not have, also, resolved who qualifies to be a philosopher of universal significance in Africa. Olubi Sodipo and Barry Hallen’s *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy* is a work done within the African context of Yoruba philosophy. It represent a classic example of a joint work done by an African, and an American that once lectured at the department of Philosophy, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria). The reference that Sodipo and Halen’s paper makes to the Yoruba philosophy cannot be downplayed because an African collaborated with an American to create or attempt to resolve some pertinent issues/problems in Yoruba discourse on knowledge. The genuineness of what philosophy preaches must sufficiently entail the will, knowledge-that, and the technical ability (within philosophical jurisdiction) to unravel certain problems within the framework of African philosophy. This may be done by whoever possesses such philosophical skill without recourse to racial essentialism and regionalism. Doing philosophy in Africa may not necessarily be by an African. Similarly, a non-African may possess the merit above an African to carry out a discourse or research in African philosophy over a certain problem, where his/her research may help in resolving a philosophical dispute, or provide relevant analysis into the problem analyzed by the foreigner. It does not sufficiently follow that African philosophy ought to be done by Africans, or the person who should qualify to do African philosophy must be an African by birth, or an

African who understands the nitigrity of the language to be used which is solely African.

A philosopher, in a way, transcends having a particular cultural or contextual affiliation. A philosopher need not be an offspring of a particular region to be able to use his/her philosophical skills and tools to analyze problems and provide the general or contextual relevance on issues that will aid the development of philosophy. To define African philosophy is to situate our definition within the African condition, problems and contextual relevance, currency and the provision of adequate information on the subject under consideration. To define a philosopher does not necessarily mean such individual should be an African. A philosopher discusses issues and problems using the tools of philosophy (like logic, epistemology, and so forth) to analyze discourses, problems and prospects.

According to Kwame Appiah, "African's intellectuals have long been engaged in a conversation with each other and with Europeans and Americans, about what it means to be an African." At the heart of these debates on African identity, Appiah says, are the seminal works of politicians, creative writers, and philosophers from Africa and her diaspora (Appiah, 1992, p.x). Part of the writers in the diaspora, as Appiah maintains, is W.E.B. DuBois. Appiah's discussion of DuBois is a derivative of the notion that "the idea of an African race, is an unavoidable element in the discourse of the idea of Negro, and this racist notion is grounded in bad biological, and worse ethical – ideas, inherited from the increasingly racialized thought of nineteenth-century Europe and America" (Appiah, 1992, p. x). It is not that easy to highlight or understand Appiah's mind concerning who should participate in doing African philosophy, but it can be derived from his thought-experiment that only Africans whether living within the continent or outside of African (diaspora) should participate in doing African philosophy and which qualifies as African philosophers. Appiah (1992) has helped us in answering who is an African, and who qualifies to become an African philosopher. He asserts that "being African is, for its bearers, one among other salient modes of being, all of which have to be constantly fought for and rethought" (Appiah, 1992, p.177). Appiah's aim, in asserting who is an African, what African philosophy

should be, and who qualifies to become African philosopher, attempts to say that central to contemporary life and the discourse on Africa, African philosophy and African philosopher, it is only Africans that recognizes what African identity is all about, and doing African philosophy by African intellectuals only, in a way, defends the identity that is solely African. Thus, the 'identity' of Africa has received intervention from Africans, since it will be difficult for a non-African to understand and to defend African Identity. His (Appiah's) objective is to posit that African unity, African identity, through African philosophical discourse need securer foundation than race (Appiah, 1992, p. 176). By Appiah's conclusion, philosophy has become a contextual discipline or a compartmentalized discourse rather than its general outlook or usage of its tools for general analysis. This contextual compartmentalization of philosophical discourse, for Appiah, asserts the independent existence of African philosophy, and who an African philosopher is.

In a way that is different (but not essentially opposing) to Appiah, Chukwudi Eze (1997, p. 3) asserts using Lucius Outlaw's analysis that "to identify the features that make certain intellectually practices and legacies of persons who are situated in geographically and historically-socially diverse societies 'philosophy,' features characteristic of though not necessarily unique to – the persons as members of a dispersed race should be exemplified." The issue of race, as Eze contends, cannot be discounted, despite the fact that he (Eze) has not come to understand whether the notion of "geographic race" is the most pertinent of productive to be used in showing who to partake in African philosophy, and who ought to become African philosopher (Eze, 1997, p. 3). Eze (1997, p. 3) points out in favour of Outlaw that he (Outlaw) explicitly insists that he will not subscribe to "biological or racial essentialism". It is from this point of view that I think I have to arrive at a concluding notion that, to subscribe to the fact that it is only Africans (born within the geographical location of Africa, or the ones in the diaspora) are the only eligible ones to partake in doing African philosophy and who are qualified to become African philosopher is to create "racial essentialism". It will represent an attempt to create, what Eze calls "Africa's distinct gene pool" (Eze, 1997, p. 3). Barry Hallen, in a way, supports this view when he says "philosophy in any cultural

context is not likely to be the easiest subject in the world” (Hallen, 2002, p. 1). Through his discourse, Hallen has sent philosophy into contextual framework. Hence, philosophy exists in Africa and it is supposedly to be done by African intellectuals. In his footnote analysis, Hallen posits that “I use the term “African” to refer to scholarship that is specifically concerned with the African continent and its cultures” (Hallen, 2002, p. 4).

Are the philosophers that have been considered on the contextual relevance of indigenous Africans to African philosophy so genuine and original about their positions? It is not sufficient to disclaim their views but it is pertinent we highlight the view that a philosopher need not necessarily be of African descent or race before he/she can participate in the discussion of relevant and significant issues in African philosophy. This is true to some extent because some African scholars participate in the discussion of some issues in the Western (British or Continental) philosophy.

However, “racial essentialism”, “distinct gene pool” and “African” are terms that are recently developed to aid the advancement of philosophical orientation and discourse in Africa by Africans in Africa and diaspora. However, these terms will or may not help the proper or genuine development of philosophical discourse, discussion and orientation in Africa because philosophers are said to perform thought-experiment, unlike scientist that performs laboratory-experiment. Any philosopher, whether in Africa or outside of Africa (whether of African descent, race or origin, or European or American or Asian) can use the tools of philosophical analysis to discuss problems, prospects, issues and mortality of or in African philosophy provided that they understand the subject under discussion. Since most African countries are either Franco-phone or Anglo-phone, it should not be a problem for any philosopher outside of Africa or not of African descent or race to discuss whatever they desire or are prepared to discuss in African philosophy.

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