

Victor Ahomefule Anoka

African Philosophy

An Overview and a Critique
of the Philosophical Significance
of African Oral Literature



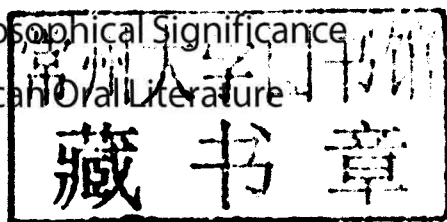
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Philosophy as a discipline has not only been distinct and crucial but also consistent in the enduring search for practical solutions to human problems. This study discusses the role philosophical enquiries and postulations can play in the practical reconstruction of Africa. It identifies the continent's peculiar and diverse challenges as arising mostly from effects of Western intervention in African history and argues for a restoration of the heritage immanent in Africa's oral tradition. The author prefers an African philosophy rooted in a critical reappraisal and appropriation of Africa's oral literature which not only possesses a treasure of philosophical ideas and principles but can also be employed in meeting the challenges confronting Africa and in sustaining development there. He, consequently, defends the theory of intracultural dialogue as the best possible option towards a practical reconstruction of Africa in an African manner. This dialogue can be initiated and sustained with the help of philosophical hermeneutics and through the method of ordinary-language philosophy. The intracultural dialogue is seen as the necessary foundation for a meaningful, productive, and realistic intercultural dialogue.

Victor Ahamefule Anoka was ordained a catholic priest in 2002 for the catholic diocese of Ahiara (Nigeria). He holds bachelor degrees in Philosophy and Theology from Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, as well as a Master's degree in Philosophy (M.A) from the university of Münster, Germany.

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To all who may read this work, I am open to your suggestions and comments. I intend to follow in the future the line of research argued in this work and to this end I will welcome every suggestion, comment and query that will help me to achieve this purpose.

Muenster, Germany

Victor Anoka

General Introduction

Philosophers, over the centuries, have been engaged in the search for practical solutions to human problems. This search, at times, has a moral outlook and, at other times, a political, economical, metaphysical, or psychological one, etc. But, more often than not, it is a search for practical solutions to sustainable human development, a search that is not lacking in African philosophy.

It is indisputable that the questions of identity and sustainable development are pertinent ones in Africa. Africa has a checkered and peculiar history characterized mostly by factors inimical to human development. This history is defined by a slave trade that bled Africa of her future and retarded her growth, by a colonial intervention that ensured the systematic destruction and suppression of African cultural values, by a corrupt and insensitive post-independence political elite who have persistently constituted obstacles to any genuine development of their people and trampled on their human rights, thereby ensuring the continuing bondage of their people to the evils of poverty, disease and hunger.

The situation is such that, even with many African countries enjoying independence today, there is still much to accomplish if Africa is to firmly stamp herself on the path of sustainable development and put to rest the question of her identity and contributions to the evolution of civilization. This, of course, will not be an easy task considering the ever-present menaces and negative effects of neo-colonialism, the brain drain syndrome which continues to rob Africa of her best minds and talents, and anti-indigene tendencies which justify the neglect of indigenous values, among others, evident in Africa's socio-political reality today. But it is a task that must be undertaken, especially by philosophers and scholars of Africa. This study is a contribution to the philosophical search for practical solutions to a sustainable socio-economic and political development in Africa. It is a study that defends the thesis of intracultural dialogue – a sustained and intensive critical dialogue with indigenous historical and cultural values and customs – as the best possible option towards resolving Africa's myriad of problems in an African manner rather than looking to the West for ideas and solutions.

Excursions in intradiological level of discourse in African philosophy began in the 1950s when some scholars (e.g. Placid Tempels) discovered the need to understand the customs, beliefs, and practices of the African peoples. Descriptions of such beliefs and practices which, as we argue later on, were not completely