

World Philosophies: Transformative Conversations on a Future that is Open

MUNGWINI PASCAH

University of South Africa, South Africa (mungwp@unisa.ac.za)

The shift towards world philosophies within the academic philosophical landscape is part of the “global movement towards intellectual decolonization.” This critical corrective endeavour and its correlative task of restoring the philosophical enterprise its richness and diversity is taking place against the backdrop of waning belief and intellectual loyalty in the efficacy of a single dominant tradition. By expanding the circle of intellectual engagement to include the various traditions of philosophy, the world-philosophies approach gestures towards a future that is not only open but emancipative. The courage to acknowledge different traditions, philosophical genres, and conceptualizations of the enterprise not only transforms the terms of conversation, but it unshackles the collective creative powers of human imagination. For those who have suffered exclusion, philosophy must dispense with rigid orthodoxies and instead celebrate “the plurality of reason” in the sense of that “intellectual disposition to reflect, to criticize and to ask infinite questions” as it expresses itself in the variety of philosophical traditions at our disposal in this world.

Key words: world philosophies; African philosophy; diversity; philosophical genres; plurality

1 Introduction

The agenda of philosophy is not fixed once and for all; nor are the ways of pursuing the issues on it. As it and they change, those from its past whose thinking matters to it do not remain in the same relations of salience (Schacht 1993: 425).¹

This is true of philosophy everywhere despite the apparent air of invincibility and unparalleled loyalty demonstrated by other thinkers towards some of its outmoded theories, ideas, and figures. The story of philosophy’s acclaimed “high priests of reason,”² if we may borrow the phrase by Janna Thompson (1983: 10), and the circumstances that have elevated mastery of their works to a sacred ritual within the discipline is well known to require serious elaboration. As Richard Schacht (1993: 425) makes clear, some of these philosophers “have come to be ‘canonized,’” and so ranked among the generally acknowledged saints of the discipline, at the conclusion of a process that might be thought of as having begun—in ecclesiastical terms that are not without a certain appropriateness—with their “veneration,” followed by their “beatification,” prior to their eventual “canonization.”

These so-called paragons of truth and reason, instantiated in what we call today western philosophy, were subsequently “exported” to the rest of the world, including Africa, as “omniscient teacher[s] endowed with the highest competence in the conduct of a deadly monologue” (Ramose 2014: 72).³ In other words, and from the perspective of African philosophy, the idea of philosophy as ineluctably connected to dialogue, which is celebrated in the figure of Socrates as the father of philosophy, was conveniently forgotten when western philosophy announced its arrival in Africa. Even the drama of Socrates that culminates with his choice to die in defence of truth and justice was not to be contextualised for what this commitment to truth and justice meant for Africa in the colonial circumstances she found herself. For the sake of maintaining its quest for the universal and eternal truth, it was upheld that philosophy must remain untainted by what obtained on the ground.

But philosophy, and where it has not been doing that, must surely descend from its lofty heights of generality to address the specifics. Describing the western philosophical tradition, Critchley (1995:17) writes,

Socrates announces the vocation of the philosopher and establishes the lines of transmission that lead from individuality to universality, from the intellect to the forms—a route which bypasses the particular, the communal, the traditional, as well as conventional views of ethical and political life.⁴

This is the form in which western philosophy announced itself to Africa and other similarly placed parts of the world. The question for the African philosopher has always been whether the practice of philosophy is invested with a certain level of moral expectation and commitment by virtue of the place within and out of which the activity of philosophizing is undertaken. In other words, the conviction is that there should be an attempt by the philosopher, at the level of both ideas and theory, to address the question of context, especially given Africa’s own history, and what it means to philosophize in an unjust place. In hindsight, the story of western philosophy in Africa can be described perhaps as a catalogue of mistakes and missed opportunities for advancing the plurality of reason, but this is an issue for another day. In the story of philosophy are key figures whose works now comprise the canon. Perhaps what deserves attention is not so much the story of how these “high priests of reason” got to be where they are today but how that positioning has and continues to impact the enterprise, its practice, and its outlook. For as Bruns (1984: 464) makes clear,

the whole point of canonization is to underwrite the authority of a text, not merely with respect to its origin as against competitors in the field [...] but with respect to the present and future in which it will reign or govern as a binding text.⁵

The texts that constitute the philosophical canon have and continued to enjoy this reign even in those places where these have been imposed from outside. It should never be forgotten that the establishment of a canon is a process that involves human beings as experts. In that sense, it is therefore a process that is not innocent of the politics and ideological presuppositions of its time. An injustice is perpetrated when the people over whom the canon is to reign cannot at all identify with that set of texts. And to allow oneself to remain bound by a set of texts which exclude or distort the true history of the contribution of your own people to human civilization is to submit to slavery. As Schacht (1993: 431) rightly points out, “the greatest problem with the existence of a [...] canon is not what it *includes*, but rather what it implies with respect to the things and thinkers it *excludes*.” Today, it

can be said that with the world-philosophies approach assuming the position of a serious philosophical current, the discipline of philosophy has entered a new era, one defined by a commitment to restore to the enterprise its richness and diversity. This shift, championed primarily from the periphery by those whose voices cannot be recognized in the reigning canon, is also growing in strength and is being vigorously defended from within the Occidental world itself by a growing number of intellectuals keen to witness meaningful change in the story of philosophy. This new age for the world of academic philosophy, as Ganeri (2016:136) argues, is defined by, among other things, “a heightened appreciation of the value of world philosophies, the internationalisation of the student body...[including] philosophical pluralism which [...] global movements make salient.”⁶ The universalist pretext, which has served as the veil for propagating hierarchy within the academic world of philosophy as a fact of nature, is slowly unravelling and to be replaced by a new era that celebrates the plurality of reason. There is a growing desire to reclaim the diversity of philosophy and to lay claim to alternative “contours of a philosophical understanding not subservient to dominant paradigms and [to] provide a platform for diverse philosophical voices, including those long silenced by accident, history, or design.”⁷ The ultimate goal, therefore, is to reconfigure the terrain and to help restore to the practice that fecundity of philosophical expression consistent with the diversity of thinkers and cultures that constitute this world.

My reflections on the future of the practice and on diversity in philosophy will proceed from the perspective of African philosophy and from the position of philosophy as a universal human enterprise. Leaning on the debates and preoccupations in African philosophy, I draw attention to the different dimensions of African philosophy being illustrative of its own growing internal diversity. A diversity that with proper intellectual investment can spur new conversations that sustain the emancipative pulse. In the section entitled, “The Imperatives of Our Shared World,” I return attention to the demands that the new reality of world philosophies places on the practice of philosophy. As the field opens itself to different and potentially enriching conversations, the obligation that this places on the philosopher cannot be underestimated. The waning grip of orthodoxy and the correlative loss of faith and intellectual loyalty in the dominant tradition in the so-called periphery bears testimony to the transformative shift in the world of philosophy. This shift reinforces the fact that the agenda of philosophy is not fixed once and for all and neither are the ways of pursuing the issues on it.⁸ As the world gradually transitions from centuries of a debilitating monologue, which presided over the silencing of other voices, the opportunity has come to change the story of philosophy and with it the fecundity of its expression.

2 The Dimensions of African Philosophy

The story of African philosophy belongs to the larger fabric of African discourse in which scholars and philosophers in particular have given considered attention to issues and priority questions arising from within the fabric of their society. Assessing the field at the turn of the new millennium, Appiah (2001: ix) writes, “African philosophy is now a rich project, contributed to from many directions by scholars with many conceptions of the task but with a shared conviction of the importance and interest of an African presence in the global discourses of philosophy.”⁹ As it continues to unfold, African philosophy has sought to carve its space as a counterhegemonic and reconstructive discourse,

responding to the challenges history has imposed on it, on one hand, and, on the other, working to establish its own identity and priority questions in response to the specificities of the continent, but of course, cognizant of the wider philosophical discourse unfolding in other similarly placed parts of the world (Mungwini 2022: 2).¹⁰ Over these years, therefore, effort by scholars to creatively expand the discourse of African philosophy has given rise to what one may call today the different dimensions of African philosophy.

Without in any way suggesting the existence of rigid boundaries or strict discontinuity, Wiredu (2004) identifies what he calls the three dimensions of African philosophy.¹¹ There is the historical dimension mostly identified with those scholars of historical reconstruction who have retraced the story of philosophy to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, including focus on African thinkers of the Greco-Roman era, classical Ethiopian philosophy, and the centuries-old tradition of Islamic philosophy in East and West Africa. The second dimension is what he calls traditional philosophy, which is that dimension within the discourse of African philosophy to be found in engagement with indigenous traditions and other sources of wisdom, such as communal proverbs, myths, poetry, art motifs, tales, lyrics, and maxims, which are mostly of the oral traditions of Africa. Lastly, there is what he refers to as the contemporary dimension—for lack of a better term—any form of philosophy being undertaken in postcolonial Africa, no matter its focus, belongs to this category. Wiredu uses this term to refer more strictly to the thoughts and reflections on contemporary issues and debates in postcolonial African philosophy—even though, as Eze (1997: 14) clearly points out, the “post” of “postcolonial”¹² Africa remains deeply problematic, if not misleading, as a marker of history. This is because, strictly speaking, colonialism has persisted in many guises to this day in Africa pointing to the reality of neo-colonialism and coloniality, issues that have remained of utmost concern but whose arguments I shall not enter into at this point.

In this article, I place specific focus on the traditional dimension of African philosophy.¹³ This is of interest to me not only because it has been the subject of much controversy and significant misunderstandings but also because of its multifarious media of expression, which speak directly to the story of the fecundity of philosophical expression, an issue that often eludes those who only seek philosophy in the written discourse. As Wiredu (2004:21–22) argues, this dimension “is multifaceted not only because [...] it has a communal as well as an individualized component, but also because it has multifarious media of expression.” And “access to it can be gained through” a number of sources including “communal proverbs, maxims, tales, myths, lyrics, poetry, art motifs,” among others. This multiplicity of genres is testimony to the breadth and depth of riches. Describing some of these sources, Wiredu (2004: 22) contends,

Art motifs are in some ways approximations to writing. In some ways, indeed, they may have a vividness of message that a piece of writing may not approximate. In terms of profundity, this is even truer of some of the deliverances of African talking drums, which communicate abstract reflections through riddles and paradoxes in the very midst of music and dance.

The riddle of life and the world can be explicated through these resources. There is as Wiredu acknowledges, “an intimate connection between philosophy and art, music, and dance in African society” (Wiredu 2004: 22). Perhaps I should also make it clear from the outset that when we refer to this traditional philosophical heritage, we are also speaking of “the world of predecessors [...] whose lived experiences do not overlap in time with us” but can be reached “through records, monuments,

artifacts, and other expressions of their subjectivity that they have left behind.” (Henry 2000: 153).¹⁴ And here is the point,

because of the predominantly oral nature of the traditional African heritage, the data on our traditional African predecessors will clearly be ethnographic in nature [...]. Thus, in spite of the controversy that has raged over the practice of ethnophilosophy, [...] it is a necessary component of not only African philosophy but also all Africana-oriented philosophies (Henry 2000: 154).

Perhaps, realizing that his famous critique of ethnophilosophy may have been misconstrued as a blanket rejection of anything to do with African traditions, Hountondji, in a clarificatory follow up in his book *The Struggle for Meaning*, lamented,

If the critique of ethnophilosophy has had this liberating effect on some, it seems to have had on others a paralyzing effect, by preventing them, through excessive scruple or hesitation, from exercising on African culture and experience their talents as analysts and philosophers. It was as if any work on Africa was *a priori* suspect of ethnophilosophical contamination, and that to retain philosophical purity, one had to hover above the concrete situations! (Hountondji 2002: xviii).¹⁵

There can be no doubt that the position he describes is an outcome of carefully following and recording some of the developments in African philosophy over the years in the aftermath of his critique and to realize the gravity of some of the unfortunate interpretations that have ensued. The attempt to sever the activity of inquiry from the cultural roots from which it draws nourishment is not only detrimental to philosophy, but ill-informed and it seems recognition of this fact is proving elusive for some in Africa. The “excessive scruple or hesitation” to engage with concrete modes of cultural expression that are part of the heritage in the form of African traditions has not abated and neither has the apparent desire to sever philosophical ties with it. The real problem that African philosophers must come to terms with is that this hesitancy and therefore exclusion of the yet to be fully documented African traditions from their purview as thinkers may actually become an inadvertent form of systematic erasure. It is their intimate knowledge of culture that will, in the words of Okere (1983: 119),¹⁶ “enable [African philosophers] to articulate authentically at that ultimate level of meaning which is properly the philosophical, the peculiar understanding of life and reality which their culture embodies.”

Due to colonialism, as Wiredu (1996:134–35) acknowledges, “the resources of the oral tradition remain either untapped or only insufficiently tapped.” As such, they have “a contemporary importance [in our continent] not matched in various other places.”¹⁷ This is despite the fact that mention of the need to critically engage this heritage will irritate some contemporary African scholars. Their charge against certain forms of philosophy and the infelicities they have engendered are genuine, and yet there will always be something to treasure, even in some of those dismissed efforts. History has not been kind to this heritage, and the situation will not correct itself without the intervention of well-meaning thinkers in our midst. But there is also the compelling reason that this tradition constitutes a formidable history of ideas—an intellectual legacy bequeathed to us by our predecessors. In its etymological meaning, “tradition” refers to something given over (in the context of the law of inheritance) by one generation to another and which implies an obligation to protect, keep, and nurture

for onward transmission (see Mungwini 2011).¹⁸ Thus, in so far as these traditions form Africa's intellectual heritage, they do impose an obligation on us to understand them and their inner message as a product of thinkers past. These traditions as an intellectual heritage that belongs to Africa imply a certain obligation in terms of maintaining fruitful contact with the ideas of our predecessors. Our knowledge of the predecessors and their connection to the present is mediated through the systematic and judicious interrogation of these traditions. And in the words of Henry (2000: 154),

This legacy is our responsibility in ways that it cannot be for non-African groups. The reciprocal nature of our relation to these African symbols and discourses links us more directly to the wishes and expectations of the predecessors who created and nurtured them. In short, unique ties of kinship and inheritance have given African philosophers a special responsibility for a shared set of symbols and discourses. To fulfil the obligations of this responsibility, African philosophers must preserve and develop this heritage by examining it ethnophilosophically, by reflecting on it in their own lived experiences or collectively with contemporaries and consociates.

Failure to take both the obligations of history and tradition as inheritance seriously has a negative effect on the idea of the philosophical in Africa, including the richness and variety of sources that could go into lending to the enterprise its distinct identity. This identity is distinctive not in terms of its techniques and standards of scholarship—since critical rigour and interrogation of sources must be maintained at all times—but distinct by reason of its priority questions, its history, its problematics, and its background assumptions including projections about the future (Mungwini 2022: 74). We should never forget that within the dimension of traditional African philosophy, and here following Wiredu (1996), there is a communal as well as an individualized dimension to the philosophy. Whereas it should follow with necessity that all ideas, even those designated as communal, are products of individual thinkers, even if those thinkers may be unknown, it has also been possible for a number of African philosophers to deal directly with individual philosophical thinkers with knowledge of these traditions and to engage them in fruitful philosophical conversations. Odera Oruka's Sage philosophy¹⁹ and Hallen and Sodipo's (1997)²⁰ projects are good examples. There is no doubt that there is still a virtual mountain of literature in the form of oral traditions in Africa that are yet to receive full attention and to be analyzed for their philosophical import.²¹ Since these exist predominantly in oral form, this intellectual heritage, or data, from "our traditional African predecessors will clearly be ethnographic in nature" (Henry 2000: 153). There is, therefore, as Kresse correctly points out, the need to take a pragmatic approach and to realize that "the more specific the issues treated in African philosophy become, the more one accepts the necessity to use anthropological knowledge which can provide the culturally or socially specific information needed for philosophical interpretation" (Kresse 2002: 35).²² In this task, therefore, to render the "specificities of Africa's various philosophical traditions visible and understandable" and "in the reconstruction of the various traditions of philosophical thought in Africa, philosophy, anthropology, and history must necessarily become partners" (Kresse 2002: 33). This should not be taken to mean that we gloss over the problems of anthropology and, in particular, its questionable role or complicity in the colonial project—a curse that it will carry for many years. In advocating this collaboration, all we are saying is that no area, especially that which studies the human being and its existence, should be outside the inquisitive interest of the philosopher because within it could lie a conceptual network of abstract and theoretical ideas that may offer different answers to some of philosophy's perennial questions. After all, the ultimate goal of philosophy is to broaden our understanding of the world, chief among which is the condition of the human being and its place in the grand scheme of existence. This is why philosophy

enjoys a special connection to many other disciplines as seen in the variety of topics that any random collection of philosophical essays would reveal. For the best account of that interconnectedness, one has simply to open the prospectus of the World Congress of Philosophy, which is by far the most informative assemblage of philosophers and what they are busy with from their different historical locations where they ply their practice.

Together with the sources of traditional African philosophy previously outlined is the study of indigenous languages themselves as valid sources of indigenous precolonial philosophical thinking. Wiredu (1996) links the significance of an in-depth study of Africa's languages with another acutely important undertaking that should define the practice of African philosophy namely, conceptual decolonization. "For" he argues, "in addition to their basic philosophical relevance, there is a need to unravel, by their means, the conceptual distortions that have accumulated in accounts of African traditional thought through the legacy of years of a self-assumed Western spokesmanship" (Wiredu 1996:118). To be able to correct these conceptual distortions and thus take the practice forward, philosophers are compelled to go to their roots to try and understand the meanings of key philosophical concepts of their culture in the history of their provenance. Philosophical progress for the African must not be synonymous with being unreceptive to the cultural past and neither should it be assumed to be a linear and straightforward march. It involves taking countless detours including a habitual review of the old, that is, revisiting the ideas from the past as part of the necessary process of moving forward. This is as true of philosophy everywhere as it is about philosophy in Africa. And for Africa, this past includes an oral intellectual heritage that needs to be critically assessed and documented.

In order to occupy their role as seekers of truth and due to the amount of conceptual distortions still prevalent at many levels in extroverted accounts about the continent bequeathed by colonial scholarship, African philosophers are expected to exhibit a much higher level of conceptual awareness or alertness compared to others who were never colonized and thus philosophize in their own languages. Of course, the goal cannot be limited to just that of establishing truth and clarity. Such conceptual exploration must also expose areas of philosophy that have not received enough attention and in which there is potential for more thought inspiring discoveries. Because not much effort has been invested in the task of conceptual decolonization, it remains a major source of concern that one may still encounter cases of African thinkers who hold on to ideas about Africa inherited from colonial scholarship, which, despite their popularity, turn out to be false on closer conceptual scrutiny. These are issues that will not go away anytime soon. However, what this problem highlights is that African philosophers cannot take what is written for granted; they must engage in conceptual analysis relying on the local languages that Africans use to construct thought and meaning even as we find ourselves in circumstances that require us to engage with others globally and intellectually in foreign languages. Our knowledge of more than one language must translate into a distinct advantage, in terms of versatility, on this quest for intellectual self-recovery. Philosophy must continue to look for answers and to engage in discourse even on the so-called perennial questions of philosophy that are not proscribed to any culture without severing itself from the roots from which it draws nourishment, which is its culture.

The crucial point I wish to make, however, is that once this hesitancy and fear of ethnography is overcome, contemporary African philosophy and its own history of ideas will never be the same. In other words, it will become apparent even to critics that there is a complexity, a depth, and breadth

that belongs to African philosophy that only a serious study involving its different dimensions together can reveal. The different dimensions of African philosophy, illustrative of its own growing internal diversity, are a significant pointer to the diversity that can flourish within a tradition of philosophy and what's more if one dares to consider all the philosophies from the world's cultures. The turn to world philosophies, the richness and diversity in each and every philosophy, must inspire a concomitant desire to explore the different philosophical traditions that we encounter on their own terms. The debilitating attribution of false and discrepant truths to opponents who subscribe to a different view and vision for philosophy must not go unchallenged. For as Ramose (2013: 9) correctly argues,

those who articulate an unfamiliar philosophy are not, by definition, our opponents or enemies. They simply espouse a different philosophy. To recognize this, is an important step in accepting their philosophical position as an invitation to a dialogue that could deepen and widen our perspectives on mutual understanding.²³

With this, I now turn to reflect on, though briefly, what the new reality of the world philosophies entails for those interested in understanding another tradition of philosophy other than their own tradition.

3 The Imperatives of Our Shared World

When we confront a text not written in a language we know, the meaning of the text has the status of a mystery. We see some [...] object] with marks on it, but we do not know what those marks mean. We could capriciously assign meaning to the marks, but we do not do it because we know that the text is the product of some other human being's attempt at communicating a message, and we want to find out what that message is, not to project our ideas into the text (Gracia 1992: 26).²⁴

The world and all the linguistic and cultural paraphernalia that comprise it form a crucial philosophical text open for constant and continual interrogation. There would be no need to draw specific attention to this otherwise straightforward principle of historiography were it not for the fact that it is continuously flouted. This principle comes to the fore in the context of the growing reality of the world philosophies. Its apparent simplicity disguises the weight of demands it imposes particularly on a discipline notorious for its deep-rooted proclivity to invent and donate narratives often for ulterior and ideological reasons. There can be no doubt that our own republic of letters has seen its own fair share of today's equivalent of "conspiracy theorists" and shameless pedlars of "fake news" under the guise of learned philosophical disquisitions. Central to the principle of historiography is that when one encounters an unfamiliar text, one must approach it "with an open mind and engage in an honest attempt to understand" (Garcia 1992: 27) by putting aside any forms of bigotry. And here the text must be understood in its broader sense. The motive should always be to institute necessary measures to find out what message the text conveys. As Gracia (1992: 31) makes clear, "texts impose on those who wish to understand them certain conditions that are not negotiable and therefore must be accepted by those who wish to deal with them." It is true that this principle of historiography has not been upheld at many levels in the encounter between cultures of the center and the so-called periphery.

The historical record for this and the injustice this has engendered at the most fundamental level of being, knowledge, and truth are too numerous to consider. These consequences are still with us, but so too—and in direct response to that—are the ongoing initiatives for the decolonization of knowledge and philosophy. There is a notable attempt to open the field and to allow the philosophical riches of the world to flourish and with that restore to the enterprise that multiplicity of voices, which is the hallmark of our collective as humanity. As we look into the prospects and possibilities that the openness to world philosophies brings to the practice of philosophy, it is impossible not to anticipate a future in which not only philosophy but also relations of knowledge production will be transformed. Philosophy must dispense with rigid orthodoxies and instead celebrate “the plurality of reason” in the sense of that “intellectual disposition to reflect, to criticize and to ask infinite questions”²⁵ as it expresses itself in the variety of philosophical traditions at our disposal in this world.

This brings me to the important point of openness to the insights provided by other traditions of philosophy.²⁶ Directly or indirectly our philosophical effort as humanity is to understand the world in which we live together including our own position within that constantly evolving system. In this endeavour, there is a plurality of conceptual frameworks adopted by the different cultures, which requires that the circle of engagement be expanded beyond any single philosophical tradition. Since “philosophic discourse itself originates from and is organically linked to the concrete conditions-of-existence and the life-practices of the horizon within and out of which it is formulated,”²⁷ there is need to seriously consider the significance of the spaces and places out of which a particular philosophic discourse is articulated. In other words, geography and history matters in shaping not only the form but also the priority questions that inspire each of the different traditions of philosophy at any given time. And philosophers too “are situated human beings, and thereby inheritors of (amongst other things) a specific historical, economic, and cultural context” (Plant 2017: 9).²⁸ Our encounter and indeed our engagement with each other as philosophers must, out of necessity, reflect this level of awareness. The reality of world philosophies demands that we reinscribe at the most fundamental level of thinking that understanding of philosophy as the love of wisdom, broadly and diversely construed, and in that spirit “follow the beloved wherever it takes us,” regardless of the geographical or cultural identity of the peoples where the wisdom is found (Li-Hsiang 2020: 136).²⁹ It is this that will enable more creative conversations that will not just transform but advance an open understanding of the enterprise, not subservient to the dominant paradigms in the field (Kirkoskar-Steinbach and Kalmanson 2021).³⁰ For ultimately, it is the philosophers themselves who should continue to reshape the enterprise and with it cultivate approaches that would make the enterprise itself richer and more fascinating. These in summary are the imperatives of our shared world as philosophers.

4 Conclusion

The growing reality of world philosophies demands, no doubt, a corresponding change not only in the tasks that philosophy sets for itself but more crucially in the manner philosophers deal with their increasing encounter with the unfamiliar. As texts, the different traditions and cultural resources from which the philosophies are drawn impose on those who wish to understand them certain conditions that are not negotiable, such as readiness to acknowledge new genres and sometimes rival conceptions of philosophy itself. The very spirit of philosophy demands that philosophers subject to continual

scrutiny their own inherited assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the discipline. This they can do by expanding rather than foreclosing their circle of intellectual engagement to include the world's different traditions of philosophy. It is this that shall reconfigure the terrain of philosophy and guarantee for the enterprise a future that is not only open but emancipative.

Pascah Mungwini is Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy, Practical & Systematic Theology, University of South Africa. His most recent publications include the book *African Philosophy: Emancipation and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

- 1 Richard Schacht, "On Philosophy's Canon, and Its 'Nutzen und Nachteil'," *The Monist* 76, no. 4, (1993): 421–35.
- 2 See Janna Thompson, "Women and the High Priests of Reason," *Radical Philosophy* 34, (1983): 10–14 (URL: <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/women-and-the-high-priests-of-reason>; last accessed on October 12, 2022).
- 3 Mogobe B. Ramose, "Dying a Hundred Deaths: Socrates on Truth and Justice," *Phronimon* 15, no. 1, (2014): 67–80.
- 4 Simon Critchley, "Black Socrates? Questioning the Philosophical Tradition," *Radical Philosophy* 69, (1995): 17–26.
- 5 Gerald L. Bruns, "Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 3, (1984): 462–80.
- 6 Jonardon Ganeri, "A Manifesto for a Re:emergent Philosophy," *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies* 4, (2016): 134–42.
- 7 The statement is taken from the home page of the *Journal of World Philosophies* where it forms part of the description of the journal's aims. See <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp/index> (last accessed on October 12, 2022).
- 8 Refer to the opening quotation in this article by Richard Schacht.
- 9 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Preface," in *Explorations in African Political Thought*, ed. Teodros Kiros, (New York: Routledge, 2001), ix–x.
- 10 Pascah Mungwini, *African Philosophy: Emancipation and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).
- 11 Kwasi Wiredu, "Introduction: African Philosophy in Our Time," in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 1–27.
- 12 Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "Introduction: Philosophy and the (Post)colonial," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chikwudi Eze, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), 1–21. Eze proposes that due to "the colonial and neocolonial nature of Africa's relationship with the West, the 'post' of 'postcolonial' African philosophy has to be written under erasure, or—more conveniently—in brackets. Scribing the 'post' of the postcolonial under erasure or brackets serves as signal and pointer to the [...] unfulfilled dreams of the independence achievements of the 1960s."
- 13 This is because I wish to accord primacy to the historical and cultural, being a heritage that occupies the position equivalent to that record on the thinking of our forebears as they negotiated the challenges that life imposed on them and as is clearly apparent succeeding in doing so in different ways. And our very existence as a species is testimony to their ingenuity. I have special interest in this dimension of African philosophy and believe it is a tradition that we have not invested enough time to understand

- for reasons that have nothing to do with the tradition itself but our sheer hesitancy, which in truth amounts to another inadvertent form of systematic erasure.
- 14 Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
- 15 Paulin J. Hountondji, *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture and Democracy in Africa*, trans. J. Conteh-Morgan (Ohio University: Center for International Studies, 2000).
- 16 Theophilus Okere, *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility*, (New York: University Press of America, 1983).
- 17 Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- 18 Pascah Mungwini, "Philosophy and Tradition in Africa: Critical Reflections on the Power and Vestiges of Colonial Nomenclature," *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 3, no. 1, 2011: 1–19.
- 19 Henry Odera Oruka pioneered an approach in African philosophy that he called Sage Philosophy, which involved going into the field to identify and interview individual Sages as a way of building a tradition of philosophy in Africa that could offer evidence of the existence of individualized philosophical cogitations from traditional precolonial Africa.
- 20 Barry Hallen and Olubi J Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). In this book, Hallen and Sodipo took to the field and focussed their attention on the question of Yoruba epistemology and how knowledge is conceived within the Yoruba culture with the help of traditional Yoruba experts on medicine.
- 21 See Barry Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 11.
- 22 Kai Kresse, "Towards an Anthropology of Philosophies: Four Turns, with Reference to the African Context," in *Thought and Practice in African Philosophy*, ed. Gail M Presby, (Nairobi: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2002), 29–46.
- 23 Mogobe B Ramose, "Introduction," in *Hegel's Twilight. Liber Amicorum Discipulorumque Pro Heinz Kimmerle*, ed. Mogobe B Ramose, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 7–9.
- 24 Jorge JE Gracia, *Philosophy and its History: Issues in Philosophical Historiography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).
- 25 Jacob E Mabe, "Introduction: Marcien Towa, or the Eternity of Reason," (2015): 15–18), <https://content.bautz.de/neuerscheinungen-2015/pdf/9783883099989.pdf>.
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