

scathingly critical of Western social science as he suggests, why does he focus almost exclusively on the process by which "the West" integrated Africa into its empire? After all, dialectical materialism is a tool for forging socialism. Does Ake help his students to confront the global enemy on a global scale?

The book appears to contain certain inconsistencies. If he really believes that "capitalism is the one thing that has been developing," how can Ake also maintain that the ruling class's "eclecticism of course underlines the fact that they are running out of ideas." Could one not say that the ruling class is full of bright ideas about how to implement capitalism? Ake seems unsure whether capitalism is really working in Africa. He thinks that:

The tendency to accumulate through the use of state power rather than through productive activities makes post-colonial capitalism less conducive to the development of productive forces and the increase of surplus.

But he seems to overlook such African capitalism growth "miracles" as South Africa and the Ivory Coast, which are undoubtedly "success stories" by World Bank standards. Why should Nigeria not follow their direction? He sees the African state as having only limited potential "for making the socio-economic formation more coherent," thus appearing to ignore the remarkable success with which the state in countries like France and Japan virtually took over the running of national capitalism. There is no reason why Ake should believe in the continued fragility of African governments in this respect, and in the consequent stagnation of their economies. Fascism can be perfectly compatible with booming business, as it was in Nazi Germany.

Ake's predictions for the future are based on continuity of present trends. To that extent, the book could be described as conservative. He foresees socialism only in the distant future (he is rightly sceptical of so-called "socialisms" that have manifested themselves in some parts of the world so far) and he therefore seems cautious to enter the political arena and thus become an agent of change.

African Philosophy — An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*

T. Onyewuenyi**

In his foreword to the book one of the authors, Professor E.A. Ruch, states as follows:

only an African can properly understand the African world-view and philosophy of life. Only a sympathetic outsider can communicate to other outsiders a certain insight into this world-view in a language which is intelligible to other non-Africans. (p. 5).

The book which is before us for review is the outcome of an attempt at realizing the above statement. It is testimony to openness to ideas and an acceptance that philosophy is always in search of truth and never regards any answers as final but leaves its present conclusions open to criticism and review. That the two authors agreed to present their different stands on African Philosophy side by side, even when they contradict each other, shows an intellectual maturity deserving commendation. Professor Ruch, a European, evidently is the "outsider" while Dr. Anyanwu, an African, is the "insider" in this exercise.

I hasten to add that it does not necessarily hold that the "outsider" must be a non-African and the "insider" an African. It may happen that a non-African may be the "insider" and an African the "outsider." By this I mean that what is central is *understanding a system* in an objective philosophical manner. Father Placid Tempels in his work *Bantu Philosophy* is a good example of an "outsider" who both understands and "communicates his convictions, his beliefs and his enthusiasm to those who do not share them" (p. 5). The contribution of this book to African Philosophy depends not so much on which of the two authors is an "outsider" or "insider," but on precisely how much each author understands about what African Philosophy means.

The book is divided into an introduction, four main parts and a bibliography. At the conclusion of each part by the major author (Professor Ruch), Dr. Anyanwu contributes a lengthy essay which outlines his own views.

* E.A. Ruch and K.C. Anyanwu, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, Rome, Catholic Book Agency, 1981, pp. 414.

** Innocent Onyewuenyi is working at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

- Part I : "The Nature of the Philosophical Endeavour." Chapters 1 — 3 by Ruch.
 Essay I : "The African World-View and Theory of Knowledge" by Anyanwu.
 Part II : "Myth in Africa." Chs 4—7 by Ruch.
 Essay 2 : "African Religious Experience" by Anyanwu
 Part III : "Philosophy About Africa." Chs 8 — 11 by Ruch.
 Essay 3 : "Artistic and Aesthetic Experience" by Anyanwu.
 Part IV : "Ideology for Africa." Chs. 12 — 15 by Ruch.
 Essay 4 : "African Political Doctrine" by Anyanwu.

A most important section of the book is the Introductory article "Is There an African Philosophy?" (pp. 11—24) by Professor Ruch. A slightly altered version of it had been published in *Second Order*, July 1974 (pp. 3-28), and had attracted serious criticism by E.L. Mendosa in the January 1976 issue of the same journal. In the article as it appears in the book the author supports his stand that there is nothing like African Philosophy by evoking the criticism of African Philosophy by an African "insider" Professor Paulin Hountondji "who wants at all costs to destroy theoretically this pervading myth" (p. 14), contending that Philosophy in the strict sense of the world must be a scientific, theoretical and individual discipline, just like algebra, physics or linguistics, and can therefore not be replaced by popular beliefs, traditional practices and a collective and unconscious behaviour (p. 12). I am yet to be convinced that the contemporary protagonists of African Philosophy claim that "popular beliefs, traditional practices and a collective and unconscious behaviour" qualify as philosophy.

It is lamentable that the understanding of Philosophy is restricted to a scientific, theoretical discipline like algebra or physics by some arm-chair speculators of western universities. Happily such contemporary European authors like Soren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers have vehemently criticized such a conception of philosophy. Karl Jaspers, for example, in his *Way to Wisdom*, criticises what he calls systematic philosophy, which always reckons with the most advanced scientific findings of its time:

But essentially philosophy springs from a different source. It emerges before any science, wherever men achieve awareness. ... In philosophy men generally assume that they are competent to form an opinion without preliminary study. Our own humanity, our own destiny, our own experience strikes us as a sufficient basis for philosophical opinion. (p. 8,9).

That there should be a doubt as to the existence of African Philosophy alongside Asian, Western or European Philosophies is an unconscious claim of superiority or inferiority depending on who doubts it. It is saying that European philosophy provides the measure and valid paradigm for philosophy; if what is called *African philosophy* does not conform to this

paradigm, then it is not philosophy but myth or at best an anthropology.

After establishing that the African is mythical and the European rational, Ruch strikes a compromise which he calls "a third alternative," namely to introduce reason into the myth. He attempts, in the pages that follow:

to determine in what way mythical consciousness, existential and cultural reflection, and politico-social ideology, can be considered genuinely philosophical. (p. 24).

I now turn to Dr. Anyanwu's Essay I — "The African World-View and Theory of Knowledge." He exhibits a profound knowledge of the meaning of Philosophy, underscoring the relative and cultural aspect of philosophy which Professor Ruch failed to note. Dr. Anyanwu contends that:

by subordinating African cultural facts to the assumptions, concepts, theories, and world-view suggested by Western culture and developed by western thinkers, confusion ensues. (p. 78).

He bluntly disagrees with Ruch's idea of universal, scientific or theoretical philosophy and argues that there is no neutral world philosophy applicable to all cultures at all times.

Dr. Anyanwu's position is nothing emotional or paternalistic because the celebrated German Philosopher G.W. Hegel had earlier attested to the cultural and relative dimension of Philosophy.

But men do not at certain epochs merely philosophize in general. For there is a definite philosophy which arises among a people and the definite character which permeates all the other historical sides of the Spirit of the people — The particular form of philosophy is thus contemporaneous with a particular constitution of the people among whom it makes its appearance, with their institutions and forms of government, their morality, their social life and their capabilities." (Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1:53).

What follows in Parts II, III and IV can be easily understood in the background of the two author's positions on African Philosophy. Whether it is Myth in Africa (p. 101) or Origin and Destiny, the Sacred and the Profane (p. 120) or The Dynamics of life forces (p. 145), or African Identity (p. 180) or Negritude or African Salvation Philosophy (p. 223), or Ideology for Africa (p. 283) that Professor Ruch discusses, his guiding principle is his new found "third alternative," namely to introduce reason into myth and to "determine in what way mythical consciousness, existential and cultural reflection, and politico-social ideology, can be considered genuinely philosophical." (p. 24).

On the other hand, Dr. Anyanwu in his Essay 2 — "African Religious Experience" (p. 161); Essay 3 — "Artistic and Aesthetic Experience" (p. 270) and Essay 4 — "African Political Doctrine" (p. 369) is saying that there is no need for Ruch's "third alternative;" that the African is as

reasonable as the European and that the European is as mythical as the African; that confusion is created by Ruch's and his kinds' imposition of assumptions, concepts, theories and world-view suggested by western culture and developed by Western thinkers on African cultural facts.

I will select Part II dealing with "Myth in Africa" to elucidate what I have just said. In this section Professor Ruch gives myth a rather confusing connotation. Whereas the Western scholars ordinarily contrast myth with reality, Ruch credits the mythical man with:

knowing the scientific or technical sources of fertility or of technical efficiency. He knows how and when to plant his seeds... he knows how to make efficient tools... but he will attribute the efficacy of his technical work to the ritual properly performed. (p. 109).

He further calls it the *magical efficacy of a symbolic act*. This is nothing but a betrayal of ignorance of the Power of Nommo (word) in African Philosophy. "Nommo, the life force, is a unity of spiritual-physical fluidity, giving life to everything, penetrating, causing everything," says Janheinz Jahn (Muntu p. 124). Alex Kagame further explains that myth in the African context "rests upon a kind of metaphysics which differs substantially from that of Western Philosophy." (Bantu Philosophy p. 35). One wonders whether Professor Ruch could really communicate to other outsiders a certain insight into the African world view by calling the African mythical and magical instead of rational and philosophic.

In a review like this where concession to brevity is imperative, one cannot dwell on every chapter of a book even in a cursory manner. There are materials in chapters 8—12 which raise interesting issues. Dr. Anyanwu has argued that the failure to understand the African belief systems is as a result of efforts at adapting them to those of Christianity and Islam. However Dr. Anyanwu in defence of his culture has made a number of gratuitous statements about religion:

Belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God and in the Church as the sole knower of that reality are regrettable dogmatisms which destroy what religion should be: the manifestation of the divine qualities in man. (p. 161).

I think that this is an intrusion into the area of revealed religion which is not the subject matter of Philosophy.

The two authors should be commended for the amount of work put into writing this book and there is a lot to learn from it. They have presented their own personal ideas of African Philosophy to the reading public. It is left with the individual reader to assess the success of each author.

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