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PHILOSOPHIC SAGACITY IN AFRICA

BY

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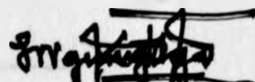


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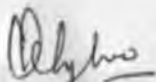
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Dedication ----- i

Acknowledgements ----- ii

Summary ----- iii

Introduction ----- 1

CHAPTER 1 : Literature Review and Methodology 5

CHAPTER 2 : Denial of Reason to Africa 21

CHAPTER 3 : The Existence of African 37

Philosophy (The Ethno-Philosophers)

CHAPTER 4 : The Professional Philosophy 55

"A Critical African Philosphy"

CHAPTER 5 : Philosophic Sagacity 74

CHAPTER 6 : Conclusion 92

APPENDIX : Feild Work Findings 108

BIBLIOGRAPHY: 167

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i

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TO ALL THOSE CONCERNED

WITH PHILOSOPHIC SAGACITY

IN AFRICA

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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To those many others whom I cannot thank personally, I extend my sincere gratitude. However, let me make a special reference to my father, Mr. Bernard Kathanga F.I.B.A. for the Moral encouragement that he accorded me throughout the whole period of my work on this thesis.

S U M M A R Y

This thesis is made up of seven chapters.

The first chapter is on Literature Review and Methodology. There, the texts and other academic references used on the production of this thesis are clearly indicated. Besides, in this chapter the methodology employed in collecting data and other facts from the field are spelt out.

The second chapter covers the views of those scholars who vehemently denied reason to Africa.

In the third chapter which is on Negritude and Ethno-philosophy, light is shed on how "African philosophy" emerged. The first serious attempt to offer evidence of the existence of African philosophy as explained by Placide Tempels is covered. The position here is that African philosophy existed but as a communal enterprise.

In the fourth chapter, the views postulated by the professional philosophers are recorded. Basically, the professional school of thought was not concerned about the existence or non-existence of African Philosophy. Its main pre-occupation was to bring forth a universally acceptable definition and meaning of philosophy. However, the position advanced here is that an individual is the initiator of a philosophy. It rejects the view that philosophy in the strict sense has its basis in the collectivity of people in a community. Further, this category of philosophers advance that for one to be able to engage in a philosophical activity or to do philosophy for that matter, he must be trained in thinking rigorously and critically. Much of the current professional philosophy in Africa tends to place too much emphasis on literacy as a necessity for the existence and production of a philosophy.

Our fifth chapter on Philosophic Sagacity which is most central in this thesis advances that literacy is not a condition per se for one to be able to do or to think philosophically. It also dispels the view that philosophy was non-existent in traditional African. The position adopted here is that in traditional Societies there are wise men and women who as individuals are gifted in offering rational explanations and interpretations for any challenge directed to them. This is so despite the fact that they may not have benefited from the modern education and may be illiterate.

In our sixth chapter, we have made the conclusion based on the discussions from the previous chapters. Lastly, in the Appendix section the field research findings are recorded in full.

This academic exercise is most fundamental as it will offer concrete evidence to the readers and "the doubting Thomases" that critical and rigorous thought equivalent to that found in Western Society existed in the "illiterate" traditional African Society.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

What is Philosophic Sagacity?

To sufficiently answer this important and fundamental question, it is absolutely necessary that philosophy and sagacity as separate concepts be first defined. We then go on to define philosophic sagacity on the basis of the two definitions.

According to ancient Greek tradition, philosophy is the search or love for wisdom. In general understanding however, philosophy is a discipline that is involved in an objective interpretation and comprehension of reality. Of prime importance to mention is that philosophy was the first academic discipline to come into existence. It was an all encompassing discipline and that is why it was regarded as the "mother" of all other disciplines that today stand separately from each other albeit interacting at some point. The distinct and independent existence of various disciplines must have come to existence due to the issue of specialisation and need for efficiency.

Sagacity is wisdom. For our concern here, it is wisdom in any particular individual, based on his/her ability to conceptualise, memorise and recite correctly and clearly the traditional beliefs and norms of his/her community as well as the social and physical facts that govern the prevailing environment.

From the onset, it is necessary to be clear on the actual difference and similarity between a sage and a philosophic sage. A clear understanding of these two concepts is necessary and crucial.

A sage is considered to be a wise man/woman in a given society. He is a person gifted in conceptualising correctly and accurately memorising, and recalling his community's norms and beliefs.

A philosophic sage is in turn that wise man or woman who transcends the role of a mere sage. His category is gifted in not only being able to memorise and recite his people's traditional beliefs and values, but his mental faculty is equipped in such a manner that he is capable of insightfully and critically handling most problems of wisdom and human life. A philosophic sage unlike an ordinary sage is therefore rational and critical of what he encounters and experiences within his environment.

For those interested in this area or study, they should be cautioned that philosophic sagacity should not be confused with Ethno-philosophy as some scholars have done.

Ethno-philosophy is a mere description of beliefs as expounded by scholars such as Placide Tempels (a pioneering scholar of Ethno-philosophy), J.S. Mbiti and Alexis Kagame to mention but a few.

Tempels ideas on Ethno-Philosophy are found in his works Bantu Philosophy, those of J.S. Mbiti are contained in his books African Religions and Philosophy and in New Testament Eschatology, those of Kagame are in his book, La Philosophie Bantou Rwandaise de L'etre. These exponents of Ethno - philosophy contended that whatever philosophy that there is among Africans is communal and cannot as such be attributed to any particular individual thinker.

Philosophical sagacity as such is ipso facto derived from independent critical thinkers in a society. This category of sages is crucial for production of theoretical and practical knowledge that relate to reality.

Of importance to mention and so much married to the above stated fact is that from time immemorial, philosophy or the search for knowledge has been a concern of many scholars. Besides, the problem of what constitute wisdom has always troubled mankind in

that quest for knowledge and truth. Therefore, philosophic sagacity is of utmost significance as it attempts to solve these problems.

For my thesis, the prime concern is about the protracted debate on African sagacity and the existence of African philosophy as a coherent and logical system of thought equivalent to western philosophy.

The proponents of philosophic sagacity such as Prof H.O. Oruka argue that within African society, there exists some wise men and women who are capable and can be classified as philosophers in their own unique sense.

What makes the debate interesting, inviting intense scholarly activity is the fact that there also exists a category of thought that rejects strongly the existence of African sagacity as a philosophical trend. This category argues that there is nothing like African philosophical sagacity. Prof Peter Bodunrin of Ibadan University in Nigeria and Professor Joseph Nyasani are some of the scholars in this category.

In this opposing school of thought we have some scholars who have always equated wisdom with written word like in Western legacy hence the bias against African philosophy as it is largely unwritten.

The other seemingly different category that I will deal with is composed of those scholars who do not actually reject sagacity but only stress for more seriousness on the part of the proponents of philosophic sagacity. D.A. Masolo is an example of scholars making this demand.

In this work, I intend to critically analyze and evaluate fully the two opposing categories of thought exposing the apparent contradictions therein and further attempting a clarification on the differing views expressed. The clarification and evaluation

combined with my field work research will enable us to arrive at conclusive and convincing ground as to whether Africa sagacity can be taken as a philosophical discourse or not. Similarly the same will enable us to establish whether in traditional African society (and indeed in any other) there existed any wise men and women who are capable and can qualify to undertake a philosophical dialogue like the philosophers in the western societies.

Lastly, let this attempt to tackle this important and controversial topic serve to provoke and stimulate those scholars interested in the subject to make more contributions to the subject.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

To comprehend this thesis on African Philosophic Sagacity clearly, and indeed to eradicate any technical aspects and ambiguities that a reader may encounter, it has been found worthwhile to carry out a Literature review in this chapter. This will be accomplished by way of outlining the relevant texts and publications on this subject that would be made use of and at the same time shedding light on the arguments these texts advance to support the thesis.

Further, it has also been considered absolutely necessary to outline the methods employed in primary data collection during the field work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this topic literature review is concerned mostly with the evaluation of secondary data as opposed to primary data. This is the case because secondary data unlike primary data is gathered from the available written material while the primary data are direct results of the field dialogues conducted by the researcher.

In precise form, I wish to make a review of the literary contributions by the various scholars who have exposed their ideas and arguments on the subject of philosophic sagacity either directly or indirectly.

Prof. Henry Odera Oruka of Nairobi University is the pioneering scholar of Sage philosophy. He is a strong propagator of the view that philosophic sagacity obtains in the traditional African thought system or in any other traditional thought for that matter. In regard to this subject on philosophic Sagacity,

Prof. H.O. Oruka has written several texts or publications some of which are outlined hereunder i.e.:

Sage Philosophy, (Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African philosophy), ACTS Press, Nairobi. 1991. This is one of the latest works by Prof. Oruka and it embraces so far most of his ideas on and arguments for sage-philosophy. His works relevant to the subject of philosophic sagacity are:

- "Four Trends in Current African Philosophy" in A.A. Diemer, ed, (philosophy in the present situation of Africa.) Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner. 1981.
- Trends In Contemporary African Philosophy, Shirikon Publishers Nairobi, 1991
- "Sagacity in African Philosophy", International Philosophical Quarterly 23(4). 1983.
- "Fundamental Principles to the Question of African Philosophy" Second Order 4(2). 1975.
- "Mythologies as African Philosophy" East Africa Journal 9(10) 1972.
- "Cultural Fundamentals in Philosophy," East-West Philosophers' Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii. 1989.
- OGINGA ODINGA, His philosophy and beliefs, Initiatives Publishers Nairobi, 1992.

We gave also the book edited by H.O. Oruka, and D.A. Masolo on Philosophy and Cultures, Nairobi, Bookwise Ltd. 1983

These are just some of his texts and publications which are relevant to our subject of Interest. However, Prof. Oruka has also made a lot of contribution in other areas of philosophy.

Fundamentally, Prof. H.O. Oruka wrote to dispute arguments advanced by eurocentric scholars such as G.W.F. Hegel and Lucien Levy Bruhl whose views denied the black race the ability to reason. Further, Prof. Oruka wrote to dispute the contention furthered by some scholars that the African thought is collective and not attributable to individual entities. (Ethno - philosophy was originated by this category of academicians).

In addition however, Prof. Oruka also wrote to dispel the original position adopted by the professional scholars or the so called classroom philosophers. These scholars held that for one to be able to engage in a philosophic activity, he or she must of necessity be able to read and write. In other words one must be literate for them to be able to produce logical/scientific ideas and be in a position to philosophise.

In regard to the first category of classical scholars who wrote and denied the negro race the inherent and natural gift of thinking, Prof. Oruka's work vehemently objects to this position. This he does by embarking on field research exercise mainly directed at those people who are still traditional in thought, attitude and practice namely, those who have resisted the forces of western cultural influence. As we shall see in our chapter 5, Prof. Oruka was successful in his research as he managed to establish wise men and women who were greatly gifted in critical thought.

Let us short list here the texts written by those who denied the black person the ability to think.

Fredrich Hegel's ideas are contained in his book; Philosophy of History, New York; Dover, 1959. Lucien Levy Bruhl's ideas can be found in his book "Les Carnets" (The confessions) published in London, in 1949. Hegel and Bruhl are the two dominant thinkers whose views depicted a lot of racism which discriminated against the negro-race and distorted facts about them.

Their disciples are scholars such as E.A. Ruch, the author of the publication; "Is there an African Philosophy," Second Order Vol. III, No.29. (IFE, Nigeria, July, 1974).

Another scholar is Robin Horton who wrote "African Traditional Thought and Western Science" African 37. 1967. He has however made other academic contributions like "Tradition and Modernity Revised" New York, Dover, 1982. According to Robin Horton, "traditional thought is explanatory but not reflective".¹

B. Hallen and J.O. Sodipo. Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft (Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy) ethnographica, London, 1986. E. Tylor the author of the book Primitive Cultures, London Press, London, 1871 also falls in this category.

In addition, we have M. Maurier who wrote "Do we have an African Philosophy?" in R.A. Wright (ed) African Philosophy University Press of America, 1979. A.P Newton, a historian is also a good example of those who wrote contemptuous views on Africans. His Ideas are noted in his book entitled: Cambridge History of the British Empire, Cambridge University Press, London 1929.

(As we cannot exhaust the list here, most of the remaining writers whose views were racist and distortive will be noted alongside their arguments in Chapter 2 of this document).

Let us now consider the Ethno-philosophical category of thought that Oruka also partly wrote to counter. Although this school of thought acknowledged the existence of African philosophy and in essence, philosophic Sagacity, Sage philosophy by Oruka emerged to contest the position implied by Ethno -

¹ B. Hallen and J.O. Sodipo, Knowledge, Belief and witchcraft. (Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy) Ethnographica, London 1986.

philosophy that African philosophy is communalistic and not individualistic. Sage philosophy ventured to counter this view by going out to the field and bringing to light those wise men and women found to be capable of engaging in a philosophical discourse as individual entities. Paul Mbuya Akoko is a good example of the philosophic sage capable of embarking on a rational activity and not just on mere descriptions and narrations of reality. Mbuya is a member of the Luo community and was interviewed by Prof. Oruka. We shall read more about him in our fifth chapter on philosophic Sagacity.

Proponents of Ethno-philosophy are led by Placide Tempels who wrote the books; Bantu Philosophy, Paris, of 1959. Tempels had worked and stayed for a long time in Africa as a Missionary. His views were based on his observations of behaviour and study of the language of the Baluba of present day Zaire. Tempels' ideas were fundamental as they opened the gates for another category of Scholars who began to view and respect Africans as people with their own culture and philosophy embedded in their way of life.

His disciples are; Alexis Kagame and J.S. Mbiti, the authors of La Philosophie Bantou Rwandaise de Letre, Brussels Academic Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956 and African Religions and Philosophy, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1969, respectively. J.S. Mbiti carries out an Ethnographical description in his book where he emphasis the "Unity of African religions and philosophy"² Mbiti argues that in Africa no one can separate philosophy from religion since Africans are notoriously religious and it is religion more than anything else which governs their life.

1. Onyuwenyi and K.C. Anyanwu are other authors who came in to support Tempels argument that bantus i.e. Africans have an ontology which is embedded in their way of life. Onyuwenyi's two important papers are, "

² J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Nairobi, Heinemann, 1969. P. xii.

Is there an African Philosophy?" Journal of African Studies (4) 1976. His Other publication is by the title "Philosophical Reappraisal of African Belief in Reincarnation", International Philosophical Quarterly vol.22.) 1982.

Anyanwu's ideas relevant on the subject are contained in his "Scientific Attitude and African Human experience," Thought and Practice 3 (2). 1976.

"Onyuwuanyi brings out what he considers as most fundamental disparity between the African people and their Western Counterparts. According to him, "African 'metaphysics' is as opposed to Western metaphysics and logic for the African, his 'vital force' comes to influence the Living".³

Anyanwu on his part (according to Oruka) writes that, "Science, rationalism and deduction are matters of Western concepts which are alien to African thought African Philosophy is that every existing thing or reality is a life force".⁴

In connection with professional philosophy, Oruka (as was noted before) wrote to dispute the view that for one to be able to think and engage in philosophy, he must have gone through some formal training in academic Institutions of Western type. Basically the contention here is that literacy, or the knowledge of how to read and write is a necessary condition for one to be able to engage in a philosophical discourse. The Scholars who advanced this view took up the discussion of African philosophy from a strict and critical point of view. In fact their preoccupation was not to contest for existence or non-existence

³ H.O. Oruka, Sage Philosophy, Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy Acts Press, Nairobi. 1991 P.24.

⁴ Ibid.

of African philosophy. Their interest was basically to come up with a universal definition and meaning of philosophy that was to be acceptable all over.

Among those who have made contributions in this field are; P.O. Bodunrin, the author of; "The Question of African Philosophy" In Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy (C.U.P) No. 56. 1981 b.

There is also Kwasi Wiredu, the author of the book: Philosophy and an African Culture, Cambridge, University Press, 1980.

Included in this category is Paulin J. Hountondji whose ideas are documented in his work; African Philosophy: Myth and Reality.

Generally, professional philosophy saw no possibility of African philosophic Sagacity coming into existence because according to this school of thought, the ordinary African man per se has not been trained in critical thinking and appreciation.

Let us now come back to Prof. H.O. Oruka the strong contender of the view that Philosophic Sagacity exists in the traditional Society.

Oruka in his argument advanced the view that in traditional society, there are indigenous thinkers who are critical and thorough in thought. According to him they are thorough in thought even though they have not benefited from the modern education. However, Oruka does not object to the position that there can also be philosophic sages emanating from the educated category within a community. In this connection Prof. Oruka has mentioned or acknowledged names of distinguished persons like Julius Nyerere (former President of Tanzania), the late Mahatma Gandhi and Kwame Nkrumah, to name but a few. According to him however, the difference between the modern sage and the

traditional sage is that the latter cannot note down his ideas unless he is helped to.

However, Oruka adds that the modern sage and the traditional sage are very much alike in that all are equally good thinkers who are exemplary in synthesis of human and natural problems. In regard to the folk sage and the philosophic sage in the traditional set up, Oruka notes that the philosophic sage is more gifted and surpasses the former in that they make sagacious and critical analysis of the views held by the community and in addition, they are able to outline carefully the reasons as to why they adopt a given stand on an issue. The folk sages according to him are only good in general narrative where they make a description of cultural elements and customs without making any critical analysis of the same.

Besides Prof. Oruka, other scholars who have conducted field research and supported the view that philosophic Sagacity exists are such as: Taita Towett, Marcel Griaule, Kwame Gyekye and Barry Hallen and J.O. Sodipo among others whose views will be noted in chapter 5.

Taita Towett, has made a formidable contribution in this area of philosophic Sagacity. His ideas are noted in his; "Le Role du Philosophie Africain," In Presence Africaine (Beuxieme Congress des Herivains et artistes noirs) Numero special 27-28, August-November, 1959.

Towett commenced by making an attempt to define philosophy. According to him, philosophy is love of wisdom and pursuit for knowledge and truth. His definition is more or less the one made by ancient Greek philosophers.

Towett further held that philosophy is any body of reasons by which we make our beliefs logical and systematic. Deriving from this, Towett accepts that there must have been African philosophers engaged in formulation of culture philosophy, and these African philosophers are the philosophic sages in essence.

Like Oruka, Towett concurs that formal education is not a necessary condition for one to be able to undertake a philosophic activity.

Though he concurs with Oruka on this, the disparity in their ideas arisen where, Towett fails to make a careful distinction between a mere sage and the true sage in a serious philosophical sense.

Marcel Griaule as observed is another scholar who ventured in this field of philosophy. His ideas are noted in his work by the title; Conversations with Ogotemmel London: Oxford University Press. 1965. Griaule was a French ethnologist who carried out his research among the Dogon people of West Africa. In his field exercise, he identified a sage in the name of Ogotemmel to qualify his contention that blacks based their life on a complex and ordered behaviour. Precisely, he contends that the African person too possessed an ordered system of thought that had an underlying philosophy in it.

In essence Oruka partly wrote to dispute Griaule's view that Ogotemmel was a philosophic sage. The comparison carried by Oruka between Ogotemmel and his 'philosophic sage' Paul Mbuya will be seen in the chapter on sage philosophy.

Kwame Gyekye, B. Hallen and J.O. Sodipo like Griaule carried out their research among their people of West Africa. Kwame Gyekye's views and arguments are noted in his work; An Essay on African Philosophical Thought (The Akan Conceptual Scheme) CUP. 1987.

Those of Hallen and Sodipo are noted in their joint venture; Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft (Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy). Ethnographica, London 1986.

These scholars carried out their research specifically on the Yoruba (Akan) people of West Africa. Unlike Oruka however,

they did not mention specific names of individual philosophers established. According to them, they came across individual thinkers but have referred to all of them as Onisequns who represent the unanimous thought. According to these scholars, specific names could not be given because, Onisequn were medicine men who did not want their names to be exposed as they feared that their trade would be affected.

Besides this group that support the view of existence of philosophic sagacity, we have another opposing school of thought that postulates that there is nothing like African philosophy. In this category we have scholars such as Joseph Nyasani, Lansana Keita and Peter Bodunrin. The other seemingly different category that exists is composed of those scholars who do not quite oppose the notion of sagacity. A good example of these category is Dr. Masolo.

Nyasani's views can be obtained from his unpublished articles; "The nature of traditional African Community and its transcendentality" and in; "The state and Statue of African Philosophy: Some critical reflections". Nyasani is possibly the hardest critic of philosophic sagacity. His central theme is that philosophy and its methods are universal. He also advances Literacy as a vital tool in doing philosophy.

L. Keita's arguments are well noted in his publication; "The African philosophical Tradition," In R.A. Wright, (ed), PP. 35-54 1977. Keita sees no difference between Ethno - Philosophy and philosophic sagacity. In fact he reduces the latter in to ethno-philosophy.

Peter Bodunrin is a major critic of African Philosophic Sagacity. His ideas can be extracted from his paper "The Question of African philosophy," In Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy; CUP. No. 56. 1981. According to this scholar of Ibadan University of Nigeria; philosophic attributes are not equatable to cleverness. He objects to the

method of giving evidence for philosophic sagacity arguing that the interviews and questionnaires used make the product of such an exercise be essentially a joint product of both the informant and the interviewer. Like Nyasani and others, Bodunrin considers literacy as an essential aspect for one to be able to do philosophy.

D.A. Masolo as we observed is a mild critic of philosophic sagacity. His arguments can be found in his unpublished work by the title, "Half a Century of Philosophy" (problems of philosophy since 1930s).

Masolo and his likes do not actually oppose sagacity but only stress for more seriousness from the proponents of philosophic sagacity. The argument by this category of scholars is very healthy and useful in making the philosophic sagacity scholar's work more serious and organised for acceptance by its likely critics.

In addition to what we have already observed, it is imperative to shed light on the Negritude movement in Africa which was pioneered by Leopold Sedar Senghor. The ideas of Senghor are clearly documented in "What is Negritude?" in Mutiso G.C.M. and S.W. Ruhio, (eds).

Readings in African Political thought.

London, Heinemann. 1975.

The ideas of Senghor on Negritude are fundamental in that they in one way or another contributed to the emergency of African Philosophy and indeed to what we are referring to as philosophic sagacity in traditional african set up.

Negritude should be viewed as a unique movement in that it emerged in Africa through the efforts of Senghor who had taken a keen interest in cultural crisis in Europe. Through these developments that were taking place in Europe, the African people were now aroused to think of themselves as a distinct race with their own unique cultural and practices. In short, the African was awakened and now began to aggressively assert his dignity and cultural value. This development in our continent was most

welcome given that Africans had been colonised for many years and subjected to all manner of social vices such as discrimination, oppression, suppression and exploitation. In other words, the African race had been subject to all manner of abuse and injustice and hence the opportunity availed by Senghor through the Negritude movement which was very crucial in reasserting the African persons cultural glory and dignity. This movement triggered an interesting dimentioning dimension in that to re-do the damage on African dignity and culture, the Intellectuals like Leopald Sedar Senghor started a serious exercise where they had to liase with the wise men and women who still harboured the traditional frame work of mind so as to succeed in this noble task. Hence Negritude movement was pivotal in origination of sagacious reasoining in African Society and indeed the coming into being of African Philosophic Sagacity.

More details on texts used and the arguments advanced will be outlined in the other chapters of this thesis as we cannot exhaust them here.

METHODOLOGY

In this area we are going to consider the format employed in data collection from the informants in the field.

Worth mentioning at this initial stage is that, for any serious academic treatise and especially if it is field research oriented, it is paramount to have a clear method of collection of the required data. In regard to African philosophic sagacity therefore, a lot of emphasis was laid to a clear methodology of data collection from the field. Since the field part forms the backbone of this subject of our interest, the required facts are with the people themselves out in the field and less so in the records as contained in the Libraries and other vital centres of information preservation.

Before considering the method utilized for collection of the

required information, let us know the research site and the reason that led to its selection.

Research Site

My research activities were restricted to Kirinyaga District in Central Province. I sought to carry out my field research here because I hail from this area and therefore it is a place I felt most confident to carry out a meaningful and effective research. Besides, by virtue of having been born and brought up here, language barrier was out of question and further, no guide was to be required as this is a place I am most conversant with. Over and above this, the other factor that really encouraged me to conduct my research here is the existence of a fairly high percentage of the traditional people who I was basically to rely on in collection of data and to prove that philosophic sagacity exists.

The estimated percentage of the aged in Kirinyaga District is 5%. This is as per the information contained in the District Development plan, on population statistics.

Method of Data Collection

The kind of data required from the field is what is referred to as primary data. This is opposed to secondary data collected from the written material available, bearing on a subject of interest.

Primary Data

This data was collected directly from the people themselves. Vital to outline here are the various methods existent of getting the primary data;

- (i) Self-Administered Questionnaire

In regard to this method questionnaires are posted to the informants out in the field to fill them and then post them back to the sender. Of importance to mention is that I did not use this approach as it is limited and cannot produce efficient results especially when the informants being dealt with are illiterate. Besides even if the informants are literate, the posted questionnaires are not effective as they have a high non response rate. In addition, this method is hectic and at times may lead to total despair.

(ii) Direct Interview

This is the other alternative method for primary data collection. This method is more efficient due to its openness and hence it is more preferable. Indeed this is the method that I used out in the field.

For this method a questionnaire is also used but the advantage is that the researcher directly interacts with the respondents. He is therefore able to assist and guide them where they land in a cross-road through use of probe questions and other available tactics. As indicated, I used this method and found it to be most enjoyable and encouraging as it fully involves one directly and brings him to appreciate the ability to reason out issues by the wise old folk in the non-literate framework of our society.

Type of Questions Asked

I used open questions where the informant concerned had the chance to fully 'give birth' to his ideas without any impediment. This method is more fruitful unlike the formant of closed up

questions where one is just required to indicate; yes or no. In addition to the prepared questionnaire used, I also used the strategy of informal discussions so as to extract more ideas from the sages where the need arose. Such informal discussions are crucial in that they help to take care of the issues left out of the questionnaire but vital to record. Further, it helps to consider issues that crop up in the mind of a researcher from time to time, and which are relevant to the topic at hand.

NB:, The primary data of this thesis is contained in the sixth chapter. Included in that chapter, at its commencement, is the exact questions used in my field activity and as contained in the questionnaire.

Sample Selection

This I did with the help of local leaders both administrative and political. Through them I was able to identify the wise men in their respective jurisdictions. However, after interviewing each and every one introduced to me, I was tactfully able to detect and discard those who were to be of no meaningful assistance.

Following Prof. Oruka's foot steps, I went to the field with the knowledge that there are basically three types of statements: The common-place, foolish and the wise statements. In regard to the wise statements, I knew they are the kind to be uttered by those considered wise. However, the common-place and foolish statements constitute the vast area of non-wisdom.

In short, this approach is the one which enabled me to compare and distinguish between statements given by my chosen informants.

Well, as we cannot cover everything here in regard to the texts used and the methods employed in data collection, further details in the same regard will be noted in other chapters of this thesis.

However, let me mention here that both primary and secondary data were most fundamental to production of this academic document as it was through the same, collected through the spelt out methods, that was subjected to the various methods of data analysis and the result recorded in the form of this document.

Now let us move to our second chapter about those who denied "reason" to Africa.

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C H A P T E R T W O

DENIAL OF REASON TO AFRICA

Are the Africans capable of Philosophising and do they have a Philosophy of their own or not?

Many intellectuals from different walks of life have made a contribution to the debate on Africa Philosophy in their attempt to answer the above fundamental question(s).

Besides the philosophers, we have anthropologists and theologians who have also made their contribution and views known on this vital subject. However, in this particular chapter, we shall concern ourselves mainly with Philosophers and ethnographers whose views were opposed to existence of African Philosophy. Indeed this is the very category of Scholars who strongly argued that the African mind is simple and incapable of complex mental activities under which the activity of Philosophical reflection falls.

These Philosophers whose views rejected African Philosophy and depicted the African person as unphilosophical, fall under a special influence of Western classical philosophy. Of importance to mention at this initial point is that, the general conception and understanding of African mentality in the Western world has been negative and biased for a considerable length of time. To qualify this point, one will note that the Western literature has for a long time tended to paint the black man as an inferior being. This literature has in essence relegated the black person to a sub-human position. Needless to mention, this is the reason as to why the black person (i.e. Negro-race) has been described and seen as irrational and hence primitive. For instance in the writings of Professor Robin Horton (a European who lived and worked in Nigeria for considerable period),

compares what he calls "Western Science with African Traditional Thought".⁵

This comparison is contained in his article entitled "Traditional Thought and the emerging African Department", a comment on the current Debate, Second Order, Vol. VI, No.1, Jan.1977. Here Professor Horton a British Anthropologist talks of African thought and traditionalism as if all there is in it is just traditionalism. Reasonably speaking, there is a sense in which we may speak of a tradition of Science in the West or elsewhere for that matter. However, it is misleading to appropriate a universal concept like Science for a particular part of the world.

For us to grasp Horton's argument clearly, let us briefly consider what his exact position was in regard to African traditional thought, and consider the fact that Horton had made several scholarly contributions to this subject. In his early writings, Horton was quite extreme. Horton at this time saw and described the African traditional thought as a closed system. This was in contrast to his view of Western thought which he depicted as open. Professor Odera Oruka notes in his works: Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, that Horton saw "gods and spirits as basic elements in African traditional thought while in Western thought he talked of atoms, molecules and waves as the basic elements of understanding and explaining reality".⁶ The contention by this scholar went that 'there is no critical Philosophical reflection in traditional Africa. All thought and explanation is a mere appeal to the tradition itself. Hence the argument that there could never have been a socrates and the like in traditional Africa'. In short, the claim of this argument is that reflective and rational thought is non-African.

⁵ A.S. Oseghare, "The relevance of Sagacious Reasoning in African Philosophy", PH.D. Thesis. University of Nairobi 1985. P.60.

⁶ H.O. Oruka, Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, Shirikon publishers, Nairobi 1990. P. 140.

In his much later publication on the same subject entitled "Tradition and Modernity Revised" of 1982 prompted by criticism on his earlier article, Horton sounded rather mild. Although in here Horton still talks of scientific mode of thinking and the magical or pre-Scientific mode, Horton no longer thinks that any of these modes of thinking 'is unique and changeless quality of anyone race or civilisation', as Professor Oruka notes in his, Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, mentioned above. According to Horton, the continuity from pre-scientific thought to scientific thought is a reality in all civilizations. By implication then, "traditional African mode of thinking will eventually develop into the scientific, progressivistic type".⁷ As for now, it is what it is. All the above clearly depicts the negative and biased attitude attributed to African mentality and personality by Horton. In essence, Horton's view of African mentality made him draw the erroneous and outrageous conclusion that they cannot critically philosophise.

E.A. Ruch is another Scholar whose views depicted the black man as a person incapable of embarking on a rational activity. Like Horton, he lived and worked for a long time in Africa. He lives in Lesotho. His views are vividly expressed in his paper entitled 'Is there an African Philosophy'. The observation by this Scholar is that 'African Philosophy only reflects and concerns itself with the way African peoples of the past and present make sense of their existence and destiny'. In addition, Ruch says that the propagators of this Philosophy are the mythopoeists and the Ethno-philosophers. In his view, the philosophy by these people is not scientific but a representation of their creative wisdom to their peoples' art of living. He further notes that their philosophy does not constitute critical and analytical approach as they do not verify their observations 'in terms of logical consistency and empirical objectivity'. This observation by E.A. Ruch is recorded in H. Odera Oruka's,

Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy.

By implication therefore, Ruch held that Africans cannot think in a critical philosophical fashion, and that the only Philosophy existing in Africa is mythopoetry and ethno-philosophy. His view is clearly illustrated by his contention that "There do not exist, in the African tradition, that rationalistic attitude and that almost solipsistic individualism which is so common in the West no traditional African would have stated the conviction' I think, therefore, I am 'nor would it have crossed his mind to conclude; 'to be is to be perceived.'"⁸

Besides Horton and Ruch, another interesting Scholar from the Western world whose work despises blacks was Professor M. Maurier. However, his views are similar to those of Horton and Ruch. This Scholar argued that the African mind had not fully evolved to be able to embark on intellectual activities. Consequently, he concluded that there is nothing like African Philosophy, though he left the possibility of its coming into existence. Professor Maurier's views are recorded in his work by the title, "Do we have an African Philosophy" in R.A. Wright (ed) African Philosophy, University Press of America, 1979.

A.P. Newton, a historian is also a good example of those who wrote derogatory views on Africans. His ideas are documented in his work by the title: The Cambridge History of the British Empire, General editors, J.H. Rose, A.P. Newton and E.A. Benians, Cambridge University press, London 1929. According to Newton, 'Africa South of Sahara had no history before the coming of the Europeans History only begins when men take to writing.' His ideas are also reflected in his paper that he presented in London in 1923 on "Africa and Historical research." The argument of this biased and Eurocentric Scholar, generally held that Africans are less of human beings and that is why they "have no"

⁸ E.A. RUCH, "Is there an African Philosophy?"
Second order, Vol. III, No.2 (Ife, Nigeria, July, 1974) P.11

history, religion or morality. The deduction that one can draw from his argument is that Africans can only change for the better if the Europeans undertook to instill them with moral values and civilization so as to place them in the right path of human development and hence be able to make history.

One would however not be wrong to assume that Eurocentric dimension adopted and employed in the Western circles in general, on the black race, largely explain the stand taken by the philosophers who find Africans innocent of critical philosophy and the rigid use of reason.

Among the noted European thinkers whose views we are going to consider on the subject of African philosophy are G.W.F. Hegel and Lucien Levy Bruhl.

Hegel was a Germany Philosopher, and his ideas about inferiority of the black creation are mainly contained in his book, Philosophy of History. Hegel is quite well known in the discourse of the academic Philosophy in Africa. Hegel an idealist, sought to trace the development of ideas and Philosophical history of the world. In so doing, Hegel came to analyse the many and different continents that there are in the world. It is here where his conception and understanding of the African creation and mentality is found.

Basically, Hegel divided Africa into three main regions namely:

- i) Africa South of Sahara
- ii) Africa North of Sahara
- iii) River Region of Nile

According to this Philosopher, Africa South of Sahara is the Africa proper. Hegel adds that it is here that you find a true and actual African person in his peculiar identity and in his natural setting. To quote him, Hegel says that, this is Africa

proper as far as history goes back because "it has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world shut up It is the gold land compressed within itself - the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self - conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night".⁹

Consequently, Hegel describes Africa North of Sahara as "European Africa" because according to him, this is not Africa proper. Hegel notes that this region "must be attached to Europe like Hither-Asia. It looks Europe-wards and the interests and influence of Europe are so profound".¹⁰

As concerns Nile Valley Africa, this region too, he says is not Africa proper as it has been under cultural influence from elsewhere. Specifically, he points out that this region has been under immense Asian influence.

Hegel in his argument noted that reason is the world moving force. To dominate the world, it is a prerequisite to have or be able to utilize this power.

In his analysis of the African continent, Hegel arrived at the position that due to lack of power of reason, Africans will never be able to dominate the world. Hegel believed that it is reason that enables a person to arrive at universal ideas. That is, to the objective nature of all that there is in the universe. In turn, Hegel held that it is through the understanding of the objective nature of things and the subsequent use of universal laws that man is able to dominate the world and make history.

In his further observation, Hegel vehemently denied the Africans this fundamental and vital power of reason. According to him,

⁹ G.W.F. Hegel , Philosophy of History. Dover publications, New York. 1956. P.91

¹⁰ Ibid, P.93

"In negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence. The Africans, he says, cannot invent anything among the Africans and this is evident in lack of concrete achievements. Reasonably because, ideas are manifested i.e. in cultures and in other sorts of material form."¹¹

Therefore, Hegel arrived at the conclusion that Africa South of Sahara has no history to observe, talk or write about.

Due to all the noted points, Hegel also arrived at the erroneous conclusion that the African person (Negro-race) is/are not complete human beings. If anything, they are sub-human where he is concerned, and as already observed.

"The negro exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state

There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in the particular type of a character."¹²

To justify his position on the negroes primitivity, Hegel further adds that, 'to them tyranny is regarded as no wrong and that cannibalism is looked upon, as quite customary and proper.' According to Hegel, 'at the death of a king, hundreds are killed and eaten, prisoners are butchered and their flesh sold in the markets.

Hegel's assertions concerning the question of philosophy and culture in Africa is better summarised by Christian Neugebauer when he reduces everything into seven theses, namely:

- i) Staticity of Africa

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. P. 94

- ii) Primitivity of Africa
- iii) Profligacy of Africa
- iv) Savageness of Africa
- v) Africa without history
- vi) Africa has no proper Philosophy
- vii) Africa is regarded as a cultural homogenous 'Continent'¹³

For us to be able to make a fair criticism and conclusion on the views expressed by Hegel, let us first consider Levy Bruhl's views in brief, on African mentality.

Levey Bruhl's ideas are originally documented in his, "Les Carnets", (the confessions) London press. London 1949. However, the same can be found in Levy Bruhl's Primitive Mentality; with preface by M. Leenhardt, translation from French by P. Riviere. Oxford: Blackwell, 1975. P. 204. (Translation of Les. Carnets). According to this French philosopher, Africans live their own unique life. This life he says, 'revolves around the conventional beliefs and values which are deeply rooted in their customs and traditions: In exact words, Levy Bruhl contends that, "the primitive always behaves according to tradition and feels strong aversion towards what is new".¹⁴ In 'Philosophy and cultures' edited by Oruka and Masolo, Paulin Hontondji brings out Bruhl's implication clearly that 'the "primitive" is devoid of reason and free judgement. That tradition to him is absolute and exclusive of any type of personal thought and responsibility'.

On what prompted Levy Bruhl to write on African mentality and in designing the concept of "Primitive mentality", Hountondji

¹³ C.M., Neugebaur, 'The racism of Hegel and Kant,' in O.H. Oruka's SAGE PHILOSOPHY; Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy; Nairobi Kenya, Acts Press. 1991. P. 249

¹⁴ O.H. Oruka, and D.A. Masolo (eds) Philosophy and Cultures, published by Brookwise Ltd. 1983, P. 139

says that Levy Bruhl intended to oppose "the English anthropological School" of Tylor and Frazer who contended that:

- i) "Human nature is identical through time and space
- and ii) That the acts and deeds of "primitive" peoples are based on a particular Philosophy i.e. a coherent and self-conscious world outlook."¹⁵

In regard to what Levy Bruhl had to say, this comes out clearly when he attempted to make a distinction between the civilized and the primitive man.

According to Levy Bruhl, there are two mentalities in man, namely:

- i) Logical and professional and
- ii) Illogical and unprofessional.

The classification of these two mentalities is brought out clearly by Paulin J. Hountondji in his article noted down by H.O. Oruka and D.A. Masolo in their (eds) Philosophy and Cultures, published in 1983 by Bookwise Ltd. In Pages 138-139.

Levy Bruhl argued that one mentality is for a civilised man while the other is for a mystic one. It is in this latter category that this academician placed the black man. In his argument, he says that in "primitive man's mentality, it is this mysticism that prevails and to him anything is possible with magic". Given this African unique setting he argued that Europeans should be very careful when they categorise certain African aspects as impossible. Through their magic he said Africans may be able to attain certain results which Europeans can attain only through modern technology. For instance curing of the sick.

Levy Bruhl's actual argument was that the African has a way of thinking that is different from that of the Europeans. Due to lack of logic, he argued that the Africans have ideas but the same are not fully developed. Following this argument which is more or less in line with that of Hegel, Bruhl arrived at the conclusion that the African man cannot have a Philosophy as he lacks relevant and sufficient ideas. However, unlike Hegel, Levy Bruhl talked of potentiality in African mind.

In his analysis, he talks of sometime in future when the African mind will be fully developed as to be able to reason fully and give birth to meaningful ideas that can make history. That time he says, the black race will be able to think Philosophically and even produce a Philosophy of its own.

On making a careful evaluation and analysis of Levy Bruhl's argument, one will note that it is less extreme than the view of Hegel. Hegel's position is that by nature, African mind is devoid of reason in an absolute sense, and therefore, has no possibility or potentiality of being otherwise. Therefore it will never be able to make history or philosophy forever.

Levy Bruhl's contention that the Africans have a way of thinking but which is different from that of the Europeans is comparable to Placide Tempels position (an Ethno-Philosopher we shall talk about later). However, the two Scholars differ in that, whereas Levy Bruhl holds that the Africans have no Philosophy, Tempels argued differently saying that they have one which is peculiar to their way of thinking. The arguments advanced by these scholars and especially Hegel are biased and very unfair to the black race. This is in consideration of the standing fact that 'reason is to all mankind and not a monopoly of any race'. For instance, and as Neugebauer observes in his discussion of "the racism of Kant and Hegel" (Oruka's Sage Philosophy, page, 259) on what is meant by 'Africa' by Hegel.

Neugebauer comments correctly when he says that, 'it is

obvious that Hegel does not perceive Africa as a Continent as he excludes Egypt and Ethiopia from the 'African Spirit' as he knows that his racist view of Africa could easily be refuted with the civilization and general advancements recorded here.' The racism depicted by Hegel and his colleagues 'is on the one hand part and parcel of the European racial mania against the Jews'. Further, F. Fanon expounds this racist attitude better when he says that "the very conditions causing hatred against the Jews are responsible for the humiliation of the negro"¹⁶

Apart from Hegel and Levy Bruhl, another scholar whose views are worth mentioning in brief, is John Darwin, the Father of the theory of evolution. This scholar's views also fall under the anti-black philosophical thought. Of importance to us is his "theory of evolution". In this theory, Darwin argues that a man is constantly evolving from lower stages of civilization to higher ones. That is, from low level mental capacities to higher ones, i.e. from primitive stage(s) to reflective ones. However, Darwin says that the Western man has already attained this reflective and civilised stage. The black man on the contrary, he says has not. He classified the African mentality as being close to that of an ape than it is to the white man's. In essence, his argument is similar to that of Hegel and Levy Bruhl.

Darwin's ideas are well documented by C. Eiseley Loren in his works entitled, "Darwin's Century": Evolution and the men who discovered it. New York Doubleday, 1961. (Anchor book A 244).

Darwin concluded that the black race has not reached a stage that can enable it to think philosophically and therefore has no philosophy to talk about.

For the African man to be in a position to have or to think

philosophically, he must of necessity attain the vital reflective stage.

John Darwin's theory of evolution came to influence other scholars such as E. Taylor whose ideas are noted in his book known as Primitive Culture, London press, 1871. Taylor used Darwin's theory to relate to the social cultural dynamism of human society. He depicted Africans as pre-cultural and pre-historical. According to him, Africans were yet to start climbing the dialectic ladder of social development.

This scholar lamented that his mission was to put straight and in scientific terms what Hegel had put forward earlier. His contention held that the primitive man i.e. the African man does not differentiate between subject and the object. This is because he has a pre-logical mentality i.e. he is not aware of the principle of identity.

Nevertheless, a common characteristic of Hegel, Levy Bruhl and Darwin is that they all deny the negro-race reason vital for producing relevant and meaningful ideas that can give rise to philosophy. However, Darwin like Levy Bruhl is a bit lenient as he leaves a possibility of sometime in future when the African will have a fully developed mind to enable him reason and even think philosophically.

The views of these scholars on the mentality of the Africans, though well argued out, should not be given a serious consideration. This is so because, their views are heavily influenced by the biased cultural factors in the western world. As was indicated at the start of this chapter, the western attitude to blacks and the black mentality has been that of contempt and degradation. Most of the western scholars have been egoistic in their approach and hence their biasness and the distortion of facts about the Africans. The bias is so obvious especially in light of the fact that we can only talk of varying

mental capacities between individual entities but not between races. The arguments of these scholars depict Africans as a people from whom no single individual with active and reflective mind can be found. At the same time, they portray their race as one from which no single person has mental incapacity and that in their society everybody is reflective.

In any case, it is wrong and unfair for one to use a given standard i.e. of one culture to judge another, quite divorced from it.

A standard can only be used to judge itself but no another one. Hence it was unfair for these scholars to use their culture to judge that of the black race. These are actually two different situations with different challenges.

Basically, these were the views of the classical philosophers whose presenting views held that Africans are unphilosophical.

In our next chapter, we are going to consider the views of those scholars who wrote in support of African philosophy. That is the group that immediately took up arms against the views of anti-African European classical philosophers.

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C H A P T E R T H R E E

THE EXISTENCE OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

(The Ethno-Philosophers)

In this section, we are going to consider the factors that led to black awakening and self consciousness. This is basic to the emergency of written African philosophy.

Having considered the historical factors that led to self-consciousness, we shall then turn to Prof. Odera Oruka's four trends in African philosophy. For chronological reasons however, we shall commence with Ethno-philosophy before finally embarking on the subject of our interest and the core of this thesis, namely philosophic sagacity in Africa.

African philosophy was basically prompted by black renaissance movement in the United States and the negritude movement in Africa by Leopord Sedar Senghor. However, these were not the only movements which influenced the rise of African philosophy. There were other factors like the general character of the pre-world war II, European philosophical movements such; as phenomenology, existentialism and structuralism. All these movements had a common characteristic which was their general revolt against the pure rationalism of the Kantian-Hegelian type.

This came about as a result of the 19th century new development in western philosophy, namely:

- i) The crisis of scientific explanation and
- ii) The thought and the writing of the Swiss psychologist, Sigmund Freud. Sigmund's ideas are clearly noted in Mcglashan Agnes M's work on him entitled, Sigmund Freud, in 'Founder of Psycho-analysis,' London, Hart Davis, 1970.

Freud's influence included the discovery of the sub-conscious. The crisis of scientific explanation similarly came to dispute the Hegelian position that only science could explain everything including human behaviour.

Both of these factors combined to give birth to the variety of western philosophical movements that we have just mentioned.

Black renaissance movement of 20th Century began in America and took place in other countries like Cuba and Haiti. The theme of this movement was reinstatement of black man's cultural value and dignity. This movement held that the black man has his own rationality and cultural value. As such, he had an important role to play in historical development.

In Haiti, the black movement was known as indigenism. The movement here was spearheaded by people like Jean Price-mars, Carl Bronard and Jacques Reumain. In Cuba, the movement was known as cubanism and it began with the generation of Nicolas Guillen. In America, Dubois, Cullen and Hughes among others were the initiators.

Let us now turn back to the pre-world war II, European philosophical movements of phenomenology, existentialism and structuralism before saying something about negritude movement.

Phenomenological movement began in Germany with Edmund Husserl as its main speaker and promoter. This movement like the others, had characteristics that were conducive to emergency of African philosophy. Before Husserl's phenomenological movement which was anti-scientifism, though as mentioned before, science stood as a powerful means of expressing philosophy (reality). Phenomenological movement came to oppose science because of the presuppositions inherent in it. For instance, this movement was opposed to idealism in science which was more concerned about man and his daily practical experiences.

To be precise, this movement was more concerned with that which was free of presuppositions and distortions. Its concern was directed towards man's concrete reality. This philosophical movement inspired people like Placide Tempels who authored the book Bantu Philosophy.

Existentialism was the other important philosophical movement that helped to give rise to written African philosophy. This movement flourished in Europe after the 2nd World War but its pioneering scholar was much earlier in the person of Soren Kierkegaard. This movement laid emphasis on individual existence and held that, will other than reason holds the world. The argument here runs thus, Being is basic and is revealed to each and every individual through reflection on his own individual experience. Namely; that, each self-aware individual understands his own existence in terms of his own situation and experience.

Existentialism postulate that will or freedom is the fundamental weapon that an individual possesses. Further, it adds that, the self of which the individual is, is a thinking being which has beliefs, hopes, fears and desires. This self also has the need to find a purpose and a will that can determine his actions and comfort in the world.

However, like Phenomenology, Existentialism is thoroughly anti-rationalism, unlike science, it is prepared to separate the inquirer from the subject of inquiry. It emphasizes the relationship between the individual and the world.

Kierkegaard says that, 'when man comes into the world, he becomes part of it. Consequently, man while in the world tries to create his own meaning of it for himself. This meaning that man renders the world, in turn makes him more involved with it as his environment, likewise, all this creates a purpose for his existence'.

Kierkegaard's ideas are well noted by G.J. Stack in his: 'Existential Ethics' Alabama, University of Alabama Pr. 1977. (Studies in the Humanities: No.16).

Structuralism on the other hand is a cultural movement which considered all the manifestations of human experience e.g. art, morality, ethics, language and so forth. A prominent scholar in this school is Levi Strauss. His arguments are clearly noted in his book; Structuralism and Sociological Theory, London Hutchinson. 1975. However, Sigmund Freud is the father of structuralism. He believed that the human mind is structured from the conscious to the sub-conscious.

This scholar considered the human mind from the point of view of system analysis rather than from the historical perspective.

According to sigmund, human minds are different from one another, but they are Not inferior or superior to each other. Structuralism does not put emphasis on the genesis of concepts but on the system of relations that join concepts. Each human mind has a structure which defines it as such, it adds.

This category of thought attempts to explain different aspects of human life in terms of some invariables that defy and transcend time i.e. the rules of human thinking and behaviour, it says that this can be understood in their own objectivity and scientific neutrality over and above the historical contingency which exerts influence upon them.

From this methodological point of view, structuralism embodies the features of anti-historicism and anti-idealism. All in all, one will note that the arguments advanced by this European Philosophical movements created an atmosphere that was favourable for the coming into being of African philosophy.

Negritude is a philosophical and cultural ideology. It's origin is African as the phrase was firstly coined by the poet Aime Cesaire from West Indies. Cesaire himself was a descendant of Africa.

Negritude is however a unique movement that came into existence in Africa mainly through the efforts of Leopold Sedar Senghor who elevated it by giving it a philosophical content. To pioneer this movement in Africa, Senghor had been influenced by the developments taking place in Europe. Through the mentioned developments, the Africa person was made aware of himself as a race and thus awakening him to assert his dignity and cultural value. This inclination had its basis on the fact that Africans had been colonised for a very long period and subjected to all manner of abuse and injustice.

Through negritude movement, the African person wanted to restore his culture to its previously respected position. As noted above, this came with the realisation that the white man had already become aware and conscious of his culture and dignity such that he now wanted it to prevail over others so that he could dominate the others for ever. This is clearly illustrated by the case of Franco-phone Africa where the French colonial power aimed at fully assimilating Africans into their culture and general way of life.

In defense of Negritude, Senghor had the following observations to make "Negritude is not the defense of a skin or a colour Negritude is the awareness, defense and development of African Cultural values. It is a part of Africanity and is made up of human warmth. It is the sum total of the values of the civilisation of the African world. It is not racialism. It is a culture"¹⁷.

Senghor's ideas are however well documented in his original

¹⁷ Quoted in J.S. Mbiti African Religions and Philosophy, Heinemann, Nairobi. 1969. P. 267.

works; "Psychologie de negro-africaine," Diogenes 37. 1962.

Negritude movement underscored that cultures should be understood as they stand and should not be compared and judged on the basis of other cultural standards. In short however, Negritude Movement did certainly inspire people i.e. scholars to originate African philosophy by putting down their ideas into writing to justify the black man's position as an equal to the rest of his fellow human kind.

Ethno-philosophy:

How did existentialism and black renaissance movement help to give rise to Ethno-philosophy?

The teachings of these two movements were very inspiring to the negro-race and their sympathisers to come up with a theoretical framework based on reality, in defense of themselves.

Contrary to the Eurocentric view that Marginalised the negro-race, Existentialism taught that, the self of which the individual is, is a thinking being which has beliefs, hopes, fears and desires. Further, it argued that the self has the need to find a purpose and will that can determine his actions and comfort in the world. According to this movement, will or freedom is the fundamental weapon that an individual possesses.

Black renaissance movement played a very crucial part as its theme was reinstatement of black man's cultural value and dignity. It also emphasised that the black man has his own rationality and cultural value. This movement was in particular fundamental in that it was through its efforts that the pre-world war II, European philosophical movements came into existent to supplement it. Besides, it also inspired the coming into being of the Negritude Movement. All combined created the right atmosphere and attitude that led to origination of Ethno-philosophy.

As indicated by Prof. Odera Oruka, Ethno-philosophy comprised the first organised attempt by scholars to contend for existence of African philosophy. Their actual motive was to suppress the views of classical European philosophers who argued against African philosophy. The ethno-philosophers were not philosophers in the serious and strict sense. They were mainly ethnologists, anthropologists and theologians.

Leading scholars here are; Placide Tempels, John Mbiti and Alexis Kagame. Tempels is himself the pioneering scholar in the field. Before considering the views advanced by these scholars, let us first understand what Ethno-philosophy is and what it stands for.

Ethno-philosophy is a philosophy based on the cultural beliefs and practices of a society or community. Hence, it is a folk or communal philosophy as it derives its raw materials and contents from a peoples ways of life and practices.

Prof. Odera Oruka says that "Ethno-philosophy is a description of what is supposed to be philosophy or thought of a whole community, that is of the uncritical part of a people's tradition such as beliefs which characterise the religions, legends, folk tales, myths and superstitions of a community and which a people treat as imperishable truths and which everyone is expected to respect without question."¹⁸

In short, Ethno-philosophy is that which purports to portray a world outlook or a thought system of a particular African community or the whole African people and therefore it is a collective enterprise.

Assumptions or implications found here indicate that

¹⁸ H.O. Oruka, "Four trends of African philosophy". (photocopy). Now in, Trends in contemporary African Philosophy, Shirikon Press, Nairobi. 1991 P. 18

whatever philosophy there is among Africans is communal and as such cannot be attributed to any independent individual thinker(s). Another assumption here and which this philosophy picks is that philosophical thought in Africa is radically distinct from the same elsewhere and in particular from the western philosophical thought. It is claimed to be unique in that it is devoid of rationalist explanation and does not employ rigorous critical inquiry observed in western philosophy (thought).

In essence, African philosophical thought is reduced to a system of Ethno-logical beliefs i.e. myths and mysticism. All these are adhered to by community members without question.

Let us now briefly consider the views of Placide Tempels and those of his two disciples - Alexis Kagame and J.S. Mbiti.

Placide Tempels ideas are contained in his book Bantu Philosophy. His views are actually based on his observation of behaviour and study of the language of the Baluba people of present day Zaire. These are people he had lived with and worked for as a missionary for many years. Therefore, a people he thought to have well understood. Tempels in his work aimed at refuting claims of the likes of Levy Bruhl and Hegel who had described the African as irrational, pre-logical and hence uncivilized. Tempels in his work recognised the rationality of the so called "Primitive mentality".

According to Tempels, 'to declare on prior grounds that primitive people have no ideas on the nature of beings, no ontology and lack logic is simply to turn one's back to reality'.

His study and analysis of bantu ontology was actually not directed to the Bantu themselves but to the colonialists "of good Will" and more so the missionary. According to D.A. Masolo, "Tempels wanted primitives raised and recognised as men, men with their own way of life, their own system of thought furnished by

logically coherent ideas".¹⁹ This is as per deductions made by D.A. Masolo in his, "A half a century of philosophy" (unpublished).

In short, Tempels argued that Africans (Bantus) must have an ontology (principles) of their own. According to him, these principles are inevitable to thinking beings and are the ones which condition human behaviour. These principles he says, were originated and left behind by the ancestors as the practical solutions to the basic human problems i.e. those concerning death and life.

To qualify his argument, this scholar validly contends that persistence on a certain line of action means or implies that there must be a body of logically co-ordinated and motivated concepts. This he says, enables man to act and behave in a certain acceptable manner. Tempels notes that no human behaviour can be universal or permanent, if it lacks a base, a body of ideas commonly held and adhered to. That is a body of ideas in which knowledge of universe i.e. of man and the things that surrounds him is imbedded.

However, what is interesting in Tempels "Bantu ontology" is his analysis of the "vital force". This he says is the highest value in Bantu life. Tempels vital force runs from God to the inanimate. This includes the dead ancestors to living community of human beings and the animals. Given his argument, vital force is present in all creation and everything revolves around it as the most fundamental thing in the lives of the Bantu people. God he says, is the most supreme force from whom all other forces emanate. In this sense, Tempels brings to light a hierarchy of forces in the universe ranging from weak to strong. The Bantu holds man to be occupying a central location such that all creation is centred on him.

¹⁹ D.A.Masolo: "Half a century of Philosophy" (problems of philosophy in Africa since 1930s) Unpublished. P.53

This vital force is the African metaphysics. Everything that there is in the universe is closely interrelated. None exists independently from the other, adds Tempels. However, it is argued that God created the other inferior forces with the aim of being able to help man increase his force. That is why the Bantu talk of either gaining or diminishing this force. Vital force is indeed the central thing in magic or witchcraft, the more force one has, the more superior or gifted he is, i.e. in witchcraft.

In conclusion, Tempels contended that vital force must have its basis in the society's value system i.e. cultural order, and that is why African behaviour just like western or indeed all human behaviour should be seen to depend upon a system or principles. He further argues that this is the more reason as to why it is wrong for anybody to contend that Africans possess no system of thought as this would be excluding them from the category of man where they actually fall.

Generally and as seen from the views expressed by Tempels, the most fundamental base of reality among the Africans is the vital force. This is because the vital force is explained to be integrated in all aspects of human life. From his analysis, Tempels acknowledged that there must be some philosophy among the Africans but one based on peoples' world views.

The aim of Tempels was to bring forth the bantu system of thought that guides them in all their actions. This being a rejection of the position advanced by some philosophers that people of negro-race have no system of thought that is recognised or recognisable.

John S. Mbiti on the other hand explained his views in his book entitled, African Religions and Philosophy. Without going into so much details, let us consider Mbiti's argument. Mbiti in his work has tackled many subjects but most interesting is his understanding of African concept of time.

According to this scholar, Africans have a philosophy but this philosophy is rooted in the past. In his views, he records that African concept of time has a very long past but a very short future. For Africans he says, "Time is simply a composition of events which have occurred, and those which are immediately to occur"²⁰. Given a close analysis one will realise that the African concept of time is not so different from the western one. This is despite the fact that the African view of time is or can be said to be more practical. Time according to western tradition, is the measure of the rate at which events take place or the medium through which change takes place. The distinct difference however, between the African and western system of thought is that Africans restrict time only to the past, where events have occurred, and the present where they are occurring.

Africans do not talk of future time where events have not occurred, but a discount is given to immediate future ranging from six months to two years period of which period events can be almost accurately predicted. Beyond this period, the Africans according to Mbiti can not talk of time. Further, Mbiti notes that the western concept of time is more numerical than anything else, unlike the African's it is three dimensional, past, present and future. For them he says, 'time is hope, survival and something to be prayed for.'

Mbiti in his argument for existence of African philosophy said that the philosophy that there is, has its base in the community's cultural heritage i.e. as contained in their past time. This is in consideration of the fact that, the cultural heritage of a people encompasses the lived and experienced time. Since the customs and traditions are passed from one generation to another, Mbiti implies that whatever philosophy that there is, is communal and not individualistic. He says that everybody is involved in producing and modifying it. In short, the wisdom

inherent in it, is a direct or indirect contribution of the vast members of the community. To arrive at the noted position of existence of African philosophy (Ontology), Mbiti carried out his research and study among the Akamba and the Kikuyu communities of Kenya. Mbiti did this by analysing and evaluating the people's language. His objective was as hinted, to bring out an ontological order of the world in accordance with African culture.

Mbiti paid a lot of attention to the concept of time because according to him, the reality of time influences the people's religions and behaviour. Reality he believed was controlled by some basic religious notions. On the other hand, Mbiti took time to be a basic element in ordering our experience and events in the world. Mbiti held that, "the concept of time can only be understood to some degree of satisfaction within the context of a general conception of reality, its origin, constitution, prospects and limits, meaning and destiny and in close relation to the way of life of a given cultural unity."²¹

Alexis Kagame carried out his research among the Banyarwanda people of Rwanda. His views are contained in his book, "La Philosophie bantu rwandaïse de letre" Brussels: Academic Royal des sciences coloniales. 1956. Kagame's philosophy as was indicated, is based on African culture and is contained in the spoken language. To extract this philosophy imbedded in the people's language, Kagame set out to establish and confirm the origin, structure and relationship of words, through his method of linguistic analysis. This he did because he thought of language as subordinate and secondary instrument of thought. From Kagame's findings, the deduction that can be made is that, there is no thought or idea for which we have got no word unless the idea is totally foreign to our native language pattern.

Kagame, in short believed that ontology of a people is given

in the grammatical structure of their language and its semantic. Namely that, African philosophy is manifested in African languages i.e. in their grammar where African concept of reality is imbedded just as it is contained in a people cultural system which is in essence their value system.

Kagame sought to follow up and verify the ideas of Tempels regarding Bantu ontology. Kagame was convinced that Tempels ideas could only be perfected by one who knew Bantu culture and language adequately.

Nevertheless, this scholar notes that proverbs, fables, stories and poems are, 'institutionalised documents which contain within them assertions of philosophical order.' Kagame was of the view that, study of language is vital where lack of literacy tradition is evident. Here he observed, language qualifies to be most, "adequate source and means of preserving thought and values". This observation he says, arises with the realisation that the act of speaking is a technical and a complex phenomenon.

However, from his analysis of Kinyarwanda language, Kagame extracts the generalisations and reflections on reality in general and Being in particular. In regard to Being, Kagame squeezes everything that here is in the universe into four categories:

i.e. Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu.

- i) Muntu: he says is a philosophical category which include God, Spirits, the departed human beings and certain trees. This category to Kagame, constitutes "force" endowed with intelligence.
- ii) Kintu: on the other hand includes all forces which do not act on their own but only under the command of Muntu, such as plants, animals,

minerals and so forth.

- iii) Hantu: he says is a category of "force" that covers time and space, finally,
- iv) Kuntu: is what he refers to as "modality" and covers items like beauty and laughter etc.

The above categories cover the findings contained in his language analysis of the Banyarwanda people. According to Kagame, all being and all essence in whatever form can be subsumed up under one of these categories and nothing can be conceived outside them. He sticks to Tempels concept of "force" and tells us that man is a force, all things are forces, time and space are forces and the "modalities" are forces. The four categories he says are related merely on linguistics stem i.e. such that NTU occurs in all the four and it is supposed to be the universal force. NTU is being itself and cosmic universal force. Tu is the force where being coalesce. NTU expresses not the effect of these forces but their being.

Whatever philosophy that Kagame implied at in his linguistic analysis, like his colleagues, he concluded that it was communal and therefore not attributable to an individual thinker. Like Tempels and Mbiti, Kagame notes that the wisdom evident is a contribution from many human sources over a period of many years.

A common factor between Mbiti and Kagame is that, their theories are based on study and analysis of people's language.

They both concede to the idea that African philosophy is manifested in African people's language. Reasonably because, it is in the grammar and word structure where the African concept of reality is imbedded.

Having briefly considered the position taken by Ethno-philosophy and the views at glance expressed by its proponents,

let us now draw a conclusion. To stress once more, this category of philosophy is made up of scholars who contend for existence of African philosophy and seeing it as a communal enterprises other than attributing its ideas to independent individual thinkers. The argument notes that the philosophy is with the people. Therefore, it is implicit and not explicit as it is bound in the peoples' traditions and beliefs.

By and large, it can be said that African philosophy is a philosophy without philosophers according to Ethno-philosophers. It can also be observed that Ethno-philosophy brings together questions and propositions which contemporary philosophy (philosophy proper) classifies into various subject groupings. A general observation on this category of philosophical thought is that it comprises of religion, cosmology, history, technology, epistemology and logic besides others. Hence it is a global system of thought which is part and parcel of the peoples experience and testimony.

Of importance to mention is that, the views advanced by exponents of Ethno-philosophy on existence of African philosophy are fundamental in that they act as a proof that Africans have a philosophy of their own. This is important in that their views dispel the western position (of some scholars) that Africans are primitive and uncivilised.

However, what is interesting and controversial about Ethno-philosophers is that they took the position that this philosophy (African philosophy) is unique and therefore categorically different from the western philosophy that we know of. This being so because, if African philosophy is categorically different from western philosophy, then the two can not communicate.

The views expressed by Ethno-philosophers are however worth consideration in that they also help to correct certain attitudes. For instance, those of foreign scholars who see

nothing but traditionalism in Africa whereas in the western circles they talk of logic and science. One of the basic concerns of the Ethnophilosophers was to bring out the ignorance of such scholars who bracket the traditional element within their culture.

Basically, Ethno-philosophy is useful in a unique sense in that it contributes to the development of philosophical thought in Africa and elsewhere. Secondly, it's criticism contributes to a more clear philosophical thought and debates. Besides it should be respected for its position as a pioneering category of thought to come in defense of African thought system by way of proof to expose the philosophy inherent therein. Indeed it helped to inspire and provoke critical African philosophy in the 60's through to 90's.

For our next chapter, we shall consider the position taken by classroom philosophy i.e. professional philosophy by the formally trained scholars.

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don. is what in other words is referred to as philosophical thought. It is referred to as philosophical thought because it is the work and debates of those scholars who have received training and general orientation in philosophy as a discipline of university study. Therefore scholars here are those in the discipline of philosophy.

The leading scholars of this category of thought, and arguments we shall consider in this chapter are from, Paulinountoodj, Henry Odera Oruka and Kwasi

For instance, it should be mentioned that this category of thought exists from the Ethno-philosophical thought. The actual position being that, scholars here dispute the position taken by the exponents of Ethno-

For instance, unlike Ethno-philosophy which held that philosophy is a communal enterprise among African peoples and that it is not critical or identifiable with any particular, professional philosophers took the position that philosophizing is a personal or individual based activity. Namely that, philosophy should be viewed as a discipline in which various ideas emanating from various individual thinkers have been brought together.

Consequently, one can deduce that according to this philosophical category of thought, Philosophy does not depend on any particular, but is basically concerned with the ideas and

C H A P T E R F O U R

THE PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY:

‘A Critical African Philosophy’

This Philosophical trend is what in other words is referred to as classroom philosophy, classroom philosophy because, it mostly contains the works and debates of those scholars who have received formal training and general orientation in philosophy as a discipline of university study. Therefore scholars here are professionals in the discipline of philosophy.

Among the leading scholars of this category of thought, whose views and arguments we shall consider in this chapter are Peter Bodunrin, Paulin Hountondj, Henry Odera Oruka and Kwasi Wiredu.

Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that this category of thought derieves its existence from the Ethno-philosophical school of thought. The actual position being that, Scholars here emerge to dispute the position taken by the exponents of Ethno-philosophy. For instance, unlike Ethno-philosophy which held that philosophy is a communal enterprise among African peoples and adding that it is not critical or identifiable with any individual in particular, professional philosophers took the position that philosophizing is a personal or individual based intellectual activity. Namely that, philosophy should be viewed as a discipline in which various ideas emanating from various different individual thinkers have been brought together.

Consequently, one can deduce that according to this philosophical category of thought, Philosophy does not depend on a consensus, but is basically concerned with the ideas and thoughts of independent individual thinkers rather than those of the entire community.

As was noted earlier on, the basic position of professional School is a rejection of assumptions of Ethno-Philosophy and adoption of a universalist view of philosophy. According to this School, "Criticism and arguments are essential characteristics of anything which is to pass as philosophy, consequently it contends that 'mere descriptive accounts of African thought system or the thought systems of any other society would not pass as philosophy".²²

However, scholars here were not so much concerned with the ongoing debate on existence or non-existence of African philosophy. Their immediate objective was to establish and bring out the universal meaning and definition of philosophy that would be acceptable without any controversy. Prof. Oruka notes the concern of this school of thought better when he says that, "there cannot be one meaning and definition of philosophy in Africa and at the same time a completely different meaning and definition of the same elsewhere i.e. in the west". This is contained in his previously unpublished article, "The Fundamental principles in the question of African philosophy". Now the same is published and clearly spelt-out in his book; Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy, Shirikon Publishers, Nairobi, 1990.

Interestingly however, is that even though scholars here agreed on a consensus that the meaning and definition of philosophy should be the same all over, they could not among themselves settle or arrive at an exact meaning and definition. This will be evident from the views of the various individual scholars that we are going to analyze.

Kwasi Wiredu's ideas are contained in his book Philosophy and an African Culture. In here, Wiredu has written several essays but the first four deal directly with the idea of African philosophy. In this section, this scholar stresses the distinction between African philosophy as folk thought preserved in oral traditions and African philosophy as critical, individual reflection using modern logical and conceptual techniques.

In his rejection of Ethno-philosophy, Wiredu argued that philosophy proper as a thought should be seen to be critical, systematic, rigorous and independent. That it must be engrained with argument and criticism. According to this scholar, "philosophy as a theoretical discipline is devoted to detailed and complicated argument".²³

However, Kwasi Wiredu's position on African philosophy was a bit mild because, he did not conclusively dismiss African traditional thought system. According to Wiredu, African traditional thought system was at one given time useful but today it has outlived its usefulness due to the prevalent demand of modernisation. Wiredu observes that this thought system has become anachronistic in that its ideas can no longer be useful in solving the day-to-day problems.

Further, this philosopher notes that time has come when this thought system should be re-evaluated and another one evolved that can provide practical ideas i.e. those that are workable in present environment of modernised life. In the introductory remarks of his works, Wiredu contends that, "we can come up with a new system of thought by interpreting, clarifying, analysing and where appropriate by offering a critical evaluation on the existing traditional thought system, and then assimilating the new ideas arrived at to develop the resulting body of thought, contemporary Africa is in the middle of transition from a traditional to a modern society. This process of modernisation

²³ Kwasi Wiredu, Philosophy and an African Culture, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980. P. 34.

entails changes not only in the physical environment, but also in the mental outlook of our people, manifested both in their explicit beliefs, customs and their ordinary daily habits and pursuits".²⁴

Consequently, Wiredu noted that any change in a world outlook is basically a philosophical matter. Therefore, he felt that the philosophical evaluation of our traditional thought is of very considerable relevance to the process of modernisation in our continent. According to this scholar, there is a traditional African philosophy and there is an emerging modern African philosophy. The latter he says appropriates whatever is of value from the former and indeed from the western thought, making valuable contribution and also coming up with a more acceptable thought system.

In short, Wiredu is of the opinion that from the traditional thought system, the bulk of ideas that are no longer valuable should be discarded. In turn, those ideas that are still workable in solving problems and bringing about progress should be retained. Accordingly, he says that whatever is arrived at should be combined with those of value and relevance to our thought system from the western thought.

Wiredu wrote this after observing that the African traditional thought system was pre-scientific. Equally, this scholar had also noted that western societies too had traditional thought system but had abandoned them to give room to a more practical system of thought which would be of immense physical and mental benefit to them.

Wiredu dismissed Ethno-philosophy which held that African philosophy is embedded in the African people's traditions and customs. According to him, traditional society was deeply authoritarian and had become anachronistic besides having

supernatural tendencies, all of which combined to form an evil that afflict the society. In his own words, he observes that:

"Our traditional society was deeply authoritarian. Our social arrangements were shot through and through with the principle of unquestioning obedience to superiors, which often meant elders. Hardly any premium was placed on curiosity of those of tender age, or independence of thought in those of more considerable years. Our traditional thought is famous for an abundance of proverbs But it is rare to come across ones which extol the virtues of originality and independence of thought".²⁵

Wiredu argued convincingly that if African philosophy means traditional African philosophy as some people tend to think, then we should forget any pretence of modern philosophising. Namely, abstain from such disciplines as symbolic logic, philosophy of mathematics, natural and social sciences, philosophy, morality, political philosophy etc. and regard them as un-African while contending 'ourselves with repeating the proverbs and folk conceptions of our forefathers'.

According to Dr. D.A. Masolo, in his forthcoming publication "Half a Century of Philosophy (problems of philosophy in Africa since 1930s), Wiredu holds that 'Our societies are being rapidly changed by industrialization, as such, if we wish to understand this change and control its direction, (then) we must adopt new ways of thinking, a new outlook upon man, society and nature.' By and large that was Wiredu's position on African philosophy. Now let us briefly consider P.O. Bodunrin's argument on the same subject.

P.O. Bodunrin's ideas and arguments are contained in his publication entitled, "The question of African philosophy": The journal of the Royal Institute of philosophy, (C.U.P) No.56.

Like his other colleagues in this school of thought, Bodunrin concurs that philosophy and indeed African philosophy should be critical, discursive and independent. Therefore, Bodunrin is opposed to Ethno-philosophy as philosophy proper in that it is not analytic and does not question the peoples beliefs and customs.

In his definition of African philosophy, Bodunrin contends that, "it is the philosophy done by African philosophers whether it be in the area of logic, metaphysics, ethics or history of philosophy. It is desirable that the works be set in some African context, but it is not necessary that they be so."²⁶ In short, this scholar argues that any ideas on any philosophical subject, so long as they are written by an African should be grouped under the title, "African Philosophy".

Bodunrin's argument is similar to that of Wiredu on definition of philosophy. Precisely he says that, "philosophy of a country or region of the world is not definable in terms of the thought content of the tradition nor in terms of the national origins of the thinkers. This view is contained in Bodunrin's publication, "The question of African philosophy".

Wiredu in turn was of the view that, "for a set of ideas to be a genuine possession of a people, they need not have originated them, they need only appropriate them, make use of them, develop them and thrive on them. The intellectual history of mankind is a series of mutual borrowing and adaptations among races, nations, tribes and even smaller sub-groups".²⁷

²⁶ P.O. Bodunrin, "The question of African philosophy" The Journal of Royal Institute of Philosophy, (C.U.P) Vol.56, No.216, 1981, P. 162.

²⁷ Kwasi wiredu's, 'What is African Philosophy?', Presented at the William Amo International Symposium., P.7

Coming back to Ethno-philosophy, Bodunrin dismissed it as no philosophy at all because according to him, instead of Ethno-philosophers proving the existence of African philosophy, they only venture in 'describing a world outlook or thought system of particular African community or the whole of Africa'. According to this scholar and as already hinted, philosophy should not be seen as a communal thought but as a body of logically argued thought of individuals.

This scholar does not refute the fact that there is African philosophy, what he refutes is the specimen provided as evidence of existence of African philosophy. For instance, he totally disagrees with Ethno-philosopher's argument that philosophy is embedded in the peoples beliefs and customs. Peter Bodunrin of Ibadan University in Nigeria then settles at the position that, for African philosophy to exist, this can only happen in the name of those philosophers or people who have engaged in organised systematic reflections of the thoughts and practices of their people. Exposing people's folk-lore and beliefs as Ethno-philosophy does, is not sufficient enough to prove beliefs as Ethno-philosophy does, is not sufficient enough to prove the existence of African philosophy or philosophers for that matter.

It should also be noted here that Bodunrin considers written tradition or literacy as essential to philosophy. According to him, 'this lack of written tradition has led to Africa's late start in philosophy'. This particular argument by Bodunrin will be given due consideration in our next chapter where we shall be looking at philosophic sagacity.

However, Bodunrin dismisses Ethno-philosophy as philosophy proper because according to him, Ethno-philosophers "do not attempt to give a philosophical justification of the belief system or issues that arise in it. It is for these reasons that we find their works philosophically unsatisfactory, it is not

because we consider the material on which they have worked unworthy of the philosopher's attention or their work unscholarly".²⁸

This scholar was of the plausible view that the African philosopher can not deliberately ignore the study of the traditional belief system of his people. According to him, 'philosophical problems arise out of real life situations, however, this scholar says that 'philosopher's' approach to this study must be one of criticism and must seek to reveal the philosophical concepts embedded in African traditional thought'. In short that was the argument advanced by Peter Bodunrin.

Prof. Odera Oruka is also a member of this trend of professional philosophy, besides being the pioneering scholar of sage philosophy, a subject we shall look at in our next chapter.

Prof. Oruka's ideas on the meaning and definition of philosophy are well documented in his article, "the fundamental principles in the question of African philosophy". In this article, he attempts to discuss and explain what African Philosophy is or should be.

Before considering his actual arguments, it is important to mention that like his colleagues in this category of thought, Prof. Oruka concurs that philosophy is universal. As such, he says that philosophy must be seen to be critical, logical, rigorous and systematic as an intellectual activity. According to Oruka, philosophy must have its basis on an individual thinker and must not be looked upon as a collective enterprise. Oruka further adds that any other 'philosophy' that does not fulfil this is not philosophy proper but philosophy only in a unique and debased sense.

Let us now come back to Oruka's actual arguments as contained in his article. In here, this scholar wishes to bring out the conditions which 'African philosophy' must fulfil to deserve being referred to as African philosophy. According to him, "there is an intellectual temptation to take the position that it is unnecessary or insubstantial to concern oneself with 'African philosophy' since philosophy is universal."²⁹

It should be noted clearly that Oruka does not really avoid "African philosophy". In addition, he does not find it out of order to establish and bring out evidence for existence of philosophical thinkers, in the traditional society. As such, philosophic sagacity was prompted to oppose Ethno-philosophy and also to reject the views of some Professional scholars who insist on literacy as being basic for one to be able to do and think philosophically. According to Oruka, philosophic sagacity qualifies as philosophy proper as it falls in second order mode of thinking which is analytical and as such reflective.

Prof. Oruka in his arguments agreed that philosophy is universal and as such, the subject matters are not meant for any particular race or nationality. Equally, he noted that philosophy as a universal discipline should have truths that can be proved by methods which are independent of any personal, national or racial criteria i.e. values and feelings.

In short, Prof. Oruka underlines that, "Philosophy must be a discipline which employs principles that are objectively granted, or else that are rationally (logically) warrantable these principles if true, are true regardless of the person or place from which they originate."³⁰

²⁹ O.H. Oruka, "The fundamental principles to the Question of African Philosophy". Second Order 4 (2) 1975. P.45.

³⁰ Ibid, Page 46

Prof. Oruka qualified his contention by further adding that even though philosophy is universal, this does not entail that 'all the philosophers must have similar interests, employ similar methods in philosophy and that all the rationally warrantable or objectively granted principles or methods must be identical or that they must establish similar truths.

Odera Oruka's position on Ethno-philosophy in his discussion of African philosophy is also eminent when he argues that, "one should not indulge in recruiting traditional idiosyncrasies held unquestionably and parade them as examples of African philosophy or African thought. The result of such an unfortunate enterprise is a panorama of the traditional beliefs, superstitions, mythologies, which are entertained as the accumulated and collective wisdom of the African peoples - in other words, as African philosophy."³¹

Oruka was of the opinion that, Ethno-philosophy is not philosophy proper because of its recourse to traditional idiosyncrasies. According to him, even though this is motivated by the unique sense of philosophy, it is also encouraged by the debased sense of philosophy. He deems this kind of philosophy to be innocent of logical, critical, and impersonal inquiries and rigorous speculation. Philosophy here is understood only as the collective beliefs and opinions of a people. Oruka agrees with Hountondji when he describes it as mythical (spontaneous) and with Wiredu when he refers to it as pre-scientific. This kind of philosophy i.e. philosophy in debased sense is according to Oruka, inconsistent with the universality of philosophy.

Finally, Oruka was of the opinion that we have a demanding task of preventing a debased folk - or pre-scientific philosophy in Africa, "from blocking and thus hindering the development of an exact or rigorous philosophical literature. Philosophy he

says, must doubt all beliefs unless and until they are rationally justified".³²

The above is Prof. Oruka's argument on meaning and definition of philosophy in his discussion of what African Philosophy should be. His position largely agrees with that of his colleagues in this professional category of thought. Nevertheless, a distinction will arise when we consider his arguments on sage philosophy in our next chapter. For instance, we shall bring to light his unique argument that literacy is not a necessary condition for one to be able to engage in a philosophical discourse.

Paulin Hountondji is the other scholar whose views I would like to consider briefly in this area. His ideas and arguments are contained in his work by the title, African Philosophy, myth and reality.

Hountondji in his work has tackled the question of meaning and definition of philosophy. In here, he tried to bring out his understanding of philosophy and its nature as a discipline of study.

To begin with let us consider his definition of philosophy before considering other issues. Hountondji defines philosophy as the most "self-conscious discipline that involves by its very nature a constant process of reflection upon itself".³³ According to this philosopher, philosophy is an intellectual activity and as such, it has some characteristics that make it qualify to be what it is. For its characteristics which are seen in its approach and methodology, Hountondji records that philosophy is and should be seen to be systematic, analytic, critical and rigorous. In short, this scholar says that after

³² Ibid, Page 49

³³ P.J. Hountondji, African philosophy, myth and reality, Hutchinson, London. 1983. P.7

postulating ideas i.e. problems, philosophy as an intellectual activity should attempt to comprehend them, discuss them fully and then seek their justifications. In short, a thorough analysis and critical consideration of ideas and problems is very fundamental in doing philosophy.

The point being emphasized here is that philosophy as a discipline should look at the nature of universe and all that there is in it critically and analytically as a way of arriving at objective truths. This is given the fact that philosophy deals with real and existing problems. Hountondji's argument is very much in line with his colleagues in this philosophical trend. He agrees with them that philosophy is the same all over i.e. that the method of doing philosophy is the same and that philosophy may differ only in nature but not in meaning and definition. Once again, let me repeat here that, this scholar like his colleagues contends that this and that philosophy should not be viewed as being radically different and opposed to each other since philosophy is universal.

On the question of African philosophy, Hountondji also made some contributions. This scholar did not object to existence of African philosophy but only qualified it in a given sense or context. According to him, African philosophy only exists and is African philosophy in the sense that "it covers all text written by Africans on philosophical issues including criticism of western philosophy. This philosophical literature he argued includes the works of those authors who do not believe in the myth of a collective philosophy. This academician notes that, "Just as the writing of western anthropologists on African societies belong to western scientific literature, so the philosophical writings of Africans on the history of western thought are an integral part of African philosophical literature".³⁴ Further, Hountondji argues that it is not enough to recognise the existence of an African philosophical

literature. According to him, the most basic task is to transform it from the simple collection of writings aimed at foreigners and consequently upholding the peculiarities of the so called world-view that it is today into the vehicle of a free and rigorous discussion among African philosophers themselves. He further noted that only then will this African philosophy (Literature) acquire universal value and enrich the common heritage of human thought.

However, Hountondji, was opposed to Ethno-philosophy as philosophy proper and indeed it was him who coined this term "Ethno-philosophy" when he realised that a peoples' world view as derived from their cultural heritage can not constitute a philosophy in a strict sense of the word. To begin with, Hountondji dismissed Ethno-philosophers and their work because according to him, these people were not philosophers per-se as they were mainly ethnographers, anthropologists and theologians whose approach and ideas were not philosophical.

As observed from what we recorded as Hountondji's understanding and general approach to philosophy, this scholar was of the view that "Ethno-philosophers were looking for philosophy in a place where it could never be found i.e in the collective unconscious of African peoples in the silent folds of their explicit discourse".³⁵

This scholar's actual argument of dismissing Ethno-philosophy as no philosophy in the strict sense is that, "Ethno-philosophy is a description of an implicit, unexpressed world-view, which never existed anywhere but in the anthropologist imagination. Ethno-philosophy is a pre-philosophy mistaking itself for a metaphilosophy, a philosophy which instead of presenting its own rational justification, shelters lazily behind

the authority of a tradition and projects its own thesis and beliefs on to that tradition".³⁶

Hountondji was of the view that Ethno.philosophy should be discarded as an academic discipline since according to him, no science or branch of learning can appear except as an even of language or more precisely, as the product of discussion. This scholar further noted that if African philosophers today wished to develop an authentic African philosophy, then their first task would be to promote and sustain constant free discussions about all the problems concerning their discipline as these would enable them to overcome the permanent temptation of 'folklorism' that limits their research to so called African subjects. This he arrived at with the realisation that, "for one to be able to engage in philosophy proper, he must liberate himself from the weight of the past as well as from the allure of ideological fashions."³⁷

Generally the position of this philosopher was that for any philosopher to come up with a real philosophical treatise, he must follow and should not evade the rigor of this discipline. Further, he noted that philosophy in a strict sense must not skirt around the existing philosophical tradition. The method and general character of philosophy is such that it is a system that involves a special method of inquiry. Philosophy has a unique character such that it continuously reflects on itself. This he notes, is given to its nature that it is not a closed system but a history, or rather a 'debate that goes on from each generation, in which every thinker every author engages in total responsibility'. Here a thinker must be responsible for what he says and for the theories he originates such that, "he must be in a position to justify them and attest to their validity". In his closing remarks, Hountondji repeats that philosophy as an open-ended process attaches a lot of importance to 'logos' i.e.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. P.68

to discourse as the decisive element in scientific truth. In brief, that was Hountondji's position and argument on philosophy in general and indeed on African philosophy.

In summary, I would like to say that the four professional scholars namely; H.O. Oruka, Peter Bodunrin, Kwasi Wiredu and Paulin Hountondji whose views we have considered, agreed on a consensus that, for any piece of work to qualify as philosophy in a strict and professional sense, it must meet the following conditions:

That the philosophical ideas advanced must be seen to be discursive in the sense of being analytical, critical, rigorous and systematic. In short, the argument here is that for the ideas put forward as philosophy must be seen to contain their justification by even being self-reflective.

Further, these scholars agreed that individual thinkers form the base of any philosophy. These academicians dismissed Ethno-philosophy (collective philosophy) as derived from a people's cultural heritage as no philosophy in the strict sense because according to them, it does not satisfy the requirement of philosophy proper. For instance, the ideas advanced in it are presented as everybody's ideas without attributing them to any individual thinker. Secondly, this philosophy is seen as being not reflective i.e. critical because it only gives a mere description of a peoples tradition values and customs.

The professional scholars also believed that, for anybody to be in a position to do philosophy, he must be capable of reading and writing. (This particular position as we shall see in our next chapter, is objected to and dismissed by Henry Odera Oruka and formed the basis of his famous sage philosophy.)

To the four professional scholars discussed in this chapter, namely Oruka, Bodunrin, Wiredu and Hountondji, critics of their views such as Campel Momoh and J. Nyasani do exist. Briefly let

us outline Momoh's position. That of J. Nyasani will be noted in our next chapter.

Momoh is a Nigerian philosopher. His ideas are basically contained in his two publications; "Modern Theories in African Philosophy", Nigerian Journal of philosophy, 1. (2) 1981 and in "African Philosophy: Does it exist?" Diogenes 130, 1988.

Momoh classifies the African philosophers mentioned as 'Neological positivists,' of which he takes Peter Bodunrin, P.J. Hountondji and Odera Oruka, as the hard core. When it comes to outlining what should constitute authentic African philosophy, Momoh offers no answer other than a fall back on sage philosophy. His main concern is that those who demand that African philosophy must not shy away from employing logic, rigorous and critical analysis deny the existence of African philosophy'. He says that these scholars 'are influenced by the attitude of the Vienna Circle in Western philosophy.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the contributions by the professional scholars are worthy in that they help or attempt to find a solution to the existing problem of African philosophy and generally endeavour to outline what the nature of philosophy should be. In addition to the above observations, I would also like to point out that one shortcoming of these scholars is that, given their western training in philosophy, they could not completely be unfree from the influence of western philosophy.

Without much elaboration as this is quite apparent, one will note that these scholars have tended to act wholly on the western influence such that on any philosophical problem and other related issues, western perspective has been extensively employed to the extent of dismissing anything else.

However, it should be repeated here that the concern of these philosophers was not really to give proof of existence or non-existence of African philosophy. The major concern of these scholars was to establish the meaning and definition of philosophy that is acceptable universally.

—Dr. P.O. African Philosophy: A new and
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C H A P T E R F I V E

PHILOSOPHIC SAGACITY

As it was observed in the earlier chapters, this category of thought known as philosophic sagacity forms the backbone of this thesis. Accordingly, one will realise that the earlier chapters are of importance as they outline the historical background that brings this school of thought into existence. The pioneering scholar here whose views we shall be considering and evaluating is Prof H. Odera Orika of the University Nairobi. Of importance to mention here is that this scholar has written a lot of literature in exposition of sage philosophy.

As it has already been made clear, this school of thought came into existence to reject some of the positions and ideas advanced by proponents of professional philosophy. Controversy is sparked off by this school of thought when the scholars concerned attempt to contend what it takes for one to be able to do philosophy or to be identified as a philosopher in a universally acknowledged sense. For clarity purpose, it should also be mentioned here that philosophic sagacity also rejects the arguments advanced by Ethno-philosophy and those by the classical school of thought. In short and as we have already noted, philosophic sagacity in other words known generally as Sage philosophy, has evolved as a result of views expressed on philosophy and human mentality by the various schools of thought.

Before venturing deeply into the arguments advanced by this philosophical trend, let us first attempt to define philosophic sagacity and state what it stands for so as to be able to proceed smoothly. To do this effectively, it is important to first separate philosophy and sagacity and then proceed to define each one of them distinctly before venturing to outline what philosophic sagacity stands for.

Philosophy according to Greek tradition is the search or love for wisdom. Generally however, philosophy is a discipline that is involved in a rational interpretation and understanding of reality. Of importance to mention is that, originally, philosophy stood as the only discipline, and as such, it preoccupied itself with all spheres of knowledge. Today, various disciplines have come into existence independently due to need for specialisation and efficiency purposes. This is why we have, Mathematics, History, Geography, Sociology, Religion, to mention but only a few as separate units of study, otherwise all these were covered in the said discipline of philosophy which was then known as the 'Mother' of all disciplines.

Sagacity on the other hand is wisdom. Namely, wisdom arising from knowledge of experience which has been accumulated over a period of many years. For our immediate purposes however, it is wisdom in any particular individual, based on his/her ability to conceptualise with insight and recite the traditional beliefs and values i.e. customs of a community to which he belongs, and to be able to extend that insight at understanding human life and nature in general.

Philosophical sagacity as a form of cognition is above mere sagacity. In fact the difference between a folk sage and philosophic sage is seen in that one is critical and the other is not. To put it straight and for clarification purposes, a folk sage is considered to be the aged wise man or woman in a given community. In rare cases however, we may also find some young persons who may qualify as sages (in folk or philosophic sense).

A good living example of a young sage is Chaungo Barasa born in 1960. His profession is water engineering although he is a self taught philosopher who has carried out numerous interviews with many sages in the western Kenya. Further information on him can be gotten from H. Odera Oruka's: sage philosophy, Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy Act, Press

Nairobi; 1991. Pages 147-156. His ideas for instance on man, races, culture, wisdom, goodness and God are noted and they depict a lot of insight.

Consequently and as was noted above, a folk sage is a person who is only gifted in correctly and accurately memorising and recalling his community's traditional beliefs and values.

A philosophic sage is in turn that wise man or woman who transcends the role of a folk sage. This is so because, his category is gifted in not only being able to memorise and recite his people's traditional beliefs and values, but is also capable of taking an independent position on any subject. This is as a result of the fact that a philosophic sage is rational and critical of what he experiences within his cultural environment. Prof. Oruka spells out the difference between a philosophic sage and an ordinary sage clearly in his publication, 'Four trends in currents African philosophy' when he says that; 'A Philosophic sage guides his thought and judgement by the power of reason and in-born wisdom rather than by the authority of the communal outlook or foreign innovations.'³⁸

The basic idea here is that a philosophic sage operates within a special category of mental process and capacity as he is a person who is able to reflect individually and critically and one who also looks at what there is objectively without any bias or limitation of mind. This is unlike the folk sage (i.e, cultural sage) who employs simple perspective in his evaluation of what he experiences and observes, without even using the power of reason which he seems to be lacking. Instead therefore, this category of sages tend to just describe what they see without going further to analyse and give critical evaluation of the same.

However, sage - philosophy, according to Odera Oruka "Consists of the expressed thought of wise men and women in any given community and is a way of thinking and explaining the world that fluctuates between popular wisdom (well known communal maxims, a phorisms and general common sense truths) and didactic wisdom, an expounded wisdom and a rational thought of some given individuals within a community".³⁹ This wise persons are found among both the literate and illiterate members of any given community. As it was hinted earlier on, the wise persons are mainly found among the old folk although in some cases some youthful members of the community also qualify by right to be described as wise. Thus sage philosophy is the general expression which embraces both the philosophic sagacity and the folk sagacity.

Professor H. Odera Oruka started a research project entitled Thought of Traditional Kenyan Sages in 1974. Its objectives was to identify and come up with indigenous individuals who are wise either in philosophic or in the folk sense. Basically however, philosophic sagacity attempts to address itself to some questions which can be levelled against enthno-philosophy and professional philosophy. (For arguments advanced by these two schools of thought read chapters 3 and 4 respectively).

Professor Oruka on philosophic sagacity basically contends that, in traditional African society, there are indigenous thinkers who are thorough in thought. He argues that these wise men and women have not received, formal education and that they have not had the opportunity to put their thought in writing. He however, adds that, their thinking capacity and synthesis of human or natural problems deserve to be labelled philosophical.

According to Odera Oruka, these wise men and women do not take anything for granted. Indeed Oruka brings out the distinction between a philosophic sage and a cultural sage when he argues that the former makes sagacious analysis on the views held by the community and that they carefully outline the reasons as to why they take a given stand on an issue. As for the latter, Oruka argues that this category is only good in general narrative i.e. in description of cultural elements and customs without making any critical analysis of the same.

Another scholar that I would like to refer to and who has made a formidable contribution in this area of philosophical sagacity is Taita Towett. Towett a renown scholar, first commenced by defining who he thinks is a philosopher. According to him, a philosopher is "He who devotes all or most of his time and thought to philosophy".⁴⁰ In turn, Towett defines philosophy as love of wisdom and pursuit for knowledge and truth. This being similar to the Greek definition of the same.

Dr. Dismas Masolo in his forthcoming publication, entitled Half a Century of Philosophy, notes Towett's argument that 'Philosophy is any body of reasons by which we make our beliefs logical and systematic'. It is however within this framework that Towett accepts that there must have been African philosophers engaged in the formulation of culture philosophy, and these African Philosophers are in essence the philosophic sages.

Generally, Odera's argument and that of Towett are identical. Both of them also concur that writing and modern formal education are not basic requirements for making of a philosopher. However, it is important to observe that Professor Oruka is more careful in distinguishing who is a true sage in a serious

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T. Towett. "Le role d'un philosophe Africain, "In Presence Africaine (Beu xieme Congress des Herivains et artistes noirs) Numero Special 27 - 28, August to November 1959 pp. 111.

philosophical sense and who is not. This is as demonstrated previously there-before where he make a distinction between a mere sage and a thinker. Being a sage he says, does not necessarily qualify one to be philosophic but being a sage and a thinker does. In short, a sage who combines his wisdom with reason is the one he refers to as a philosophical sage. This category of sage however, transcends the communal wisdom of their own people and are responsible for reforms carried out on existing traditions.

For the few examples that I shall give of the scholars who ventured in this field of philosophical sagacity, I would also like to refer to Marcel Griaule, a French ethnologist. Marcel Griaule joined this category of thought basically by identifying a sage in the name of Ogotemmeli to qualify his contention that blacks based their life on complex and ordered behaviour. He contended that the African too possessed an ordered system of thought that imbedded a philosophy in it.

In fact, Professor Odera Oruka partly wrote to dispute Ogotemmeli's views as presented by Marcel Griaule. Odera did this by bringing out a Sage - called Paul Mbuya from Luo Community whose views he said were more philosophical and intellectually superior to those of Ogotemmeli. Odera consequently relegates the latter to a position of a cultural sage in contrast with Mbuya who he saw as a philosophical sage.

Oruka categorised these sages by comparing their views on women. According to Ogotemmeli, 'After God made woman, he gave her bad blood, which has to flow every month! Mbuya on the other hand observes that, "A man has the physical capacity to run faster than a woman. But on the other hand, a woman has the physical capacity to undergo the pains of carrying and bearing a baby which a man lacks. So we cannot say one is superior or inferior to the other In truth the two sexes are

naturally equal or balanced."⁴¹ In comparing the arguments by the two sages, Oruka notes that, Ogotemeli's contention is not independent of his Dogon Society's beliefs and communal chorus. However, in regard to Paul Mbuya's argument, Oruka observes that this sage displays independent thought which depicts liberal use of reasoning power in him as an individual.

Kwame Gyekye, Barry Hallen and J.O. Sodipo are the other academicians who have made a mark in this exercise. Kwame Gyekye's ideas are recorded in his: An Essay in African Philosophical Thought (the Akan conceptual scheme) CUP 1987. Those of B. Hallen and J.O. Sodipo are contained in their joint works by the title, Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft (Analytic Experiments in African philosophy) London: Ethnographica. 1986.

Kwame Gyekye, a West African carried out a similar project to that of H. Odera Oruka on sage philosophy. This was done among the Akan people of West Africa. Emphasis was laid on language analysis in what came to be labelled as, the Akan concept of this or that e.g. the Akan concept of person. According to Gyekye, "philosophical concepts can be found embedded in African proverbs, linguistic expressions, myths and folk tales."⁴²

The difference between H. Odera Oruka and Kwame Gyekye's findings is that the latter does not bring out the individual thinkers although they are existent. The philosophy established is brought out as communalistic and as represented by its unanimous thinkers."⁴³ The individual thinkers names in the work of Hallen and Sodipo are held secretly as they are medicine men who would like to guard their gift of thought and trade secretly.

⁴¹ Ibid. PP. 49-50

⁴² Ibid. P. 9

⁴³ Ibid.

Hallen and Sodipo carried out their research among the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

It should be mentioned once again at this juncture that the position taken by the proponents of philosophic sagacity contradicts that of classical, Ethno-Philosophical and professional school of thought. Equally, it disagrees with the views held by the contemporary critics of philosophic sagacity whose argument in one way or other seem to tie with that of professional scholars. For clarity purposes, let us briefly state once again the positions of these categories of thought before evaluating the critics views.

Classical school of thought as depicted in our first chapter is composed of philosophers whose views were opposed to existence of African philosophy. According to these scholars, the African mind is simple and not capable of complex mental activities such as philosophizing. Literature compiled by these scholars relegate the black person to a sub-human position depicting him as an inferior being and therefore one who is unphilosophical. The leading scholars who we have considered in this area are Fredrick Hegel and Levy Bruhl. By bringing forth the evidence for existence of sage philosophers in African traditional society, Professor Odera Oruka and his disciples aimed at rejecting the position taken by these scholars. In addition he wanted to depict to them that the black creation is an equal in all senses and that his mind is not simple but complex like that of white race and therefore one equally capable of complex mental activities such as those of philosophizing. In so doing, these proponents of philosophic sagacity wanted to prove that the black creation is not sub-human or inferior to the other races. Philosophic sagacity as such is a second order intellectual activity just as the thought of Socrates or Descartes are.

On the other hand the position taken by Ethno-philosophers unlike the classical view acknowledged that African philosophy existed. However, this category of thought contended that

African traditional thought and indeed African Philosophy is communal and not individualistic. This school of thought dismissed any form of independent philosophical activity and ideas held by individuals, instead, it argued that the ideas held by the society are collective. Philosophic sagacity emerged also to dispute this position and that is why it went to the extent of demonstrating the existence of individual thinkers. At this early juncture, I do not want to take a position, but it should be noted here that the argument advanced by philosophical sagacity scholars is more sensible and plausible, namely, that ideas in any given society or collectivity of people must have their basis in individual entities and not in their collectivity. It is absurd for one to hold that an idea or ideas in society have their base in it's collectivity. People can only hold ideas collectively after individual entities among them have produced them and they have become convinced that these ideas are workable and therefore worth adapting for every ones benefit and utility.

In regard to Ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity emerged to give proof that in our African traditional society and indeed in other traditional societies, there exists individual thinkers who are critical and analytical of their cultural heritage and general ways of life.

Most professional scholars held the view that literacy is a prerequisite of any form of a philosophical discourse and definition. According to this category of thought, existence of philosophy or philosophizing in African traditional thought was or is not possible since it lacks this basic requirement of education. According to this school, it is only a literate mind that can be able to look at things critically making analyses and coming up with knowledgeable ideas such as those that make up philosophy.

Philosophic sagacity in this area came up to dispute that literacy is a pre-requisite of doing philosophy. According to scholars of this category of thought, wisdom also enables one to

look at what there is in his environment critically. According to this category of thought, one can be enlightened in his own traditional setting and does not need formal education to be able to think. My position here which I will expound on later, is that literacy per-se is not a condition for one to be able to think. The truth of the matter is that literacy i.e. ability to read and write is also a product of a traditional and natural mind. Therefore wisdom precedes literacy.

The best way of illustrating this point is by looking back and for instance taking into consideration the diverse and sophisticated achievements recorded in ancient Egypt before literacy came into existence. Achievements recorded here are today referred to as, 'early Egyptian civilization'. Here magnificent pyramids and tombs were constructed. Generally, very fine art work was carried out and the art of writing itself was originated besides many other achievements. Construction of pyramids pre-supposed mathematics as measurements had to come in in such projects. In short, the ancient civilization recorded in Egypt depicts and presupposes a critical and rational mind in a traditional setting, since a lot of logic had to be applied.

Let us now turn to the contemporary African scholars who also reject existence of African philosophic sagacity. Along side this group, there is the other seemingly different category that does not quite oppose sagacity but actually stress for more seriousness by the supporters of philosophical sagacity.

In this category we have scholars like Professor Joseph Nyasani, L. Keita, Peter Bodunrin (Prof) and Dr. D.A. Masolo (who sounds rather soft in his opposition) to mention but a few.

Professor Nyasani is perhaps the hardest critic of philosophical sagacity. Important to observe however is that his views on this subject have not yet been published. He argues that philosophy and its methods are universal. Further, he adds that philosophy as a deliberate and a conscious activity needs

to be critical and analytical and that literacy is vital in doing philosophy. As one will clearly note, Prof. Nyasani holds the same position as that taken and advanced by the professional scholars.

In regard to Prof Nyasani's argument, the fundamental question that one ought to ask himself, and which has already been answered, is whether literacy is really a prerequisite and a condition for one to be able to think critically.

The actual position is that one need not be literate to be able to think rationally and indeed to even philosophise. This is actually the position that African philosophic sagacity tries to put forth. In any case, the argument postulated and advanced by this school of thought is greatly given weight by the known and illustrated case of early Egyptian civilization which took place before Literal tradition came into existence.

As such, professor Nyasani's argument is not as thorough going as it should be. However, one would agree with the argument that Literacy boosted human mind further in this activity of rationalising and looking at what there is in the universe critically. This is the case because it introduced consistency by way of keeping records of events and activities taking place. This in itself accorded a better opportunity to evaluate and advance the same.

L. Keita on the other hand argues that there is no difference between sagacity and Ethno-philosophy. In essence therefore, Keita reduces what Oruka and his colleagues refer to as sagacity to Ethno-philosophy, which is a peoples' world view.

According to Keita, the whole idea of philosophic sagacity amounts to self-contradiction. This scholar contends that:

"The thesis that philosophic sagacity has a stronger claim than professional philosophy or nationalist - ideological

philosophy to helping in the development of a genuine African philosophy, on the basis that the latter are "generally suspected of smuggling western techniques into African philosophy, is surely open to criticism".⁴⁴

This Scholar's view is that the proof for 'existence of philosophic sagacity can be achieved by writing and through other modern techniques that can be attributed to western modernisation!

The other major critic of African sagacity is Professor Peter Bodunrin from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. Bodunrin laments that cleverness is not 'Ipso facto' equitable with philosophic attributes. According to this scholar, "It is one thing to show that there are men capable of philosophical dialogue in Africa and another to show that there are African philosophers in the sense of those who have engaged in organised systematic reflections on the thoughts and practices of their people".⁴⁵

Peter Bodunrin objects to the method of revealing and bringing out philosophic sagacity arguing that the interviews and questionnaires used, make the product of such an exercise to be essentially a joint product of both the sage concerned and his interviewer, the professional philosopher. Professor Odera Orika again comes up to reject the view of Bodunrin arguing that, 'most philosophers come to create new ideas of philosophy only as a result of responding to the ideas of some other philosophers'. Even though Bodunrin's argument is logical, Odera's argument actually carries more weight. This is so because, deriving from our academic experience, one would agree with Odera as we realise

⁴⁴ L. Keita. "Contemporary African philosophy" The Search for a Method. Praxis International 5, 2 July, 1985, Page 150

⁴⁵ P.O. Bodunrin., "The Question of African Philosophy" in Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of philosophy, (C.U.P.), No. 56. 1981, Page 70

that there is a lot of co-relation between ideas expressed by various scholars that existed and for those who still exist. Directly or indirectly, there is an indication of interaction of ideas between scholars leading to other new ideas.

Important to note also is that Bodunrin like his counterparts in Professional View consider written tradition as essential to philosophy. This is qualified by his contention that, 'Lack of written tradition has led to African late start in philosophy'. Oruka rejects this by saying that the implication of Bodunrin is that 'for Africans to be authentically philosophical, they must be UnAfrican'. i.e. must drop their inalienable right of oral tradition and adopt written one.

Dr. D.A. Masolo is a mild critic of philosophic sagacity. In his works; Half a century of African Philosophy he stresses that proponents of philosophic sagacity should be more serious and cautious in their work. In short, he says that they should be more careful and that they should go into much depth so as to reveal this sagacity.

To depict this lack of seriousness, Masolo criticizes Oruka's views on Paul Mbuya the Luo Sage, what Oruka describes as philosophical about Mbuya's view; that 'a man has the physical capacity to run faster than a woman, but on the other hand a woman has the physical capacity to undergo the pains of carrying and bearing a baby which a man lacks, hence one cannot correctly say that one is superior or inferior to the other ... in truth the two sexes are naturally equal or balanced.' Masolo says that such a view is not philosophical as such. His argument is that anybody can say that, may be even a thoughtful and an intelligent child, for that matter. Masolo stresses more seriousness and strictness as a way of getting to the real philosophic values from sages.

As one should have realised, Dr. Masolo is not against sagacity as such, indeed his position is very useful in making

the philosophic sagacity scholar's work more serious and organised and hence more acceptable to its likely opponents.

In any case, any serious academic work must be open to criticism. This in itself is health for purification of any idea that is being postulated and helps to ensure that the final product is a real scholarly masterpiece.

Sage philosophy by H. Odera Oruka is of prime importance in that it concretely demonstrate that traditional thought can qualify as philosophy in a serious and rigorous sense, equivalent to the Western kind that we know of. Through the mentioned project initiated by Oruka in 1974 - as an attempt of establishing whether wise men and women capable of reflective thought existed or not, the outcome was and has remained most encouraging. Reasonably because, through this research carried out among the illiterate members of our African society, it was vividly established that even though these people had not benefited from formal education, they had the capacity and ability to apply reason and give rational explanations for human and worldly problems presented to them.

It should be disclosed here that some Wazees proved to be very gifted when presented with sophisticated academic challenges equivalent of what is tackled by the established contemporary thinkers. A good example is Paul Mbuya presented by H. Odera Oruka who really proved to be quite gifted in offering thorough rational explanations and interpretations of problems presented him. (Refer to what we have already noted about him elsewhere in this chapter).

However, to confirm and expound on Oruka's findings that literacy per-se is not a condition for one to be able to think and engage in philosophical activities, I personally did venture in this field of research. My findings are clearly spelt out in our Appendix part of this thesis. However, to shed light on my

contention here, I do wish to draw some highlights from the field research findings.

Out in the field, I did manage to speak to a cross-section of people introduced to me and considered wise in the strong sense of the word. As indicated in my first chapter, I relied on strategically placed people like the administrators and politicians to pin point out for me the most probable candidates of the calibre of the people I was seeking .

To my academic delight and satisfaction, I was most moved to witness the ability of some of these people in critically and analytically appreciating problems posed to them. For a few others who could not offer independent and rational explanations, I was appreciative of their effort and ability to clearly recall and outline their peoples' customary beliefs and practices.

The ability by the two clear categories to either offer a rational explanation or to be in a position to recite clearly the society's world views enabled me to classify them accordingly as sages in the philosophic sense or in the folk sense. These two categories of sages emerged as ones made up of special breeds of people compared to the majority of their colleagues in the community who lacked this ability even in the rather simplistic folk sense.

In my research project, I identified people like Samuel Makindu, Norman G. Waikahu, and Mwangi Wangu as people who were specially gifted in such a manner that they could embark on any reflective academic activity by way of being able to offer rational answers. (Let us not demonstrate their abilities here as the same is comprehensively covered in the next chapter).

Generally, Odera Oruka's discoveries as noted in his sage philosophy and my corresponding findings on the same are critically fundamental in dispelling the Eurocentric view which

advanced that people of negro race have a mind that is alien to logic.

As such, the argument of scholars such as G.W.F. Hegel and Lucien Levy Bruhl not to mention many others who denied the negro race the ability to reason, is rendered most misfounded as it is misleading.

The discovery made in this sage philosophy research project has succeeded in bringing out people in the traditional set up who are capable of embarking as individuals in philosophic activities though they have not benefited from the modern education. Further, it dispels the position held by the Ethno-philosophers that the traditional thought is communal and not attributable to individual thinkers.

In regard to the topic discussed in this fundamental chapter, it should be noted here once again that philosophical sagacity category of thought expresses a position that is very sensible and plausible. This school of thought realises and reminds us that man has had the power of reason even before he came to learn how to read and write. In short, man must have been critical and analytical from time immemorial. Further, I would agree with the argument of the exponents of sagacity that traditionally, collective lores, or generally oral tradition was the only 'way of preserving and disseminating ideas. With the noted power of reason which is inherent in man, the eminent oral tradition must therefore have had an underlying philosophy of which it could not exist without. As such, African sagacity has been existent.

Deriving from the prior chapters, our next and final chapter shall strive to give a summary or a general conclusion. In here a distinction between a philosophic sage and a folk sage shall be demonstrated by comparing and contrasting their views on some of the topics. Nevertheless a whole report on field work finding will be found in the Appendix part of this thesis.

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C H A P T E R S I XCONCLUSION

Deriving from the prior Chapters of this thesis, one must have by now noted that Philosophic Sagacity as a trend in African Philosophy has evolved systematically from the preceding Schools of thought in this vital subject; These categories of thought that led to emergency of philosophic sagacity are:

- i) The Classical School of thought,
- ii) The Ethno-Philosophical School, and finally,
- iii) The Professional School of thought.

A point worth noting is that it is from the Classical School of thought which denied reason to Africa that the other trends find their basis including Sage Philosophy which is of immediate concern here in this thesis.

The historical background as noted right from the classical category of thought, to the professional School was necessary in order to examine the issues in their proper historical perspectives.

Besides making an attempt at establishing a lasting solution to the human and academic problems that persist, the existent Schools of thought in this area of Philosophic interest i.e. African Philosophy also sought to analyse and rate the human mental capacity, while giving due consideration to the various races that there are in the world. In short, these Schools of thought sought to academically examine and establish the ability of human mind to Philosophise and engage in other related intellectual activities.

Drawing from the available philosophical literature, one will readily agree that most of the contributions recorded so far have emanated from the Western Schools of thought. In this

regard, however, negligible contributions have been recorded from other races and more so the negro - race.

Given the above, and drawing from what is recorded in our First Chapter, the white race came to develop the negative attitude that the Negro-race is limited in thought in such a manner that it cannot engage in Philosophic discourse or in any related activity.

Nevertheless, these white men did very little or nothing at all for this matter to find out whether the black man's mind was naturally inferior or whether something else had contributed to it's alleged limitation. In other words, the white man cared less to find out why the black race applied or used a different perspective in their understanding and interpretation of reality.

For example, these people did not bother to make an attempt of understanding the negro-race in its own environmental set up. Instead, the Western Scholars proceeded on to draw the erroneous conclusion that the black man's mind is inferior and nothing meaningful and useful can come from it to contribute to advancement of ideas and therefore general progression of the world.

In this regard, the black man's culture and general way of life as endowed in his traditional set up, was dismissed as primitive and of no concrete value.

The point at stake here is that the Western Scholars and indeed the white race gave no consideration at all to the fact that different human environments breed varying cultures as different peoples tend to develop peculiar ways of observing, analysing and understanding of the reality. Consequently, these people ignored the fact that any given cultural arrangement also evolves a standard of judging itself such that another standard i.e. a different culture, may not yield fair results if used to judge another one.

However, comparisons may be made between two different cultures, but only as a way of borrowing that which is more workable in either of them to boost the other. This is so because all cultural set ups are fundamental in their own unique senses.

Given the argument advanced above, it should be clear that Western Scholars and Philosophers in particular were erroneous in their belief and assertion that only those blacks trained in Western Philosophy and general way of thinking could engage in philosophical discourse. These people overlooked the possibility that in his own traditional way, the black person may have developed a unique way of observing, understanding and storing his knowledge of the universe.

Western Scholars laid a lot of emphasis in their literacy heritage which they believed was the corner-stone for one to be able to think and do Philosophy. As observed in our earlier chapters, 'reason is to all mankind and not a monopoly of any race'. Consequently, knowledge of how to read and write is not a necessary condition for one to be able to engage in a Philosophical discourse. In any case and as we have gathered from the available ancient philosophic literature, people like Socrates are impressed upon as people who did not know how to read and write or at least never wrote, however, they were not denied the standing fact that they were thinkers.

Once again therefore, it should be repeated here that it is ridiculous to deny one ability and attributes of thought simply because his attitude of life and language are, for instance, different from that of another, and the fact that they employ different approaches in their comprehension of the reality.

Turning back to Philosophic Sagacity, it should be mentioned here again that it emerged to counter and dispel the biased attitude and views held by the Western race on the Negro-race. This is as demonstrated in our first Chapter where we have

recorded the classical School's position on African mind and personality, in regard to views by classical Scholars, Philosophic Sagacity rose to specifically dispute the contentions held that the African person and indeed the Negro-race is unphilosophical as they are primitive, uncivilised and sub-humans.

Further Philosophic Sagacity came about to dispel and correct the position taken by Ethno-Philosophers on African traditional thought. Sage philosophy rejected the Ethno-Philosopher's position that Africans have a Philosophy but this Philosophy is communal, as it is held and known by everybody. Although the position adopted here was rather sympathetic as it granted African's the ability to think,; philosophic Scholars criticised the contention severely because according to them all ideas originate from particular individuals and not in their collectivity.

In regard to the position advanced by professional School, Philosophic Sagacity surfaced to reject the view that, only those formally trained to think i.e in Western sense can engage in intellectual activities.

According to African Sage Philosophy, one need not have gone through any formal training to be able to think Philosophically or be recognised as a Philosopher.

According to the position taken by proponents of African Philosophic Sagacity, the argument runs that in traditional African Society, there were and still there are wise old men and women who never went through any formal training but can effectively and efficiently engage in a rational activity such as Philosophising. This is attributed to the fact that these people's thought is guided by reason such that they do not take anything for granted but instead subject it to thorough reason. Considering all the necessary facts proponents of Sage Philosophy feel justified to qualify these old wise folk as equivalents of

Western thinkers as they are objective in thought and perspective of that which they encounter in natural environment.

In declaring them thinkers in the Western Philosophers sense, a consideration is made in that although these old folks are naturally oriented, they think independently and as individual thinkers, they are rigorous in rationalising natural and human problems that are existent.

According to Professor Oruka, Philosophic Sagacity "Shows that the problem in traditional Africa is not lack of logic, reason or scientific curiosity since we can find many Sages there with a system of thought employing a rigorous use of these mental gifts. It shows that communal consensus, a fact typical of most traditional Societies, should not be seen as a hinderance for individual critical reflection traditional African folk wisdoms and taboos left some room for real Philosophic, thought'.⁴⁶

To establish for certainty whether the contentions of Sage Philosophy are worth going by or not, I decided to embark on a field research project (of which the outcome is noted in Chapter 5 of this Thesis). This as mentioned earlier on, was carried out in my home district of Kirinyaga.

Reading through my field findings, one will realise that they are very encouraging. Indeed, the findings go along way to prove right the Philosophic Sagacity Scholar's argument that in African traditional Society, serious thinkers have been existing.

In the field, I sought the audience of these old wise folk. Point worth note is that these people are referred to as wise because they have in their mind a wealth of accumulated knowledge and experience, which spans over a lengthy period. These people

were actually difficult to locate because their type is very scarce in Society, nevertheless, I managed to trace some of them.

In the field exercise which aimed at recording, evaluating and analysing the wisdom and intelligence (insight) of the wise men, I was equipped with a written questionnaire which I used as a guide for the topics I was to pose questions and pick a dialogue from. Deriving from the answers that I recorded from them, and as illustrated in the immediate previous Chapter of this Thesis, I was left with no doubt that the reasoning capacity of some of these men is of very high quality hence putting them on the same footing as the reknown ancient and contemporary Western thinkers.

In essence therefore, I found little or no difference at all between these deeply insighted wise men and the white thinkers we have read about and who are alleged to have a superior brain. This is in spite of the fact that most of the said wise men are illiterate and communicate only in their mother tongue.

Generally, my field work exercise in my home district made it clear to me that thinkers exist and existed in African traditional Society as postulated by Sage Philosophy Scholars. I also realised that these kind of specially gifted people could not be existing only in the African traditional Society but generally that they can also be found in all Societies of human creation including the Western one. These wise men are indeed the people who originated the basic ideas that have led to the Modern technological advancements and general developments in the world including the literacy heritage. This is so because, these things have not always been present but wisdom in man has been existent since time immemorial when God created man.

SAGES

As mentioned and illustrated elsewhere in the prior Chapters, the Sages, existing in the human Society are of two types. We have the:

- i) Cultural/folk Sages
- ii) Philosophic Sages

Prof Oruka was correct in categorising them into these two groups as they greatly differ in their mental ability.

In the category of cultural Sages, we have wise men who are only gifted and versed in memorising and reciting common lores as held by the community in which they are members. It should be made clear that these people do not go beyond this activity as they are not thinkers but only wise men versed with their people's customary beliefs and traditions. In other words these people do not engage in any reflective activity of their people's beliefs and customs but are just well versed in them. As such, their "Philosophy" can be regarded as that of first order activity as it is not analytical and does not rationalise that which they are versed with from their Society.

For our other category of Sage we have the Philosophic Sage. Philosophic because the wise men here are not only well versed with their communities beliefs and customs but in their own right, they are thinkers who do not just take what they know for granted. Instead they subject the same to a lot of rigorous reflective activity, recommending or rejecting the same, while at times emerging with even more workable and useful ideas. Given that fact, these category of Sage supersede the area of common knowledge as they have the extra quality of being rational. According to Prof Oruka, the Philosophic Sage "are capable of taking a problem or a concept and offering a rigorous Philosophical analysis of it, making clear rationally where they

accept or reject the established or communal judgement on the matter"⁴⁷

In my research exercise, I for certain established that we have this kind of Sages who have a critical and dialectical frame of mind. The thoughts of these Philosophic wise men are individualistic and dialectical and therefore cannot be regarded as folk Philosophy but Philosophy in a strict sense.

To make the distinction between a folk and philosophic Sage more clearer, let us consider some of the extracts recorded from the two types of Sages in the field.

1. **SOLOMON MURIU (On God's Nature and Creation)**

When asked who is Satan and what is his origin given that God's nature could not have resulted into such a creation i.e. evil, Muriu had this to say:

'Satan is man himself. He is a normal man himself who chooses to do wrong things which run counter God's wish. Therefore satan should be seen as one's bad acts or inclinations.

2. **SAMUEL MAKINDU (On the biblical story of Adam and Eve)**

This mzee made the following observation:

'The theory of Adam and Eve is foreign to us! However, it is nothing so unique or new to the Kikuyu's because as the white man talked of Adam and Eve, the "Agikuyu" people had Gikuyu and Mumbi as their first parents Mzungu did not introduce this idea of fore fathers to the 'Agikuyu' people, but these two i.e. Gikuyu and Mumbi are equivalent to the Mzungu's Adam and Eve the Mzungu should

⁴⁷Ibid, Page 16

therefore not claim credit for the theory of our first parents because even other people as depicted by the "Agikuyu's" case had the knowledge of the same!

3. **NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (On Comparison Between Wisdom and Formal Education)**

According to Waikahu, inborn wisdom is basic to man. This is because it is not instilled into man externally but is internally manufactured. As such, formal education does not instill wisdom in a man since wisdom is a product of internal processes in a man. People have survived comfortably for ages with only wisdom which is also the 'magic' behind our instinctive responses. Wisdom is of high utility to man. It makes it possible for him to acquire and make use of formally attained knowledge, making him intelligent and broadening his perspectives. This is in such a manner that he can now plan, make judgement and generally guide his life in a more organised and civilized way.

COMMENT

Considering the three different extracts recorded from Muriu, Makindu and Waikahu respectively, one would obviously agree with me that their responses depict that these men are deeply insightful and can actively reason out issues and problems laid before them logically. Therefore these individuals according to me are good examples of thinkers or philosophers in our traditional Society. The difference between philosophic sages and the folk sage will come out more clearly in our next demonstration whereby extracts from folk sages will be considered.

Now let us consider the following extracts also recorded from Sages that I interviewed.

1. **KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI - (On Races)**

Asked what could have been the creators possible reason for creating different races i.e. Asians, Blacks and Whites, Kabia made this observation:

'My cow may produce a calf without a tail whereas yours gives birth to one with a tail, as it should be in a normal case. This is all attributable to the will of God'.

'In turn we all know that the whole universe was created by one Creator. This including the smallest of all creatures i.e. lice and others like safari aunts. Equally, the white and black races have their origin in the same and one God that we all know of. It is the will of God that makes this happen and be as we see them including those that we cannot imagine'.

2. **KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI (On Death)**

Commenting on death had the following to say:

'Man cannot check death from occurring because God had his invisible soldiers who he sends when he wants to take someone's life, and they never fail ... These God's "Askaris" are not like the chiefs or the D.C.'s who can be bribed and fail in their mission'.

Commenting on man versus other creatures, Kabia noted that: 'Man has greater brains than all other creatures, as such he can even tame a lion or a leopard while other creatures cannot handle him'.

3. **JOEL RUKENYA (On Dream)**

According to Rukenya:

'Dreams originate from the thought system of a man. Some

dreams are good while others are bad. The good ones have their basis on God while the latter derives from satan. A human creation cannot do without them because dreams form a part of his nature and in any case, constitute one of the diverse ways in which God communicate with his human creatures'.

COMMENT

Compared to the first three Sages whose extracts we considered, one will realise that the extract from the two Sages we have just noted do not reflect a lot of reason. The two Sages appear to base their answer on the common knowledge as held by the Society. For instance, Kabia's reasoning is deeply coloured with the folk beliefs of the surrounding or borrowed culture. For example when he says that "man is superior to other creatures because he can tame and control them". Further when he says that God uses secret invisible soldiers to take ones life when he wishes and adding that these soldiers are not comparable to chief's or D.C.'s soldiers who can be corrupted, and fail in their mission.

In this case, I would regard Kabia Kathiri and Rukenya as good examples of folk Sages, because even though their answers reflect a lot of wisdom, extra application of reason is not on their part revealed to qualify their claims as Philosophy in a serious sense.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Has my thesis succeeded in the objective it sought to achieve?

My concern in this field of philosophy was to establish whether African Philosophic Sagacity exists and as a coherent and logical system of thought equivalent to the Western Philosophy, considering the long debate that has persisted on this subject.

Well, considering the extracts recorded in my field work exercise, I hold that there is concrete reason to back the views of proponents of African Philosophic Sagacity, that within the African traditional Society and indeed in other traditional societies in the world, there exists some wise men and women who are capable and can be classified as Philosophers in their own unique sense.

Therefore, this Thesis has gone a long way to make a contribution to this vital subject and also disapprove the arguments of the categories of thought that reject the existence of African philosophy in the unique area of sage philosophy.

Turning to these schools of thought that have made the contribution to this area of African philosophy and commencing with professional philosophy, we have realised that it's argument that literacy is a prerequisite of any form of a philosophical discourse does not hold water. This is given the demonstrated fact (elsewhere in this thesis) that we have wise men and women who never benefited from the modern education in Western sense and yet they are critical and analytical thinkers in equivalent sense to the Western trained thinkers.

In regard to Ethno-Philosophy and its contention that African tradition thought and indeed African Philosophy is communal and not individualistic, we have proved otherwise.

As Prof Oruka observes, we have established beyond any reasonable doubt that in our traditional Society, there existed and still exists indigenous thinkers who are thorough in thought. Indeed their thinking capacity and synthesis of human and natural problems, so much deserves to be labelled Philosophical. Philosophical because, as per the established universal tradition of philosophy perse, these indigenous are critical independent thinkers who 'guide their thought and judgement by the power of reason and inborn wisdom rather than by the communal outlook.'

These indigenous critical thinkers are as we established, over and above the cultural sages who are only good in general narrative and in description of cultural elements and customs of their people. As such, the two should not be confused or allowed to lead us to the wrong position that Africans in their traditional set up reasoned or reason collectively given the fact that cultural Sages are the majority compared to the former. The serious indigenous thinkers that I am referring to, are comparable to Scholars in the Western world such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, to mention but a few.

The truth of the matter therefore, is that African Philosophic Sagacity exists as a Philosophy in a serious sense and fulfilling all the tenets of philosophy proper despite the general absence of formal training in the vast majority of the thinkers involved.

Aside from the question as to whether African Philosophic Sagacity exists or not, I would like to make the following observations:

That, although a lot of research have been carried out in this area, more African Scholars should come up and exert more effort and energy by way of research so as to come up with more evidence and confirmation of Philosophic Sagacity in traditional Societies.

In any case, I cannot say the area has been fully researched on (exploited) therefore further discoveries and advances can still be made and these combined will help to resolve the controversy still persisting once and for all.

Where the African mentality and personality is concerned, efforts of Prof Oruka in this field of Sage Philosophy should be hailed as they have largely watered down and proved null and void the arguments of those Scholars (and especially the classical ones like Hegel and Levy Bruhl) who depicted the negro-race as

mentally deprived and therefore incapable of thinking Philosophically.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Over and above the objective to establish philosophic sagacity (something which Prof. Oruka has also accomplished), my work has in addition made the following contributions to sage-philosophy.

Unlike Prof. Oruka and other scholars who have written on this subject, my approach is different as I have traced the theme of this thesis from a much earlier position which covers the views of academicians such as Hegel G.W.F. and Levy Bruhl.

Further, the views of these two scholars and others that I have considered in this part are looked at in a critical and discursive manner. This is in contrast to other scholars who have just mentioned them passingly.

Whereas Prof. Oruka's focus on sage-philosophy is mainly centred on Western and Nyanza Provinces, mine is highly specialised as I focus solely on sages from central province. This I consider important as it offers a specialised and comprehensive picture of traditional wisdom which could turn out to be an important point of reference for other interested scholars.

The other unique aspect of my work is that my sages are more elderly, the youngest being 76 years of age. This is in contrast to Prof. Oruka's sages who range from quite young to elderly. Baraza is a good example of a very youthful sage interviewed and acknowledged as a philosophic sage by Prof. Oruka. However, Prof. Oruka's sages are of crucial importance as they fall under different age and sex categories hence offering a variety of taste and choice.

By and large, those are the basic contributions by my work on Sage - Philosophy.

A P P E N D I XFIELD WORK FINDINGS

In this part of my Thesis, I intend to record my field findings of a research exercise carried out in my home district of Kirinyaga. This exercise was actually devoted to establish whether there are, as it is argued, (by proponents of Philosophical Sagacity), in traditional African Society, wise men or women who are capable and can qualify to undertake philosophical dialogue and the equivalent, like the ones undertaken by philosophers in the Western world such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Hegel, to mention but only a few.

In essence therefore, this chapter is geared towards finding out whether real philosophical thought existed in traditional Africa or not. The motive here is to counter the biased argument advanced by some foreign scholars (in the field of philosophy) that existence of philosophy in modern Africa is as a result of the introduction of Western thought and culture to Africa. In short therefore, I wish to find out whether African traditional thought existed as a coherent and logical system of thought equivalent to the Western thought.

Before noting down my research findings, I find it vital at this point to once again note the contention of the proponents of African philosophic sagacity. According to these scholars, within African Society, there exists some wise men and women who are capable and can be classified as philosophers in their own unique sense. Partly, proponents of philosophic sagacity wrote to dispute the views expressed by some scholars (mainly western) who always equated wisdom with written word like in western legacy, hence the bias against African philosophy, as it is largely unwritten. Originators of sage philosophy aimed at concrete evidence to proof that literacy and formal training are not necessary conditions for one to be able to do or think

philosophically.

To qualify their argument that philosophy was/is also inherent in the traditional African society, proponents of sage philosophy for instance argued that a careful examination of oral narratives such as folk lores, proverbs, dances and poems reveal that they contained a lot of wisdom for cautioning and educating the youth. According to them, some of this wisdom amounted to philosophy. Further, these scholars observed that there is no organised life or ideas without an underlying philosophical base.

In this chapter, I will present a number of sages, (philosophic/ordinary) that I came across in the course of my field work. This will be done by producing extracts of their ideas and arguments on the various subjects that I introduced to them. Therefore to establish whether one is philosophical or not, the answers given by the various sages on the questions posed should be considered. In short, I intend to produce extracts of their ideas and arguments since in so doing, one can then proceed to classify these individuals in the category where they fit best i.e. philosophic sage or cultural sage category.

For one to succeed in this sensitive exercise of making a distinction between a philosophic sage and a cultural sage and indeed to be in a position to identify a non sage, as Odera Oruka makes it clear, the most basic and workable method is for one to be able to differentiate between three kinds of statements. These are classifiable as here-below:

- i) Wise statements
- ii) Common place statements, and
- iii) Foolish statements.

With the above categories of statements in mind, one can then be in a position to categorise an individual according to the type of statements he is capable of making. With that in mind, it should be mentioned here that "Wisdom is expressed by

the first category of statement while the second and third categories constitute the vast area of non-wisdom. However, even though wisdom is normally associated with the first category of statements this does not mean that wisdom necessarily entails philosophy and vice-versa. Reasonably, this explains why in this category of statements one can either identify a cultural sage or a philosophic sage. A person will for instance qualify to become a philosophic sage if only he can surpass wisdom and be in a position to make an independent rational judgement of what he knows, experiences and observes, without depending on the society's view of the same.

On the other hand, a cultural sage will equally fall under the first category of statements but the distinction or difference between him and the philosophic sage is seen in that a cultural sage is not able to surpass wisdom and make rational independent judgement. This category of sage is only gifted in memorizing and reciting the beliefs and customs of his people.

Consequently, the second and third category of statements constitute a vast area of non-wisdom. However, whereas those in second category have the potentiality of making wise statements, those in the third category are deprived mentally such that they have no capacity and ability to enable them to make sagacious statements or rational decisions and judgements of what they know and experience.

However, it is important to take note of Oruka's view in regard to wisdom. According to this pioneering scholar in this era of African philosophic sagacity, ".... wisdom does not exist in a vacuum, it exists in a context. A statement may be considered wise in one cultural context and yet appear foolish in another different context"⁴⁷. Besides, Prof Oruka makes it clear that 'some sayings are able to transcend their given

cultural spheres and appeal as wisdom in all cultures'. The point that I am trying to put across here and which has been elaborated on very well by Prof Oruka is that there is a possibility for sagacity both in the pre-literate and in the literate societies. As explained or hinted at, at the beginning of this chapter, for one to qualify to be a sage, he simply need to be wise and in a position to utilise that wisdom for the benefit of his community. Indeed wisdom is not restricted to the illiterate societies but it is a human quality found in any form of society. Another point worth noting is that even among those Africans who have had modern form of education, there are some who can be classified as sages. Such are people like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Taita Towett of Kenya. Another good example outside Africa is Mahatma Gandhi of India.

Now let us turn to extracts from sages as recorded in the course of my field work. Here I intend to bring out the concrete proof that we have sages among us who are capable of philosophising. What I will do is to record the questions I asked them and the answers they provided so that from their views we can then make a judgement of where to place them. This is in consideration of the earlier stated fact that some sages will actually fall under the category of the so called Philosophic sages.

As it was a very difficult task to identify philosophical sages and cultural sages, I intend to present views from seven individuals who I felt can qualify to be either sages in the cultural sense or in the philosophic sense.

All the sages that I interviewed hail from Kirinyaga District and therefore are Kikuyus. The names of these wise men or sages are as recorded hereunder:

1. Solomom Muriu
2. Samuel Makindu
3. Mwangi Wangu

4. Norman Gathakari Waikahu
5. Joel Rukenya
6. Kabia Joseph Kathiri
7. Kimongo wa Karinga

Actually, I had interviewed over 50 old men and women but only the seven listed above, I, believe could qualify as sages.

Before venturing into the questions asked and the responses made by the informants, let us first give a brief history of each of the above persons interviewed.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SAGES INTERVIEWED

1. SOLOMON MURIU

This old man hails from Kabare location in Kirinyaga District. He is now 90 years of age having been born in 1901 but he is still physically strong and has a sharp mind. Muriu is a farmer and a businessman. He never went to school but has learnt one or two things about modern ways including some education through exposure. He established a tobacco business in 1927 and used to collect it from Meru by foot and transport it to Nairobi and Nakuru. As a result of the long distances involved in this tobacco business, Muriu decided to live in Nairobi where he sold charcoal. Afterwards he settled to sell water in Pangani at the price of two cents per tin.

In 1936 after Pangani town was demolished, he moved back home to Kirinyaga and settled at Kutus where he opened a shop. Between 1942 and 1950 when beer taking ban imposed on blacks was lifted, Muriu ventured into beer business which he does to this day. In 1950 he was elected as a locational elder head for arbitrating cases in Kabare Location. From Locational Court of elders he was together with two others appointed for Divisional court where he was later appointed the Chairman/Judge of the Kirinyaga Court. In 1967 Solomon Muriu and his colleagues

retired when other formally trained and educated judges came along.

2. **SAMUEL MAKINDU**

This man hails from Inoi Location in Ndia Division. He has now attained 76 years of age and is a farmer. He belongs to the so called "Giciri age group". This group received identity cards 1917 the year known as "Mwaka wa duma" - The year of the eclipse of the sun. In 1936, Makindu married traditionally. He received some education, in Gitigiu Primary School where he studied upto Standard IV.

As a young man he trekked to Mombasa where he was employed as a houseboy by an Indian called Alji Auman. In 1938 he left Mombasa to participate in 2nd World War and first fought in Uganda where he claims to have served as a sergeant. Later, he travelled to Middle-East, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Italy and then came back to Kenya via Sudan.

Back from war, Makindu settled to farming activities. This was the period of land demarcation around 1947. He was made a top clan leader, a position which made him acquire large pieces of land. Today Makindu is still a senior village elder and still attends all vital village meetings.

3. **MWANGI WANGU**

He comes from Kabare Location in Gichugu Division. Farming is his occupation. He has now attained 81 years of age but he physically remains strong. He got circumcised in 1928. When young, he was active in Kikuyu traditional dances like "Mugoiyo, Gicukia and Ndugi". He married in 1931. He has eleven children, five boys and six girls. As a young man he travelled on foot to Mombasa to look for a job. The journey according to him would take one month. First he worked as a butcher and later in hospital where he was engaged to trap rats which were becoming

a menace especially by causing plague.

When the mau mau war broke out, Mwangi travelled back home where he took to cattle herding. Later he was employed as a police "Kanga" (Administration Police) to serve the colonial government. He claims that while in this job, he secretly assisted his fellow Africans as he did not like the white man.

Much later in the village, he says that he was made a village elder "Muthamaki" and upto this day he still retains the title. Mwangi today actively participates in village/location meetings and his advice is taken very seriously. Mwangi says that although he would have liked to attend school, he never got the chance.

4. **NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU**

Waikahu originates from Kiine Location in Ndia Division. He is now 91 years of age and does business and farming. According to him, while at a tender age of 14 years, he ventured into farming, selling sweet potatoes at Sagana Town. Later he travelled to Nairobi where he did not settle but instead turned back to Muranga in a place called Makindi where a certain muslim farmer engaged him to be chasing away wild animals i.e. monkeys that were eating and destroying his crops.

Later on he travelled back to Nairobi where he worked as a houseboy for an Indian man who paid him two shillings per month. He also worked in the same capacity for a police inspector in the present Central Police Station. In 1941 - during World War I Waikahu was a strong man and worked at Ngong war camp for a certain captain - cleaning his clothes. 1919, having made some money in Nairobi, he decided to go back home and attend school - Mutira Primary School. He studied for three years and since there was scarcity of teachers, he was made a teacher after standard three.

Due to his fluency in Kiswahili and the education he had received, he was employed at Baricho Divisional office in Ndia to teach Kiswahili language to the administration police. In 1925, Waikahu became a member of the native Tribunal Court made up of 44 elders. Here they arbitrated on cases and made judgements of problems presented to them by the people. The court of appeal was in Nyeri, he says. In 1927 Waikahu was elected to the local Native Council (L.N.C.) which in 1933 changed its name to African District Council (A.D.C.) today known as County Council.

Mzee Waikahu participated in legislative council elections which saw Eliud Mathu excel as the representative of African interest. Eliud Mathu was proposed by Norman Waikahu from Kirinyaga. Waikahu later became a Senior Chief. He claims that he knows the late Paul Mbuya from South Nyanza who was also once a Senior Chief. They worked closely especially in the election of the African representative to the legislative council. According to him, it was Paul Mbuya who sat as the Chairman of the conference to elect the African representative in Nyanza.

5. **JOEL RUKENYA**

80 years of age and hails from Kabare in Gichugu Division of Kirinyaga District. He is a farmer.

As a young man, Rukenya began life as a herdsboy, grazing his father's cattle. Later he travelled to Nairobi like many others - In Nairobi, he was, as he claims, one of the first labourers to lay foundation of our present day city. Here he did the masonry work - dressing stones and transporting the same by cart. In 1952 during Mau Mau war he was detained in Langata and later in Manyani Prison.

Back in the village, Rukenya was elected chairman of the council of elders that resolved disputes and made vital decisions. Today he is still a village elder and chairman of water

project in his village.

6. **KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI**

He was born in 1905 in Kabare Location of Kirinyaga District. Initially, Kabia Kathiri began as a local businessman doing barter trade around his locality where he was engaged in exchanging food stuffs. Later he worked as a carpenter and around 1940 was a butcher. Before venturing in meat business, in 1939 he had helped to start a cabbage/carrot machine in Kerugoya town.

Kabia was also known for his practice as a traditional healer. In this connection, he is particularly remembered because of his ability in treatment of swollen women breasts. He says that he knew the best herbs for treatment of breasts.

1952-57 during Mau Mau period - Kabia was a headman (Assistant Chief) but never a home-guard, he claims. Currently he is a peasant farmer and also a respected village elder who sits in all elders' committee meetings.

7. **KIMONGO WA KARINGA**

Kimongo is now 85 years of age and does farming in Mwea Division where he hails from.

Kimongo says that he was among the founder members of Kikuyu Central Association (K.A.C.) and the consequent Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U.).

At the tender age of 22 years, he was in Nairobi where he worked as an ox-cart puller and much later at the Railway Station as a casual worker.

Back in the village, Kimongo like many others was elected

to the council of elders and today remains a respected elder who is now and then called upon to arbitrate on crucial matters like those relating to boundary disputes.

When I visited the above listed informants, I interviewed them on various topics such as those concerning God, Religion, man, wisdom, death, dream and universe. The motive was to gauge their wisdom and to find out whether they are capable of thinking philosophically. For us to follow clearly what was recorded in the field research, I shall deal with individual topics one after the other beginning with that of God. First I will list the questions asked and in giving the responses from informants, I will then indicate the supplementary questions and other clarifications sought from the individuals interviewed.

ON GOD

Questions:

1. If God stands for all that is pure and perfect, and He is the sole creator of the universe and all that is inside it, how then do you explain the existence of evil in the world as this is quite contradictory to the creator's own nature?
2. Is there a possibility that the so called God, the creator, does not exist at all?
3. Are there many supplementary Gods or is God only one, given the contention by some people that they have their own God?

SOLOMON MURIU

Answers:

1. Everything in the universe surely emanated from God. As such Satan is not anything different or a power similar to God and standing on its own.

Supplementary Question:

Who is satan then and what is his origin?

Answer:

Satan is man himself. He is a normal man himself who chooses to do wrong things which run counter to God's wish. Therefore satan should be seen as one's bad acts or inclinations.

Supplementary Question:

Since satan/evil is found in a normal man, can one then conclude that he was created by God himself?

Answer:

Satan was never created by God. As I had said earlier on, he is found in a man who opts to sin by doing things against God's wish. It should be clear therefore that satan is a "creation" of a bad man himself and not God. If men stopped sinning satan would have no room in the universe as God gave no consideration for his existence.

Answer:

2. God our creator had never been absent. His existence is traceable from time immemorial. Indeed we are not the first in his line of creation. He has related with and seen many of us. He is the one who separated the earth from heaven and he is the creator of water and the landscape that we see including everything else.

Supplementary Question:

What is He and how is He then?

Answer:

God is an invisible being. No one can see or touch Him. Nevertheless, His force (power) and presence is felt all the times. Besides that, God is the most permanent and independent of all. He has no beginning and no end.

3. **Answer:**

Selfishness and greed are the sole cause of all the division and it is also the root cause of the origin of the multiple religions. The same can be attributed to the idea of separate and supplementary gods.

Supplementary Question

Can you please clarify/elaborate?

Answer:

If I may illustrate what I am saying, take a family of about six people. In these family unit, one member may choose to break away and form his independent family system claiming that your "Government is not his government". In short, these people who claim that they have their own separate Gods are the evil ones.

MWANIKI MAKINDU: (ON GOD)**Answers (s)**

1. Existence or the talk of evil has come about due to people's ignorance. Evil is a creation of man.

Supplementary Question:

Can you expound on what you are saying?

Answer:

To make it clear, let us look at those old days when there was shortage of rain. In this situation people used to pray and ask God to send rain and this would happen. At times God would send too much rainfall which would lead to floods and consequent destruction of crops. What is strange is that for this unwelcome happening, people would blame satan as the cause even where nothing like satan existed as such.

2. **On Existence/Non-Existence of God**Answer:

Makindu says that: according to the Agikuyu people, there is nothing like non-existence of God.

Supplementary Question

What is the position then?

Answer:

The truth of the matter is that African God has always existed. The idea of God's non-existence was introduced by the very people who brought the alien religion to Africa.

3. **One/Multiple Gods**

Makindu's answer is that God has always been one and not multiple. The so called gods are a creation of the people and are gods of imitation as they cannot be compared with the one and All powerful God.

The idea of many gods or supplementary gods was introduced by foreign people i.e. whites interested in exploiting others like the Africans for their own selfish ends.

Supplementary Question:

Why was this the case?

Answer:

The white man wanted to dominate all other races in all spheres of life, hence he came up with the idea of his own god who was supposed to be superior than all others. The idea was to deceive other people that he was equally superior than other races.

MWANGI WANGU

Answer:

God created everything but Satan is the misguided creation of God. In other words, Satan exists in the name of a person who refuses and fails to heed and satisfy God's wishes.

Supplementary Question:

Can you please elaborate further on the origins of Satan?

Answer:

God created man in his own image but with limited powers and ability, but such was supposed to be the good nature of man. Satan in the name of man started appearing when man himself developed interests that were not in agreement with our creator's expectations.

Supplementary Question:

Why did God not eliminate satan once and for all?

Answer:

God being all knowledgeable and powerful know very well that satan would never be able to defeat Him or to march Him. As such, God just decided to leave him alone but in addition made a curse on satan that he remains restless and suffers endlessly as his struggle will never yield him any concrete results.

2. **Answer:**

There is no concrete or otherwise evidence to point to non-existence of God. It should be very clear in our minds that to suppose God is not existence is also to suppose we are not existent which is stupid!

Supplementary Question:

What can you give as evidence for God's presence?

Answer:

All the wonders that we see on earth such as mountains, rivers etc., were created by God and if they were not created by Him then I would like those who dispute this to explain the force behind their existence.

Supplementary Question:

Would you be having an idea on how God may have created the universe and the things in it?

Answer:

God can never and will never reveal to us how He went about creating the universe and everything in it. Even if God

were to do this we would never understand because our mind is so simple and limited.

Supplementary Question:

What other explanation can you give for this reality?

Answer

It is my feeling that if God were to allow us to know Him fully or how he created the universe, then He would have to instil us with all or some of His qualities. The end result would be, emergence of so many gods. In addition to the above, God being all powerful and knowledgeable, He outrightly foresaw chaos in the world if human knowledge was to equal His knowledge. To God, difference in religion, ideology or ethnic differences for that matter, do not count. He does not discriminate anybody or any community for these differences, but would however, never allow human knowledge to rival His in any dimension.

All in all I would like to say that we can never be equal to God. Let us take the example of the whiteman. This man has been able to "create" almost anything but God has limited him basically in one thing, that He would never allow him the knowledge of how to create another human being like himself. This limitation on us by God depicts His superior position vis a vis ours. For instance, God sees the whiteman, but is the white man able to see God?

3. **Answer:**

God is one and for all. People pray one God only despite the many religious denominations and so forth.

Supplementary Question:

Can you elaborate further:

Answer:

Peoples' different ways of living are as a result of multiple cultures, themselves, due to environmental differences have led to diverse ways of looking at and appreciating God. This in itself has led to the human idea of "many" Gods whereas God is but only one.

Supplementary Question:

Can you please base your explanation on real concrete example to illustrate that God is only one and for all?

Answer:

Muslims could be dwelling in the same environment as Christians, but when God sends rain for instance, does he favour either against the other? Never! This is because we all have one undivided source of all our needs - God who is for all races.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU**Answer:**

1. Satan is an evil spirit that got into man. This evil spirit/satan desired to be like God. To be feared and respected by all.

Supplementary Question:

Who would have created satan or rather how did he come into being?

Answer:

Everything was created by God as the universe and all in it did not exist until God brought it into existence. Therefore, I would conclude that satan himself was also created by God. However, his nature does not reflect that of God the almighty.

Supplementary Question:

Why is this so?

Answer:

Initially satan was not satan/evil as we know him today. He became so when he abdicated from the wishes of God. This deviation occurred because when God created us he made our mind in such way that it could choose between good and bad. As such if one chooses that which is not in conformity with God's wish, then he becomes the satan we are talking about. In short, satan per-se is the evil choice or act that a man may commit himself to and which in turn makes him evil.

2. **Answer:**

On a possibility of non existence of God, I believe it is ridiculous to think that God does not exist. All people strongly believe in God's existence even those who may feign otherwise. This idea is even strengthened further by the existences and happening such as earthquakes, lightnings and thunder storms.

3. **Answer:**

There are no more than one "God" and even nothing like supplementary gods. The many different gods we hear of are a creation of man himself.

Supplementary Question:

Why is this so?

Answer:

Selfishness, ignorance, sometimes leadership struggle due to greed combined with other factors have prompted people to "create" their own gods and hence the talk of the supplementary gods by others.

The truth of the matter is that God is only one, has one love and one language for all His people irrespective of their race or colour.

Supplementary Question:

Can you state the message you are trying to put across clearly?

Answer:

Yes. What I am saying is that God is not divided and as such has no divided interests. He is wholly objective such that no two or more denominations should exist in His name.

JOEL RUKENYA**Answer:**

1. Satan/evil is the wrong things or bad things that a man

engages in. After man sinned and brought evil into existence, God wanted to punish satan reflected through the sinful man by destroying him but since our God is one of mercy, he decided to curse satan and let him suffer throughout his lifetime.

Now that satan is here, peace and harmony cannot be attained fully as he embarked on wooing innocent people to his camp where he is lonely.

Supplementary Question:

Why did this have to happen?

Answer

No thief wants to steal alone as no one wants to suffer or die alone, as such even satan aspires to have company in his evil deeds.

2. On the question of the possibility of non-existence of God, Joel Rukenya had this to say:

Answer:

Everything has its origin as all things emanate from somewhere. For instance rivers have their sources, just like seeds result to plants i.e. trees. Equally, things we see like vehicles, houses must have emanated from certain sources. Given the above, we should know that there is an overall designer and originator of the universe and all that we see in it. This universal source of everything is God Himself. As such God is there and if He were not there then there would be nothing to talk about or look at in the world. We would not even be there ourselves.

Supplementary Question:

Can you elaborate on what you are saying?

Answer:

My view is that God made all the different things we see and made them in such a way that in turn it is this particular individual entities that will be producing offsprings to sustain their type in the world. Therefore given the above, God as the overall creator exists and pre-empts such absurd contentions as one saying that he emanated from his parents and his parents tracing their source to their parents in turn, and so on and so forth until a point where they may not be able to proceed further.

QUESTIONS ON RELIGION

1. What do you have to say about religion and its existence?
 - ii) Besides, why should so many religions and denominations exist if God is only one?
2. How would you compare the traditional religion with the western religion introduced recently?

According to you which of the two do you think is more superior in terms of fulfilling the desired ends?

NB:

At this juncture I would like to state that from the various subjects covered, I am only recording answers from informants which I consider appropriate for our exercise. As such, those not worth recording I am not giving them any consideration here.

SOLOMON MURIU (on religion)Answer:

Religion came to benefit human creation and even other creations so as to make the world a more comfortable place to live in. It came about to educate man on how to conduct himself and indeed how to treat his fellow human beings and other creations in existence. Its motive was to eradicate evil and create order in the world.

Supplementary Question:

What are you trying to say?

Answer:

As it is evident in books and stories told, in those ancient times, people used to fight so much. Spears, arrows, pangas and many other weapons were used in self-elimination. God as such cropped up religion to contain evil here on earth.

Answer:

So many religions and denominations exist because of greed and selfishness inherent in the nature of man. People are so self centred as it is evident in our day to day life. For instance a village will disintegrate into small units due to selfish interests i.e. some members may be after break-offs because they want to be undisputable leaders of their people but do not want to be led.

2. **Answer:**

Traditional religion was practised by forefathers (ancestors). Among them were chosen few people who on behalf of

others said prayers and made sacrifices to God. Sacrifices were in form of food i.e. smoke from roasted meat of goat and beer offered for instance when people experienced good harvest.

Supplementary Question:

But how do you compare it with modern religion. Was it better or worse in returns?

Answer:

Both traditional religion and modern religion are the same in that just like the latter, traditional prayers used to be answered and in accordance with the peoples wishes. Therefore none is superior or inferior to the other.

Supplementary Question:

If so, then why did people change from traditional to modern religion?

Answer:

Things can never be the same, things have to change to suit new ways of life and general challenges. As such modern religion is not any different from the traditional religion but time factor has necessitated some changes although the basic idea is retained i.e. the essence of religion.

MWANIKI MAKINDU (on religion)

Answers:

1. Religion reached the African people through their forefathers. For instance, religion reached the "Gikuyu" people through Gikuyu and Mumbi - their ancestors. Reli-

gion and in its original sense therefore did not reach Africans through the white man and the African person has always known God from time immemorial.

MAKINDU'S VIEW OF GIKUYU AND MUMBI

Vis a vis the biblical story of Adam and Eve

According to Mwaniki Makindu "The biblical story of Adam and Eve is foreign to us. However, he adds that it is nothing so unique or new to Kikuyu's because as the white talk of Adam and Eve, the "Agikuyu" people had Gikuyu and Mumbi as their first parents. According to him, mzungu did not introduce the idea of Gikuyu and Mumbi to the "Agikuyu" people but these two are equivalent to the mzungu's Adam and Eve. As such Makindu says that "The mzungu should not claim credit for the theory of our first parents because even other people as depicted by the "Agikuyu" case had the knowledge of the same.

2. Makindu on the question of Traditional religion versus Modern religion, had this to say:

Answer:

Today I am a complete follower of the modern religion introduced to us by the whiteman but this aside, I still consider traditional religion as superior to the former.

Supplementary Question

Give reasons for your position:

Answer:

Besides the modern religion, aliens (Whiteman) also introduced money and it is this money that has corrupted the

religion, making it less serious. For instance some people would like to take up religious roles and responsibilities simply because they want to reap some financial gains.

Supplementary Question:

Is there any comment that you would like to make in the same regard?

Answer:

Yes, I strongly hold that we should revert to the seriousness of the traditional religion but without foregoing modernisation in religion today which is as a result of inevitable circumstances dictated by the different times that we experience. For instance, the written tradition in religion should not be discarded.

MWANGI WANGU (on religion)

Answer:

Before religion was introduced, I believe that the society was backward in all aspects that pertain to life and that people themselves were very divided. As such religion is great as it imbeds in itself, God's wisdom which is knowledge useful for more organised and orderly life style.

Answer:

Before religion, there was total chaos. With religion there came wisdom of God as I have just mentioned, and this wisdom, which was divided in all spheres of life and man's daily experience helped man to meet his challenges rationally without being excessively emotional. Religion should be compared with a dog that man keeps in his home-stead for security purpose i.e. for keeping off intruders.

Religion is for making people to act humbly and live harmoniously, namely keeping satan at bay!

2. On traditional Religion versus Modern Religion Mwangi has this to say:

Answer:

If you happen to be in an open ground and it begins to rain and you do not know of a house nearby to take cover in, you will certainly have to take shelter below a tree.

Consequently, the old generation had only the traditional religion to turn to for spiritual wellbeing and other problems that may have needed religious therapy, lack of sophistication in this religion made it difficult to satisfy the desired ends. Instead of having hospitals and doctors, there were the witchdoctors who claimed to derive their power from God although it was apparent that they did not have full knowledge to handle all the complex diseases that come by. Modern religion and its practices is very advanced and equipped to cope with existing complex challenges as it is not limited i.e. in knowledge of God. However, it should be noted that both religious practices refer to the same God.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (on religion)

Answer:

1. Religion is meant to humble human beings because by nature man has inclinations to do evil.

Supplementary Question:

How exactly does religion help?

Answer:

Religion "Cools" peoples' hearts and checks off the tendency to want to do evil. It gives people a smooth and harmonising sense of direction that enables them to do meaningful things. To be precise, religion clearly spells out the do's and don't's in the society. Without religion as such, people would never have been in a position to really distinguish between good from bad acts. Absence of religion in turn would have spelt out doom in the universe, as human creation would have tended to act or take into any activity without any due consideration to morality and especially in its universal sense. In short therefore, religion is most basic to our harmonious co-existence.

ii) Answer:

Religion - Dini - Should only be one and for all. However, many religions exist today because of the capitalistic tendencies that have come into existence. For instance in business interests where one wants to excel at the expense of his colleagues using all sorts of dirty tricks. In short, human beings have become greedy prompting various religious groupings and teachings for their own selfish material benefits. God is one and for all, therefore church or religion should be only one and undivided.

Norman adds that - Today, we hear of so many squabbles in church. These fights have nothing to do with God as they are personality clashes for material interests and self glorifications.

Traditional Religion versus Modern Religion

Answer by Norman on their comparison

2. The truth is that traditional religion was also good in its own perspective even though most of the people have taken

to the teachings of the modern religion. This is because even in those ancient days God used to respond to peoples prayers whenever they were made and after making sacrifices.

Supplementary Question

What can you say about Modern Religion?

Answer:

Even Modern Religion is good and the truth is that it can even be better because it is an improvement on the former.

Supplementary Question:

What do you mean?

Answer:

What I want to say is that God gave man a complex and flexible mind and through man's own intelligence, he has been able to improve and adopt himself all the time to the new challenges in life. For instance people cannot always make this material sacrifices whenever they pray as they are exhaustible and hence have to look for alternatives.

Question

What are you trying to say?

Answer:

I want to say that the number of people is swelling and as such the number of goats and other things could easily be threatened by continued sacrifices. However since God has to be prayed, man through his flexible mind had found other

convenient methods of communicating with his creator.

I would like to imagine what would have happened if people lacked an important item for sacrifice due to their increased numbers - could this have meant postponement of prayers if a new religious culture was not evolved?

JOEL RUKENYA (on religion)

2. I only considered his answer to the second question.

Answer:

Traditionally people worshipped Murungu/Ngai - (God) and made sacrifices of beer, goats, and food stuff. The sacrificial items would be placed in a sacred place in the forest - a well reserved and protected part of the forest where no one would fell trees.

Supplementary Question

After prayers and sacrifices what followed?

Answer:

Having made the sacrifices, if it is the rain that people wanted, God would send them rain or whatever else they may have requested for.

Supplementary Question

Now can you compare Modern Religion with the traditional one?

Answer:

In comparison, traditional religion was more serious in its

prayers and practices as it was not corrupt. As such, God took peoples prayers more seriously and therefore it must have been superior. As you may have witnessed, modern religion is riddled with greed prompted by selfish desires and this cannot please God.

KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI (Recorded answer to the 2nd question only)

Traditional Religion vs. Modern Religion.

2. Answer:

Traditional religion referred to and worshipped the only one and all powerful God. Therefore it was also good as it never worshipped a minor God. Unlike traditional religion which was originated by our ancestors, modern religion was originated by the white man.

I have no complaint to make against it as such because for one, I know that it has an extra quality of being more organised due to its written tradition in particular.

However, one will realise that it could be used to perpetuate corruption, exploitation and suppression of others.

Supplementary Question

What do you mean? Can you elaborate?

Answer

Yes, what I want to say is that modern religion could be used adversely. A concrete case in point is that the whiteman used it to conquer and rule the black man. This kind of corruption was not evident in traditional religion.

QUESTION(S) ON MAN

1. Is there any basic difference between a man and a woman?
Justify your position.

MIANGI WANGU

Answer:

A woman can never equal a man. By nature, a woman is weak. For instance the nerves and bones of a woman are weak while those of a man are strong.

Supplementary Question

Can you expound on what you are saying?

Answer:

Yes, the point is that a woman has been created differently and her body is loose, flexible and weak.

Supplementary Question

Please illustrate your point with a real life experience?

Answer:

You may have noticed that when a woman for instance goes to till land, she has the ability to bend and remain in that curved like position for so long. A man cannot because his body is rigid. As such, no matter, how huge or fat a woman may be, a normal man will always fight and knock down a woman.

Supplementary Question

Elaborate on your point once again please.

Answer:

A man is naturally strong as I had mentioned there-before and besides, he can endure tough situations for a long duration unlike a woman whose energy is quickly exhaustible.

Supplementary Question

What in the woman's nature can you cite as basically contributing to her weakness?

Answer:

As you are aware, a woman loses a lot of blood during child birth. To regain the same it takes a lot of time and sometimes it is lost even more as she may continue to lose more than she gains if she frequently gives birth. On the other hand, a man's blood is hardly lost and therefore his strength is constantly there.

Supplementary Question

Is there anything you would like to add on?

Answer:

Yes, I would like to say that despite the weak nature of a woman, we respect her because it is through her that the dead are survived. This happens frequently by naming newly born children after the dead or the old who are at the verge of dying.

Further to that, I would like to add that a woman should never be told a full secret because by nature they cannot keep secrets. This in itself contributes to their weakness and the consequent inferior position to that of a man.

1. **Answer:**

Men and women are seemingly equal due to the mutual respect derived from man's acquired knowledge. It is indeed the modern culture that has tended to equate a woman to a man but the truth is that a man is superior to a woman especially physically. For instance a man can do harder tasks than a woman.

JOEL RUKENYA (ON MAN)**Answer:**

Women were created to supplement men on everything. As such a man is superior to the latter. A woman is weak and easily breaks down, they cannot stand tough challenges in life. This is such that, no matter what position of power a woman may be offered, her limitation will be clearly evident.

QUESTION(S) ON WISDOM/MAN

1. For a man to be wise or intelligent, must he have gone through some formal education like the western one? Give your views.

SOLOMON MURIU (ON WISDOM)**Answer:**

First is inborn wisdom, then intelligence, which is also wisdom attained from worldly experience.

Supplementary Question

Can you explain how this really came about?

Answer:

Yes, inborn wisdom is inherited. For instance in a family where there existed a wise man (ancestor) then there is always bound to be a repeat case.

Therefore inborn wisdom and intelligence vary. Nevertheless, the two supplement each other such that a person is stronger and better equipped mentally than being with one set and not the whole set. My believe however is that inborn wisdom is most basic.

SAMUEL MAKINDU (ON WISDOM)

Answer:

In the ancient days, our ancestors (forefathers) never acquired the formal knowledge gotten from education. However, they lived comfortably.

Supplementary Question

Why is this the case?

Answer:

This is so because formal education is only a supplement to inborn or God given wisdom and intelligence, which actually exists naturally in man's mind.

Supplementary Question

How do you rate intelligence acquired from formal education?

Answer:

In contemporary times that we are living, education for worldly intelligence is vital since the older and more knowledgeable and wiser generations can conveniently record

what they consider vital for the youth to better their lives and make the world a comfortable and enjoyable place to live in.

WANGI WANGU (ON WISDOM)

Answer:

Formal education received in educational institutions does not account for wisdom as the latter is inborn or God given and is acquired or received gradually when one is developing in his mothers womb.

Supplementary Question

Does formal education assist in any way?

Answer:

Yes. Formal education helps in cementing ones wisdom and guiding its application in real life experiences. However, formal education is of secondary significance because a person can do without it and yet lead a smooth life. On the other hand, one would be an imbecible without a meaningful degree of wisdom. Therefore wisdom is very fundamental to man. In fact it is very difficult and indeed next to impossible to instill worldly intelligence in a man who has no inborn wisdom

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (ON WISDOM)

Answer:

In-born wisdom is basic to man. This is so because it is not instilled into man externally but is internally manufactured. As such, formal education does not instill wisdom in a man since wisdom is a product of internal processes in a man. People have survived comfortably for

ages with only wisdom which is also the "magic" behind our instinctive responses. Wisdom is of high utility to man as it makes it possible for him to acquire and make use of formally attained knowledge making him intelligent and broadening his perspective in such a way that he can now plan, make judgement and generally guide his life in a more organised manner.

KIMONGO WA KARINGA (ON WISDOM)

Answer:

Wisdom is not a product of formal education. It is God given and it is the one which had enabled our people (ancestors) to live well even before formal education was introduced.

Supplementary Question

Can you make your point clear?

Answer:

What I am trying to say is that formal education and the consequent sensible knowledge is not a necessary condition for man to be able to lead a meaningful life. During those ancient days wisdom alone enabled man to plan his life and to preserve and communicate vital ideas to generations to come, through songs, proverbs, and tales. In fact some of my age mates who never went to school and are in position of leadership have proved even better than those who did.

QUESTION(S) ON EXISTING HUMAN RACES

1. i) Given the difference in colour between races i.e. the black and white races, do you in your opinion hold that all races have the same capacities and potentials

or do you think that one race could be superior to the other(s)?

- ii) What could have been the creator's possible reason for creating different races i.e. Asians, blacks and whites?

SOLOMON MURIU (ON RACES)

1. **Answer:**

There is no great or superior race than the other. All races are equally gifted and therefore all have the same capabilities and potentialities.

Supplementary Question

Do you want to say that there is no variation at all?

Answer:

The only slight variation that I can mention is as a result of environmental difference. Namely, all races are born and bred in varying environments and therefore cannot behave and act similarly. This also accounts for their differing physical appearances and cultural set ups.

Supplementary Question

You have stated that there is no superior race than the other, but as you are aware, why do we recognise some races as superior and others as inferior?

Answer:

A race will be considered superior or inferior today depending on the standard being used to make the judgement. For instance if the modern standard is used, mzungu will

emerge as the superior because of his advancement in modern technology. However, if a traditional/natural standard is to be applied, the black race could surface as the superior.

ii) Answer:

As indicated, the reason behind the existence of different races is the different geographical factors being experienced in different regions. At heart all races have one language but the outer or surface language is different because of the mentioned continental/regional environmental differences which have led to i.e. African language, European and Indian one.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (ON RACES)

Answers:

- i) All races are equally gifted and created. None is superior or more privileged than the other. All of them are the same such that they all do and comprehend the same things. To be precise, all the people irrespective of race or creed have the same brain capacity. There is nothing that a white can do that a black man cannot if he is trained and taught to do it.

Supplementary Question

What basically can be the equating or regulating factor that accounts for the same capacities and potentialities in the different races?

Answer:

All races were created by the same God, and He having the prior knowledge of human nature could not have allowed a superior race in a permanent sense because he knew this could have meant endless suffering to the rest.

- ii) The environmental difference and the resultedly air and water variation not to mention soil, account for some slight difference in man and hence the idea of races.

Nevertheless, man is by nature the same apart from the physical variation arising from climatic differences such that a person or people dwelling in a climatically very hot area can never be exactly the same as those in a cold environment.

SAMWUEL MAKINDU (ON RACES)

Answers:

1. It is true that there are different races but one should note that there is no better brain of a human race than that of another

Supplementary Question

Do you mean to say that all our brains have the same capacities?

Answer:

No. What I am saying is that brain capacity and potentialities may only vary between individuals irrespective of their races but not otherwise.

- ii) God created all the existing races and this I believe must have been deliberate as God may have wanted to depict to us

His strength and ability.

Supplementary Question

Could there be any other reason for this?

Answer:

Yes. God could have done this so that human beings can differentiate between themselves. Equally he may have done this as way of balancing His people in the world such that they all do not crowd in one area. Namely, he may have wanted order among his people, this is not to mean that a member of a different race cannot visit or live with those of another.

MWANGI WANGU (ON RACES)

Answers:

1. All races i.e. black, white or the Asian are creation of God. However, the black and the Asian race can never attain the wisdom and intelligence of the (mzungu) white man.

Supplementary Question

Do you mean to say that mzungu is superior to all other races? If so illustrate how!

Answer:

Yes. He is superior. As you are aware, mzungu has today been able to advance in many diverse fields. Such that we have now resorted to him for knowledge. Indeed the worldly intelligence/knowledge that we have, has emanated from him and he was given the unique position by God.

Supplementary Question

What reason can you advance for the white race's unique position?

Answer:

I believe that God may have required a person on earth to guide his fellow human being. This man is the whiteman. God may have in turn done this because he did not want us to deal directly with him.

ii) **Answer:**

God may have created the different races as he had the prior knowledge that if he created one people who were alike in all ways, they may never concur and live harmoniously. Some tension to provoke reason was necessary.

KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI (ON RACES)

Answer(s)

1. i) Individuals have varying thought capacities. Nevertheless, one race cannot be said to have a better equipped and superior mind than others just like a whiteman is not known to have a different colour of blood from that of a black man.

Answer:

- ii) My cow may produce a calf without a tail whereas yours gives birth to one with a tail as it should be in a normal case. This is all attributed to the will of God. In turn we all know that the whole universe was created by one creator. Even the smallest creatures including lice and safari ants were created by God.

Equally, the white and black races have their origin in the one and only God that everybody knows of. It is the will of God that makes things happen and be as we see them including those that we cannot imagine.

QUESTION(S) ON MAN VERSUS OTHER CREATURE(S)

1. What is your view or contention for man's distinct category from other creatures?

(As it has been the practice, let us now look at the answers given by the same individuals interviewed).

SOLOMON MURIU

Answer:

It is God who created all the creatures that we see and hear of including man himself. However, God put man in a unique position and it is him who commands all the animals that exist.

Supplementary Question

How did God ensure that man can be able to fulfil this?

Answer:

Man controls all animals including those very strong than him like the elephants, lions and so forth because man was given a special brain that is big and complex.

Unlike that of other animals, the brain of man enables him to reason and make judgements which supersede the ability given to other animals. In this sense man would know exactly just how to bring down an elephant or how to tame it.

Supplementary Question

Can you illustrate what you are trying to say by giving a concrete example?

Answer:

Yes. As you may have observed especially in our villages, a young boy for instance, may have the knowledge and ability to direct and guide a calf of a cow, and even its mother including the bull itself. This becomes possible because of the ability given to his large brain unlike that of an animal which is simple and limited in thought.

SAMUEL MAKINDU (ON MAN VS OTHER CREATURES)Answer:

Man is certainly superior and greater than all other creatures. As you are aware, man has the ability and the knowledge of how to handle these other animals. For instance, when man decides to slaughter an elephant or a cow for that matter, he knows exactly how to go about it and there is no "complaint" from the victim animal.

Supplementary Question

Is that all what you can say or is there anything else you may wish to add?

Answer:

To illustrate my point clearly, man unlike other animals is very organised and lives in a society in which there are some very complex activities going on and all for his well being in the society. Besides man has learnt many ways of

communicating and exchanging his ideas with colleagues. This includes preserving information for future generations. Animals lack this kind of organisation and their life is simple. Man's brain is the secret behind his rationality.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (ON MAN VS OTHER CREATURES)

Answers:

In all God's creations, it is the man who is at the helm. All other creatures that exist fear and fall under man's authority. The difference between man and other animals comes in that, man has a rational mind which enables him to plan his life and lay strategies for his security.

Animals lack this kind of brain as theirs is very limited to engage in rational activities. As such they have no knowledge of anything and what they have is an active instinct which helps them to for instance satisfy their hunger and cater for some basic protection.

MWANGI WANGU (ON MAN VS OTHER CREATURES)

Answer:

Man is the most organised and rational of all other creatures. This is due to the sophistication and size of his brain. However, there is difference in mental capacity between this and that animal.

Supplementary Question

Please elaborate on your last statement and generally expound on what you are saying.

Answer:

My contention is that intelligence in all creatures vary. For instance the cat family i.e. leopards, cheetahs and tiger have been given a lot of intelligence by God unlike other animals. The cat family creatures i.e. leopards, are equipped mentally and are able to apply quite some recognisable reason.

Supplementary Question

How is this applied?

Answer:

A leopard for instance knows how to utilise its reason to catch its prey for food. To do this, a leopard using its power of reason goes to, for instance where other animals such as buffaloes go to drink water. Here the leopard urinates on one side of the pond and hides on the other side where it has calculated to be most likely escape point. When the prey comes and smells the urine, they assume the leopard is there and run in the opposite direction in which the leopard is hiding. Consequently the leopard strikes and quickly kills one. This depicts a lot of intelligence on the part of the leopard. As it is quite obvious that the leopard uses this trick frequently, then lack of intelligence on other animals is recorded because they do not seem to master the trick.

Supplementary Question

What is the man's position?

Answer:

Man is over and above them all. He not only knows how to handle them but also how to take cover from the dangerous ones, through use of brain only. This also explains why man has been able to make rational decisions and judgements that has made his life more comfortable and enjoyable. Man is indeed so creative such that he is the only animal that dresses and besides he has been able to advance even technically utilising other material substances available on the earth.

QUESTION(S) ON DEATH

1. Is there any connection between life and death?
Justify your position.
2. Why do you think that death has to occur?

MWANIKI MAKINDU**Answer:**

Life and death are connected. According to what I know the idea of life implies the idea of death and vice-versa.

Supplementary Question

What do you mean by that?

Answer:

What I mean is that one has either to be living or to be dead. However, the connection is seen in that, if a Mr. Kamau for instance died today, he would not be forgotten

but instead would be remembered as if he was still living because a newly born offspring comes to survive him, even though he is physically absent. Two, the property that a diseased leaves behind is a continuous reminder of him/her. Some properties last for millions and millions of years.

Supplementary Question

Do you believe in resurrection?

Answer:

A dead man can never resurrect physically from death. The only form of resurrection that I can think of is only spiritual i.e. when a person dies and another young person is named after him. This child resurrects the person spiritually. This explains why our people experienced a lot of pain if a man died without having married and given birth to children as in so doing he would have lost the seed of "spiritual presence". According to Makindu "The Gikuyu people used to pray God that they get back the "same" person in an event of somebody's death. This would happen in the name of newly born child being named after the dead. The idea of being resurrected spiritually used to be given much weight if the child concerned behaved and acted like the departed one.

MWANGI WANGU (ON DEATH)

1. **Answer:**

Death surfaces and tells life that I have come and must go with you. Life is very resistant but death is the strongest and always prevail and overpowers life.

Supplementary Question

How does this occur?

Answer:

As I have mentioned, death is very strong and comes like a charging flood. It blocks all the escape routes for life leaving it in a fix.

Supplementary Question

But how are they connected?

Answer:

Both life and death are connected. One, they both originate from God and it is his wish that they occur. Secondly, they are realities that we experience in such a manner that today I am living, tomorrow I will be dead.

Besides, we should realize that there is a very close bond between them in that they interact at the point of shifting from one form of existence to the other - life to death.

2. **Answer:**

It is God's will that death occurs and we have nothing to complain about. In fact I wonder whether every body being born could fit in this world if death did not occur. Death as such must be the regulating factor here on earth.

JOEL RUKENYA (ON DEATH)

1. **Answer:**

Death and life are one and the same even though they appear

to be two different things.

Supplementary Question

Can you please elaborate on what you are saying?

Answer:

Yes. As you are aware, there is death and there is life. These two are however, not distinct from each other as such. Death is a continuation of life and that is why every living being has to die.

Supplementary Question

Should people fear death as they appear to?

Answer:

Death is not bad as we view it. It is actually another stage of life or continuation of the same in another form for that matter. What I think is that people do not fear death but are uncertain as to why it has to occur and what happens after life.

2. On the question as to why death has to occur, Rukenya had this to say.

Answer:

I do not like to discuss death so much. Among the Kikuyu we say, "mention a snake and it will appear". Nevertheless, I feel that death is vital because it replaces the old and exhausted with the young, fresh and energetic, here on earth.

Supplementary Question

If your position is that death comes to harvest the old and tired leaving only the young, then it is not acceptable because from our experience even children die. Please elaborate.

Answer:

Well, the youthful, including small babies die. This happens because it is the wish of God, mainly it happens as a way of regulating and ensuring that those left behind are the only ones nature can take care of comfortably.

KABIA JOSEPH (ON DEATH)

Made a general comment only as he was not willing to be asked questions on this subject.

Kabia says that "no matter what or how much effort a man puts to check death from occurring, it will always occur".

According to him, "God has invisible Soldiers who he delegates the job of taking someone's life, and they never fail as they do their job without giving prior warning and in any case no one knows how to tackle these invisibles". Kabia argued that these are God's "askaris" and they are not like the chiefs or the D.C.s who can be bribed.

Kabia says that it is God alone that gives and takes away life. As such, if some other person was to succeed in the exercise of checking death then it could also imply that he also has knowledge of how to bring life. This would

however, be impossible as it would be assuming powers of God who has no equivalence.

QUESTION(S) ON DREAM

1. What is the fundamental significance of dream, and do you think human beings could have done without them?

SOLOMON MURIU

Answer:

Dream is a component of life system and that is why one dreams only when he is alive and never in death.

Supplementary Question

Could there be a person who lived and never dreamt?

Answer:

No. As I have stated, people will always dream because the nature of a living man is that he must dream. As such, one cannot escape dreams as it is his inner nature and in any case his life system is incomplete without it just like it cannot operate without the intestines or kidneys.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (ON DREAMS)

1. **Answer:**

Our nature as human beings is such that we must dream. However, dreams occur only when our minds resort to sub-consciousness and this happens normally when we retire to bed. A dream can however occur when one's mind is expected to be active i.e. when one is seated in his office or when he is walking around.

Supplementary Question

How does this happen?

Answer:

This may happen when one gets tired and can no longer concentrate on his activities, such that the mind is not alert hence leaving room for dream to occur in this sub-conscious state of mind.

2. **Answer:**

Well, I hate and do not like discussing dreams because I find them deceptive. For instance, there is this tendency in dreams to bring back to our memory the pictures of the dead which can be very hurting. Besides, dreams tend to give us some hopes i.e. utopian ones that are not realisable.

Supplementary Question

Is that a sufficient reason for you to dismiss dream?

Answer:

Well, I strongly believe that it is the dream which is the vehicle of death and therefore I feel that talking about dreams should be avoided as one might be inviting his death.

JOEL RUKENYA (ON DREAMS)

1. **Answer:**

Dreams originate from the thought system of a man. Some dreams are good while others are bad. The good ones have their bases on God while the latter emanate from satan.

2. **Answer:**

A human creation cannot do without dreaming because, dreams

form a part of his nature and in any case, dreams form or constitute one of the diverse ways in which God communicate with his human creations.

KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI (ON DREAMS)

1. **Answer:**

Dreams come from God and anything from him can never be bad. Dreams are inevitable in a life of a man as it is the will of God that man dreams.

Supplementary Question

How is this? Please elaborate.

Answer:

As you may be aware, man looks the way he looks and behaves like he does as this is his nature as derived from his creator. Equally, therefore dreams are part of his inner nature as implanted in him by God.

Supplementary Question

What could be the function or significance of a dream in man?

Answer:

Dream is important and fundamental in man in that it is, in a way a source of knowledge, and also a way of life such that without it, man's existence cannot be complete.

QUESTION(S) ON UNIVERSE/CREATION

1. Apart from physical world that we are in constant contact

with, do you think that there could be another or other worlds, similar to it? Give a justification for your answer.

N.B.

As has been the procedure let us now look at the responses from the various sages interviewed.

SOLOMON MURIU - ON UNIVERSE

1. **Answer:**

The universe is not only one. There could be another world just like this one that we live in. It could be existing but the problem is seen in that the experienced or real knowledge of the same may be absent in our minds. It is difficult to dismiss the idea of existence of another/other universe(s) because there is for instance, the experience of people crossing the large seas and coming across other vast lands i.e. continents, inhabited by people - This experience may explain the likelihood of existence of another or multiple universe.

Supplementary Question

Do you think a time will come when man will have the necessary tools to enable him confirm the existence of another universe? Say what you think.

Answer:

I think that man may never be able to confirm that there could be another/other worlds, below or above us in the area beyond the skies. Basically this is the case because of man's limited nature. The limitation is such that man

can never know much about things or issues lying beyond his immediate area of his immediate experience. In any case, how could he know for certainty about other worlds when he does not even fully comprehend his immediate environment? God alone, unlike man is the only one who has the knowledge in complete form, and of everything as he is not limited in any way.

NORMAN GATHAKARI WAIKAHU (ON UNIVERSE)

Answer:

I believe that it is only the scientific who can tell us whether there is one or multiple worlds.

Supplementary Question

Why is this the case?

Even though the scientists themselves might be successful, they are at least better equipped than myself to engage in such exercise. However, the fact that I cannot for sure tell whether there is only one or multiple worlds does not mean that I should dispel the idea or possibility of other worlds. The handicap in man is that although God gave him a broad mind, he still made a limitation on him such that he cannot do or know all that which God himself can or know. This is why we may never get some answers to some problems.

MWANGI WANGU (ON UNIVERSE)

1. Answer:

It is only God the creator who knows whether one or multiple worlds exist. God is so sophisticated and the fact

that we are just mere creations of God means that, there are some things connected with God that we may never know, such as this question of whether one or many worlds exist.

Supplementary Question

Do you have any further comments to make in this connection?

Answer:

Yes. I strongly believe that there is ordinary knowledge i.e. that only known to man, and super knowledge - i.e. knowledge that could only be existing in God's mind. As such and with this kind of division, there are some things that we shall never know no matter how much effort we put in. For instance, the knowledge of whether one or many worlds exist may be difficult as this may be special category of knowledge that an ordinary creation may never comprehend, as accomplishing this may be coming close to knowing the nature of God Himself.

KABIA JOSEPH KATHIRI (ON UNIVERSE)

1. Answer:

God is the sole creator of the universe as it is or as we see it. God created one universe and therefore there cannot be another one.

Supplementary Question

What explanation can you advance for that?

Answer:

God could not have created another universe because He

created a universe that could accommodate everything he had in mind. Reasonably, that is why there are diverse and countless things in the universe i.e. trees, animals, seas, rivers, mountains, valleys, stars, moon etc.

OBSERVATIONS MADE

Generally, the noted are the views and responses that I recorded from the named sages who I interviewed in the course of my field research exercise. This field research exercise, as it has been made clear, was carried out through use of a prepared questionnaire which covered various subjects and therefore one that has was broad based.

Well, it is not my intention to analyse these views and responses recorded from the sages as I would rather leave this work to the individual readers who may even classify and categorise the sages accordingly. However, one point that should be clear in our minds is that these men I interviewed are all wise men (sages) of whom some may even qualify to be placed in the category of philosophical sages while others in the category of cultural sages.

Without going into so much details as I have indicated that it is my wish to let the readers gauge the respondents, I would, if asked, group sages, Solomon Muriu, Norman Gathakari Waikahu, Samuel Mwaniki Makindu and may be Mwangi Wangu as the wise men who depicted a lot of independent thinking and who can easily qualify to be the philosophic sages. These four have great insight and are good free thinkers. Their answers are not a repetition of the folk beliefs held in the society but are an attempt at a clear well considered reasoning.

Further, Kabia Joseph Kathiri, Joel Rukenya and to a lesser extent Kimongo wa Karinga, can be said to constitute a

category of cultural or folk sages. This is so because, deriving from the responses recorded from them, their reasoning seem to be deeply coloured with the folk beliefs i.e. religious beliefs of the surrounding or borrowed culture. For instance when Kabia Joseph Kathiri argues that "man is superior because he controls and tames animals and that death is the secret invisible God's soldier."

Well, our task in this chapter was to find out whether in traditional African society we had or still there are some wise men and women who are capable of engaging in a philosophic dialogue, or not.

From the results recorded in the field research exercise, one will realise that some light has been shed on this problem. The findings show that, we have some wise men and women who are very independent in thought and who are not prepared to take things for granted without rationalising them.

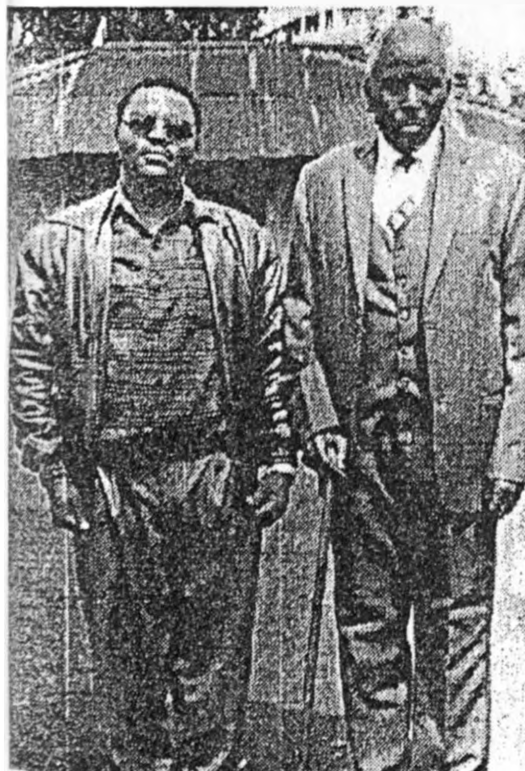
Below are the photographs of some of the informants who I encountered in the field. Some qualify to be recognised as philosophical sages such as Norman G. Waikahu, Samuel Makindu and Mwangi Wangu.



NORMAN W. WAIKAHU
FORMER SENIOR CHIEF)



SAMUEL MAKINDU (right)
with researcher



MWANGI WANGU (left)
with researcher



JOEL RUKENYA (right)
with researcher

KNOWLEDGE COMES BUT WISDOM LINGERS
Lord Alfred Tennyson - English Poet (1809-1892)

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