

# THE DECONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH IN THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY METHOD AND TAXINOMY OF GRÉGOIRE BIYOGO

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This text deals with the method followed by Grégoire Biyogo in writing his history of African philosophy in four books. This great work presents itself as a re-construction of the history of African philosophy through a historiography forged from sharp historical research concerning the origin and the beginning of philosophy. The aim here is to examine the way in which a historian of African philosophy writes the history of this discipline and cuts it down into different historical periods.

Born in Oyem, Gabon, and trained at Libreville University in philosophy and letters, Biyogo arrived in Paris in 1984 and entered the University of Paris IV. He obtained a DEA of Letters in June 1985, then a DEA in philosophy in June 1986, with a degree in Science Po in June 1990, and a PhD in theory and epistemology of human sciences in four volumes at the Sorbonne. He currently teaches in doctoral schools of African and French universities. Dr. G. Biyogo is one of the most prolific philosophers of our time. He has more than forty published books and numerous scientific articles. An epistemologist, Egyptologist, poet, political scientist and historian of philosophy, his four volumes on the history of African philosophy constitute a veritable mine of universal philosophical knowledge. He is among the best specialists of Jacques Derrida, the deconstructive philosopher on whom he wrote a book entitled: *Adieu à Jacques Derrida*<sup>1</sup>.

Biyogo admits<sup>2</sup> having had five "maîtres à penser": Tsira Ndong Ndoutoume (African scholar Ekang connoisseur of Mvett), Cheikh Anta Diop (pioneer of historiography and African

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<sup>1</sup> Biyogo, Grégoire (2005). *Adieu à Jacques Derrida. Enjeux et perspectives de la déconstruction*. Paris, l'Harmattan.

<sup>2</sup> During our long electronic conversations about his philosophical approach, his historiography and his knowledge of ancient Egypt, he has repeatedly confessed how his five masters taught him to deconstruct the truths received, based on outdated prejudices or justifications.

Antiquities, and theoretician of the kinship of the ancient Egyptian and Negro African languages, in this case Wolof), Karl Popper (epistemologist and father of falsification), Richard Rorty (master of irony born of difference and neo-pragmatism<sup>3</sup>), and Jacques Derrida, his favorite teacher, initiator of grammatology and the thought of difference. The discerning reader finds the impact of his five masters through the four volumes of his history of African philosophy.

The philosopher Auguste Makaya says of him and his work: "We had known of him the Egyptologist, the theoretician and the poet, the mvetologue<sup>4</sup>, the man of theater, the philosopher and the historian of philosophy, the novelist, the renowned speaker, the great prefacer, the methodologist. Here we discover the historian, and certainly the political scientist. It must be said bluntly: Gregory Biyogo is our Jacques Attali, with one difference: Biyogo does not (still) belong to any chapel, and this neutrality which singularises it fundamentally confers on his work a revival of objectivity and serenity. Nothing distracts him from his attachment to scientificity, historicity, and the limpidity of demonstration. Only scientificity is the great epistemological and methodological battle of his work.<sup>5</sup>"

By studying his four books on the history of African philosophy, the researcher discovers a limpid philosophical writing with a constant and scientific search for historical truth and its profound meaning. The erudition of the author, its depth, the clarity and the rigor of its language, the systematic application of its grid of reading and rereading of ancient, modern and contemporary philosophical texts, as well as the triggering of an over-dependence of theoretical reason and practical reason in the movement of the mind, gives its text the form of a dynamic construction of African philosophy. His objective and critical view of philosophy is gradually

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<sup>3</sup> Van Den Bosshe, Marc (1990). *Ironie et solidarité. Une introduction au pragmatisme de Richard Rorty*. L'Harmattan.

<sup>4</sup> See in Gregory Biyogo (2002). Encyclopedia of Mvett. Volume 1: Upper Nile in Central Africa. Menaibuc. "The musical and poetic dream of the Fang Anciens ...", Biyogo does not make a mystery of a strong epistemological step, the Mvettologie, the crucible of the great reform of the world finally returned to the worship atonien, devoted to the light, to the pure knowledge. This honorable goal may sometimes be difficult to access, interdisciplinarity, neologisms, complexity and structuring of the text playing as an asset on the substance but perhaps not on the form. "Http://ntoutoume.unblog.fr/about-about-gabon/.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.courrierdesafriques.net/2016/06/portrait-dun-nouveau-savant-africain-dorigine-gabonaise-le-shemsu-maat-gregoire-biyogo-continueur-du-savant-africain-cheikh-anta-diop>

transformed into a rewriting of the history of universal philosophy which finds its scientific justification in the necessity, even the urgency, of a profound and radical questioning of the classical thesis or the Eurocentric myth of the Hellenistic origin of philosophy.

Let's start with a brief presentation of the structure of his work, from Book I to Book IV, before moving on to the formulation and treatment of the question that is at the center of our inquiry, namely the method followed by Biyogo and its taxonomy in writing the history of African philosophy. We will end up in this methodological investigation with the presentation of the taxonomy of the history of African philosophy formulated from this approach. Our conclusion will consist of some remarks on his taxonomy and historiography of African philosophy.

### **I. Structure Of The History Of The African Philosophy Of Biyogo**

The Book I of the History of African Philosophy by Gregory Biyogo under the title of *The Egyptian Cradle of Philosophy* has three parts. The first part deals with the methodological and theoretical elements of his history of African philosophy, such as the methodological precautions of the history of philosophy, the problem of philosophy's "origins and clarifying this interest from that of the Hellenizing Emile Bréhier.

The second part of Book I carries the Egyptian cradle of philosophy. Biyogo presents the testimony of the first Greek thinkers and the attestation of the Egyptian beaker of philosophy and science, with historical documentation in support. he then briefly presents the texts of Egyptian philosophy with their schools. Finally, he addresses the question of the Nubian origin of Egyptian philosophy.

In the third part, Biyogo argues against the interest of the question of the origin of philosophy by African philosophers. He provides answers to Eboussi-Boulaga and other African

philosophers who reject the thesis of the Egyptian cradle of philosophy, before analyzing modern African philosophers' discussions of the theory. Masterfully exposing the Egyptian-Nubian school, Biyogo shows his rigorous knowledge of the historical facts about the Egyptian origin of philosophy and science.

The conclusion of Book I is devoted to the difference between the beginning and the origin of philosophy. The author calls this distinction "the argument of the semantic and ontological difference of beginning and origin<sup>6</sup>." We will return to this question when we examine his philosophical method. For the moment, we limit ourselves to the presentation of the structure of his work to allow the reader to follow our summary concerning his methodology. Let's turn now to the presentation of the structure of Book II.

Book II of the History of Biyogo's African Philosophy is divided into three parts. In his Foreword, the author emphasizes the methodological importance of the use of the "I" on the agenda of the elaboration of a history of philosophy by a subject at once remote, ironic, self-distant and attached to the deconstructive reading. This is not the hateful self of Pascal, but rather the I attached to the tradition of Nietzsche, Derrida and Rorty<sup>7</sup>. The author is constantly referring to Derrida and Rorty in his critical account of the history of African philosophy.

The first part of Book II deals with the "Birth of Modern African Philosophy: Objects and Challenges", in three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to "The Origins of the Modern and Contemporary African Philosophical Renaissance: New Negro, Negritude and Negro Art. The second chapter presents the "Existing Synthesis Works on African Philosophy. While the third chapter exposes "The Horizons of Modern African Philosophy".

The second part, under the title "Clarification, Fields and Issues of African Philosophy", includes five chapters devoted to the clarification of the following areas and issues: the "Philosophy Notion" in the first chapter. The domain of the "Reasoned Corpus of Modern and Contemporary African Philosophy," in the second chapter. The challenge of the "Necessity of the

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<sup>6</sup> Livre I, p. 201.

<sup>7</sup> Livre II, p.10.

elaboration of a history of African philosophy", in the third chapter. The challenge of the "Periodicity of African Philosophy", the fourth chapter. And the problematic of the "History of an endless paradox", in the fifth chapter. The third part examines the definitions and uses of African philosophy in two chapters. The "Definitions of the concept of African philosophy", in the first chapter. And "The crisis of philosophy and the stuttering of history", in the second chapter.

In Book III of the History of African Philosophy, Biyogo examines "Currents of thought and synthesis books". As a logical continuation of Book II, Book III consists of two parts followed by a post-scriptum devoted to Sheik Anta Diop, which the author considers as the inaugural figure of modernity in modern African philosophy and science, and a general bibliography.

In the first part, under the main title of: "The main currents of thought of African philosophy", the author examines in turn the ethnophilosophy of Tempels and Kagame, as well as the ontological current, the refutation of Tempelsianism by Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, what he calls the destruction of ethnophilosophy by Marcien Towa and Paulin Hountondji and finally criticism of the critique of ethnophilosophy.

In the second part, which consists of five chapters, the author presents the great syntheses of modern African philosophy and the birth of modernity. The first chapter is devoted to presenting the arguments of Paulin Hountondji under the title: On Paulin Hountondji's "African Philosophy"<sup>8</sup> and the Destruction of Ethnophilosophy (1976). In the second chapter, Biyogo presents the ferocious critique of europhilosophy by Pathé Diagne<sup>9</sup>. In the third chapter, he exposes the re-elaboration of the Marxist critique of African philosophy conducted by Amady Aly Dieng<sup>10</sup> in 1983. The fourth chapter is a presentation of a book by Ngoma-Binda<sup>11</sup> containing the milestones of a history of African philosophy. The fifth and last chapter of Book

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<sup>8</sup> Hountondji, J. Paulin (1976). *Sur « la philosophie africaine »*. Paris : Maspéro.

<sup>9</sup> Diagne, Pathé (1981).

<sup>10</sup> Dieng, A. A mady (1983).

<sup>11</sup> Ngoma-Binda, E. (1994).

III is a general synthesis of the birth of modernity in African philosophy. We will address this question of the modernity of African philosophy as we examine Biyogo's approach to constructing his historical narrative.

Book IV contains fourteen chapters, three in the first part and eleven in the second part. The first part is entitled *The Great Thoughts of Postmodernity and Neo-Pragmatism*. In the first chapter, Biyogo proceeds to a succinct presentation of the philosophy of the crossing of J.-G. Bidima. In the second chapter, he presents the postmodern current of Burahima Ouattara, texts in support. In the third chapter, he subjects African philosophy to the test of the philosophy of the return: between destruction and neo-pragmatism. In this chapter, we find valuable elements of his approach to philosophy, as well as a synthesis of the three postmodern African philosophies: the philosophy of the Bidima crossing, the philosophy of Ouattara's otherness and the philosophy of Biyogo's return. The conclusion of this first part of the last book of the quartet in the history of African philosophy is entitled: *The African Philosophy to the test of the Ironist, Deconstructivist and Coming Back (du revenir) paradigms*<sup>12</sup>.

The second and last part of Book IV deals with re-readings of African thought. In the first chapter, the author proceeds to the re-evaluation of the moment of Negritude and lays solid epistemological foundations for criticism of the critique of negritude. In the second chapter, he presents the Orphic philosophy of Negritude. In the third chapter, he exposes the obscurity of the Enlightenment in the West against the slave trade. Then he returns to African philosophy in the face of the Marxist current in the fourth chapter, before addressing critical theory in African philosophy in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter, Biyogo presents the African philosophy of science, then in the seventh chapter, the pragmatist current of Afro-American philosophers, in the eighth chapter, neo-pragmatism and diopism, in the ninth chapter, the current of political philosophy, in the tenth chapter the questioning of traditions, and the eleventh and last chapter,

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<sup>12</sup> Livre IV, p. 187. *La philosophie africaine à l'épreuve des paradigmes ironiste, déconstructiviste et du revenir. (African philosophy under the paradigms of ironist, deconstructivist and coming back or re-venir.)*

the Heideggerian rereading of the failure of Tempelsianism. This is a review of Tempels as if to say, we can not philosophize in Africa since 1945 without mentioning Placide Tempels. And yet, the practice of philosophy exists in this old continent and centuries before the publication of Bantu philosophy. Leaving aside the debate on the Bantu philosophy of baluba shakandi<sup>13</sup>, let us continue our investigation of the methodology of writing the history of Gregory Biyogo's philosophy.

In his philosophical quartet, the author proceeds to the elaboration of what he calls "the first<sup>14</sup> history of African philosophy, examining the thinking of his philosophers and presenting the controversies, the main currents that brought problematic displacements. and themes, and which have contributed more to renew its landscape<sup>15</sup>. "The central question of his research is that of the origin of Western philosophy. To deal with this question, he begins by going through the texts of the great historians of Western philosophy such as Diogenes Laertius and Emile Bréhier. It was by following him attentively in his reading and his rereading of the partisans of the theory of the Hellenistic origin of philosophy that we surprised him by using a methodological tool appropriate to the dismantling and reassembly of philosophical texts from their historical and scientific foundations. It is this philosophical method of Biyogo that constitutes the main object of this work.

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<sup>13</sup> Placide Tempels led his anthropological research to discover the deep thought of the Bantu Baluda shakandi of Katanga, Kamina, and not Baluba Kasai as claimed by Biyogo in his book.

<sup>14</sup> Biyogo's work is not at all the first story of African philosophy. Because before him, four philosophers of the University of Congo Kinshasa wrote on the history of African philosophy: A. De Smet with Nkombe Oleko, Ngoma Binda and Jean Kinyongo Jeki. There is more. In 2002, three years before the writing of Biyogo's book, Barry Hallen published a book entitled *A Short History of African Philosophy* at Indiana University Press. The first chapter of this book is entitled *The Historical Perspective*. While the ninth and final chapter, entitled *Histories, Athologies, Introduction to African Philosophy, Journals, and Web Sites*, contains numerous bibliographical references to the history of African philosophy. Among these indications is the very first comprehensive and detailed history of African philosophy written by Kenyan philosopher DA Masolo under the title: *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, in 1994. Long before Masolo, Tsenay Serequeberhan wrote a good book of *History of African Philosophy* under the title *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings* (1991). Professor Alfonse Josef Smet is undoubtedly the very first historian and bibliographer of African philosophy. He has written on the subject since 1974. He is perhaps the Diogenes Laerce of African philosophy, while Professor Biyogo is our Emile Bréhier or our Frederck Copleston, this illustrious historian of philosophy in the British tradition. Biyogo's work is undoubtedly the first work of methodical reconstruction of the history of African philosophy in the 21st century.

<sup>15</sup> Livre IV, p. 193.

## **II. The Deconstructivist Method Of The Neo-Pragmatic Return In The History Of African Philosophy**

Very methodical, Biyogo reads and re-reads the classical texts of the history of philosophy and the theoretical productions of African philosophy through the grid of "the neo-pragmatic revenir." What does this technical expression mean according to our philosopher? Answering this question is the main objective of this research on the first post-modernist reading of African philosophical writings. Biyogo applies this new reading through four books. Each of his books is like a phase of his reading. It is like quartet singing the marvelous melody of African philosophy composed by a true Maestro of the rhythm of African philosophical reason, nourished by his historical consciousness. It is in this sense that we speak of his quartet. The main objective of his research is "the radical deconstruction of the Western philosophical tradition"<sup>16</sup> which addresses the central question of any serious and scientific history of philosophy, the question of its origin. It proceeds to a real deconstruction of the foundation of Western historiography of philosophy to develop a new historiography of philosophy based on historical data. His method of writing the history of African philosophy in four volumes led him to lay the foundations of his de-constructivist and neo-pragmatic historiography.

### **1. The neo-pragmatic return (revenir) of Grégoire biyogo**

Our philosopher introduces his reading grid of the history of African philosophy to Book I in these words:

"For my part, I mainly intend to present the major currents of thought, in a chronological order, by insisting on dissident thoughts, the different links that unite or separate them. I intend to dwell on the authors who have deployed a philosophy whose readability is

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<sup>16</sup> Livre 4, p.191

attested. The method will be deconstructive and neo-pragmatic and classificatory<sup>17</sup>. Several questions internal to the discipline are to be clarified<sup>18</sup> ...”

Reading this paragraph leads us to seek a better understanding of the “deconstructivist and neo-pragmatist” method. We will see later how the author tries to resort to classification in his readings and re-readings of African philosophical texts. This technical effort is based on more or less well-defined taxonomic criteria. We will dwell on its taxonomy when we approach its historiography, that is to say, the way the author writes his history of African philosophy, the different periods he distinguishes through this turbulent history of African reflection on the whole of reality in order to elucidate the deep meaning and the conditions of possibility of its historical deployment.

To better understand the main articulations of his approach, we will go through the whole of the third chapter of the first part of Book IV<sup>19</sup>. Let us remember that the first part of Book IV is entitled “The Great Thoughts of Postmodernity and Neo-Pragmatism”. While the third chapter that comes after the first, devoted to Bidima and the philosophy of the crossing, and the second that deals with the postmodern current of Burahima Ouatarara, bears the revealing title of: “The African Philosophy to the Test of Ironist Pragmatism and Revenue.”

Although placed in the last volume of his publication, this chapter constitutes the backdrop of his entire work. It is in this chapter that we find the key concepts of our historian's approach to African philosophy, as well as the synthesis of the three postmodern African philosophies, the philosophies of crossing, alterity, and coming back<sup>20</sup>. It is for this reason that

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<sup>17</sup> It is us who emphasize in bold the key words of his grid of reading and writing of the history of the African philosophy.

<sup>18</sup> Biyogo, G. (2006). *Histoire de la philosophie africaine*. Livre I, p. 31 (It's us who write in bold).

<sup>19</sup> Livre IV, p. 39

<sup>20</sup> Livre IV, p. 69

we begin our technical examination with a careful study of this chapter entirely devoted to its method. We will go almost step by step to better understand its main conceptual tools.

## 2. De-construction and re-coming<sup>21</sup>

De-construction and re-coming, such are the two basic concepts, better the two pillars, of his approach to the history of African philosophy, or even his rereading of the history of philosophy. Because through the four books of his history of African philosophy, the author often reviews the history of ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary philosophy, insisting on the question of its origin that he takes care to distinguish from that of its beginning<sup>22</sup>. He does not hesitate to engage in a dialogue with the most famous historians of Western philosophy<sup>23</sup> to pose the problem of the origin of philosophy from their own historical discoveries. In doing so, he will approach the history of philosophy in the light of the proven historical data concerning the Egyptian cradle of Greek philosophy. The scientific foundation of this discovery allows him to relate the history of modern and contemporary African philosophy to its true origin. He thus succeeds in laying epistemological foundations for the reconstruction of the history of African philosophy since his true origins discovered by three other African philosophers, Anta Diop<sup>24</sup>, Bilolo<sup>25</sup> and Obenga<sup>26</sup>. Biyogo discusses the history of African philosophy in the historical

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<sup>21</sup> This is the first topic addressed in Chapter 3 of the first part of Book IV. The author writes this subject as follows in his book: 1. The method (deconstruction and coming back or revenir in french). We have deleted the parentheses in our synthesis and boldly write the title of this section which contains the methodological tools of writing the postmodern history of African philosophy into four books.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, according to Biyogo, the question concerning the origin of philosophy is not to be confused with that of its beginning.

<sup>23</sup> Diogène Laëce, Livre I, p. 20, 80; Charles Werner, Livre I, p.81;Émile Bréhier, Livre I p. 17, 48, 50, 51; Christian Delacampagne, Livre I, p. 29, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Anta Diop, Cheik (1976). *Existe-t-il une philosophie africaine?* In Séminaire sur la philosophie africaine, Addis-Abbeba, 15p, polyc.

<sup>25</sup> Bilolo, Mubaminge (1994). *Métaphysique pharaonique: IIIe millénaire av. J.-C.* prolégomènes et postulats majeurs Volume 4 de Académie de la pensée africaine (Series).: Pensée de l'Égypte et de la Nubie anciennes |Volume 4 de Académie de la pensée africaine-Academy of African thought & Centre d'études égyptologiques C.A. Diop de l'Institut africain d'études prospectives de Kinshasa, Section I. Editions Menaibuc.

<sup>26</sup> Obenga, Théophile (2005). *L'Égypte, la Grèce et l'école d'Alexandrie. Histoire interculturelle dans l'Antiquité. Aux sources égyptiennes de la philosophie grecque.* Khepera, L'Harmattan.

context of the negro-African civilization traumatized and disfigured by slave trade, colonialism and neocolonialism. He deconstructs it, dismantles it, breaks it up to better examine it, to explore it, to analyze it. Then he picks up the spare parts one by one, for the assemblies and thus goes back a more dynamic structure, re-writing a philosophical discourse more meaningful for his time, the time of postmodernity. He calls this approach "the re-venance", the "come back de-constructivist and neo-pragmatist".

**The fundamental principles and rules of this philosophical method unfold in three phases:**

- A. The phase of the de-construction of the history of philosophy in general and that of African philosophy in particular, with the description of its objects, its controversies, its multiple identities leading to the relativist reading of truth and philosophy herself. This phase leads the philosopher to the question of the inheritance of African philosophical thought still sparse, without firm taxonomy or corpus requiring the introduction of mutations and deep breaks in a dogmatic tradition to guide thinking towards horizons still unexplored.
  
- B. The phase of coming back, as an infinite movement of fluidity of thought, against the rigidity of classical concepts, and the illusion of a stable truth, exploring the indefinite horizon of truth, stretching it, rejecting the myth of its own exhaustion. It is a question of re-examining what has been said in African philosophy or African philosophy, thus giving the right to a critical return on fixed or supposedly stable traditions. The RE with the verb REVENIR invites a permanent examination of acquired knowledge, the infinite or continuous search for the truth.
  
- C. The phase of re-coming at once ironist and de-constructivist consists in dismantling all that is given as immutable in philosophy. The ironist re-comer ironically treats all so-called immutable, absolute, fixed truths. The reigning irony removes African philosophy, or even

any philosophical discourse, from any fixist and deterministic illusion<sup>27</sup>. The pragmatic coming back seeks new forms of solidarity through scientific activity, in the name of the agreement freely agreed, knowing that "no speech is true for all contexts nor superior to another<sup>28</sup>". The return is incessant questioning, dynamic analysis, mobile, between deconstruction and irony of the description or the self-creation of oneself<sup>29</sup>. We find here the disciple of the master of neo-liberal and pragmatic irony, Richard Rorty<sup>30</sup>.

The paradigm of re-coming is the key to postmodern writing of African philosophy. All the philosophical production of Biyogo is articulated through this approach. "The paradigm of the return intends to pulverize the vestiges of the authoritarian ruse of the indentitarist and tautological Logos of African philosophy. It appears as a spectographic thought in that the return is always destabilization of the stable, horizons towards the distant and moreover towards the unapproachable, aiming at the incompleteness, the incompleteness<sup>31</sup>. The return is subversive. The coming back is neo-skeptical on the strictly logical plane. It is a re-elaboration of the inventive and subversive analysis of possible new languages. It is an ever-moving thought, an incessant recommencement of philosophy. "The return brings a memory dreaming of the future, and questions intensely the legacies of the philosophy that speaks as Derrida says "what happens, what happens tomorrow.<sup>32</sup>" The philosophy of the coming back belies any irreversible conception of defeat, oblivion and movement. There is an incessant recommencement of philosophy.<sup>33</sup> The re-coming causes disruption of thought. In looking through the history of Biyogo's African philosophy, the attentive reader realizes how his theoretical approach causes

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<sup>27</sup> Livre IV, p. 43

<sup>28</sup> Livre IV, p. 42, Biyogo quoting Rorty.

<sup>29</sup> Livre IV, p.43

<sup>30</sup> RORTY, Richard (1993). *Contingence, ironie et solidarité*. Paris: A. Colin.

<sup>31</sup> Livre IV, p. 45

<sup>32</sup> Livre IV, p. 46. It is we who highlight the keywords of the method of the author.

<sup>33</sup> Livre IV, p. 46

upheavals in the history of universal philosophy from the introduction of his philosophical examination of the question of the origin and beginning of philosophy through the grid of historical criticism based on facts. Faithful to the principle of falsifiability<sup>34</sup>, it challenges any school truth that does not stand the test of the history of philosophy and science.

The return is given through his writing as an epistemology of the human sciences and history. He presents this epistemology under the name of "asymmetrical return". The theoretical development of this approach begins with the principle of abandoning the refuted hypotheses. For Biyogo, "the great revolutions of science involve an agreement to abandon refuted hypotheses and to solve problems in support of a science attentive to the asymmetrical representation of the universe."<sup>35</sup> The paradigm of the coming back responds to the age of science<sup>36</sup>. The re-coming is both post-modern and neo-pragmatic. Like these last two currents, the philosophy of the return puts into question the great theses produced in the history of philosophy in general and in the history of African philosophy. The coming back is a reinterpretation of the origin of philosophy, its beginning in the world and its development in Africa.

Let's examine the application of the grid of re-coming de-constructivist in the writing of the history of African philosophy in four books by Grégoire Biyogo. Let us concentrate on the first two books, while using some data from the paradigm in question in the other two books. Because Book I is a real construction site of the de-constructivist re-coming of Biyogo. While Book II is the foundation of the re-coming construction that continues in Books III and IV.

The ironist and neo-pragmatic comeback of Biyogo begins with deconstruction before going into the writing of the history of African philosophy by reconstructing its historical periods and its major currents through a few synthesis books. We plan to devote ourselves to a

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<sup>34</sup> Falsifiability, according to Karl Popper, can be defined in the following way: a statement is falsifiable "if the logic authorizes the existence of a statement or a series of statements of observation which are contradictory to it, it is to say, who would falsify it if they proved true " K.POPPER, quoted by A. CHALMERS (1987), dans *Qu'est-ce que la science ?*, Paris, La Découverte, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> Livre IV, p. 56-57

<sup>36</sup> Livre IV, p. 60-68

comprehensive review of all four books in a deeper exploration of Biyogo's de-constructivist historiography. Such a study goes well beyond the scope of this preliminary examination of its approach. We limit ourselves to Books I and II to highlight the two sides of the application of the postmodern approach to the history of African philosophy.

### **III. The Application Of The Neo-Pragmatic Coming Back Method In Book I**

#### **The De-Constructivist Treatment of The Problem**

##### **Origin and Beginning of Philosophy**

##### **Book I: The Egyptian Cradle of Philosophy**

Before moving forward in our quest for the application of Biyogo's method in the history of African philosophy, let us summarize once again the great articulations of his main work. His de-constructivist approach allows him to articulate the four books of his history of African philosophy in such a way that they together form a whole. The first book lays the methodological and theoretical foundations of an introduction to the history of ancient African philosophy, through a rigorous examination of the problem of the origin and beginning of philosophy<sup>37</sup>. This radical questioning leads to the deconstruction of the alienating thesis of the origin of philosophy. The second book deals with the history of modern and contemporary African philosophy. The third book presents the main currents with some African philosophical works. The fourth and final book deals with the most recent developments in African philosophy, through what the author calls "the birth of postmodern relativism and neo-pragmatism<sup>38</sup>".

All these four books together form a true re-constructive de-construction of the ancient, modern and contemporary history of African philosophy from an almost systematic dismantling of historical philosophical texts. It is from his disassembly that the author discovers the different historical moments of African philosophy, as well as these main currents. Let us remember that

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<sup>37</sup> Livre I, p.15.

<sup>38</sup> Livre I, p.16.

the first book consists of three parts, and begins with the author's dedications to Diogenes Laertius and Paulin J. Hountondji, a foreword and preliminaries. The first and second parts of this book each include three chapters. While the third part consists of four chapters.

It is interesting to note that the author dedicates his work to a former historian of philosophy, Diogenes Laertius, and to a fierce critic of African "ethno-philosophy," Paulin Hountondji, who took care to define philosophy as a set of philosophical texts written by Africans. The two references at the very beginning of his work constitute a sign of the movement of his investigation which begins with the dismantling of historical theories concerning the origin and the beginning of philosophy to pave the way for the reconstruction of the history of African philosophy based on proven historical facts. In his foreword, Biyogo begins by emphasizing the need to write a history of African philosophy, because, in his own words, "this discipline is first of all an introduction to philosophy, and in a certain way, an invitation to put philosophy and science together.<sup>39</sup>" Then he poses the problem of the "relocation" of the Egyptian cradle of philosophy. The history of philosophy constantly revisits the problem of the beginning of philosophy by constantly putting this beginning into question<sup>40</sup>. He thus introduces the need to question the classical argument of the Hellenistic origin of philosophy. Because this school position is not an immutable truth, infallible or falsifiable. « *L'histoire de la philosophie invite à revenir sans cesse à son origine, comme une tâche nécessaire, pour tenter, à bien regarder, de comprendre ce que philosopher veut dire en son commencement et pour espérer l'entendre dans l'histoire de ses multiples recommencements.*<sup>41</sup> » The historian of philosophy is thus preparing to subject the problem of origin and that of the beginning of philosophy to the sieve of historical criticism. This will be the first point of application of his de-construction of the history of

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<sup>39</sup> Livre I, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> Livre I, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Livre I, p.11.

philosophy as written by classical authors such as Émile Bréhier<sup>42</sup> or Frederick Copleston<sup>43</sup>. In his preliminaries, he returns to the problem of the beginning of philosophy after sketching the structure of his work<sup>44</sup>. He progressively advances the historical evidence concerning the Egyptian origin of philosophy<sup>45</sup>. It breaks the long silence maintained in the Western school on this taboo subject. Because we need a clear and precise answer to this crucial question. "To postpone the examination of this question any longer, to abandon it in indeterminacy, would leave an ambiguity that is far from being a detail, but a problem which would taint the very fate of this discipline, the whole its developments and orientations that would inevitably be felt in the way it deals with and resolves its questions, the choice of corpora, definitions ... <sup>46</sup>"

The very notion of philosophy compels the questioning of its origin and its historical beginning. For philosophy is not a closed, inaccessible wisdom, but rather an open wisdom, an unfinished quest, in the words of one of Biyogo's three masters, Karl Popper<sup>47</sup>. We must begin all writing and rewriting of a history of philosophy by the history of the origin and beginning of philosophy for a better understanding of its evolution and its revolutions, its progress and its regressions. For Biyogo, the history of African philosophy, like any other history, is at the center of the historical critique of its origin. He inaugurates the hour of listening to ancient philosophical texts about the history of this human discipline. "The history of philosophy, this patient, meticulous science, attached to the description of doctrines, currents of thought, and theories, listens to philosophical texts.<sup>48</sup>" The history of philosophy is essentially an initiation to

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<sup>42</sup> Bréhier, É. (1931, 1938, 1981). *Histoire de la philosophie*, 3 vols. Paris : PUF.

<sup>43</sup> Frederick Copleston, Jesuit, famous writer of the history of philosophy in English. In his *History of Philosophy*, Volume 1, Greece and Rome, this former professor of the history of philosophy at London University ignores the Egyptian origin of Greek philosophy.

<sup>44</sup> Livre I, p.15

<sup>45</sup> Livre I, p. 16-17

<sup>46</sup> Livre I, p.20

<sup>47</sup> Popper, Karl (1981). *La Quête inachevée*. Paris : Calman-Lévy. Cité par Biyogo, Livre 1, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Livre I, p. 22-23

philosophy<sup>49</sup>. By listening to philosophical texts about the origin of philosophy, we realize the need to go beyond traditional answers to this question and return to historical data. This is what Biyogo tries to accomplish in the first part of his first book devoted to methodological and theoretical elements. It engages in a systematic practice of radically questioning all the answers of the ideological nature concerning this question and thus opens the way to a philosophical and scientific writing of the history of philosophy. What are the difficulties inherent in developing a history of philosophy? This is the first question he explores in the first chapter. He begins by identifying the difficulty of choosing the material to be treated. Then the method to follow. He ends by choosing the presentation of the major currents of African philosophical thought, in a chronological order, by insisting on dissenting thoughts. It stops at the thought of the authors having deployed a philosophy whose readability is attested<sup>50</sup>.

From the first to the last chapter of his book, Biyogo remains faithful to his approach to the history of African philosophy, which he took care to define in these terms: “The method will be deconstructive and neo-pragmatic and classificatory”<sup>51</sup>. His enterprise of deconstructing the history of philosophy begins with the formulation of three internal questions that arises for all who undertake the writing of a history of philosophy, according to Émile Bréhier<sup>52</sup>:

1. What are the origins and what are the boundaries of philosophy?
2. To what extent does philosophical thought develop sufficiently independently to be the subject of a history distinct from that of other scientific disciplines?
3. Can we talk about a steady evolution or a progress of philosophy?

Biyogo chooses to answer the first question by deconstructing the classical answer concerning the origin and the beginning of philosophy. Because, to his knowledge, this problem forgotten

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<sup>49</sup> Livre I, p. 23

<sup>50</sup> Livre I, p. 31

<sup>51</sup> Livre I, p. 31

<sup>52</sup> Bréhier, Émile (1931, 1981, 1994). *Histoire de la philosophie*, 3 vol. Paris, PUF. Coll. «Quadrige» (7<sup>ème</sup> édition), Quoted by Biyogo, Grégoire, Livre I, p. 31-32.

throughout the history of philosophy is an old problem, long debated by historians of this discipline. The Hellenizing position of Émile Bréhier being largely outdated by the current historical knowledge, Biyogo proposes to return to it to try to formulate a response based on proven historical facts<sup>53</sup>. Biyogo thus proceeds to a real return of the reel. By his re-coming, he reformulates the question of origin and proposes to answer with solid historical facts.

At the first level of its historical re-coming, there is the testimony of early Greek thinkers that Egypt is the cradle of philosophy and science<sup>54</sup>. The author here confines himself to the depositions of the first Greek philosophers, who proudly presented themselves as pupils of the erudite priests of Egypt: Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras and Solon. Historical sources on the scientific and philosophical exchanges between ancient Egypt and Greece are still accessible. Biyogo is rigorous in his fact-finding mission, examining the doxographical<sup>55</sup> school of thought, to the Hellenistic and Roman period<sup>56</sup>, to other scholars of the history of philosophy<sup>57</sup> who have come to similar conclusions about the origins of philosophy. The careful examination of all these sources led Biyogo to the conclusion that most of the great Greek scientists and thinkers had re-energized in Egypt, bringing back the science of priests<sup>58</sup>.

Seven Greek thinkers are recognized by historians of philosophy as having followed their initiation to science and philosophy in Egypt. They are Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras of Samos,

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<sup>53</sup> Livres I, Première partie, Chapitre 3. De la position hellénisante d'Émile Bréhier à la clarification de l'intérêt de la question, p. 47-52. (Books 1, Part One, Chapter 3. From the Hellenistic position of Emile Bréhier to the clarification of the interest of the question, p. 47-52.)

<sup>54</sup> Livre I, p. 55

<sup>55</sup> Manetho, an Egyptian and Hellenistic priest who lived under Ptolemy II, considered the father of Egyptian historiography, wrote in Greek a monumental Egyptian history, Erasthosthenes, mathematician, astronomer and Greek philosopher would have collected a document in Greek language revealing a list of the Theban kings, Theophrastus, disciple and successor of Aristotle at Lycée, Galen (II 2nd century), author of a History of Philosophy.

<sup>56</sup> Archimedes, Euclid, Aristarchus of Samos, Hipparchus of Nicea, Ptolemy, Plutarch, Plotinus, Porphyry, Pythagore, Jamblichus, Proclus, Clement of Alexandria, Diodorus of Sicily, Apollonius of Tyana, Hécatée, all of these scholars have attested in their writings the existence of Egyptian philosophy.

<sup>57</sup> Diogenes Laertius, Alfred Weber, Emile Bréhier, Alberr Rivaud, Brice Parain, Francois Châtelet, Jean Michel Besnier, Christian Delacampagne, Lambros Couloubaristis, Jean-Paul Dumont.

<sup>58</sup> Livre I, p. 65.

Solon of Athens, Hippocrates, Democritus of Abdera and Articles, alias Plato and Eudoxus of Cnidus<sup>59</sup>. Biyogo testifies:

“In sum, the testimonies reported by the ancients, the Greek and Latin thinkers, the historians of philosophy, the Egyptologists are formal: Egypt gave birth to philosophy, to the geometrical, astronomical and medical sciences, that the Greek thinkers among them, Thales, Pythagoras, Solon, ... Hippocrates, Oenopides, Democritus, Eudoxes of Cnidus, and Planton ... have gathered during their journey in Egypt, with the teachings of the learned and philosophical priests.<sup>60</sup>”

At least fifteen Greek thinkers initiated in Egypt can be well established<sup>61</sup>, and the names of Greek thinkers who have visited Egypt have been well documented and are well known<sup>62</sup>. The historical facts concerning the origin of Greek philosophy are thus well established. Why do we persist in supporting the Hellenistic thesis of the origin of philosophy? Because it is thought that Egyptian thought was more religious and mystical than philosophical.

Biyogo dismantles this prejudice by presenting in the second chapter of the second part of Book I, the texts of Egyptian philosophy. Egyptologist by training, able to read the language of the ancient Egyptians, he translated in French the great philosophical currents of ancient Egypt and some concepts of Egyptian philosophy, while advancing solid arguments in favor of the existence of a philosophy in Egypt before the emergence of this discipline in Greece. Philosophy in Egypt was written according to five currents<sup>63</sup>. The currents of the philosophy of what is hidden, secret, *seschat* in Egyptian, not to be confused with what is inexplicable through the texts left to us by Egyptian scholars and priests, anticipate the great questions of modern ontology. Such schools examined, among other things, philosophy, astronomy and the concept of chaos,

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<sup>59</sup> Livre I, p.66-79

<sup>60</sup> Livre I, p.81

<sup>61</sup> Orpheus, Lycurgus the Spartan, Pythagoras, Solon of Athens, Museum, Democritus of Abdera, Melampus, Thales of Miletus, Plato, Dedal, Hippocrates, Eudoxes of Cnidus, Homer, Oenopis, Aristotle.

<sup>62</sup> Livre I, p.82-83

<sup>63</sup> Livre I, p.87

often through a helio-centric framework<sup>64</sup>. Biyogo does not stop at the inventory of Egyptian philosophical schools; he goes so far as to provide documentary evidence on the development of mathematics and science in ancient Egypt<sup>65</sup>, by examining the mathematical papyri now stored in various museums and archives and which prove unequivocally that Egyptian philosophers were exploring complex mathematical questions as early as 1991 BC<sup>66</sup>. Biyogo continues with his mission by then acknowledging the Egyptian propensity for scientific enquiry through astronomy, medicine (the science of embalming for example), human anatomy, chemistry and biology.

Solid arguments in favor of the existence of philosophy in Egypt before the emergence of Greek philosophy are advanced by Aristotle,<sup>67</sup> Isocrates<sup>68</sup>, Clement of Alexandria<sup>69</sup>, Mayanassis<sup>70</sup>. The Egyptians began to philosophize and practice the sciences before the Greeks, and initiated the latter into the love of wisdom and scientific research. Philosophical texts exist and constitute solid material evidence of the existence of thought in ancient Egypt.

Some key concepts of Egyptian philosophy from texts that are accessible today:

A. The first concept most studied is that of *maat*. It is the pivot of Egyptian thought. It is a concept of cosmological origin, before being ethical. “*Maat* is the essence of philosophy, the

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<sup>64</sup> For a detailed examination of these schools see Biyogo Livre I, p. 90, Bilolo, M. (1986). *Cosmothéologies philosophiques d'Héliopolis*, Essai de thématization et de systématisation, Kinshasa, Libreville, Munich, Publications Universitaires Africaines. Cité par Biyogo à la p. 91 du Livre I.

<sup>65</sup> Livre I, p. 92-93

<sup>66</sup> These include: The Mathematical Rhind Papyrus: British Museum #10,057, #10,058, The Muscov Papyrus: Puskin Museum #4676, The Papyrus Kahun: British Museum, Papyrus of Berlin: 6619 5C2, The Papyrus of Akhim: Cairo Museum #10,758, The Berlin Papyrus #6,619, The Reisner Papyrus: Boston Museum of Fine Arts #38, The Michigan Papyrus, The Rouleau de cuir of Egyptian mathematics

<sup>67</sup> Livre I, p. 96

<sup>68</sup> Livre I, p. 97

<sup>69</sup> Livre I, p. 97

<sup>70</sup> Livre I, p. 97

dynamic order that opens to the true ... It is the substance without which the world should plunge into chaos<sup>71</sup>.” *Maat* means both harmony and universal justice.

B. The second concept of the Egyptian philosophy retained by Biyogo is *isefet*. The principle of disorder, chaos, destruction that must be tamed, overcome. In fact, it was in response to *isefet*, embodied by floods that threatened to engulf the Nile, that scientists gave birth to geometry<sup>72</sup>. The concept of *isefet* is a distant ancestor of the concept of antithesis of the thesis that must be overcome by synthesis.

C. The third fundamental concept of the philosophy of ancient Egypt is the subject. “This concept refers to the movement of the eternal return, the eternal return of the One—divided to the infinite (heh).<sup>73</sup>” Here, we find the origin of the dialectic.

D. The fourth major concept of Egyptian philosophy is noun. This concept designates the ocean of the possible. “It is he who contains everything in the virtual state. He is the condition of all that is while he has neither origin nor end. It's the unconditioned. It is the principle of unconditionality and self-referentiality. The noun is the cause and the end of all beings.<sup>74</sup>” The noun is the ancestor of the concept of Being in philosophy.

E. The fifth concept is called *ankh*. This word means life, vitality, and more so the permanent invention of life. “All of Egypt has thus thought of life as the norm of existence.<sup>75</sup>” Is not this concept that we find at the center of African ontology? In this philosophical conception, there is

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<sup>71</sup> Livre I, p. 99

<sup>72</sup> Livre I, p. 100

<sup>73</sup> Livre I, p. 100

<sup>74</sup> Livre I, p. 100-101

<sup>75</sup> Livre I, p. 101

a pre-life (Cosmic Egypt), a life (Earthly Egypt) and an after-life (Heavenly Egypt and the Douat). For the ancient Egyptians, as for the Africans of yesterday and today, life is everywhere. “Everything is endowed with life: numbers, animate or inanimate beings. Everything is a celebration of life.<sup>76</sup>” This is the thought central of the Helio-politan philosophy through the Hymn to Aton of the priest Akhenaton<sup>77</sup>.

By carefully following the introduction of these few fundamental concepts of Egyptian philosophy, we are gradually entering into a well articulated conceptual universe. In this architectonic, all concepts find their ultimate meaning in life. We are not far from the vitalism discovered by Placide Tempels among the *baluba* sages of Katanga. “Egypt refuses death. It rejects death and magnifies the dialectical movement of life - of the spirit.<sup>78</sup>” This vitalistic conception of our cosmic, historical and trans-historical being is a trademark of African philosophy.

At this stage of our exploration of the history of African philosophy written by Professor Gregory Biyogo, let us retain the main thesis of Book I which he himself summarizes in these words:

“The beginning of philosophy is dated from School of Thebes, in the 3rd millennium BC, with the philosophy of mysteries, while the beginning of Greek philosophy is dated to the first thinkers of Asia Minor, especially in the 7th century BC, with Thales the Milesian and Pythagoras from Samos. Egyptian philosophy gave birth to Greek philosophy. This is today incontestable.<sup>79</sup>”

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<sup>76</sup> Livre I, p. 101

<sup>77</sup> Livre I, p. 101

<sup>78</sup> Livre I, p. 102

<sup>79</sup> Livre I, p. 105

This is the thesis that replaces that of the Hellenistic origin of philosophy demolished radically by historical evidence.

In the third chapter of Book I, the author examines the question of the origin of Egyptian philosophy. It draws on the research of Claude Sumner<sup>80</sup> in Ethiopian philosophy and the extensive research of Cheikh Anta Diop on the contribution of Ethiopia and Libya to the development of the pharaonic civilization<sup>81</sup>, concluding that “Ethiopia is the origin of moral philosophy, that the Egyptians will take again to elevate it to cosmological, metaphysical and geometric constructions.<sup>82</sup>” But the historical evidence gathered in this chapter concerning the Nubian origin of Egyptian philosophy does not resist the test of falsifiability. The question concerning the Nubian origin of Egyptian philosophy remains in this book. Concerning the problem of the Egyptian origin of Greek philosophy, George G.M. James provided irrefutable proof of this in his 1954 publication entitled *Stolen Legacy*<sup>83</sup>. Professor Biyogo is familiar with this book published in 1992 by First Africa World Press Editions. The researches of Cheik Anta Diop<sup>84</sup>, Bilolo Mubabinge<sup>85</sup> and Théophile Obenga<sup>86</sup> largely confirm the historicity of this thesis.

The third part of Book I deals with the questioning of the Egyptian origin of philosophy by African philosophers. The thesis of the Egyptian cradle of philosophy is thus put to the test of African philosophers whose main arguments can be summed up as follows: Fabien Eboussi-

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<sup>80</sup> Livre I, p. 105-113

<sup>81</sup> Livre I, p. 114

<sup>82</sup> Livre I, p. 113

<sup>83</sup> James, G. G. M. (1952). *Stolen Legacy. Greek Philosophy Is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy*. Published by Africa World Press, Inc., Treton, New Jersey in 1992. George Granville Monah James was born on November 9, 1893, died June 30, 1958. He was a graduate of Bachelor and a Masters degree at Durham University and obtained his Ph.D. Philosophy at Columbia University in New York. He taught logic and greek at Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina, before working as a professor at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. He died in 1956 after the publication of *Stolen Legacy*.

<sup>84</sup> Anta Diop, C. (1967, 1993) *Antériorité des civilisations nègres, mythes ou vérité historique ?* Presence Africaine : Paris.

<sup>85</sup> Bilolo, M. (1987, 2004). *Les cosmo-théologies philosophiques d'Héliopolis et d'Hermopolis. Essai de thématization et de systématisation*, AAT., Sect. I, vol. 2, Kinshasa-Munich; rééd., Munich-Paris.

<sup>86</sup> Obenga, T. (1990). *La Philosophie africaine de la période pharaonique 2780-330 avant notre ère*. L'Harmattan.

Boulaga rejects the allegation of the Egyptian cradle of philosophy. Because this thesis is irrelevant. The search for origin by projecting itself into the past is a ruinous movement, a loss of oneself, an illusory step. “The past prescribes nothing, determines nothing and saves nobody.<sup>87</sup>” Philosophy, itself, seems to delegitimize the relevance of the debate on the origin in favor of what it must consider as a moment determine: “The philosopher never begins, he always starts again.<sup>88</sup>”

To answer Eboussi, Biyogo introduces, in chapter two of Book I, the distinction between the origin and the beginning of philosophy. “The first notion - that of origin - presupposes an explanatory theory of a phenomenon and refers to the ancient times that gave birth to it, whereas the beginning refers to history, and thus requires the most possible explanation of the phenomenon.<sup>89</sup>” In other words, this is not a theoretical debate about the origin of philosophy, but the material historical evidence of the beginning of philosophy. It is therefore necessary to distinguish two levels of research. “First, the beginning of the historical adventure of philosophy. Secondly, the origin of this adventure itself, which is necessarily anterior to it<sup>90</sup>”. Biyogo provides solid historical evidence which shows that philosophy began historically in the third millennium BC in the sanctuary of Egypt<sup>91</sup>.

That philosophy was born in Egypt does not exclude that his adventure can begin again in many places. However, this apparition, according to Biyogo, is not an accident or a pure contingency. He then puts forward five types of arguments by historians of philosophy to explain the beginning of the philosophical adventure: the Marxist argument supporting the joint development of science, democracy and the economy (Greece, Europe, North America). North); the existentialist argument that the acute awareness of the lack of being a child of philosophy

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<sup>87</sup> Livre I, p. 124

<sup>88</sup> Livre I, p. 125

<sup>89</sup> Livre I, p. 127

<sup>90</sup> Livre I, p. 127

<sup>91</sup> Livre I, p.129.

(Black Africa and African-Americans); the pragmatist argument considering the practical necessity to solve concrete problems in a society and a specific context as creating the need for science and philosophy (Egypt and America); for the metaphysical argument the search for the inner truth and the Absolute, the Being is the basis of philosophy (India, China); and lastly, the argument specific to his philosophy of coming back, which maintains that survival in the face of destruction and the incessant need for adaptation to the revolutions of science—assumptions of irregularity and unpredictability—create philosophy<sup>92</sup>. In reality, philosophies, such as science, technology, technology, and religion, can be born of anything and any time. The birth and development of philosophical discourse are part of the history of humanity.

#### **IV. From De-construction to Building the History of African Philosophy in Book II**

After the deconstruction of the Hellenistic thesis of the origin of philosophy, Biyogo undertakes the construction of the history of African philosophy. He introduces the reader to modern and contemporary African philosophy, after the initiation to the ancient Egyptian philosophy in Book I. Book II is largely devoted to the initiation to the great schools of African philosophy. According to the documentation provided by Biyogo, African philosophy does not begin with the publication of the Placide Tempels booklet in 1945 in the Congo. Another opinion very widespread in the African and Africanist philosophical milieu, but which does not resist historical criticism. Moreover, Tempels himself never said that he is the initiator of African philosophy. He listened to the wise Bantu to know their deep thoughts about being and historical and cosmic existence. Like the wise Socrates who never wrote a book of his famous philosophy vaunted by his disciples, the wise Bantu never took the time to write their deep thoughts and all they thought day and night of their cosmos, their being and their situation in the world.

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<sup>92</sup> Livre I, p. 133-134

Our own field research in Katanga, while we were following the course of history<sup>93</sup> of African philosophy given by Professor Alfonse J. Smet<sup>94</sup>, at the Lumbumbashi University Campus from 1974 to 1979, demonstrated to us that Bantu philosophy of Tempels was first and foremost the Luba-shakandi conception of being and life. This is the deep wisdom of our elders. We find the same wisdom in the writings of Henry Odera Oruka (1944 -19995), this Kenyan philosopher (well known by Paulin Hountondji) who popularized the term "Sage<sup>95</sup> philosophy Project", a dialogue methodically engaged on issues of our existence with African sages who demonstrate their love of wisdom in their thinking, telling them and acting. The concept of being-force is not peculiar to the Bantu. It's a universal concept. It is not surprising to find him in a French ethnographer<sup>96</sup> interpreting the sorcery fight led by an un-witcher in the *bocain* as a struggle for the restitution of the vital force of his patient that the wizard desires to destroy at any cost. It is wise to take seriously this key concept of our philosophical anthropology that we find in Jeanne-Favret Saada. Is not philosophy essentially the love of wisdom?

Several currents of thought have developed within African philosophy in order to understand the extreme degradation of the being-in-the-world of the *muntu*, and to recover oneself in order to overcome the crisis of the *muntu*<sup>97</sup>, existential crisis, yes, but also a historical crisis rooted in the tragedies of the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism that still continues today. Biyogo takes care of grouping these currents as the Renaissance of modern

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<sup>93</sup> SMET, A.J. (1980). *Histoire de la philosophie africaine contemporaine: Courants et problèmes* (Cours et documents, 5). Kinshasa-Limete, Départ. de PRA, FTC, 299 p. - Bibliographie, p.5-14 et 277-292.

<sup>94</sup> Smet, A.J. (1982). *Plaidoyer pour la Philosophie bantoue et quelques autres textes*, Préface et traduction par A.J. Smet (Cours et documents, 6), Kinshasa-Limete, Dép.de PRA, FTC, VIII-100 p.

<sup>95</sup> Oruka, O. H. (1990). *Sage philosophy. Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*. E.J. Brill, Leiden , New York, Kobenhavn, Köln.

<sup>96</sup> Favret-Saada, J. (1977). *Les mots, la mort, les sorts. La sorcellerie dans le Bocage*. Gallimard : Paris.

<sup>97</sup> We borrow this expression from the book of the Cameroonian philosopher: Eboussi-Boulaga, F. (1977). *La crise du Muntu, Authenticité africaine et philosophie*. Présence Africaine. Paris.

African philosophy <sup>98</sup>, the original and controversial current of ethnophilosophy, <sup>99</sup>, the current of criticism of Tempelsianism and ethnophilosophy<sup>100</sup>, current of modernity exposing ethnophilosophy<sup>101</sup>. and the various deconstructivist currents. <sup>102</sup>

After delineating these five currents, the author points out that the sixth axis of his research will be the critical rereading of Marxist thought, critical theory, political philosophy, the philosophy of law, neo-pragmatist diopism epistemology, tempelsianisme revisited in the light of Heidegger<sup>103</sup>. He thus attempts to inaugurate a critical, taxonomic, hermeneutic and epistemological discourse: the history of modern African philosophy which he defines as “the acute awareness of the reflection on philosophical thought in Africa<sup>104</sup>”.

Biyogo provides four reasons justifying this new writing of the history of African philosophy. First, the history of philosophy can give us another way to read the tumultuous history of the sequences of this African philosophy that is developing in a continent that is constantly searching for itself. “The absence of a history of philosophy is what commands the development of this research as a priority<sup>105</sup>.”

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<sup>98</sup> Livre II, p.14 “The Renaissance, Negritude, Negro Art and philosophical criticism of these discourses represent the distant sources of the re-birth of modern and contemporary African philosophy, after its long absence in Africa - which had virtually disappeared since advent of the slave trade”

<sup>99</sup> Livre II, p.1

Livre II, p.16 inaugurating the advent of philosophical moderation, with the conquest of the autonomy of reason<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> Livre II, p.16 ruining its onto-theological discourse and its metaphysical humanism, developing an emancipatory philosophy based on the hopes of science.

<sup>102</sup> Livre II, p.19 going beyond the great controversy of Négritude, Ethnophilosophie, and the critique of Ethnophilosophie. This is the paradigm of the Bidima crossing, the postmodern program of Ouattara and the paradigm of the return that Biyogo elaborates.

<sup>103</sup> Livre II, p. 20

<sup>104</sup> Livre II, p. 20

<sup>105</sup> Live II, p. 23

Secondly, the idea that the history of philosophy can regain the memory of the loss of the meaning of this African philosophy in order to develop other forms of possible worlds and other forms of rationality oriented towards political emancipation. The permanent reinvention of freedoms and the production of new forms of exchange, thought and knowledge<sup>106</sup>.

Third, to give African philosophy an opportunity to scrutinize its own history and spiritual adventure, subjecting it to the “test of deconstruction—in the Derrida sense of the challenge of regime-based thinking. stable, security, oppositional, hierarchical, phonocentric, phallogocentric—from his own thoughts and from the rortyrian ironic re-description of his philosophical identity.<sup>107</sup>”

Fourthly, the need to open up to another history of African philosophy, recreating it, forcing it, making it happen through the power that history has given us: “that of thinking differently and that of the development of a cogito of survival, hostile to the system hypostasis - Hegelian model<sup>108</sup>”.

As pointed out in the first section of this work, the first part of Book II of the History of African Philosophy deals with the “Birth of Modern African Philosophy: Its Objects and Its Issues.” The author highlights the re-birth of modern African and contemporary philosophy<sup>109</sup> by revisiting its history. We present here a synthesis of its reconstruction, leaving aside the questions raised in its introductions concerning the decline of Africa, the bankruptcy of the philosophical activity and its recapturing. We put in brackets these historical questions to focus on the philosophical themes dealt with in this second volume.

The very first theme is the passage from what Biyogo calls New Negro to Negritude and Negro art. According to Biyogo, this movement of African thought is at the origins of the modern

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<sup>106</sup> Livre II, p. 23

<sup>107</sup> Livre II, p. 25

<sup>108</sup> Livre II, p. 28

<sup>109</sup> Livre II, p. 37

and contemporary African philosophical re-birth. It is about the African-American re-birth “who has experienced the irruption of living forms in a history that is still a prisoner of linearity, segregationist servitude and the most overwhelming contradictions.<sup>110</sup>” The examination of this historical irruption of the human spirit stifled by slavery reveals “the reasons for the resumption of philosophy in Africa.” These reasons, Biyogo tells us, are in what I call re-coming, the need and ability to resist and survive an essential loss. Through musical, political, sculptural and philosophical invention, this part of the self affirms the possibility of reversing this idea of historical defeat through artistic creation that is at once unpredictable and incalculable <sup>111</sup>. Subjected to slavery and objectified, the spirit of the African began to produce liberating melodies. His music accompanies him everywhere. His music is transformed into a channel of invention of freedom. The birth of the Negro Spiritual culminated in the Negro-Renaissance, “this poetic, cultural and political movement prestigious, born in African-American circles - especially in the city emblem of Harlem - and which spread in the Caribbean and the Caribbean<sup>112</sup>”.

It was Markus Garvey's homecoming, the time of W.E.B. Dubois, founder of the Movement for the Defense of the Peoples of Color (NACCP), and especially the time of the Negro-American revolutionary poetry. Leopold Sedar Senghor<sup>113</sup> devoted a great deal of administration to Alan Locke's poetic anthology with his New Negro doctrine. Hence the historical link between the American black revolution and negritude. Through music and poetry, the blacks of the Americas and those who lived in the metropolis set themselves on the path of freedom of thought for a more dignified, more humane existence.

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<sup>110</sup> Livre II, p. 59

<sup>111</sup> Livre II, p. 59-60

<sup>112</sup> Livre II, p. 61

<sup>113</sup> Livre II, p. 62

“The revenge of the blacks was made by this music which would not only participate in their integration in the United States, but also make them known in this country that had denied them, with its official segregationist doctrine, its terrorist institutions (Ku Klux Klan) and its separatist politics ... The irony of history, the Blacks had become overnight, the masters of American and world music by the triple invention of Blues - which murmurs the story of a millennial suffering transmuted into a musical miracle - then Negro-spiritual - which seeks from the sky this promised land of which the Hebrew people speak in the Bible and draws in the wounded soul a love inspired by the Lord - and finally the Jazz - refined and mythical kind which would open up to a category of blacks the ways of redemption and of world coronation.<sup>114</sup>”

Blues, Negro-Spiritual, Jazz, these musical creations combined with poetry led to the manifestation of the spirit of the negation of the black in the world. It is from this double negation that the urgency of the liberation of artistic and theoretical creativity was born where blacks were muzzled. The end of the instrumentalising and codifying logos was close. The belief that another world was possible was beginning to win the world.

Then came the time of Négritude<sup>115</sup>, this surprising poetic and theoretical movement, born from the meeting of three black poets in Paris, a Senegalese, Léopold S. Senghor, a Martinican, Aimé Césaire, and a Guyanese, Léon G. Damas, play an important role for the cultural and political revolution of the Black world. “Negritude was going to prolong the ideal of the liberation of the black people of the Negro-Renaissance. What she will aim for is the conquest of political independence in Africa as in the West Indies but also the construction of the dignity of the world, scorned after the slave trade, colonization and war.<sup>116</sup>”

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<sup>114</sup> Livre II, p. 62

<sup>115</sup> Livre II, p. 68-69

<sup>116</sup> Livre II, p. 70

It is in this historical context that Placide Tempels published his book entitled: *Philosophy Bantu*, in 1945, while working as a Catholic missionary in Kamina, Baluba Katanga, in the former Belgian Congo. The revolutionary inheritance of Négritude was thus recovered by missionaries in search of the knowledge of the soul of the *muntu* that they wanted to evangelize.

“In short, Sartre's and Towa's double criticism of Negritude and Tempel's ontology gave rise to the re-birth of philosophy in Africa, where it has been absent<sup>117</sup> ... Thus, what the African-American Renaissance, Negritude and Tepelsianism would have in common, is the critique of a conceptual and instrumental order that has turned against man, the environment, the animal and live together, without really achieving it<sup>118</sup>”.

The author thus aligns three historical moments of African philosophy: The African-American Theory of Criticism of Racism, Negritude and Bantu Ontology. These three historical moments will take part in turn in the birth of a new writing of African philosophy.

The second chapter of Book II presents the synthesis of modern African philosophy<sup>119</sup>. Before proceeding to the succinct presentation of this chapter, we wish to underline two historical truths established by the de-constructivist approach of the history of African philosophy practiced by Biyogo.

The first historical truth comes from his reinterpretation of the poetry of negritude in its historical context. He reveals the revolutionary dimension of the poetic verb of Senghor, Damascus and Cesaire. The poetic revolution of Negritude<sup>120</sup> transforms the evil of racism, slavery and colonization into beauty, the sufferings of blacks into hymns for the liberation of

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<sup>117</sup> The researches of Tempels and Kagame, as well as the numerous investigations on the deep philosophy of ancient Africa, show that philosophy has never been absent from Africa since the 18th century. But that it was active, as indeed today, among the specialists of the thoughtful conceptual discourse, the wise ones. We will examine this question in our work on Oruka's "SAGE PHILOSOPHY".

<sup>118</sup> Livre II, p. 89-90

<sup>119</sup> Livre II, Chapitre 2. Travaux de synthèse existant sur la philosophie africaine moderne, p. 95-120

<sup>120</sup> Livre II, p. 68-72

oppression and the advent of a more just and dignified world. more open to historical truth with all its unexplored diversities and all its infinite human wealth. It was this revolutionary character of the poetic-philosophical movement of negritude that compelled the other to recognize the existence of a soul in the African. Hence the historical rationale for literature on the Bantu soul, Bantu philosophy, the Bantu being.

His second historical truth emerges from his presentation of the revolutionary legacy of Negro art. This is the inversion and subversive uses of asymmetric parallelism<sup>121</sup>. In his analysis of the Ngöntang mask, Biyogo begins a philosophical reading of the formal figure of asymmetrical parallelism that calls for the creation of a philosophy of style and rhythm that allows us to understand the inventive and creative character of the exilic and painful situation of the people<sup>122</sup>. Under the pen of Biyogo, music, poetry and Afro-American and Afro-continental art regain all their historical and existential significance. He thus unveils the passage from the anti-structural structure<sup>123</sup> of music, the poem and African art to the philosophical discourse of Africans in the diaspora and the cradle. Modern and contemporary African philosophy has first and foremost been aesthetic, before being ontological, through the writings of Tempels and Kagame with their disciples, and epistemological, under the leadership of the profound critique of ethnophilosophy, animated by Hountondji, Eboussi and Towa. It is above all a philosophy of the search for the beautiful through the poetic verb and the African art, before being research of being and truth. It is through this dialectical movement that various currents of modern and contemporary African philosophy have developed. “The poets of Négritude were for that reason thinkers, but super-brainy thinkers who had reinvented the poetic song that Orpheus had carried away by breaking his harp in Hades and restored poetry to its nobility. That is to say, by giving back to poetry and music their philosophical essence and philosophy, its poetic power.<sup>124</sup>”

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<sup>121</sup> Livre II, p. 75

<sup>122</sup> Livre II, p. 80

<sup>123</sup> Livre II, p. 82

<sup>124</sup> Livre II, p. 82

## **V. Synthesis work on modern African philosophy**

The restoration of the philosophical essence of poetry and the poetic essence of philosophy is the object of the constructivist deconstruction in the second chapter of the first part of Book II. The author quotes eight philosophical works that he briefly presents as syntheses of modern African philosophy. Many of these authors follow a similar mission as Biyogo, in either critiquing contemporary modes of African philosophizing, such as ethnophilosophical unanimism, or are continuing a philosophical journey by revisiting Negritude, pan-africanism and engaging in dialogues with other African philosophers, rather than working only with Western texts (some of which are also roundly critiqued)<sup>125</sup>. Themes such as pluralism and a re-orientation towards Egyptian epistemologies, as well as an overall attempt to ground philosophy in an African or Black experience emphasizes why Biyogo felt a kinship with these philosophers and their works.

It should be noted that the author does not cite any synthesis of African philosophy written by English-speaking African philosophers. We believe that a brief study of the work of Masolo<sup>126</sup>, D.A. (1994), *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, would have been a great complement to his review of the synthesis work in African Philosophy of English Language. Let us now turn to the periodization of the history of African philosophy proposed in the second part of Book II, chapter 4. It is in this chapter that the author sketches his historiography of African philosophy, after having insisted on again on the need for developing a history of African philosophy in Chapter 3.

## **VI. Periodicity of African philosophy**

According to Biyogo, “African philosophy has so far not presented any satisfactory, firm periodization, and indeed there is no proven theory on this question<sup>127</sup>.” To meet this theoretical challenge, he will develop his own taxonomy of history of African philosophy. In an article

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For a more detailed account of these authors' positions, see Biyogo Livre II p. 82-107. <sup>125</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Masolo, D.A. (1994). *African Philosophy in Search of identity*. Bloomington : Indiana, University Press.

<sup>127</sup> Livre II, 187

published on the Afrikhepri electronic page, he defines this science in these terms: “Taxonomy is the study of the division and the formal and rational classification of works within a given field of research, here the history of African philosophy<sup>128</sup> ...”. Based on his taxonomy, he distinguishes in Book II four great historical moments of African philosophy. Each of these moments has internal subdivisions<sup>129</sup>. Returning to this question in his article on the history of African philosophy published in the electronic journal Afrikhepri, the author distinguishes three major periods while reading this note: “In the present division of this philosophical adventure, we can distinguish five great periods and within them, varied divisions.<sup>130</sup>” It seems that Biyogo hesitates in four, three or five periods. By grouping them together using precise dating, it is possible to see at least three clearly delineated periods—those being, ancient philosophy of Egypt, Ethiopia and Nubia from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium to the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>131</sup>, medieval philosophy in various African empires (13-19<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>132</sup> and modern/contemporary philosophy emerging after WWII until 1990.

It is within this modern or contemporary period that Biyogo begins to segment historical periods into smaller and smaller slices of time. He lists no fewer than seventeen periods within 1945-1990, though some scholars do edge into the early aughts. Biyogo’s detailed analysis of the many varied and overlapping philosophical discussions among Africans and members of the diaspora clearly shows just how much depth the African philosophical canon has, which certainly deserves attention and praise. However, as a serious taxonomy of the history of African philosophy, it falls short. Many of his historical currents, seem more like events, or even moments in time when several important books were written. Doubtless, movements like Pan-

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<sup>128</sup> *Penseurs et sage Africains* – Philosophie & Psychologie. By Afrikhepri.

<sup>129</sup> Livre II, p. 187.

<sup>130</sup> <http://afrikhepri.org/lhistoire-de-la-philosophie-africaine/>

<sup>131</sup> Livre II, p.187

<sup>132</sup> Amo, A. G. (1738). *Tractatus de arte sobrie et accurate philosophandi, De l’art de philosopher avec sobriété et précision*. Ouvrage cité dans Livre II, p. 189. Traduit du latin en français par Simon Mougnot et publié chez l’Harmattan en octobre 2013 sous le titre de : *Traité de l’art de philosopher avec précision et dans fioritures*.

Africanism, the critique of ethnophilosophy, or even Marxism on the continent are important. However, by examining more closely the taxonomy of the history of African philosophy that Biyogo proposes, we find that it lacks precise references to define historical periods and better categorize the major currents of African philosophy.

The history texts of Alfonse Smet's African philosophy<sup>133</sup> contain a coherent presentation of the major currents of African philosophy through its modern and contemporary history. It will be necessary to examine the main periodizations proposed by historians and historiographers of African philosophy to develop a taxonomy based on precise historical landmarks.

In his *History of African Philosophy*, Hubert Mono Ndjana<sup>134</sup> proposes the following divisions: 1. Formerly. 2. Before yesterday. 3. Yesterday. 4. Contemporary African philosophy: 4.1. French-speaking; 4.2. English-speaking; 4.3. Maghrebian philosophy.

Then he goes on to present the main currents: 1. Pan-Africanism. 2. Negritude. 3. The African Renaissance 4. Egyptology, Afrocentricity. Why is this historian of philosophy content with vague terms such as "formerly", "the day before yesterday", "yesterday" and "today" used to define the historical divisions of African philosophy where he gives specific dates of the history of this discipline? This way of proceeding to categorize in time the different periods of African philosophy brings us back to the problem raised by Biyogo concerning the lack of serious taxonomy in this field. Biyogo is undoubtedly the first historian of African philosophy who took this heuristic problem seriously. He is the first historian of African philosophy who posed the problem of a serious taxonomy to proceed with the historical divisions of this discipline. However, his work in this area remains unfinished. It is for this reason that we suggest resorting to a more or less precise periodization outlined by Professor Ikechukwu Kanu in his article on the historiography of African philosophy<sup>135</sup>. Its periodization better corresponds to the different

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<sup>133</sup> Smet A. J. (1980). **Histoire de la philosophie africaine contemporaine**. Courants et problèmes. Département de Philosophie et Religions Africaines, Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa – Limeté.

<sup>134</sup> Ndjana, M. H.(2009). **Histoire de la philosophie africaine**. L'Harmattan.

<sup>135</sup> Kanu, I. (2014). **A historiography of African Philosophy**. GJRA – Global Journal for Research Analysis, Volume 3, Issue8, ISSN No 2277-8160.

stages of the history of African philosophy released by Biyogo through his deconstructivist approach. Kanu cuts the history of African philosophy into four traditions related to historical time:

1. Ancient Tradition of African Philosophy, from 3000 to 300 BC.
2. Medieval Tradition of African Philosophy, the earlier period of North African Christian Philosophy, from the second to the seventh centuries AD; Arabo-Islamic activities from the 10th to the 15th.
3. Modern Tradition of African Philosophy, include philosophical activities in Africa and by African outside of 15th and early part of 20th centuries.
4. Contemporary Tradition of African Philosophy, from the 19th century to date. This periodization gives us the opportunity to situate African philosophical works in space and time. It responds to the historiography of African philosophy developed by Biyogo.

With his four books, Biyogo has put at our disposal a history of African philosophy, but also a historiography, a science of postmodern writing of the history of African philosophy. As a historian<sup>136</sup> of philosophy puts it, the history of philosophy is at once a science and a philosophy. As a science, the history of philosophy questions philosophical facts. Authors with their works must meet the criteria of historical criticism. Hence the need to examine the origin and authenticity of the philosopher and his work, to submit each work to textual criticism, to date it accurately and to situate it in its original geographical space and in its historical context and time (chronological). The history of philosophy is a methodical introduction to philosophers and their philosophies, a way for learning to listen to the voice of thought of the past, which continues to

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<sup>136</sup> Hirschberger, J. (1958). *The History of philosophy*. The Bruce Publishing Company. Préface, p. v.

think in our time to initiate us to think in the present of our own way of being in this world. An objective writing of the history of African philosophy should be a presentation of its philosophers and philosophies from the 3rd millennium BC to the present day. The historian of this philosophy would be subject to respect for each period of its history. The de-constructivist approach of Biyogo opened the way to the methodical writing of a true history of the reason of the African sage in search of the being and meaning of his existence in a world that is still waiting for his contribution to the building a civilization worthy of humanity enlightened by the light of wisdom.

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