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BOOK REVIEW

What is ailing Africa? Practical philosophy in reinventing Africa,
by Stephen Onyango Ouma, Leiden, Brill, 2024, 256 pp, € 145.00 (hardback),
ISBN: 978-90-04-69766-9

Stephen Onyango Ouma, the author of this book, aims to explore and critique the impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism on Africa while offering practical philosophy to rebuild the continent's identity and ethics. To achieve this, he employs a multidisciplinary methodology, including critical analysis, social construction and practical philosophy. The results of his analysis are presented in five sections.

Section One, *The Social Construct*, explains how colonizers forcibly constructed African social systems, including politics, economics, education and culture, to ensure long-term domination and exploitation. This construction is deeply ingrained, leading to the erasure of authentic African identity and replacing it with one aligned with colonial interests. Ouma refers to this as the 'Invented Africa'. He argues that Africa must liberate itself from this imposed mentality, as decolonization involves more than just political changes; it also requires a mental shift (pp 1–83).[1]

Section Two, *Decolonizing Colonial Education*, discusses how colonial education was designed to internalize African inferiority and turn Africans into loyal followers of European and Western systems. According to Ouma, this education led to 'Miseducation', which uprooted indigenous African knowledge. Thus, it is essential to reintegrate African traditions into modern education to create a more holistic and relevant system. In doing so, education becomes a tool of liberation, helping Africans understand and appreciate their cultural heritage rather than glorifying external values (pp 86–148).

Section Three, *The European Social Constructs and Development in Africa*, explains how European social constructs have shaped the narrative of African development. Although some African countries have experienced significant economic growth, it has more often led to structural problems rather than widespread prosperity. Ouma calls this the 'Paradox of African Development', where despite indicators of economic growth, many countries on the continent remain underdeveloped due to social structures controlled by European and Western interests. Africa must break its dependency on external aid and development models, as actual development can only occur if it aligns with local contexts and needs (pp 156–186).

Section Four, *African Economic and Political Liberation Trajectory*, examines Africa's economic and political independence struggle. According to Ouma, colonial powers have left behind 'Mono-Commodity' economies, making Africa dependent on exporting raw materials with little added value, leaving the continent vulnerable to global market price fluctuations. Therefore, economic integration, including industrialization through initiatives