

step further and asks what the contrasting cases mean about the nature of defense, state-building, urbanization, diplomacy, peacemaking, violence, banditry, and military science, the book is of broader utility. His analysis is particularly fascinating, as he compares what he calls the “culture of fear” that dominated Tanzania in the late nineteenth century, and the role that the more stratified Ethiopian system provided for both conducting war, and enforcing peace. Thus, despite the fact that Reid is reliant on the written sources of Europeans, he develops a story rooted in Africa, and not only in Europe.

If there is a weak point in this book, it is in its over-reliance on archival data collected by literate Europeans. Alas, this is a problem shared with most other historians of Africa. And until there is more development of Arabic, Amharic, Tigrayan, and Swahili manuscripts; development of oral data; and the slow analysis of archaeological materials; such biases are likely to remain. But until this happens, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* is likely to remain among the best studies available for understanding the nature of eastern Africa’s politics on the cusp of European intrusions.

The strongest point of *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* is that Reid’s comparisons allow him to make conclusions about African warfare that reflect Africa. He does this in a fashion which I think can inform understanding of more general studies of warfare on any continent. I have long thought that African cases need to be developed which will inform understandings of social change in all parts of the world—the works of great comparativists like Karl Polanyi, Max Weber, William McNeill, Daniel Chirot, Steven LeBlanc, and others, are too often weakened through the absence of African material. This book can, I hope, be put to good use by scholars studying the nature of horticultural societies, incipient kingdoms, the evolution of the state, the nature of violence, and other subjects which have long attracted them. Indeed, Reid himself implies that his study could be a basis for introducing a more *longue duree* approach to African history, *a la* Fernand Braudel. I think Reid is right and believe that this book will be a rich source of data for scholars integrating an African perspective into the broader corpus of social history.

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**Lewis R. Gordon. *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008.**

Lewis R. Gordon’s *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* faces the daunting task of giving an introduction to the whole of Africana thought. By “Africana thought,” he means the philosophical writings of Africans and those part of the African Diaspora, although the bulk of the text is devoted to thought of the African Diaspora. The book begins by giving a background of African thought and some of the reasons why it is not as established as European thought (conquest) and reasons why it is not always properly recognized as African, as in the case of the half Berber St. Augustine (appropriation of thinkers by conquerors). For Gordon, the idea of an Africana philosophy does not really take shape though until the establishment of the slave

trade. It is with this that “the clearly modern moment of Africana philosophy begins . . . with the conquest of the Americas and with the Atlantic slave trade” (p.28). Next, Gordon discusses the three pillars of Africana philosophy: the works of Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois and Franz Fanon. He then discusses Africana movements in the US and Britain, Afro-Caribbean philosophy, and African philosophy.

Gordon gives us a narrative through which to understand Africana thought. I suspect, though, that his narrative will not be uncontroversial. One of its key features is that Africana philosophy begins to take shape with the rise of the slave trade. Perhaps this is true, but Gordon does not say enough to support it. As I see it, part of this book’s contribution to the literature is to supply us with a narrative to help us understand all these different thinkers and movements that supposedly fall under the heading of “Africana philosophy.” If the narrative is to be a contribution to the field, then surely such a central idea of the narrative--that the birth of Africana thought arose with the birth of the African Diaspora--needs a full defense.

One of the strengths of the work is that it covers much ground. There are many thinkers and ideas mentioned and described in this book. However, sometimes-crucial ideas are in need of a fuller explanation. At times, crucial concepts go unexplained and the reader is merely pointed to other works. Here is just one example.

Collins argued that the proper method for black feminist thought was engagement with postmodern thought and standpoint epistemology, (p. 103).

The phrase “standpoint epistemology” is not explained. The reader is simply directed to the work of Collins. This term actually occurs a few times in the book and the reader is never given a good sense of it. Such practice makes the ideas in the book difficult to grasp for someone who is not already familiar with them. In addition, it is not just terms that could use more explanation. Gordon could provide more exposition to help his readers understand arguments and ideas in the book as well. For example, Gordon writes,

“African thought always presupposes other kinds of thought, whereas European thought often denies the existence of those beyond its own,” (p. 31).

This thesis, as interesting as it sounds, is never fully explained. And it should have been. For what does it mean to say that one form of thought presupposes another? What are some reasons for thinking that European thought denies the existence of systems of thought that are not its own? These heady ideas are far from clear to those who have not yet mastered them. Like my comments about terminology, this point suggests that this book is at times difficult for the beginner to understand. At times, it goes into too much detail too briefly to be worthwhile to anyone but those most familiar with this material. Here is another example.

“The main criticisms of Africana existential phenomenology are from several angles. For critics who cannot see phenomenology as anything other than a European enterprise, the charge of Eurocentrism is unleashed. For those who reject the idea of non-discursive dimensions of reality, a reassertion of discursive, even textual, idealism would be their retort,” (p. 149).

What is a non-discursive dimension of reality? What is discursive idealism? The author does not give us much help in understanding these concepts.

Perhaps it would have been more effective to focus on major themes in Africana thought and let those themes drive the narrative. Of course, Gordon mentions reoccurring themes: DuBois's notion of double consciousness, for example, is a theme often mentioned. However, had the book been organized around the major themes of Africana thought, the ideas might have come across more efficiently. As it stands, this book would not serve a beginner well. It is more suitable for a graduate course or an upper level undergraduate course in Africana philosophy. There is plenty of material in the book to foster discussion, plenty of ideas to be fleshed out and argued over. The book assumes a certain familiarity with critical theory, though, that is worth keeping in mind as well.

The book ends with a useful guide to further reading. The denseness of the text and the general assumption that the reader is familiar with a great body of critical theory and thereby in no need of an explanation of what phrases like "non-discursive reality" mean makes this book not so much an introduction to Africana thought but a certain articulation of it, an articulation from a certain theory-driven framework. The project of providing an introduction to Africana thought is most certainly a worthwhile one. While working through this book would help students to get a better grasp on Africana thought, there is probably a better introduction to Africana thought yet to be written.

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**Katherine Homewood. *Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008.**

There are a number of books written over the years that discuss the links between ecology and pastoralism in East Africa. What makes Katherine Homewood's volume on the ecology of African pastoralist communities stand out is the breadth and depth of information and how it is synthesized in such a succinct manner. In less than 300 pages, Homewood manages to pack in a wealth of knowledge about the origins and spread of African pastoralism, the relationship between pastoral livelihoods, ecology, and biology, and recent changes in the trajectories of pastoral communities in Africa.

Homewood is a well-known human ecologist and pastoral scholar. She draws on the depth of this knowledge to create an easy to read and comprehensive book on African pastoral systems that multiple audiences can enjoy it. The breadth of the research that Homewood conducted to compile this book is clear from the 35-page bibliography included at the end of the book. The synthesis of this range of information is one of the main strengths of the book. Homewood draws from numerous case studies, as well as multiple empirical data sources to paint a comprehensive picture of the diversity and complexity associated with African pastoral systems.

The book consists of nine chapters. The introductory chapter sets up the academic context