



## Hegel's Historical Denialism and Epistemic Eclipse in African Philosophy

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### Abstract

African philosophy remains bedevilled by relics of Hegel's racist chants against the rationality of Africans, and this situation deserves revisitation and reevaluation for reconstructive purposes. In this paper, I implicate Hegel's concatenations as necessitating the reactive fervour within which a significant portion of the themes, thesis, and content of African philosophy is locked. This influence, which partially eclipses African philosophy, I term historical denialism. In an attempt to repudiate Hegel's constructs, some philosophers in Africa seem ideologically contrived into developing or discovering an authentic philosophy for Africans, and in the process, advocate cultural essentialism as determinants of philosophy—at least logically. Averring that philosophy is not the sole representation of thought, I proceed by exploring other trajectories which could have informed a non-reactive African philosophy, while logically linking Hegel's denialism to subtle silencing of his idealism within philosophical discourses in Africa. This subtle silencing, which shortchanges pedagogy of philosophy on the continent, forms the other half of the eclipse in philosophy in Africa. I conclude the discussion by asserting that while it may be imperative to exorcise Hegelian ghost in African philosophy, to use Olufemi Taiwo's coinage, essentializing African philosophy would either further enmesh the field in a reactive predisposition, or limit its reflective and multifarious possibilities.

**Keywords:** African Philosophy, Cultural Essentialism, Decolonisation, Epistemic Eclipse, Historical Denialism, Reactionism.

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### Historical Denialism and the Reactive Fervour in African Philosophy

A significant portion of the content of the history of African philosophy<sup>1</sup> is informed by a reaction to what I call "Hegel's historical denialism." I assume a little conceptualisation of what historical denialism means is necessary here; I will address this shortly. Hegel balkanises the African continent into three parts before proceeding in his ascription of what he conceives as the irrationality of Africans: the stretch of the south of the Sahara he calls Africa proper; the north of the Sahara he terms European Africa; and Egypt, he describes as the territory connected to Asia. Africans<sup>2</sup> are, in Hegel's evaluation, influenced by nature. They are so conditioned on account of being untamed and completely wild and by this 'composition', Hegel argues. Implicatively, therefore, Africans had not reached a level of self-consciousness [Hegel 1956: 93]. Hegel consequently denies the portion he terms Africa proper participation in the absolute spirit, which is intermittently linked to consciousness. How could a people in their untamed and wild nature be capable of the level of consciousness necessary for such thought processes that philosophy entails? This is a logical inference from Hegel's pontification.

Innumerable responses trailed Hegel's foregoing comments, consequently necessitating a conscious effort to repudiate such pronouncement, and fashion out a systematic body of thoughts that can be called African philosophy. It is not my intention here to assert that all philosophical postulations

that birthed African philosophy emanated from Hegel position, as this would connote radical reductionism, and this is avoidable for consistency and validity. However, acknowledgement of a non-reductionist approach does not diminish Hegel's influence on the subsequent development of African philosophy, as this influence is undeniable. Coincidentally, or by a well-thought-out presupposition, the debate on the possibility or existence of African philosophy partially falls within the mix of response to residues of Hegel's propositions, while arguments against the existence of African philosophy fundamentally rests on a tripod. Numerous interpretations and explications of the structure of repudiation of African philosophy abound, but I will limit the identification of these to three compartments I believe capture all insinuations, and they are as follows. First, there are no known individual thinkers to whom we can trace the body of knowledge put forward as philosophy at the inception of the discourse. Secondly, Africans are not rational enough to participate in such systematic thought processes that make philosophy possible. Lastly, there were no written records of philosophy in Africa, and philosophy cannot rely on oral tradition as it is an enterprise adumbrated with writing [Ikuenobe, 1997: 190]. Outright rejection trailed the second charge, while the first and third charges, I contend, set the stage for debates among thinkers and philosophers in Africa, on the possibility of African philosophy.

Boundaries of the central motive drive for African philosophy are marked by at least three inter-related theses: these are the rational derivative thesis, the militancy thesis, and the counterhegemonic thesis. For the current discourse, I will pick Polycarp Ikuenobe, Alena Rettova, and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze as representative voices of these positions. In the rational derivative thesis, Ikuenobe argues that to deny a people philosophy is to deny them any kind of intellectual activity, a system of thought, culture, and civilization [Ikuenobe, 1997: 196]. What Ikuenobe seems to suggest is that philosophy is the sole pool from which intellectual activity, culture, and civilization emanate. Alena Rettova's commitment to the militancy thesis is expressed in the position that African philosophy emanates from a standpoint of repudiating dehumanising tendencies afflicted on African worldviews through components of slavery, colonialism, and racism [Rettova, 2016: 127]. Rettova would subsequently conceptualise African philosophy as a radical critique, given that at the heart of its development is a political charge embedded in "acute social awareness and a readiness for political militancy" [Rettova 2016: 127]. Eze, however, extends this description of the origin of African philosophy to include rupturing of colonial relics and 'a historic critique of modern western anthropological and philosophical tradition' [Eze, 2001: 207]. The foregoing expressions are intermittently linked to reactive fervour of African philosophy, as

<sup>1</sup> I rather consider the body of thoughts of what is referred to as African Philosophy as Philosophy in Africa. I must admit that this position is not uniquely mine. There are many philosophers who equally consider this as an apt conceptualisation.

<sup>2</sup> This erratically means occupants of Hegel's Africa proper.

they explicate calls for reengineering African philosophy for a political project Eze, through the consolidation of a counter hegemonic thesis, christens ‘a representative voice of counter hegemonic histories of modern philosophy’ [Eze, 2001: 207]. Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani equally recognises this reactive ardour of the development of African philosophy through an explorative approach contending that African philosophy is replete with claims of ideological motivation [Ani, 2020: 52].

It should be noted that at the formative stage of the *formalisation* of African philosophy<sup>3</sup>, and upon activation of the reactive fervour, African philosophers were fractionalised into particularist/culturalist<sup>4</sup> and universalist schools of thought [Wiredu, 1980: 27]. While the former denotes the camp arguing that philosophy can emerge from cultural beliefs, or that precepts of cultural worldviews indeed qualify as philosophy (here, one could aptly place Alexis Kagame [1956], Sophie Oluwole [1999], Olubi Sodipo [1973], Kwame Gyekye [1987], and to some extent, Polycarp Ikuenobe [1997] and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze [1997, 2001], universalists on the other side, consider philosophy as an enterprise not necessarily reducible to cultural elements; but rather a critical engagement of concepts [[Kwasi

Wiredu, 1980; 1996], Peter Bodunrin [1981], Paulin Hountondji [1995], and Kwame Appiah [1992] fit this description]. Sufficiency of this conceptualisation remains contested like any other universal categorisation or fixation. A case in context would be that if one reads Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s *African Philosophy and the Analytic Tradition* literally, the claim that philosophy is a critical enterprise entailing activities of conceptual clarification, is indicting of analytic philosophy—more prominently, the linguistic turn of the analytic tradition. Eze subsequently terms some defenders of this brand of universalism ‘the ultra-faithful’, referring to those committed to the analytic tradition in which they had been trained as professional philosophers [Eze, 2001: 207], while Ikuenobe [1997] conceives the universalist school’s presuppositions reductive and exclusive. Without prejudice to the universalist tradition, this is at least one strand of universalism. However, quite all universalists seem to agree that individual thoughts of a critical nature qualify as philosophy, thereby satisfying the condition of identified authorship<sup>5</sup>.

Moses Akin-Makinde attempts an interventionist thesis on the existential dismissive subject of African philosophy, by contending that if African philosophy exists,

then it is the duty of philosophers to demonstrate that by doing it. This is further extended to include assumptions that the controversy on the existence of the subject had been laid to rest [Makinde, 2010]. Within context and contests, therefore, D.A. Masolo’s, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, V.Y Mudimbe’s *The Invention of Africa*, E.A Ruch’s *Is There an African Philosophy*, Peter Bodunrin’s *The Question of African Philosophy*, and a compendium of essays in *Second Order*, a journal that bears a near-perennial witness to the debate on the existence of African philosophy, give careful illustration and historical references to the description of culturalism and universalism in African philosophy.

Recent anthologies such as P.H Coetzee and A.P.J Roux’s *The African Philosophy Reader*, Kwasi Wiredu’s *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Eze’s *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola’s *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, Edwin Etieyibo’s *Method, Substance, and the Future of African Philosophy*, and others, strengthen various debates and contestations on the themes, methods, and issues in African philosophy, as well as present demonstrative and contentious scopes of African philosophy from both camps, throu-

gh issue-based, author-based, and sceptical explorations. Whether or not the debate on African philosophy has ended is not a decisive focus of the current discourse, hence, hibernating the question may be warranted here.

Now, a return to the initial identification of Hegelian historical denialism is germane, as African philosophy could either be logically, in a non-exclusive sense, conceived as originating first, as a reaction to Hegel’s racist view, or secondly as the *philosophical induction* of African worldviews. In either case, Hegelian denialism is extended. The extension is direct in relation to the reaction to Hegel, and indirect in the second case signified by the presentation of African worldviews as philosophy. What makes the latter indirect is that Hegelian import is one of numerous sparks necessitating the attempt to christen African worldviews as philosophy, while in the first case is a direct reaction to Hegel’s racist postulations. Some Western philosophers, ethnographers, and anthropologists, especially those of the enlightenment era, had equally dismissed Africans’ capacity for critical reasoning by stating that certain conditions, especially ontological, are responsible for Africans’ lack of capacity for reasoning. That such racist thoughts are represented in the works of David Hume [1974],

Immanuel Kant [2007], and Lucien Levy-Bruhl [1975] is egregious.

What the racist thoughts in the works of other identified thinkers demonstrate is that Hegel was not alone on this path of denialism, as Levy-Bruhl’s pre-logical argument exhibits some basis of sentiments against Africans’ capacity for critical reflections. In *How Natives Think*, Levy-Bruhl dismisses the possibility of Africans’ philosophical endeavour on the basis of assigning mysticism and pre-logicality to their thought process and understanding of the world [Kebede, 2004]. However, despite other thinkers’ ascriptions, Hegel is a ubiquitous figure within African philosophy discourses and conversations on philosophy in Africa. From dialectical conversations on the existence and practice of African philosophy, either through contextual interpretation, nationalist representation, cultural validation, rationality defence, methodological proposals, universalist critique, or particularists’ affirmation, I aver that a significant context and content of what is thus known as African philosophy seems to be continuously and surreptitiously shaped by Hegel’s repulsive thesis. And just as Olufemi Taiwo opines, Hegel’s ghost is yet to be fully exorcised in philosophical discourses in Africa [Taiwo, 1998].

One may ask why African philosophers’ attention is further drawn to Hegelian disruption. First, by tying his denialist postulation maximally and more ferociously than others to history, Hegel elicits enormous and perennial responses because an affirmation of a people’s history can be perceived as a major edifice on which cultural meaning-making notions are built<sup>6</sup>. Acting on the contrary to repudiate a people’s space in the universal history, and in that process denying their rationality as Hegel did, is tantamount to a tragedy of delineating a people from humanity [Cabral, 1973]. Another perspective is in the contention that since reason is a major component of human existence, and philosophy is one of the most expressive modes of reason, then Hegel’s attempt at decapitating Africans’ rationality might be construed as irredeemably necessitating such rapt attention<sup>7</sup>. These expressions are not solely reflective in Hegel; they exist *disjointedly* in Hume, Kant, and Levy-Bruhl. However, Hegel’s position seems more comprehensive in this dismissal, and for that, the attendant centrality of Hegel in discourses aimed at *affirmation* of reason and history could hardly be prevented, I suspect.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the period when African philosophy started developing as a professional endeavour.

<sup>4</sup> In this essay, I will use culturalist more often as particularism aligns more with relativism. I take the culturalist position to be a major element of essentialism. This view makes it possible to aptly describe concepts thoroughly by avoiding category mistakes.

<sup>5</sup> If any respondent views this perspective as a reactive agenda of satisfying earlier queries of critics or denialists of African philosophy on grounds of unidentified authorship, I presume it is the responsibility of universalists of the identified authorship conviction to respond appropriately.

<sup>6</sup> Hountondji, Paulin. 1983. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Sola Olorunyomi shares a similar thought on this.

## Implicating Hegelian Denialism in Epistemic Eclipse in African Philosophy

A critical implication that can be drawn from Hegel's historical denialism is what I term epistemic eclipse. By eclipse, I mean a structurally restrictive and reductive conjuring of African philosophy. It is structurally restrictive and reductive, in the sense that it foregrounds African philosophy as a sole tool for asserting the rationality of Africans, while also contriving African philosophy into a reactionist model. Owing to the first reflection of the eclipse, in order to respond appropriately to Hegel's claims, African philosophy implicitly takes the route of affirming the self, strictly, in a rational capacity. Hence, in a sense, African philosophy emanates as a reaction to Hegel's claims against Africans' capacity for reason. The restrictive character of the eclipse incidentally foreclosed other possibilities of conceiving African philosophy aside the reactive fervour of Hegel's *demand*. Epistemic eclipse accruing from Hegelian denialism also refers to incomprehensive conception of philosophy in Africa. And closely tied to this are a plethora of proposals for radical racial boundaries and cultural essentialism, in discussing or formulating African philosophy.

Yet, without Hegel, the context of the development of African philosophy might or would have been different. There are many ways to demonstrate this, but for this discourse, I will expand the topic by interpreting epistemic eclipse through the notion of extant externalism. By permitting the reactive fervour, construction or evolution of African philosophy is willed to an external force, and this is what

extant externalism implies. This proposal harbours two perspectives: the first part is the extent to which, in an attempt to contradict or reject Hegel's description of African rationality, the structure, themes, and content of African philosophy is often influenced by Hegel. That this external influence of Hegel remains a key directive factor of African philosophy, I suppose, is obvious. The second part of extant externalism is more paradoxical and lies within the culturalist construction of the subject matter. By limiting the confines of African philosophy to cultural views, culturalists unconsciously sap the subject of its potential for universal exemplification, and without mincing words, this approach is external to the discourse of what philosophy *is*.

One would find in literary texts predating the question of African philosophy in the strict sense certain reflections of a similar fervour. For instance, prior to the debate on the existence of African philosophy as a composite professional discipline, works of literary thinkers, mostly Africans, had attempted to repudiate the unsavoury tainting of the rationality of Africans or African rationality<sup>8</sup>. This is where the essentialist character of the works of literary scholars such as Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Négritude* falls [1995]. Building on this, Alexis Kagame and other philosophers joined the conversation in an attempt to extrapolate an authentic Africanness, while sociological and anthropological works like Placide Tempel's *Bantu Philosophy* and John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophies* had

also set some pace for subsequent elaboration on the conversation. The reactive school, I suspect, attracts insinuations that some works are worthier and are apt representations of decisive response to racist charges than others. Bernard Matolino for instance, rather than consider Placide Tempel's *Bantu Philosophy* as a seminal work in the establishment of African philosophy regards it as a continuation of the racist description of Africans. Tempel's book advances philosophical racialism, Matolino alleges [2011].

We could link the reactive dimension of African philosophy and the culturalist scope of African philosophy without logical inconsistency. In fact, taken from a normative point of view, the culturalist perspective of the essentialist bend aligns easily with a repudiation of Hegelian postulation, thereby suggesting we could create a necessary connection between culture and philosophy. One aspect of the normative dimension informs some opinion that the essence or duty of African philosophers is to promote African views and philosophies, or as philosophy. And the enclave that asserts this is by no means negligible [P'Bitek, 1970]. Such a proposal is both pre-emptive and reductive. But for Hegelian denialism, geographical isolation of thoughts championed by essentialists might not have been the case as it is now, as African philosophy may have arisen differently. To invert Leibniz's dictum, the culturalist motif is not the best of all possible worlds. However, essentialists' reverberating agenda tends to suggest it is.

A people have a right of response to any charges they presume worthy of reaction, and I think placed within historical antiquity, responses to Hegelian claims may appear pertinent. However, construing African philosophy as an *endless* item of such reaction, in anticipation of justifying Africans' capacity for reason may be unnecessary. Yes, while philosophy entails application of reason, not all endeavours that accommodate reason necessarily qualify as philosophy. There are many ways to apply reason, and philosophy is just one of many of such categories. A reactive African philosophy must take this into cognisance in order not to undermine or foreclose other possibilities of constructing the subject.

Existing culturalists' construction of African philosophy has not been able to convincingly dispel the claim that philosophy is not necessarily group thinking. If anything—and I mean by its basic constituent—philosophy often amounts to a critique of culture; an accidental tool for assessing cultural beliefs, but critically. However, when unchecked cultural enthusiasm is made a sacro-

sanct precondition for philosophising, as some culturalists are wont to do, thoughts become fossilised, and in that process, the critical tool of philosophising might become moribund as pandering towards cultural thoughts becomes attractive. By ascribing philosophy to cultural worldviews or collective thoughts as some claim, the individuated thought pattern that swells the boundaries of philosophy is sandwiched. And through this, the sceptical and critical spirit of philosophy is not done good service, and neither is the aim of some culturalists satisfied beyond mere reactionism, symbolic as they may conceive it. Garbing cultural views as philosophy is unnecessary, and neither does doing so legitimately affirm capacity for reason since, as earlier affirmed, philosophy is not the all and only means of affirming rationality. When philosophy is thus garbed, anachronism becomes not just only what Michel Foucault would call the regime of truth, but also a living burden to the philosopher.

We may further our query of the logic behind culturalists' position on essentializing culture in deter-

mining philosophy. Philosophical postulations often begin in scepticism, meanwhile, acceptance of cultural worldviews as philosophy seems to eliminate the questioning capacity philosophy requires, as quite many culturalists, out of inclination towards the essential difference between Africans and Westerners are readily happy to signal communitarian ideals as the spirit behind African philosophical thoughts. It is suspicious to see where a sceptic fits in such a structure, let alone an individual critical thinker whose views run contrary to the seemingly-fossilised group thoughts and *legislative* assumptions. In the meantime, it is aggregable that our critical individual would otherwise qualify as a philosopher; this is if we consider critical and logical thoughts as ingrains of philosophy, and there are convincing preconditions to accept such perspective. However, since our sceptic's views run contrary to group thoughts, by the communitarian ideal of the culturalists' model, they would hardly be a *true* African, let alone being an African philosopher. After all, being African is ontologically premised, if we go by some culturalists' construction.

## Reconstructive Explications of How African Philosophy Might Have Been

Given that insufficiency of the reactive fervour is a major concern here, we may ask how an alternative view of the development of African philosophy could be expressed. We may also seek clarification on the reference of its conceptual or existential framework. In response to this, African philosophy, I contend, could have emerged as a compendium or grouping of the works

of African thinkers on a particular philosophical subject, or as a critical interrogation of any matter without essentialism. Such an attempt could be similar or coincidental with the ascription of the term 'German philosophy', 'British philosophy', 'French philosophy', and so on, to works produced by philosophers in those territories, regardless of the diversity of thoughts involved in them.

A major implication of the idea should be obvious by now. It is an insistence on the delineation of philosophy from cultural validation, as though philosophical thoughts may be developed within a cultural context, it does not translate to the validation of cultural edicts. We may cite revolutionary works in the field as examples. John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* could be read, and ri-

<sup>8</sup> These terms are used cautiously with proper understanding that 'African rationality' is not synonymous with 'rationality of Africans'. While the former suggests a totalitarian assertion, the latter does not.

ghtly so, as thoughts developed within a cultural context of contestations between liberty and equality. What makes it a philosophical piece is not a conglomeration of cultural views presented from the opposing sides of libertarianism and egalitarianism. On the contrary, it is the explication and argumentation of critical reflections.

I am aware that this line of thought could be pushed into the purview of the analytic tradition in philosophy. It could be said that such a view is Western as a number of critics of *universal* thoughts could describe it thus with varying degrees of scepticism. Here, Eze comes in handy in dispelling the analytic bend of such narrative. A charge of using Western categories in describing what philosophy is or ought to be—we would be reminded by Safro Kwame—is inappropriate as there ought to be a unique African approach to the study and development of African philosophy. African philosophy is authentic, Kwame [1992: 29] would emphasise.

Hegelian denialism, I presume, could be neglected while reflecting on philosophical issues in Africa, and this would not be restricted so as to assert that there is no African philosophy. We may admit that one of the current dimensions of conceptualising African philosophy is instructive in this regard, and this is the perspective that conceives African philosophy as philosophical products of Africans regardless of the themes addressed<sup>9</sup>. Some

reference can be made to Paulin Hountondji's alignment of African philosophy with existing African literature, where literature is described here as written thoughts on philosophy by Africans. The individuality thesis would therefore be integrated into what counts as African philosophy, not as a legislative or normative model, but of the import of individual reflection and postulations of philosophical categories. This perspective shares semblance with the works of Kwasi Wiredu, Moses Akin-Makinde, Paulin Hountondji, D.A. Masolo, Abiola Irele, Peter Bodunrin, and Kwame Appiah, among others. As an illustration, however, such dimension would mean that African philosophy of the alternative non-reactive bend need not possess colouration of cultural essentialism which some reactive works in the discipline reflect.

Hegel's historical denialism extends beyond the reactionism it ferments, as it inwardly attracts *strategic* or unconscious elimination of some aspects of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's denialism, like an unsheathed sword swayed by the blindfolded, cuts both ways, and in that process, sometimes lands a deadly strike on its own foundational work and how it is engaged on the continent. In teaching philosophy in Africa, quantitative positioning and concentration on Hegel's remarks in his *Philosophy of History* as epistemic determinant of Africans' capacity for reason, eclipses the content and structure of other important aspects of his contribution

to philosophy. For instance, Hegelian idealism, being a precursor to the subsequent contrarian views of Karl Marx's materialism, could easily be passed over in teaching philosophy in Africa<sup>10</sup>. That Marx's philosophy is based on the inversion of Hegel's idealism ought to create a fuller conversation on the subject matter of Hegel's thoughts system than is often engaged. It is by no accident, therefore, that I link this to Hegel's historical denialism. For instance, while both the principle of dialectics and alienation are central to Hegel's idealism, how these can be interpreted materially was, without doubt, the focus of Marx's philosophical thought. Within German idealism, and idealism in the tradition of philosophy in general, these two notions are central to the extent that neglecting them could be tantamount to espousing only half-truths of that philosophical tradition in particular, and of history of philosophy in general. Teaching philosophy in Africa without observation of the foregoing short-changes the discipline of philosophy, as there are observable cases of this approach.

The history of philosophy should not entail haphazard representation nor be imbued by selective ideology of the sort Bernard Matolino [2020] and Mesembe Edet [2002] advocate. Matolino is right in saying the teaching of the history of philosophy ought to entail critical reflection on the context within which a philosophical postulation is made. Yes, this is true. Nevertheless, I think Ma-

tolino's assertion is an extension of what a critical teaching of history ought to be, as no historian of philosophy worth their onion should be predisposed to teach the history of philosophy without proper elucidation of circumstances (historical and speculative) that influenced and could have influenced such postulations. If we search within the development of important texts in the history of philosophy, we would find some convergence on this approach. For example, taken in isolation, Bertrand Russell's treatment of John Locke as one of the luckiest political philosophers in history based on the happenstance of Locke's *Treatises on Government* and the concurrent battle for American independence, thereby earning his theory of rights a place in the American declaration of

## Conclusion

The foregoing brings the thought in this paper to some concluding remarks. Should Hegelian denialism not be excoriated while furthering the conversation of Hegel's other philosophical thoughts? Would a comprehensive approach to conceptualising African philosophy, in hindsight, not serve the purpose of reengaging the history of the discipline? Would Hegel's ghost not be expunged altogether within the matrix of alternative thoughts towards how things might have been? This, perhaps, should interest philosophers currently researching decolonisation in African philosophy, or decolonising philosophy in Africa.

Reactionist basis of African philosophy is questionable enough, and to add the claim of essentialism to the construction of the discipline, African philosophy gets locked

independence and its subsequent constitution. Russell's identification of the theocratic concretisation of Aquinas' legal theory as a probable consolidation of the latter's Catholicism are quite a point of reference in this regard. Viewed more comprehensively, perhaps, not only could Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* be taken as a mere documentation of the history of philosophy in Western thought systems, but it could also be interpreted, for its contextual elucidation, as a philosophical commentary on the history of Western ideologies and its extended foundations. This is one way, and a convincing one at that, to understand and teach the history of philosophy with its numerous contextual possibilities, but not with a preconceived cultural fossilisation.

into a closet of difference—within which exists a reasoning that attempts to separate Africa from the rest of the world. The paradox of this trajectory is that rather than the nationalists' attempt to repudiate the logic of racial difference which underlines the logic of racist charges against the rationality of Africans, African philosophers are on the contrary systematically reinforcing claims exhibiting similar disintegrative tropes through assertions of uniqueness and peculiarity, but with a different political shade. We find a sharp expression of such in Lucky Uchenna Ogbonnaya's exploration and advocacy for a method of African philosophy and a subsequent proclamation that African ontology is different from Western ontology [Ogbonnaya, 2018: 121]. We could once again allude to Leopold Sedar Senghor's impulsive disintegrative claim that

Even if existing historical pedagogical writings on African philosophy does not express such contextual reflection as Matolino [2020] claims, only a comprehensive and non-disintegrative approach could rectify such omission, not cultural fragmentation or political expediency of essentialism. Regardless of the grand followership an essentialist thesis may currently enjoy on the continent, a non-culturally affiliative mechanism, I believe, is apt for any concrete historical corrective model. To be historians, we must first and foremost be philosophers, claims Bertrand Russell [1945]. And we could add that to be historians of philosophy is to be critical explorers of the history of development of ideas, and not necessarily cultural associates of the essentialist twist.

reason is Western, while emotion is African, as an existing example that glosses such thought also. Meanwhile, one should be warned of the invalidity of such an essentialist split.

In this paper, my expressed view of non-dependence on philosophy as the only source of reason is largely premised on a conviction that African philosophy need not be construed on the basis of reacting to wanton criticism of Africans' rationality. Responsive constructions repudiating such racist claims abound, and it is critical to also dissuade philosophical postulations that attempt to essentialise philosophy in the name of authenticity or Africanness. Instructive, this is, for discursive conception of African philosophy on the one hand, and pedagogical continuity of philosophy in general on the other.

<sup>9</sup> This is not suggestive of a unilateral way of doing philosophy as the notion of what qualifies as individual philosophy would invariably lurch to the fore. Nonetheless, the individualised approach to a subject-matter in philosophy might be one of the ways to philosophise on the continent. And this is already so.

<sup>10</sup> Here, I will like to mention at first hand, a former teacher, Dipo Fashina of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, whose interest in Marxism influenced his insistence on a comprehensive study of Hegelian thoughts, and by extension, a relation of the latter's influence of Karl Marx's philosophy.

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