Contemporary African Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

Given a broad sense of "philosophy" as systematic rational reflection on fundamental issues beyond the sciences, precolonial sub-Saharan societies with oral cultures certainly engaged in it. However, African philosophy in a much narrower sense, as a field with a body of literature that is studied by scholars in sub-Saharan Africa, is new, having been properly established only in the 1960s with the advent of literacy and the decline of colonialism. It was only following independence from colonial powers after World War II that substantial numbers of sub-Saharans became university lecturers who began writing about their cultures with sympathy and erudition. This article focuses on this "academic" African philosophy, which, despite its recent creation, is large, admitting of a wide variety of issues and subdisciplines, of styles and methods, and of languages and traditions. To obtain focus in a way that will most interest the audience of this encyclopedia, this article analyzes recently published English-language texts that are informed by perspectives salient in discussions among sub-Saharan professional philosophers. Such a concentration implies, for example, that this article does not refer much to the following: oral engagements with community elders ("sages"), French- or indigenous-language manuscripts, works in Arabic philosophy from North Africa, and sub-Saharan texts appearing before the 1980s. Concentrating on contemporary Anglophone writings of interest to academic philosophers in black Africa will make this article tractable and should enable readers to make cutting-edge contributions to the field.

INTRODUCTORY WORKS AND GENERAL OVERVIEWS

The bird's-eye views of African philosophy that one encounters vary dramatically, differing in terms of the swaths of intellectual territory they cover and the degree of detail. <u>Appiah 1998</u> is by far the shortest, and yet it is also the most comprehensive in one sense, ranging from philosophical themes in precolonial oral cultures to academic, written work in the postwar era. <u>Masolo 1994</u>, <u>Wiredu 1998</u>, and <u>Janz 2007</u> focus on postwar materials, such as classic texts in ethnophilosophy and political theory (see Precursors to the Contemporary Debates), as well as on second-order issues related to the nature of African philosophy itself (see Metaphilosophy). <u>Masolo 1994</u> is notable for including a well-informed, comprehensive discussion of Francophone philosophers. <u>Bell 2002</u> is split about equally between the issues covered in those texts, on the one hand, and contemporary themes in moral and political philosophy on the other— and like those texts, it does not address any recent philosophical enquiry into the nature of knowledge or reality. For this area of enquiry, the remaining works will be most useful. In particular, those wanting a big picture of the systematic

issues discussed in this article would be best off reading Gyekye 1995, Wiredu 2004, or Hallen 2009, which take up a variety of substantive topics in metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, and value theory. Masolo 2005 is an interesting critical review of the ideas of six thinkers who substantially influenced the field in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Appiah, K. Anthony. "African Philosophy." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Craig. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Freely available online, this terse contribution covers several traditions but not recent, substantive debates.

Bell, Richard H. *Understanding African Philosophy: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

A clear discussion that integrates a wide variety of texts, including a particularly thoughtful treatment of the way sub-Saharan moral thinking (and not Christianity) was principally responsible for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Gyekye, Kwame. "On the Idea of African Philosophy." In *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* Rev. ed. By Kwame Gyekye, 189–212. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

An overview of ontological, epistemological, and axiological themes recurrent among sub-Saharan worldviews.

Hallen, Barry. *A Short History of African Philosophy*. 2d ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

A book-length and yet concise treatment of a variety of topics, including a substantial bibliography as well as a discussion of salient anthologies, journals, and other issues that would facilitate entrance into the field.

Janz, Bruce. "African Philosophy." In *Columbia Companion to Twentieth-Century Philosophies*. Edited by Constantin Boundas, 689–701. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Noting that "the central concern in African philosophy in the twentieth century, often to the frustration of its practitioners, is over the existence and nature of African philosophy," Janz accordingly discusses, with sophistication and clarity, mainly metaphilosophical ideas and texts.

Masolo, Dismas. *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. African Systems of Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

A wide-ranging survey of major strands of sub-Saharan philosophy since the 1940s, this book critically discusses figures influential not only among English speakers, such as Placide Tempels, John S. Mbiti, and H. Odera Oruka, but also among French speakers, such as Alexis Kagame, Pauline Hountondji, and V. Y. Mudimbe.

Masolo, Dismas. "The Making of a Tradition: African Philosophy in the New Millennium." *Polylog: Forum for Intercultural Philosophy* 6 (2005).

A lengthy critical overview of the ideas of key African philosophers, with a focus on Pauline Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, Barry Hallen, J. Olubi Sodipo, Kwame Gyekye, and V. Y. Mudimbe.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "African Philosophy, Anglophone." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Craig. London: Routledge, 1998.

Half of this encyclopedia entry analyzes the post-independence political philosophies of "statesmen-thinkers," while the other half recounts the major figures and ideas associated with different styles of African philosophy, such as ethnophilosophy and sage philosophy. Available online to subscribers.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "African Philosophy in Our Time." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 1–27. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 28. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

A wide-ranging and well-organized discussion of major themes in the field, under headings such as "Personhood," "Democracy," "Relativism," and "Time," by the most influential African philosopher of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

COLLECTIONS

The edited works most worth acquiring are by and large anthologies, which group together mainly works that have already been published. These are, of course, useful for teaching a course devoted to African philosophy, and they are an ideal starting point for the researcher. For those wanting to instruct an undergraduate class devoted to African philosophy in general, Eze 1998, Wiredu 2004, and especially Coetzee and Roux 2003 would be apt. For those wanting a more focused class, Murove 2009 would be suitable for an upper-level study of ethics, while Serequeberhan 1991 or Mosley 1995 would work particularly well for one devoted to the status and methods of African philosophy. Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, Kiros 2001, and Brown 2004 are comparatively slim volumes and are not meant to be comprehensive collections. The first consists of work by important Ghanaian philosophers, the second addresses mainly political themes, and the third presents fresh papers in metaphysics and epistemology; these books would be useful for upper-level students and those interested in research.

Brown, Lee, ed. *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

The collection that will be of most interest to philosophers interested in metaphysics and epistemology, with a selected bibliography of works in these two areas.

Coetzee, P. H., and A. P. J. Roux, eds. *The African Philosophy Reader*. 2d ed. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Probably the most widely used anthology, it has separate chapters devoted to metaphysics, epistemology,

race, morality, justice, and the like. It includes nearly fifty contributions from a variety of sources, and approaches a hefty seven hundred pages. A sound choice if one can acquire only one collection.

Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, ed. *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. **Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies 5. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.**

This large book, with fifty-six chapters spanning about five hundred pages, includes not merely African philosophy narrowly construed but also what some would call "postcolonial African studies," with major parts devoted to topics of colonialism, race, gender, and slavery.

Kiros, Teodros, ed. *Explorations in African Political Thought: Identity, Community, Ethics*. **New Political Science Reader Series. London: Routledge, 2001.**

Sports a star-studded lineup of contributors, including K. Anthony Appiah, Dismas Masolo, Ali Mazrui, I. A. Menkiti, Kwasi Wiredu, and others, who address mainly political issues, such as governance, democracy, identity, ideology, and stability.

Mosley, Albert, ed. *African Philosophy: Selected Readings*. **Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995.**

This collection includes only three major parts, the largest devoted to ethnophilosophy and its critics, another to witchcraft and science, and a third to aesthetics, with several important entries in each part.

Murove, Munyaradzi Felix, ed. *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*. **Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009.**

The only anthology focused exclusively on sub-Saharan morality that is well-rounded, this book is composed of seven parts with two dozen chapters on African values and their applications to issues in business, medicine, politics, the environment, and more. It includes many fresh contributions but does not include influential works by Kwame Gyekye, I. A. Menkiti, or Kwasi Wiredu.

Serequeberhan, Tsenay, ed. *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*. **Paragon Issues in Philosophy. New York: Paragon House, 1991.**

Exclusively devoted to metaphilosophical issues, such as the existence and nature of African philosophy, this book includes oft-read works by Peter Bodunrin, Pauline Hountondji, H. Odera Oruka, and Kwasi Wiredu.

Wiredu, Kwasi, ed. *A Companion to African Philosophy*. **Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.**

A massive book with forty-seven chapters that runs to nearly six hundred pages. An essential resource for those seeking a maximally comprehensive understanding of the field, it includes historical essays, intellectual biographies, and entries on somewhat more "peripheral" topics, such as the relation between philosophy and literature.

Wiredu, Kwasi, and Kwame Gyekye, eds. <u>Person and Community</u>. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

A classic collection composed mainly of papers by three Ghanaian scholars, N. K. Dzobo, Gyekye, and Wiredu. Several of the chapters, particularly in value theory, have often been cited and reprinted.

PRECURSORS TO THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

As this article focuses on recently published works by professional philosophers, it excludes some widely read texts in African philosophy. In particular, several pieces initially appearing in English in the 1950s through the 1970s have been influential and are still cited. They can be categorized according to four major topics. First, <u>Biko 2006</u> and <u>Fanon 2004</u> take up the psychological harms of colonialism and racism and discuss political strategies for overcoming them. Second, some of the first systematic "ethnophilosophical" attempts to understand and relate African worldviews to an English-speaking audience are classically represented by <u>Tempels 1959</u> and <u>Mbiti 1990</u>. Third, the theoretical books of political independence leaders include <u>Senghor 1964</u>, <u>Nyerere 1968</u>, and <u>Nkrumah 1970</u>. Fourth, articles that debate African approaches to knowledge, often set in the context of discussion about the status of witchcraft and its relation to science, are represented here by <u>Winch 1964</u> and <u>Horton 1967</u>.

Biko, Steve. *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*. Edited by Aelred Stubbs. Johannesburg, South Africa: Picador Africa, 2006.

Originally composed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the essays in this collection are classic works of the Black Consciousness movement against South African apartheid and racial oppression in general.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove, 2004.

First published in French (Paris: Maspero, 1961), Fanon's discussion of the "Negro neurosis" caused by colonialism, and of the use of violence as instrumental in overcoming it, has been enormously influential in the field of postcolonial studies in general, not merely in an African context.

Horton, Robin. "African Traditional Thought and Western Science: Part 2; The 'Closed' and 'Open' Predicaments." *Africa* 37.2 (1967): 155–187.

[DOI: <u>10.2307/1158253</u>]

Informed by E. E. Evans-Pritchard's famous prewar study of the Azande's belief in witchcraft, this often critically discussed essay argues that sub-Saharan belief systems are characteristically "closed" in comparison with Western ones, making them comparatively immune to revision.

Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2d ed. Oxford: Heinemann, 1990.

One of the first sympathetic accounts of African worldviews written by an African scholar, and of them certainly the most influential. Although many of its claims about the nature of African society as such are hotly contested, it remains a widely read classic, having initially appeared in 1969.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization.* **Rev. ed. New York: Monthly Review, 1970.**

First published in 1964. The former Ghanaian president presents the most Marxist version of anticapitalist philosophies espoused by post-independence African political leaders, maintaining that a dialectical materialist understanding of human life underwrites a conception of dignity entailing socialism.

Nyerere, Julius. *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism.* **Galaxy Book 359. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.**

The former leader of Tanzania known for having enforced collectivized agriculture, Nyerere maintains that village-based, agrarian socialism is entailed by the communal way of life dominant among sub-Saharans, their egalitarian value system, and some considerations involving realpolitik.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar. *On African Socialism.* **Translated by Mercer Cook. London: Pall Mall, 1964.**

The first president of Senegal famously argues that different races have different cultures; that black African culture, or *négritude*, is largely characterized by communalist values, spiritual beliefs, and holistic and intuitive forms of judgment (contrasting with the individualism, materialism, and analyticity of European whites), and that such traits underwrite a socialist approach to political economy.

Tempels, Placide. Bantu Philosophy. **2d ed. Translated by Colin King. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959.**

A missionary's attempt to make the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical beliefs of Bantu speakers comprehensible to European colonialists. It was upon the publication of this work that people outside of African really began to think of sub-Saharans as having thoughtful worldviews. Often criticized for overgeneralizing about African societies in general, but many still take Tempels's discussion of the fundamental concept of life force to be worthy of reflection.

Winch, Peter. "Understanding a Primitive Society." *American Philosophical Quarterly* **1 (1964): 307–324.**

Defends a largely relativist approach to knowledge, according to which it can be rational for some societies to believe in witches, even if it is not for other societies.

METAPHILOSOPHY

For much of the 1980s and 1990s, African philosophy was substantially preoccupied with issues regarding the nature of African philosophy itself. One urgent question among this metaphilosophical reflection is whether African philosophy, in some important sense, even exists. Some works, such as Bodunrin 1984 and Hountondji 1996, suggest that African philosophy is merely in the process of being created, given the need for a substantial written corpus that is being developed only in the postwar era, while others, including Wright 1984, Oruka 1990, and Wiredu 2002, contend that philosophy can be readily found in oral cultures. Related to this debate is whether "ethnophilosophy," the systematized written exposition of a worldview purportedly held by traditional sub-Saharans generally, of the sort presented by Placide Tempels and John S. Mbiti (see Precursors

to the Contemporary Debates), is the correct term or counts as genuine "philosophy." Here again, <u>Bodunrin 1984</u> and <u>Hountondji 1996</u> maintain that it is not, since ethnophilosophy lacks a critical or argumentative element, while <u>Wright 1984</u> and <u>Oruka 1990</u> are more generous. Implicit in the debate about whether African philosophy exists are, of course, views about what the phrase "African philosophy" means. Beyond consideration of whether philosophy is or requires a body of written texts that express critical reflection, perhaps on certain themes of universal relevance to human beings, one encounters discussion about what it is for philosophy to count as "African," with <u>Appiah 1992</u> carefully considering whether the term is best understood to signify a territory, a race, a method, a set of interests, or something else, and <u>Hountondji 1996</u> notoriously taking the term merely to indicate philosophy written by an African. A further issue for the field is what the proper method is for African philosophers, perhaps qua African. Here, the options include, among others, ethnophilosophy (<u>Wright 1984</u>); "philosophical sagacity," wherein one recounts the views of the wise and rationally reflective elders of a given society (<u>Oruka 1990</u>); hermeneutic enquiry into a particular culture (<u>Serequeberhan 1994</u>); a "holistic" apprehension of a subject matter (<u>Ramose 1999</u>); or an analytic approach of the sort characteristic of Anglo–American philosophy (<u>Hallen 2006</u>). Similar to the issue of method is that of taxonomy, the classification of different types of African philosophy, with the <u>Oruka 1990</u> schema being by far the most influential. Additionally, there is debate about what the proper aims of African philosophy ought to be, with, for example, <u>Wright 1984</u> suggesting that it is good for its own sake, simply to understand African perspectives, and <u>Wiredu 2002</u> maintaining that African philosophy ought to help sub–Saharan peoples make informed decisions about which concepts to employ, free from the distortions and pressures of colonial influences.

> **Appiah, K. Anthony. "Ethnophilosophy and Its Critics." In *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. By K. Anthony Appiah, 85-106. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.**
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> A chapter from one of the most widely read books in African philosophy, including by those outside philosophy, no doubt because of its erudition and interdisciplinarity.

> **Bodunrin, Peter. "The Question of African Philosophy." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. 3d ed. Edited by Richard A. Wright, 1–23. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.**
>
> Along with Pauline Hountondji, one of the African philosophers most critical of folk worldviews and ethnophilosophy as being insufficiently philosophical.

> **Hallen, Barry. *African Philosophy: The Analytic Approach*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2006.**
>
> Although other African philosophers take an approach to philosophy that focuses on clarity, logic, and truth, Hallen is most willing to call it "analytical" and to apply what is often deemed to be a "Western" method to African content.

> **Hountondji, Pauline. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. 2d ed. Translated by Henri Evans. African Systems of Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.**
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> First published in French (Paris: Maspero, 1976) and later in English (London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1983), this book has been the most influential text from Francophone sub–Sahara in the contemporary era, and it is a must–read for those interested in metaphilosophical debates. Worth

comparing with Hountondji's more recent statement, *The Struggle for Meaning* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2002).

Oruka, H. Odera. *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy*. Nairobi, Kenya: Shirikon, 1990.

The most influential philosopher from Kenya, Oruka contends that recent work in sub-Saharan philosophy consists of four basic types: ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy. In later work he added two more categories, hermeneutic philosophy and artistic and literary philosophy.

Ramose, Mogobe. *African Philosophy through* Ubuntu. Harare, Zimbabwe: Mond, 1999.

Argues that the linguistic structure of Bantu languages expresses a metaphysical picture of the world as "rheomodic"—roughly, as consisting of undivided movement, which requires a kind of holistic and definitively nonanalytic philosophical method to capture.

Serequeberhan, Tsenay. *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Along with Theophilus Okere, Serequeberhan has done the most not only to expound but also to defend as particularly apt for an African context the method of interpreting a proverb, song, or, in principle, anything that has a meaning in ways that can be expected to help liberate sub-Saharans.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "Conceptual Decolonization as an Imperative in Contemporary African Philosophy: Some Personal Reflections." *Revue Rue Descartes* 36.2 (2002): 53–64.

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Draws a useful distinction between what African philosophy is and what it ought to be, and argues that the latter, desirable kind of African philosophy should serve the function of promoting intellectual freedom of a certain kind for sub-Saharan peoples.

Wright, Richard A. "Investigating African Philosophy." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. 3d ed. Edited by Richard A. Wright, 41–55. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.

Editor of the first widely read anthology devoted to African philosophy, Wright in this chapter defends a widely inclusive sense of what belongs under that heading.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Most of the recent debate among philosophers of knowledge in Africa has concerned the nature of justified belief, occasioned largely by the awareness that friends of Western science are quick to discount the tendency of indigenous Africans not only to believe something because it has been traditionally believed or because an elder has recounted it, but also to believe in a variety of "spiritual" agents and forces, such as ancestors, witchcraft, magic, and the like. Kwasi Wiredu is well known for criticizing "unanalytical" and "superstitious"

belief formation that he deems widespread in indigenous African culture; see <u>Wiredu 1980</u>. <u>Menkiti 2004</u> implicitly replies to Wiredu on the issue of superstition, arguing that when what he calls "the village" in Africa appeals to "spiritual" entities and forces, it is doing so grounded in empirical considerations in a way that is not qualitatively different from Western forms of explanation. In addition, <u>Ikuenobe 2006</u> explicitly replies to Wiredu on the issue of lack of analytic argumentation, contending that Wiredu and similar critics implicitly appeal to internalist and individualist conceptions of epistemic justification that are questionable in light of recent work by Anglo–American epistemologists. Relatedly, <u>Hallen and Sodipo 1997</u> provides reason to reconsider the extent of traditionalism among indigenous Yorubas, pointing out that to have evidence such as to know a proposition, it is not enough to have been told it by an authority; instead, first-person empirical verification of a proposition is crucial for knowing it. Another interesting debate concerns the sources of epistemically justified belief, with <u>van Binsbergen 2003</u> and <u>Mosley 2004</u> contending that there is evidence that paranormal cognition can be an independent source alongside memory, perception, and the like. In addition to work on justification, one encounters interesting discussions about truth, with <u>Wiredu 2004</u> critically discussing the correspondence theory of the nature of truth and the fact that it is a nonstarter in the philosophy of the Ghanaian Akan because of their linguistic structure,and <u>Sogolo 2003</u> arguing for a broadly relativist approach to the scope of truth. Not merely epistemic, but also pragmatic considerations for belief formation figure in <u>Horsthemke 2004</u>, which argues against the tendency of many African scholars to believe and instruct sub–Saharan worldviews primarily because doing so is likely, say, to foster an African identity or to promote self–esteem.

Hallen, Barry, and J. Olubi Sodipo. *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*. **2d ed. Mestizo Spaces. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.**

These are the findings of analytic philosophical exchanges with Yoruba shamans, and the authors report that, contrary to the widely held stereotype that tradition and testimony are sufficient grounds for belief, many Yoruba believe that one knows something only if one has seen it.

Horsthemke, Kai. "'Indigenous Knowledge': Conceptions and Misconceptions." *Journal of Education* **32 (2004): 31–48.**

Argues against the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) movement that is strong is South Africa and elsewhere on the continent, according to which traditional belief systems ought to be deemed sources of propositional knowledge at least equally valid as those of Western science.

Ikuenobe, Polycarp. *Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism and Morality in African Traditions*. **Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006.**

Ikuenobe appeals to recent "social" trends in contemporary analytic epistemology, such as testimony, reliabilism, contextualism, and an epistemic division of labor, to defend the epistemic rationality of believing a proposition because it has been traditionally held or voiced by elders. See in particular pages 175–213.

Menkiti, I. A. "Physical and Metaphysical Understanding." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. **Edited by Lee Brown, 107–135. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Argues that, contrary to stereotypes about African culture, traditional sub-Saharan epistemology is largely grounded in empirical, publicly verifiable considerations, so that appeals to what Westerners would call the "supernatural" or "spiritual" are often really quasi-physical explanations that are continuous with perception, no different in kind to quantum mechanical appeals to unobservables in the West.

Mosley, Albert. "Witchcraft, Science, and the Paranormal in Contemporary African Philosophy." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. **Edited by Lee Brown, 136–157. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Critically engages with the work of Peter Bodunrin, a Nigerian philosopher who argued that there is a lack of evidence for telepathy, clairvoyance, and the like. Mosley appeals to distinctions and theories in contemporary analytic epistemology as well as experimental findings to defend the claim that paranormal cognition is a "mode of knowing," as many traditional sub-Saharan societies maintain.

Sogolo, Godwin. "Logic and Rationality." In *The African Philosophy Reader* **2d ed. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 244–258. New York: Routledge, 2003.**

Recounts some essentials of the classic Peter Winch-Steven Lukes-Martin Hollis debate about relativism from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, with a focus on the Congolese-Sudanese Azande's belief in witchcraft, and generally defends Winch's belief in the "incommensurability of different forms of life."

van Binsbergen, Wim. *Intercultural Encounters: African and Anthropological Lessons towards a Philosophy of Interculturality*. **Munster, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2003.**

Written by a European professional philosopher who recounts the process by which he became a southern African *sangoma* (diviner-priest) and defends divination as an independent source of knowledge.

Wiredu, Kwasi. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. **Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980.**

In the first few chapters of this book, the foremost African philosopher in the world criticizes traditionalist approaches to belief formation that he finds practiced widely in African societies, railing against "indoctrination," "unquestioning obedience," and an "unanalytical, unscientific attitude of mind."

Wiredu, Kwasi. "Truth and an African Language." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. **Edited by Lee Brown, 35–50. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Critically discusses the correspondence theory of truth and contends, interestingly, that this theory is "tongue-dependent," that is, has purchase only for those working within certain languages, for, in the Akan language, the theory is a mere tautology.

METAPHYSICS

Anyone interested in African conceptions of being qua being, or the most fundamental categories of reality,

must read the classic work of Placide Tempels on the worldview of Bantu-speaking peoples (Tempels 1959, cited under Precursors to the Contemporary Debates). Kagame 1956 writes largely in reaction to Tempels and famously suggests, on the basis of an intricate analysis of the Kinyarwanda language, that there are four basic facets of existence, in later work generalizing to all cultures with a Bantu language. Ramose 2003 also starts with the etymology and grammar of southern African languages to articulate a philosophical view of reality, one conceived as fundamentally fluid and interconnected. With regard to specialized topics in metaphysics, African philosophers are often concerned not merely to analyze "spiritual" entities, such as God (Oladipo 2004), but also to defend their existence (Gyekye 1995), particularly those agents not salient in the Western tradition, such as witches (Oluwole 1995) and ancestors (Brown 2004). However, some African philosophers would question the physical–spiritual dichotomy that is common in Anglo-American approaches to metaphysics, which Gbadegesin 1991 discusses. Causation too has received systematic enquiry, with works such as Sogolo 2003 articulating and defending the appeal to supernatural causes typical of indigenous African thought. There is interesting work on African approaches to time, which are often critical reactions to John Mbiti's classic discussion (in Mbiti 1990, cited under Precursors to the Contemporary Debates), here represented by Masolo 1994.

Brown, Lee. "Understanding and Ontology in Traditional African Thought." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. Edited by Lee Brown, 158–178. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Argues that characteristic African belief in the existence of ancestors who have survived the deaths of their human bodies is no worse than typical Western theistic claims, and furthermore, that their existence does not flout the findings of Western science with regard to, for example, artificial intelligence and physics.

Gbadegesin, Segun. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. American University Studies 5.5. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.

Spells out the cosmic worldview of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and usefully compares and contrasts it with Christian, and more generally Western, understandings of the basic nature of reality.

Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

Spells out not only the problem of evil for the existence of the divine as it is faced by religious believers among the Ghanaian Akan, but also the way they seek to resolve it by appeal to free will. Also maintains that the ontological argument for God's existence is a nonstarter among the Akan, as there is no linguistic or conceptual space for its key premise. See in particular pages 123–128 and 177–181.

Kagame, Alexis. *La philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L'être*. Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956.

Although still available only in French, this text and Kagame's other major work, *La philosophie Bantu comparée* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1976), are essential for anyone interested in the fundamental categories of existence among Bantu speakers.

Masolo, D. A. "Cultures without Time? Mbiti's Religious Ethnology." In *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. By D. A. Masolo, 103–121. African Systems of Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

A critical discussion of the influential and hotly contested claim in John Mbiti's classic work (Mbiti 1990, cited under Precursors to the Contemporary Debates that those in African cultures typically do not think in terms of a long-term future.

Oladipo, Olusegun. "Religion in African Culture: Some Conceptual Issues." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 355–363. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 28. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Spells out the religious metaphysics of the Yoruba, comparing and contrasting their conception of the Supreme Being and of their relation to it and other divinities with the basic tenets of Christianity.

Oluwole, Sophie. "On the Existence of Witches." In *African Philosophy: Selected Readings*. Edited by Albert Mosley, 357–370. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995.

At least tries to argue that it is not certain that witches do not exist, and at most aims to establish that there are some events that existing science cannot explain and that are plausibly accounted for by positing the reality of witchcraft.

Ramose, Mogobe. "The Philosophy of *Ubuntu* and *Ubuntu* as a Philosophy." In *The African Philosophy Reader* 2d ed. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 230–238. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Maintains that a characteristic African approach to the fundamental nature of reality, which can be gleaned from the structure of Bantu languages, involves seeing it as a whole, the various life forces of which are in constant motion.

Sogolo, Godwin. "The Concept of Cause in African Thought." In *The African Philosophy Reader* 2d ed. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 192–199. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Articulates, in the context of sickness and health, the kinds of causes that traditional Africans tend to believe exist, and argues that they are often reasonable to believe in a kind of nonmechanistic causation, since causal ascription can depend on the practical interests of the ascriber.

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

This category is construed broadly to include not only discussion of the mind-brain relationship but also issues in free will and personal identity. With respect to the question of who a person essentially is as numerically distinct from others, it is characteristic of sub-Saharan philosophers to believe that one is identical to some spiritual facet of one's nature that can survive the death of one's body, articulated in Engmann 1992 and supported with philosophical argumentation that is worth taking seriously in Adeofe 2004. Another theory of

personal identity that one might expect to find among African philosophers, at least in light of John Mbiti's widely quoted remark that "I am because we are," is the view that the community to which one belongs at least partially determines who one essentially is. Such a theory is not easy to find explicitly advocated in the literature, but the ideas in Malpas 1999 would be useful to African philosophers wanting to develop it. Regarding free will, recall that in the Western tradition a soul-oriented account of the self is usually conjoined with an indeterminist (namely, libertarian) account of free will, and a physical account of the self is typically held alongside either hard or soft determinism. Interestingly, in the African tradition, exemplified here by reflection on the Ghanaian Akan worldview in Gyekye 1995 and Wiredu 1996, one finds a spiritual account of the self paired with a soft determinist account of free will. One reason for this combination is that many indigenous African communities believe that a person's spiritual nature carries a destiny, with Gyekye 1995 and Gbadegesin 2004 providing reflective analysis of what that plausibly involves and of how one might understand it as compatible with responsibility for one's life. In terms of the mind–brain debate, the dominant theme among African philosophers is an anti-reductive-materialist approach, that is, a rejection of the view that the mind is a substance identical to the brain, as Masolo 2010 articulates. Views of what is both characteristically sub-Saharan and plausible range from the denial that the mind is a substance of any sort and is instead a disposition of a certain kind (Wiredu 1987, Kwame 2004), to the claim that the mind is identical to an immaterial substance (Gyekye 1995).

> **Adeofe, Leke. "Personal Identity in African Metaphysics." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. Edited by Lee Brown, 69–83. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**
>
> Argues that both the unity of the mind and the ability to recognize oneself from a first-person perspective are evidence in favor of a roughly soul-based account of who a person essentially is.

> **Engmann, Joyce. "Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought." In *Person and Community*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 153–190. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.**
>
> An intricate exploration of the Ghanaian Ga people's conception of oneself as essentially constituted by a spiritual facet that is able to survive the death of the body.

> **Gbadegesin, Segun. "An Outline of a Theory of Destiny." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. Edited by Lee Brown, 51–68. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.**
>
> Gbadegesin has written more than any other African philosopher on the belief in destiny that is so widely held among sub-Saharans. Here he presents the view of destiny held by the Nigerian Yoruba and critically addresses questions such as whether one chooses one's destiny and whether, if not, destiny is compatible with free will.

> **Gyekye, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.**
>
> Presents a Cartesian dualist account of the mind and the self as well as a soft determinist account of free will, an unusual combination of positions. See in particular pages 85–128 and 163–169.

Kwame, Safro. "Quasi-Materialism: A Contemporary African Philosophy of Mind." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 343–351. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Argues that a typically African approach to the mind, and the one that is most defensible, is "quasi-physicalism," according to which the mind is not a substance but rather a capacity that cannot be reduced to an object captured by the language of physics, but it is dependent on the physical for its behavior.

Malpas, Jeff. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511487606]

Although not in the tradition of African philosophy, Malpas's ideas about the way personal identity is determined by place should be of interest to African thinkers who want to develop the ubiquitous claim that "the community is prior to the individual" into a metaphysical account of personal identity.

Masolo, D. A. "Understanding Personhood." In *Self and Community in a Changing World*. By D. A. Masolo, 135–181. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Critically compares Wiredu's conception of the mind, grounded in the thought of the Ghanaian Akan, with contemporary Anglo-American, particularly physicalist, philosophies of mind.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "The Concept of Mind with Particular Reference to the Language and Thought of the Akans." In *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey* Vol. 5, *African Philosophy*. Edited by Guttorm Floistad, 153–180. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1987.

Maintains that a certain Ghanaian people's philosophy of mind is compatible with a thoroughgoing materialism, since it conceives of mind as a capacity for thought, a view akin to functionalism in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "African Philosophical Tradition: A Case Study of the Akan." In *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. By Kwasi Wiredu, 113–135. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

A clear and detailed analysis of the Ghanaian Akan's soft determinist views of free will and responsibility.

PERSONHOOD

The personhood debate, one of the most salient features of contemporary African philosophy, concerns the meaning of the term "person," or sometimes "human," in sub-Saharan societies. Quite often these terms are used in two different ways—namely, in a descriptive or metaphysical sense, on the one hand, and a prescriptive or axiological sense, on the other. In the former, ontological sense, all readers of this article are persons; that is, they are beings whose nature differs from that of animals, perhaps by virtue of having a certain kind of body, type of intelligence, and sort of life force that has come from God. However, chances are that not all readers of this article are persons in the normative sense, in that not all have developed the valuable facets of their human

nature; that is, some have not become virtuous. Just as an unjust law is not a "real" law as per Saint Augustine, so sub-Saharans would typically say of an immoral individual that "he or she is not a person," or even that "he or she is an animal." Wiredu 1992 and Gyekye 1992 explicitly address both senses of "personhood," with the latter critically discussing the potential relationships between them, noting a tendency to try to derive normative conclusions from metaphysical premises about the alleged "ontological priority" of the community over the individual. With regard to the metaphysical sense of "personhood," Kaphagawani 2004 provides the most wide-ranging overview, discussing several conceptions of it that are prominent in West and East Africa. Gbadegesin 1991 critically discusses the Nigerian Yoruba account of human nature and compares it with that of the Ghanaian Akan, while Appiah 2004 sketches the basics of Akan and Western views of why people behave the way they do and argues that the Akan are reasonable to retain their view in the face of Western criticism. Regarding the axiological sense of "personhood," two influential papers, Menkiti 1984 and Menkiti 2004, explain what is involved in the African idea of it being an achievement, one fully made only by elders who have lived up to certain communal norms. Detailed and thoughtful analyses of what it means with regard to virtue to become a full person for the Acoli and Luo peoples of Uganda are found in Pido 2000 and Masolo 2010, respectively.

Appiah, K. Anthony. "Akan and Euro-American Concepts of the Person." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*. Edited by Lee Brown, 21–34. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Argues that those who believe in an African account of the metaphysical nature of personhood have good practical reason to continue to believe in it, as well as no epistemic reason not to, since there is no non-question-begging way to choose between competing theories.

Gbadegesin, Segun. "Enìyàn: The Yoruba Concept of a Person." In *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. By Segun Gbadegesin, 27–59. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.

A thorough, critical analysis of the Yoruba conception of human nature, dealing with both physical and nonphysical aspects and their relation to each other.

Gyekye, Kwame. "Person and Community in African Thought." In *Person and Community.* Edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 101–122. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

A discussion focusing mostly on the normative sense of personhood that famously uses Menkiti 1984 as a foil.

Kaphagawani, Didier. "African Conceptions of a Person: A Critical Survey." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 332–342. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 28. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

A widely read analytic enquiry into several major metaphysical accounts of personhood salient in sub-Saharan societies.

Masolo, D. A. *Self and Community in a Changing World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

About half of the book is devoted to exploring the developmental and relational notion of personhood typically found in African moral philosophy. Particularly interesting here is the analysis of personhood through a critical comparison of the philosophical anthropologies of Immanuel Kant and Kwasi Wiredu and its invocation to ground a non-Western communitarian social and political philosophy.

Menkiti, Ifeanyi. "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. **3d. ed. Edited by Richard A. Wright, 171–181. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.**

One of the most widely read texts in African moral philosophy, this essay was one of the first to make clear to English-speaking audiences that talk of "personhood" in an African context often differs substantially from that one in a Western context.

Menkiti, Ifeanyi. "On the Normative Conception of a Person." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. **Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 324–331. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 28. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.**

An updated statement from Menkiti on the normative dimensions of personhood for characteristic African thought that is in many ways clearer than his earlier, influential contribution.

Pido, J. P. Odoch. "Personhood and Art: Social Change and Commentary among the Acoli." In *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry*. **Edited by Ivan Karp and D. A. Masolo, 105–135. African Systems of Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.**

Uniquely and refreshingly addresses personhood from an aesthetic standpoint by interpreting a song.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "The African Concept of Personhood." In *African-American Perspectives on Biomedical Ethics*. **Edited by H. E. Flack and E. E. Pellegrino, 104–117. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1992.**

A clear statement of the metaphysical and normative aspects of personhood talk among the Akan people in Ghana, though surprisingly without substantial application to a bioethical context.

ETHICAL THEORY

The two goods most often considered fundamental in African moral philosophy are community and life—or sometimes "life force", an invisible energy that is thought to come from God and to permeate the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. Kasenene 2000 takes no clear view on whether community or life force is more basic, simply placing them side by side as salient elements of African morality. However, most sub-Saharan ethical philosophers suggest that one value is derived from the other, with some taking the value of life to be fundamental. Here, a person's ultimate moral obligation is a matter of increasing either his or her own vitality, as discussed in Shutte 2001, or everyone's, something that he or she can do only upon communing with others, as per Dzobo 1992, Magesa 1997, and Bujo 2001. For these philosophers, community is either constitutive of vitality, a cause of it, or a way to discover how to promote it. In contrast, Gbadegesin 1991,

Wiredu 1992, and Metz 2007 are straightforwardly read as taking the value of community to be at the heart of African morality. Roughly, one's sole nonderivative duty is to prize communal relationships, conceived in terms of cohesion, harmony, or sympathy, which requires, among other things, valuing others' lives or liveliness. Gyekye 2010 does not fit this schema, taking well-being to be the morally fundamental value, with communal relationships as reliable means by which to promote it. Both the vitalist and the communitarian conceptions of ethics present fascinating, underexplored rivals to the dominant approaches in the West, which focus on autonomy and well-being.

Bujo, Bénézet. *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality.* **New York: Crossroad, 2001.**

Seeking to reconcile Christian theology with African traditionalism, Bujo presents a spiritual ethical system in which we must honor human life, which means promoting the "fullness of life" by communing with other persons, including ancestors who are believed to have survived the deaths of their bodies.

Dzobo, N. K. "Values in a Changing Society: Man, Ancestors, and God." In *Person and Community.*, **Edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 223–240. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.**

Regards life, conceived as "dynamic creative energy," as the ultimate value in African ethics, which underwrites various norms with regard to marriage, work, and education.

Gbadegesin, Segun. "Individuality, Community, and the Moral Order." In *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities.* **By Segun Gbadegesin, 61–82. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.**

Argues that in African societies ethical norms are often deemed to obtain independently of God's will, and that they can be captured by a duty to "consider [one]self an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role toward achieving the good of all."

Gyekye, Kwame. "African Ethics." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* **Edited by E. N. Zalta. 2010.**

A comprehensive overview of the normative ethics of virtue and of rightness in sub-Saharan societies, as well as of meta-ethical issues regarding the (non)religious source of morality. Gyekye maintains that sub-Saharan morality is broadly naturalist and utilitarian in that "actions that promote human welfare or interest are good, while those that detract from human welfare are bad," where hospitality, solidarity, and mutual aid are good actions.

Kasenene, Peter. "African Ethical Theory and the Four Principles." In *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Medical Ethics.* **Edited by R. M. Veatch, 347–357. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2000.**

Spells out some basic elements of characteristic sub-Saharan prizing of vitality and of community and then draws out their implications for considerations of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice in a medical context.

Magesa, Laurenti. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. **Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997.**

Takes one's basic duty to be to enhance life force among people, and considers how this is to be done by way of certain communal practices in a variety of social spheres, such as family, medicine, and criminal justice.

Metz, Thaddeus. "Toward an African Moral Theory." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15.3 (2007): 321–341.

[DOI: 10.1111/j.1467–9760.2007.00280.x]

The most systematic attempt to develop a comprehensive and fundamental principle of right action grounded on sub-Saharan norms that could compete with the Western principles of respect and utility, this article argues that the prescription to prize relationships of identity and solidarity best captures salient African ethical intuitions.

Shutte, Augustine. Ubuntu*: An Ethic for the New South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster, 2001.

A comprehensive treatment of African ethics. Shutte presents a theoretical interpretation of it in terms of a basic duty to realize oneself by entering into community with others, which he applies to several practical matters, including education, work, and politics.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "The Moral Foundations of an African Culture." In *Person and Community.* Edited by Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 193–206. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.

Contends that much African morality is captured by the golden rule, conceived as a matter of recommending action in light of a sympathetic and impartial identification with others' interests.

APPLIED ETHICS

Often the positions that African moral philosophers take on applied issues play down the values of autonomy and desert, at least as "individualistically" construed in the West, and instead defend a requirement to respect life or communal relationships that would leave fewer matters to be determined by voluntary choice. Consider that in the field of business ethics it is routinely suggested that markets be tempered by duties to protect lives or to support collective decision making, a perspective represented in this section by Khoza 2006 and Nussbaum 2009 (see also Ramose 1999, Presbey 2002, and Nkondo 2007 in Political Philosophy). In the literature on medical ethics, one commonly finds the claims that abortion and suicide are impermissible and that duties of confidentiality are weak insofar as an individual's health is a communal matter. Such views are here expounded by Tangwa 1996 and Murove 2009 (see also Magesa 1997 and Kasenene 2000 in Ethical Theory). With regard to environmental ethics, it is frequently claimed that caring for nature is required to protect present and future human lives and that nature may not be exploited, because, say, particular human

beings cannot own it or they have a duty to treat it as akin to a family (Oruka and Juma 1994, Kelbessa 2008). When it comes to criminal justice ethics, it is a recurrent theme in the literature that reconciliation— namely, the restoration of community— and not retribution should be the primary goal in responding to wrongdoing, articulated here by Louw 2006 and Krog 2008 (see also Magesa 1997 in Ethical Theory and Bell 2002 in Introductory Works and General Overviews). A large majority of applied research that appeals to sub-Saharan values is in these fields of business, medical, environmental, and criminal justice ethics; however, one will find additional applied ethical topics in Iroegbu and Echekwube 2005 (see also Murove 2009 in Collections).

Iroegbu, Pantaleon, and Anthony Echekwube, eds. *Kpim of Morality Ethics: General, Special, and Professional*. **Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann, 2005.**

A large text, nearly seven hundred pages long, that includes several dozen short chapters of uneven quality, principally by Nigerian philosophers, including about two dozen entries by the editors. The book addresses a wide variety of applied issues, ranging from euthanasia to cloning, informed consent, worker migration, and corporate social responsibility, often, but not always, from an African standpoint.

Kelbessa, Workineh. *Indigenous and Modern Environmental Ethics: A Study of the Indigenous Oromo Environmental Ethic and Modern Issues of Environment and Development*. **Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change 2.13. Washington, DC: Council for Research and Values in Philosophy, 2008.**

The only book-length treatment of environmental ethics by an African philosopher, with a very heavy exposition and application of the views of an Ethiopian traditional people.

Khoza, Reuel. *Let Africa Lead: African Transformational Leadership for 21st Century Business*. **Johannesburg, South Africa: Vezubuntu, 2006.**

A thoughtful articulation of several key values of traditional African morality and their applications to contemporary issues in business.

Krog, Antjie. "'This Thing Called Reconciliation . . .': Forgiveness as Part of an Interconnectedness-towards-Wholeness." *South African Journal of Philosophy* **27.4 (2008): 353–366.**

Arguably the most perspicacious commentator on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Krog spells out how it was southern African morality, and not Christianity or human rights discourse, that largely motivated Africans to seek to reconcile with former apartheid agents and beneficiaries.

Louw, Dirk. "The African Concept of *Ubuntu* **and Restorative Justice." In** *Handbook of Restorative Justice: A Global Perspective*. **Edited by Dennis Sullivan and Larry Tifft, 161–172. New York: Routledge, 2006.**

Explains how a restorative approach to wrongdoing naturally follows from several core facets of *ubuntu*, the word used by Zulu, Xhosa, and Ndebele speakers in southern Africa for "humanness" or "virtue."

Murove, Munyaradzi Felix. "African Bioethics: An Exploratory Discourse." In *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*. **Edited by Munyaradzi Felix Murove, 157–177.**

Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009.

A Zimbabwean theologian and ethicist who has edited the first real anthology devoted to sub-Saharan morality, Murove maintains that a given bioethical approach is properly grounded in a local culture, and then spells out salient facets of characteristic African culture as they bear on sickness and health care.

Nussbaum, Barbara. "*Ubuntu* and Business: Reflections and Questions." In *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*. Edited by Munyaradzi Felix Murove, 238-258. Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009.

Indicates how managerial decision making and the production process would differ if informed by an African ethic, providing several real-life examples.

Oruka, H. Odera, and Calestous Juma. "Ecophilosophy and Parental Earth Ethics." In *Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology*. Edited by H. Odera Oruka, 115-129. Nairobi, Kenya: ACTS, 1994.

An influential environmental ethics text among African philosophers. The authors argue for a "parental debt principle," roughly according to which the flourishing of one person depends on the flourishing of others.

Tangwa, Godfrey. "Bioethics: An African Perspective." *Bioethics* 10.3 (1996): 183-200.
[DOI: 10.1111/1467-8519.00020]

The most visible and influential African philosopher working in medical ethics in the early 21st century, Tangwa recounts several values and principles from his native Nso' culture in Cameroon and applies them to bioethical issues.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The most distinctive contribution in political philosophy from the African tradition concerns political power. A number of theorists, represented here by Wiredu 1996, Gyekye 1997, and Ramose 1999, argue that sub-Saharan values prescribe a consensus-based form of decision making among legislators, not the competitive, party-based, and majoritarian form that is ubiquitous in the West and in Africa. Wamba-dia-Wamba 1992 and Presbey 2003 also address the topic of democratic political power, but with a focus on the degree to which it should be centralized in an African context. In terms of which decisions government ought to make, as opposed to how it ought to make them, Ramose 1999 and Nkondo 2007 provide explicit accounts of the proper final ends of the state. Most contemporary African political philosophers believe that among them is the protection of human rights. However, there is rich debate about what human rights are grounded on, which ones there are, how to make trade-offs among them, and how they relate to duties of beneficence. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, adopted in the 1980s, was the first major agreement to include group rights, something that Ake 1987 maintains is rightly a weighty facet of African political morality. Gyekye 1997 and Metz 2010 appeal to different conceptions of dignity salient in traditional African morality to ground human (individual) rights. Although many African political philosophers accept human rights, few are full-blown liberals with regard to civil liberty, with most advocating some kind of communitarian legislation, exemplified here by

Nkondo 2007. Similarly, libertarianism is alien to characteristic sub-Saharan morality, with economic redistribution advocated, in different ways, by Gyekye 1997, Ramose 1999, Presbey 2002, and Nkondo 2007.

Ake, Claude. "The African Context of Human Rights." *Africa Today* 34.1–2 (1987): 5–12.

Famously argues that the communal value system of traditional African society entails not only that socioeconomic rights are no less weighty than civil-political rights, but also that group rights are of at least comparable importance to individual rights.

Gyekye, Kwame. *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

The most in-depth, wide-ranging, and well-known book in African political philosophy. Gyekye argues, among other things, that the best interpretation of sub-Saharan morality is a "moderate communitarianism," entailing weighty social responsibilities constrained by the observance of individual rights, and he maintains that this theory entails a consensus-based democracy, a market-oriented economy, and a substantial redistribution of wealth.

Metz, Thaddeus. "Human Dignity, Capital Punishment, and an African Moral Theory: Toward a New Philosophy of Human Rights." *Journal of Human Rights* 9.1 (2010): 81–99.

[DOI: 10.1080/14754830903530300]

Drawing on ideas salient in African moral thought, this article reconstructs a conception of human dignity as grounded in a person's capacity for harmonious relationships that, it is argued, entails that the death penalty is a human rights violation and promises to underwrite human rights in general.

Nkondo, Gessler Muxe. "*Ubuntu* as a Public Policy in South Africa: A Conceptual Framework." *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 2.1 (2007): 88–100.

Spells out some essentials of a characteristically southern African approach to morality, often captured by the term *ubuntu*, and applies them to some concrete institutional issues, such as economic production, higher education, and civil liberty.

Presbey, Gail M. "African Philosophers on Global Wealth Distribution." In *Thought and Practice in African Philosophy: Selected Papers of the Sixth Annual Conference of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies*. Edited by Gail M. Presbey, Daniel Smith, and Pamela A. Abuye, 283–300. Occasional Papers, East Africa 5. Nairobi, Kenya: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2002.

A critical discussion of the ideas of H. Odera Oruka on redistributive justice and of Segun Gbadegesin on the right to work, both in an international context.

Presbey, Gail M. "Unfair Distribution of Resources in Africa: What Should Be Done about the Ethnicity Factor?" *Human Studies* 26.1 (2003): 21–40.

[DOI: 10.1023/A:1022583716722]

Explores various proposals, including "ethnic federalism," to deal with the inclination of sub-Saharan politicians to distribute resources in ways that favor groups with whom they identify.

Ramose, Mogobe. *African Philosophy through* **Ubuntu. Harare, Zimbabwe: Mond, 1999.**

This book's chapters on justice have often been reprinted. Ramose appeals to several moral principles salient in traditional sub-Saharan morality to argue, among other things, for creating an economy that treats people's lives as more important than money, sharing political power in the form of seeking consensus among lawmakers, and using law to promote harmonious relationships.

Wamba-dia-Wamba, Ernest. "Beyond Elite Politics of Democracy in Africa." *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* **6.1 (1992): 28–42.**

An influential paper arguing that proper democratic politics in Africa should not focus solely or mainly on a party-based state as the default mode of organization; even if a state is practically necessary, its power should be checked by the creation of local, deliberative committees.

Wiredu, Kwasi. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective.* **African Systems of Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.**

The most systematic attempt to argue against the majoritarian, party-based system of all contemporary democracies in favor of a nonparty polity according to which, to be just, a law must have been the object of consensus among elected legislators. See in particular pages 157–190.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The two central topics of debate among contemporary African philosophers of education concern its proper ends, on the one hand, and the right means by which to realize those ends, on the other. With respect to ends, Metz 2009 surveys more than fifty texts in the field, reduces the discussions of the appropriate final ends of (higher) education to five basic views, and then invokes an African moral theory to critically appraise them. Many African pedagogical theorists believe that proper ends of public (higher) education include not only inculcating the norms of the student's culture or imparting an African identity (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2003, Makgoba and Seepe 2004), but also fostering virtue, conceived in terms of a disposition to prize communal relationships in some way (Letseka 2000, Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2003, and Wiredu 2004). More liberal-oriented philosophers based below the Sahara argue that such communitarian ends would do African pupils an injustice (Dieltiens 2008, Horsthemke and Enslin 2008). Regarding the methods of education, traditional sub-Saharan education was notoriously "authoritarian," known for discouraging questioning, issuing threats, and employing rote techniques. Few contemporary scholars favor these means, with Metz and Gaie 2010 appealing to African values to argue against them, among other things. However, Ikuenobe 2006 interestingly defends a more traditionalist approach, arguing in a systematic way for using certain kinds of indoctrination in the classroom.

Adeyemi, Michael, and Augustus Adeyinka. "The Principles and Content of African Traditional Education." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* **35.4 (2003): 425–440.**

A largely sympathetic overview of several facets of education in indigenous sub-Saharan societies.

Dieltiens, Veerle. "'As Long as the Rain Still Falls We Must Cultivate': Africanist Challenges to Liberal Education." *Journal of Education* **45 (2008): 29–42.**

Argues that liberal principles are largely incompatible with an Africanist approach to education, and that the former are more defensible than the latter.

Horsthemke, Kai, and Penny Enslin. "African Philosophy of Education: The Price of Unchallengeability." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* **28.3 (2008): 209–222.**

Two of the most salient critics of the African philosophy of education interrogate some Africanist texts not taken up here, including works by Philip Higgs, Mogobe Ramose, and Yusuf Waghid.

Ikuenobe, Polycarp. *Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism and Morality in African Traditions.* **Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006.**

Argues that some kinds of indoctrination are inevitable in the education process, and that the value of individual rationality does not always outweigh other aims, such as virtue, for which "moderate indoctrination" would be an appropriate means. A controversial, thoughtfully argued position. See in particular pages 215–255.

Letseka, Moeketsi. "African Philosophy and Educational Discourse." In *African Voices in Education.* **Edited by Philip Higgs, N. C. G. Vakalisa, and T. V. Mda, 179–193. Lansdowne, South Africa: Juta, 2000.**

One of the first to seek to systematically ground answers to questions about the point of education in an Afro-communitarian moral philosophy.

Makgoba, Malegapuru, and Sipho Seepe. "Knowledge and Identity: An African Vision of Higher Education Transformation." In *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education.* **Edited by Sipho Seepe, 13–57. Pretoria, South Africa: Vista University, 2004.**

Two influential scholars from South Africa articulate and defend the view that public universities below the Sahara above all ought to promote the socioeconomic development of blacks, impart an African identity, rectify the "epistemic injustice" of colonialism by teaching African worldviews, and satisfy the needs and preferences of the black majority.

Metz, Thaddeus. "The Final Ends of Higher Education in Light of an African Moral Theory." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* **43.2 (2009): 179–201.**

Spells out a principle of right action informed by sub-Saharan values and applies it to the point of a public university, suggesting a revision of the final ends Africanists ought to advocate, while also aiming to rebut major liberal criticisms of an Afro-communitarian approach.

Metz, Thaddeus, and Joseph Gaie. "The African Ethic of *Ubuntu/Botho*: Implications for Research on Morality." *Journal of Moral Education* **39.3 (2010): 273–290.**

[DOI: 10.1080/03057240.2010.497609]

Two philosophers based in southern Africa present a philosophical interpretation of sub-Saharan morality and use it to address a variety of issues regarding moral education, including those regarding moral development and reasoning as famously studied by Lawrence Kohlberg.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "Prolegomena to an African Philosophy of Education." *South African Journal of Higher Education* **18.3 (2004): 17–26.**

Analyzes the concept of an educated person among the Akan, a Ghanaian people, and interestingly brings out some differences between their understanding of it and a typical Western one, with the former essentially including wisdom and moral insight as essential to education and the latter not.

FEMINISM

Feminism is not yet a well-defined subdiscipline in African philosophy, as Oluwole 1998 discusses. Extraordinarily few African women practice professional philosophy, and there is little interest in feminism among the men who principally do. However, given this article's aim to help facilitate fresh research, it discusses feminism as a distinct body of work that deserves more attention from the field and raises important issues in moral and political philosophy as well as in epistemology. With respect to the latter, one encounters the point that contemporary African philosophy has by and large adopted Euro-American male styles and methods and has excluded other (more) legitimate ways of knowing (Osha 2006, du Toit 2008). One also finds the recurrent suggestion that many of the epistemic categories used by Western feminists are inappropriate for an African context, leading to misinterpretations and inappropriate prescriptions (Nnaemeka 1998, Nzegwu 2002, Oyěwùmí 2003). Similarly, many claim that the values characteristic of African women's projects differ from those of some major strands of Western feminism and merit serious consideration (Nnaemeka 1998, Nzegwu 2002, Oyěwùmí 2003, Osha 2006), although some also maintain that there are deep commonalities between a Western feminist ethic of care and a traditional African communitarian morality (Harding 1998). There are important ethical discussions about power relationships, say, between wealthy, white academics and poor, African women whose lives they research (Nnaemeka 1998), between the Western feminist movement and those in Africa oppressed by practices such as polygamy and clitoridectomy (Okin 1999, Oyěwùmí 2003), between donor organizations and women in underdeveloped conditions (Nzegwu 2002), and between "malestream" researchers who typically dominate knowledge production in universities and feminist scholars who offer different and promising ways of interpreting reality (Mama 2002).

du Toit, Louise. "Old Wives' Tales and Philosophical Delusions: On 'The Problem of Women and African Philosophy'." *South African Journal of Philosophy* **27.4 (2008): 413–428.**

Maintains that the characteristically male approach to African philosophy alienates prospective female philosophers, raising issues not merely about the forms that philosophy can take but also about which sorts of knowledge are valuable.

Harding, Sandra. "The Curious Coincidence of Feminine and African Moralities." In *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 360–372. Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies 5. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

A thoughtful and interesting discussion of parallels between the feminist ethic of care and a characteristically African approach to morality, suggesting that both are born out of a reaction to approaches typical of Euro-American men.

Mama, Amina, ed. *Special Issue:* Intellectual Politics. *Feminist Africa* 1 (2002).

The central articles of this issue address a variety of topics relating to women in the African academy, including respects in which female academics are disrespected and feminist approaches are neglected.

Nnaemeka, Obioma, ed. *Sisterhood, Feminisms, and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 1998.

A large volume of more than five hundred pages, this collection addresses a wide variety of issues, including differences and conflicts between (Western) feminism and (African) womanism, as well as research ethics as it concerns the lives of African women. Of particular note is the suggestion that many African women prefer to share power with men rather than focus on securing individual rights to be free from men's interference.

Nzegwu, Nkiru, ed. *Special Issue:* Feminism and Africa. *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 2.1 (2002).

Includes articles relevant to feminist theory and applied ethics, among them discussions of how Euro-American understandings of family structure and motherhood differ from characteristic African ones in ways that should affect feminist analysis and an account of "donor ethics" as it pertains to nongovernmental organizations and the women they are seeking to aid.

Okin, Susan Moller, ed. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

In an "author meets critics" format, Okin argues in the lead essay that feminist and multiculturalist aspirations are often in irreconcilable tension, and that the former should take precedence, after which several Western academic philosophers, including Will Kymlicka, Martha Nussbaum, and Yael Tamir, critically engage with her, with Okin responding to them at the end.

Oluwole, Sophie. "Africa." In *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Edited by Alison Jaggar and Iris Marion Young, 96–107. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 12. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

Written by one of the handful of professional female African philosophers on the continent, this is an overview of the status of feminism in the field of African philosophy and of some major trends in African philosophy, pitched largely to a Western audience, with suggestions about how to develop African feminist philosophy.

Osha, Sanya, ed. *Special Issue:* African Feminisms. *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* 20.1–2 **(2006)**

A collection of articles largely by Africans, although not by philosophers, this issue includes enough philosophically relevant issues to be of interest, including the tensions between (Western) feminism and (African) womanism, the relation between anticolonialism and antipatriarchal struggle, the relevance of rights as a moral category for feminist agendas, and the epistemic and political relevance of philosophical method.

Oyĕwùmí, Oyèrónké, ed. *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood.* **Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2003.**

One of many books produced by this influential feminist sociologist, this collection, composed of contributions from African women lecturing in North America, discusses ways in which the African context is likely to ground a kind of feminism that differs from that in the West, as well as concerns about the Western feminist movement being "colonialist" with regard to African women.

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