CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY, IDENTITY AND THE QUESTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract
The issue of African identity is arguably the central plank of contemporary African philosophy due mainly to historical and contextual reasons. While the almost inadvertent attention to the theme highlights African philosophy as a discipline that is responsive to the exigencies of its immediate fulcrum, the attitude of many Africans in real life to the factors that undergird identity betrays this apparently worthy attention. This essay reviews the import of the issue of identity in contemporary African philosophy vis-a-vis the language policy of most African countries as well as the attitude of many Africans towards their indigenous languages. Given the pivotal importance of language in ensuring cultural identity it argues that there is an antithesis between the quest for identity and the neglect of African languages and concludes that the revival of African sense of identity requires a transvaluation of African values.

Introduction
To speak of contemporary African philosophy bespeaks of historicity of the sub-discipline. It is an affirmation that African philosophy is historical, as well as a statement against the views of scholars like C. B. Okolo (1992: 35) that African philosophy started with PlacideTempels' Bantu Philosophy. That Okolo's view is not defensible should be taken for granted given the current state of research on the history of African philosophy. Today we have histories of African philosophy taking full consideration of Ancient Egyptian philosophy, philosophy of North African Christian fathers of the Church, Islamic African philosophy, philosophy of diaspora Africans in pre-contemporary period, including Anton Wilhelm Amo, and of course, contemporary African philosophy.

Like all traditions of philosophy, all the epoch of history of African philosophy may not provide a seamless whole. Western philosophy between the end of the Ancient period and the rediscovery of Aristotle and Plato in later medieval period did not know much of Greek philosophy. Before the rediscovery of Aristotle and Plato, John of Salisbery was appalled by the level of philosophical teaching going on in some cathedral schools in Paris. Having left the place for a few years, he returned to find the same teachers rehearsing the same information they had given in his earlier visit. This is not to say that there was not serious effort at reflection. Though there is no doubt that the rediscovery of Aristotle served as a booster to philosophical learning in new medieval universities, it goes without saying that without the Greek philosophers there were thinkers who made deep philosophical reflections. What is of central importance in all these epochs of African philosophy is that each of the extant reflections is nurtured by influences which to all intent and purposes were philosophical, contextual and also African.

In terms of the influence at play in philosophical reflections, contemporary African philosophy stands out in a very special way. It is a philosophical epoch especially marked by the outcome of the encounter between Africa and Western culture, civilization and militarism. It does not mean that the influence of the West shaped the whole of contemporary African philosophy, since that epoch also takes account of Ethnophilosophy or traditional African philosophy which represents the thoughts of Africans in their milieu untainted by the later European or indeed any foreign influences. It was from such thinkers that Henry Odera Oruka was seeking to find the basis for his conviction that independent critical sages existed in Africa who were able to stand aside and make personal criticism of their culture, social practices and beliefs. Still the specificity of much of contemporary African philosophy is that it is strongly influenced by the issue of African identity. Dismas Masolo was apt in naming his book, acclaimed by Barry Hallen as the first history of African philosophy, as *African Philosophy in Search of Identity (*1994).

In this essay we explore the place of the issue of identity in contemporary African philosophy, by reviewing the origin and some of the outcome or results of the quest for identity among African

philosophers. We will highlight the ambivalence or antithesis of this central issue and see how this ambivalence is clearly reflected in the position of African language in language policies as well as the practices and attitudes of Africans in general towards their numerous indigenous languages. The position of indigenous African languages vis-à-vis the quest for African identity will be used to reaffirm the position of Kwasi Wiredu that African cultures through their passage through colonialism have changed fundamentally.

African Identity

The issue of identity itself and how it became the central issue in contemporary African philosophy is itself very historical. For Wiredu, the question of African identity is not an attempt to apply the metaphysical laws of identity and excluded middle. It is not whether Africans are Africans. It is rather a normative question, whether African are what they should be. Thus the question raises a negative feeling, for people do not usually spend much time in asking what they should be as a people, a country or a continent. This negativity is created by the historical experience of the African with the West, starting from the time of slavery. For Frank Snowden (1983) the classical view of blacks was not negative among ancient Europeans. His research indeed indicates that Blacks were taken by ancient Europe as models of beauty. It was after the experience of slavery that the negative conception of blacks took root. This historical event was aided by later conquest and direct colonialism by European powers aided by their obvious advantage in scienco-technology.

It should not be overlooked that just a few hundred years back, Europe had not gained its technological head-start that enabled it to virtually subjugate the rest of the known world. The trans-Atlantic slavery was necessitated by the need for cheap labour after the American continents were colonized, subjugated and exploited and more reliable work hands were needed to cultivate the vast plantations gained in this exploit. This debilitating phenomenon lasted for over 300 years and millions of Africans were shipped to the Americas and Europe.

By the time the process of capturing and enslaving Africans was started, Europe through its contacts with the rest of the world

had cultivated cultural triumphalism with the implication of utter denigration for other cultures and people of the world. Slave dealing was a process of complete dehumanization. The Africans who left were not only required to divest themselves of all traces of their culture, they were also divested of their humanity. They were not allowed to retain their names, speak their languages or maintain any link with their roots. While slavery had existed in the world before trans-Atlantic slavery, the special feature of the trans-Atlantic slavery was that it was linked with racism in addition to extreme cruelty and dehumanization. It is no wonder that Joseph Anene described it as the most wicked transaction in human history.(1979) Trans-Atlantic slavery had a telling effect on the way the African was seen by others, and one may add, by himself. George B. N. Ayittey asserts that slavery though at an end by 1840 "left the African persistently stigmatized as inferior." (1992: 5).

The end of trans-Atlantic slavery was quickly followed by direct colonialism. With the industrial revolution, slave labour was becoming more and more unprofitable. It was incidentally at this time that the much vaunted anti-slavery movement started to raise its voice. Slavery was first legally banned in England in 1807 but continued for some decades later. But the effects of industrialization necessitated direct colonialism in the quest for raw materials and market. These selfish ends were intellectually clothed in the pretence of civilizing mission to Africa. Africa became depicted as a dark continent that needed the promethean light from the civilization of Europe. The people were taken as inferior and needed to be raised to the level of 'civilized humanity'. Hannah Arendt was right in her view that without imperialism, past racism, like that of the Enlightenment would have disappeared had the scramble for Africa and the consequent imperialism not exposed Western humanity to fresh shocking experiences: "Imperialism would have necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible "explanation" and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking had ever existed in the civilized world." (quoted in Mudimbe, 1988: 108).

Thus colonialism occluded Western self-interest and progressed with complete denigration of all that was African. To justify colonialism and cultural subjugation, Africa was presented as a continent without history, without geography, literature, culture,

civilization and of course, philosophy. The degrading effect of slavery was therefore reinforced by colonialism. In spite of the glorified conception of their discipline, most major philosophers of the West aligned themselves with the racist prejudices and misconceptions of their society vis-à-vis the African.

David Hume who had virtually no experience of blacks and of Africa was bold enough to abandon all the critical foundations of his philosophy to "suspect" that the entire African race and in fact all other human races are inferior to whites. His argument is that there was never any great nation among them, and that there was no individual great in action or speculation, no gifted manufacturer, no art and sciences among these races. He contrasts them with his own race and claimed that even the less privileged of them can some time exhibit signs of inventiveness, but the blacks that were enslaved in white countries have never shown any sign of greatness. For Hume such uniform and persistent outcome must be due to the nature of the different races. (cf Immerwahr 1992: 23) Hegel describes Africa based on the same parameters as "unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own." (1975: 190). After outlining his categorical imperative, Immanuel Kant did not find it contradictory to habour terrible racist views about Africans, detailing how the African could be physically abused given his toughness of his skin. (Eze: 1997)

It is notable that all these philosophers were working with the presumption of the humanity of their subject. Only a notable exception like Charle de Montesquieu clearly stated that the African was not human. His reason for this belies all his power of reflection. He was only able to describe the physical features of what was for him the typical African and concluded that it was impossible for him to take him as human, for if he was human, then the Europeans would not be qualified to be called Christians (1989). Unusual as his position may be, it is obvious that Montesquieu was more consistent at least with his Christianity than Hume, Hegel and Kant were with their philosophy. At least his position was taken in defence of the Christianity of the West and he was insightful enough to realize that they would not be Christians given their treatment of the blacks if these blacks were indeed human beings.

Before the African, thinkers of the Enlightenment betrayed all the principles on which their epistemological project rested. But this betrayal is even more general in Western philosophy. For instance, from Augustine to Aquinas and to the modern time, Western philosophy has debated on the conditions for a just war. But throughout this period of debate what reigned was the right of conquest. Ben Ramose describes this as "I conquer, therefore I am right." It is remarkable that while Western war lords were all over the world in their quest for colonial space, hardly any notable philosopher ever spoke against their conquests in the name of the just war theory. Rather what could not be hidden was the obtuse racism of the ilk of Hume, Hegel and Kant, raising a big question mark on the acclaimed independence, objectivity, insightfulness and ultimacy of philosophical reflections in general. As late as 1916, Bertrand Russell was still arguing in his *Principles of Social Reconstruction* that Germany as a great nation had the right to colonies. It was the period of the First World War, and Russell was of the view that to respect Germany, other nations or people should be given to them to subjugate.

However, the betrayal of philosophy by its Western practitioners is not as significant as the way these entire events influenced the Africans who were subjected to them. George B. N. Ayitteh lamented that even though slavery had come to an end by 1840, it left the African permanently stigmatized as inferior (1995: 35). It is unfortunate that while external observers may think of Africans in that manner, many Africans also regard themselves as inferior as well. For Joseph Nyasanyi, the history of oppression against the African cannot but leave a strong negative impact on his psyche. He writes: "the long years of exploitation, humiliation, subjugation, vilification and utter contempt for human equality and dignity has gradually and progressively brought about a sad process of mental, spiritual and social degeneration of the colonized African." (1994: 183)

But the African that the white man encountered at the period of direct colonialism was much more confident than to think of himself as inferior to other human beings. The Igbo of Southern Nigeria can serve as just one example here. In 1906 Colonel Kembal wrote that Igboland was the most troublesome part of Nigeria

(Isichei, E.: 1973). In 1937 a colonial anthropologist C. K. Meek congratulated the colonial government for its effort in bringing peace in Igboland because for him, they were the "most lawless part of Nigeria." (1937: xiii) This attitude of the Igbo can very easily be seen to be an outcrop of their native egalitarianism and republicanism. The Igbo practiced a democratic system that was so complete that it is hardly replicable in any other place. James Africanus Horton a descendant of Igbo recaptives in Sierra Leone wrote of the Igbo: "The Egboes cannot be driven to an act; they are most stubborn and bull-headed, but with kindness they could be made to do anything, even to deny themselves of their comfort." (J. A. Horton in T. Hodgkin, 1975: 352). This attitude is very much backed by their democratic ethos which another colonial anthropologist Sylvia Leith-Ross expressed as follows: "So natural did it seem to find autocracy in some form or other wherever one went in Africa that it was impossible even to imagine a democracy so absolute as that of the Igbo." (Leith-Ross, S., 1939: 67)

This general feature of self-confidence and independence can be exemplified in the Izzi people of Ebonyi State of Nigeria. During the era of colonial conquest, the Izzi people could not stomach the subjugation of a foreign power over their people. To the colonial messenger that was sent to them they emphasized that they (the Izzi) recognized the heavens above and the earth beneath, and that apart from these two cosmic potentates, they (the Izzi) constituted the third force, and would therefore not take orders from any human authority (Oguejiofor, 2001: 41). It would be interesting to compare this pre-colonial attitude and confidence of the Izzi people with the attitude of their descendants in relation to Europeans. But this rebuff was of no consequence in the colonial subjugation of the people.

Following the encounter between Europe and Africa, the logic of conquest held sway, backed by the false claim that African had no history, no culture, no civilization. The acceptance of foreign cultures led to many telling consequences. African religion was quickly abandoned and many became Christians or Muslims. Education became Western styled and was aimed from the beginning to alienate the subject from his culture and context. European way of life became status symbol for the elite and privileged. This attitude is

reflected in some very widely used sayings among Africans: *Mbaraediekpo* (Efik: the white man is a spirit), *Bekeewuagbara* (Igbo). The flexibility in African naming custom ensured that this attitude towards the white man and his ways also entered into many African names. In addition to bearing foreign names as sign of entrance into new religions, some Africans were named in adulation of the white man: Bature (Hausa: white man), Onyiboka (Igbo: white man is greater), Nwabekee (Igbo: child of the white man).

Identity and Contemporary African Philosophy

In effect the above is the terrain in which contemporary African philosophy found itself. It is commendable that from the beginning it took that situation very seriously, and faced its consequences. As far back as the 19the Century, Edward Wilmot Blyden had started calling attention to the special feature of Africans as a race with a goal which it will be suicidal to check. It is for him like a mission that must be fulfilled. He called for the unity of Africa and Africans, and became known as the father of Pan-Africanism. Blyden encouraged African Americans to return to Africa and help in the building of the continent, and this was part of his adherence to the movement of Ethiopianism one of which notable advocates he was. Blyden was also one of the earliest forebears of the concept of African personality and inveighs against those who would advocate the unity of all humanity in the following words:

> Let us do away with the sentiment of Race. Let us do away with our African personality and be lost, if possible in another race." This is as wise or as philosophical as to say, let us do away with gravitation, with heat and cold and sunshine and rain. Of course, the Race in which these persons would be absorbed is the dominant race, before which, in cringing self-surrender and ignoble self-suppression they lie in prostrate admiration.

While W. E. B. Dubois and others were working and arguing for racial equality, Blyden and later Malcom X wanted a space for themselves as Africans because of the distrust engendered by years of subjugation and racial prejudice. It was impossible to believe that

egalitarianism and social justice was possible in the thwarted racial relationship that reigned in the new world.

Much later Placide Tempels would give the quest for African identity a more manifest philosophical foothold by his book *Bantu Philosophy*. Tempels was moved by his better understanding of the Bantu after ten years of missionary work among them. Much as his book was praised, it is in reality a paternalistic attempt to outline the thought of the Bantu with their hidden logic. Tempels' aim was to help missionaries to evangelize better and colonialist to better colonise. His research was motivated by the conviction that philosophy was a cultural universal and so every culture must have a philosophy by which it lives. In fact the presence of philosophy was linked to the humanity of the human, and so Tempels became also the first person to use philosophy as a means of affirming African humanity. Thus for him if primitive people had no philosophy, then they would be removed from the category of humanity. Even though his fellow Europeans in Congo failed to understand him, his book became a lightning rod to many of African thinkers of the time.

Alioune Diop, the writer of the preface to the French edition described Bantu Philosophy as "the most decisive work he had ever read." Leopold Senghor aped its doctrine as an authentic sample of African metaphysics copying the whole gamut of the theory of vital force and its influence on the activities and life of all beings. (1965: 36 – 37) Diop's and Senghor's adulation of *Bantu Philosophy* is a throwback to their assimilationist background. They were products of French colonial policy which effectively created classes of human beings within their domain. The assimilés were the privileged class, with all the pecks of this class. The Africans who enjoyed that luxury were nevertheless alienated. Senghor gave expression to this alienation in his poetry one of which reads: "Yesterday was All Saints, the solemn anniversary of all the dead … In all the cemeteries, there was no one to remember." Senghor was overwhelmed by the necessity for a culture or a people to contribute something to global civilization. Any culture that has nothing worthwhile to contribute; no "unique message which only they can proclaim" becomes a museum piece (1965: 98). That underlies his insistence on blackness and its beauty, objectified, something different!

It was also on the necessity of difference that reason becomes Hellenic and emotion becomes African, a position for which Senghor has been most severely, and sometimes unfairly criticized. Without knowing it, Senghor played into the logic of the Otherness of the Other, which was the base of the European justification of colonial subjugation and the right of conquest. Negritude was "enveloped and specified within the Otherness of the Other as projected by European metaphysical and delusionary self-conception" (Serequeberhan, 1994: 46). Senghor bought into Levy-Bruhl's pre-logism of the African in his eagerness to exhibit his specificity. For him, the European:

> takes pleasure in recognizing the world through the reproduction of the object … the African from knowing it vitally through image and rhythm. With the European the cords of the senses lead to the heart and the head, with the African Negro to the heart and the belly. (Senghor, 1956: 58).

That is not to say that he was altogether boxed into the corner of Negritude. Senghor was an accomplished Francophile who never tired of praising Latinité and Arabité. He had a very wide horizon in which every culture will play an important and specific role. He was thus universalist or globalist but with the insistence that Africa must have a place, a respectable place by bringing something to the table. He is convinced that only by so doing that the continent will take its place in the civilization of the universal: "that panhuman convergence towards which mankind is tending." (Ba, 1973: 153)

More professional philosophers started academic philosophy in modern African universities by first arguing whether Africa had a philosophy and if so what its nature should be. It was an attempt to give answer to the hidden question of humanity raised by Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*. It is from this debate that different currents emerged in contemporary African philosophy. Ethnophilosophy followed the lead given by Tempels and Marcel Griaule's*Converstion with Ogotemmeli*. (1965) They argued forcefully that philosophy is universal and Africa must also have its philosophy to be found in its folklore, folktales, proverbs, myths,

religion, etc. The self-acclaimed professional group insisted that philosophy was a critical enterprise and Kwasi Wiredu distinguished between first and second order reflections placing philosophy in the domain of the second order which uses the first order as a starting point. Okere's hermeneutical movement is akin to this, distinguishing between philosophy and non-philosophy, with non-philosophy roughly represented by Wiredu's first order reflections.

Henry Odera Oruka bought into the ideas of critical professional philosophy with the proviso that these existed even in African traditional settings unencumbered by colonial and missionary influence. His aim was to fish out these critical sages and present them as the philosophers of a continent in a deep quest. Thinkers of the Nationalist ideological current can be said to be philosophers in spite of themselves since hardly any of them had the slightest philosophical pretension. They were foisted on the terrain to give vent to the idea that we must also have our own political theorists. But the historical current made its aim of fostering African identity as clear as possible. Its project was to trace African philosophy to the patrimony of Ancient Egypt and so prove that even Western philosophy through the mediation of its fulcrum, Ancient Greece, owes its root to philosophy of Ancient Egyptians. George G. James asserted that the end of his research in *Stolen Legacy* (1954) was to convince young blacks that their ancestors left respectable philosophical reflections appropriated by Ancient Greece, and thus to enable them develop self confidence in the actual world. James' *Stolen Legacy* is therefore squarely in the service of African identity which as we have pointed out is the guiding principle of philosophic reflections in contemporary Africa.

It is in the intellectual context of subjugation and denigration that this question of identity finds its root. Philosophy of African identity was therefore a bold attempt at self-assertion, self-reassurance and in fact the affirmation of humanity of the African in line with Tempels' argument. For Serequeberhan, philosophy was "tacitly privileged as the true measure of the humanity of the human as such." (1994: 3). This is itself is the outcrop of the presupposition that reason was the sole preserve of Western or European humanity. Since those who were not logocentric or those who were emotive could not have a philosophy, it became axiomatic that the

philosophy loaded with honorific sense became the highest expression of the humanity of the human. But these conclusions were reached, in the words of Serequeberhan "without even the benefit of an argument" but nevertheless African philosophic discourse acquired the aim of "redeeming the humanity of the human in colonized African existence." (p.3). This background also serves as a focus for contemporary African philosophy. For Eboussi-Boulaga, philosophy in this sense becomes a desire to attest to a contested humanity (undesird'attesterunehumanitéconstestée) (1977: 7).

African Identity and African Languages

Given this strong concentration on the question of identity and of African humanity, it becomes necessary to ask how seriously the issue was taken in practical life to obviate the great questions raised by what Eboussi-Boulaga called contested humanity. Here let us concentrate on the place of African language vis-à-vis colonial languages in most African countries. This issue helps to see the extent that the alienation of African humanity by the consequences of colonial encounter is viewed with seriousness beyond the bounds of philosophic reflections. Language is not only the vehicle of culture; it is also very significant in constructing self-identity, serving to "construct our sense of ourselves – our subjectivity." (Norton, B. 2013: 32). Subjectivity itself is discursively constructed within both social and historical context. Consequently, identity is constructed by and through language:

> By extension every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with members of the target language community, they are also organising and reorganising a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. As such they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation. (Norton, B. 2013: 33)

This special connection between language, cultural and personal identity speaks volume about the state of African indigenous languages today. First it is notable that there is hardly any African country where the language of education is an African language. In

South Africa, the two languages which are used are Afrikaans and English. While Afrikaans can in some sense be called an African language, it is nevertheless one that has its roots in Dutch and Flemish of Holland and Belgium. To the extent that Afrikaans is an African language to that extent is it the only African language that is the language of instruction in any African university. Even below the tertiary level of education, the consistent behaviour is to use English as language of instruction even from nursery school.Most often the argument in defence of this practice is that foreign colonial language gives their learners greater opportunity for the future; their mastery gives more assurance of obtaining jobs in the former colonies where they are used.

The pervasive use of colonial languages often occludes the fact that in most African countries, less than 50% of the population are able to use the dominant colonial language. This means that in reality excessive concentration on the use of these languages is a hindrance to grass-root communication in many African countries. The realization of the awkward situation has nudged many countries to adopt the use of African languages at the primary levels of education, but this is often not adhered to and so teachers continue to teach children in nursery and primary schools in foreign or colonial languages in contravention of government policy on education. This point cannot be made more poignantly than in the following statement which refers specifically to the Nigerian and Igbo situation:

> It is a sign of irresponsibility and a mark of inefficiency on the part of the government to abandon a policy as important as that of language, a policy that was made by government herself, which has direct implication on education, at the hands of business people. School proprietors and even government-owned schools absolutely pay no heed to the policy and the government pretends to be completely ignorant of the happenings in the schools who flout the stipulations and proviso of the policy. Government ineptitude towards the implementation of language policy is slowly and steadily destroying

> Igbo language and culture. (Ezenwa-Ohaeto & Akujobi, 2013: 47)

An even more aberrant situation is the increasing number of children born and bred in big African cities that are unable to speak any African language. Their language of education is the foreign colonial language, which is also their language of communication at home. The result is that these children of the ignorant elite spend their most impressive years within Africa, and in towns where 80 to 90 percent of the population speak such a language and remain ignorant of it. It means that many of such children are completely ignorant of any African language. Irrespective of government educational policy of the particular country, this attitude explains better the dismal state of many African indigenous languages in relation to colonial languages. It must therefore not be forgotten that attitudes to languages tell more about those who use the language and also the use of the language: "people generally do not hold opinions about languages in vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which indicate their views about those who speak the languages, and the context and functions with which they are associated." (Norton: 410)

What this means is that in relation to the philosophical quest for African identity, the African has changed very significantly that one can no longer speak reasonably of an African culture without reference to the view of the people about that culture or their attitude to it. Language is a vehicle of culture and ultimately the attitude of the people to their culture will influence their attitude to their language. This attitude is always determined by the expectation of future benefits or advantages. It is reported for instance that in 1940 the Colonial Administrator of Northern Nigeria was convinced to introduce English in the educational system in his region by the Emirs of six Emirates. They were quoted as telling the colonialist that even though they recognized the religious importance of Arabic, "knowledge of English is 'Cigaba', i.e. progress." (MobolajiAdekunle, p. 63)

While the opinion of the Emirs is significant, and while the subsequent developments have followed their guideline, it goes without saying that there is more to the state of African languages in

relation to the quest for African identity in contemporary African philosophy. Language policies in Africa as well as the attitude of the people to their languages are good mirrors of the extent to which African cultures were impacted by colonialism. In an interesting article, Kwasi Wiredu outlined what he called the paradox of culture change. Cultures can change their kernel without changing. But when they change their gab they have changed fundamentally. Wiredu concluded that since African cultures have been changing their gabs, they have changed for good. There may be arguments to defend the reluctance of Africans to use their native languages as lingua franca and as languages of instruction including that these languages lack the necessary modern vocabularies. But no language is static. Like culture itself all languages mutate over time, especially by the addition of new vocabularies. The colonial languages, especially English and French have more foreign words than practically all other languages. The main reason why African languages are still not used as languages of instruction in school and why some educated Africans prefer that their children are not speakers of their language is that foreign and colonial languages have become status symbol in the colonized African mentality. The situation is such that in some quarters it is queerly taken to be a sign of special status when African children are not able to speak their native languages. Our view is that the mentality that gives rise to such incomprehensible phenomenon is the hidden background of the failure of African educational institutions to use African languages as their languages of instruction, and the failure of African governments to effectively use African languages as lingua franca.

What it means is that the task which contemporary African philosophy has received mainly on account of its context of evolution is really an uphill task. Most Africans in addition to their cultural hybridism are also of the silent conviction that what they inherited from their colonial past is superior and language is only one of these. The primary direction of contemporary African philosophy should be first and foremost to seek a trans-valuation of African values. Success in this process will ensure a more fruitful quest for African identity.

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