

# Editor's Note

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The articles in the current issue of *Thought and Practice* make contributions to debates on several matters of social, political and economic concern in Africa today, namely, the applicability or inapplicability of Prof. John S. Mbiti's account of the African concept of time to the sluggish pace of economic development in the continent, the late Prof. Odera Oruka's political thought, the place of African philosophy in the global philosophical discourse, the concept of martyrdom in contemporary social activism, and strategies for economic development, for raising accountable leadership, and for promoting environmental conservation.

John S. Mbiti's controversial assertion that the African conception of time is one with a long past, a present, and an almost non-existent future, and that the responses of Africans to various situations can only be adequately understood in terms of this conception, continues to generate vigorous debate among scholars. While some hold it as incontrovertible truth, others wonder why it continues to enjoy any attention. Some of those in the former group have sought to explain Africa's economic stagnation in terms of Mbiti's assertion. In contrast to such an approach, Helen Lauer seeks to show that it is impossible to demonstrate how a person's metaphysical views about time do or do not influence his or her decisions in various facets of life, and in particular, in the economic sphere. She proposes that deficiencies in the perception of time that bear a negative impact upon African economics are instead the cache of foreign experts who fail to appreciate conventional uses of time in Africa as rational strategies for risk avoidance, damage control, resisting hegemonic authority, quelling foreign

expropriation of African resources, and maximizing efficiency given scarce capital and inadequate infrastructure.

The December 2012 issue of *Thought and Practice* was dedicated to the memory of the late Kenyan Prof. H. Odera Oruka, who was instrumental in founding the journal. We certainly did not imagine for a moment that the Special Issue was the “last word“ on Oruka’s monumental contribution. In the present issue, Kai Kresse examines Oruka’s career-long passion to make philosophy relevant to practical matters, and more specifically, to the re-engineering of socio-political conditions with a view to building a humane society in Africa in particular, and in the world at large. Kresse looks at how the term “humanism” has been used (and can be used) to describe Oruka’s work, in contrast to the invocation of this term by some nationalist political ideologies, in particular Daniel arap Moi’s so-called “*nyayo* philosophy”.

The place of African philosophy in the global philosophical discourse continues to be a topic of vigorous controversy. In this regard, Ada Agada contends that the continued emphasis on ethno-philosophy and the relative absence of intellectual passion and curiosity are the greatest challenges facing African philosophy. According to him, there is no good reason to blame the West for Africa’s absence from the stage of world philosophy, because this absence can be accounted for in terms of the general lack of radical and innovative thinking among African practitioners of philosophy.

We live at a time when different groups - ethnic, religious, political, among others - are agitating for what they see as their rights. The discourse around this agitation has brought back to the fore the idea of martyrdom; and yet quite often this idea has been misused or outrightly abused. Ibanga Ikpe seeks to establish the Christian equivalent of contemporary Islamic martyrdom, exploring different perspectives of the morality of martyrdom, and especially the more popular self-martyrdom of contemporary times. He posits the immorality of what he calls “self criminalization” by some Christian functionaries, especially given the high esteem in which society holds such functionaries, and argues for the de-radicalization of religion.

As African scholars in the humanities and social sciences continue to grapple with pertinent theoretical issues, they must not lose sight of the urgency of meeting the basic needs of Africa's growing populations. To this end, E.W. Wahome and J.J.W. Gathungu focus on the history of the tourism industry in Kenya from the dawn of colonialism to its sunset, exploring alternative branding approaches during the colonial period, in the hope that insights thereby gained will be used to sustain and enhance the industry at the present time.

The need for effective leadership remains urgent. As in other parts of the world, many of those who run for political office in Africa use their positions for personal gain, contrary to the pledges they make to those who elect them. D.E. Gberevbie, A.O. Shodipo and F.O. Oviasogie jointly examine the relationship between leadership and accountability in the management of public resources, with special reference to Nigeria. They contend that for the living standards of Nigerians to be enhanced, there is need to enforce strict compliance of public officials with rules governing the management of public resources, thereby curbing corruption.

In the light of powerful neo-colonial influences in Africa, the question of the management of the continent's vast natural resources continues to be a matter of great concern to socio-political theorists. M.O. Ikeke explores ways in which the ideas of the eco-philosopher, Thomas Berry, could be utilised to address the environmental degradation caused by oil and gas exploration in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

We as the *Thought and Practice* Editorial Board deeply appreciate the support of all our avid contributors and readers, and look forward to an ever-growing "meeting of minds" as we all work towards addressing the numerous challenges that confront our continent.

Reginald M.J. Oduor, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief

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