

School Mate®

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LEAVES

Theophilus Okore

- * Aims to show the method and pathway of authentic African philosophy
- * Inclined with phenomenologist = reality begins with what you can feel and touch { phy in space and time }
- * Authentic and legitimate starting point of Φ_y is the Peoples way of life (culture)
- * Culture is required in Φ_y , but it is not Φ_y . It is a raw material for Φ_y
- * The questioning, interpreting, and investigation of culture leads to Φ_y .
- * Hence, Φ_y is the questioning, interpretation, examining the reasons why culture is practised.
- * Philosophy = Culture acted on by Hermeneutics.
- * He noted the deficiency of ethno philosophy because the claim that African culture is African philosophy.
- * His criticism focused on Tempesta, Alexis Kagame and John Mbiti.
 - Tempesta
- * Proposed that the philosophy of the Bantuba people of Bantu origin is their way of viewing reality.
- * Okore also argued that there is need for interpretation and engagement of culture.

- Kagame Alexets.

- * Kagame presented a structural dimension of Rwandean language.
- * Their phyg is seen in the complexities of their language.
- * Okere argued that it is not enough for Kagame to conclude that phyg is seen in the complexities of their language.
- * There is need for interpretation & engagement of the complexities of language b/f concluding that it is phyg
- Mbiti.

- * Mbiti argued that African conception of time is three dimensional - "extended past, the present and a very short future (not too distant future)"
- * African conception of time is linear
- * For mbiti this conception of time is African phyg
- * Okere said it is a mis-understanding because there is no interpretation and engagement of culture b/f such conclusion
 - Influences of Okere.

- Paul Ricoeur

- * A french phenomenologist
- * Argues that language is not just a means of communication but a symbol, which has a meaning that transcends the immediate visible meaning.

- (in the specificity of symbol)*
- * Man is a situated being, who makes effort to relate with other situated beings through language.

A symbol is any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates in addition another meaning, which is indirect, secondary & figurative

- * The Meaning of a language is understood by decoding the Symbol.

- * There are three stages of interpretation :-

- Phenomenological Stage:- Stage of encountering the language without knowing the meaning.

- Hermeneutical Stage:- Beginning of interpretation engagement.

- Reflexive Stage:- Makes use of interpretation to conceptualize.

- * He is known for the statement "Le symbole donne à penser" - Symbols compel you to think.

- * for him language defines man

- * Hence Derrida being influenced saw culture as symbol of the African society that compels one to think.

- Heidegger.

- * He focuses on the situatedness of being.

- * His Φ_1 is an analysis of the Dasen of a situated being

- * Situatedness is defined by facticity, situational, historical and relatedness.

- * A situated being makes itself known by facticity, historical and relatedness.
- * For Okere, African art is situated in the culture of Africans and is also defined by facticity, historical and relatedness.
 - Gadamer
- * Focused on the nature of understanding
- * Understanding means dialogue (adds an imposed meaning)
- * Any understanding entails the engagement of that thing in a dialogue
- * Through dialogue one discovers meaning.
- * Three things involved in dialogue
 - Presupposition
 - Foresight or initial idea
- * For Okere our understanding and interpretation of culture should be informed by dialogue.
- * In dialogue prejudice and initial presumptions are interpreted and clarified.
- * It is in the process of interpreting the environment that dialogue goes on.
- * Gadamer's hermeneutics is into three parts:-

- Understanding
- Interpretation is not always impartial b/c of initial presupposition
- Application.

- * Since the interpretation must go through of personal input and natural presumption it means that hermeneutics is relative to different individuals who interpret culture.

Nkrumah O'Leko (D.R.C)

- * Also influenced by German phenomenologists
- * Focused on language (his own) - called "etela language"
- * Observed that there are confused words in the language, and pointed out irony and metaphor.
- * For him language is a massive expression of symbols.
- * Agrees with Ricoeur that symbols seen in language invites one to think
- * Symbols contain the accumulation of their experience, and is understood when it is interpreted.
- * Hence, the process of interpreting is the pathway to authentic Afrikan Eky.
- * Language is also an accumulation of a people's intelligence
- * Inter-subjectivity - caused by the use of metaphor, irony and

proverb) - it means that man represents a web of inter-relatedness of different levels of reality.

- * Through language we find symbols made up of meaning which are inter-related and understood through interpretation.

Benoit Okofio Okonda

- * There is an inherent link b/w life & culture.
- * Culture is indispensable and underlies people's way of life.
- * He focused on tradition & destiny to explain the specificity of culture. and as well to show how the interpretation and understanding of a culture by a people matters.
- * Tradition
- * He recognized that people have the tendency of interpreting tradition as something handed over from past generation and which is static without changing. of western understanding in this understanding culture is devoid of change, innovation and growth.
- * Tradition should be an on-going effort to change your environment with the aid of hemispheres, it doesn't just mean transmission and reception of Africa but also

changes because new interpretation is always made.

- Destiny.

1. Whereas Heidegger's understanding of hermeneutics emphasizes the situatedness of being, Paul Ricoeur focuses on the unmasking of the hidden meaning of symbols. Discuss how these two thinkers' approach to hermeneutics influenced Okere.

2. Relativism seems to be the natural conclusion to the hermeneutic argument. Discuss.

3. Tampoco, Kagame and Mbiti promoted ethnophilosophy and defended its charms. Discuss Okere's critique of ethnophilosophy and what he proposed as the right direction for African philosophy.

4. Three key words stand out in Okere's contribution to the question of the possibility of African philosophy namely, philosophy, culture and hermeneutics. Discuss how his legacy on African philosophy could be said to be built around these three themes.

5. How does Sassequeberhan's approach to hermeneutics in contemporary African philosophy resonate with or

differs from Okere's views.

6. Like Okere, Nkome Oeka and Benoit Okonda were proponents of the hermeneutical current in African philosophy albeit with significant variations. Explain their individual views on the hermeneutical paradigm showing their specific ideas and where they are in agreement and/or in disagreement with Okere.

7. Situate the study of hermeneutics within the contexts of initial efforts to justify African philosophy.

3. ... "Discuss Okenes critique of ethmophiosphy and what he proposed as the right direction for African philosophy.

INTRODUCTION.

ETHNO PHILOSOPHY.

Ethno philosophy is one of the currents in African Philosophy. It refers to the first attempt made by African thinkers to argue about the existence of African philosophy. Ethno philosophical trend conceives philosophy as belonging to a race, tribe, people or ethnic group. For them, the people's way of life (*Weltanschauung*) is what is considered to be philosophy.

This implies that for the ethno philosophers, culture is equal to philosophy. This is a conclusion that they arrived at after studying the peculiar ways and lifestyle of the African man. Hence they posited that whatever is culture is philosophy. They do not see culture as having a mere relationship with philosophy but attributed the status of ~~philosophy~~ to culture.

Among the ethno philosophers was Father Placid Tembebe, a missionary from Belgium. He is considered as the pioneer of this trend of African philosophy. After observing the Bakuba people (Bantu) of Congo he wrote a thesis ~~defending~~ about the ability of

Africans do philosophize. He argued that the philosophy of the Bantu people "the same with the culture which was the concept of vital force.

Other proponents of this trend are Aictus Kagame, John S Mbiti and also Jean Caron.

Kagame presented a structural dimension of the language of the Rwandans. For him there are structures in the Rwandan language that say more than ^{the} phenomenological view. He argued that the philosophy of the Rwandans is seen in the complexities of their language in agreement to the notion that culture is equal to philosophy.

Mbiti studied the Kikuyu people of East Africa. He argued that Africans do not have the concept of eternity in their conception of time. For him African conception of time is not linear because African dimension of time conceives only an extended past, the present and a very short future. He concluded that this concept of time is the same with philosophy.

These arguments by ethno philosophers were criticized by Theophilus Okere, especially because they equate culture with philosophy.

OKERE'S CRITIQUE OF ETHNO PHILOSOPHY.

Okere to some extent agreed with ethno-philosophers in their argument that culture has a relation with philosophy. However, he vehemently criticized their submission to the idea of culture being equal to philosophy. His critique to ethno-philosophers are thus:-

Okere criticized Kagame, who argued that the Rwandian language, its complexities, principles and thoughts is their philosophy. Okere argued that it is not enough for Kagame to conclude that the complexities of their language is the same with philosophy. For Okere, there should be interpretation and analysis as well as a hermeneutical engagement of the language before one can conclude that it is philosophy.

In his critique of Mbizi, Okere argued that there is a mis-understanding of philosophy since there is no interpretation, questioning and engagement of culture before it is concluded to be philosophy. Moreover he noted that Mbizi did not make relevant distinction between time as social, scientific, mythological and

philosophical.

Hence for Okere, culture is not equal to philosophy. Culture for him is the raw material for philosophy.

OKERE'S PROPOSITION.

Since the arguments and proposition of ethnophilosophy is insufficient to explain what African philosophy is. Okere in his doctoral thesis proposed the hermeneutical current in African philosophy. It was in a bid to prefer the right direction for African philosophy that Okere proposed the hermeneutical current in African philosophy.

Okere aimed at showing the method and pathway of authentic African philosophy. For him the authentic and legitimate starting point of philosophy is the people's way of life and culture and not just speculations.

His first basic conviction is that Culture is the condition sine qua non for philosophy. Culture is the necessary raw material for philosophy. He argued that philosophy cannot be in isolation of culture because culture provides the necessary ingredients

for philosophizing.

In addition, Okene argued that { proposed } there is also a hermeneutical interpretation of culture in other for philosophy to develop. Thus, for a culture to develop into philosophy, it must have the searching of hermeneutics ^{engaged &} on it. When culture is ^{interpreted correctly} philosophy blossoms.

Summary, Okene's argument is that Culture is not equal to philosophy as proposed by the ethnophilosophers. Hermeneutics is the proper method through which one can arrive at an authentic African philosophy. Culture must pass through the fire of hermeneutics in order to be called philosophy. This is meant mainly because philosophy deals with rationality, coherence and logic whereas there are some cultures which are not logical enough to be referred to as philosophy until they are interpreted properly.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION.

After the experiment was conducted,

the following conclusions were drawn:

The results of the experiment were as follows:

The following conclusions were drawn from the results:

2. " Discuss how these two thinkers approach to hermeneutics influenced Okere.

INTRODUCTION.

PAUL RICOEUR

Paul Ricoeur was a french philosopher who influenced Okere. In his idea of what hermeneutics is, Paul Ricoeur attributed the whole field of semantics to hermeneutics ie the question of meaning.

Ricoeur argued that hermeneutics involves

language. However, language is not just a means of communication but also a symbol, which consists of a meaning beyond the immediate visible meaning.

For one to understand the meaning of language one has to decode the meaning of the symbol.

For Ricoeur, all ^{symbolic} signs are symbols but not all signs are symbols. He defined symbols as any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates in addition another meaning which is indirect, secondary and figurative.

He described the opacity of symbol as that which is not immediately understood. Hence, symbols are to be interpreted before one can understand it.

Ricoeur postulated three stages of interpretation of Symbols.

1. Phenomenological Stage:- Here symbols presents itself to our senses. One just encounters the symbols that make up a language. There is also an impartial assessment of such symbols in this stage.

2. Hermeneutical Stage:- Here the symbols which are made known to the senses are interpreted so as to

bring out the meaning intrinsic in them. Here, one can simply say that the symbols let out their hidden meaning to us.

3. Reflexive Stage: This is the last stage, here the interpretation obtained from the hermeneutical stage are used to conceptualize information. They are arranged to form a discourse. It is in this stage that philosophy lies.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger in his idea of hermeneutics focused on the situatedness of being. For him philosophy is the study of ontology, that is the study of being. This ~~be~~ being is not an imaginary being but a situated being, hence the best way to approach it is through phenomenology.

Heidegger's philosophy is based on the notion of Dasein, which means a situated being, hence his philosophy is referred to as Dasein analytik "Analysis of the Dasein"

In his explanation of the situated being, Heidegger

noted that it is defined by facticity (factual), historical and relatedness. It is through these qualities that a being reveals itself.

Heidegger claimed that meaning is insinuated beings and that hermeneutics searches for this hidden meaning in a situated being through interpretation.

INFLUENCE ON OKERE

The influence of the three western phenomenologists Heidegger, Ricoeur and Gadamer on Okere are greatly noticed in his work and discuss of hermeneutics.

From Paul Ricoeur, Okere was influenced because he borrowed the idea of Ricoeur that symbols are pregnant with meaning beyond what is physically seen. He applied this to African Culture, arguing that there are deeper meanings embedded in African culture and for philosophy to emerge, culture must be interpreted so as to ^{drive} sieve out authentic African philosophy.

Ricoeur also argued that symbols compel one to think

'Le symbole donne à penser'. Okere having been influenced also believes and argued that the culture of African society compels us to think, to ask questions and to engage what is said to be culture.

Heidegger on the other hand also influenced Okere especially with his idea of a situated being, which is defined by facticity, historical and relatedness. Okere also argued that African philosophy is situated in a culture hence it is from the context of this situated culture that philosophy is obtained through interpretation. Okere also argued that just like a situated being, culture is defined by facticity, historical and relatedness.

Merging the views of Ricoeur and Martin Heidegger, Okere was able to deduce that our culture has meaning beyond what is visibly seen, these hidden meaning is made known through the search light of hermeneutics and interpretation which must be situated in the context of African culture.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Situate the study of hermeneutics within the context
of the initial efforts to justify African philosophy.

Introduction

Meaning of hermeneutics.

Stages of Justification of African Philosophy

Hermeneutical Currents

Evaluation & Conclusion.