PLS Assessment 2 - AYIBO

Western Philosophy (University of South Africa)

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PLS1501 Assessment 2

Option A: Comparing Wiredu's and Oruka's Classifications of African Philosophy

The classification of African philosophy has been a subject of much debate among scholars. Kwasi Wiredu and Paul Oruka, two prominent figures in the field, have proposed distinct classifications that aim to categorize the diverse philosophical traditions of the continent. This essay will critically compare Wiredu's classification with Oruka's four trends, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and ultimately suggesting a preferred classification.

Kwasi Wiredu, a Ghanaian philosopher, proposes a classification of African philosophy based on its relationship to Western philosophy. He distinguishes between "traditional" and "academic" African philosophy. Traditional philosophy, according to Wiredu, is the indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews that predate colonial contact. It is often expressed in oral traditions, proverbs, and folktales. Academic African philosophy, on the other hand, is the philosophical work produced by African scholars who have been educated in Western philosophical traditions. It is characterized by its engagement with Western philosophical concepts and methodologies. Paul Oruka, a Kenyan philosopher, identifies four distinct trends in African philosophy: ethnophilosophy, professional philosophy, philosophical sagacity, and ideological philosophy. Ethnophilosophy is the study of the philosophy implicit in African cultures. It is based on the assumption that every culture has its

own unique worldview. Professional philosophy is the philosophical work produced by African philosophers who have been trained in Western philosophical traditions. It is similar to Wiredu's concept of academic African philosophy. Philosophical sagacity refers to the wisdom and insight of African thinkers who have not been formally trained in philosophy but who possess deep knowledge and understanding of their culture. Ideological philosophy is the philosophical thought that is motivated by political or social agendas.

Both Wiredu's and Oruka's classifications offer valuable insights into the diverse nature of African philosophy. Wiredu's distinction between traditional and academic philosophy highlights the importance of recognizing the continuity between pre-colonial and contemporary African thought. Oruka's four trends provide a more nuanced understanding of the different ways in which African philosophy has been practiced.

However, both classifications have limitations. Wiredu's focus on the relationship between traditional and academic philosophy may overlook the complex interplay between these two traditions. Oruka's ethnophilosophy has been criticized for its reliance on stereotypes and its failure to adequately capture the diversity of African philosophical thought.

In my opinion , Oruka's classification is preferable to Wiredu's. It offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the different ways in which African philosophy has been practiced. While ethnophilosophy may have limitations, it remains a valuable approach to studying African thought. Oruka's other trends, such as professional philosophy and philosophical sagacity, also provide valuable insights into the diversity of African philosophical traditions . In conclusion ,the classifications proposed by Kwasi Wiredu and Paul Oruka offer valuable perspectives on the nature and scope of African philosophy. While both classifications have their strengths and weaknesses, Oruka's four trends provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the diverse ways in which African philosophy has been practiced. By recognizing the limitations of both classifications and building upon their insights, future scholars can continue to develop a more sophisticated understanding of African philosophical thought.