

DEMANDS OF AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN THOUGHT: PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

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Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the role of African philosophy, in view of the links between Africa and Brazil, at a time marked by a reorganization of social life on the planet. This, of course, is a qualitative research. Our investigation will focus on the current situation of these two regions, the historical elements that draw them together. One of the conclusions of this paper affirms that Brazil should give due attention to the philosophical production in the African continent.

Keywords: African philosophy; 21st century; philosophy of education; Brazil; conceptual decolonization.

Introduction

The reflections presented here are grounded in a past that unites Brazil and Africa strongly. This connection is marked by pain and joy. As a birth that brings to the world a new being, the encounter that took place in these lands between three cultural matrices (indigenous, white and black) is the origin and source the modern Brazilian people. As such, a Brazilian is neither European nor African. However, his thinking is undoubtedly marked by Western influence.

In Max Weber's view, Western rationality has as its main characteristic the desire to dominate the world. So, from an external perspective, we must consider our relationship with nature and with

other people as objects and adversaries that exist to serve us; from an internal perspective, the "I" channels its efforts towards profit. These Weberian considerations are basic to explain the existence of capitalism.

The main purpose of this paper is to reflect on the importance of African philosophical thought in times of restructuring of social life at planetary level. In addition this research also deals with the following scopes: discussing African philosophy as a problem for philosophy itself; discussing the philosophical production under development on the African continent; African philosophy as a source for education in the 21st century.

In this academic exercise, we shall deal with African philosophy as a philosophical problem; the main currents of African philosophical thought since Placide Frans Tempels; some of the most important issues facing philosophy in Africa today; and finally, the relationship between the discipline Philosophy of Education and African philosophy.

1. The existence or not of philosophy in Africa

In my writing *África e filosofia*, I present considerations on African philosophical thought as an issue to be confronted by philosophy itself.

No século XVIII, em um contexto histórico de colonização, aparece na Europa para a Filosofia o seguinte problema: há ou não uma filosofia africana? A resposta que o debate vai produzir reflete a visão de mundo e a compreensão de homem que possui o colonizador europeu à época. Posteriormente, no século XX, esse problema será levantado outra vez, graças à obra *La Philosophie Bantoue de l'Être* do missionário franciscano Placide Tempels, publicada em 1945. Nela o missionário belga argumenta que as categorias metafísicas do povo Bantu estão refletidas em suas línguas, isto é, em categorias linguísticas. Finalmente, nas últimas décadas, o debate se intensifica.¹

In fact - it cannot be denied - there is a philosophical thought in intense activity, in the African continent; but in addition there is a philosophy that can be termed African.

The philosophical work elaborated here can be organized into two groups: a traditional (not Western) philosophy, linked to folklore; a modern (western) technical philosophy.² Thinkers like Anta Diop, Odera Oruka and Théophile Obenga represent the first group; the second consists of intellectuals such as Paulin Hountondji, Kwame Appiah and Kwasi Wiredu. Let's pause a bit in this last one.

Wiredu, graduated in Philosophy, at the University of Ghana and then went on to Oxford University in England for his postgraduate studies. For 23 years, he taught at the University of Ghana, but also worked as a teacher at some Western institutions of higher learning, especially at the University of South Florida in Tampa, United States. Certainly, his training possesses strong western traits. This Western foundation of his training must be taken into account for one to understand the conception of this theorist regarding the definition of African philosophy.

For him, this kind of philosophy must be studied, using modern, logical and conceptual technical tools of Western philosophy. He advocates a rational method used scientifically, but also recognizes the need of African philosophers to relate to the traditional basis of their philosophical thinking³.

In his view, it is up to philosophy to perform an important social task. Although philosophical ideas are theoretical and abstract, they are necessary for our well-being. He argues that this kind of knowledge is indispensable to modern life.⁴ Wiredu recognizes, preserved in the oral tradition of African peoples, a popular thought that is present in proverbs, adages and folklore. For him, good philosophy, be it African or Western, is one that is rigorous, constructive and critical. In this direction, he raises the following criticism: Many identify the *communal philosophy* with the *folk philosophy*. According to Wiredu, regardless of how we denominate it, it is no more than several aspects of traditional philosophy put together. The more technically elaborated philosophy is, the more philosophical it is considered to be in relation to its communal variation, explains the author.⁵

However, this distinction does not resolve the issue. Wiredu considers the definition of Paulin Hountondji, according to which it would be the set of philosophical texts produced by Africans. However, this definition has the limitation of not accounting for the traditional orality-based thinking produced in Africa. Indeed, Wiredu defends the thesis that writing is an indispensable condition for African philosophy in the modern world. Even so, he recognizes in the traditional thinking of staple societies the existence of both irrational and rational elements⁶.

Concerning his understanding of African philosophy, he insists on the distinction mentioned above between: philosophy as popular thought preserved in the oral tradition of the African peoples and, philosophy as individual and critical reflection, aided by modern conceptual and logical techniques. We must emphasize: for him, the popular thought of the African continent should not be confused with African philosophy.⁷ The identification of the sayings of some traditional philosophers as a technical philosophy, however, represents an evolution in their conception of African philosophy⁸. He observes as a positive fact that, at present, there is a disposition, on the part of philosophers of that continent, to carry out studies on individual indigenous thinkers considered traditional technical philosophers. According to Wiredu, this is a critical and reconstructive philosophy.⁹

Indeed, the conception elaborated by Wiredu as to what philosophy is, expresses his understanding of what African philosophy ought to be. Fundamental, in this sense, is to define what philosophy can do for Africa. In fact, he considers philosophy as theoretical knowledge, but emphasizing its practical function.¹⁰

In *O despertar filosófico em África*¹¹ (2014), the Congolese Pene Elungudefends similar position. In his view, the main role to be played by contemporary African philosophy has nothing to do with either traditional Africa or European modernity. Their task is tied to what Africa and Africans want to do.

2. Some Chains of African Philosophy

In view of this dual conception of African philosophy, we will present three of the most significant currents of active philosophical thought on the African continent, from Tempels to our days.

- Ethno-philosophy:

This chain has as important reference point the work of Frans Tempels *A filosofia bantu*.¹² He worked as a missionary in the Belgian Congo for years. The occasion allowed him to carry out philosophical studies from an African perspective. The cited work: tornou-se um clássico do pensamento filosófico africano como etnofilosofia. Filósofos como A. Kagame ou J. Mbiti têm seus nomes ligados à etnofilosofia. Vale salientar que este modelo filosófico logo encontrou uma dura crítica. Críticos dele são Césaire e EboussiBoulaga, por exemplo. Se a filosofia africana termina sendo uma etnofilosofia (para estudo e análise dos de fora), se iria aniquilar tanto a existência como a identidade filosófica da África. É o que defendem. Assim, segundo eles, a filosofia bantu seria reduzida a um intento por parte dos europeus de explicar a idiosincrasia dos africanos.¹³

In fact, Kwame Appiah, in his book *In My Father's House* (1992), claims to be the Franciscan priest's text the founder of ethno-philosophy.

He also criticizes this stream of thought that deserves to be recorded: "Though much ethno-philosophical material is indeed very interesting – at least where it is not, as it too often is, woefully inaccurate – we should go carefully in discussing how to put it to philosophical use"¹⁴ He goes on to denounce the philosophical ingenuity of anthropological accounts by ethnographers. And he condemns it by explaining: we could say that it is only a question of criticism, if there were not the thesis defended by many, according to which African philosophy is ethno-philosophical.¹⁵

Moving forward in his reflections on ethno-philosophy, he says that it is supported by two assumptions:

The first, which Paulin Hountondji has dubbed "unanimism," is the factual assumption, which I have already rejected, that there is some central body of ideas that is shared by black Africans generally. The second is the evaluative assumption that the recovery of this tradition is worthwhile.¹⁶

The author cites some important works that critique ethnophilosophies: *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1976) of Paulin Hountondji; *Essais sur la problématique de philosophie dans l'Afrique actuelle* (1971) of Marcien Towa; and *Philosophy and the African Culture* (1980) of Kwasi Wiredu.

- The sage philosophy:

What is sage philosophy? The "philosophy of African wisdom" (also called "philosophy of wisdom" or "philosophy of sagacity") is the common name given to the body of thought produced by people considered wise in the communities of the African continent and, more specifically, to those who seek a rational basis for ideas and concepts used to describe and visualize the world, critically examining the justification of these ideas and concepts. This strand of thought has its origin in Odera Oruka, whose main objective was to establish, with evidence, that critical reflection on issues of fundamental importance has always been the concern of a few in African societies. These themes involve questions about the Supreme Being, person, freedom, equality, death, and the afterlife. The evidence that Oruka collected about the rational elaboration of such themes by indigenous sages is contained in dialogues, many of which appear in his work *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, published in 1990. In the essay *Filosofia da sagacidade: sua metodologia, resultados, significância e futuro*, Kibujjo Kalumba comments:

A maioria das pessoas concorda que um sábio é uma pessoa excepcionalmente inteligente. Além dessa sabedoria, Henry OderaOruka sugere um segundo critério sobre a sagacidade. Um verdadeiro sábio, ele diz, deve usar habitualmente o dom da sabedoria para o aperfeiçoamento ético de sua comunidade. Por isso, ele ou ela tem que ser constantemente preocupado com os problemas éticos e empíricos provenientes de sua comunidade, com a intenção

de encontrar soluções interessantes para elas. Na visão de Oruka, o segundo critério é o que distingue um sábio de um sofista¹⁷

This proposal of Odera Oruka received criticism from many intellectuals, including the philosopher himself. Next, to illustrate, we will present Gail Presbey's criticism. She shows fragile points in the project of the Kenyan thinker. She starts by considering Odera Oruka's self-criticism. For Presbey,¹⁸ Odera Oruka doubted his own Sage's philosophy project. In *Philosophy in East Africa and the Future of Philosophical Research in Africa* (1997)¹⁹, Oruka admits the limits of his project from the point of view of the historical context and soon will give rise to tendencies that he considers central to the future of the African philosophy (the professional philosophy and the nationalist-ideological philosophy). Moreover, although he criticizes the work of Tempels and that of other ethnophilosophers, the author confesses that his own is a combination of anthropology and philosophy.

Oruka says that he began his *Sage Philosophy*²⁰ as a contestation to the thesis defended by some Europeans that the Africans are not able to philosophize. However, he continues to suggest that his project serves only as a "base" or "raw material" for other forms of philosophy that must emerge in the future. In his view, professional academic philosophers must focus on African indigenous texts. In them, these philosophers can base their research, instead of always choosing the European texts for their future works. In addition, he notes that the beliefs of African populations would have little or no impact on the modern debate on philosophy or science. In other words, Oruka seeks to reinforce his modernist position by asserting that the ethnological beliefs personified by those he calls "popular sages" would hardly have much impact on modern science and philosophy.²¹

According to Presbey, Oruka's criteria for the eligibility of someone as wise are discriminatory. He insists on the prudent philosophy that neither age nor gender is a necessary condition for becoming a sage. However, in his book *Sage Philosophy* (1991), we see that of the twelve sages, there is only one young man and one

woman. This credits Presbey's critique and demands suspicion as to why the wise are generally referred to as "wise old men," in line with the general cultural bias that men are superior to women.²²

Thinkers like Wiredu believe that it is not enough to limit themselves to data collection of what was thought or said by ancestors. Part of the Wireudian critique of ethnophilosophical relies on this. In the philosopher's view, Odera Oruka's Sage Philosophy represents an individualistic version of ethnophilosophy.²³ As previously noted, it can be said that Wiredu does not agree to identify philosophy with traditional philosophy.²⁴ This makes us realize that in Kwasi Wiredu the problem of whether or not an African philosophy exists is as follows: Is it correct to speak of African philosophy as a contemporary discipline? In his work *Philosophy and an African Culture*, mentioned above, we find: "African philosophy, distinct from traditional African views of the world, is the current philosophy of production by contemporary African philosophers".²⁵

- The formal African philosophical model:

The position of Kwasi Wiredu, posed above, on African philosophy as a technical and professional philosophy enables the reader to have a reasonable idea of this current of thought. Paulin J. Hountondji²⁶ and Marcien Towa²⁷ ask whether it is really possible to speak of an African philosophy (alongside the Western model) in the strict sense. For them, this is not possible. They deny, therefore, a strictly African philosophy. However, for the question of the existence of an African philosophy to find a solution, it must take into account the emergence of the spontaneous and autonomous development of African society. In this way, African philosophers are forced to invent their own definition of philosophy by virtue of their time and place.²⁸

To end this topic, I would like to add, in terms of provocation, an element that seems to me indispensable in this debate. This is the role of the University for the development of Africa. I am convinced that it does not make much sense to raise the problem of the definition of African philosophy without connecting it to the question of what task the University should carry out on that

continent, for as, for example, chemistry, physics, mathematics and medicine have a contribution to the development of Africa, and for this to happen, these areas of knowledge need a well-structured university system, academic philosophy also has work to do not least important for the continent in question. In fact, this leads us to an old debate that goes back to Plato, that is, to see if everyone can be philosophers or if, on the contrary, this would be the privilege of only a few.

This debate is also of interest to Brazil. There are issues to be resolved: What role should philosophy play in our country? Is there a philosophy, effectively Brazilian? What does it consist of?

3. Some questions of African philosophy in recent decades

The current philosophical debates that take place on the African continent revolve around topics such as identity, culture, religion, human rights, democracy, modernity, development and conceptual decolonization. It should be emphasized that, in Brazil, they are also an object of interest in philosophy and the humanities in general.

As an example and suggestion of consultation on the thematic identity, we present the Congolese philosopher Mudimbe.²⁹

A obra *A invenção da África: Gnose, Filosofia e a Ordem do conhecimento*, de Valentin Yves Mudimbe, caracteriza-se por abranger uma perspectiva historicista que problematiza os conceitos e discursos do que conhecemos como uma África mitificada. As verdades veiculadas por filósofos, antropólogos, missionários religiosos e ideólogos, bem como imagens ocidentalizadas e/ou eurocêntricas, inerentes aos processos de transformações dos vários tipos de conhecimentos, são desconstruídas por Mudimbe *pari passu* aos padrões imperiais ou coloniais. Para tal empreitada, vale ressaltar as inúmeras referências que compõem um sólido *corpus* documental utilizado pelo autor em sua investigação, ou seja, estas transitam da filosofia romana ao romantismo alemão. Ou ainda, o questionar e investigar através do termo gnose, cunhado com o

intuito de erguer uma arqueologia do(s) sentido(s) do Pensamento Africano.³⁰

He is influenced by thinkers such as Eboussi-Boulaga, Bimwenyi, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Ricoeur, among others. The very debate about which definition to give to African philosophy throws us directly into the heart of discussions about identity in general and about the identity of Africa in particular. The same can be said in relation to thinking about these topics. As you can see, the problem of African identity has many nuances. One of them are the languages spoken on that continent.

Kwame Appiah, in his book *My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, right in the first chapter, faces this question of identity. He calls it *The Invention of Africa* (1992). The author begins his reflections by problematizing the multiplicity of languages and dialects spoken on the continent. The first element that he throws in the discussion is the predominance, in African countries, of the languages of the settlers (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic). Africa, as a concept, is one of the main points of this book. Defining what it is represents a central aspect of the debate about its identity.

The philosophy of culture elaborated there is vigorous, and has provided good reflections so far. This text by Appiah is an example of this. It is a recommended reading for anyone interested in the study of African culture. Another notable author in the field of philosophy of culture in Africa is Kwasi Wiredu. In this sense, famous is his already cited book *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (1996). It starts from the universals and particulars in human culture to gain a better understanding of what Africa means.

As for religion, it can be said that this is an element that attracts, more and more, the interest of African philosophers. This assertion applies both to indigenous religions and to their relationship to both Christianity and Islam. To clarify these discussions, let us look at the text of Wiredu *African Religions from a Philosophical Point of View* (2010).

The author points out that the term "religion" does not originate in Africa. In addition, he adds that, according to Mbiti,

there may not be an equivalent word in African languages. However, in *African Religions and Philosophy*, we read that not only are African peoples known to be religious, but they are said to know not how to live without religion.³¹ Wiredu provokes: to have a religion isn't necessarily a moral or intellectual advantage.³²

Wiredu, a confessed atheist, criticizes the fact that many African scholars strive to prove that a belief in God has arisen in Africa. According to him, this results from the idea that religion is an achievement. The thinker points out: This assumption, unfortunately, is capable of undermining a dispassionate examination to clarify the role played by religion in African culture (2010). In his view, "the concept of religion applies to African culture, in most cases only in a minimal sense".³³ He goes on treating the Supreme Being for African populations. The author seeks to clarify:

African worldviews usually, though not invariably, feature a Supreme Being who is regarded as responsible for the world order. Generally, that being is explicitly conceived to be omniscient, omnibenevolent, and, subject to a rider to be entered in due course omnipotent [...]. A sense of dependency, trust, and unconditional reverence is almost everywhere evident in African attitudes to the Supreme Being.³⁴

Wiredu emphasizes an element that deserves to be mentioned in these reflections, that is, "strikingly, however, rituals of God-worship are often absent from African life".³⁵

Let's talk a little about human rights. Law professor Fischel Andrade, in his essay *O sistema africano de proteção dos direitos humanos e dos povos*, talks about the Banjul Charter.

A entrada em vigor da Carta Africana dos Direitos Humanos e dos Povos, também conhecida como Carta de Banjul, aos 21 de outubro de 1986, consolidou o terceiro sistema regional de proteção internacional dos direitos humanos. Trata-se, sem lugar a dúvidas, de um marco nos esforços que vêm sendo feitos, tanto a nível global quanto regional, com vistas à promoção e ao respeito dos direitos humanos. Não obstante, o sistema africano encontra obstáculos de

ordem histórica, política, estrutural e jurídica que podem comprometer sua eficácia³⁶.

Three decades after the promulgation of this document, the following testimony of Achille Mbembe, in a way, justifies this fear: Eu estava aqui durante o último surto de violência contra esses “estrangeiros”. A caçada atual por “estrangeiros” é o produto de uma complexa cadeia de cumplicidades. O governo sul-africano tomou, recentemente, uma posição dura sobre a imigração. Novas medidas draconianas têm sido aprovadas. Seus efeitos são devastadores para as pessoas já estabelecidas aqui legalmente. Algumas semanas atrás, eu assisti, em uma reunião de equipe “estrangeira”, na Universidade de Wits, histórias horríveis. Licença de trabalho não renovada, vistos recusados para membros da família, crianças no limbo nas escolas... Por meio de suas novas medidas anti-imigração, o governo está mudando os migrantes, anteriormente legais, para ilegais³⁷.

He is not reporting any developments in Europe as a result of recent waves of migration of Africans to that continent. On the contrary, it refers to what is being experienced in South Africa. In fact, the Cameroonian philosopher is denouncing human rights violations that are currently taking place in the country that had its name associated with the struggles against apartheid.

Indeed, this continent is the scene of countless disregard for human rights. Wiredu believes that governments are his biggest violators. For the thinker, this results from the moral degeneration of some politicians or failures in the very system of majority democracy.³⁸

Of the suggested themes, the next three (democracy, modernity and development) will be treated together as a bloc because they have strong connections to each other.

Held (1996)³⁹ and Robert Dahl (1989)⁴⁰ present four historical models of democracy: a) participatory or classical democracy; b) republicanism; c) liberal representative democracy; d) Marxism and single-party democracy.⁴¹ However, for many African intellectuals to propose democracy to that continent is something viewed with reservations or even reprehensible. Already among the supporters of democracy for Africa there is a problem to

be solved at the outset, that is, to define which model of democracy would be most appropriate there. The divergences are several.

However, Kwasi Wiredu condemns both democracy by majority (proposed by the West) and that of a single party (inheritance of the former Soviet Union). The philosopher proposes a new model, that is, democracy by consensus. It is a system not anchored in political parties. This proposal has as reference the concept of community consensus, present in Akan populations, in the pre-colonial period⁴².

Another relevant point for understanding Kwasi Wiredu's social philosophy is his contributions to the African development project. In this sense, a major challenge is the problem of self-definition, because, in that continent, the traditional and the modern coexist with difficulties.⁴³

But what exactly does developed Africa mean? For him, the development of Africa demands technical-scientific knowledge, but he warns: "It would profit us little to gain all the technology in the world and lose the humanistic essence of our culture".⁴⁴ Of course, developing it suggests modernizing it. This implies recourse to modern science to improve the living conditions of Africans.

In relation to the development of this continent, Wiredu indicates two indispensable elements: Technical-scientific knowledge and education. However, he makes an important clarification: the knowledge required by the continent is not that offered by the hard sciences, but the knowledge of the social sciences and philosophy, as these will contribute to defining how to apply scientific and technological resources properly.⁴⁵

On conceptual decolonization, we will discuss in the next section.

4. The discipline Philosophy of Education and the African philosophy

In Brazil, we have in Bachelor's Degree Program under the discipline of Philosophy of Education. The idea is to provide future teachers with a minimum philosophical basis to better perform their

activities as education professionals. However, very often, the philosophical source that feeds this discipline is Western philosophy (authors, theories, categories and concepts). We can say without fear of making mistakes: African philosophy is almost never considered when it comes to preparing the menus and, hence, the course plans of the discipline under analysis.

Looking briefly at the history of our country, we find without difficulty the neglect to which education was relegated from Tomé de Sousa to Michel Temer. One of the consequences of this is to have an elitist educational system (conscious, for most of its history). This is the first phase of a system whose landmark is the arrival of the Jesuits to the Land of Vera Cruz⁴⁶.

Another important element is the fact that the constitution of Brazilian society was marked by a terrible misunderstanding, that is, the attempt by the white matrix of anthropological negation of two of the three matrices responsible for the formation of the Brazilian people (indigenous and Afro). This was decisive in order to have, until the beginning of the twentieth century, a consciously elitist educational system, which made little or no case for indigenous and Afros and their descendants.

In the 1930s, due to the elaboration of the new constitution, we have a strong debate surrounding the theme of education. This is one of the highlights of the philosophy of education in our country.

From these debates, there is certain hope that Brazil needs an educational system open to all Brazilians. So this is a new element. Although, in practice, the country continues to have an educational system focused on the dominant elites, at least theoretically, we have a new concept. We can say that this is the second phase of the history of this system.

With the departure of the military from power, in 1985, the period of redemocratization began in the country. In 1988, the new Federal Constitution, denominated as Citizen Constitution, was elaborated. This could be set as the beginning of the third phase of the Brazilian educational system. The source that gives life to the discussions about education, in this third moment, is the notion of "democracy". In the years that follow, several practical measures are

taken with the aim of achieving the goal of providing quality education for all Brazilians.

However, since the end of 2014, we have been experiencing regression in educational policies, although we were still far from achieving the aforementioned scope. Even so, it should be noted that there have been some advances regarding the integration of indigenous people, Afros and their descendants. In this context of redemocratization, in spite of immense difficulties related to ethno-racial issues in Brazil, there is maturation in some sectors of Brazilian society capable of producing laws of the scope of the 10.639/2003⁴⁷ and 11.645/2008⁴⁸.

Certainly, in the country, one of the characteristics of Basic Education is inequality. It is in the racial field that these asymmetries are more blunt. In fact, in Brazilian society, those who are most affected by prejudice, racism and discrimination are those belonging to the Afrodescendant population. As for the constitution of Brazilian society, as mentioned earlier, the great misconception of the white matrix was to have expended a terrible effort with the objective of annihilating the other two matrices. Indeed, this error contributes to a better understanding of the prejudices directed at blacks and Indians in our country. If we consider the pre-colonial period, it is worth emphasizing that in the content taught in Basic Education, there is an almost absolute silence about the Indian and the Negro before his contact with the white *in terra brasilis*. In the book *Casa grande e senzala* (1963), the Indians are described by Brazilian Gilberto Freire as "Bandos de crianças grandes; uma cultura verde e incipiente; ainda na primeira denteição; sem os ossos nem o desenvolvimento das grandes semicivilizações americanas"⁴⁹ (Freire, 1963: 150). In a general way, the authors portrayed the Indian and the Negro, since the arrival of the Europeans in our land.

Some of the themes visited by African philosophy today are of great interest to countries like Brazil. Among them we can emphasize those mentioned in the previous section. They involve issues that directly concern us. Therefore, they are also interested in philosophical thinking that deals with Brazilian educational issues.

Therefore, in Brazil, the discipline Philosophy of Education must seriously seek to carry out dialogues with the philosophers of Africa, because for us, these are categories of the first order.

One of the advantages that deserves to be highlighted in consulting these thinkers on these issues lies in the fact that we have in common with them the peripheral regions of the world. Among so many traits that approach us this is quite significant. Thus, in addressing these issues, observing the treatment given to them by Africans will certainly be of benefit to us Brazilians.

Here it is not suggested, of course, to give up the Western classical philosophical tradition, when we approach the themes of interest in the Philosophy of Education. Far from this, what we propose has to do with aggregate and not substitute. We defend the thesis, according to which, given the nature and proximity of the problems theoretically faced by the Brazilian Philosophy of Education and those discussed by the African philosophy, we will only have to win if we are bold and able to include in the classes of said discipline, given for us in the courses of teacher training, the contributions of the African philosophers.

As an example of the contributions that can be obtained by visiting the philosophical production of African intellectuals, researchers in the field of philosophy, let us cite the "conceptual decolonization", since it is a good category for dialogue with those mentioned above or with others of the interest of Philosophy of Education. For decades, this theme has been intensifying in that continent, involving several of its thinkers.

In this direction, Mbembe (2001) criticizes the fact that in Europe, with the end of the slave trade, the doubts about whether Africans can be able to govern or not to govern themselves.⁵⁰ This negative view of the colonizer over the African ended up being assimilated by this. The result of this was the strengthening of something that was long gone, that is, the epistemic temptation of the African (and us Brazilians) to think the world using European categories and concepts.

Hountondji is another author concerned with this subject. In *Conhecimento de África, conhecimento de africanos* (2008), he argues in favor of the thesis, according to which it is necessary to

strengthen in that continent an autonomous, self-confident epistemological tradition of research and knowledge that responds to problems and questions directly or indirectly, by Africans themselves.

The debate on the decolonization of thinking relies on the remarkable presence of Kwasi Wiredu. In his view, conceptual decolonization refers to two complementary actions: a) “Evitar a assimilação sem verificações em nosso pensamento [...] de esquemas conceituais fixados nas tradições filosóficas estrangeiras que tiveram um impacto sobre a vida e sobre o pensamento africanos”⁵¹; b) “Em nossas meditações filosóficas, desfrutar o máximo possível [...] dos recursos dos nossos esquemas conceituais originais, inclusive em setores altamente especializados da filosofia contemporânea”.⁵²

For the author, colonialism led to the overlapping of foreign categories over African thinking systems. Basically, this is why it is necessary to carry out the task of conceptual decolonization in Africa⁵³. His research in this respect highlights his studies in the field of language and culture. In this direction, one of his works that deserves prominence is *Philosophy and an African culture*. For him, there is a danger to be faced, that is, the “de-africanization”.⁵⁴

Here I turn to the words of Kwame Appiah *In My Father's House*, which deals essentially with the philosophy of culture:

When I argue that ideological decolonization is bound to fail if it neglects either endogenous "tradition" or exogenous "Western" ideas, and that many African (and African-American) intellectuals have failed to find a negotiable middle way, I am talking about friends and neighbors and I am talking about how *we* deal with *our* shared situation”.⁵⁵

Bringing African philosophy into the Philosophy of Education will be helpful, as it will help us, as a Brazilian people, to build our worldview (though open and attentive to the classical Western tradition) from within ourselves, leading us to assume, in this process, an active role. In addition, it will produce, among

others, the following fruits: It will inform the new teachers in formation in Brazil about the philosophical production, in the African continent; will move towards overcoming Eurocentrism; will contribute to the enrichment of the content worked in the discipline Philosophy of Education; will collaborate for the implementation of Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008; will enrich and deepen the debate on the Brazilian identity.

Final considerations

Brazil should pay more attention to the philosophical work that, especially in the last decades, has been developed in Africa. In my judgment, it is good that this happens for three main reasons: a) existence of a serious and quality work, in the field of philosophy, being elaborated in that continent; b) like us, they are seen as the periphery of the world; c) there are deep historical ties that bind us to them.

As we have seen, Wiredu takes the term "philosophy" in two distinct meanings: academic discipline and habit of reflection. The first is a relatively recent experience in sub-Saharan Africa; the second, in turn, is not something new on that continent.⁵⁶ Since the last decades of the twentieth century, humanity has been experiencing profound changes in social design. As in the fifth, fifteenth, and eighteenth centuries AD, we are experiencing another kind of society. Put differently, we are undergoing a social restructuring. This time the process of transformation is marked, among others, by two new elements, that is, the highest level of technological development and a globalization that makes the planet a village.

These changes bring before us a series of difficult challenges. I conclude these reflections by bringing to light one that, in my judgment, is central to this process. It is a question of the necessity of conducting, as humanity, this passage in such a way that we have as a result an organized society, where the humanity is given the greatest emphasis. It is worth clarifying that this does not imply taking it as master of nature, but, on the contrary, to consider it an integral and inseparable part of it and to understand it as a *sine qua non* condition of human existence.

To do this requires great effort and dedication from us. Two things are indispensable: to be aware of this process; to resort to a type of rationality present, for example, in Ubuntu that expresses itself in the "I am because we are". We should note the following: the "We" indicated here signifies not only the human collectivity (*muntu*) but also communicates nature (*kintu*). After all, we exist because we are also nature.⁵⁷

END NOTES

¹ Translation: In the eighteenth century, in a historical context of colonization, the following problem appears in Europe for Philosophy: is there an African philosophy or not? The answer that the debate will produce reflects the world view and the understanding of man that the European colonizer has at the time. Later, in the twentieth century, this problem will be raised again, thanks to the work *La Philosophie Bantoue de l'Être* of the Franciscan missionary Placide Tempels, published in 1945. In it the Belgian missionary argues that the metaphysical categories of the Bantu people are reflected in their languages, that is, in linguistic categories. Finally, in the last decades, the debate intensifies"

Vasconcelos, Francisco Antonio de (2015), "África e Filosofia". In ENCONTRO INTERNACIONAL DE LITERATURAS, HISTÓRIAS E CULTURAS AFRO-BRASILEIRAS E AFRICANAS UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO PIAUÍ, IV, Teresina. *Anais IV Encontro Internacional de Literaturas, Histórias e Culturas afro-brasileiras e africanas Universidade Estadual do Piauí - Identidades e Diásporas: afrodescendência, africanidade, educação e cultura indígena*. Teresina: NEPA/UESPI, 187-194. Accessed September 15, 2016. http://s3.amazonaws.com/nepa2015/ckeditor_assets/attachments/56/africa_e_filosofia.pdf. P. 1

² Ibid

³ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Roma: Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, Facultas Philosophiae, 2008. PP. 14-15

⁴ Ibid. P.16

⁵ Ibid. P. 21

⁶ Mozzato, Diletta (2011), *Filosofia (africana) in progress: Studio su Kwasi Wiredu*. Milão: Mimesis. (Coleção La scala e l'album, 16). Pp. 32-33.

⁷ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Op Cit. P. 31

⁸ Wiredu, Kwasi (1980), *Philosophy and an African culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 36

⁹ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Op Cit. Pp. 32-33

¹⁰ Ibid. 23.

¹¹ Elungu, Alphonse Elungu Pene (2014), *O despertar filosófico em África*. Luanda: Edições Mulemba; Mangualde, Edições Pedagogo.

¹² Tempels, Placide Frans (1945). *La philosophie bantoue*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

¹³ has become a classic of African philosophical thought as ethno-philosophy. Philosophers such as A. Kagame or J. Mbiti have their names linked to ethno-philosophy. It is worth mentioning that this philosophical model soon found a harsh criticism. Critics of it are Césaire and Eboussi Boulaga, for example. If African philosophy ends up being an ethnophilosophical (for study and analysis of outsiders), it would annihilate both the existence and the philosophical identity of Africa. That's what they stand for. Thus, according to them, the Bantu philosophy would be reduced to an attempt on the part of the Europeans to explain the idiosyncrasy of the Africans” Vasconcelos, Francisco Antonio de (2015), “África e Filosofia”. *Op. Cit.*. P. 4

¹⁴ Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1992), *In my father's house: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 94

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. 95.

¹⁷ Translation: “Most people agree that a sage is an exceptionally intelligent person. In addition to this wisdom, Henry Odera Oruka suggests a second criterion on wit. A true sage, he says, should habitually use the gift of wisdom for the ethical improvement of his community. Hence, he or she has to be constantly concerned about the ethical and empirical problems coming from their community, with the intention of finding interesting solutions for them. In Oruka's view, the second criterion is what distinguishes a sage from a sophist.” Kalumba, Kibujjo M. (2004), “Filosofia da sagacidade: sua metodologia, resultados, significância e futuro”, Translation for didactic use of Renato Rocha Lima Marques. In WIREDU, Kwasi (ed.). *A companion to African Philosophy*. Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell, 274-281. Accessed April 6, 2017 https://filosofia-africana.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/2/1/13213792/kibujjo_m._kalumba_-_filosofia_da_sagacidade_sua_metodologia_resultados_e P. 1

¹⁸ Presbey, G.M. (1997), “Who Counts as a Sage?, Problems in the Further Implementation of Sage Philosophy”, In *Quest: Philosophical Discussions: An International African Journal of Philosophy/Revue Africaine Internationale de Philosophie*, v.11, n. 1-2, 52-66. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.quest-journal.net/>

¹⁹ Oruka, Odera (1997), *Practical Philosophy: In Search of an Ethical Minimum*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

²⁰ Oruka, Odera (1990), *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, Nairobi: African Center for Technological Studies (ACTS) Press; also published by Leiden: E. J. Brill

²¹ Mosima.Pius Maija (2016), *Philosophic Sagacity and Intercultural Philosophy Beyond Henry Odera Orika*. Leiden: African Studies Centre. Pp. 102-103

²² Ibid.

²³ 36

²³ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Op Cit. P. 18

²⁴ Mozzato, Diletta (2011), *Filosofia (africana) in progress*, Op. Cit. P. 35

²⁵ Wiredu, Kwasi (1980), *Philosophy and an African culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 36

²⁶ Hountondji, Paulin (2008), "Conhecimento de África, conhecimento de Africanos: Duas perspectivas sobre os Estudos Africanos", In *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*. Ano 80, Março, 149-160.

²⁷ Towa, Marcien (2015). *A ideia de uma filosofia negro-africana*. Curitiba: NEAB; Belo Horizonte: Nandyala.

²⁸ Vasconcelos, Francisco Antonio de (2015), "África e Filosofia". *Op. Cit.*. P. 5

²⁹ Mudimbe, Valentin Yves (2013), *A invenção de África: Gnose, filosofia e a ordem do conhecimento*. Mangualde (Portugal), Luanda: Edições Pedagogo; Edições Mulemba.

³⁰ Translation: Valentin Yves Mudimbe's *A invenção da África: Gnose, Filosofia e a Ordem do conhecimento* is characterized by a historicist perspective that problematizes the concepts and discourses of what we know as a mythical Africa. Truths conveyed by philosophers, anthropologists, religious missionaries and ideologues, as well as Westernized and/or Eurocentric images, inherent in the processes of transformation of the various types of knowledge, are deconstructed by Mudimbe *paripassu* to imperial or colonial standards. For this work, it is worth mentioning the innumerable references that make up a solid documentary *corpus* used by the author in his research, that is, they go from Roman philosophy to German romanticism. Or, to question and investigate through the term gnosis, coined with the intention of erecting an archeology of the meaning(s) of African Thought" Weber, Priscila Maria (2014), "A África de Valentin Mudimbe e o descobrimento de uma ordem do conhecimento", *Anos 90: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História*, v. 21, n. 40, 563-568.

³¹ Mbiti, John. S (1990), *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2. Ed. London: Heinemann. P. 2

³² Wiredu, Kwasi (2010), *African Religions from a Philosophical Point of View*. In Taliaferro, Charles; Draper, Paul; Quinn, Philip L. (eds.). *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Second Edition. Malden; Oxford; West Sussex: Blackwell, 2010, 34-43, by Lana Ellen T. de Sousa. P.10

³³ Ibid. P. 2

³⁴ Ibid. P. 35.

³⁵ Ibid. P. 36

³⁶ Translation: "The entry into force of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter, on October 21, 1986, consolidated the

third regional system of international protection of human rights. This is undoubtedly a milestone in the efforts being made, both globally and regionally, with a view to promoting and respecting human rights. Nonetheless, the African system encounters historical, political, structural and legal obstacles that can jeopardize its effectiveness”Andrade, José H. Fischel de (1994),“O sistema africano de proteção dos direitos humanos e dos povos”,*África: Revista do Centro de Estudos africanos*, 23-57. Accessed November 23, 2016. <http://www.revistas.usp.br/africa/article/view/96035/95278>. P. 23

³⁷ Translation: “I was here during the latest outbreak of violence against these “foreigners.” The current hunt for “foreigners” is the product of a complex chain of complicity. The South African government has recently taken a tough stance on immigration. New draconian measures have been passed. Its effects are devastating for people already established here legally. A few weeks ago, I watched, at a “foreign” team meeting at the University of Wits, horrible stories. Unrecognized work permit, refused visas for family members, children in limbo in schools [...] Through its new anti-immigration measures, the government is moving migrants, formerly legal, to illegal immigrants” (2015). Mbembe, Achille (2015),“Afrofobia”? Achille Mbembe escreve sobre xenofobia na África do Sul”. In *Por dentro da África*. 19 abr. 2015. Accessed September 3, 2016 <http://www.pordentrodafrica.com/noticias/afrofobia-achille-mbembe-escreve-sobre-xenofobia-na-africa-do-sul-2>

³⁸ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Op Cit. P. 80.

³⁹ Held, David (1996),*Models of Democracy*. 2 ed. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers

⁴⁰ Dahl, Robert (1989),*Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 48

⁴² Remember that Wiredu is of the Ashanti people, one of the Akan people.

⁴³ Ibid. P. 85.

⁴⁴ Wiredu, Kwasi (1980), *Philosophy and an African culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 18.

⁴⁵ Ogbenika, Gregory Ebalu, *Democracy and Development in the Socio-political Philosophy of Kwasi Wiredu*. Op Cit. Pp. 88-89.

⁴⁶ This was the first name that the Portuguese “discoverers” gave to the lands that later would be called of Brazil.

⁴⁷ It imposes on the network of Basic Education the obligatory nature of the theme “History and Culture Afro-Brazilian”.

⁴⁸ It imposes on the network of Basic Education the obligatory nature of the theme “History and Culture Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous”.

⁴⁹“Bands of large children; a green and incipient culture; still in the first dentition; without the bones nor the development of the great American semicivilizations”(Freire, 1963: 150).

⁵⁰ Mbembe, Achille (2001), *Formas africanas da escrita de si*. Accessed July 12, 2016.

⁵¹ Translation: To avoid assimilation without verification in our thinking ... of conceptual schemas fixed in foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on life and African thinking"

⁵² Translation: In our philosophical meditations, enjoy as much as possible ... of the resources of our original conceptual schemes, even in highly specialized sectors of contemporary philosophy" Wiredu, Kwasi (2009), La necessità di un a decolonizzazione concettuale nella filosofia africana. In: *Rivista Semestrale di Filosofia*, n. 6. Roma: Dipartimento di Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi Roma Ter. P. 97

⁵³ Ele aponta três canais responsáveis por essa sobreposição: a linguagem, a religião e a política. Sobre a descolonização conceitual numa perspectiva de Brasil, vale conferir o artigo *Descolonizar o saber: Um tema da filosofia africana*. ["He points to three channels responsible for this overlap: language, religion, and politics. Regarding conceptual decolonization from a Brazilian perspective, it is worth giving the paper *Descolonizar o saber: Um tema da filosofia africana*"]

⁵⁴ Vasconcelos, Francisco Antonio de (2016b), "Descolonizar o saber: Um tema da filosofia africana", In CONGRESSO SOBRE GÊNERO, EDUCAÇÃO E AFRODESCENDÊNCIA, III, Teresina. *Anais III Congresso sobre Gênero, Educação e Afrodescendência: Direito de ser nas relações de poder*, November 09-11, 2016.

⁵⁵ Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1992), *In my father's house: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. x

⁵⁶ Mozzato, Diletta (2011), *Filosofia (africana) in progress*: Studio su Kwasi Wiredu. Milão: Mimesis. (Coleção La scala e l'album, 16). P. 29

⁵⁷ Vasconcelos, Francisco Antonio de (2016a), "Jürgen Habermas e Kwasi Wiredu: Reflexões sobre o consenso", In COLÓQUIO HABERMAS E COLÓQUIO DE FILOSOFIA DA INFORMAÇÃO, XII e III, Rio de Janeiro. *Anais XII Colóquio Habermas e III Colóquio de Filosofia da Informação: Conflitos Contemporâneos – Direitos Humanos e solidariedade*. Rio de Janeiro: SALUTE, 342-355. Accessed November 12, 2016.