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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE OF ETHNOCENTRIC COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The question of whether or not African Philosophy exists is no longer a question that plagues the minds of African philosophers. It is now taken for granted that Africa has philosophy. The most pressing issue now is how to develop African philosophy to rank at par with philosophies of other regions. Asouzu believes that philosophy is inhibited in Africa, because of the divisive mindset with which Africans pursue philosophy – a mindset after Aristotle. In his Metaphysics, Aristotle bifurcated being into substance and accidents, and exalted substance above accidents. He also bifurcated humans into – the wise and the less wise. The wise are those that know the cause of a thing. They are superior to the less wise. In the same vein, he divided science into two categories – the master science (Metaphysics) and the ancillary science (other subjects). Once again the master science is placed above the ancillary science. This divisive mindset Asouzu believes percolated through the West due to the influence of Aristotle on the Western thought. The West in their turn transported it to Africa through socialization, indoctrination and education. Africans now imbued with this divisive mindset now tend towards ethnocentric commitment in their philosophizing. Ethnocentric commitment has tended to limit Africans merely to attempts, to show how their philosophy or culture is equal or better than that of the West. This kind of spirit in which philosophy is pursued in Africa, Asouzu argues inhibits the mind from properly grasping reality and thereby unable to advance knowledge. This work therefore, presents Asouzu's proposed solution to this drawback in African philosophy, with the intent of charting a better course for African philosophy and thereby enhancing the speedy growth of philosophy in Africa.

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