

Editor's Note

Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)
Premier Issue, New Series, Vol.1 No.1, June 2009, pp.v-vi
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Welcome to the new series of *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya*. Africa's socio-political crisis is multi-faceted, and therefore requires a many-pronged approach. It is for this reason that *Thought and Practice* seeks to serve as a forum for scholars with broad interests in the humanities and social sciences, where they can exchange ideas on various facets of Africa's current realities and challenges. The articles in this maiden issue can be categorized into four.

First, Reginald Oduor's and Patrick Nyabul's papers deal with the need to challenge destructive modes of thought, with a view to developing a more enlightened African citizenry. Any truly human action proceeds from deliberation, that is, thoughtfulness in decision making or action. The effectiveness of any deliberation is determined by habits of thought that are committed to sound logical, metaphysical, epistemological and axiological principles. Reginald Oduor examines four modes of thought that seem to hinder desirable social transformation in contemporary Africa, and calls for an interdisciplinary approach to verifying, mitigating and/or eliminating them. Patrick Nyabul avers that contemporary Africa urgently needs to utilize various social institutions to provide sound moral education. For Nyabul, such a strategy should result in the containment of spiraling social ills such as corruption and bad governance.

Second, D.A. Masolo's and Godwin Azenabor's papers examine the content and methodology of African philosophy. D.A. Masolo contends that though previously underrated in scholarship, communalism is the distinctive feature in African philosophy. Nevertheless, he cautions that communalism does not entail an exclusivist outlook that dehumanizes people from other identities. Godwin Azenabor examines the contribution and ongoing relevance of Odera Oruka's philosophic sagacity, contending that while it demonstrates exceptional originality, current socio-economic changes are rendering the identification of genuine philosophic sages increasingly difficult.

Third, we have papers that address various issues pertaining to governance in Africa. It is difficult to gainsay the fact that a number of Africa's current troubles stem from poor systems of governance, many of which purport to be "democracies". Francis Owakah and Robert Aswani interrogate the need to respect the will of the people expressed through regular elections, while ensuring that specialized knowledge is put into practical use for the common good. Ademola Fayemi proposes an eclectic approach to the construction of an African theory of democracy, arguing that while the core of such a theory must be traditional African values, we must also accommodate useful concepts from outside the continent. On her part, Sirkku Hellsten reflects on the basic discrepancy in the practice of democracy in Africa today, with special reference to the Kenyan post 2007 elections crisis. She argues that the paradox of governance in contemporary Africa is that politicians take advantage of ethnically-based communalistic sentiments for selfish ambitions, while perpetuating what on the surface is a Western type liberal democratic system whose basic assumption is the autonomy of the individual.

Fourth, the papers by Crispinous Iteyo and Samson Gunga interrogate the question of African culture. Crispinous Iteyo contends that despite the elaborate African funeral rituals emanating from belief in an after-life, it is difficult to see how spirits of the dead, if they exist, would be interested in how the bodies they previously inhabited are handled by surviving members of their families. Samson Gunga challenges widowhood practices among the Luo of Kenya, and advocates for widowhood empowerment projects that can finally set the oppressed rural women free from the clutches of antiquated and life-threatening customs.

We hope that these papers will spur further scholarly research and debate into ways of improving the social conditions in our continent. Towards this end, we welcome articles for consideration for publication in future issues of this biannual journal.

Reginald M.J. Oduor
Editor-in-Chief