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PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICA LUSOPHONE: ANGOLAN CASE

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Short Abstract

The idea to know the philosophy of the lusophone region of Africa turns to be more interesting when, as it says in the Bible “for the tree is known by its fruits”, meaning by that one wants to know if there are philosophy and philosophers in the Lusophone Africa. Is philosophy taught there? What are the results of the philosophical production?

Long Abstract

In Angola philosophy has existed since the independence period until nowadays. In the first stage it appeared in the religious institutions as the preparation for the missionaries and in the second stage, when the independence was proclaimed. The communist ideology adopted by the main Party (MPLA) permitted the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, dialectic materialism, that deeply influenced the Angolan politics until the proclamation of multi-party system (indeed, from the economical point of view, the capitalism has already been influencing the economy of the state since 80's) to be involved in the state and party supporters' education.

Despite this observation, the fruits of the Angolan philosophy are scanty, which is why we are prepared to present some justifying reasons by looking at the conditions, in which the philosophers live, social and political contexts. We are appealing also to the philosophers of other areas to join the philosophers of the Lusophone Africa and therefore we suggest an annual forum about this theme.

Key-words: Philosophy, the Lusophone Africa, Philosophical production.

The idea to know the philosophy of the lusophone region of Africa turns to be more interesting when, as it says in the Bible “for the tree is known by its fruits”, meaning by that one wants to know if there are philosophy and philosophers in the Lusophone Africa. Is philosophy taught there? What are the results of the philosophical production?

Before answering these questions it's important to mention that the Lusophone Africa is consisted of the countries of the African continent (S. Tome, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique). So, when we are talking about the Lusophone Africa, we are talking about African continent, which in everyone's mind is a problematic continent that has already been encountering various problems since colonization period: underdevelopment, civil and military conflicts, human underdevelopment, dictatorships, nepotism, centralised power, social exclusion, money concentration in the hands of powerful people, weak performance of judicial powers, patronage, military coups, economical subsistence, lack of respect for the human rights, etc.

As for the existence of the philosophy in Angola, we can confirm that it has existed before the independence period until nowadays. At first it started in religious and diocesan seminaries and was used to prepare the missionaries. Later on, with the independency, the communist ideology was adopted by the main Party (MPLA) and later incorporated in the education of the supporters (Marxism-Leninism philosophy, dialectic materialism). It influenced the political class of Angola until the proclamation of multi-party system (although from the economical point of view the capitalism has already been influencing the economy of the state since 80's). Therefore, the philosophy of Angola is real and it has its history.

What type of philosophy is it? Firstly, we'd like to know if this philosophy is purely Angolan or not. Is there Angolan philosophy after all, in other words, is there African philosophy? We can't forget that philosophy is a result of the world-view of the human beings and a consequence of the historical context, which appeared as the product of the oral tradition in the antique Greece. So, we can conclude that there is philosophy in Angola.

Before the colonization Angola was a group of kingdoms (Kongo, Matamba, Cassanje, Ngola, Vie, Wambu, Caconda, Benguela, Lunda Empire, etc.) with its own social, economical and political organisation. These facts were widely recorded by the occidental, American and Angolan literature, which allows us to confirm that Angolan philosophy exists as a group of knowledge about social life organisation, although this philosophy is mainly oral and concentrated on the proverbial tradition of each culture that forms Angolan group, in particular: Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo, Fiote, Tchokwe, Nhaneka-Humbi, etc.

During the colonial movement traditional African philosophy came across the occidental Greek philosophy, as a result of which political and religious movements as pan-africanism, negritude, churches as Tocoista, Kimbanguista, left political parties as MPLA, UNITA, FNLA occurred.

As for the institutionalization of the philosophy, it followed two routes: ecclesiastic one of the religious character and the more materialistic one by political parties, MPLA, UNITA, FNLA, *et. al.*

Regarding the institutionalisation of the Marxism philosophy, as we mentioned before, it influenced the direction of the political parties, MPLA in the phase of the adoption of Marxism-Leninism (see the Constitution) and other revolutionary movements. However, after the appearance of multi-party system and capitalism, today the philosophy is not anymore the same

as during the revolutionary period, when it was banned in some secondary and higher education institutions. It's important to reinforce that philosophy taught during the revolutionary period was the inspiration of the left Hegelian movement: Marx, Engels, Feuerbach, Lenin, etc.).

And where are the Angolan philosophers? Is there difference between the philosophers and teachers of philosophy? Is it possible to be a philosophy teacher but not to be a philosopher? It's the same as being political science teachers without being politicians. In case of philosophers, if we consider that the philosophers are the ones that teach philosophy and live it in a coherent a selfless way as Socrates, Aristotle, Marx, Lenin, etc. did, if they teach their ideas in a free and independent way, although are influenced by the others, so then it'll be difficult to honestly tell if there are Angolan philosophers or not. Therefore, we can agree that there are partial philosophers. We'll be also happy to add that yes, we have teachers of philosophy but that's it. It occurs because those, who teach philosophy, are also supporters of political parties (are members of these parties) or religious supporters linked to a certain discipline (i.e. heresy, inquisition, excommunication, etc.) that stop them from freely manifesting their ideas. Well, looking at the occidental philosophical tradition, party-political affiliation has not always been done in a way to freely express one's ideas. If it's already difficult in Europe, it's even more complex in Africa.

That's the reason why, from our point of view, the promoters of the philosophy haven't liberated themselves from the domination of the political parties, being afraid to lose their status. Being aware of these situations, the lusophone philosophers also struggle with the poverty (their poverty and their family's). How is it possible to conciliate the demands of the freedom of thought with the poverty and a fear of punishment (being expelled from the university, having cuts in the salary, being followed and murdered) by the political power (that is disturbed by their

ideas. It's really said that philosophy disturbs: Socrates, etc.) if expressing the opposite ideas? Philosophy can't flourish when people don't have a freedom of thought (Greek roots, which are the part of the philosophy, present abundance of wealth, leisure, freedom of men, etc.). Therefore, instead of looking at the fruits of the philosophy we should question if the conditions, that surround the lusophone philosophers, allow them to philosophise and freely produce. Weren't they the antique philosophers that said "primo vivere deinde philosophare?" Doesn't this mean that economical primacy is imposing the thinking? It's a false question because the economy is not possible without thinking, but we need to find out if this thinking is philosophical or it's just the flash of the survival instinct (invisible hand in the studies of Adam Smith).

In this sense, it's important that philosophy in the Lusophone Africa detaches itself from the political parties to be able to fully commit to the reality and social life in order to contribute to the development of the human spirit (perhaps the parties themselves) and direct it to the real freedom.

Finally, we should refer the results of the philosophy:

Do you know a philosopher from the Portuguese-speaking part of Africa? Even among specialist in the philosophies of sub-Saharan Africa this question will mainly be answered negatively. Until today the discourse on African philosophy mainly focuses on the Anglophone or francophone parts of Africa. The lusophone part is widely excluded. The target of our panel is to introduce concepts of philosophers (from history until today) of the Lusophone Africa. It is a trial to correct a neglect that Portuguese-speaking African countries have suffered and a trial to fill a gap in the history of philosophy in sub-Saharan Africa.

In this passage taken from the abstract of Dr. Angek Graness (the University of Vienna, Austria) we came to the conclusion that the Lusophone Africa remains unknown when we speak

about philosophy, where only Anglophone and Francophone countries stand out. The most difficult question is why it happens? Is it because of the colonization (that provoked fear and terror, intimidation and separation in order to reign better), the decolonization or it has also to do with the roots of the colonizers? How the colonization was done in the other countries? Were the native people allowed to develop the freedom of thought? Did they study in the same institutions? Did they represent in the parliaments and governments? What was the level of instruction and developments state of the colonizers? How the independence was achieved or, in other words, which decolonization philosophy was followed by the Portuguese empire? What was the relationship between the parties that assumed the power in the newly independent states? How did these movements deal with the difference of ideas inside the political parties and outside of them (civil society and intellectual class)? It's curious that this colloquium takes place here in Portugal that permits us to question the philosophers of ex-metropolis about the contribution in the process of decolonization of the lusophone Africa.

If we find answers to some of these questions, we will discover why nowadays Portuguese Africa lives in a social exclusion in the frame of the affirmation of the African Anglophone and Francophone philosophy.

However, for something to be recognized it has to be written. The predominant tradition of the today's world is graphic or written (the words go away but the writing remains). It's a must for the philosophers of the Lusophone Africa to write, because only this way they will be able to contribute to the history of the lusophone and universal philosophy, which means that the philosophers will need to detach from the tradition and political movements that can't be achieved without sacrifices. In the reality the conditions, that surround philosophers, most of whom are teachers dependent on the state, where they don't have proper housing, computers,

financial resources to be able to buy books, cars to travel to the places of investigation, electricity to concentrate on thinking and write, family problems (they normally have big families), allow us to question psychological availability of these men to produce the knowledge. More they try to climb the mountain to reach the top, more they are pulled back by the family problems, tradition that doesn't permit them to be happy with the progress of the children of your relatives to the point that they try to find a way to eliminate them physically. Which politicians support mocking criticism of the philosophers involved in the realization of lusophone humanity?

These questions can help to discover why there is a lack of the philosophical fruits in the Lusophone Africa. In case of Angola, we can affirm that there is a small production dispersed in the poetry (i.e. the poetry of Agostinho Neto is full of the existentialism and liberation philosophy) and in the works of the authors as Muanamosi MATUMONA (2011)

¹ *African Philosophy – In the time line – Epistemological, pedagogical and practical implications in the modern science, (2004) Reconstruction of Africa in the era of modernity. Trial of epistemology and pedagogy in the African philosophy; José Manuel IMBAMBA² (2003), New culture for new men and women – Philosophical project for Angola of the 3rd millennium in the light of Battista Mondim's philosophy; Raul TATI³, African crisis and a process of democratization in Africa (Pertinence and Ethic-Anthropological Implications) and Paulo SOMA. (2013) Problems of Irrationalism and Pessimism in the Angolan Poetry, and other works that need to be systematized by the Angolan philosophers.*

Here we have some reflections for the lusophone philosophers and hope to have more open dialogue. We also leave the challenges in order to create some kind of alloy⁴ that would

¹ In the memory of the author who in life was a catholic Priest.

² The author is Archbishop of Lwena.

³ The author was a Catholic Priest, whose service is currently terminated upon his request.

⁴ Philosophical Society of Angola" was formed in Angola and until now hasn't given any results.

serve as a space for the establishment of the philosophy in the Lusophone Africa. And we would like to thank the non-lusophone philosophers for the initiative and solidarity, in which “those who are awake help the others to raise”.

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