

CONCEPT NOTE

The 5th Biennial African Philosophy World Conference

Theme

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is generally defined as “love of wisdom”. However, as an exercise of love, it is a commitment freely embarked upon and exercised in an ambience of liberty and simplicity. Hence, philosophy is a voluntary commitment to articulate fundamental principles, evaluate/justify certain claims and dispassionately search for values in human affairs/concerns through a dynamic radical exercise of the intellect (Essien & Okon, 2016). In a similar vein, Olusegun Oladipo (2008) underscored philosophy in three perspectives: as the formulation or construction of world-views, critical thinking and as a rational, but non-scientific, quest for understanding. Essien & Okon (2016) adds that any philosophy must be a personal, unrestrictive, and a critically rational commitment.

Since the mid-20th century, African Philosophy has become a full-fledged academic discipline. Many readers and anthologies, introductions, and other pedagogical publications have been made, along with a great number of texts striving to give an overview of the field, often in comparison with Western philosophy or with philosophies from other regions of the world. African Philosophy has branched out to cover the philosophical activities of various groups: of people of African origin in the Diaspora (mostly the US), called "Africana Philosophy", the philosophical thought of African women ("womanism"), African aesthetics, ethics, to mention some of them.

Gender, on the other hand, has been defined differently by various authors. Biological determinists think “A person’s gender is largely/entirely determined by their biology” (Shea, 2019: 3). Sociologists define gender in virtue of people’s different roles in society (Shea, 2019: 3). While a third view of gender ties it directly to a person’s sense of self-identity (Shea, 2019: 4). And lastly, others instead think “gender” is simply the way that societies have unjustly discriminated against people with differing biological sexes, and forced them to lead different sorts of lives (Shea, 2019:4)

Today, gender issues have become a global concern. While confusion still abounds on what gender is, it is still another question as to what has brought about the widespread discrimination against the female gender in contrast to the male gender in almost all aspects of human life - such as education, health, sports, politics, culture, religion, and livelihoods.

In the area of philosophy in general and African philosophy in particular, there is conspicuous domination by the male gender. This makes one wonder as to why this trend, which seems to be deeply embedded in human history of thought, should still prevail in the modern world, where every individual is claimed to be equal to each other. On the other hand, African philosophy should as well concern itself with other questions of identity, social structures, power, and change that are on-going in wider gender debates.

On the basis of these basic concerns, this conference aims to deliberate on the gender dimensions of African philosophy. More specifically, the conference aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify the general African thought systems on gender

2. Investigate specific African philosophical thought systems on the question of gender
3. To make clear suggestions on the way forward for the various dimensions of gender in Africa

To achieve these, presenters will have to choose and deliberate in details on one or some of these issues. From the general African perspectives, the following, though not limited to these issues, may be chosen and deliberated upon:

- Gender thoughts in traditional and modern African society
- Gender and wars in Africa
- Gender and politics
- Education and gender
- Environment and gender
- Religion and gender
- Science and gender
- Technology and gender
- Arts and gender
- Gender in music, dance and drama
- Wealth and gender
- Society and gender
- Human rights and gender
- Gender and identity
- Gender and social structures
- Power and gender; and
- On-going changes in wider gender debates

From specifically African philosophical point of view, we intend that the presenters discuss the following, though not limited to, the following issues:

- Gender in traditional and modern African philosophy
- Gender and Ubuntu philosophy
- Gender and African socialism
- Gender and African negritude
- Ethnophilosophy and gender
- Philosophic sagacity and gender
- Hermeneutical philosophy and gender
- Artistic/literary philosophy and gender
- National ideological philosophy and gender
- Professional philosophy and gender
- Gender in African bride's wealth practices and African philosophy
- Gender and inheritance in African philosophy
- Democracy and gender in African philosophy
- Gender emancipation in African philosophy

From this concept note, we also think that we shall garner collaborative efforts to prepare for the conference and implement the activities identified as essential for the successful realization of the objectives of the conference and the publication of the knowledge generated by these debates. We strongly think the participation of graduate students at PhD level and post-doctoral researchers could

add a very big value to these investigations and pave ways for academic growth and development of knowledge in this area of African philosophy.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

1. Prof. Taban Lo Liyong, from the University of Juba, South Sudan – overview of gender dimensions and African philosophy.
2. Associate Prof. Anke Graness, the University of Hildesheim, Germany – on women in the global world - contrasting with Africa.
3. Prof. Sylvia Tamale, School of Law, Makerere University, Uganda – on perspectives of women in African legal, human rights, and justice systems.
4. Prof. Ebuloluwa Olufemi Oduwole, Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun-State, Nigeria – on the implications of gender dimensions in African philosophy and its future.
5. Assoc. Prof. Josephine Ayokire, Principal, CHUSS, Makerere University, Uganda – on male and female gender dynamics in Africa.

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