Philosophy, Race and Multiculturalism in Southern Africa

Zimbabwean Philosophical Studies, III

Edited by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy
Acknowledgments

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those who contributed directly and indirectly to the production and publication of this book. Many thanks go to the Executive Director of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy in America (Washington, D.C.), Dr. Hu Yeping, who supported this project by attending the conference as our guest of honour, and was also instrumental in the publication of the book volume.

Many thanks also go to the University of Zimbabwe leadership which allowed the Philosophical Society of Zimbabwe (PSZ) to host the conference at the University of Zimbabwe on the 13th of May 2017. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Itai Muwati and his Deputy, Professor Nisbert Taringa, both graced the occasion, for which we thank them.

Some members of the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, who are not in the PSZ Executive Committee, participated as members of the organizing committee, and these include Dr. J. Maritz and Ms. Barbara Chibvamushure. To them we can only say: May God bless you!
Dedication

This volume is dedicated to all the people in Southern Africa who have invariably suffered as a result of xenophobia and racial discrimination.
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Preface

FAINOS MANGENA

The title of the book volume, *Philosophy, Race, and Multiculturalism in Southern Africa*, was born out of the theme of an International Philosophy Conference which was held at the University of Zimbabwe on 13 May 2017 under the auspices of the Philosophical Society of Zimbabwe (PSZ) and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) based in the United States of America.

The book addresses three pertinent issues, namely, philosophy, race, and multiculturalism, especially as they play out in Southern Africa. My conviction is that if there is one thing that has divided the world, it is the issue of whether or not Africa has a well-defined philosophy worthy of celebration. This debate, which started with Western philosophers such as G.W.F. Hegel, David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Lucien Levy-Bruhl, is more than five decades old, and yet its influence on contemporary philosophical thinking in South Africa still abounds.

It is also important to note that, apart from this seemingly tired debate, there have also been debates centred on the issues of ethnic difference in Africa, particularly in South Africa and Zambia, which have seen fellow black Africans fighting and killing each other through what has become known as xenophobia. These unfortunate developments have prompted some contributors in this book to ask questions similar to the following: Where has the African spirit of brotherhood gone? Do African boundaries really matter? How pragmatic is the philosophy of *hunhul ubuntu* in uniting the people of Southern Africa?

The volume is made up of fifteen well-argued papers which are divided into three parts, namely: race and culture, multiculturalism and *ubuntu*, and culture and values. Contributors have been drawn from diverse academic backgrounds so as to make the book appealing to a wider readership. This book is the third in a series of volumes published on Zimbabwe by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy in the last 10 years. The first, was entitled: *The Struggles after the Struggle: Zimbabwean Philosophical Studies I*, published in 2008 (edited by David Kaulenu). The second was entitled: *Philosophy in African Traditions and Cultures: Zimbabwean Philosophical Studies II*, published in 2015 (edited by Fainos Mangena, Tarisayi Andrea Chimuka and Francis Mabiri). We trust that this volume will be a worthy contribution to the series.
Introduction

Revisiting the Themes of Race and Multiculture in Southern Africa

FAINOS MANGENA & JOHN DOUGLAS MCCLYMONT

This volume is a product of a collaborative effort between the Philosophical Society of Zimbabwe (PSZ) headquartered at the University of Zimbabwe’s Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) based at the Catholic University in America, Washington, D.C. The two philosophical bodies agreed to have a conference running under the theme “Philosophy, Race and Multiculturalism in Southern Africa,” and the PSZ was given the mandate to organize the conference, which took place on the 13th of May 2017 at the University of Zimbabwe’s main campus. The above theme was considered to be topical and relevant, given that Southern Africa as a region was experiencing spates of ethnic and racial conflicts as a result of xenophobia and academic racism. While xenophobia had seen foreigners from countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia being targeted for attack by native black South Africans who accused them of taking their jobs, academic racism was seen in the philosophical writings of some radical white philosophers in South Africa, who still viewed blacks and their philosophies as not measuring up to their “standards.” This conference set the record straight that Africans needed to re-claim their place and space so as to unapologetically fight the scourge of xenophobia and racism, through embracing the idea of multiculturalism. Below, we give an outline of the papers that make up this volume.

In the first paper, Fainos Mangena is engaged in critical conversations with renowned South African philosophers on the subject of race and African philosophy. These include: Rafael Winkler,1 Augustine Shuttet,2 Thaddeus Metz,3 and Douglas F.P. Taylor.4 In his attempt to rebut the claims of these philosophers, Mangena makes use of the critical contribu-

Mangena makes it clear that the philosophical racism exhibited in the works of the above-mentioned white South African philosophers should not be tolerated, and that there is a need for African philosophers of black extraction to break free from the shackles of racism and chart their own destiny.

In the second paper, socio-linguist Francis Matambirofa, arguing in a Zimbabwean context, and dealing with the same problems as Mangena in the first paper, postulates that the ideas of multiculturalism and anti-discrimination should be invoked to deal decisively with the problems of racism, especially against blacks and Asians. Thus, Matambirofa advocates a complete rejection of any racial discrimination deodorized and given academic respectability by some academics, especially in South Africa. Matambirofa thinks that in order to deal with the problem of racism in Zimbabwe, there is need to draw some lessons from Noam Chomsky’s universal grammar, which holds that: “All human beings are endowed with an innate capacity for culture acquisition, evolvement, development and/or abandonment.” The foundational argument he presents is that humans are fundamentally the same, and that variations in culture cannot constitute sufficient grounds for any form of discrimination whatsoever.

The third paper by Joyline Gwara is another contribution on the problem of racism in philosophy in Southern Africa, with a particular focus on Zimbabwe. In this paper, Gwara argues that Western philosophers have continued to monopolize discourses on philosophy, including African philosophy, thereby causing unnecessary confrontations between them and indigenous black philosophers, who justifiably believe that they are better qualified to define and characterize African philosophy by virtue of their rootedness in African culture. The paper proceeds by critically defining racism, as well as identifying “the challenges associated with the subjective element in the definition of the same.”

One of the critical works Gwara uses to unravel these issues is by Chitando and Mangena who look at the history of philosophical racism in the University of Zimbabwe soon after independence, where there were more white philosophers than there were black philosophers, and the

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Curriculum had a bias towards white supremacist values. In the final analysis, the paper argues that Nyerere’s idea of socialism could be improved and utilized to deal with the challenges posed by racism in Southern Africa.

Like Mangena, Matambirofa and Gwara, who seem to think that race has perverted indigenous cultures, and thereby distort their philosophies, John Mweshi argues, in the fourth paper, that culture plays an important role in shaping one’s philosophy. Unlike Mangena, Matambirofa and Gwara, who prefer to focus more on philosophical narratives of racism in Southern Africa, Mweshi focuses more on the issue of culture, arguing that philosophy can be understood better if an attempt is made to analytically define culture in relation to other related concepts such as race and civilization without confusing these concepts. For Mweshi, before one proceeds to engage in debates on racism in African philosophy, it is important to clarify key concepts. As Mweshi puts it, “Clarity is crucial, especially in academic discourse, where it is essential to operationalise or give specific meaning to many of the terms in common usage.” Thus, “[i]n treating culture, race and civilization as aspects of human society, this discussion maintains that these concepts should be clearly disentangled, in order to appreciate how each relates to philosophy.”

In the fifth paper, Prolific Mataruse provides a critical reflection on “events that happened in Grahamstown, South Africa, drawing a connection between the seemingly separate and disconnected incidents of xenophobia (2015) and #Rhodes Must Fall (2015), #Rhodes So White (2015), #Fees Must Fall (2015 and 2016), and the anti-rape-culture protests (2016) – events which featured in several debates on the transformation of South African tertiary education in general and Rhodes University in particular.” The reflections are based on Mataruse’s personal experiences as a student at Rhodes University, which is located in Grahamstown, South Africa. Mataruse argues that the incidents or demonstrations cited above are a clear indication that people of colour (black South Africans) are still being racially discriminated against by their white counterparts in sectors of higher education.

In the sixth paper, Tarisayi Andrea Chimuka argues that the Southern African region is currently experiencing serious economic and political challenges triggered by the economic and political instability in Zimbabwe. Chimuka argues that the Zimbabwean crisis has led to some Zimbabweans migrating into neighbouring countries such as South Africa in search of better employment opportunities. This has put strain on South Africa’s resources, resulting in native South Africans, especially blacks, becoming frustrated and venting their anger on foreigners through xenophobia. This development has prompted Chimuka to challenge the promise of multiculturalism in promoting regional integration. This is a very
powerful paper coming at a time when there are ethnic and racial tensions in the region.

In the seventh paper, Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru argues for the need to promote social solidarity, especially as Zimbabwe comes to grips with the new curriculum introduced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, which has opened up teaching on religions other than Christianity, which was traditionally the norm. Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru argues that Zimbabweans must be tolerant of each other and, for that to be possible, there is need to embrace a multicultural education which will put every Zimbabwian on an equal footing. This is a well-argued paper very relevant to contemporary Zimbabwe, which is threatened by ethnic differences and racial tendencies as a result of the political polarization of the last two decades.

Chipo Marble Hatendi argues, in the eighth paper, that the idea of contraception poses many challenges in a multicultural society like Zimbabwe, where cultures always conflict when it comes to family and reproductive issues. Hatendi explores the perceptions of the Shona people regarding the idea of contraception, in order to ascertain whether or not these perceptions can be universalized. Hatendi uses the tried and tested philosophy of hunhu/ubuntu as her tool of analysis. Her contribution is important in that it helps women to understand the gender-related, cultural and religious dynamics involved in the discourse of family planning in Zimbabwe.

The ninth paper by Madlozi Moyo is a reflection on the deployment of animals in the depiction of human political relations in Greek and Kalanga orature. Moyo proceeds by asking critical questions such as: How are animals used to dispense political wisdom in Greek and Kalanga orature? Which animals are symbols of power, and which animals are symbols of weakness? How do the two bodies of ancient Greek and proto-literate Kalanga literature assign literary roles to animals? As Moyo argues, “mention of animal virtues is essential in a praise poem because it transfers an animal’s power into the human world. In that sense animals have cultural capital which is used by both artisans and poets to give their recipients cultural status.” This knowledge is critical in that it helps human beings, especially the Kalanga people, to appreciate the value of animals in their lives and the need to protect them.

In the tenth paper, Philemon Chamburuka takes the reader through the ‘politics’ of pneumatology as found in one of Zimbabwe’s biggest Pentecostal churches, the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Zimbabwe. He does so by interpreting Pauline and Lucan pneumatological traditions on glossolalia with a view to showing that multiculturalism had an influence on the development of pneumatological traditions in the early church, and continues to do so in present-day Zimbabwe. This is a very important contribution, given the emergence of Pentecostal prophets in
Zimbabwe since 2007, and the way they have changed the Christian way of worship because of their emphasis on the prosperity gospel, linked with the discourse of glossolalia.

In the eleventh paper, Clive Tendai Zimunya and Chipo Marble Hatendi argue in support of the move taken by the Zimbabwe government, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, to introduce the new curriculum which opened the way for the teaching of Islam and other non-Christian religions. Contrary to the views of the general public, Zimunya and Hatendi believe that this development promotes social cohesion. Their view is that Zimbabwe is a multicultural society, and as such it should give equal respect to all religions. To them, the inclusion of Islam in public schools should be seen as a step in the right direction.

In the twelfth paper, Ruby Magosvongwe discusses two concepts which she considers to be key in building harmonious human relations in Southern Africa, in general and in Zimbabwe, in particular. These concepts are reciprocity and humwe. Magosvongwe’s discussion of these concepts is informed by Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* and Mashingaidze Gomo’s *A Fine Madness*. Her discussion places a premium on tapping the wisdom from these fictional narratives with a view to showing that something worthwhile can be found in these narratives that points towards harmonious human relations. Magosvongwe argues that literature is one window through which human beings can better understand themselves, their cultural values and their worldviews. This is a very relevant and lucid contribution which enriches this volume. In our time, issues of relationality and togetherness have become very urgent because of the fractured nature of our societies, as a result of modernity and globalisation.

In the paper entitled “Some Misconceptions about Culture: Views from a Zimbabwean Classical Thinker,” John Douglas McClymont begins by re-marking that “the theme of culture is an important one whenever we are looking at interactions between Africa and the West.” In order to foreground his thesis, McClymont asks critical questions such as: Are all cultures equally valid, or is one better than another? Can culture be separated from other elements of human life, such as religion? How should people of African roots respond to Western culture? McClymont then presents ten myths which he thinks serve to distort the true meaning of culture. Worthy of particular mention are: Myth 1, whereby culture is not related

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to religion; Myth 2 that culture can be more or less ignored in the realm of reasoning and epistemology; Myth 3 that there is no objective truth, only different cultural perspectives; Myth 4 that no belief from one culture can ever be binding on another culture; and Myth 5 that my culture is perfect. There is no doubt that the relevance of this paper lies in its ability to promote tolerance, and peaceful co-existence, which we consider to be the hallmarks of development.

In the fourteenth paper, Ngoni Makuvaza and Ruth B. Gora interrogate the place of Old People’s Homes (OPHs) in the context of Shona culture, and they use two approaches to defend their claim. Firstly, they look at these OPHs from a positive perspective where they see them as addressing a persistent social problem in the name of destitution. Nevertheless, they also look at these OPHs from a negative perspective, whereby they see them as contributing to the erosion of our cultural values, given that once these old people are domiciled in these homes, younger generations would fail to access their wisdom, as the OPHs would become “locked libraries.” In their bid to unlock these libraries, Makuvaza and Gora call for the resuscitation of *chirere chigokurerawo* (the principle of reciprocity) augmented by the philosophy of *hunhu/ubunto*. This paper is important in two ways. On one hand, it is important to note that the paper sees the introduction of OPHs as a positive development in Zimbabwe, considering that the plight of elderly people, just like the plight of other disadvantaged groups such as orphans and the disabled, is sometimes overlooked by the government. On the other hand, it is equally important to applaud the two contributors for standing their ground in saying that the concept of OPHs is not African, and may sometimes tend to uproot the African from his or her cultural roots.

In the fifteenth paper, Ngonidzashe Muwonwa and Nehemiah Chivandikwa introduce the notion of “how theatrical performances as sites of socio-cultural and socio-political constructions may be implicated in the struggle for nation-building and identity-constructions within the context of cultural diversity or multiculturalism.” Their view is that a nation is a cultural zone of contact comprising many contact spaces, such as the areas of education, media, politics and sports as well as cultural activities. As Muwonwa and Chivandikwa argue, “the chapter demonstrates how theatre complexly reflects the way the state inherited plural and diverse national colonial political structures, national in the negative political sense,

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and modified them, in the process creating a modified version of colonial diversity or multiculturalism in which the state sought to dominate all cultural, economic and political spaces.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Disclaimer}

The viewpoints of each author are their own, and inclusion of an author in this publication does not imply agreement with or endorsement of their views. We are not here expecting authors to adhere to a “party line” but are allowing people of different perspectives to express themselves. The papers were first drafted while Mugabe was in power in Zimbabwe, and do not necessarily reflect the impact of events in Zimbabwe in November 2017 which included his subsequent resignation.

\textbf{References}


