INTRODUCTION TO
AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY
2016 MAY/JUNE ANSWERS:

Section A

1.1. Savage v civilised

The difference between civilized and savage is that civilized is having a highly developed society or culture while savage is an uncivilized or feral human, a barbarian or inferior, not cultivated society.

In this case, the civilised was the western world whereas the savage was the African world. In this context, Africa was referred to as a nation that cannot be the strategic intellectuals in running its own affairs because it suffers from lack of extraordinary intelligence or individual genius. Westerners are referred to as the civilised society because it has the ability to put things into writings, they are the carrier of the wisdom and sagacity.

Pre-logical v logical

Africans were regarded as the nation that is represented by the notion of pre-logical as opposed to logical. This is because Africa practices that which includes cultural activities and has a lot of unwritten beliefs. The westerners on the other hand are the ones who are logical because they undergo evolution in thinking daily.

Westerners in this case are the superiors because they claim to be capable of using logic and reason and invent things. And not using the communal beliefs but individual ingenuity.

Perceptual v conceptual
Perceptual involves the ability of an individual to be aware of his surrounding through the senses. Conceptual, on the other hand, comes from concepts or else abstract ideas. Africans are described as the perceptual nation because they rely on the mythical and scientific spirit to understand themselves. The westerners classify themselves as the conceptual nations because they rely on ideas and knowledge through reason to keep moving.

**Oral v written**

This cause claims that Western civilisation is derived from writing, in the absence of which, Western civilisation could never exist whereas African ‘savage’ is based on the oral (magical) things which are commonly communal and not individualised.

**Religious v scientific**

African thought is taken as an illogical thought which does not understand or take serious alternative thoughts, it lacks philosophy and logic, because it is religious and not scientific. Western thought has a claim of its own, a claim that it is the only scientific and logical thought only because it is a model of knowledge construction itself.

1.2. Ethnophilosophy deals much with the beliefs found in African cultures. These beliefs include the activities of the kind. Such an approach treats African philosophy as a set of similar beliefs which are not based on human reason or scientific knowledge. Ethnonphilosophy is a communal thing and not an individualised belief. He classifies it as trend which came from ethnic philosophy.

**Philosophic sagacity** is an individualist version of ethnophilosophy, this trend characterises the beliefs of individuals as opposed to those of a community. The premise here is that, The sage goes beyond mere knowledge and understanding to reflection and questioning the truth against all odds. Sage philosophy is still known as the widely unwritten aspect of African philosophy. It lives in the minds of individuals and not in text.

**Professional philosophy** this trend has a claim that for a philosophy to be authentic and real, it must be put in writing. It then suggest that ethnophilosophy and sage philosophy are not part of the philosophy because what they represent is not in text.

**Nationalist-ideological philosophy** might be seen as a special trend of philosophic sagacity, in which not sages but ideologues are the subjects. We might see it as ‘professional political’ philosophy because it has a lot of political techniques in it. I refer to it as a tank of ideology and not philosophy.
1.3. The term of Africa has a lot of meanings, such as ethnicity, language, patterns of socio-economic privilege and religion. I am confronted with the fact that the meaning of the notion of 'Africa' is not self-evident or ethically neutral. This is the case both for the concept as a self-description and as a horizon for theoretical reflection.

Many people define the term Africa by the colour of skin one carries whereas many define it by the values one has, e.g., Ubuntu. The very existence of the white South African minority group (to which I belong) that continues to benefit from its problematic socio-political history is an indication that there are different and often contradictory concepts of Africa. Many members of this group, for example, choose to refer to themselves as 'Afrikaners', or people from Africa. The language spoken by this group is called Afrikaans.

The term Africa is also to be defined in terms of the religion Africans practice, the beliefs and the hemisphere in which one lives. This geographic has many Africans of blood and Africans of colour. This is a geographic that accommodate everyone.

Africa can also mean under development and under education, in the historical sense Africa got to be named Africa because of its less contribution in the world affairs. It lacks philosophy but rich of communal Africanity.

1.4. The intra-personal pole

This pole has a lot to do with oneself as an island and his/her thoughts. This is the pole that smuggles Western techniques into African philosophy. This pole deals with people who are pompous and have self-importance belief, individuals who care less about another. This pole of anthropology dictates that a human being is soul and body and not his/her surroundings.

The inter-personal pole is concerned with the societal issues. It states that a person is not related only to himself but to the rest of the community. A man is not an island, but a being with others, a being in a community. This pole describes that a man can never be an isolated being, but essentially being.

1.5. Language is an important component in the study of philosophy. It is language that characterises the philosophy of many countries in the world today.

Anglophone African philosophy is the philosophy of the previously English colonial countries in the African continent whereas is the philosophy of the previously French colonial countries in the African continent.

Anglophone African philosophy came to existence the day Africa was colonised by the English speaking tribe and francophone African philosophy is influenced by the colonisation of Africa by France.
The language is though the defining factor of both the trends but the other one is characterised by English language whereas the other one is influenced by the French language.

Anglophone emerged partly in reaction to Placide Tempels, after which it was translated into English in 1959 since francophone is based on the critical questioning of characterising factors which are the identity and the dilemma of modernism.

SECTION B

2.2. Gyekye has identified the characterisation of the function of the community in determining personhood as radical communitarianism. He argues that this position is erroneous as it confuses the cultural structure and the person who is supposed to function within that structure. Hence he proposes his own version of moderate communitarianism. He argues that while it is true that an individual is a social being, she is other things as well. The community may nurture the individual but she possesses mental attributes at birth which are not handed to her by the community.

These mental features are responsible for the individuality of the person and the exercise of certain capacities such as rationality and free will. He argues that his own version of moderate communitarianism retains the attraction that it takes the rights of the individual seriously. Although, by his own admission, a communitarian society will not be overly obsessed with rights; his version will recognise the individuality of every person. He goes on to argue that within the traditional Akan society there exists a number of proverbs that show recognition of individuality of the person that is not wholly subsumed by the community.

He says it is some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory that defines a person as a person. Personhood is a thing to be acquired through birth. It is not the community that makes an individual, but the individuality of a person that makes a community. The way persons sees the community is the right way that defines a person in the African context according to Gyekye.

Gyekye bitterly criticises Menkiti’s argument that personhood is determined by one’s moral achievement and that one becomes more of a person as she gets along in society.
Firstly Gyekye argues that it is not entirely clear how rituals are supposed to add any moral worth to a person. Secondly, he notes that Menkiti’s assertion that one becomes more of a person or a fuller person as she gets along in society is beset with incoherences and confusions as it fails to articulate what those excellencies could possibly be. Further, Gyekye argues that Menkiti’s position runs into difficulty because it necessarily conceives of old people as having the disposition or ability to practice moral virtues. Gyekye notes that there are a lot of elderly people who are known to be immoral yet we would not rush to identify them as non-persons.

Gyekye’s conception of persons is communitarian but only the moderate kind, according to him.

2016 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER ANSWERS:

SECTION A

1.1. a) Cultural interaction- the interaction between and among the Romans and the Greeks and the people of what was later called North Africa.

b) Climate conditions of the continent.

c) The historical experiences of the West Europeans.

1.2. Ethnophilosophy involves the recording of the beliefs found in African cultures. Such a trend treats African philosophy as a set of shared beliefs, a shared world-view, and item of communal property rather than an activity for the individual. He classifies it as a trend which came from ethnic philosophy, myths, religions, legends customs and superstitions. Such an approach treats African philosophy as a set of similar beliefs which are not based on human reason or scientific knowledge. This trend involves the lived ritual practices of ethnic Africans, because it pronounces that Africa has only one ethnic group with the same philosophic practice. Eg, Ubuntu philosophy.

1.3. Savage v civilised

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Pre-logical v logical

Africans were regarded as the nation that is represented by the notion of pre-logical as opposed to logical. This is because Africa practices that which includes cultural activities and has a lot of unwritten beliefs. The westerners on the other hand are the ones who are logical because they undergo evolution in thinking daily.

Westerners in this case are the superiors because they claim to be capable of using logic and reason and invent things. And not using the communal beliefs but individual ingenuity.

Perceptual v conceptual

Perceptual involves the ability of an individual to be aware of his surrounding through the senses. Conceptual, on the other hand, comes from concepts or else abstract ideas. Africans are described as the perceptual nation because they rely on the mythical and scientific spirit to understand themselves.

The westerners classify themselves as the conceptual nations because they rely on ideas and knowledge through reason to keep moving.

Oral v written

This cause claims that Western civilisation is derived from writing, in the absence of which, Western civilisation could never exist whereas African ‘savage’ is based on the oral (magical) things which are commonly communal and not individualised.

Religious v scientific

African thought is taken as an illogical thought which does not understand or take serious alternative thoughts, it lacks philosophy and logic, because it is religious and not scientific.

Western thought has a claim of its own, a claim that it is the only scientific and logical thought only because it is a model of knowledge construction itself.

1.4. The goal of moderate communitarianism is the reconciliation of rights and social responsibilities, that is, the balancing of social forces and individual autonomy. Moderate communitarianism aims to ascribe to both the community and an individual an equal moral standing. Moderate communitarianism is optimistic that social responsibilities and individual rights are reconcilable. This trend is motivated by the need to prevent the over-celebration of the community. Gyekye holds a view that rights are so important that at both theoretical and practical level, communitarianism cannot set its face against individual rights. This trend states that an individual is both social (communitarian) and autonomous (not self-completeness state but the having of a rational will of one’s own that determines one’s destiny.)
1.5. Language is an important component in the study of philosophy. It is language that characterises the philosophy of many countries in the world today.

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SECTION B

2.2. Morality and ethics in Western and non-Western societies have similar importance in that human social and interpersonal behaviour is under the necessity of the adjustment of interests among individuals for attaining the general well-being of the community.

In all societies the concepts of right and wrong are determined by perceptions of what constitutes the good life for individuals, on the one hand, and the general good of society, on the other. Divergences of moral norms as between Western and non-Western societies are largely due to variations in cultural traditions and to ecological, sociological, and other existential differences.

At the risk of being accused of ethnophilosophizing, Bewaji attempted an account of the wellspring of morality in Africa (and parts thereof) for the purpose of facilitating the proper analysis and appreciation of the foundations of that morality. In this regard, one can boldly affirm that the wellspring of morality and ethics in African societies is the pursuit of a balance of individual, with communal, well-being. It is not unusual to get the impression that African cultures extol the virtues of community, that moral obligations are primarily social rather than individual, and that communal factors often take precedence over individual rights or interests. The impression exists, furthermore, that morality is predicated on a religious foundation.

The Yoruba culture is an example of African system of morality. Yoruba philosophy is best understood as a folk philosophy, a set of narratives and cultural practices that attempt to explain the causes and the
nature of things affecting the corporeal and the spiritual universe. The Yoruba people inhabit a world of myths, allegories, poetry, and the love and wisdom of the IFA divination system. These people believe that the past survived through oral tradition. From that foundation have Yoruba philosophy, religion, and literature developed, all of which blend ancient truths and divine moralities with reason.

This culture has cardinal virtues, namely, love, honesty, honour, bravery, justice, prudence and fortitude. These virtues are a great sign of morality in our African continent, it is because they enhance the spirit of doing that which is communally good and right.

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SECTION A

1.1. a) The ethno-African factor which identifies an African by origin or nature, by birth, ancestry, tribe, physiology, colour, and culture. E.g. Yoruba African.

b) The geo-temporal African factor qualifies the African space and time within which African philosophy is typically occurring. The African geo-temporality is by immediate physical placement within the African continent. E.g. a liberal African.

c) The lego-African factor qualifies and outland issue which becomes African by virtue of a civil or academic law which empowers it. E.g. an African philosopher by education.

d) The techno-African factor identifies and outland African who becomes an African philosopher by interest or preoccupation, enterprise or doctrine undertaken or produced. E.g. Africans by colonisation.

1.2. Ethnophilosophy deals much with the beliefs found in African cultures. These beliefs include the activities of the kind. Such an approach treats African philosophy as a set of similar beliefs which are not based on human reason or scientific knowledge. Ethnophilosophy is a communal thing and not an individualised belief. He classifies it as trend which came from ethnic philosophy.
Philosophic sagacity is an individualist version of ethnophilosophy, this trend characterises the beliefs of individuals as opposed to those of a community. The premise here is that, The sage goes beyond mere knowledge and understanding to reflection and questioning the truth against all odds. Sage philosophy is still known as the widely unwritten aspect of African philosophy. It lives in the minds of individuals and not in text.

Professional philosophy this trend has a claim that for a philosophy to be authentic and real, it must be put in writing. It then suggest that ethnophilosophy and sage philosophy are not part of the philosophy because what they represent is not in text.

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The **inter-personal pole** is concerned with the societal issues. It states that a person is not related only to himself but to the rest of the community. A man is not an island, but a being with others, a being in a community. This pole describes that a man can never be an isolated being, but essentially being.

**1.5. Traditional African philosophy** has a communal as well as an individualised component, and this philosophy is not presented through text but through commonly accepted practices of the Africans.

Whereas

**Contemporary African philosophy** is still undergoing evolution in Africa, and it is a professional and academic philosophy which is presented through texts and many other educational means. This
component is smuggling the techniques of the western philosophy and clearly associates itself with the Anglophone and francophone African philosophy.

SECTION B

2.1. African Philosophy can be formally defined as a critical thinking by Africans on their experiences of reality. African philosophy is "that which concerns itself with the way in which African people of the past and present make sense of their destiny and of the world in which they live." In this regard, African philosophy is a critical reflection on African leaderships in the administration of their duties towards their citizens, the morally blameworthiness or praiseworthiness of it. It will also provide possible solutions to the problems experienced in African governance.

Much of the modern African philosophy has been concerned with defining the ethnophilosophical parameters of African philosophy and identifying what differentiates it from other philosophical traditions. One of the implicit assumptions of ethnosophy is that a specific culture can have a philosophy that is not applicable and accessible to all peoples and cultures in the world, however this concept is disputed by traditional philosophers. Furthermore, ethnophilosophical approach to African philosophy is a static group property which is is highly problematic. Research on Ubuntu presents an alternative collective discourse on African philosophy ("collective" in the sense that it does not focus on any individual in particular) that takes differences, historical developments, and social contexts seriously.

One of the most basic disagreements concerns what exactly the term 'African' qualifies: the content of the philosophy and the distinctive methods employed, or the identities of the philosophers. On the former view, philosophy counts as African if it involves African themes such as perceptions of time, personhood, space and other subjects, or uses methods that are defined as distinctively African. In the latter view, African philosophy is any philosophy produced by Africans or by people of African descent, and others engaged in critiques or analysis of their works.

An African philosopher is one who attempts to understand the African's phenomena, the purpose of human existence, the nature of the continent, and the place of human beings in that world. This form of natural philosophy is identifiable in Africa even before individual African philosophers can be distinguished in the sources.

In Southern Africa and Southeast Africa the development of a distinctive Bantu philosophy addressing the nature of existence, the cosmos and humankind's relation to the world following the Bantu migration has had the most significant impact on the philosophical developments of the said regions, with the development of the philosophy of Ubuntu as one notable example emerging from this worldview.
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2017 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER ANSWERS:

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African philosophy has a lot much to do with communal issues as opposed to individualisation of the ideas. African is largely known as unwritten philosophy but the philosophy that lives in the commonly accepted practices.

An example of African philosophy can be the Ubuntu philosophy. Research on Ubuntu presents an alternative collective discourse on African philosophy ("collective" in the sense that it does not focus on any individual in particular) that takes differences, historical developments, and social contexts seriously.

1.2. Professional philosophy is the view that philosophy is a particular way of thinking, reflecting and reasoning, that such a way is still unquestionably new to Africa, and that African philosophy must grow in terms of the philosophical work carried out by Africans and applied to African problems. This sort of view would be the spontaneous answer of most Western philosophers to the question 'is there African philosophy?'

This trend has a claim that for a philosophy to be authentic and real, it must be put in writing. It then suggest that ethnophilosophy and sage philosophy are not part of the philosophy because what they represent is not in text.
Nationalist-ideological philosophy might be seen as a special trend of philosophic sagacity, in which not sages but ideologues are the subjects. We might see it as professional political philosophy because it has a lot of political techniques in it. I refer to it as a tank of ideology and not philosophy, we have to retain a distinction between ideology and philosophy between sets of ideas and a special way of reasoning.

Ethnophilosophers attempt to show that African philosophy is distinctive by treading heavily on the 'African' and almost losing the 'philosophy'. Their main rivals, the professional philosophers, adopt the view that philosophy is a particular way of thinking, reflecting, reasoning, that such a way is relatively new to (most of) Africa, and that African philosophy must grow in terms of the philosophical work carried out by Africans and applied to (perhaps not exclusively) African concerns.

1.3. Pre-logical v logical

Africans were regarded as the nation that is represented by the notion of pre-logical as opposed to logical. This is because Africa practices that which includes cultural activities and has a lot of unwritten beliefs. The westerners on the other hand are the ones who are logical because they undergo evolution in thinking daily.

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1.5. African ethics is the ethics of a society embedded in the ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, what is a good or a bad character. It is also embedded in the conceptions of satisfactory social relations and attitudes held by the members of the society. It is embedded, furthermore, in the forms or patterns of behaviour that are considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and cooperative living, justice, and fairness. The ideas and beliefs about moral conduct are articulated, analysed, and interpreted by the mortal thinkers of the society. African ethics are meant to guide social and moral behaviour in the society.

1.6. The politics attached to the definition of the term Africa are based on the 3 main philosophical questions one would ask today.

The question of who named the continent? Many African philosophers argue that the name Africa was given to us through the imposition of the most powerful nations on us. Others say the name Africa is named by our own self after a great consideration of our capacities and weaknesses.

There is still a great debate on the question, what influenced the naming of the continent? While others say it’s the geographic state of the continent, others say it is the values of the people living in that continent, lifestyles, beliefs and the practices of the kind.

Today, we say Africa mean unity, peace and harmony while others say Africa is characterised by all features of the opposite. So that is the politics attached in the definition of the African politics.

SECTION B

2.3. Gyekye has identified the characterisation of the function of the community in determining personhood as radical communitarianism. He argues that this position is erroneous as it confuses the cultural structure and the person who is supposed to function within that structure. Hence he proposes his own version of moderate communitarianism. He argues that while it is true that an individual is a social being, she is other things as well. The community may nurture the individual but she possesses mental attributes at birth which are not handed to her by the community.

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