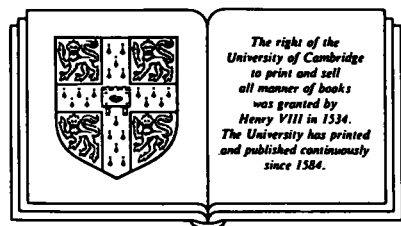


An essay on African philosophical thought

The Akan conceptual scheme

KWAME GYEKYE

University of Ghana



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge

New York New Rochelle Melbourne Sydney

Contents

Preface	page ix
Acknowledgments	xii
Guide to the pronunciation of Akan words	xiv
I The question of philosophy in African culture	1
1 On the denial of traditional thought <i>as</i> philosophy	3
2 Philosophy and culture	13
2.1. Sources of African philosophical thought	13
2.2. Collective and individual thought	24
2.3. Language and philosophical thought	29
2.4. On defining African philosophy: some proposals	32
3 Methodological problems	44
3.1. False impressions about the unwritten character of African traditional philosophy	44
3.2. Difficulties besetting the study of African traditional philosophy	51
II The Akan conceptual scheme	59
4 The Akan conception of philosophy	61
5 Concepts of being and causality	68
5.1. God and the other categories of being	68
5.2. Causality	76
6 The concept of a person	85
6.1. <i>Okra</i> (soul)	85
6.2. <i>Sunsum</i> (spirit)	88

Contents

6.3.	Relation of <i>ōkera</i> and <i>sunsum</i>	94
6.4.	Relation of <i>ōkera</i> (soul) and <i>honam</i> (body)	99
6.5.	Akan psychology and Freud	102
6.6.	Conclusion	102
7	Destiny, free will, and responsibility	104
7.1.	Basis of belief in destiny	104
7.2.	Nature of the concept	108
7.3.	Causality, fate, free will, and responsibility	119
7.4.	The problem of evil	123
8	Foundations of ethics	129
8.1.	Religion and morality in Akan thought	129
8.2.	The social and humanistic basis of Akan morality,	143
9	Ethics and character	147
9.1.	The Akan word for "ethics"	147
9.2.	The centrality of character(<i>suban</i>) in Akan ethics	148
10	The individual and the social order	154
10.1.	Communalism as a social theory	154
10.2.	The tensions of individualism	158
11	Philosophy, logic, and the Akan language	163
11.1.	The mind-body problem	163
11.2.	Time	169
11.3.	Existence, predication, and identity	177
11.4.	The ontological argument	180
11.5.	Subject and predicate	181
11.6.	Conclusions	185
III	Toward an African philosophy	187
12	On the idea of African philosophy	189
12.1.	The need not to generalize	190
12.2.	Common features in African cultures	191
12.3.	The community of cultural elements and ideas	195
12.4.	Conclusion: the legitimacy of talking of African philosophy	210
	Notes	213
	Name index	239
	Subject index	242