Teaching Ancient Egyptian Philosophy of Education in Teacher Education

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Simphiwe SESANTI
Language Education Department, Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-00034546-5218

"*Just as in our modern times, countries like the United States, England, and France are attracting students from all parts of the world, on account of their leadership in culture; so was it in ancient times, Egypt as supreme in the leadership of civilization, and students from all parts, flocked to that land, seeking admission into her mysteries or wisdom system*." – (George James 2001, 42)

Abstract
In 2003, almost a decade after South Africa's 1994 first democratic elections, an academic debate emerged about the need to include the indigenous African philosophy of education in teacher education. Subsequently, Ubuntu philosophy has been given attention in philosophy for teacher education. However, ancient Egyptian philosophy of education, an indigenous African tradition, is absent. On their part, European and Asian philosophies of education are centred, leaving space for some philosophers of education to falsely attribute the genesis of philosophy, in general, and philosophy of education, in particular, to Europe and Asia since the two are dated. In contrast, Ubuntu philosophy of education is not dated. In this article, I argue that ancient Egyptian philosophy of education must be reclaimed and centred on teacher education not only in South Africa but wherever Africans are. Such an approach will not only expose Africans to their rich philosophical heritage but will also help to reclaim African philosophy's space as a leader of humankind in the history of philosophy.
Keywords: African philosophy, ancient Egyptian philosophy, teacher education, Maat

Introduction

In 2003, Phillip Higgs (2003, 5 – 6), a philosopher, called for a formulation of "a new philosophical discourse in education […] the introduction of an African discourse into the conversation surrounding the re-vision of philosophy of education in South Africa", a discourse which would have reference to that "spoken tradition and body of literature referred to as African philosophy". This was necessary taking into cognizance that "for at least three centuries since the conquest of the indigenous peoples in the unjust wars of colonisation the education curriculum in South Africa did not include African philosophy" (RAMOSE 2004, 138). This "callous inhumanity towards the indigenous conquered peoples ensured that the educational curriculum in the country would be dominated by the epistemology and the

philosophy of the conqueror", something that was unacceptable due to the "change in the political dispensation since 27 April 1994" (RAMOSE 2004, 138 – 139). The point made by Ramose is well and clearly articulated by Higgs' (2011, 1 – 2) observation that the "marginalisation of African values in education has resulted in the general Westernisation of education theory and practice in Africa", contributing to educational theory, research and practice being "overwhelmingly either European or Eurocentric". Higgs' (2011, 3) calls for the re-visioning of philosophy of education in Africa was a call for the "African Renaissance in education", a call which "insists that all critical and transformative educators in Africa embrace indigenous African world views and root their nation's educational paradigms in African socio-cultural and epistemological frameworks". The implication of a call for an African Renaissance in education is that "education does not connote a detachment from pollical radicalization and mobilization" (2011, 3). Rather, it is a recognition of an argument that "the influence of Western Eurocentric culture on Africans needs to be forcefully arrested by all critically conscious African educators in the struggle for the establishment of an African identity in education theory and practice" (2011, 3)

While commendable efforts have been made in accommodating an African philosophy in teacher education, extremely little attention has been given to ancient Egyptian philosophy, something that has serious negative implications for according African philosophy a space and the respect it deserves among the philosophies of the world. In arguing for the teaching of ancient Egyptian philosophy in teacher education in South Africa, I begin by giving a historical context for the calls for African philosophy in teacher education. I then move on to demonstrate how the centring of African philosophy in teacher education since Chancellor Williams' call and, subsequently, Higgs', with specific reference to South Africa, are commendable yet remains inadequate. I then demonstrate, through the examination of ancient Egyptian texts, why it is important to reclaim ancient Egyptian philosophy of education for teacher education.

Calls for African philosophies of education in teacher education: A historical context

Williams (1993, 185) notes that not only is education "the key", but that it is also "the only key" for Africans to the door opening to the road of progress. This is because education is the basis for African people to build a sound government, "wise political action", and economic development (1993, 185). At the time Williams expressed this observation, Africans were emerging from the yoke of European colonialism, regaining their independence, and seeking to determine their future on their terms. While the recognition of the centrality of education in the quest for Africans' self-emancipation was important, this recognition in and of itself was inadequate unless the concept "education", was clearly defined and its objectives spelt out (1993, 185). Williams' point was that while the "what" and "how" of education are important, the "why" is more important because it speaks to the "philosophy" of education. Williams' (1993, 186) argument was informed by his

having observed that education, despite the newly regained independence in Africa, remained "the system and the philosophy of the ruling power before independence". What this effectively meant was that there was "no African educational system […] no philosophy of education as such" (1993, 186). If education was to be useful for Africans, the perpetuation of European philosophies of education in Africa, as if Africans did not have their own, was a wrong that had to be righted because every nation's educational system should be "developed from its own culture, felt needs, and its own philosophy of life" (1993, 186).

Teacher education deserves special attention because, as Williams (1993, 197) points out, "Nothing is more important for Africa's future than the character of the teachers who will determine the shape of things to come". The foregoing observation is made with an appreciation that the "philosophy and general direction of the nation having been determined, the re-education of teachers would have to begin in a well-organized program" (1993, 197). Anticipating that the foregoing may not be clear enough, Williams (1993, 196) emphasized that the "nation's basic social philosophy and fundamental goals must be predetermined, because the program to be developed will be designed to translate the philosophy into action in achieving the set goals". Taking the foregoing into cognizance, Williams (1993, 197) warned that "We should stop playing at education by employing as teachers the mediocre and persons unfit for other high occupations" because "Education is a high profession and demands the best in the country as teachers". Williams' foregoing observation helps in reminding us that the attitude regarding the profession of teaching as an inferior profession, especially in Africa, is a consequence of the legacy of European colonialism, where teaching was made one of the few options open to Africans, since European colonialists reserved many professions exclusively for European settlers. Yet, despite these observations by Williams, and the laudable struggles for a decolonized and Afrocentric education waged by the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall Movements in 2015 in South Africa, there is "a remarkable silence about the pedagogy of teaching" (SAYED, DE KOCK & MOTALA 2019, 165). The focus that has been given to disciplines such as philosophy, literature and the sciences "excluded any focus on teacher education and the importance of transferring the decolonising agenda to the preparation of teachers, with a view of generating long-term gains across the whole education system" (SAYED, DE KOCK & MOTALA 2019, 166). Special focus on the "decolonisation of teacher education" is crucial because it is about the "dismantling of the system of education that produced 'generations of teachers, of all races, with distorted and deficient understanding of themselves, of each other, and of what was expected of them in a divided society" (SAYED, DE KOCK & MOTALA 2019, 167). I now turn to why some measures in positioning African philosophy in education are inadequate.

Accommodating Ubuntu and leaving out ancient Egyptian philosophy (Maat) – an inadequate exercise

Amongst other issues, Higgs' call was concerned with three important questions:

- What are the implications for the construction of an African discourse in the philosophy of education?

- What ought to be the purpose of education in an African context and within the framework of African philosophy?
- How does traditional African educational practice seek to educate the child?

Higgs (2003, 16) articulated the view that "In order to address this state of affairs in South Africa, a distinctively African knowledge system would have as its objective the goal of recovering the humanistic and ethical principles embedded in African philosophy". This was because "African philosophy [….] provides a philosophical framework that can, and should, contribute to the transformation of educational discourse in philosophy of education in South Africa […] primarily because, African philosophy respects diversity, acknowledges lived experience and challenges the hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge" (HIGGS 2003, 16 – 17). In a clear demonstration and recognition that education is not value-neutral but philosophy-driven, Higgs and Smith (2017, 18) point out that "African philosophy provides the necessary context for the resurrection of African values in education systems on the African continent". Higgs and Jane Smith (2017, 17) further correctly point out that

> Education has to do with values. As such the marginalisation of African values in education on the African continent, as witnessed in the colonial and post-colonial periods, has resulted in the general westernisation of education in Africa. Due to this, education systems in Africa have failed to acknowledge the cultural preferences and practices in education of African people. Instead, these education systems have given prominence to the cultural preferences and practices of the Western world. Such practices have perpetuated an ideology of the cultural superiority of the West.

The African philosophy that Higgs (2003, 16) specifically proposed was Ubuntu. True to this commitment, Higgs co-edited two books, one, with Jane Smith, [Philosophy of Education Today: An Introduction], and, another, with Yusef Waghid, [A Reader in Philosophy of Education]. In [Philosophy of Education Today: An Introduction], significantly, Higgs and Smith (2017) dedicated the first chapter to *African Philosophy and education*, and published, as an appendix, *A Comparison of African Philosophy and Western philosophies*. In [A Reader in Philosophy of Education], significantly, the first chapter, by Higgs and Waghid (2017) is entitled *African philosophy of education through a (post)critical lens*. Commendably, Higgs and Smith (2017, 5) observe that it was "in Africa […] where philosophy, education and, indeed humankind itself started". In a direct reference to ancient Egypt, Higgs and Smith (2017, 15) note that "African written philosophy goes back to the time of the pharaohs", indicating their awareness of ancient Egypt's written philosophy. While these gestures, on the one hand, are appreciated, Higgs and Smith make some inaccurate observations regarding the history of African philosophy. Firstly, in their discussion of "African philosophy and Feminism",

Higgs and Smith (2017, 140) note that "historically, religious and moral philosophies (whether they be African or Western) are the creation of men and tend to assign to women a limited and subordinate role in society", further noting that "until very recently, 'community' here consisted solely of men". While we accept that this was the case in Europe, particularly in Greece where men were regarded as superior to women, and women were not recognized as citizens (ARISTOTLE 1981, 56; 91 – 92; 168 – 170), this was not the case in Africa where women played prominent roles. Among the many hymns of ancient Egypt, God was celebrated as the "Creator of all, who makes them live", the "Self-creator" who was "uncreated" and the "Beneficent mother of gods and men" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 87). Reference to the Creator as a "mother" by ancient Egyptians was progressive in a world where many cultures and religions, God cannot be conceived of as a woman. Being pro-mothers did not mean that ancient Egyptians were anti-fathers. Recognizing that the Creator had both female and male attributes, passed on to humankind, ancient Egyptians celebrated the Creator as the "mother and father of all that [S/He] made" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 91). In a world that, in the 21st century, wages strenuous battles against patriarchy and anti-women sexism, ancient Egyptians' philosophy of education has much to offer.

The second inaccurate statement made by Higgs and Smith (2017, vii) is that "Philosophy of education was first expressed, like so much of philosophy by the Greek philosopher Plato (427 – 347 BCE)". Referring to Plato's book, [Meno], Higgs and Smith (2017, vii) further note that "Plato's work, then, is philosophy of education at its best". It is against this false attribution of the genesis of philosophy to Greece, instead of to ancient Egypt, that George James (2001, 9 – 10) wrote his book, [Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy], demonstrating how Greek philosophers, who preceded Plato studied philosophy in ancient Egypt.

Higgs and Smith are not alone in wrongly attributing the genesis of philosophy to Greece. Amongst others, in her book, [Not Out Of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History], Mary Lefkowitz (1996, 189) notes that "philosophy was invented, so far as anyone knows, by the ancient Greeks". Having attributed the genesis of philosophy to the Greeks, Lefkowitz (ibid) goes on to point out that although the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians had advanced civilizations, and "could have developed an abstract terminology for discovering causes and principles had they chosen to do so […] they did not study and analyse the nature of reality in abstract, nontheological language". Not only does Lefkowitz (1996, 124) deny the ancient Egyptian genesis of philosophy, but goes on to argue that "there was never an organized educational program or established canon of books of Egyptian philosophy". But ancient Egypt's extant texts reveal that Lefkowitz conflates what *she does not know* with what *does not exist*.

In *The Instruction Addressed To King Merikare* (LICHTHEIM 2006a, 99), the father counsels his son thus:

> Copy your fathers, your ancestors.
> See, their words endure in books,

> Open, read them, copy their knowledge,
> He who is taught becomes skilled.

Two important issues are significant and must be noted in *The Instruction Addressed To King Merikare*. The first is that this document, which is located in the 23rd Century BCE by Breasted (1933, 20) instructs a son to copy his "ancestors", whose "words endure in books" which must be read to gain knowledge, and, thus, becoming "taught" and "skilled". The point is that *The Instruction Addressed To Merikare* demonstrates an awareness that there was, in ancient Egypt, 2300 BCE, literature in existence to refer to for the purposes of education. This awareness is not an isolated one found only in *The Instruction Addressed To King Merikare*, but one also found in *The Instruction Of Any* (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 140). In *The Instruction Of Any*, not only is there an appreciation that literacy skills a person, but that it also empowers one:

> One will do all you say,
> If you are versed in writings;
> Study the writings, put them in your heart,
> Then all your words will be effective (2006b, 140)

At approximately 2500 BCE, there existed in ancient Egypt, *The Teachings Of Ptahhotep; The Oldest Book in the world*, while before Ptahhotep's book, there were, in existence, two older books, that of Kagame and Hardjedef (HILLIARD III, WILLIAMS & DAMALI 1987, 13 – 14). The reason that Ptahhotep's book is celebrated as the oldest book in the world is that it was a complete text while the other texts were short and incomplete (1987).

Writing about the ancient Egypt of the period 1550 – 1080 BCE, Lichtheim (2006b, 167) notes that "Numerous papyri and ostraca of Ramesside date testify to the existence of a school system that taught young boys to become professional scribes and civil servants". Having observed that "Not all instructions took place in schools", Lichtheim (2006b, 167) further points out that many other ancient Egyptian texts suggest "a personal form of teaching in which a senior official guided a young man who had completed basic schooling and was already a member of the bureaucracy". The foregoing clearly demonstrates that between the periods 1550 – 1080 BCE, there already existed, in ancient Egypt, a "school system" and "schooling". As Lichtheim (2006b, 167) points out, ancient Egypt's education system entailed both "basic skills of reading and writing and the more advanced knowledge of grammar, orthography, vocabulary, and composition". With particular reference to the training of scribes, a highly regarded profession, Lichtheim (2006b, 167) notes that this education entailed, "of course, instruction in wisdom [philosophy]" and "moral teachings propounded in the didactic texts" aimed at helping "to form the characters of the young scribes". In other words, ethics (character) was one of the key pillars of ancient Egypt's education.

While some scholars attribute the genesis of philosophy, in general, and philosophy of education, in particular to the Greeks, Yu (2017, 152) in his article, *Chinese philosophy and education: Philosophy of education in classical Confucianism*, attributing the genesis of philosophy of education to Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, notes that "The piece, called Xueji […] or 'On Education' […] is probably the world's first treatise on education, dated around 476 – 221 BCE".

An examination of the history of ancient Egyptian philosophy, below, reveals that ancient Egyptian philosophy in general, and philosophy of education, in particular, precede both Greek and Chinese philosophies.

Ancient Egypt: Leader of the world in philosophy

Lefkowitz (1996, 188) defines "the term philosophy in the more specialized, modern sense", as "the study of causes and laws underlying reality or a system of inquiry designed specifically to study those laws and causes". There is nothing wrong with that definition considering the recognition that the "modern sense" is what it is, "modern", and that prior to the "modern" there were, in existence, definitions of the concept "philosophy", among them, being Plato's, who defined a "philosopher" as a "man who loves (Greek philein) wisdom (sophia) in the widest sense, including especially learning, knowledge and truth" (LEE 2003, 192). In other words, a philosopher is a "lover of wisdom". But even based on Lefkowitz' "modern" definition, ancient Egyptians were the leaders in the field of philosophy.

Isocrates (ISOCRATES, NORLIN & VAN HOOK 1944, 115), a Greek philosopher, notes that "the Egyptians […] for the soul […] introduced philosophy's training, a pursuit which has the power, not only to establish laws, but also to investigate the nature of the universe". Isocrates (1944, 115) goes on to point out that young people in ancient Egypt were "persuaded to forgo all pleasures and devote themselves to the study of the stars, to arithmetic, and to geometry; the value of these sciences some praise for their utility in certain ways, while others attempt to demonstrate that they are conducive in the highest measure to the attainment of virtue". Isocrates (1944, 155) referred to this ancient Egyptian approach as "the cultivation of practical wisdom [which] may also be reasonably attributed to Busiris". Busiris was driven by the conviction that "individuals should always engage in the same pursuits, because he knew that those who continuously change their occupations never achieve proficiency in even a single one of their tasks, whereas those who apply themselves constantly to the same activities perform each thing they do surpassingly well" (ISOCRATES, NORLIN & VAN HOOK 1944, 113). It is for this reason that Isocrates (1944, 113) further notes that "in the arts the Egyptians surpass those who work at the same skilled occupations elsewhere" and that "also with respect to the system which enables them to preserve royalty and their political institutions in general, they have been so successful that philosophers who undertake to discuss such topics and have won the greatest reputation prefer above all others the Egyptian form of government".

In his book, [The Histories], estimated to have been written between the years 450 to 430 BCE, Herodotus (2014, 141) a Greek historian, notes that in ancient Egypt, "The practice of medicine is highly specialized: individual doctors will treat individual ailments, rather than the whole gamut of diseases. As a result, Egypt positively teems with doctors; some specialize in treating eyes and others heads; some are dentists, and others tend to the stomach; some specialize in obscure illnesses." The ancient Egyptians' philosophical approach to mathematics moved Plato (2004, 267) to urge Greek gentlemen to "study each of these subjects to at least the same level as very many children in Egypt, who acquire such knowledge at the same time as they learn to read and write". Of significance is that Plato urged Greek adults (gentlemen) to at least reach the level of mathematical comprehension, displayed by Egyptian children. Plato had a meticulous understanding of the ancient Egyptians' teaching methods because the Greek philosopher "travelled extensively in Egypt […] a country in which intelligent Greeks took much interest" (ARMSTRONG 1981, 34; 64).

Amazement about ancient Egypt's advanced education did not end with scholars of the Greeks of old times, but has continued to the present 21st century. In his foreword to Christopher Dunn's [Lost Technologies of Ancient Egypt: Advanced Engineering in the Temples of the Pharaohs], Arlan Andrews Sr., ScD (2010, xi) notes that ancient Egypt's technology "demonstrates the existence of sophisticated tooling that did not exist again until the 1900s […] the ancient Egyptians possessed technologies not replicated until the twentieth century – if even then".

Isocrates (ISOCRATES, NORLIN & VAN HOOK 1944, 119) informs us that Pythagoras, a highly celebrated Greek philosopher, who, on his visit to "Egypt […] became a student of the religion of the people […] was first to bring to the Greeks all philosophy". In line with this appreciation, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1973, 7 – 8), a European philosopher, observes that "Egypt [is] the first school of mankind […] the mother of philosophy and the fine arts". With specific reference to the Greeks, to whom Lefkowitz attributes the genesis of philosophy, Herodotus (2014, 129), a Greek historian, notes that "Indeed, almost all the names of the gods came to Greece from Egypt […] and that they mostly arrived from Egypt seems to me obvious". Herodotus (2014, 130) also points out that there are also "various customs adopted by the Greeks from the Egyptians". While, on the one hand, the Greeks inherited ancient Egyptian culture, Herodotus (2014, 143) points out, on the other hand, that "Greek customs are shunned by the Egyptians – as too, by and large, are those of other peoples". In explicit terms, ancient Egyptians did not only shun Greek customs, they also shunned those of other nations, believing in, and holding on, to their own. As if to emphasize the foregoing, Herodotus (2014, 129) points out that his

> argument would therefore be that Melampous, who was demonstrably a man of great wisdom, and a self-taught master of the arts of divination, introduced a number of things to the Greeks which he had learned at the feet of the Egyptians – among them, barely altered, the cult of Dionysus.

Herodotus (2014, 129) goes on to point that he is "not going to claim that the similarities between what the Egyptians do in honour of the god, and what the Greeks do, are mere coincidence: if that were the case, the Greek rites would not be so alien, nor would they have been so recently introduced", adding that he would also "dispute the possibility that the Egyptians could have adopted them or indeed any other custom from the Greeks". In Herodotus' (2014, 178) book, "the Egyptians […] were quite without peers in wisdom". What this means, in other words, is that ancient Egyptians were leaders and had no equals in philosophy. Along these lines, philosophizing about the ancientness of the concept of state constitutions, Aristotle (1981, 419) makes the following observation:

> That these are all ancient is shown by Egyptian history: the Egyptians are reputed to be the most ancient people, and they have always had laws and a constitutional system.

This was the case, too, with ancient Egyptians' philosophy of education discussed below.

Ancient Egypt's philosophy of education

Asa Hilliard (2003, 279) observes that a "window to what was a well-developed education system is through Kemet [ancient Egypt]". In pointing us to Kemet as a model of education, Hilliard (2003, 270) is cognisant that the path to rediscovery, through Kemet, is fraught with many difficulties, among which are the "widespread loss of documentary materials, the destruction of social institutions, including their library records, and years of prejudice and neglect". As a result of this widespread loss, "Anyone who is familiar with the material on ancient Egypt is well aware of the fact that there exist few if any books on the educational system of Egypt" (HILLIARD 2003, 266). An understanding of the philosophy of education in ancient Egypt which produced "highly specialized" practitioners, which so impressed the Greek historian, Herodotus, is essential for the present and future generations of education specialists in designing teacher education that will serve in moulding specialist professionals in all fields of education for Africa's true independence and self-reliance for Africans now, and for all times.

We learn from Hilliard (2003, 276) that at ancient Egypt's "base the educational process was a religious process in the broadest sense of that word". In order to make sense of Hilliard's observation we refer to George James (2001, 27) who, ahead of Hilliard, informed us that the Egyptian Mystery System, "like the modern University, was the centre of organized culture" entered by candidates as the "leading source of ancient culture", and had, as its most important object, the "deification of man, and taught that the soul of man if liberated from its bodily fetters, could enable him to become godlike and see the Gods of this life and attain the beatific vision and hold communion with the Immortals". Such an experience is the "liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, when it becomes one and is identified with the Infinite" (JAMES 2001, 27).

If, as James points out, ancient Egypt's philosophy of education was to mould a person to "become godlike", it is essential, then, to establish the ancient Egyptians' concept of God. We will address this later, but for now, we must point out that the centrality of spirituality in ancient Egypt was not uniquely Kemetic, but a pan-African feature. In recognition of this, Hilliard (2003, 276) notes that "the Egyptians made no separation […] between religion and life […] just as is the case with traditional African religions".

At this point, it must be emphasized, as Hilliard (2003, 279) does, that "ancient Kemet was an African culture and it shared then, and shares now, in the great cultural unity of the African continent and in the diaspora of ancient African people". It is also important, at this point, to state, as Williams (1993, 2) does, that reference to "African religion" is to "something more than a subscribed-to system of beliefs, but a philosophy and actual way of living" so much so that "the shortest route to the African mind is through his religion". In his book, [African Religions and Philosophy], first published in 1969, John S. Mbiti (1989, 1) notes that "Africans are notoriously religious". Mbiti (1989, 1) goes on to note that spirituality is so central in the lives of African people that "Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it". Because of this African character, Mbiti (1989, 1) argues that "A study of these religious systems is, therefore, ultimately a study of the peoples themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life". The phrase, "notoriously", used by Mbiti, regarding African spirituality, is, however, not new. It is an echo made by Herodotus, if not by other earlier writers, the only difference being that Herodotus' reference was made with particular reference to the ancient Egyptians. Herodotus (2014, 123) notes that the ancient Egyptians, "Far more than people elsewhere […] are religious to an extreme – as is witnessed by a number of customs". Later, in his book, [Egyptian Magic], first published in 1899, and regarded as a "classic", regarding ancient Egyptian's spirituality, Wallis Budge (2016, vii – viii) notes that the "scrupulous care with which they performed their innumerable religious ceremonies, and carried out the rules which they had formulated concerning the worship of the divine Power or powers, and their devotion to religious magic, gained for them among the nations with whom they came in contact the reputation of being at once the most religious and the most superstitious of men". The ancient Egyptians had particular ideas about God, which informed their philosophy of education.

Ancient Egyptians' images of God

In his book, [The Dawn of Conscience: The sources of our moral heritage in the ancient world], James H. Breasted (1933, 19; 30; 31), referring to ancient Egypt's document known as the "Memphite drama", estimated to have been produced by ancient Egypt's "priestly body of temple thinkers", *note well, in the year 3300 BCE*, states that it was the "earliest known discussion of right and wrong in the history of man", a "semi-theological, semi-philosophical […] the earliest known philosophical discussion". In this document, Ptah – one of the names attributed to the Creator in ancient Egypt – is presented as a God who thought creation in The One's heart and

commanded it into being with The One's tongue (BREASTED 1933, 35). The One's inclinations are revealed through the following words attributed to the Creator: "(As for) him who does what is loved and him who does what is hated, life is given to the peaceful and death is given to the criminal". Here, the Creator is presented as a pro-peace, and anti-crime God, giving life to those who are peaceful, and death to those who are criminal.

In the literature referred to, in ancient Egypt's history, as "Coffin Texts", we get to learn about God's purpose in creating humankind (BREASTED 1933, 221):

> I made the four winds *that every man might breathe thereof like his brother* during his time […]
> I made the great waters that *the pauper like the lord* might have use of them […]
> I made *every man like his brother*; and I have forbidden that they do evil, but it was their hearts which undid what I had said.
> I made that their hearts not to forget the West (death and the grave) that they may present offerings to the district gods!

This text, written by theologizing priests almost 2000 years BCE, reveals an expectation of human relations in a society where "all social distinctions are levelled in the creator's intention at the time of creation, placing all men likewise on the same level of moral responsibility", and not only that but also at the level of "complete human equality". Informed by this view, the Creator, in ancient Egypt, was celebrated, as "Ptah, Lord of Maat" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 109), Maat being the philosophy of ancient Egypt whose meaning was "righteousness", "justice", "truth" (BREASTED 1933, 20). If then, Ptah was referred to, by the ancient Egyptians, as the "Lord of Maat", this means that the Creator was regarded as the God who sided with "righteousness", "justice" and "truth", meaning, therefore, that if the philosophy of education in ancient Egypt sought, as James points out, to fashion a God-like human being, then such a human being would be a human being who is not only righteous, just and truthful, but one seeking to establish a righteous, just and truthful order on earth.

In *The Instruction Addressed To King Merikare*, written between the years 2650 to 2135 BCE, we learn that human beings were regarded as "god's cattle" and The One's "images" (LICHTHEIM 2006a,106). Important to note here is that ancient Egyptians' conceptualization of human beings as God's "image" was ahead of the "Abrahamic" faiths, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And this being the case, it means that in ancient Egypt human beings were expected to be agents of justice (Maat) since their Creator, in whose "image" they were created, was referred to as the "Lord of Maat".

The concept of "justice" was not a vague notion. As already noted, "justice" implied human equality which included gender equality. In a hymn sung to Aten – one of ancient Egyptians' names for God – we find the following expressions that articulate equality among members of the human race across colour lines:

> O Sole God beside whom there is none!

You made the earth as you wished, you alone, […]
You set every man in his place,
You supply their needs;
Everyone has his food,
His lifetime is counted.
Their tongues differ in speech,
Their characters like wise;
Their skins are distinct,
For you distinguished the peoples (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 98)

This hymn, which was in existence in ancient Egypt in the period between 1550 and 1305 BCE, reveals the attainment of high political consciousness that many, in the 21st century, yet have to grasp, that being that differences in skin colour and languages are not by default, but by the Creator's design, and, therefore, emphasizing that skin colour differences are no basis for human beings to discriminate against fellow human beings in the world

In as much as ancient Egyptians valued philosophizing, they, equally, appreciated that for philosophy to take root in societies, there had to be a conscious educational effort to inculcate ideas in the minds of communities.

Ancient Egyptians' pedagogics and didactics in fulfilment of their philosophy of education

In the hymn to Amen-Re (another name for God in ancient Egypt) we find the following counsel (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 106):

Declare him to son and daughter,
To the great and small,
Herald him to generations,
Not yet born […]
Declare him to fool and wise

As part of their pedagogics and didactics, ancient Egyptians selected certain prayers and used them, in Lichtheim's (2006b, 110) words, as "school texts". Among these prayers were "Praise of Amen-Re" and "Prayer to Amun" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 111 – 112). In the first prayer, children addressed the Creator as the "vizier of the poor", One who "does not take bribes from the guilty" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 111). In the second prayer, children called upon the Creator to lend The One's ear "to the lonely in court", who is "poor […] not rich" because "the court extorts from him" and demands silver and gold for corrupt clerks, and clothes for the attendants (2006b, 111). Amun is called upon to "appear as the vizier, To let the poor go free" (2006b, 111).

By teaching the children to pray to the Creator to aid the poor, children were taught that the Creator was a God of justice who took the side of the violated poor. Simultaneously, the children themselves were taught to be just, oppose

corruption, and side with the violated poor in line with the teaching of ancient Egypt's philosophy – Maat. This emphasis is found in the "Prayer to Amun" (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 112):

> Helmsman of [the weak]
> Who gives bread to him who has none […]
> I take not a noble as protector,
> I associate not with a man of wealth […]
> My lord is my protector,
> I know his might to wit:
> A helper of strong arm,
> None but he is strong.
> Amun who knows compassion […]

This prayer inculcated in the minds of children that no one was stronger than God and that even the nobles' and the wealthy's power did not match God's power, and, therefore, children were not to associate themselves with, and fear the power of the nobles and the wealthy, but should associate themselves with the weak because, as the Prayer to Amun states, the Creator is the "Helmsman of [the weak]".

In his visit to ancient Egypt, Herodotus (2014,140) found particular conduct among young people remarkable:

> Should a younger man meet with someone older on the road, he will step aside; just as, should he be approached by one of his elders while sitting down, he will rise to his feet.

The behaviour observed by Herodotus on the part of young people was not automatic, but rather an outcome of conscious pedagogics and didactics. In *The Instruction of Any* (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 139) we find the following:

> Do not sit when another is standing,
> One who is older than you,
> Or greater than you in his rank.
> No good character is reproached,
> An evil character is blamed.

Not only did Herodotus find this conduct remarkable, but he (2014, 140) was also moved to remark that in this behaviour there was "a point of resemblance between the Egyptians and the Lacedaemonians, alone of the Greeks". The similarity in conduct that Herodotus observed between the ancient Egyptians and the "Lacedaemonians, alone of the Greeks" was not a mere coincidence. We learn from Isocrates (ISOCRATES, NORLIN & VAN HOOK 1944, 113) that "the Lacedaemonians […] govern their own city in admirable fashion because they imitate certain of the Egyptian customs". In other words, the Lacedaemonians looked to the ancient Egyptians for their political systems.

While both the instructions of Any and Amenemope urge young people to be respectful, adults are also urged to conduct themselves respectably and not be irresponsible drunkards. In this regard, *The Instruction of Any* (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 137) is explicit and forthright:

> Don't indulge in drinking beer,
> Lest you utter evil speech
> And don't know what you're saying.
> If you fall and hurt your body,
> None holds out a hand to you;
> Your companions in the drinking
> Stand up saying: "Out with the drunk!"
> If one comes to seek you and talk with you.
> One finds you lying on the ground,
> As if you were a little child.

There was a recognition, on the part of Any, that pointing children in a certain direction while community adults were moving in an opposite direction, was a futile exercise. Ancient Egyptians recognized that for effective teaching to take place, parents, who are children's primary teachers, have to epitomize the values they claim to advance. Common in both *The Instruction of Any* and *The Instruction of Amenemope* is a caution against the uttering of "evil speech" and the encouragement of "speaking sweetly". This was deemed necessary for both adults and children, but more for adults who had an obligation for setting the standards for children. As *The Instruction of Amenemope* (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 150) notes

> Don't start a quarrel with a hot-mouthed man,
> Nor needle him with words,
> Pause before a foe, bend before an attacker,
> Sleep (on it) before speaking.
> A storm that bursts like fire in straw,
> Such is the heated man in his hour.
> Withdraw from him, leave him alone,
> The god knows how to answer him.
> If you make your life with these (words) in your heart,
> Your children will observe them

The Instruction of Amenemope's (LICHTHEIM 2006b, 150) observation about, and the recognition that children are greatly influenced by what adults do, is only an echo of an earlier observation made by Ptahhotep (2006a, 75):

> Every man teaches as he acts,
> He will speak to the children,
> So that they will speak to their children.
> Set an example, don't give offense,
> If justice stands firm your children will live

It is of no small significance that the philosopher, Ptahhotep, whose book is located in the period 2500 BCE, and *The Instruction of Amenemope*, located in the period 1305 – 1080 BCE (HILLIARD III, WILLIAMS & DAMALI 1987, 13 – 14; LICHTHEIM 2006b, 147) gave attention, already, during the periods cited above, to what, presently, Dhillon (2017,169) calls "philosophy of language" developed by the philosopher Nagarjuna (150 – 250 CE) in the tradition of "Buddhist philosophy of language". The Buddhist "philosophy of language" refers to the "importance of educating for right speech" and, to be sure, was not developed by Buddha Shakyamuni, the figure known as "the Buddha", born in Eastern Nepal in 563 BCE, but by "subsequent followers" (Dhillon 2017, 172). This historical fact places, again, ancient Egypt, in the traditions of philosophy – with specific reference to "philosophy of language" – in the lead.

Concluding Remarks

As a point of departure, this exercise pointed out that in 2003, a philosophical debate emerged in South Africa following a call by Phillip Higgs, for granting space to African philosophy in teacher education. To be sure, Higgs' call was a new development *only* in the South African context, following the gaining of the right to participate in a democratic space by the African majority. Ahead of Higgs' intervention, such a call existed already, as demonstrated by reference to Chancellor Williams' intellectual work.

This exercise argued that while considerable progress has been made in granting space to Ubuntu philosophy, such measures were inadequate since ancient Egyptian philosophy of education has been left out. Cognizant of this omission, this exercise argued for the centring of this rich philosophical tradition, in the conviction that it will raise revolutionary consciousness amongst teachers about the "key" role, as pointed out by Williams (cited earlier), that education can play in creating "God-like" human beings who will know that the primary reason of human existence is to spread Maat – truth, righteousness, justice – as argued in this exercise. When the ancient Egyptian philosophy of education is centred, Africans will not only be inspired to advance a philosophy of education that will sensitize African teachers and children about the importance of human compassion, but will be inspired to learn that this is the gift that their ancestors bequeathed not only to Africans but to the whole of humanity, and that their ancestors were leaders in this regard, as opposed to the falsified history of philosophy of education that places Greece and, by extension, Europe, in the lead. The false attribution of the genesis of philosophy to Greece – through Eurocentric education – has led to students of philosophy, and philosophers, in their own right, such as Kwame Nkrumah, who have established credentials in the struggles of decolonization, re-Africanisation and the African Renaissance, to quote, authoritatively, from Greek philosophers, while unable to do so from Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) philosophers. Nkrumah's (1970) book, *Consciencism: Philosophy And Ideology For De-Colonisation*, is a shining example of this inability.

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