

# Zar'a Ya'aqob: The ethiopian philosopher founder of "Hatataism"

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If the French René Descartes is regarded as the pioneer of “Modern Philosophy”, if many believe that Kant – the philosopher who borrowed the concept of the “Thing in itself” or “Noumenon” from the Amo, the philosopher of Guinea in Africa – is the “greatest philosopher” of the “European Enlightenment”, then all those who're hep to and familiar with the treatises of Zera Yacob or Zar'a Ja'aqob would argue with me that the works of this East African philosopher represent the climax of both “Modern Philosophy” and the “Age of Enlightenment”.

Yacob lived in the 17th century in Abyssinia – in contemporary Ethiopia. He propounded the the school of thought we decently dub today “Hatataism”, deriving from his method “Hatata”, denoting thorough inquiry, analysis and investigation based on human reason alone.

Incidentally, we know that the word “Ethiopia” comes from the Greek word “Aithiopes”, burned faces, i.e. blacks and/or people of color. We know for sure that blacks and/or people of color do have a great deal of melanin, which makes up a natural protection against ultraviolet radiation and skin cancer.

The philosopher Yacob confuted in the 17th century in Africa the false rumors and slander oftentimes bandied about by some scholars -- including some black scholars -- that blacks and/or people of color are essentially irrational beings, who more often than not only know how to use their brawns, how to dance, to run, to play, to sing, how to pursue witchcraft, but who can't operate their brains and who cannot think hard.

These scholars have never fathomed out that each human, irrespective of his skin color, does have a rational as well as an irrational dimension.

We see that in ancient Greece, where the first “Enlightenment” unfolded – during the lifetime of Socrates. The Bible even reports in the book “Acts of Apostles” – in the “New Testament”/ “Second Testament” – how Apostle Paul arrived at Athens, Greece, that he was perturbed on realizing that the Greeks were worshipping many deities. The philosopher Socrates himself was wont to consult the “Oracle of Delphi”.

Indeed, anybody who's conversant with psychology and with classic or traditional metaphysics, and who's already inquired about the philosophy of mysteries and of the unseen, knows that the Greek notorious “Oracle of Delphi” was a higher aspect of the art of Rajo witchcraft. Now then, the art of Rajo witchcraft is the highest category of all operations of witchcrafts.

Most people who often publicly broadcast that they are atheistic at bottom usually worship deities,

metaphysical entities or spirits secretly. Even today, scores of people all over the globe regularly consult clairvoyants and fortune-tellers.

Well know, philosophy is the oral or written diffusion and/or vulgarization of edifying and profitable thoughts, concepts, beliefs and recommendations attained through rational, critical, theoretical, constructive, productive and orderly meditation or discussion upon and about general and fundamental issues raised by humans in their striving for understanding reality in order to bring about better living conditions.

According to Descartes, the “initiator” of “Modern Philosophy”, one should fulfil two main requirements if one means business in going about or pursuing philosophy so as to find out any possible truth – “Principles of Philosophy”, 1644. The first prerequisite is that one ought to get rid of one’s prejudices and submit all of one’s beliefs to the scrutiny of the light of reason; the second prerequisite is that one should suck in the truth that God exists and that all humans depend on him.

Yacob and Walda, the student of Yacob who recorded his teachings, just as Plato jotted down those of Socrates, wrote in their joint “Treatise” known as “ The Treatise of Walda Heywat”: “[...] but let these believers know that I also write this book feeling that the spirit of God is with me, inducing me to write the truth and protecting me from any falsehood; for I write after a long period of inquiry, prayer and purification of my heart before God; I do not write anything which does not agree with our reason, but only what is in the heart of all men.”

The arch philosopher of the Enlightenment Immanuel wrote after the 17th century a text titled, “Religion within the confines of bare reason”; but Zera Yacob and his student Walda Heywat had already philosophized long before Kant in East Africa on religion and faith within the framework and confines of reason. We can read the outcome, fruit and result of their philosophical pursuits in chapter V of the “Treatise” of Walda Heywat ( and Zera Yacob): “That I may not be misled in my faith, I believe nothing except what God demonstrated to me by the light of my reason”.

“Hatataism” is universal because the issues Yacob addressed then are still relevant today. The man of East Africa ranks among the few thinkers world-wide who have already seriously philosophized on business and labor; thus he stated: “ Do not exhaust yourself as animals with no power of thinking, but lay out your work wisely so that you will increase usefulness and profit, and lessen fatigue.” In another place, he declares, “Acquire as much as you can without dishonesty.” Elsewhere he says, “ He who lives on the work of another man while he has himself the ability to work is a chief and a plunderer.”

Last, but not least, to be enlightened means to live up to the fundamentally humanistic African principle of “Ubuntu”, which is in some way the contemporary equivalent of the “Maat” principles of ancient Egyptians, the ancestors of blacks and/or people of color. “Ubuntu” refers to being truly human.

Eventually, Claude Sumner wrote: “[...] MODERN PHILOSOPHY, in the sense of a personal rationalistic critical investigation, BEGAN IN ETHIOPIA with Zär’ a Ya’aqob at the same time as in England and in

France.” We’ll just add, Modern Philosophy and the Enlightenment reached their peak with Zera Yacob, of Ethiopia in Africa.