

## Foreword

### ***Thought and Practice: Taking Stock, Re-engaging***

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Jean-Paul Sartre's famous "Orphée noir" (1948) still ranks among the most memorable Prefaces aimed at capturing the significance of the moments of historical regeneration of interrupted cultural expressions. For that piece, simultaneously celebrated and controverted, Sartre borrowed the idea from the ancient Greek religious movement now widely referred to as "Orphism", associated there with the mythical poet or singer, Orpheus, from about the 6<sup>th</sup>. Century B.C.E. The movement led to several mystery cults as well as to a theogony whose key objective was the poetic laudation of the birth, death, and re-birth of the gods. In the original Greek myth, and therefore in the sense that Sartre had hoped to apply to his revaluation of the novel Negritude poetry, the account begins with the idea of "night" as the primal entity from which a series of "kings" or gods springs?.

Needless to say, metaphors are abundant in all the three levels of this "theogonic" resurgence of *Thought and Practice* in particular, and of the new dawn in the history of African philosophy generally. While the Greek myth depicts the onset of a new historical beginning - a re-awakening - of the processes of self-creating acts after a period of lull and despair in Greek culture, Sartre thought that Léopold S. Senghor's inauguration of the new generation of poetry, one that followed an almost decimating effects of colonialism throughout the black world, would similarly set in motion the expressive regeneration of a black culture. Like the gods in the Greek myth, he thought, the poets in Senghor's anthology - *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nIgre et malgache de langue française* - become the agents of the new world, a reconfigured historical moment. It is with these ideas in mind that I similarly view the new generation of African philosophers, such as the editors of *Thought and Practice* to be the agents of a new dawn in the philosophical practice in our country and region. They will have the unenviable, yet so much needed special responsibility, for enabling a re-awakening of minds to grapple with such a much needed discourse.