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Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur met en avant certains points concernant les études féministes dans le contexte de l'Ouganda. La principale supposition est que les études féministes ne peuvent pas n'être qu'une addition au status quo mais, bien plutôt, qu'il existe des problèmes théoriques qui ont besoins d'être soumis à des débats et à une réflexion critique. La position des femmes dans l'histoire et le besoin de redonner une légitimité aux discours différents sont mis à l'oeuvre afin d'illustrer cette supposition.

BRINGING WOMEN BACK IN A Search for Alternative Historiographies

Josephine Ahikire

The field of Women studies as it is unfolding in Africa generally lacks a dimension of rigorous challenge to ruling discourses consequently running the risk of achieving no more than mobilising women into the existing order. This assertion is not to project a negative picture of whatever efforts are taking place in the field of women's issues. There is indeed, more than ever before, a rising consciousness about the position of women. What is at stake is that many of the efforts around women and development are largely locked in integrationist paradigms of development where, particularly the 'Third World' women have been oversimplified into a poverty stricken and powerless lot with no agency whatsoever. Hand in hand with this goes an almost total de-theorization and depoliticization of women's studies. The overriding trend in Uganda for instance, is that research on how women can generate income and *participate* better in *development* takes precedence and that which seeks to rethink the theoretical understandings of the construction of the woman subject is of secondary interest at best. The questions that are being posed are primarily defined by donor and development agencies and there is little organic critical and feminist thinking (and/or rethinking). Mbilinyi puts this trend succinctly that "women studies are simply "catching up" with the POAR (policy oriented applied research) trends and reliance on external funding characteristic of social Science in general in neo-colonial Africa" (Mbilinyi, 1984:291).

There is a need for a radical departure in the way issues of women and development are being addressed - to begin to challenge in a much more fundamental way the ideas that are basic to the order that we seek to change and to legitimize alternative discourses that give a better representation of women. In other words, struggle to change gender relations must of necessity include rigorous questioning at the level of discourse - there is need of a strong women's movement in the arena of knowledge.

In this paper, I use the example of history to illustrate the fact that in Uganda, for instance, the limited effort to problematize the position of women in history is part of the whole trend in which

women studies leaves the basic ideologies of womanhood largely unchallenged. Women's lopsided appearance in what we call history is part of the patriarchal discourse that exalts the male subject by conversely obscuring the female and as such history is a participant in the production of knowledge about sexual difference. As an extension of their subordinate position, women are denied the role of historical actors. Hence part of the struggle to change gender relations is to reconstruct women's past. In this paper I will try to highlight some of the questions that need to be raised so as to transform the rationale of traditional historiography. This analysis therefore focuses on the need for more critical methodological rethinking of gender processes so as to derive a better representation of women in such an arena of knowledge as history.

Writing Gender into History: A Critical View

As several feminists have noted, writing women into history is not a matter of accretion, what has been termed as the "add and stir method". Rather, there is need for a more rigorous way of asking questions and conceptualising women in historical processes (Fox-Genovese, 1982, Lerner, 1979, Scott, 1988).

We cannot understand women and their lives by adding facts about them to bodies of knowledge which take men, their lives, and their beliefs as the human norm...The attempts to add understandings of women to our knowledge of nature and social life have led to the realization that there is precious little knowledge to which to add them.

(Harding & Hintikka 1983:ix)

There is general consensus that women's invisibility in history or their distorted past calls for a feminist methodology in order to challenge the dominant frameworks that have treated women essentially as uninteresting and irrelevant. This paper therefore attempts to make a conceptual distinction between feminist history and the history of women in order to bring out the specific importance of methodological questions. Whereas the history of women could be taken to mean merely a history about women, feminist history is that which involves giving

women a voice, an access to power hitherto denied (Thom, 1992). In this paper the term feminist is used to refer to a conscious effort to challenge women's subordination and to redress gender inequality in all aspects of social existence. In Schmidt's words:

A 'feminist perspective' takes in all aspects of the dominance of men and subordination of women, and the means whereby these have been established and maintained. It is concerned with all levels of historical knowledge, awareness, thought, study and explanation...it analyses the significance of gender for the very process of understanding history itself, and the linguistic difficulties in conceptualising women's history as 'a history of their own'. A feminist perspective is committed to historical experiences of women and men in both their divergences and their interactions, and argues that 'gender' is a combination of lived experiences and of cultural and symbolic expressions changing through history (1993:86).

The challenge of reconstructing women's past therefore, is primarily a theoretical and political one. It is an undertaking which is complex particularly due to the manifestations of both homogeneity and heterogeneity in women's experiences. It is a question that requires constant reflection, questioning and debates in relation to specific contexts.

The recognition that women are absent in history bred what was coined as "herstory", as a reproach of the knowledge that only gave us "his story". This effort to reconstruct the female past has surely added to our knowledge about women; there is more written about women than before. On the other hand, there are problems with this approach. Women are abstracted as a category and this has wider implications for women in history in general.

In the first instance, women as a focus denotes a biological category and by implication a category that is the same through time and space; a category that is identifiable prior to the process of analysis. There is an underlying assumption, whether consciously or unconsciously of a "natural separation of human activities by sex"

(Lerner, 1979:169), an assumption that basically takes off from an essential female self whose differences from the male are natural and given. This, as a methodological premise, has major flaws.

The study of women has to come to terms with the fact that there are differences between women. Women are differentiated by class, region, race, ethnicity, religion, etc., and cannot constitute a homogenous category. Women's subordination intersects with other systems of oppression and domination such that women are part of the systems that exist in society; they are part of the ruling as well as the oppressed collectivities (Scott, 1988). The construction of gender therefore varies with the context thus implying that different women experience gender differently. Further, women as historical subjects have to be conceived in relation to men and to social processes. In fact some scholars have described women's history as a misnomer (Lerner, 1979, Schmidt, 1993) because in lived reality, there is no such thing as women's history in isolation from other processes.

Women's [separate] history has also had as one of its major flaws, a tendency to stress stereotypes, hence generating knowledge that is basically essentialist. One of the common stereotypes is the conception of women as victims of this or that system. The impression that follows from this kind of account is that women have never fought back and have never been effective social agents on behalf of themselves or others (Harding, 1987), as if to confirm the thesis of the 'world historical defeat of the female sex' advanced by Engels (Young, et al. 1977:101).

Furthermore essentialisation of women is seen in the temptation to always start (and in most cases end) with the conjugal relationship of husband and wife. The relations between the sexes affect and are also affected by other systems of social organisation such that the male or female subject at once also has many other identities such as clan head, father, mother, queen, traditional healer, witch, peasant, etc. That we almost exclusively start and end with conjugal relations is an imposition of a particular model into our view of the world. Sacks, demonstrates this point of differing identities of women and how they imply different relations in her study of various societies in Africa. In relation to Buganda (central region of Uganda), she shows how with the rise of the ruling class there followed a destruction of patrilineal

kin corporations and hence the demise of sisterhood and the rise of wifehood as women's sole relations to the means of production (1979:-198). For Sacks, sister is a kind of kinship shorthand for a female member of the community while wife is shorthand for a woman's relationship to her spouse (1979:6). Sacks' study is a bit blocked by her strict application of the Marxist method of analysis whereby relations are directly and almost exclusively flowing from production relations. Nonetheless it is an important text and its contribution to the conceptualising of gender relations cannot be overemphasized. It breaks the monotony of wifehood and charts a new perspective that has the various identities of womanhood and their significance as part of the questions to be asked.

Out of the drive to make women visible, some of those who seek to write women's history are tempted to look for heroines partly to challenge the history that presents us with only heroes. This is what has been termed as compensatory history (Kelly, 1984, Kannabiran et al., 1989). In this sense the history of women remains in the tradition of conventional history where whenever women appeared it was only the names of those women whom great men loved or those who could enter fields customarily reserved for upper class men. Such a history not only marginalizes women but also mythologizes them into the terms of a male-centred world (Kannabiran et al., 1989:19). The life of the majority is ignored and such a history is unable to make sense of women's daily life, the major aim of feminist social history. Within compensatory history also exist those studies that have gone to great length to demonstrate that matriarchy existed or is existing (Amadiume, 1992). This trend has mainly come from the African 'front' wherein it is argued that there was or is matriarchy in 'traditional African societies (Amadiume, 1992) and the present systems of patriarchy have mainly been a colonial imposition. The history of exceptional women may only serve a limited purpose of demonstrating that women have also occupied spaces that wield conventionally recognized social power but this is as far as it can go. It leaves basically unanswered, the more fundamental questions of the construction of 'woman' in specific contexts and the social relations that define and are defined by this process.

Another temptation in making women visible is to try to interpret their individual actions in a way that makes women powerful "in their own spheres"- the opposite of victimologies. The crucial question here is that women's actions are looked at in isolation and indiscriminately interpreted as indications of women's power, a kind of romanticization of the women's past. An example of this is the way the silence of women is sometimes given the status of a weapon of struggle in all cases without posing the question of how far silence can generate social power. As Young et al. rightly argue, it is not necessary to look behind manifest social forms in order to see women because such a perspective reinforces the notion of separate spheres of men and women, while leaving women to appear as of marginal relevance in the analysis of fundamental social structures (1977:126). It may seem that this question, if posed with that which is opposed to victimologies leaves no option for the feminist historian. On the contrary, it is more of a call for proper and concrete analysis of practices and structures to reveal the significance of women's position and how they sometimes create spaces for themselves in a system that is most evidently oppressive to them. In this way, women are taken as historical actors but the objective coordinates of their reality also remain central to the analysis.

Defining women as the 'other', as a category that is defined as outside of the processes in which it is situated, is also common in the case or instances such as national struggles or liberation movements. Women are defined as having 'contributed' to this or that movement - as if they are contributing to something that exists /existed independent of them (Kannabiran, 1989:20). Analyses of women and nationalism and revolution are the most telling in this aspect. Molyneux, a scholar who has written extensively on [socialist] revolutions, may to an extent exemplify this stance. For instance she argues that:

Revolutionary governments tend to see the importance of reforming the position of women in the first period of the social and economic transformation in terms of helping to accomplish at least three goals: i) to extend the base of government's political support; ii) to increase the size or quality of the active labour force; and iii) to help harness the family more securely to the process of social reproduction. (cited in Moghadam, 1991:12)

Such a construction of women's place in revolutions projects them as if they exist outside of the social reality. Women are brought in the analysis at the level of the course and outcomes of the revolutions and movements rather than their causes and this presents women as though they are contributing to a project to which they do not have an intrinsic stake. It is important to ask why discourses and laws about women and the family signal the political, economic and cultural agenda of revolutionaries and new states - why, for instance, the majority of revolutions almost invariably raise questions concerning women even in cases where these questions may cause so much trouble (Moghadam, 1991). It therefore means that as gender relations are part and parcel of societal processes, those who seek and/or claim to redefine relations in society (for the better) cannot ignore gender - at least in their proclamations. Similarly, writing women into the history of such movements needs an orientation to women, as part of that process, and as collectivities that also have a stake in what goes on. Conceptualising women as contributing, participating or being manipulated, denoting a kind of separation between women and society is basically grounded within the premise that primarily defines women as the "other".

Furthermore, as far as the politics of history are concerned, a number of feminists contend that "herstory" leaves conventional notions of knowledge largely unchallenged. Fox-Genovese maintains that simply to substitute women's history for main stream history leaves us prisoners of precisely the pernicious status as 'other' to which mainstream history has assigned us (1982:7). The generation and increase of [descriptive] case studies on women does not necessarily transform the dominant discourses. There is acknowledgement that women are there but women's history then is dismissed as separate from men's. Hence the fears that women's concerns may remain in the ghetto are real (Moore 1998). As Scott points out, it is not uncommon that one hears assertions such as: "women had a history different from men's, therefore let feminists do women's history which need not concern us"; or Women's history is about sex and the family and should be done separately from political and economic history (Scott, 1989:83). These statements from non-feminists, whether male or female, are loaded with deep seated ideological values that seek to

negate feminist concerns. But still it has to be acknowledged that women's separate and abstracted out case studies may reinforce these very values.

The study of women needs to come to terms with the politics of history (of knowledge) such that women are given their rightful place. Women need to be part of the knowledge about societies as they are part of those societies. Indeed it is a process that requires a deconstruction of the discourses that negate women while reconstructing those wherein women are properly represented in relation to each other, to men and to other processes; discourses that capture the gender realities as they inform and are shaped by other processes. This means that the knowledge about women should have the capacity to transform the general social picture and the institutional framework of knowledge.

These are some of the problems associated with the conception of women as a pre-given group. Women are abstracted as a category, frozen in time and isolated from general historical developments. The point here is not to negate what has been written as women's history. Indeed Fox-Genovese makes a cautionary note that we should not make a mistake in this critique of "her story" because women's exclusion has been so total that every rectification must be conceived as a substantial development (1982:6). Moreover the very quantitative accumulation of information is a great leap forward because it forces a redefinition of the existing records in several ways. Therefore, the emphasis that there is need to go beyond adding women's history to the conventional narratives is more of a search for a way, or rather, ways forward.

Women's history needs to be conceptualised as an effort to reconstruct a neglected past which at the same time does not abstract women as having a separate history. It is a term that has political significance in that it seeks to redress the poor and in most cases, non-representation of women in history. Hence the term women's history can be usefully applied if it is understood:

Not as being descriptive of a past reality but as both a conceptual model and a strategy by which to focus on and isolate that which traditional history has obscured.

(Lerner, 1979:169)

The ultimate aim would be to have a history in which women as well as men are presented: a history that deals with the actions, ideas and experiences of both women and men as they relate to specific contexts. This is where the conceptual distinction between women's history and feminist history becomes relevant. One of the important ways to achieve this, is to adopt gender as a fundamental category of historical analysis. I now move on to a critical analysis of gender as a unit of analysis and point out some of the ways in which its merits can be utilised while at the same time avoiding the deficiencies.

Gender as a Tool for Historical Analysis: Examining the Uses and its Abuses

Gender denotes the socially constructed differences between men and women; a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women. It is used by those who reject biological explanations and who maintain that women and men are products of social relations; conversely, that women and men are defined in terms of one another and cannot be understood in isolation. Bock refers to gender as:

an intellectual construct, a way of studying peoples, an analytical tool that helps to discover neglected areas of history... a conceptual from of cultural enquiry that challenges the sex blindness of traditional historiography

(1989:11, cited in Schmidt, 1993:95)

Conceptualised in this way the reconstruction of women's past bears capacity to transform dominant discourses and to offer a more adequate interpretation of not only social relations of sexes but also other processes as they inform and are informed by the relations between men and women.

The insistence on the social construction of relations between men and women is significant in the sense that once we understand gender systems to be historically rather than biologically determined, we then cease to uphold a pre-given situation and instead seek to define and characterize processes in their specificity. Rejecting biology as a basis and cause for social definitions then opens up the analysis into the study of the 'interrelations between women and men, and the role of

gender in structuring human societies, their ideologies, economic systems and political structures (Moore, 1988:6).

The use of gender as a concept makes possible a broader perspective for researching and writing about women because it helps to ask questions rather than rushing to give answers, to look into the concrete forms in which differences and inequalities are articulated and the specific ways in which 'womanhood' is lived. This is why patriarchy, an otherwise significant concept for feminist writing (and activism) has at one point been dismissed by some quarters because the way it was used was predominantly too universalistic and non-specific. It was first articulated by radical feminists to express the systemic character of the oppressive and exploitative relations that affect women and the basic critique of radical feminism was that the use of the concept patriarchy takes all societies as essentially characterized by male dominance and female subordination at the peril of historically specific analysis of relations between sexes. The danger here is that the institutions that need to be explained may be and/or are used as explanations in themselves.

On the other hand, patriarchy has tangible implications for feminist history. It is explicit on the systemic subordination of women and how this subordination pervades the way in which people live and how processes are conceptualised so that gender inequality can be analyzed in its own right. If patriarchy is taken beyond the traditional meaning that focuses on the rule of the father, it is an invaluable tool for feminist history. If we use a historical method, patriarchy can stimulate a quest into the possible social structures underlying both institutional inequalities and everyday action (Hearn, 1987). In this sense, institutions such as the family or household which have been rightly referred to as the main seat of patriarchy cease to be natural or transhistorical but are studied in their concrete manifestations of social relations between genders, age groups, etc., why and how these change and are changed over time. In this sense, the concept patriarchy has the capacity to "highlight the possibility of different social bases of control arising from gender differences" (Hearn, 1987:43). In other words, gender and patriarchy do not have to be posed as polar opposites but rather as terms that reinforce each other in the questioning and understanding of women's past.

The need to do away with polarised theses in the use of the concept gender, also applies to the issue of biology. Much as biologism has to be avoided, the question of biology is still relevant to women's lives. To say that women should not be viewed primarily as a biological category does not necessarily take the argument to the question of whether it is the social or the biological that takes precedence. Whitehead argues that 'sex is the province of biology and gender is the province of social science' (1979:10). Such a statement may be useful in the quest to historize women's experiences but carries with it the other side of the attempt to separate the biological from the social in a way that leaves one part of women's lives inexplicable. And as Barrett writes, 'feminists run a risk if they ignore arguments from the level of biology, of leaving the forces of anti-feminism comfortably encamped on this ground' (1980:74). Biology as it informs women's lives, and as it interacts with other processes, is a crucial concern for feminist history.

I have emphasized that understanding and writing women's past needs a more rigorous approach, which the concept of gender is capable of generating, provided that one avoids polarized and causative grounds for analysis. Gender analysis should be applied to establish the basis of oppression and the forms it takes without lapsing into questions of monocausality and origins. Therefore inquiry on women's past goes beyond the search for single causes and origins for female devaluation. Or rather, questions are asked differently, in a way that keeps gender as part of the interactive and complex historical process. This substantiates the questions of feminist history and the place of gender in historical investigation, where women are visible but are part of the general history of society and not made to appear separate and unique. The concept gender is an invaluable tool in achieving a recentring of knowledge and is capable of transforming norms of historical investigation to include feminist concerns such that women figure in all courses of history. On the other hand, there is need to note the flaws of gender and particularly the political implications of its abuses.

If the word gender is used to substitute for women and to avoid the confrontation that goes with the mention of women's issues it then becomes a sure tool for forces of anti-feminism. If women's history is simply and uncritically renamed 'gender history', we have a situation

where neutrality takes precedence over efforts to hold a critique of male supremacy in all its forms. The term 'gender history' 'blunts the challenge of women's history by developing a kind of neutral discourse about gender in order to eliminate those specific aspects of a feminist approach which are uncomfortable for men' (Schmidt, 1993:90).

Therefore, one of the possible reasons why gender has become a popular word even within circles that are evidently patriarchal is that it can be easily manipulated to play down what would otherwise be a conflict laden terrain. This is particularly so in relation to what is referred to as 'personal relationships'. For example issues of sexuality are regarded by many people as personal, private and sensitive and often researchers or activists may use gender, to avoid the wrath that may confront them. Hence ideologically, researchers and activists adopt a 'non-confrontational posture, which too often becomes apologetic for raising the issue of women's oppression at all' (Mbilinyi, 1984:293).

Gender as a concept therefore sets a trap in which even the well-intended scholars and historians can fall. Its uses are very attractive in the way women's subordination is conceptualised and historized but its abuses can be far reaching. If neutrality particularly so dear to the academia takes precedence then we have academic recognition at a cost of losing the very aims of redressing women's position in society. As Schmidt puts it, "the price for professional and institutional acceptance is an increasing loss of political impact" (1993:91). The current upsurge and fashionable use of such diluted and empty terms as bias, gender imbalance and gender violence is illustrative of how gender an otherwise useful concept can be retrogressive.

Further, analysis should not just be for its own sake but rather should be used to inform action to challenge women's oppression and hence the use of gender must of necessity maintain the political stance that would in essence uphold a women's movement. The ultimate goal is to have knowledge about the past where the woman subject is at the centre of the inquiry as the man subject is. That is, knowledge that is illustrative of social relations as they are constituted by the two genders and knowledge that leads us to the challenge and eradication of oppressive relations. Hence it imperative that gender is used as a tool to have the desirable end of proper analysis of social relations while

the political aims of feminism for changing oppressive relations and in the specific case of history, rescuing women's past, remain at the centre.

The Challenge of who writes about whom: Examining Epistemological Concerns

The crux of the politics of history does not stop at the general level of the critique of traditional history. There is an internal controversy for feminist writing on the legitimization of knowledge and who writes about whom. The most common and popular version of these concerns is the controversy between black and white and a critique of how white feminists have taken it upon themselves to write about black women, while generalising the Third World from the western view point. In her article entitled "Under Western Eyes", Mohanty (1988) strongly castigates the assumption of women as an "always-already" constituted group in the particular case of the "Third World" as a manifestation of a colonial discourse and western ethnocentrism. She asserts that the construction of the 'third world' woman as powerless, exploited and dependent, is not only based on the generalisation of women as a powerless group but also has a strong foundation in the assumption that Third World women are generalisable. Referring to the book by R. Cutrufelli, entitled *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression*, Mohanty poses a question whether, in the 1980s it was possible to imagine writing a book entitled 'Women of Europe: Roots of Oppression' (1988:67).

Although Mohanty points out that the critiques she offers also pertain to "identical analytical principles employed by third world scholars writing about their own cultures" (1988:62), her analysis is rather obstructed by her high pitched attack on western ethnocentrism. The point that can be drawn from Mohanty's submission is that generalisation of powerlessness, in particular, inhibits proper analysis of the women's roles as subjects of history. The current upsurge and indiscriminate use of such terms as grassroots women, rural women, peasant women is a case in point. In Uganda for example, the moment the word grassroots is mentioned, automatically, one is expected to imagine the oppressed woman, overburdened by work, the powerless,

having no control over her labour, her sexuality, etc. Middle class women i.e., those who have the opportunity to write, almost invariably feel they must write about peasant women. This in itself would not be particularly improper but the problem lies in the way peasant women are generalised and taken summarily as a 'bunch' of oppressed women.

The tendency to generalise the powerlessness of women can be posed as one example that raises epistemological questions; questions that have raised enormous debates among feminists. This is particularly in relation to standpoint epistemology, which in general, can be referred to as a theory of knowledge that attaches importance to ones position in society. It is argued that the position one occupies also determines which features of reality come into prominence and which ones become obscured (Nielsen, 1990). In the case of oppressed social groups it means that those disadvantaged sections of society have an epistemic privilege in terms of knowledge about their position and that of the dominant groups - what is sometimes referred to as the "double vision" (Narayan, 1989: 265). It is argued that the location of oppressed groups allows them to have knowledge of both their own contexts and those of their oppressors since they have to survive in a society governed by the practices of their oppressors while the dominant groups on the other hand are not under the same pressure to acquire knowledge of the practices of the former (Narayan, 1989).

The significance of standpoint cannot be contested. We need to be critical of knowledge more so as feminist research is geared to bringing out facts not only about women, but also for women. On the other hand, overemphasis on and/or pre-occupation with standpoint epistemology could easily jeopardize the very process of creating knowledge.

In the first instance, I find the question of whether or not white feminists can write the history of black women as one that cannot be answered by yes and no approaches. In the consideration of white women interviewing black women, Edwards asserts that the relationships between the researcher and the researched are important in solving theoretical problems in feminist research. She argues that you cannot have feminist theories that explain differences without them actually being grounded in those differences (1990:478). More often

such constructions have also gone with unprecedented reification of black and the so called 'Third World women' experience.

The most eminent danger with such a crude construction of differences among women and how it should inform the claim to create or construct knowledge is that the process of legitimation and delegitimation may easily undermine one of the goals of feminism in relation to knowledge and the need to transform discourses to include women's experiences. Black versus white, or poor versus middle class for instance may be differences that inform different experiences of women but can also be used as dichotomies to negate any writing on women. These dichotomies can easily turn out to be tools that may be manipulated and invoked to invalidate whatever any woman have to say. For instance, in the case of Uganda, the issue of questioning the right of the middle class to pretend to write and speak on behalf of the poor women has several dimensions one of which could be less concerned with the need for the poor to have power over knowledge and more with the attempt to delegitimize women's voice in general.

There is need for a critical formulation of epistemological questions. Knowledge should not be judged or legitimized merely on the basis of physical belongingness. The question should rather be in terms of particular collectivities to control the means of discourse about their own situations (Narayan, 1989:265). The implication here for writing women into history is that the women about whom one is writing should not be subsumed under her or his values and assumptions but rather the voices of those women should be heard. This is different from the position of outright exclusion of the "other" on the grounds of standpoint; pre-empting the possibility of the "other" for creating knowledge. Such [over] celebration of epistemic advantage, in my view, may result in a degeneration into a kind of fundamentalism of "It-takes-one-to-know-one, a kind of crude relativism that undermines the creation of knowledge that would constitute, if you like, a feminist challenge to existing discourses. At the risk of projecting the worst case scenario, I can say that unprecedented emphasis on epistemic advantage might (even barely) give us legitimacy to our autobiographies only.

What I have outlined here is that a challenge to patriarchal structures involves much more than just 'adding' women. I have used the case of history to illustrate that Women studies need to acquire a political stance that has the capacity to challenge the general social picture of womanhood in terms of questioning the discourses that sustain oppressive practices. It cannot be overemphasized that women studies must be more than mobilising women and engender a change in our understanding of social reality and what is involved in emancipation.

Notes

1. Mbilinyi made these remarks in relation to women's studies in Eastern Africa in the 80s but unfortunately such debates were not taken up in Uganda for instance and the same assertion holds true for the 90s.
2. The use and contrast of the terms feminist history and women's history is important for conceptual clarity and not as a basis for negation. In fact at one level these may be merged into one since the goal is a re-centering of knowledge; to have women in history.

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Summary

Syndrome is understood here as meaning cross-roads. Hampâté Bâ's personality, his life and experiences can equally be considered as a meeting place, a locus where things come together. In his thought the theme of cross-roads is of central importance.

The thought of Hampâté Bâ is little known, apart from his famous saying expressed at a UNESCO meeting in 1962 "In Africa, when an old man dies a library is burnt down". Even so, this sentence is not well understood, some even consider it be a a proverb. What is the meaning of his thought? What is his life-story?

LE SYNDROME HAMPÂTE BÂ
ou
COMMENT NAISSENT LES PROVERBES¹

Yacouba Konaté

Pour qui n'est pas "kalhaldi" c'est à dire initié peul doué de la force vitale, qui a droit à la parole et sait parler, Amadou Hampâté Bâ et son oeuvre invitent, incitent à la patience sinon au silence. A plus d'un titre, ils trempent dans la mystique et donc dans un enseignement de type privé. Or dans le champ d'une représentation publique, la lecture profane à partir des pré-requis d'une formation qui elle-même est plus occidentale qu'africaine, plus prompte à désacraliser qu'à s'émerveiller, cette lecture, notre lecture peut décevoir sinon agacer. On peut se demander "de quel Amadou parle-t-il?" Si on le fait on fait bien car Hampâté Bâ souligne lui-même l'existence de plusieurs facettes dans la même personne: "maa ka maaya ka ca a yere kono": "Les personnes de la personne sont multiples dans la personne disent les Bambaras²." La même idée se retrouve chez les peuls et Hampâté Bâ de citer une expérience avec sa mère: "Ma propre mère chaque fois qu'elle désirait me parler, faisait tout d'abord venir ma femme ou ma soeur et leur disait: "j'ai désir de parler à mon fils Amadou mais je voudrais savoir lequel des Amadou qui l'habitent est là en ce moment."³

Comme chez Nietzsche, on observe ici une multiplicité du sujet dont les différents aspects se trouvent enchevêtrés. Mais alors que chez Nietzsche la multiplicité du sujet est extérieure, excentrée, écartelée (Je suis Dionisos écartelé dit Nietzsche) éclatée et explosive, chez Amadou Hampâté Bâ, elle est intérieure. C'est dire que parler d'Hampâté Bâ le philosophe, le penseur qui tel une boule de verre, laisse voir son intériorité, n'empêche pas d'attendre, d'entendre un autre Hampâté Bâ à partir d'autres pré-supposés, d'un autre degré de lecture ou d'écoute: les degrés de l'initiation, de la mystique... Mais ces risques valent la peine d'être courus quand on veut aller de l'avant sans cesser de jeter un coup d'oeil en arrière ; quand on veut comprendre l'Afri-

que des villages tout en restant des citadins ; quand on veut comprendre la modernité de l'Afrique non pas seulement par rapport à son extraversion mais aussi par rapport à ses lignes de forces internes et intrinsèques.

I. L'arbre d'une phrase, la forêt d'une pensée

Hampâté Bâ est de ces auteurs, qui sont immenses en ce qu'ils donnent des arguments culturels et des armes intellectuelles. Véritables maîtres, ils vous prennent par la main et vous conduisent dans les arcanes d'une pensée traditionnelle dont ils analysent le système et les éléments. Ils vous inspirent... Mais est-ce bien le sage qui inspire le titre quelque peu provoquant de "syndrome Hampâté Bâ"? Après un arrêt sur ce titre, nous procéderons dans un deuxième moment à l'analyse du fond et de la forme de la phrase la plus célèbre qu'un africain ait jamais produite, avant de poser le problème de la réception du message qu'elle comporte.

"Le syndrome Hampâté Bâ": eu égard à cet intitulé quelque peu incisif, on peut avancer au moins deux types de légitimation. La première tient à l'étymologie même du mot "syndrome". A sa racine grecque, "syndrome" signifie rencontre, carrefour. En effet, Hampâté Bâ est un carrefour et sa pensée est truffée de points de rencontres, d'enchevêtrements. Lui même est un carrefour en ce sens qu'il est peul. Peul du Macina par son père, peul du Fouta Toro par sa mère, le voilà à la croisée de deux lignées rivales car les peuls du Fouta Toro exterminèrent littéralement ceux du Macina. Le père d'Hampâté est l'un des rares survivants de ce massacre et pour le mettre à l'abri, ses parents eurent recours à ce stratagème vieux comme le temps et qu'on retrouve dans La lettre volée d'Edgar Poe: mettre en évidence l'objet à cacher. Hampâté est placé dans le camp ennemi.

A Bandiagara où naît Amadou, se côtoient dogons, bobos, toucou-

leurs, peuls, bambaras... Ville carrefour donc. Son père décède alors qu'il n'a que deux ans et sa mère se remarie à un chef de province toucouleur qui l'adopte. Mais voilà que ce deuxième père est destitué de son trône de chef par les autorités coloniales qui le forcent à l'exil. Il se retrouve à Bougouni, au coeur du pays Bambara avec sa famille. Hampâté a alors 7 ans. Peul de naissance, toucouleur d'adoption, il deviendra bambara de par son immersion sociologique. Il sera initié bambara autant qu'il est initié peul. Et plus tard, à la faveur de la sympathie dont le gratifiera Danfo Siné, un "Korodjuya" (grade le plus élevé de l'initiation bambara) il pénétrera les secrets de la métaphysique bambara.

Pour autant qu'Hampâté Bâ fut accusé par Yambo Ouologuem l'écrivain guinéen de nationalisme peul, notre titre "le syndrome Hampâté Bâ" veut insister dans un premier temps sur l'homme carrefour, point décisif où les chemins se croisent et se séparent en différents courants, différentes traditions. Du reste un peul saurait-il être nationaliste conséquent lorsqu'il se définit lui-même comme "blanc parmi les Noirs et Noir parmi les Blancs, chauve-souris." Terrain de rencontres, homme multicolore, bariolé, divers et chatoyant comme un tapis, le sage de Marcory s'assume souverainement comme peul.

Hampâté Bâ est également un carrefour en ce que le fils aîné du siècle qu'il est, ne peut pas ne pas être dans le même temps le dernier fils du siècle précédant. L'imprécision de sa date de naissance (vers 1900) d'une part, certains souvenirs d'enfance d'autre part, incitent les observateurs à reconnaître en lui un fils des années 1889. Quoiqu'il en soit, la tradition orale borde sa date de naissance et il devient ainsi une charnière, un point limite, une frontière, un passage entre le temps de l'occupation coloniale et celui des indépendances ; entre le triomphe de l'oralité et les débuts de la mise en fiches, en livres, en documents de la mémoire de l'Afrique ; entre l'école coranique et l'école française ; entre l'islam et le christianisme ; entre l'Afrique traditionnelle et l'Afrique moderne, entre Bandiagara et Abidjan-Marcory, entre Bamako

et Abidjan aussi vrai qu'il fut ambassadeur du Mali en Côte d'Ivoire de 1962 à 1966. Historien, source d'histoire, poète, ethnologue, homme de lettres pour ne pas dire romancier, philosophe, c'est une encyclopédie vivante et colorée.

Philosophe? Nous reviendrons sur cet aspect de l'oeuvre du Sage de Marcory. En attendant, reconnaissons qu'il reste un témoin privilégié de la mise à caducité brutale de l'intégrité historique de l'Afrique et du télescopage du continent par une logique de la domination dont il formule le précepte comme suit: "cesse d'être toi pour être moi, mais tu ne seras pas mon égal." Aux confluent des races, des cultures, des continents, des siècles, Hampâté se tient, magnifique représentant du peul et de sa sagesse millénaire. Il se tient comme un homme à cheval sur des moments et des instances contradictoires qu'il tente de concilier, d'où son oecuménisme et sa fonction de mauvaise conscience de notre modernité. Il se tient comme un baobab, un arbre centenaire: arbre-sépulture des savoirs traditionnels qu'il recueille et cultive. Et il nous interpelle, et il nous exhorte: "Ré-africanisez! Ré-africanisez! Sinon vous cesserez d'être vous-même, et vous ne serez jamais des européens."⁴

Toutefois ce n'est pas fondamentalement cette fonction de conciliation qui se donne comme cible dans le titre "le syndrome Hampâté Bâ" mais plutôt une variation sur le sens médical de la notion. Au sens médical, un syndrome étant un ensemble de facteurs caractéristiques qui se produisent en même temps dans un certain nombre d'affections, on pourrait, dans un sens figuré, parler de syndrome Hampâté Bâ dans toute situation de connaissance-méconnaissance où l'arbre d'une pensée, d'une phrase en vient à oblitérer et le sens de la pensée et la forêt de l'oeuvre globale dont elle est solidaire.

Tout comme on a parlé du syndrome Kissinger pour désigner cette tendance de certains voyageurs infatigables à effectuer des allers-retours fréquents et brefs, on pourrait parler de syndrome Hampâté Bâ,

partout où, par la conjonction de symptômes ou de facteurs particuliers, une phrase connue trop connue comme "en Afrique quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle", pensée bien connue et même trop connue, en vient à être méconnue, mal connue puis à occulter et sa nature, et l'essentiel de la pensée de l'auteur. En résumé "syndrome Hampâté Bâ" parce que l'homme est un carrefour et parce que le succès d'un de ses nombreux petits mots, tend à coïncider avec une "conspiration du silence" sur sa pensée.

Avant de nous engager plus loin dans la logique de notre exposé, soulignons la prégnance du thème du carrefour chez le penseur peul. Le carrefour qui peut être simplement une clairière, n'est un lieu quelconque ni pour le peul ni pour le bambara. Au contraire il est le lieu même de l'histoire, son origine, son point de départ dans la mesure où il constitue l'espace de la chute primordiale de l'humain.

Dans une conférence prononcée à l'École Normale Supérieure à Abidjan le 11 novembre 1972, Hampâté Bâ présente la cosmogonie bambara telle qu'elle lui a été enseignée par Danfo Siné, un chantre du Komo Bambara. Maa N'Gala étant l'être incréé, Maa (L'homme) est la première créature de Dieu. Maa engendra Maa folo (Le premier homme) qui à son tour engendra "Bébiyèrèyé (Chacun pour soi) qui devint père de Sira Fara (carrefour)". "Maa Folo, fils de Maa, et de ses descendants jusqu'à Sira Fara, vivaient dans un univers sacré et paradisiaque. Ils étaient en parfait accord avec les lois de l'harmonie qui régissent le ciel et la terre et tout ce qui se trouve entre les deux." Mais avec les descendants de Sira Fara (carrefour), Maa Koro (Le vieil homme) et sa soeur Moussokoroni Kunje la Vieillote chenue, arrivèrent le trouble et le désordre. Intelligente, turbulente, impossible, révoltée par son état de femme dont elle rejette la culpabilité sur ses géniteurs, elle refuse d'honorer la mémoire de son père. Elle n'assistera donc pas à ses funérailles et ne se formalisera pas par rapport aux sacrifices rituels qu'elle lui devait. Sous le poids de la malédiction de son père, elle deviendra une vraie mégère, quittera le village et ira

vivre dans la forêt noire avec des génies dont elle épousera le roi. "Moussokoroni Kunjè et son époux s'engagèrent dans les troupes de Saya (la mort) de manière à pouvoir attaquer Maa Koro qui lui, s'était allié à Nienèya (la Vie)."

Espace et temps de la chute et donc de la condition humaine dans la mythologie bambara, le carrefour en Afrique noire n'a pas partie inextricablement liée avec le désordre et la mort. Il est également chargé d'affects positifs. *Kaydara*, l'un des grands textes initiatiques peuls que compte la bibliographie d'Hampâté Bâ, commence à un carrefour. Trois compagnons de voyage se rencontrent à un carrefour qui se présente comme une trifurcation: le premier homme Hammadi sort de chez lui au lever du soleil et marche vers le carrefour. Là il se trouve ébloui. Il ne voit ni n'entend Hamtoudo à son tour séduit par la beauté de l'aurore et la féerie des nuages multicolores. Arrive le troisième homme: Damourou qui lui voit et se rend compte de l'état de ses devanciers. Lui n'entre pas en extase, il n'en a pas le temps car après une injonction d'Hamtoudo, une Voix très bruyante les dirige vers le bois sacré.

Ce carrefour qui circonscrit, une trifurcation, renvoie à une triade: les trois pierres du foyer, lieu de cuisson du savoir et de la sagesse. On apprendra également qu'il existe trois types de peuls au regard des trois types de bestiaux que constituent caprins, ovins et bovidés. Par ailleurs chez le peul Amadou, n'y a-t-il pas aussi du toucouleur et du bambara? "3" c'est aussi hier, aujourd'hui et demain ; ce chiffre évoque également dans *Kaydara* les trois états de l'homme: état grossier (écorce de l'arbre), état médian (bois), état essentiel (coeur de l'arbre). Bien entendu il s'agit de l'arbre de la connaissance. Dans *L'étrange destin de Wangrin*, Hampâté Bâ énoncera également trois degrés de l'ivresse: le stade gai et enthousiaste du cabri ; le stade dominateur du lion sûr de lui ; le stade détestable du cochon qui se vautre dans ses vomissures.

Le carrefour, bifurcation ou trifurcation renvoie à toute une arithmologie chez le sage: il renvoie à des nombres d'or, à des chiffres comme 2, 3, 4... dont l'étude reste passionnante. Mais pour l'heure il y a urgence. Urgence à revenir à notre phrase pour en étudier la réception, l'audience autant que la forme et le fond.

2. Le Fond et la Forme

Véritable fleur de l'oralité, cette phrase tout en évoluant sur un substrat théorique stable, revêt plusieurs formes qui la réconcilient avec l'oralité. Il y a d'abord la variation entre "chaque fois" et "quand": chaque fois qu'un vieillard meurt, quand un vieillard meurt. Il y a aussi ce va et vient entre les formulations suivantes: "c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle" et "c'est toute une bibliothèque qui brûle". On remarquera qu'à chacune des deux parties de la phrase, correspond une version prosaïque et une autre plus soutenue. "Quand un vieillard meurt" est plus relâchée que "chaque fois qu'un vieillard meurt" ; "c'est une bibliothèque" que "c'est toute une bibliothèque". Bien entendu on peut procéder à toutes les combinaisons possibles, des nuances importantes passant d'une version à une autre. "Chaque fois" insiste sur l'événement de la mort du vieillard, qui en devient un fait singulier dans une logique du compte ou du décompte des vieillards en instance de mort. "Toute" par son effet d'insistance sur la totalité de la bibliothèque et donc sur l'immensité du dégât, est une formulation assortie avec le "chaque fois". D'autres versions de la phrase sont plus explicites: "En Afrique chaque fois qu'un vieillard traditionaliste meurt, c'est une bibliothèque inexploitée qui brûle." C'est là une mise au point effectuée par l'auteur lui-même, lors du Festival des Arts Nègres à Dakar en 1966.

Facile à retenir quoiqu'un peu longue, la phrase frappe l'esprit par la comparaison audacieuse qu'elle introduit entre deux mondes, deux espaces diamétralement opposés: le monde du livre et celui de la paro-

le. En cela, elle est porteuse de spécificité suggestive et d'originalité. Le vieillard y prend une image sympathique, sa figure se trouvant valorisée. Notre phrase est dotée par ailleurs d'une efficacité évidente. Sans surenchérir sur les épithètes, elle réalise l'économie de tout un discours sur l'importance de la tradition orale. Cohérente, imagée, elle est chargée d'affects. En même temps qu'elle possède la force de frappe du slogan, elle a l'allure allégorique et morale des paraboles, l'intensité théorique de l'aphorisme. Et puis, quel beau sujet de dissertation! "En Afrique, quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle". Commentez et discutez. Qu'en pensez-vous? Allez! A vos feuilles! Vous avez quatre heures."

Si elle revient si souvent sous forme de sujet de dissertation, c'est parce qu'elle remplit certains critères: elle n'incite pas à la récitation d'un cours et elle possède plusieurs entrées ; on peut fonder l'analyse de la pensée sur une explication de la notion de bibliothèque autant que sur celle de "vieillard". On peut également mettre en rapport le vieillard et la bibliothèque tout comme la mort et le feu.

La réception très large de cette formule lui vaudra l'honneur d'être érigée en proverbe africain, puis un imprudent l'épinglera comme proverbe senoufo et pire proverbe chinois!⁵. Loin de nous l'idée de mépriser les proverbes et toute la brillante activité de symbolisation qu'ils supposent. Mais un proverbe peut-il limiter son champ de vérité à un continent? Certainement. Toutefois un concept, une pensée ne peuvent être évalués qu'au regard des problèmes auxquels ils se rapportent comme réponses ou interrogations. Les conditions de sa création, de sa production participent de son contenu de vérité.

Cette phrase-fétiche possède une épaisseur historique dont le noeud remonte à une séance du conseil général de l'UNESCO en 1962. Cette séance est elle-même historique puisqu'elle est la toute première qui accueille les pays du tiers-monde et notamment ceux de l'Afrique fraîchement proclamés indépendants. Dans la mouvance de

cette proclamation, de toutes petites entités étatiques sans ressources mais saoules de fierté, se retrouvent à armes égales avec les grandes et vieilles nations du vieux continent et du nouveau monde. Un pays, une voix et les pays en voie de développement se retrouvent en majorité à l'UNESCO. Nous voilà donc à la toute première participation des jeunes Etats africains à la Conférence Générale. Les délégués des petits pays entonnent l'air alors à la mode de l'impérialisme, du racisme, jetant l'anathème sur la colonisation et les colonisateurs. "A les entendre, sans la colonisation, les pays africains seraient les maîtres du monde." Mais trop, c'était trop pour le sénateur américain Benson qui dans une diatribe sévère, menace de retirer l'aide américaine à "un organisme qui accueille les ingrats, les analphabètes, les ignorants."

Où sommes-nous pour entendre des propos si véhéments? Qu'est-il advenu de la diplomatie? Vivement il faut assainir l'ambiance. Sur incitation de René Maheu, directeur général de l'UNESCO, Hampâté Bâ accepte de calmer à l'africaine cette assemblée de 3000 personnes respectables mais quelque peu agitées. S'adressant alors, au sénateur américain, il replace la rancoeur des jeunes intervenants africains dans un contexte d'apprentissage réussi. Lorsqu'un enfant apprend à téter, il finit toujours par mordre le sein maternel pour vérifier la solidité de ses dents. "Vous nous avez appris à parler, à rouspéter. Et maintenant nous venons parler, rouspéter, vous trouvez que c'est trop." C'est dire que les attaques des africains contre les colonisateurs sont des effets normaux du processus de la colonisation. Elles confirment a contrario que la colonisation n'a pas été systématiquement inutile. Mais cela donne-t-il le droit de mépriser l'Afrique et les Africains? "Je concède que nous sommes analphabètes mais je ne vous concède pas que nous soyons des ignorants. Apprenez que mon pays est le pays des savants illettrés. Vous confondez à ce que je vois, l'écriture et le savoir. Pour nous, l'écriture c'est la photographie du savoir, ce n'est pas le savoir. (...) Apprenez que dans mon pays, chaque fois qu'un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui a brûlé."⁶ Ainsi parla le disciple du sage de Bandiagara.

Celui qui parle ainsi n'est pas un vieil africain perdu dans les dédales du métro parisien. C'est un chercheur et un traditionaliste confirmés. Initié peul et bambara, ancien commis de l'administration coloniale même s'il ne fut qu'un écrivain auxiliaire et temporaire à titre essentiellement précaire et révocable", son engagement religieux (il est hamaliste comme feu Yacouba Sylla grand commerçant et transporteur à Gagnoa, en Côte d'Ivoire), lui attire la suspicion des colons qui le tiennent pour un dangereux contestataire. C'est alors qu'intervient Théodore Monod qui négocie sa mutation à l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire à Dakar. Avant même d'entrer dans ce centre de recherches, Amadou homme très fasciné par les contes et légendes du terroir, avait, à la faveur de plusieurs voyages à travers l'Afrique Occidentale, mit sa très vive curiosité à contribution pour tenir un journal dans lequel il marquait systématiquement tout. En fait c'est depuis cette période de ses études primaires et de ses pérégrinations entre Djenné, Kati (1915), Ouagadougou où en 1921, il est nommé "écrivain auxiliaire temporaire à titre essentiellement précaire et révocable", qu'il commence véritablement à écrire et à engranger tout un stock de manuscrits dont l'essentiel reste encore inédit. Profitant de son séjour en Haute Volta il s'informe sur les traditions Moré. Au Mali même, il se documente sur les Touaregs et sur les principaux peuples de la région.

Mais c'est vers 1912 qu'il rencontre Wangrin. Pendant deux mois celui-ci lui conte sa vie sur fond de musique égrenée par son griot. Cette confidence s'achève par une promesse par laquelle Hampâté Bâ s'engage à écrire, sur proposition de Wangrin, un livre sur le récit. Mais Hampâté Bâ oubliera cette promesse avant de s'en rappeler à Paris. Noïra Hélène Heckmann raconte comment elle l'a vu à Paris soudainement aux prises avec un inconfort, un malaise moral et intellectuel. Manifestement il avait un problème et lorsqu'il se décidera à en parler il avouera: "j'ai fait une promesse à quelqu'un et jusqu'ici je ne l'ai pas tenue." Encouragée par son amie, l'homme de parole prend la résolution de se mettre en règle avec sa conscience et sa parole, et

tout de suite. Il écrit à son fils à Bamako afin de recevoir à Paris les notes qu'il avait consignées dans un document. Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane reste encore impressionné par la précision avec laquelle son père l'a alors dirigé vers le document. *L'étrange destin de Wangrin* sera écrit d'un jet ininterrompu à partir du récit original de Wangrin que l'auteur avait pris en notes. Tout le long de ce travail et toujours selon un témoignage d'Hélène Heckmann, il tombait dans de grands éclats de rires comme un auditeur touché par la verve comique d'un discours qu'il entendrait. Comme on le voit, Wangrin n'est pas une oeuvre de fiction, ce n'est pas un roman au sens traditionnel du terme, contrairement aux allégations d'une certaine critique, lors de sa parution, Maryse Condé notamment. Au surplus, il n'y a pas d'homologie possible entre la vie de Wangrin et celle d'Hampâté Bâ. Certes *Wangrin* intègre la vie d'Hampâté comme un événement, une expérience dont il ne saurait se défaire. Toutefois leurs vies ne se recourent ni ne se recouvrent. Le statut de cette oeuvre doit être envisagé du point de vue de l'auteur d'une part et du point de vue de l'effet d'écriture d'autre part.

En écrivant *Wangrin*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ honore une dette, il s'acquitte d'une promesse. Puis il écrit *Wangrin* comme il a écrit *Kaydara* ou tout autre récit de la tradition orale. Il écrit en tant que chercheur traditionaliste une histoire dont il est le dépositaire. De ce point de vue extérieur, *Wangrin* n'est pas davantage une fiction que ses autres oeuvres. Or il se trouve que le contenu de l'ouvrage et sa trame faite d'aventures, incitent à le recevoir comme un fruit de l'imagination de l'auteur. S'il a bien fallu que Hampâté se donne en images les scènes de la vie de Wangrin, s'il a fallu qu'il se les représente, il ne l'a fait qu'en tentant de déformer le moins possible, le récit original. Cela dit cette oeuvre, reproblématise la question du romanesque et nous renvoie au pouvoir fictionnant de l'écriture et du récit. Toute écriture est une mise en scène.

A l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) où il rentre en 1942, sous la bienveillance de Théodor Monod, Amadou Hampâté Bâ va

pouvoir se consacrer à la recherche. Affecté à la section ethnologie de cet institut, il participe aux fouilles archéologiques de Koumbi Saleh. En 1943, profitant d'un de ces voyages, il reçoit l'initiation peule. Dès 1943, il peut ainsi publier la toute première version de *Kaydara*. En 1961 il publiera un deuxième texte initiatique peul: *Koumen*. Après Dakar, Hampâté reviendra au Soudan. Il mettra à profit cette nouvelle mutation pour étudier l'empire peul du Macina en collaboration avec Dagel. Un millier de personnes seront interrogées. Sur cet échantillonnage, il ne retiendra que 88 récits. Critique interne et externe oblige. On notera ici la prudence critique qu'appelle la tradition orale.

Lorsqu'il lance en 1962, juché sur le piédestal conventionnel de l'égalité entre les Nations, Hampâté lance la sentence célèbre que nous tentons d'analyser, il sait de quoi il parle. C'est un professionnel de la tradition orale à double titre: au titre de la connaissance scientifique et au titre du savoir initiatique. Il a publié deux textes majeurs de tradition orale dont le premier (*Kaydara*) a été primé. Cette pensée est également un moment de l'interpellation d'un Blanc par un Noir. Ce dernier se présente d'entrée de jeu comme un "indigène". Humour, ironie. En effet la tirade commence comme suit: "Messieurs les Blancs! Celui que vous avez devant vous n'est pas un universitaire. Il a fait ses études dans une paillote et il a pour tout titre universitaire un certificat d'études indigène".

Dans cette phrase il y va de la question du diplôme. "Le diplôme est selon Hampâté Bâ, un gris-gris très efficace. Et l'avantage de ce gris-gris, c'est qu'on ne peut pas vous le retirer une fois qu'on vous l'a pendu au cou."⁷ Dans la nouvelle donne de l'Afrique colonisée, il confère le droit à la parole dans les instances internationales. Mais le diplômé aurait tort de mépriser l'autodidacte car "le diplôme n'est pas le seul critère du savoir". Le diplôme est la sanction positive et académique d'une étude selon un cursus conventionnel. Le savoir relève d'une inspiration transcendante. Tandis que la science reste ouverte sur les apports extérieurs, le savoir est un puits inépuisable dont les res-

sources viennent du dedans, explique-t-il.

Parlant du haut de la tribune de l'UNESCO, le sage parle également au nom du privilège de l'âge: il a 62 ans. Avec l'accord des autres délégués des pays africains, il prend la parole au nom de l'Afrique. Il parle l'Afrique. Il parle à l'africaine. Sans texte. Et il arrive à calmer les esprits échauffés par la "mutuelle incompréhension", l'une des quatre sources des problèmes humains, les trois autres étant: la sexualité, le gain, ôte-toi que je m'y mette". Venant en conciliateur, Hampâté se retrouve alors d'emblée dans une position de sagesse.

3. Qu'est ce donc qu'un vieillard?

Chacun sait ce que c'est qu'une bibliothèque, mais qu'est-ce qu'un vieillard? Ce n'est pas nécessairement un vieil homme. Dans le schéma de vie que lui a enseigné Tierno Bokar, la vie ascendante de l'homme est subdivisée en 9 tranches de 7 ans regroupables 3 à 3. L'homme atteint son maximum d'équilibre et de savoir à 63 ans. Alors il n'est plus astreint à quoique ce soit. Jusqu'à 7 ans, l'enfant est l'élève de sa mère. De 7 à 14 ans, il découvre son milieu tout en préservant sa mère comme repère fondamental. De 14 à 21 ans, le jeune homme est à l'école de la vie et de ses maîtres. 21 ans, c'est aussi l'âge de la circoncision rituelle et de l'initiation. Les trois tranches de 7 ans qui commencent avec cet âge contribueront à consolider les enseignements de l'initiation. Dès 43 ans on estime chez les peuls et chez les bambaras que l'homme a atteint la maturité. Il peut enseigner. Il a droit à la parole et peut dispenser le savoir qu'il a accumulé pendant les deux grandes périodes de sa vie. Alors "qu'est-ce que la vieillesse? Certainement une chose bien relative. Dans la tradition, on peut appeler vieux un jeune homme de quinze ans, pour peu qu'il se soit réalisé spirituellement et moralement et qu'il possède la sagesse. On dira de lui: "il a vieilli". A l'inverse, un vieillard de 80 ans, mentalement décrépi, sera considéré comme un enfant."⁸ Le temps (Tuma) engendra

la connaissance (Don). La connaissance suppose le temps de connaître.

Le vieillard, ce n'est donc pas le vieux mais celui qui connaît: le silatigui par exemple. Le vieillard c'est "celui qui connaît le visible et l'invisible, qui est l'oreille de la brousse: il entend le langage des oiseaux, lit les traces des animaux sur le sol et les tâches lumineuses que le soleil projette à travers le feuillage. Il sait interpréter le bruissement des 4 grands vents et des 4 vents secondaires ainsi que la marche des nuages à travers l'espace, car pour moi tout est signe et langage."⁹ Le vieillard c'est celui qui sait que tout est signe et langage, et que derrière chaque mot, chaque chose, il y a un secret. Le vieillard c'est celui qui sait que la parole est vie et qu'on donne sa parole comme on donne sa vie. Un homme sans parole est un homme mort. La parole plus forte que la force est en fait le lien entre Dieu et les hommes.

Selon la tradition bambara du Komo, l'être suprême incréé Maa Ngala dit Massa Dambali crée le monde par la parole. Sa première créature fut un oeuf comportant 9 divisions renvoyant au 9 états fondamentaux de l'existence et aux 9 étapes de la vie humaine. Cet oeuf donna naissance à 20 êtres fabuleux constituant la totalité des forces existantes. Mais aucun de ces êtres n'étant apte à être l'interlocuteur de Maa Ngala, "alors, il préleva une parcelle sur chacune des 20 créatures existantes, les mélangea puis soufflant dans ce mélange une étincelle de son propre souffle igné, créa un nouvel Etre, l'homme, auquel il donna une partie de son propre nom: Maa." L'homme est donc l'interlocuteur de Dieu. Investi d'une parcelle de la puissance créatrice divine qu'est la parole, il est le gardien de l'univers dont il assure l'harmonie. Mais en descendant du ciel vers la terre, de Maa Ngala vers Maa, les paroles se dé-divinisent au contact de la matérialité du monde. En revanche, elles se chargent de sacralité. L'homme a pour rôle de réinvestir cette sacralité, d'en animer les vibrations pour rétablir la relation avec Maa Ngala. Pour optimiser l'effet de la parole, celle-ci doit être scandée, tous les poètes le confirment. "Il faut qu'elle soit scandée rythmiquement, parce que le mouvement a besoin de rythme,

lui-même fondé sur le secret des nombres. Il faut que la parole reproduise le va-et-vient qui est l'essence du rythme."¹⁰

Malheureusement le Vieillard et sa sagesse sont fragiles. N'étant pas en pierre ou en granit, il sont denrées périssables, bibliothèques à la merci du feu. D'où la nécessité de la lutte pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine dont ils sont les dépositaires. "Nous avons encore présent à la mémoire l'effort colossal qui a été fourni pour sauver Abou Simbel, ce monument de granit, de pierre et de sable qui était encore en état de défier le temps. Or des menaces beaucoup plus grandes pèsent sur la tradition orale qui risque de s'éteindre avec la disparition de ses chaînes authentiques de transmission. Nous répétons encore que chaque vieillard traditionaliste qui meurt, c'est une bibliothèque inexploitée qui brûle. Avec quelques millions on peut actuellement sauver ce grand patrimoine culturel universel, alors que dans vingt ans, on ne pourra plus le faire même si on y consacrait tous les milliards de la terre et tous les savants du monde."¹¹

Le vieillard qui sait toutes ces choses est donc une condition de possibilité de la connaissance de l'histoire africaine. Sa disparition, tout en créant une rupture dans la chaîne de transmission des générations, compromet la connaissance intérieure de l'Afrique. En effet, l'Afrique post-coloniale est un continent accidenté, défiguré. La participation des fils de l'Afrique aux guerres mondiales, l'école, les impositions brutales, toutes ces violences jointes à l'esclavage et à la colonisation ont compromis le développement endogène de l'Afrique créant une dépendance accrue à l'égard de l'extérieur. Elle mit en retraite anticipée une partie des corps de métiers dépositaires de la sagesse traditionnelle dont les cordonniers et surtout les forgerons, ces fabricants de fusils, de sabres. Les hauts fourneaux furent fermés. Les ateliers artisanaux étant des écoles, (cf. Camara Laye, *L'enfant Noir*, Ed Plon) et des lieux d'épanouissement technique, culturel, humain et artistique, c'est un coup d'arrêt porté à l'inventivité, à la créativité africaine.

Le combat pour la tradition orale est donc fondamentalement un combat pour l'intégrité culturelle et historique africaine. "Vouloir étudier l'Afrique en rejetant les mythes et légendes qui véhiculent tout un savoir antique reviendrait à vouloir étudier l'homme à partir d'un squelette dépouillé de chair, de nerfs et de sang."¹² Le projet d'Ham-pâté Bâ consiste non seulement à sauvegarder la tradition mais également à la mettre en culture tout en montrant que la culture ne se confond pas avec l'écriture alphabétique. Il s'agit également de mettre l'Africain debout face à sa personnalité et de lui permettre de parler de lui-même. Il s'agit comme le disait Walter Benjamin, d'écrire, de raconter "l'histoire du point de vue des vaincus." Il s'agit d'écrire l'oralité, de considérer les contes, les légendes et les mythes comme des livres "la connaissance africaine est dans les contes? Ce sont nos livres. Elles est dans les légendes et il ne faut jamais essayer de séparer l'Histoire africaine de sa cosmogonie...".¹³

4. Oralié, Ecriture et Nom Propre

Le message a-t-il été reçu? Oui et il a même été soumis à discussion. Dès échos du séminaire du Groupe de Recherche sur la Tradition Orale (G.R.T.O) en Mars 1980 à Abidjan, ont pu faire croire que le célèbre aphorisme avait été contesté. S'il est vrai que selon le mot de Bachelard "toute vérité qui ne mérite pas d'être contredite est une vérité inutile", le séminaire du G.R.T.O n'a pas réduit pour autant notre vérité à une apologie de la gérontocratie. Il l'a seulement critiquée au sens scientifique du terme non sans aboutir aux explications indispensables que du reste l'auteur apporte dans plusieurs de ces écrits. En effet, qu'a-t-on souligné lors de ce séminaire de G.R.T.O? Que la connaissance ne se glane pas selon le schéma irréversible d'une accumulation primitive. Que plusieurs fois sur le terrain, le chercheur en tradition orale s'adresse à des Anciens qui eux-mêmes ont l'honnêteté de les diriger vers d'autres sources plus jeunes. Ainsi donc, il apparaît que la connaissance n'appartient qu'à celui qui a appris, celui-

ci étant dans l'Afrique traditionnelle souvent confondu avec l'homme initié.

Toutes les sociétés africaines ne répondent pas aux mêmes critères d'organisation hiérarchique, mais toutes sont menacées d'invalidation de leur patrimoine traditionnel. C'est pour lutter contre la disqualification des savoirs traditionnels que des instituts de recherches sur la tradition orale se sont créés. On peut les considérer comme des réponses à l'interpellation de l'élève du Sage de Bandiagara. Au surplus, Hampâté Bâ compte des disciples, des hommes de culture et de sciences comme Alfa Sow et surtout Youssouph Tata Cissé qui du reste travailla à ses côtés au centre de recherches que le premier avait créé à Niamey et où on retrouve également Boubou Hama. Aujourd'hui dans toute l'Afrique, des chercheurs sillonnent les pistes et les villages. Rencontreront-ils d'autres Ogotoméli? Sauront-ils le reconnaître?

La tradition orale est devenue une des sources principales de la littérature contemporaine en Afrique. Déjà en 1937, Paul Hazoumé avait donné le ton en composant *Dogucimi* à partir des récits oraux, chants de guerre, cantiques et légendes recueillis auprès des membres de la famille royale d'Abomey. Des romanciers de plus en plus nombreux se penchent sur l'histoire de l'Afrique, reconstituée à partir de sources orales, comme Maryse Condé dans *Ségou*, comme Kourouma dans *Monné Outrages et défis*, comme Adiaffi dans "Silence, on développe". On sait par ailleurs que le style et l'écriture des *Soleils des Indépendances* d'Ahmadou Kourouma ont à voir avec le rapport particulier que son écriture entretient avec l'oralité. Mieux, pour Yves Emmanuel Dogbé, "en matière de traduction de textes de l'oralité, l'écrivain le plus rhétoriqueur et le plus esthéticien, me semble être l'ivoirien Bernard Dadié, avec, bien sûr, le sénégalais Birago Diop. La légende Baoulé de Bernard Dadié, renforce chez moi cette appréciation."¹⁴

Comment ne pas évoquer également les travaux remarquables d'une Africaine d'adoption comme Lyliane Kestelot? Incontestablement les

intellectuels africains apprennent à étudier leurs valeurs et coutumes. De nombreuses thèses en Histoire sont bâties sur les témoignages de la tradition orale qui compte désormais au nombre des méthodologies scientifiques de l'histoire africaine. Mais force est de reconnaître que ces travaux qui empêchent les bibliothèques humaines de flamber, moisissent dans les bibliothèques universitaires et les centres spécialisés. Mal diffusés parce que restant souvent trop techniques dans leur présentation, leur écriture (cf. La résolution d'écrire de d'Ahmadou Kourouma), ils ne procèdent pas d'une opération de mise en culture efficiente, condition qui permettrait à chacun et surtout aux jeunes africains d'être partie prenante des valeurs culturelles fondamentales de l'Afrique. Alors que faire pour que les jeunes se reconnaissent en l'Afrique? Que faire sinon les exhorter à recueillir auprès de leurs parents ou grands parents, auprès des "sachants" des villages et mêmes des villes, des contes, des légendes, des mythes, des chansons, des proverbes.... Cette collecte ne consiste pas nécessairement en une mise en écriture. Le développement prodigieux des médias favorise une exploitation de la tradition orale sans nécessité de la concasser sous les presses de l'écriture. Mais cette collecte elle-même ne doit pas être une fin en soi. Elle doit participer à notre adaptation sociale globale en favorisant notre compréhension et donc notre maîtrise du milieu africain. Elle doit se poursuivre par une diffusion.

L'engouement pour la tradition orale ne va pas sans problème. Une certaine ethno-sociologie et même l'ethno-philosophie ont encouragé des descriptions sans dimension culturelle réelle, alors même que les populations étudiées se retrouvaient soumises à une massification unidimensionnelle tendant à faire croire que tous les peuls, tous les bambaras, ont la même vision du monde. La mise en évidence de la dimension collective des conceptions du monde pré-colonial s'est muée en obstacle contre l'émergence de la créativité des individus en situation réelle. Des singularités furent brimées, des subjectivités dissoutes et leurs noms ensevelis sous des remerciements furtifs. Aucun figure morale, intellectuelle, culturelle n'émergera. Trop modeste sans doute,

Hampâté Bâ ne prétend pas avoir créé un univers. Il tend plutôt à se maintenir dans le cadre stricte d'un copiste, d'un intermédiaire s'efforçant à la fidélité à ses sources. En cela il rappelle Birago Diop assurant avoir écrit "*Les Contes*" et "*Les Nouveaux Contes d'Amadou Koumba*" en tant que disciple du griot Amadou fils de Koumba dont il n'a fait que traduire les récits. Aussi cette remarque de Dadié à l'endroit de Birago Diop est-elle valable pour lui: (II) "ne se contente pas du mot à mot. Il a vécu, comme seuls savent le faire les auditeurs négro-africains, les récits du griot, il les a repensés et écrits en artiste nègre et français en même temps, se souvenant que "traduttore traditore."¹⁵ Et son oeuvre donne un statut et une stature théorique à des figures africaines, à l'image de Marcel Griaule donnant la parole à Ogotoméli. Et même s'il n'avait été que l'auteur de cette fameuse phrase, Hampâté Bâ aurait tout de même démontré son originalité en apportant avec détermination sa contribution à une meilleure connaissance scientifique et culturelle de l'Afrique. Mais il a fait bien plus.

Les aventures survenues à cette pensée nous donnent une idée du processus de naissance des proverbes. Maintenant il est urgent d'éviter d'une part que les proverbes soient piratés par des hauts parleurs qui ont tendance à signer des pensées qu'ils n'ont pas pensées, et d'autre part d'éviter que les pensées de nos auteurs passent pour des proverbes anonymes. Cette éthique intellectuelle n'est pas seulement occidentale mais également africaine. Le griot cite ses sources. Ainsi dans *L'Étrange destin de Wangrin*, Kountena le griot Kountena le griot sans talent musical de l'interprète du grand commandant blanc, décoche quelques insolences enrobées dans une belle parabole, avant d'attaquer plus directement: "Dayemaatien a dit que la parole a horreur de trois choses: être avancée avant le moment propice, n'être pas dite à temps, ou être dite après coup. Il y a donc un moment, un lieu et une manière de parler."¹⁶ Quand on sait que ce fameux Dayemaatien est un célèbre orateur du XIII^e au Mali, on comprend l'importance de notre insistance à maintenir liés les auteurs et leurs bons mots. Tout comme notre formule dont le terrain de vérification peut déborder l'Afrique,

cette pensée n'a-t-elle pas également l'apparence d'un proverbe?

L'Afrique n'est pas un continent de pensées massives et indistinctes mais aussi un peuple qui compte des penseurs spécifiques comme Hampâté Bâ, comme Dayemaatien, Danfo Siné, Tierno Bokar... La lutte pour la tradition orale, doit se doubler de la lutte pour la reconnaissance des grandes figures de l'Afrique pour qu'à l'ombre des dictateurs connus trop connus, des noms d'intellectuels, de sages, interviennent pour nous reposer des horreurs et des injustices des commandants d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain. Le fait que cette phrase apparaisse à certains comme proverbe informe sur le processus de constitution des proverbes. Un proverbe a beau être rattaché à une ethnie, à une nationalité, il n'est pas une production collective. Pour qu'un proverbe apparaisse comme peul ou baoulé, il n'a pas fallu que tous les peuls ou tous les baoulés d'une contrée se réunissent sous l'arbre à palabre pour le commettre ou le coder méthodiquement. Le proverbe est une production singulière d'un sujet, laquelle trouve un écho chez les agents culturels concernés qui s'y reconnaissant, la répercutent jusqu'au point où le nom propre du créateur original s'estompe et se perd dans la nuit des temps au rythme des sédimentations de la mémoire collective. A la différence du proverbe dont l'auteur et les conditions de production sont oblitérés dans la mémoire collective, la pensée d'auteur se rattache à un penseur, une situation, une histoire explicite. Amadou Hampâté Bâ produit une pensée d'auteur et partant amène à repenser le rapport de la philosophie à l'écriture d'une part et le rapport de la philosophie à l'institution d'autre part.

Alors Amadou Hampâté Bâ un philosophe? Oui au sens propre du terme: amoureux de la sagesse. Le disciple du Sage de Bandiagara, le Sage de Marcory, qui avouait "je voudrais être sage mais c'est tellement difficile", peut-il ne pas aimer la sagesse? Philosophe, il l'est également au sens où il présente une vision du monde cohérente qui met en correspondance les métaphysiques peul et bambara. Philosophe au sens où avec lui des termes comme le carrefour, la parole, la per-

sonne, le vieillard,... cessent d'être des notions pour devenir des concepts renvoyant à toute une systématique. Philosophe au sens où Cassirer parle de la philosophie des formes symboliques. Philosophe hors de l'institution, penseur chaotique, à l'image de la brousse, penseur expert en longues parenthèses, Hampâté Bâ n'est pas un philosophe fonctionnaire exhibant des diplômes pour se légitimer. A la différence des philosophes africains à qui on pose et repose la question de la philosophie africaine, et qui se la posent, il pense sans complexe et sans protocole. Il pense et l'Afrique se met à parler. Et on comprend que comme le dit Bernard Dadié dans *Béatrice du Congo* "les hommes qui ne parlent pas sont des hommes morts. Les pays où l'on ne parle pas sont des pays morts. Le pays où l'on dit toujours oui, est un pays d'esclaves."

Notes

1. Conférence prononcée au Centre Culturel Français Abidjan, le 6 mars 1992.
2. A. Hampâté Bâ in *La notion de personne en Afrique noire*, (Paris, Edition du CNRS, 1972), p.182.
3. Ibidem
4. A. Hampâté Bâ in *Afric Echos*, Avril-Mai, 1981, p. 75.
5. Cf. Arthur Comte.- *Côte d'Ivoire Les racines de la sagesse*. (Paris, Ed. Jeune Afrique. Grands Livres, 1981), p.33 "Il n'existe dans l'Afrique aucun texte écrit. Il n'y a d'annales qu'orales. Tous les souvenirs ne vivent que par la magie et la fidélité des récits, à preuve qu'un proverbe senoufo aime rappeler que "lorsqu'un vieux sage meurt, c'est toute une bibliothèque qui disparaît."
6. A. Hampâté Bâ à Baba Kaké, Archives sonores de Radio-France.
7. A. Hampâté Bâ à Baba Kaké, Archives sonores de Radio-France.
8. In *Le Soleil*, Dakar, août-sept. 1981.
9. A. Hampâté Bâ .- *Amkoulel*, (Paris, 1991, Ed. Actes Sud) p. 26

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10. A. Hampâté Bâ.- "La tradition vivante." Préface à l'*Atlas du Mali*". Texte repris dans *Méthodologie et Préhistoire Africaine*, pp. 196-197).
 11. A. Hampâté Bâ, Dakar, communication au premier Festival des Arts Nègres 1966.
 12. Préface à l'*Atlas du Mali*. Ed. Jeune Afrique
 13. Ibidem
 14. Yves Emmanuel Dogbo in *La tradition orale source de la littérature contemporaine en Afrique*, (Dakar-Abidjan-Lomé, Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1984), p. 102.
 15. Bernard B. Dadié. - "Authenticité de la littérature africaine écrite dans les langues européennes et sa fonction de réintroduction de la littérature orale dans la littérature mondiale" in *La tradition orale source de la littérature*, op.cit, p. 58.
 16. A. Hampâté Bâ.- *L'étrange destin de Wangrin* (Paris, U.G.E., 1973), p. 79.

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- Aspects de la civilisation africaine (Ed. Présence Africaine, Paris, 1972)
- L'Etrange destin de Wangrin (Presses de la Cité, Col. 10/18, Paris, 1978)
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Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur analyse le concept du même chez Fanon et Gandhi et en particulier les implications de ce concept pour leur manière d'envisager le rôle de la violence dans le combat pour la libération. Les thèses suivantes sont développées: (a) La prise de position de Fanon pour la violence doit être comprise dans le contexte de sa conviction que la destruction du pouvoir colonial est pour le colonisé logiquement parlant la condition sine qua non d'autodétermination et d'autovalorisation; (b) La non-violence de Gandhi fait intégralement partie d'une croyance philosophique dans l'existence d'une essence humaine éternelle offrant la possibilité d'une reconnaissance de soi mutuelle entre les colonisateurs et les colonisés.

JOURNEY TO THE NATIVE LAND
Violence and the Concept of the Self
in Fanon and Gandhi

Silvia Federici

*If you do not want the man who is before you
how can I believe the man who is perhaps in you?
If you do not demand...the man who is in you so that
the man who is on earth shall be more than a a body,
than a Mohammed, by what conjurer's trick will I have
to acquire the certainty that you, too, are worthy of
my love?*

Fanon

*One day the black races will rise like the avenging Attila
against their white oppressors, unless someone presents
them the weapon of satyagraha.*

Gandhi

Although their theories represent opposite poles in the spectrum of political strategy, on one point Fanon and Gandhi would have agreed: "An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation" [Fanon (1976c, p. 103)]. For a liberation struggle is not reducible to the military model exemplified by the wars waged by the nation states. Classical warfare is hetero-directed, being conducted by an already constituted Ego, whose interests and identity are defined at the onset of the process. Vice versa, an essential aspect of every liberation struggle is the transformation of the people who participate in it who, by creating new bonds and freeing themselves from the weight of decades of subordination, make sure that their struggle will not be defeated.

Given this common assumption, we can ask in what respect Fanon and Gandhi parted ways, and why they held radically different views concerning the role of violence in the decolonization process. This is, naturally, a question that cannot be answered by reference to one single, overriding factor. The different character of colonial rule under British and French administration certainly contributed to shape

the choices that Gandhi and Fanon made. That Algeria was a colony of settlers, determined to make the country their own, strengthened Fanon's belief that only through the use of force would the French relinquish their grip over the land. French colonialism, moreover, consistently tried to erase the history of those it subjugated; while Britain, because of its indirect rule policy, nominally at least, valorized and codified Indian culture. There were also crucial differences in the political objectives that Fanon and Gandhi pursued. While Fanon was a revolutionary convinced that the demise of colonialism should lead to the construction of a society built on social equality; Gandhi made no secret of his support for class and even caste distinctions; and he strove to ensure that the anti-colonial struggle would reform but not undermine the current social order. (Rani 1981; Pardey 1986).

As I will argue, however, there is one further clue to understanding the strategic choices which Fanon and Gandhi made. This can be found in their concept of the 'self', where by 'self' I refer to the cluster of individual and collective values, memories and anticipations about the future that form the core of cultural identity and the condition for social action. There is a direct connection between the positions that Fanon and Gandhi took on the question of violence and their assumptions concerning the nature of the self and the conditions of its constitution. In establishing this connection, my primary aim is to clarify the value-systems that are at the origins of each position. However, I also try to demonstrate that Fanon's and Gandhi's views on violence cannot be treated as universal ethical standpoints, but must be taken as strategies, whose practicability depends on the level of power which those who adopt them have in relation to their opponent and the value which they embody in their eyes. As for the role that Fanon's and Gandhi's views can play in the contemporary political scene, this is an issue that I leave to the reader to decide, although it is safe to say that both theories have crucial implications for the liberation struggles that are still being waged in Africa and the rest of the Third World.

Violence as Self-Constituting Activity

It can hardly be disputed that Fanon's pronouncements on violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* have been viewed as a scandal by the many of his critics. The passages where Fanon proclaims that anti-colonial violence has a liberating effect for the colonized have been considered particularly objectionable:

...it so happens that for the colonized people this violence, because it constitute their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole. [Fanon (1966, p. 73)]

At the level of the individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect [Fanon (1966, p. 73)]. (1). For many commentators such statements indicate that Fanon abandoned the utilitarian approach by which the discussion of political violence should be characterized, and defended violence as an end in itself. Few accuse him, as Hannah Arendt has done, of indulging in a mystical exaltation of the violent act *a la* Sorel [Arendt (1970)]. It is often charged, however, that his discussion of violence is pre-political and unduly burdened by existentialist concerns [Klein (1966, pp. 74-75)]. (2) For it is an axiom with Fanon's critics that Fanon drew his conceptual framework from Sartre's philosophy, and thus approached the question of self-determination in abstract philosophical terms, inadequate to confront the concrete problems posed by decolonization and post-independence reconstruction [Nurse-Bray (1972) ; Rohdie (1966); Nghe (1963)].

Such a response is not surprising. (3) In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon violates a convention which demands (as Hannah Arendt has argued) that political violence be "incapable of speech", and forced to retreat to "the outer limit of political discourse" [Arendt (1963, p. 19)]. Fanon, moreover, raised the question of violence in the context of a struggle waged by illiterate peasants and (from one viewpoint) inscribed in the realm of necessity, thus bound to be silent for main-

stream political theorists, if not psychologically disturbing:

For the violence which occurs between men who are emancipated from necessity *is different from, less terrifying, though often not less cruel, than the primordial violence with which man pits himself against necessity* [Arendt (1963, p. 114)] (italics mine).

Yet, it is to Fanon's credit that he transcended the conventional schemes of political philosophy. For in refusing to pass over in silence deeds that "only necessity" dictated, he was able to give voice to the subjects of Europe's colonial empires, and to question the conditions for the formation of a new society from the viewpoint of people *who had truly nothing* on which to base their claims: no land, no legal rights, no socially recognized labor, no positive cultural identity. There are only chains to be broken, but no cultural stocks to be inherited, nor pre-ordained historical missions to be accomplished in the colonial situation as depicted by Fanon. This explains why his phenomenology of decolonization immediately issued in a discussion of violence, apparently disinterested in the dialectics of means and ends, and why violence was treated by Fanon as an inseparable aspect of anti-colonial revolt, insofar as the latter could be seen as a process of collective self-valorization and value-creation.

It is important here to remember the international context in which *The Wretched of the Earth* was written. By the mid-fifties the legitimacy of the armed struggle was a matter of heated debate among the leaders of African nationalist parties, while the international media still echoed with horrific reports about the 'Mau Mau,' which were made to conjure the spectre of a rising tide of savages, threatening with their 'primordial' rage the 'order' Europe had imposed in the colonies. Through his discussion of violence, Fanon intended to counter these charges, and bring the voice of the *maquis* and of "the Africa to come" to the round tables, where support for the Algerian liberation struggle was at stake. But "On Violence" is also a logical deduction from a set of tenets concerning the conditions of individual and political self-determination which, although coated in existentialist

language, originated from his experience of the colonial world.

It was his experience as a colonial subject, and above all his work as a psychiatrist in Algeria, a land of settlers, where the native population had been radically dispossessed from its land and cultural institutions, that convinced Fanon that subjectivity, identity and self-hood are not *apriori* givens, and under colonial domination nothing remains to give substance to social bonds and provide a spur to action. For "not without impunity one undergoes domination". Where the basic conditions for intentional, self-determining activity are systematically inhibited, subjectivity disintegrates, cultural values become lifeless, sclerotized, and identification turns into a process of psychic alienation (Bhabba :xi), as the colonized are disarmed in front of the canonized racism on which colonial rule depends for its justification and, in time, interiorize the negative stereotypes forged by the colonialists, even though they can never accept them as their own. Certainly, Fanon never saw the colonized as completely defeated or dehumanized, as they appeared in the eyes of the settlers. He described them "over-powered but not tamed" and always aware of their humanity [Fanon (1968, p.142)]. He believed, however, that the anti-colonial struggle could not depend for sustenance and direction on a set of pre-constituted, culturally shared values or bonds. Nor could cultural identification activate the process of self-valorization that he believed was necessary if a new society was to be constructed, where "the people" would rule, freed from any form of exploitation.

As is well-known, Fanon was critical of the Negritude Movement and any attempt to appeal to cultural nationalism, as he interpreted the quest for African origins and authenticity as "yet another manifestation of intellectual dependency on the West" (Alamin Mazrui :360). In his view the passion with which African intellectuals, like Diop, searched for the evidence of a glorious African tradition was a justified reaction against Europe's arrogance. (Cfr. "On National Culture"). But, for him "[c]ultural expression...refers not to a pre-determined model offered by the past but to a reality that lies in the future as a perpetual creation." [Hountonji (1983, p.24)]. Even the cultural appropriation of the

past is possible, for Fanon, only for a subject engaged in transforming the present. It is our projects for the future, our struggles that revitalize and give meaning to the past, not viceversa. Thus, in a colonial situation, the first cultural imperative is the struggle itself; for in the absence of it, culture becomes a set of dead rituals that imprison the 'natives' no less than any identification with the values of the oppressors and, far from conferring value, testify against them.

To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material key-stone which makes the building of a culture possible...To take an example: all those men and women who are fighting with their bare hands against French colonialism in Algeria are not by any means strangers to the national culture of Algeria. The national Algerian culture is taking on form and content as the battles are being fought out, in prisons, under the guillotine and in every French outpost which is captured or destroyed. .It is around the peoples' struggles that African-Negro culture takes on substance, and not around songs, poems or folklore [Fanon (1966, pp. 187-189)].

As the problematic of *The Wretched of the Earth* is concerned with demonstrating the contingency of self-hood and identity, and revolves around the question of "nothingness" and self-determination as value creation, inevitably its categories are reminiscent of Sartre's. Yet, *The Wretched of the Earth* is an implicit critique of Sartre's early works, and it can be shown that it was Fanon and the Algerian struggle that influenced Sartre, and not *vice versa*.

Sartre's existentialism was a response to the dramatic devaluation experienced by many Europeans following the slaughters carried on the battlefields of WWI, and the humiliation inflicted upon them by the Nazi conquest. Sartre expressed what many Europeans felt when the mechanisms of colonization - slavery, massacres, territorial conquest - were in turn imposed on them. Thus, at the core of his early philosophy is a deep crisis of values, which led him to embrace an ethic of stoicism and individual commitment, sceptical towards all forms of collectivity. Nevertheless, the early Sartre's insistence on the possibil-

ity of self-determination through individual choice and responsibility, reveals a set of positive assumptions concerning social and political life. Even the Sartre of *Nausee* assumes that choice is possible, that meaningful projects are within our reach (if we admit to our ontological freedom), and that such projects will not immediately lead to physical annihilation. In Sartre 'nothingness' and freedom are pregnant with intentions towards the future, and negate the weight of accumulated values and identities only because they can restore the present as a field of action.

By contrast, Fanon's confrontation with cultural "nothingness" is far more radical, as it discloses not an abstract freedom and an equally abstract 'other,' but the presence of an antagonistic force, responsible for the disintegrating influences operating in the lives of the colonized. (5) This is why Fanon established a crucial link between violence and self-determination.

Violence is an essential aspect of self-determination, because, in a colonial setting, not even from a logical viewpoint can the decision to 'act' and the decision to destroy the enemy be separated. In the face of the totalitarian character of colonial domination self-definition is necessarily antagonistic; for the very existence of the settler destroys not only the identity of the natives, but their possibility of constituting themselves as autonomous agents. Insofar as colonialism is structurally dependent on the devaluation and enslavement of the colonized, so that the life of the settler is the death of the 'natives' and *vice versa*, the latter are condemned to violence, in the same way as Sartre's "man" is "condemned to freedom." Thus, for the natives, violence is the "absolute line of action": they cannot choose violence, they can only choose whether it is *self or other*-directed. This implies that *we too* cannot choose non-violence for the colonized; we can only choose whether or not they are the object of it, or also turn it against their oppressors.

Fanon, however, does not subscribe to an 'ethics of violence.' Nothing is more antithetical to his system of values than the romantic glorification of the destructive powers of the violent act--violence as

such--of the type to be found in the literature of futurism or in Sorel. Nor does Fanon justify violence on the basis of ontological reasons, as it is the case with "scarcity" in Sartre. His method is as historically specific as Marx's, and his defense of violence always relative to the colonial setting and never unconditional.

As his detailed analysis of the mental disorders produced by colonial war indicates, Fanon was well aware of the disintegrating effects which violence can have on the person, and he often discussed the conditions under which specific acts of violence were possible. [Bulhan (1985, p. 147)]. For example, he argued that indiscriminate violence against French citizens could be experienced as a positive act by the Algerian militants only as long as they believed that the enemy was inhuman; but it had traumatic psychological consequences once the identification of every colonial national as an enemy entered into crisis [Fanon (1966, p. 203)]. Finally, Fanon never proposed that violence was a sufficient condition for self-determination. He wrote profusely on the need for political education, and insisted that emancipation would be a long, protracted process.

Violent action for Fanon has 'positive qualities', insofar as it expresses the refusal of the colonized of their dehumanization, and in this sense it is itself a self-constituting activity. Through violence, with its implicit risk of life, the colonized take responsibility for their destiny, they overcome the apparent objectivity of their enslavement, and thematize a new order where their needs and objectives are posed as ultimate values. Violence, moreover, opens the possibility of collective identification since, by the very means by which they are pursued, the goals of the struggle are projected beyond the boundaries of one's life and individuality, and beyond any particularistic interest. In the course of the armed struggle a community is created based on life-and-death bonds.

Henceforward, the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in concrete fact *everyone* will be discovered, *everyone* will be massacred--or *everyone* will be saved. The motto "look out for yourself," the atheist's method of salvation, is in this context forbidden [Fanon

(1966, p. 38)].

Violence then, for Fanon, is not a psychological but a political category, and it is not reducible to any particular action, any more than Marx's concept of work is reducible to any particular moment of the labor process. Around the notion of violence a cluster of relations emerge--consciousness (individual and collective), responsibility, solidarity--pointing not only to a "transvaluation of values" and a change in psychological attitudes, but to a practical reorientation in social and political relations. Engagement in the armed struggle transforms family, sexual, inter-generational relations, so that already before independence the society is changed from bottom up [Fanon (1967b, pp. 99ff.)]; and it leads to a material reappropriation of the world at the level of social knowledge, technical skills and organizational abilities (cfr. "This is the Voice of Algeria," [Fanon (1967b, pp. 59ff and 69ff)].)

For the colonialist as well, the natives' violence has an epistemological function. When the 'natives' become violent, the colonialists no longer proclaim "we know them"; but, as the history of anthropology indicates, they become vitally interested in studying them.

Yet, it is objected, Fanon conceived of political violence divorced from economic production, ignoring that self-realization can only result from a transformation in institutions, economic structures and involvement in the work process [Zahar (1974, pp. 92-95)]. Although commonly voiced by the Leninist critics of Fanon, this argument is most explicitly developed by Zahar, who takes issue with Fanon's claim that the "militant is also a man who works", and that for the colonized "to work is to work for the death of the settler." [Zahar (1967b, pp. 78-79)]. In her view, Fanon's concept of violence is unadmittedly derived from Hegel, but Fanon misapplies Hegel's master-slave dialectics. By simply identifying the spontaneous act of violence with work Fanon leaves that element out of consideration which in Hegel's theory allows the emancipation of the slaves : the material working process, the chance of objectification through work is rejected

in favour of the psychological emancipation process through violence [Zahar (1974, p. 78)].

Zahar forgets, however, that the slaves in Hegel can emancipate themselves through their work only because the master appropriates their work in the form of "enjoyment" and is aristocratically removed from the work process [Hegel (1967, pp. 235-236)]. This is not the case with the settler, who continuously intervenes in the organization of work, preventing any autonomous self-objectification on the part of the colonized, and ensuring that little remains in the colonies that they may recognize as the product of their labor.

Fanon discussed extensively the question of work in the context of economic reconstruction, but he focussed on the conditions whereby work can truly become a self-determining activity. He realised *that in the same way as violence can become work, work can become violence*, and self-objectification through work turn into another form of alienation.(6) Thus, he refused the economic alternatives that have characterized the post-independence period: either subordination to foreign interests, or an autarchic path to development that, given the conditions of poverty in which the ex-colonies were left, condemned the masses to a new round of sacrifices, in the midst of an opulent world which their labor had contributed to create. In his view, the anticolonial struggle could not end with independence [Fanon (1966, pp. 76-79)]. If self-determination was to have any concrete meaning, the ex-colonies had to exact reparations from the 'mother country', for much of Europe's wealth, including its cultural and technological achievements, was the direct product of the exploitation of the Third World. Fanon's message is that self-determination must involve the reappropriation of Europe, not as a model to be imitated, but as the accumulated embodiment of generations of African labor [Fanon (1966, pp. 80-81)]. In Fanon's words :

We are not blinded by the moral reparation of national independence; nor are we fed by it. The wealth of imperial countries is our wealth too. On the universal plane this affirmation...should on no account be taken to signify that

we feel ourselves affected by the creation of Western arts and techniques. For in a very concrete way Europe has stuffed itself inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries...Europe is literally the creation of the Third World [Fanon (1966, p. 81)].

Zahar, then, is mistaken when she argues that Fanon "desperately rejects Europe," since "being himself a colonial" he "narrowly focused his attention on the colonies" [Zahar (1974, pp. 95, 108)]. On the contrary, it is in Europe that Fanon found the 'true African past,' that is, a past which, unlike that of the ancient African kingdoms, was still operative in the lives of the 'natives,' and, unless it was reappropriated, would continue to function as a means of enslavement.

According to Zahar, the political developments in post-independence Algeria have belied Fanon's analysis, showing that engagement in violent struggle is not sufficient to ensure that with decolonization the masses regain control over their lives. Fanon, however, never assumed it was. Nor did he speak exclusively from his experience in Algeria, as he viewed decolonization from a Pan-African perspective. We can also ask in what sense a political theory can be verified. Has Marx's theory been invalidated because the course of history did not match his expectations? Does the experience of post-independence Algeria belie, as Zahar claims, or confirm Fanon? These questions are not easily answered. In one respect, however, the history of the last forty years has been exemplary of Fanon's insights. From Algeria to Vietnam the educational power of the revolt of the oppressed has been continuously verified. For in asserting their truth, the colonized have revealed the truth of the 'developed' world, forcing everybody in it "to think [their] history together with the history of the colonies" (Said : 223) and to make a choice. As Fanon realized: "...the Algerian people's fight is....at the same time a challenge to the French people to criticize itself, to rid itself of the colonialist, anti-democratic and racist mentality...."[Fanon (1967c, p. 110)]. This, however, would not have been possible had the struggle not been conducted with the determination to "use all possible means." For only when affected in their lives

and properties were many Europeans forced to confront the "colonial question," and recognize in the humanity of the colonized their own dehumanization.

Ahimsa and Self-realization

Compared with Fanon, Gandhi, the spokesman for non-violent revolution, obviously stands for an antithetical model of anti-colonial struggle, rooted in religious precepts and on a different evaluation of the resources the colonized could muster against their opponents. Unlike Fanon, in fact, Gandhi approached the question of liberation from colonial rule not from the viewpoint of a population of dispossessed, but from that of a nation that, in his view, was the carrier of a rich cultural heritage and a unique civilizing mission in world history.

The descendant of generations of rulers, Gandhi was inspired by a deep sense of national and personal value, and by the belief that India's culture, which he identified with the tenets of Hinduism, could be a "soul force" for its people, and a key element in their emancipation. One aspect of Hinduism was especially important for Gandhi. This was the creed that the individual is a composite of two opposite natures: a higher Self *Atman*, eternal, imperishable, and a lower self, that is caught in the life-and-death cycle, until at least total purification is not achieved. As life in the flesh is an imperfect status, blinding us to our essential freedom, the aim of human existence is to overcome the body and make manifest in history our true divine nature. This, for Gandhi, was the real struggle that every person and community must confront. Thus, he valued India's Hinduist tradition for its alleged patience and disregard of material concerns; and throughout his political career he attributed a supreme importance to his ability to demonstrate (in his words) that India was a nation of martyrs.

Gandhi's belief in the immortality of the Self and the supreme value of India's identity are the basis for his doctrine of *Satyagraha*, which he developed in South Africa in the course of his two-decades long campaign for Indian rights. (Cfr. *Autobiography...*). *Satyagraha*,

which means "truth force", is a term that Gandhi himself coined to describe a political strategy where non-cooperation with injustice becomes a means of bearing witness to one's principles, and winning one's opponent over to one's cause.

Satyagraha was for Gandhi a strategic display of moral force, that aimed primarily at vindicating India's honor. Thus, from his earliest confrontations with the British authorities in South Africa, he always lent weight to matters of principle, rather than to material gains, and he insisted on the uniqueness of the Indian community, often refusing to join in struggle with the Black population and other Asian communities, because he believed that they lacked the necessary moral strength. (Cfr. *An Autobiography*.....).

Gandhi's conviction concerning the immortality of the Self also shaped his non-violence strategy. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is based on the assumption that no external force can destroy us, or in any way threaten our autonomy, because our true Self is indestructible and, even in the face of compelling external constraints, it is possible for us to achieve inner freedom. It follows that the enemy's power is of an illusory nature, and the oppressed have only themselves to blame for the chains they wear. Indeed, according to Gandhi, the oppressed must search inside themselves for the roots of their oppression, since slavery obtains only to the extent that we *accept* to compromise ourselves and submit to injustice because we are afraid of dying. If we liberate ourselves from such fear, by awakening to the consciousness of the immortal nature of our soul, we become invincible, and we also educate the enemy to the moral superiority of our cause.

Implicit in Gandhi's concept of non-violence is a relation to death radically different from that which transpires from Fanon's writings. For Fanon each death is a wound inflicted on the body and psyche of the community, and the sacrifice of life is positive only as an expression of the *moujahid's* commitment to the liberation cause. For Gandhi, the acceptance of death and suffering represents an end in itself, for in his moral code detachment from material concerns constitutes the highest value.

This point must be emphasised since Gandhian "non-violence" is usually interpreted as a Christian prescription for universal love. In reality, not only is Gandhian non-violence two-pronged--as it implies both a refusal to kill and a readiness to die-- but, of the two terms, the second is the most important. Gandhi repeatedly declared that violence is preferable when abstention from it stems from weakness and fear of the consequences, since in striving to preserve our life we betray our true Self. Thus, Gandhi judged harshly those who freeze in front of the enemy's power:

Cowardice is impotence worse than violence. The coward desires revenge, but being afraid to die, he looks to others.... to do the work of defense for him. A coward is less than a man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women [Merton (1964, p. 39)].

And again:

No doubt the non-violent way is always the best, but where that does not come naturally the violent way is both necessary and honourable. Inaction here is rank cowardice and unmanly. It must be shunned at all cost. There is nothing more demoralizing than the fake non-violence of the weak and impotent (7).

The value that Gandhi placed on the ability to undergo death and suffering explains why his tactics, both in South Africa and later during his campaign for Indian independence often consisted in a true courtship of martyrdom; as he deliberately sought for arrest and unarmed confrontation with the police and viewed the struggle as a "sacrifice," requiring (in the spirit of the *Gita*) indifference to results and selfless action.

Gandhi was convinced that, by voluntarily facing death, the *satyagrahi* would educate their enemies, as the latter would be bound to acknowledge the superior moral strength and rationality of a people who placed their refusal to compromise above earthly attachments. He considered this feat possible because he believed that the British shared

with their Indian subjects the same universal human essence, and no matter how callously and despotically they behaved, they remained rational beings, who could be made to see the viewpoint of the people they ruled (and *vice versa*). But, undoubtedly, he was also influenced by the fact that his opponent was the British Empire, which during his years in South Africa, and even much later, he admired as one of the highest examples of morality and civilization (8).

A reformer rather than a revolutionary, Gandhi was impressed by the contractual model at the basis of the British Constitution and had no doubt that it could be extended to the colonies, at least in the case of the Indian population, which he saw as eminently fit for it, because of its self-discipline. Thus, the rules of conduct which he preached to his followers were intended to forge individuals capable of behaving as "contractual beings;" and in his concept of the Self, typically aristocratic virtues are reinterpreted within the frame of a social contract ideal. Truthfulness, honor and, above all, indifference to death--the ideal qualities of the *satyagrahi*--point to a being who follows his or her course regardless of external circumstances, who remembers his or her commitments and makes others aware of these requirements. The *satyagrahi* must respect their enemies, never take advantage of their difficulties, must inform them of their plans, take their word seriously, even if the enemy breaks it a hundred times, keep their own word and never change the objectives of their struggle from those initially established.

Gandhi's conduct in South Africa was exemplary in this respect. Not only was his struggle with the British authorities conducted as a dialogue, a rational confrontation, that always assumed shared values and the possibility of reciprocal identification. Gandhi also went to unusual limits to show his opponents that he was loyal to the British Constitution, and that his breach of the law was in fact a defense of British legality. He often argued that support for the British Empire was a precondition for criticizing its laws, and was ready even to legitimize the violence exercised by the British state (Farber : 203). When the Anglo-Boer war broke out, although convinced that justice

lay on the side of the Boers, he did not hesitate to offer his services to the colonial authorities, because he argued that if he wanted to claim his rights as a British subject he had to shoulder the duties involved. For the same reason, he offered to the British the services of the Indian community during the campaign against the Bombath revolt, when in response to a Zulu rebellion against taxation and land expropriation, the British engaged in what Gandhi himself defined as a true 'man-hunt.' And he actively supported British and Indian engagement in World War I.

Gandhi practiced the same "fair play" in the course of his non-cooperation campaigns and repeatedly refused to broaden the struggle beyond its initially proclaimed objectives. Thus, during his early years in South Africa, he decided to launch a civil disobedience campaign against the three pounds tax imposed on indentured labourers, only after the British authorities had broken their pledge to repeal it, which they had made to the Indian leader Gokhale [Gandhi (1957, chap. XXXVIII)].

In the legend that has grown around Gandhi since his days in South Africa, this type of behaviour is generally taken as exemplary of a Christian humbleness and purity of heart. But each extreme recalls its opposite and Gandhi's programmatic 'fair play' can be seen as the product of an intense aristocratic pride, that disdains to recognize the enemy's power and therefore disdains the manoeuvres of actual warfare, insofar as they represent an admission of vulnerability.

Most important, Gandhi was certain that the values which the *satyagrahi* embodied would be recognized by their opponents, and that the contractual model Britain had instituted to regulate social conflict at home could be extended to the colonies. Gandhi never conceded that the 'social contract' in England might be premised on imperialist exploitation, and that the need to defend British hegemony would overrule any concern for the cultural values a nation may embody.

This accounts for the difficulties which the "non-violence" strategy encountered, both in South Africa and later India, when it was carried on at a mass level, as for example, on the occasion of the

famous *hartal* (non-cooperation campaign), called by Gandhi in 1919, which ended with the massacre of Amritsar. Confronted with Britain's determination to defend its colonial interests at all cost, people had no alternatives but to either abandon the struggle or resort to violence (9). For Gandhi this meant that non-violence could be practiced only by few selected people, if not exclusively by himself, and in some cases he urged his followers to delegate to him this struggle. As he told the workers on strike at Ahmedabad:

After twenty years experience, I have come to the conclusion that I am qualified to take a pledge; I see that you are not yet so qualified. Do not therefore take an oath without consulting your seniors. If the occasion demands one, come to us, assured that we shall be prepared to die for you, as we are now. But remember that we shall help you only in respect of a pledge that you have taken with our concurrence. A pledge taken in error can certainly be ignored. You have yet to learn how and when to take a pledge. [Quoted by Erikson :360).

Gandhi imputed the failure of *Satyagraha* to the immaturity of the masses and, after Amritsar, he looked at his hope that non-violent resistance become a mass practice as a "Himalayan miscalculation". He never doubted that, through self-immolation in front of the enemy, the oppressed could liberate themselves, politically as well as spiritually, and here perhaps is where his view of the anti-colonial struggle most differed from that of Fanon.

With Fanon, in fact, we never forget that colonialism, both as a policy of territorial expropriation and a "civilizing mission" is premised on the notion of an economic and cultural imbalance, and *constitutionally committed to not recognize the other as an equal* with whom it is possible to negotiate. To Gandhi Fanon would also object that the sacrifice of one's life can educate the enemy only when the latter values the life of the oppressed and identifies with them, but this is a contradictory proposition in the manichean world of colonial relations.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show, Fanon's and Gandhi's concepts of culture and selfhood, in the colonial context, give us some insight into the reasons of the antithetical positions they adopted with respect to anti-colonial struggle and the exercise of violence as a means of political liberation.

Fanon saw colonialism as a system that *necessarily* destroyed the culture and subjectivity of the colonized and depended for its existence on the refusal to recognize them as subjects of contractual relations. This is one reason why he maintained that violence was the only path to political liberation and cultural reconstruction and, unlike Gandhi, he validated the ruses of the slave. Lying, cheating, being lazy, in his view, represent not just survival techniques, but forms of resistance; for in the absence of a contract, the ultimate defeat is to behave as if one were possible.

Gandhi, by contrast, assumed that the colonized carried to the struggle a patrimony of indestructible and universal values, that would enable them to accept the sanctions inflicted upon them and inspire them to an exemplary behaviour capable of awakening the colonizers as well to the realization of their own humanity. Hence, liberation for Gandhi does not require the destruction of the enemy; rather it calls for a change of consciousness, and a process of reciprocal self-recognition, with the oppressed winning over their oppressors by their ability to sacrifice their lives and, in the process, become the manifestation of the latter's values.

Notes

1. It is important here to recall Bulhan's comment on this passage. Bulhan points out that much confusion has been generated concerning the meaning of this statement by Farrington's translation of "la violence disintoxique" into "violence is a cleansing force", which suggests (as in Gendzier) that Fanon proposed a "'catharsis' through violence" (Bulhan, 1985: 147).
2. Klein, for example, claimed that Fanon's is a "panegyric to violence"; that Fanon turns violence into an ethics and ideology and "rapsodizes the

virtues of violence on principle" (Klein:1966: 74-75).

3. It is instructive, however, to compare the outrage 'On Violence' has provoked with the universal acclaim that has accompanied over the years Camus' *The Stranger*, where the scandal is that a Frenchman who has murdered an Arab in colonial Algeria should be asked to give reasons for his act. Indeed, it is legitimate to wonder if *The Stranger's* 'absurd morality' would have gained equal acclaim had the victim being a European. To this day, however, few Anglo critics have been able to read *The Stranger* as an example of colonial literature. Many critics accept Camus' portrayal of Mersault as an unwilling murderer, led to his act by the sun or, at worst, a victim of his own passivity (see Tisson-Braun, 1988: 50).

4. Cfr. vice versa Sartre: "...il va de soit qu'elle (la violence) est en fait improductive...Issue de la constatation de l'impossibilite de l'humain elle aboutit simplement a preferer la destruction radicale de l'humain a l'utilisation de l'humain pour constituer un ordre inhumain ...Et comme elle ne supprime pas l'esclavage et l'alienation comme phenomenes collectifs nous la descrivons ici comme une des structures de la servitude au meme titre que la resignation" (Sartre, 1983: 420).

5. This is what the advocates of non-violence forget: asking that those who are oppressed do not use violent means to liberate themselves is to ask that they only suffer violence. This difficulty in pro-non-violence literature is often circumvented by the attempt to establish that withdrawal of consent is by itself sufficient to defeat the enemy, so that non-violence would not necessarily amount to a courtship of massacre. However the long history of brutally repressed non-violent struggles should make us reflect and ask ourselves why should we prefer to see those who are rightfully struggling to be slaughtered instead of their enemies.

6. Cf. (Fanon, 1966:76-79). By contrast, the inevitability of an unspecified modicum of repression is assumed by most of Fanon's critics. The most explicit is Norman Klein, who after reminding us that England sacrificed five or more generations of its people to the "urban sewers of its proletarianization", openly states that Fanon is "idealistic" in assuming that democratic socialism is possible in underdeveloped countries, for as long as industrialization is the goal coercion will be necessary, since creating a disciplined labor force requires separating the peasants from their routines and perhaps even from the land (Klein,1966: 80-81). Significantly, and quite cynically, Klein suggests that in place of democracy --from his viewpoint a luxury of advanced coun-

tries--"tribal culture" be offered to the masses, that tribal culture which--Klein says-- Fanon so much underestimated. Zahar as well indicates that economic growth in underdeveloped countries may require "a minimum of repressive interiorization" (sic) (Zahar, 1974: 107).

7. On this occasion Gandhi wrote: "I bore no grudge against the Zulus..I had doubts about the 'rebellion' itself. But I then believed that the British Empire existed for the benefit of the world. A genuine sense of loyalty prevented me from even wishin ill to the Empire. The rightness or otherwise of the 'rebellion' was therefore not likely to affect my decision". (ibid.)

8. On leaving South Africa, Gandhi wrote "though Empires have gone and fallen, this Empire perhaps may be an exception, as this is an Empire not founded on material but on spiritual foundations...I have always believed there is something subtle, something fine in the ideals of the British Constitution" (quoted by Huttenback, 1971: 331).

9. We can remember in this context that the ANC began originally organizing on the basis of non-violent resistance; and only after the failure of this tactic, as demonstrated by the massacre of Sharpeville in 1960, it resorted to violent struggle (Kuper, 1960: 82-83). As Ali Mazrui writes: "Leo Rupert has reminded us of a series of Gandhian protests experiments in South Africa in those early years. African women in Bloemfontein used the technique of civil disobedience in 1913 in their protest against the extension of pass laws ...In 1919 the African National Congress started experimenting with these techniques in Joannesburg. The Communist Party in Durban in the 1930s went 'Gandhian'...Then came the South African campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws of 1952, again using Gandhian techniques of civil disobedience. But in the very wake of such tactics the South African government was getting more intolerant." (Ali Mazrui, 1978: 109).

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Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur constate que le concept de téléologie est fondamental pour la théorie éthique d'Aristote. Partant de cette constatation, il recherche les racines de ce concept dans la Métaphysique du philosophe. Il remarque que dans cette oeuvre le concept subit un changement subtil quand à sa signification sans qu'un changement correspondant ait lieu du point de vue de la terminologie. Il identifie les différentes manières qu'a Aristote de concevoir une action ou acte comme détenteur d'une valeur. Après une analyse attentive de la théorie de causalité d'Aristote il montre que l'idée de finalité constitue la racine métaphysique de la téléologie dans l'Ethique. C'est la raison pour laquelle l'oeuvre éthique la plus populaire d'Aristote, l'Ethique à Nicomaque, commence par l'affirmation métaphysique énigmatique que la conduite humaine doit avoir une fin tout d'abord définie comme bonheur mais finalement identifiée comme activité contemplative.

The Metaphysical Presuppositions of the Concept of Teleology in the Nicomachean Ethics

F.A. Adeigbo

Towards an understanding of the term "Teleology"

Simply stated, 'teleology' with regard to both the human and subhuman worlds means the predetermination of natural causes by their effects. Classical examples of such teleology are an acorn growing into an oak tree instead of a palm, tree, a kitten growing into a cat instead of a dog, or salt dissolving in water while metal does not. Finality or teleology seems to be a pervasive phenomenon visible throughout the whole universe. Primitive as this conception of teleology is, the term itself is a modern one and seems to have been introduced into 18th century philosophy by Christian Wolff:

.. and still another part of natural philosophy which sets forth the purposes of things, So far it is without a name, though it is most noble and most useful. It could be called 'Teleology'.¹

However, the use of the term has not been without some confusion. The notion is familiar in the religious tradition, where it was employed in the conventional Argument from Design for the existence of God. Similarly, the 18th century Bernardin de Saint- Pierre used it to suggest that melons were produced with ridges marked on their rind to facilitate division at a family meal or that the ridges of the nose were designed to hold eyeglasses.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Aristotle was unaware of such notions of final causes. For he could have read in the *Timaeus* how the gods or the supreme craftsman placed a thick patch of hair on the head to provide shade from the burning sun and how they gave man eyes in the front of his head so that he could see where he was going and not in the back where he could see only where he came from. It was uses of final causes in this sloppy fashion that led to a strong anti-teleology campaign in the physical sciences and to the

characterisation of such explanations as a "species of obscurantism" by Ernest Nagel². However, "teleology" in the field of Ethics refers to the view that the standard of human life is value, the good rather than duty, law or formal decorum.

The concept of "telos" plays a big part in the ethical theory of Aristotle - in fact, such a big part - that one could characterise his work as an attempt to give an answer to one of the most fundamental questions: What is man's telos, man's end? For the concept developed into a teleology says that the end of man is happiness, and that happiness consists in action³. It defines the end of action, the good for man as "activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete" (NE.1:7:-1098a17).⁴

There are, in fact, for Aristotle two types of virtues - moral virtues and intellectual virtues. He devotes Books II - V of the Nicomachean ethics to showing what moral virtues are and Book VI to the task of showing (1) that "the best and most complete virtue" is intellectual, and (2) that virtue at its best is the synthesis of intellectual virtue and moral virtue (NE.VI, 12. 1144a 5f). In sum, virtue, he says, is a state of character concerned with choice lying in a mean, that is, the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which a man of practical wisdom, (the *Phronimos*) would determine it (NE.II, 6, 1106b 36).

The purpose of this paper is to underline the metaphysical presuppositions of the concept of teleology in Aristotle's ethical theory. But such a task is made no less difficult by the fact that the concept as used in the Nicomachean Ethics undergoes a shift in meaning without a corresponding shift in terminology. This difficulty is partially deflected if we keep in mind the various ways in which Aristotle would regard an action or act as possessing value and, therefore, as worth doing:

- i as an end itself or for its own sake, (viz. an act of justice, liberality, magnificence, and so forth);

- ii as a means to an end (e.g. exercise as a means to health), and lastly;
- iii as a means-end scheme, where an action is good in the sense of i) and ii) simultaneously. A means-end action is good both in itself, but combined with other good acts of bravery, temperance (or what virtue have) it also adds up to the greater good, namely, goodness, in such way that when Aristotle uses the word "good" in respect of (iii), he means "good-for-happiness". That is, he uses it in a teleological sense.

Analysis of Aristotle's doctrine of causes

"All men by nature desire to know" is Aristotle's cryptic opening statement in the metaphysics. But for him, we know a thing only when we recognise its primary causes: that which explains why the table was made, namely the Table itself (formal cause); that which explains what the table was made for, namely in order to support coffee cups (final cause); that which explains why the table can break, namely the fact that it is made of wood (material cause); and that which explains how the table was made, namely the carpenter who made it (efficient cause).

First, he discusses the material cause. The *matter* of anything is that out of which the thing was made, which is the same as that into which the thing is dissolved when it ceases to be. It is that permanent substance which underlies change but which is itself unchanging (Meta. 1:5, 986b7; Phys.II :1, 193a10). He quotes as instances of material cause:

- 1) the bronze or marble of the statue,
- 2) the genus of its species, that is, generic animality of the various species are the formed or determinate realisations,
- 3) the premises as compared to their conclusions, and
- 4) the letters of a syllable (Phys.II:3: 194).

Next, he considers what for him was more fundamental, namely "form". In seeking to know the cause of a thing, we may be inquiring,

not into the underlying substance (that is, its material cause) but rather into its form: what is it? In other words, what is the form in-forming the matter? What is its essential nature'?

The definition which adequately states the essential nature of a thing is a set of terms analyzing the form. Thus, for example, the form of man appears in its scientific definition as "rational two-footed animal". Such a definition analyses and re-synthesises its nature. Hence, nature as from is a defining principle. For a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it has attained to fulfilment than when it exists potentially (*Phys.II: 193b 7*). From this viewpoint, the form-definition of a thing is preferable to one that emphasises matter alone in much the same way that actuality is preferable to mere potentiality, the chicken to an egg, the oak tree to an acorn, a man to a semen.

Also, the form of a thing is its actuality, the being-that it-is; that which is the goal toward which its development is tending, and is as such not separable from the thing itself except conceptually. This distinctive characteristic is also for Aristotle its Entelechy, its soul, which is also the way it functions. As he says in *De Part. An. 640b 34*, "a corpse is not man, only the remains of what was a man". This provides us with an insight into Aristotle's use of the function-category (cf. *NE. I:7*).

Again, in inquiring into the cause of a thing, we may be seeking that which set the process in motion as originator, in the sense that the father is the "cause" of his son, the carpenter is the cause of the table, the sculptor is the cause of the statue. Hence, the efficient cause is logically equivalent to "that which makes", the agent. Although the efficient cause is easily identified with the formal cause, each is functionally different. It's functional correlative is the final cause, that is, the end-point of action or process. Sometimes, the final cause is introduced by the phrase "that for the sake of which or "in order to".

The four causes may be grouped in two ways:

- 1) The material and formal causes as static concepts, and
- 2) The efficient and final causes as dynamic concepts.

This mode of division is suggested by the experience of common language, which tends to articulate the agent (efficient cause) and his aim (final cause) in terms of essential causes or dynamic activity in contrast to material (the wood, the bronze) and the formal (the structure 'table') as potentiality. W.D. Ross's comments on this matter are illuminating:

It will be noted that of Aristotle's four causes, only two - the efficient and the final - answer to our meaning of cause in English. We think of matter and form not as relative to an event which they cause but as static elements which analysis discovers in a complex thing. This is because we think of cause as that which is both necessary and sufficient to produce a certain effect.⁵

However, because of the processual parallelism of the efficient, formal, and final causes, Aristotle thinks that in the final analysis they are one and the same. The crucial passage for this reduction appears in the *Physics* II: 8a21ff:

Since the causes are four, it is the business of the natural scientist to know them all, and referring to them all, he will endeavour to answer the question "why?" in a way proper to his science. The last three often coincide; for the form and purpose are one, while the primary source of motion is the same in species as these, that is, the form and purpose: for man begets man.⁶

Let us illustrate his meaning with the example of the table. The form or *eidos* of the table (its formal cause) as apprehended by the carpenter's mind is the end or '*telos*' (its final cause) which controls and determines a sequence of events initiated by the carpenter's deliberate decision (its efficient cause) to apply appropriate means to a determinate end. Although the carpenter's deliberate decision (the efficient cause) turns out to be the proximate cause of the table, it is itself the logical consequence of two antecedent causes, whose dependence is the preconceived (final) ideal (formal) table.

Ross makes an interesting comment on this point. After noting that the formal-final cause is really the efficient cause in the case of artifacts, since the form of the object to be produced is imaginatively apprehended in the artist's mind, and sets him to produce the object, he goes on to say:

And in nature, the form which is to find fresh embodiment is already present and is the cause of movement.⁷

From this analysis, we recognise a teleological determination in process both in the sense of a form (*eidos*) to be assumed and of an end (*telos*) to be realised. The deliberate decision to make a "table" either issues in a real table or a table is not made. In other words, for Aristotle, determinate developments are actualisations of an *eidos* and *telos* in such a way that the complete development of a table would be the realisation of the form, that is, "what it is to be a table", which potentially it was as a conceived final end.

Could the Ethics in which Aristotle attempts to find the ultimate purpose of human life, that is, the complete realisation of what it is to be a man, be a corollary to his metaphysics of process? "The good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (NE.I:1:1094-a2).

A final word on the final cause. In his characterisation of the final cause, Aristotle postulates the necessity of a last term of the series. He tells us in the *Metaphysics*

The final cause is an end, and that sort of end which is not for the sake of something else, but for whose sake everything else is so that if there is to be a last term of this sort, the process will not be infinite; but if there is no such term, there will be no final cause; but those who maintain the infinite series eliminate the good without knowing it.⁸

*The Teleological character of subjects-in-Process*⁹

With the correlation of formal-final causality, we come close to an understanding of Aristotle's teleological explanation. Now, implicit

statements of teleology such as "nature does nothing in vain" or "nature has chosen the best possible course in the circumstances" acquire added significance within the contexts of his Ontology and Ethics. In the former, it is the control of every step in a natural process by the character of the whole which serves as Aristotle's paradigm case of teleological explanation. In the later, it is purposive action, particularly human purposive action which turns out to be an instance of the overall teleological character of process. For as he insistently reminds us in the Ethics, purposive action is action involving deliberative choice.

In the *Physics I:6* Aristotle offers a rough analysis of his contention that process is to be understood in teleological terms, as determinate actualisations of the potentialities and capacities inherent in a substance. If natural results are fulfilments of determinable processes, the "telos" becomes precondition of intelligibility of all their actualisations and functions, and thus teleology or the formal-final structure of process becomes necessary postulate in his theory of organisms or type-differentiations, where, for example, the transition from plant-soul to animal-soul and to human-soul is given, not in evolutionary terms, but, in the light of functional analysis.

As it will be remembered, the definition which adequately expresses the essential nature of a thing is set in terms of 'form' or entelechy or soul; that is, in the Aristotelian principle of structure, which is a unity of function and activities of an organic being.¹⁰ In the *De Anima II:412a 14-21* he writes:

Every natural body possessed of life must be substance and substance of the composite order. And since in fact we have here body with a certain attribute, namely, the possession of life, the body will not be the soul; for the body is not an attribute of a subject: it stands rather for a subject of attributes, that is, matter. It must follow then that soul is substance in the sense that it is the form of the natural body having in it the capacity of life. Such substance is actuality:

the soul, therefore, is the actuality of the body as above described.

In a way, this view of the soul implies that the total life process of any substance or existent is contained between two terminal points:

- 1) the first actuality which is one of structural configuration of the organism, and
- 2) the final actuality which is the fulfilment of (1) in the total fruition of its purposive possibilities inherent in the organism as such. Marjorie Green expresses these points as follows:

The things we meet in the world, oak trees and octopuses, are knowable because as such things, things of definite kinds, they contain in themselves determinate principles which make them, the things they are and make them undergo the transformation they undergo. Nobody, no Olympian spirit decides to turn a tadpole into frog; but to be a tadpole is to be the offspring of a frog in the course of becoming a new frog according to the ontogenetic pattern that is frog.¹¹

Similarly, an infant possesses form in the sense of (1) but it possesses form in the sense of 2) only when his rationality has developed in its operational and determinate functions. The terminal distinction into (1) and (2) above correspond to my previous conjunction of formal and final causes - a conjunction which plays a more fundamental role in Aristotle's Ethical theory. In the area of human conduct, the conception of the rational soul as first entelechy becomes the starting point of true normal development. It is in this area, too, that purpose becomes a prerequisite of teleological assertibility (NE.II:4:1105a31).

The axiology of the final cause

The desire for knowledge is a natural property of man. But to know is to recognise certain causes and principles. The wise man, Aristotle tells us in the *Metaphysics*: I:982a8-19, is the man who knows both the prime principles and those subjects (sciences) which are ends in them-

selves, rather than those which subserve some further end. The science which knows to what end each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences and the most authoritative of any ancillary science; this end is the good in each class, and in general the supreme good in the whole of nature. For the good, that is, the end and aim is one of the causes.

As we move along in the *Metaphysics*, we come more clearly upon the axiological function of his axiological theory, that is, the notion that the end or goal or 'telos' is that from which value derives. Thus, after a summary treatment of the causal theories of his predecessors (Thales, Hippo, Anaximenes, and so forth), he concludes that the various Philosophers have posited various prime principles, and more so in their conception "of that which is the end". His remarks are as follows:

That which is the end for which actions and changes and movements take place, they assert to be a cause in a way, but not in this way, that is, not in the way in which it is its nature to be a cause. For those who speak of reason or friendship class these causes as good; they do not speak, however, as if anything that exists either existed or came into being for the sake of these, but as if movement started from these.¹²

We can examine a few more selections from the *Metaphysics* in which Aristotle addresses himself to the specific conceptions of value embodied in the end or final cause.

The first discovery is the fact that the "good" is always found in "action", and action is for the sake of an end. (*Meta.* 13:1078a1 ff). In considering the ends or objects of *Phronesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle re-iterates this same point "for practical wisdom issues command since its end is what ought to be done or not to be done" (*NE.* VI:1143a8). Also in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we read:

It is above all the work of the man of practical wisdom to deliberate well; but no one deliberates about things invari-

able, nor about things which have not an end, and that a good that can be brought about by action (NE.VI:1141611).

After illustrating what he means by the material, formal and efficient causes in Book II of the *Metaphysics*, he includes a statement on the final cause which is germane to the line of this paper and in which again, we notice the identification of the end and the good:

The remainder are causes as the end and the good of the other things; for that, for the sake of which other things are, is naturally the best and the end of the other things: let us take it as making no difference whether we call it the good or the apparent good.¹³

We must admit that the last sentence to the effect that it makes no difference whether we call the end the real good or apparent good is puzzling. What he seems to mean, however, is that as an object of desire or choice the appetite desires or strives after an object only under the impression of the good. Another statement which presents Aristotle's interchangeable use of end and value is found in *Meta. XII:1072a 27*. Here, he tells us that the primary objects of desire and of thought are the same. For the apparent good is the objects of desire and the real good is the primary object of rational wish.

From these examples or passages, we can derive Aristotle's belief that somehow the final cause entails the conception of the good and of value. A thing that is good is an end and, at the same time, a final cause which brings other things into being. As an end, it is an end of action and as a good, it entails value. Such value entailment is a preponderant notion in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

To conclude, one of the fundamental axioms in Aristotelianism is the axiom of the final cause. This axiom might be stated as a fundamental belief of Aristotle in the reality of the individual particular thing. Typical of his use of this axiom is a passage in *Metaphysics 994a9f*, in which he argues that the final causes cannot go on to infinity, (e.g. "walking for the sake of health, health for the sake of happiness, happiness for the sake of something else, and so one thing always for the sake of another). The axiom forms the axis of his con-

cept of teleology in the Nicomachean Ethics. For the axiom, when developed into a full-blown teleological ethical theory, says, Aristotle-wisely, that the end of man is happiness and that happiness consists in action. Hence, Aristotle's opening statement in the Nicomachean Ethics is the assumption that human conduct must have an end (NE.I:1:1094a1), defined as happiness (NE.I:4:1095a5ff), but ultimately identified with a specific form of activity, namely, intellectual activity (NE.X:7:1171a 12).

References

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2. Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York, Brace, Harcourt, 1961) p. 401
3. F.A. Adeigbo, "The Concept of 'Telos' In Aristotle's Ethics", in *Second Order*, vol. X, nos. 1 & 2 ('1981), pp. 91-100
4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Bk. I:7:1098a 17. Translated under the editorship of W.D. Ross (Oxford University Press. 1910-1952). All parenthetical references to this work unless otherwise indicated.
5. W.D. Ross, *Aristotle* (Oxford: at Clarendon Press, 1923). p. 73
6. Aristotle, *Physics*: Book II: 198a 20 21ff
7. W.R. Ross, *Opus cit*, pp. 74-95
8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*: Bk. II:994b10
9. By subjects-in-process, I mean particular beings which have in themselves an internal principle of change.
10. H.H. Joachim, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford 1951) pp.33f
11. Marjorie Green, *A Portrait of Aristotle* (University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1963). p.134
12. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII:988b6-16
13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III:1013b25

Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur rappelle les principaux points de la critique de la philosophie par Rorty. Ensuite il analyse les conséquences de cette critique pour le débat sur le caractère de la philosophie africaine. L'opinion de Rorty, qu'il n'y a pas de forme privilégiée de rationalité pouvant prétendre à un fondement rationnel indépendant, devrait avoir pour résultat une attitude de tolérance envers les diverses variantes de la philosophie africaine: "Laissez éclore les fleurs par centaines".

RORTY'S CRITIQUE OF PHILOSOPHY
The Implication for the search for a Method
in Contemporary African Philosophy

Dipo Irele

Richard Rorty has acquired the status of an iconoclast figure in Anglo-American philosophical circles since the publication of his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Rorty wants to break the idols of traditional philosophy. He questions the pretention of philosophy to provide the touchstone by which the nature of reality can be known. Traditionally philosophers aimed to establish the foundations of knowledge. Once these foundations have been established then philosophers will possess the definitive or "final vocabulary." This vocabulary will then be used to judge all other vocabularies or ways of describing reality. The importance of Rorty's book for us in Africa resides not only in the questions he addresses but in the important implication which his critique of philosophy has for the search for a method in contemporary African philosophy. In this paper, I will set forth a schematic account of Rorty's critique of modern foundational philosophy and then look at the implications of his critique for the search for a method in contemporary African philosophy. I shall not be concerned with certain objections that have been raised against his position but will focus on the tale he has spurned against the selfimage of philosophy.¹

Rorty takes on the task of deconstructing the self-image which philosophy has built. Namely, the image of being a foundational discourse which sits as a tribunal over other discourses and adjudicate whether or not their claim to knowledge is valid. This conception of philosophy as a privileged discourse originated with the Greeks and was reinforced in the seventeenth century by Descartes. As a discipline, philosophy "sees itself as the attempt to underwrite or debunk claims to knowledge made by science, morality, art, or religion." [Rorty 1979, 3] It is this notion of a privileged position that Rorty wants to undermine since he does not think that other discourses are secondary to philosophy. Rorty believes that philosophy, like other

disciplines, is founded upon certain metaphors which it uses to describe the world. Rorty bases his critique of foundationalism on an examination of the Cartesian metaphor of the mind as a mirror held up to nature and accurately representing it.

Rorty's arguments are noteworthy not so much because he is saying something essentially novel, but because he effectively gives voice to what have been a minority ideas in philosophical circles. Furthermore, he does so with the assistance of both the analytic tradition ostensibly under attack and his chosen heroes of counter-tradition. The chosen heroes are the unlikely trinity of Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey whom he regards as the most important philosophical figures of the twentieth century. The common thread in their work, Rorty contends, is the "historicist" message. "Each of the three reminds us that investigations of the foundations of knowledge or morality or language or society may be simply apologetics, attempts to externalise a certain contemporary language game, social practice, or self-image." [Rorty 1979, 9-10]

Rorty brings in as contemporary allies such figures as Quine, Sellars, and Goodman. Rorty's avowed aim is "deconstructive" in the sense that he wants to dismantle the problematic made possible by Descartes and Locke and fixed by Kant as the conventional wisdom of philosophy. These systematic philosophers defined a programme for philosophy which became the standard for the discipline. The influence of these philosophers is felt as much in fields such as empirical psychology, linguistics as in philosophy. Rorty conceives of his task as "therapeutic" by showing us 'the way out'. This is to be achieved by a historical-critical re-examination rather than by a new systematic philosophy. Rather than seeking to replace conventional philosophy, it should simply be abandoned, according to Rorty.

In Part One of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, in a chapter entitled "The Invention of the Mind", Rorty shows in detail how epistemologically based philosophy got hooked on to the idea of the mind as a mirror of nature. Plato has given the idea a canonical form

but was toned down by Aristotle. Descartes, however, made it a corner-stone of his philosophy. Descartes saw the mind as a mirror held up to nature, and truth as the achievement of accurate representations of reality, internal to the mind. According to Rorty this Cartesian model presented an inner eye inspecting a mirror, making judgements of the fidelity of the representations therein.

Part Two chronicles the development of the "modern" notion of a 'theory of knowledge as it was made possible by the Cartesian turn. Descartes' invention gave us the notion of inner representation but Locke provided a critical confusion. He confused explanation, a psychological or physiological account, with justification which occurs within the public space of reasons. "Before Locke", Rorty claims, "it would not have occurred to anyone to look for foundations of knowledge in the senses." [Rorty 1979, 159]

Kant made an attempt to correct this basic error in empiricism. He noticed that there was a failure to make a distinction between the mere succession of ideas and the capacity to make judgements about them. Kant, according to Rorty, remained trapped within the Cartesian framework, addressing the same question as Descartes, that is how our inner representations can be an accurate image of reality. This is important because it was Kant who accentuated this idea and enabled it to become conventional wisdom in the "history of modern philosophy." Thus this tradition of philosophy became the dominant paradigm as well as the institutionalised authority in philosophy. Philosophy as epistemology became the meta-narrative of other disciplines.

Rorty argues that philosophy took a wrong turn when the image built around it became that of a foundational discipline overseeing the whole culture and deciding what should be accepted and what not. Rorty argues that there is nothing interesting to say about truth, knowledge, rationality, or the world. There is no independent reality which our inner representation has to mirror. It is a delusion if we think that there is a "correspondence with reality." The belief that there is an independent world "is an obsession rather than an intuition." [Rorty 1982, 13] "The world", according to Rorty, "is either the purely vacu-

ous notion of the ineffable cause of sense and goal of intellect, or else a name for the objects that inquiry at the moment is leaving alone." [Rorty 1982, 15] Rorty contends that no perspicuous account of an independent reality has been offered. In fact, he rejects any effort to offer any "theory of knowledge" or reality. [Rorty 1982, 213-14]

Rorty's swipe against foundationalism cuts across the divide between Anglo-American analytical philosophy and continental phenomenological philosophy. Rorty believes that these two traditions have come to an end. The thrust of Rorty's position is that it is an illusion to pretend that philosophy is or can become a discipline with a methodology distinct from other disciplines which will allow us to discover the foundations of other areas of culture. [Nielsen 1987] Vocabularies are not ahistorical but contingent and as such culture-dependent. [Rorty 1989] Philosophers do not possess super vocabularies nor do they have a "secure matrix of heuristic concepts or categories which would enable us to classify, comprehend and criticise our forms of life. [Nielsen 1987, 95] Kai Nielsen makes this point when he writes in support of Rorty:

We (philosophers) have neither a philosophical architectonic nor an Archimedean point here, and it is unclear what it would be like to have one or even to have a good understanding of what we are talking about here. And we are also without any privileged, special philosophical knowledge (assuming we know what that is) of concepts, and again it is anything but clear what it would be like to have such a knowledge. [Nielsen 1987, 95]

Rorty's revolutionary stance against the foundationalist tradition undermines the view of philosophy as the clearing of conceptual confusions that arise in our forms of life and science.² In this conception of philosophy metaphysical system building is rejected. Rather, philosophy is seen as an activity which clarifies concepts and makes necessary distinctions between them. This activity can be carried out with the aid of sharp analytical tools that philosophy as conceptual or logical analysis provides. Rorty argues that it is self-deceiving to believe that the mas-

tery of "conceptual questions" which others lack puts them in a special position to articulate and criticise other areas of our culture. He remarks with poignancy:

We have dismantled Reichenbach's heuristic scaffolding, and his list of "the problems of scientific philosophy" along with it. We have not substituted anything for it, and we should not try to do so. If there is one thing we have learned about concepts in recent decades it is that to have a concept is to be able to use a language and that languages are created rather than discovered. We should renounce the idea that we have access to some superconcepts which are the concepts of no particular historical epoch, no particular portion of culture, but which somehow necessarily inhere in subordinate concepts, and can be used to "analyze" the latter, we would thus give up the old dream ... the dream of philosopher as *scientia scientiarum*, as knowledge about the nature of scientific knowledge, as a result of successful inquiry into the nature of all possible inquiry. [Rorty 1982, 222]

Rorty does, however, acknowledge that some philosophers do have immense argumentative abilities which many of their colleagues in other disciplines lack. He contends that this argumentative ability of philosophers is demonstrated by the sheer intelligence that is displayed in any problem they grapple with. He believes that an able philosopher should be able to construct a good argument and be able to detect a flaw in any argument. He says:

The able philosopher should be able to spot flaws in any argument he hears. Further, he should be able to do this on topics outside of those usually discussed in philosophy courses as well as on "specifically philosophical issues." As a corollary, he should be able to construct as good an argument as can be constructed for any view, no matter how wrong-headed. The ideal of philosophical ability is to see the entire universe of possible assertions in all their inferen-

tial relationships to one another, and thus to be able to construct, or criticise, any argument. [Rorty 1982, 219]

Rorty claims that this analytical ability is a precious cultural asset. [Rorty 1982, 221]

Rorty goes on to argue that this argumentative style is not, however, peculiar to philosophers. [Rorty 1982, 220] This skill is also possessed by other scholars in other disciplines. Analytic philosophy is like the activities of a lawyer. Rorty says that the ability "to construct a good brief, or conduct a devastating cross-examination, or find relevant precedents, is pretty much the ability which analytic philosophers think of as 'distinctively philosophical.'" [Rorty 1982, 221]

This ability, as was pointed out earlier, does not put the philosopher at a "higher standpoint", enabling him/her to be the overseer of culture. According to Rorty, analytic philosophy is one of the many variant of foundationalism which is distinguished from the others by its notion of philosophy of language as exhibiting the "foundations of knowledge."

Rorty's critique of foundationalism has implications for what we take rationality to be. Rorty argues that standards of rationality are contingent; in other words, they do not stand outside history and social practices. Thus our concept of rationality is implicated within rather than outside these. Rationality does not have foundation in terms of universal criteria or, to put it differently, there are no ahistorical, context-independent criteria of rationality.[Rorty 1989] Rorty believes that the concepts of truth, rationality, objectivity are matters that are pragmatically determined and that there are no universal criteria for determining them. Indeed, to think that there are universal criteria is to have the illusion that there is a foundation for these concepts. In this light, philosophy is an activity that cannot set up a theory or standard of rationality that is permanent, culture-transcendent, and an impartial matrix that can adjudicate between different cultures by assessing what is rational or irrational in this or that culture. The criteria of rationality have to be sought within the social practice.³

In this section, I will discuss what Rorty's critique of foundationalist philosophy implies for a search for method in contemporary African philosophy. But before doing this I shall discuss the views of some professional African philosophers on method. During the past two decades there has been much hairsplitting about the ontological status of African philosophy and its appropriate method.⁴

Following Professor Odera Oruka, we can distinguish five orientations in African philosophy: ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy and hermeneutical-historical philosophy. I need not repeat here what these various orientations stand for. It will suffice to say that ethnophilosophy has undergone the most virulent attack.

The professional philosophers argue that it is not enough for African philosophers to collect, interpret and disseminate African proverbs, folktales, myth and call this genuine philosophy. Philosophy is a rational and critical reflection on "the most fundamental ideas and principles underlying our thought about human life and its environment, natural and supernatural." [Wiredu 1991, 91]

Philosophy, according to them, must be, "explicit, methodical, and rational." Furthermore, they see philosophy as the "handmaid" of science and modernisation. [Hountondji 1983] In short, philosophy, according to this group, is a rational activity which thrives on criticism. According to Professor P.O. Bodunrin, "criticism is rational, impartial, and articulate appraisal whether positive or negative." [Bodunrin 1981, 173] Bodunrin believes a philosopher must "state his case clearly, ... state the issues at stake as clearly as possible so that we know what we are being invited to accept. We expect him to argue for his case - show us why we must accept his case. [Bodunrin 1981, 173] Philosophical systems, he states, "are built up by systematic examination of specific features of the world ..." [Bodunrin 1981, 173]

Wiredu also believes that philosophy thrives on criticism, hence the rational aspect of the discipline. "Philosophy as a theoretical discipline, (is a) detailed and complicated discipline." [Wiredu 1980, 32] He claims that "without argument and clarification, there is, strictly,

no philosophy." Further, Wiredu posits that "... the philosopher argues for his thesis, clarifying his meaning and answering objections, known and anticipated." [Wiredu 1980, 47]

Bodunrin and Wiredu are of the view that philosophy in Africa should be analytic by clarifying conceptual confusions in our world. [Wiredu 1980 and Bodunrin 1981] They believe that what distinguishes philosophical activity is the critical method and that this is what makes it a rational discipline.

Hountondji's conception of philosophy is that it is "a critical reflection *par excellence*." He claims that philosophy thrives on continuous debate. "Philosophy is not a system", he says, because it never stops. According to him, "its very existence lies in the to and fro of free discussion" hence "it is not a closed system but a history, a debate that goes on from generation to generation" [Hountondji 1983, 72] What emerges from Hountondji's reflections on philosophy is that it is a critical activity and therefore a rational discourse.

In his recent paper, "Contemporary African Philosophy", Lansana Keita, after arguing against Professor Oruka's position of philosophic sagacity, which he thinks is not distinct from ethnophilosophy, proposes a method for contemporary African philosophy which amounts to the same position as that of Bodunrin, Wiredu and Hountondji. He says:

This paper attempts to promote ... the following conception of philosophy in the African context: a dynamic philosophy in the vanguard of each of the research disciplines, committed to the formulation of new or modified concepts and modes of knowing appropriate for social and technological development. [Keita 1991, 153]

Keita believes that a useful approach for African philosophy to adopt is that of theoretical analysis of issues and ideas. He remarks again that by the very nature of the enterprise philosophy engages in critical analysis and that philosophers in Africa should "consider the importance of theoretical analysis of the foundations of empirical science"

and this is, according to him, with a view to aid "the development of scientific research in Africa." [Keita 1991, 149]

What emerges from the above discussions of Bodunrin, Wiredu, Hountondji and Keita is the argument that philosophy is a critical activity and therefore a rational discourse. They don't see ethnophilosophy as critical and therefore discard it as a non-rational discourse. According to the professional philosophers, ethnophilosophy is a fixed, closed system, "a set of propositions regarded as definitive, a set of ultimate truths, the be-all and end-all of all thought." [Hountondji 1983, 72] The question that should be asked here is: in what sense can we say that ethnophilosophy is not a rational discourse? Which brings up another question: what are the standards or criteria by which we can judge ethnophilosophy as not being rational and hence not an appropriate method to adopt in African philosophy?

In my discussion of Rorty I mentioned that the concept of rationality is context-dependent in the sense that a practice determines the standard of rationality within it; in other words, we do not have standard of rationality outside a practice. We must, therefore, have a concept of rationality which is implicated within rather than outside the practice. The context of a practice provides us with the moves that can be made. Any philosophical activity has a relational context which identifies a background of relevant concerns and standards. Furthermore, the relevant standards for discourse are largely determined by certain presuppositions within that particular practice. Thus, there is no universal algorithm of standard that cuts across different practices. The kind of inquiry as defined by its own purpose is thus the crucial consideration. In any particular inquiry one has to be rational in terms of practice within that inquiry: being rational is to observe the constraints which are set forth in that practice.

There are obvious difficulties that have to be pointed out in Rorty's position which I think we have to address. If standards of rationality are internal to a practice, is there no method of assessing that practice? Is rationality just a matter of playing by the rules of the practice in which a discourse is conducted? These can be summarised

as an attempt to find external standards which cut across local forms of rationality? On Rorty's reading, this is not possible since the standards of rationality which we have to appeal to are internal to another practice hence it would be circular or question begging.⁵ Our assessment has to be conducted within the practice we wish to assess. This seems to land us in a sort of relativism. [Berstein 1986, 21-57] However, Rorty's position is not that anything goes as rationality.⁶ What his position amounts to is that there is a pluralism in terms of rationality and no one variant should be privileged over the others since standards of rationality differ.

With this background I turn back to the question of the method which African philosophers should adopt. If we are to take Rorty's position seriously, no philosophical method is more "rationally organised than any other; (they) merely employ different kinds of rhetoric." [Williams 1990, 34] It seems that the professional philosophers are inflexible in their adherence to conventional western canons. In the light of recent developments within western philosophy, this occurs to me as an unjustified position.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage pluralism in African philosophy. While some African philosophers adopt the method of conceptual analysis, others adopt another method which is quite different from the mainstream method of philosophising. This latter method may be less abstract and general and less readily woven into the fabric of the discipline. All of these discourses should be understood as philosophical, and none should be regarded as primary.

Philosophy, as Rorty says, "lumps together a variety of reactions to a variety of cultural situations". If any idea can be distilled from this paper it is: "*Let a hundred flowers bloom*".

Notes

1. There are many objections to Rorty's critique of philosophy. See A. MacIntyre, "Philosophy and its History", *Analyse & Kritik* Jahrgang 4, Oct. 1982; J. Bennet, "Wisdom and Analytical Philosophy" *Analyse & Kritik*,

Jahrgang 4, Oct. 1982; R. Berstein, "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind", *Review of Metaphysics* 33, 1979-80; R. Berstein, *Philosophical Profiles* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986). See also the collection of papers in *Reading Rorty* edited by Alan Malachowski (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990). I am also aware of the ethnocentricism and downright reactionary political implications of Rorty's view. For this point see Cornell West's "Afterword" in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, John Rajchman and Cornell West (eds.) (Columbia University Press, Columbia, 1985).

2. For a good characterization of analytic philosophy, see A. Danto "Analytic Philosophy" in *Social Research*, Vol. 47, No. 1980. For a devastating critique of the analytic project see, H. Putnam, "After Empiricism" in *Post-Analytic Philosophy* eds. J. Rajchman and Cornell West (Columbia University Press, Columbia, 1985), pp. 20*-30.

3. see [R. Rorty 1989 and 1979] for what he calls epistemological behaviourism which is the view that certain philosophical notions are explicable in terms of "What society lets us say." For an illuminating discussion see R. Krant, "Varieties of Pragmatism" *Mind* Vol. 99, No. 394, 1990.

4. The relevant papers on this debate are, P. Bodunrin, "The Question of African Philosophy", *Philosophy* Vol. 56, No. 216, 1981; O. Oruka, "Four Trends In Current African Philosophy", *Philosophy in the Present Situation of Africa*, Alwin Diemer (ed.) (Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1981); O. Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy" *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Winter 1983; Olabiyi Yai, "Theory and Practice in African Philosophy: The Poverty of Speculative Philosophy" *Second Order* Vol. 6, No. 2, 1977. There are also books that touch on the debate especially K. Wiredu, *Philosophy and An African Culture* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980); K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987); P. Bodunrin (ed.), *Philosophy In Africa* (University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife, -1995); R. Wright (ed.), *African Philosophy* (University Press of America, 1984), V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Indiana University Press, 1988); P.J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth And Reality* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983).

5. The circularity of this position has been brought out in Lewis Carroll's paper, "What the Tortoise said to Achilles" *Mind* n.s. Vol. 4, pp. 278-80, 1985. Reprinted in *Readings On Logic* (eds.) J.M. Copi and J.A. Gould, Macmillan, 1972, pp. 117-119.

6. I cannot discuss this fully here but See. R. Rorty, *Consequences of*

Pragmatism for his views on relativism. For an illuminating discussion of this issue see Paul Rabinow, "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-modernity in Anthropology" in *Writing Culture* (eds.) J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California, 1986), pp. 234-261.

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JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA

a eulogy

H. Odera Oruka

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's education, business and political life covers more than three quarters of his more than four scores of life-span. Half a century of the history of the Luo in particular and the Kenyan people in general are part and parcel of the biography of Oginga Odinga.

Since he was young, Jaramogi was averse to routine controls. He manifested a special style of individualism with a strong will for independence. But the creative and organized character he acknowledged the importance of learning from the success and failures of others. Hence his now well documented penchant for education, first of his traditional rural community and later of the colonial missionary innovators and of world leaders.

When he was a schoolteacher at Maseno, Odinga was against the practice of regimenting the African teachers in a mandatory form of dress and life style. He was the first African teacher at Maseno to rebel against the habit of wearing shorts rather than long suits. *Daring the Devils*, Odinga walked into school church one Sunday morning wearing a good European suit, followed by the stares of the teachers and students present. Later, as a respectable senior politician in Kenya and even as Vice President of the Republic, Odinga was fond of the so well known Kenyan habit of taking the western style of dressing as the standard. But in so doing he was creating a culture for the people.

In the 1940's Odinga resigned from his teaching position in Maseno against the advise of others, and ventured into business. There is no doubt that had he not been so busy with business and politics during the climax of his life, Odinga would most likely have followed the vocation of his mentor and renowned mathematics teacher, the late Carey Francis. Although the two personalities had very different cultural backgrounds, they had one great quality in common: the simplicity of *life-style*. Like Carey Francis, Odinga was never really at home with the conventional forms of 'good living' including things like cocktails, wines and drinking.

As a formal classroom educator, Oginga Odinga's legendary mathematics genius is well known to those he taught. His great standing as a formal schoolteacher was surpassed by his celebrated role as a practical pedagogue. His life-style and attitude have been followed by many others.

Kenyatta and Gandhi

Odinga was introduced to the late founding father of the Kenyan nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1951 by his friend Ramogi Achieng Oneko. At that time Odinga entertained Kenyatta and many others at his guest house at *Sanganyinya* (Leopard Hill), situated between Kisumu and his old school Maseno. Kenyatta referred to this first meeting of Odinga as the first time he had ever met an original person, and added that if Odinga was a Luo then *Huyo ndio Jaluo Kamili!* (that he must be a real Luo).

During the period in which Kenyatta met Odinga, Odinga was torn between business and politics. His was to follow Kwame Nkrumah's great call "Seek ye first the political kingdom for all others to come". For Odinga business and financial independence was the basis for political struggle. But with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952 with Kenyatta, Oneko and the forefront of nationalists arrested and detained indefinitely, Odinga had no other option than to plunge into formal politics. Like other nationalists, he was arrested in 1952, but release soon after. Elected into the Legco in 1957, Odinga became the Chairman of the first elected Africans to the legislative council in 1958 and the number one crusader in the campaign for release of Jomo Kenyatta and all his nationalist colleagues. It is significant to mention that among those first elected African representatives was our current president of Kenya, His Excellency Daniel T. Arap Moi.

Due to the efforts of progressive persons such as Mr. Apah Sahib Pant, the first Indian High Commissioner to Kenya, Odinga made his first trip abroad when he visited India in 1953. He was highly charmed and impressed by the thoughts and political actions of the renowned

Indian Sage-Philosopher, Mahatma Gandhi. On his return to Kenya Jaramogi wrote a book on the experiences of his stay in India. He then resolved to fight for Kenya's independence and freedom as Gandhi had fought for India. It is no wonder, then, that Odinga did not advocate violence throughout his political struggle in Kenya.

At the centre of ideologically charged Kenya in the 1960s

In the 1960s Kenya attained its independence, but like many other nations found itself caught in the middle of the cold war raging between East and West. In his style Odinga borrowed all that he considered good and relevant for Kenya from both sides. With the same rigour he rejected what he considered irrelevant from each of the blocks. But despite this, his political enemies and some western powers considered him a communist. He was not a communist but an uncompromising African nationalist. Unfortunately, however, many people saw the difference between the two as insignificant. Odinga nevertheless visited the Soviet Union, China and the rest of the eastern block countries. He also visited Western Europe and the rest of Africa. He formed intellectual, ideological and nationalist alliances with leading figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Abdel Nasser, Julius Nyerere and Sekou Touré.

Within Kenya Odinga fought to eradicate ethnic suspicions among the people, advance the works for resettlement of the Kenyans displaced during the emergency, ensure the reparation to those who suffered special damages, and to improve the welfare of the *Wanachi* at large. In this role he came into direct conflict with the views of the remaining white settlers, their western backers, and the conservative newly enriched African leaders. He stood up to them and fought back, accepting to lose even his enviable and lucrative position as the Vice President of the Republic. But this was not the end of the story. Odinga's party, the *Kenya People's Union* (KPU), lasted three years (1966-1969). In 1969 it was proscribed after what is now known as the *Kisumu incident* of October 1969. Jaramogi and most of his top colleagues were detained. While others were detained together, could

generally eat together, and see each other, Jaramogi stayed at the Holla prison camp for two years. Later, in 1982, he was confined to house arrest for one full year following the attempted coup of August that year. His son, Raila Odinga, suffered detention for a total of more than six years. This long suffering of his son caused much pain to him as a father.

Besides his work as a strong nationalist, Odinga, was also a very dedicated family man. Although these detentions seriously affected Jaramogi's otherwise physical and mental robust health, they did not make him bitter, nor did he sigh of the truth or goal he had seen for Kenya. That goal for him was true independence and the best possible welfare for the Kenyan masses.

Odinga had always wished and fought for Kenya and Africa and for truth and good governance. He might have had numerous personalities as his enemies, but he never thought for a second that truth and good governance should be identified by any one individual person, however great he may be. To him, it was the people and not the leaders who were great. In this regard he did not see the passing away of Kenyatta in 1978 as necessarily meaning a liberation or a new era for Kenya. On this ground Odinga welcomed Kenyatta's successors on the condition that they would serve the *Wanachi* rather than their stomachs.

As in the 1950s and 1960s when he fought for the release of Kenyatta and then against Kenyatta's regime for having betrayed their ideal and the people, Odinga fought tigerly for what he saw as the *second liberation* of the country in the 1990s. Although he did not make it to state house himself as President, his struggle ensured Kenyans an era of multi-party politics and a commitment to democratic practice.

He died as the official leader of the opposition in Parliament, showing that he had been mainly struggling for democracy and freedom to all, rather than for a chair at state house as the President. Despite all the betrayals and broken promises that he personally suffered from colleagues in this latest version of the struggle, he died without bitterness towards his colleagues in the other parties, In be-

coming the official opposition leader, he sincerely invited Ken Matimba and Mwai Kibaki, as leaders of the rival opposition parties, to join the shadow cabinet. That this did not work out was not Odinga's fault.

He died having clearly shown an indication for democratic co-operation with the government in power. He did so as part of his concern to educate the Kenyan populace and the leaders of all parties about what democracy should mean in practice. He did so also in his sagacious practical character to help tone down and educate the rivalling party in power for the next general election. In doing so, he was recalling one of the teachings of the Bible: Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you. Therefore, given this aspect of Odingaism, should KANU find themselves relegated to the role of opposition after any of the next elections, they would be *unKenyan* to refuse to honour the government in power. Indeed, in the short run Odinga paid dearly for his stand on this co-operation issue. But in the long run, he as the true sage stands to gain immensely by his action.

The three things necessary for success are generally *objective* (or goal), *determination*, and *sacrifice*. Jaramogi had all three in him. But to other observers Odinga had failed to achieve what they took as his principal goal, namely the Presidency of Kenya. But as already explained, this really was not Odinga's principal goal. Had it been so, he would have yielded to the temptations to take the government while Kenyatta was still in prison. Life generally, to most people, is a series of fatal complaints, a series of broken promises and failed ambitions and missions. What, however, matters in the end is the legacy or philosophy which the departed has bequeathed to those behind and to posterity. This for Jaramogi Ajuma Oginga Odinga, remains to be the love of truth, the determination for freedom, and the sacrifice for the underprivileged masses. In paralleling the great American founding political thinker, Thomas Jefferson, Oginga Odinga in actions and thoughts wished to show these three ideas as the principles of the declaration of the Kenyan struggle for independence. He conducted all his life in politics as the faithful servant to these principles.

May God Almighty let him rest in peace

Résumé

En choisissant officiellement l'écriture en anglais, l'écrivain camerounais d'expression anglaise se trouve en face d'un défi historique important. Au niveau pratique comme théorique, on constate que l'écrivain anglophone camerounais ne fait montre ni de l'écriture ni de l'élocution de l'anglais des anglais. Et chose curieuse, l'usage d'origine coloniale d'une telle langue européenne empêche les camerounais de maîtriser véritablement les langues camerounaises. Il sagit d'une crise chez l'écrivain d'expression anglophone au Cameroun à travers laquelle l'anglais triomphe officiellement et officieusement des langues camerounaises. Pourtant la pratique de l'écriture anglophone chez les camerounais révèle la vitalité des langues camerounaises comme on peut le constater à travers les multiples structures sous-jacentes ainsi qu'à travers certaines structures de surface.

Tout en faisant appel à une nouvelle prise de conscience, Bongasu T. Kishana souhaite voir l'usage sans entrave des langues camerounaises grace à un programme de longue durée . Celui-ci tout en servant de guide, constitue le seul moyen par lequel on apprendra mieux à parler et à écrire les langues camerounaises, africaines, asiatiques, européennes et américaines. L'auteur réfute, entre autres, la thèse selon laquelle à un seul pays doit correspondre une seule langue. Il faudrait distinguer, selon lui, entre la politique linguistique au niveau de la performance individuelle et la politique linguistique au niveau de la performance ethnique. Quoi qu'il en soit, il faut mettre l'accent sur l'usage et sur la conservation du patrimoine linguistique camerounais.

LANGUAGE PROBLEMS IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

present writers and future readers

Bongasu Tanla Kishani

What persistently worries me in Cameroon anglophone writings, for there are several kinds, is the in some ways preferential use and the resultant, somewhat contradictory, role of the English language. In Cameroon, English language writings reveal a divided English language with a vitality that is constantly marked by the silent encroachments of other languages such as Pidgin English, French and numerous Cameroonian languages. In other words, the practice of Cameroon anglophone writings is evidently not as pure as it might appear either to the neophyte or to the non-English-speaking outsider.

An endogenous analysis of a good portion of the works published by Cameroon anglophone writers, regardless of the definition we give to Cameroon anglophone writings, validates this evaluation which is proven practically in the daily lives of many English-speaking Cameroonians by their preference for either their "mother-father-child tongue" or Pidgin English. One is often amazed by the fact that most Cameroonian teachers offer their courses in English to the very students with whom they prefer to converse in Pidgin English to show intimacy or when it comes to using a certain lingua franca *à la Camerounaise* to express mutual affection.

Godfrey B. Tangwa states in support of this evaluation that "African novelists, playwrights and poets are, with few exceptions, paradigms of how to Africanise English or French," as he goes on to conclude that: "irreversible historical accidents and political realism of the present moment have imposed official bilingualism on Cameroonians. This situation is, on the one hand, fraught with problems and, on the other, impregnated with numerous positive possibilities... . For now, the vast majority of the younger generation of Cameroonians seem to be mastering neither their indigenous languages nor any of the adopted foreign languages sufficiently well. This should be a cause for concern" (Tangwa 1992: 42).

One of the contentions of this article is that the present uses of European languages should neither prevent us from recognizing the need for an endogenous African/Cameroonian orientation in these linguistic matters nor from thinking about and preparing for the future practice of Cameroon languages in the daily running of the nation. The English and the French languages, even though they now define Cameroon officially, but inappropriately, as a bilingual country, (just as an earlier colonial use of the German language had defined our territory as *Deutsche Kamerun*) reveal themselves as languages of dependency. Their continued presence in Cameroonian European language writings, does not, and should not, constitute a permanent choice. We grant, however, that these languages seem to have enriched the variety of languages from which some future Cameroon writers might like to choose.

However, given our wealth of languages, also including English, German and French when it comes to choosing a language to write in, it seems likely that the life of European languages in general and English in particular, in a country like Cameroon will be ephemeral by comparison with countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, the West Indies, Canada, etc. To choose to write exclusively in a European language as a Cameroonian without reservations seems to me to attach too much importance to a language which only enjoys an interim status. In other words, something false, if not self-contradictory, keeps dogging the Cameroonian who chooses to write in one of the European languages with cultural, educational and research purposes as a pretext, or even, as Godfrey B. Tangwa puts it, with the excuse of "national unity, integration and development as well as global dialogue".(Tangwa 1992, 28)

Our initial caveat

A paradoxical self-questioning still haunts the practice of European language writers in Cameroon: it consists of asking one's self why one should make use of a western metropolitan language to the detriment

of one's own "mother-father-child language"¹. Many scholars profess historico-political colonial reasons, but I remain psychologically convinced that they are insufficient to deter us from preparing the ground-plan for the large-scale practice of writing for publication in the languages of Cameroon.

In other words, for a Cameroonian writer the choice between writing in a European language because of the practical advantages, or making use of a Cameroonian/African language because of more theoretical seeming advantages in the long run, remains a dilemma. Or to put it more proverbially, as Cameroonians do: should we chase out the wolves in order to teach the hens to howl in the same way? Should we encourage the wolves to howl while teaching a few hens to howl, and the hens in general to cackle while teaching a few wolves to cackle too for the benefit of their mutual understanding, in order to refute the argument that a wolf is a wolf or a hen is a hen? Wherever we stand, this serious problem requires prudence and the need to keep cowardice aside. Yet, no matter how courageous and prudent we are in dealing with these language problems, we should keep in mind the words of a latin writer whose counsel remains quite pertinent to our subject. He writes: "prohinde ituri in aciem et maiores vestros et posteros cogitate" (Tacitus, *agricola*, chapter XXXIII), which can be translated as: it is therefore wise that, embarking on this enterprise, we should keep in mind both our forefathers and posterity. It is certain that either the death of the writer or the death of his language must come one day.

Our contention

My contention is that the preference of writers from the former Southern Cameroonian United Kingdom trusteeship Territory (U.K.T.T.) for English leads to a dangerous situation in which Cameroonian Languages will be marginalized. This contention is not intended to be restrictive. Nobody, of course, should be prevented from learning to speak, read and write in foreign languages.

The colonial regimes permitted and to a certain degree even fostered the writing of some Cameroonian languages (among them Duala, Bulu, Ewondo, Mungaa Kaa -Bali -, Shupamom - Bamum - and Fulfulde - Fulani -), at least as long as it didn't disturb the European imperialistic goals of exploitation, while others were studied for evangelical purposes by Christian missionaries and used in the elementary stages of schooling, almost entirely orally. Still, it is doubtful whether a rich enough literature existed - there was certainly a lack of locally published work - to offer writers any reading public, and a conscientious interest in Cameroonian languages. The colonial experience taken by itself seems to inevitably introduce the assumption, one I question, that to learn, to be educated or to become a creative writer entails being able to read and write in English or, in the past, German. To quote Tadadjeu M., "education in an indigenous language does not yet seem to lead to significant social advancement compared to education in an official foreign language. In many instances, in the past, even when both indigenous and foreign languages were taught, the educational role of the indigenous language was underestimated and often reduced to an oral use"(Tadadjeu 1982: 148-149). Recently, we wrote that "African colonial educational systems for the most part offered little or no opportunities for a large scale practice and development of writing in African languages, arbitrarily dismissed as non-lucrative and considered incapable of being written in those systems, of promoting and transmitting science and civilization, and of defining African countries" (Kishani 1989: 99). And Mrs. E.M. Chilver testified in writing to me that "when I suggested to an Igbo historian that his work should at least be available in Igbo it became clear that he thought there would be no rewards for him if he did, and no readers. He thought me very naive!"

Africans, Cameroonians included, if they wished to succeed, were conditioned in the colonial situation, indeed obliged by it, to master European languages and models of creative writing. This historical conditioning prevented them from making a genuine choice, in the sense of selecting from a greater number of languages available in

their countries, because they were only equipped with the skills required for creative writing in European languages. Many African/Cameroon anglophone writers pay no attention to the proper orthographic rendering of terms in their own languages. In most cases, if texts are not merely sprinkled with a few indigenous terms, out of charity as it were, Cameroonian languages are rendered without the tones that are functionally required. Nearly all Cameroonian languages are tone languages: but few Cameroonian anglophone writers make the effort to study and write Cameroonian languages with tones, let alone make use of a consistent orthography. One of the main problems which prevented other Tupuri literates from reading Daniel Taore Fatouing's Tupuri translation of the Bible, according to Ursula Wiesemann, "was the omission of tone in all writing" (Wiesemann 1982: 15). "In Mungaka (Mungaà Kaà) tone is phonemic and therefore serves a distinctive role within the sound system of the language. Tone serves to mark both lexical and grammatical distinctions in the language" (Sema Lima 1988: 129), according to Adolf Sema Lima. In Lámnso', for example, we cannot ignore the philosophical differences which separate the exponents of the theory of continuous creation from those of the theory of non-continuous creation, which are marked by a choice of high and low tones respectively. Thus Nggaàmbóm means owner of creating/making and Nggaàmbòm, owner of Creation/the Made, Nyùymbóm, God of creating/making and Nyùymbòm, God of creation/the made. Other examples could be given to illustrate the semantic, grammatical and morphological pertinence of tones in most Cameroonian languages. To neglect them is to ignore the knowledge systems that underlie the linguistic realities under consideration. Tones are not only data, but also, more importantly, produce psychological effects in, for example, ways of greeting, with distinctive nuances and oral styles. They mark and mask, historically (and even contemporarily) the shift from one philosophical school of thought to another and enable many African language speakers to situate interlocutors geographically, socially, chronologically and, thus, culturally.

To the extent that Cameroonian anglophone writers neglect a coherent orthography and ignore the rules of Cameroonian languages, they put themselves, in my view, into a false and contradictory position which disqualifies them from being faithful transmitters of their ancestral civilizations to posterity.

One of the points at issue here is that our linguistic legacy cannot be transmitted through the exclusive medium of European languages without some unavoidable linguistic distortions. For example, the difference between Cameroonian geographically transmitted toponyms as we find them on European language maps and their corresponding georally transmitted Cameroonian language forms is enormous. The former distort, while the latter constitute the yardstick of authenticity, history and culture. Thus, apart from phonetic distortions, there are misnomers arising out of other causes, which, between them, have partially cut us off from a valuable source of cultural history and identity. Even if some Cameroon anglophone writers are aware of this particular issue, which is a relatively minor one, the larger issue of the necessary connection between a genuine personal and cultural identity and the use of one's own "father-mother-child" languages has yet to be accepted as a justification for turning away from European languages as representing the only option open to anglophone or francophone writers.

The habit of writing in English or French stemming from the colonial period has persisted into the post-Independence period accompanied by pious promises of eventual changes in the interest of the fatherland. This procrastination is enduring as we are not questioning the literary use of English in Cameroon, which prevents the recording of Cameroon's cultural experiences in more general ways. If we assume that the colonial imposition of European languages is to be explained solely in terms of the policies of colonial governments we could have expected some drastic changes under a wholly Cameroonian government. Yet, often enough, those most vehemently against the literary use, and at times against the oral use of Cameroonian languages are themselves Cameroonians. One gets the

impression that they are either unwilling to face learning an 'exotic orthography' or scared when they learn from experts that there are at least 236 Cameroonian languages². For, according to their way of reasoning, this forms a hindrance for us to enjoy being "one-nation-one-language", a syndrome apparently derived from Euro-american state models.

With regard to the problem of having to learn a new orthography, this is not a new phenomenon for Cameroonians. With the end of the German colonial era and the introduction of the French and British mandates, Cameroonians literate in German had to learn either English or French orthographies in accordance with the expectations of their new colonial administrators. If our parents did so in obedience to foreign interests, why can we not do the same in our own interests and in the interests of our progeny? Incidentally, the present Cameroon language orthographies constitute some of the simplest ever derived orthographies, which should enkindle some enthusiastic commitment in us. Regrettably this is not yet the case.

So we are simply saying that Cameroonians should not put up with an externally imposed colonial language without questioning its appropriateness to their own cultures and its capacity to accurately convey their realities and the philosophical concepts they embody.

The testimony of some cameroon anglophone writings

The entire corpus of Cameroon anglophone writings manifests rather than hides the legitimate vitality of Cameroonian languages. We shall direct our attention to but a few problems which stem from their anomalous coexistence with European languages. We will proceed from their mere surface structures and allusions to deeper structures of meaning, expression and thought.

It is necessary that we should admit the silent vitality and role of Cameroonian languages in Cameroon anglophone writings. Both budding and established Cameroon anglophone writers such as Kenjo Jumbam, J.A. Ngongwiko, L. Asong Tongwo, and others write

against a background of multiple Cameroonian languages. Most of their settings, characterization, etc., need a good comprehension of Cameroonian languages in order to be offered an equally good critical evaluation. With regard to the Cameroonian names of rivers, towns, villages, markets, hills, valleys, etc. these writers in general seem to follow their established colonial orthography which is for the most part either a distortion or a deviation from what one would find in the local languages.

More important however, the latent preponderant influence of Cameroonian languages, auguring their eventual re-emergence in literature, appears covertly in such works as Kenjo Jumbam's *Lukong And The Leopard With The White Man Of Cattle*. Kenjo Jumbam begins with Lámnso', his own "mother-father-child" tongue. To a certain extent an expression like the "White Man of Cattle" is a reconciliation between the Lámnso' Kimbàng ke nà', word-for-word Red (man,thing) of cow since the setting of the story takes place around the Jakiri Veterinary station; Kimbàng depicts a substantivation with the use Ki of the verbal morpheme bang (red, yellow, pink) into the Lámnso' Ki-Vi noun classes and Nà', cow, singular of anà', cows which are brought into relation through the connective of the Ki-Vi noun classes Ke, and the English language approximations like herdsman, veterinary surgeon, etc.

The titles of books by Cameroon anglophone writers, such as the *Good Foot*, *Lake God*, *The White Man of God*, etc., can be analysed in the same manner to show their basis in Cameroonian languages. Nsanda Eba has given us a verbal confirmation of this which regard to his novel, *The Good Foot*. One can conclude that regardless of how long it will take, writings in Cameroonian languages will eventually win the tug of war between European and Cameroonian languages. Linguistic units which seem to suggest such a reversion after an initial alienation are detectable in particular language uses. In *Lukong And The Leopard with the White Man of Cattle*, Kenjo Jumbam writes:

"Major Walters came out of his house and saw all his employees running down to the village. At first he was frightened; then he

plucked up courage and went in their direction. He had not gone far when he met Mainsa running along raising a loud noise.

'Meynsa! Meynsa! he called in a foreign accent.'

'Sah?' he answered and halted',

'What's the matter?'

'The Fon sah.'

'The Fon! Ah, that's the native name for the chief. What's wrong with him Meynsa?'

'Yes sah.' Mainsa did not understand English. (Jumbam 1975: 66)

The scene that follows introduces Ngo whose English is of a limited vocabulary, but who finally informs Major Walters that the Fon as Kpú, as Major Walters struggles in vain to know 'what is Kpú', before Kinga explains that "The Fon as die, sah".

A similar scene soon follows in the narration with almost the same language elements in which Major Walters confronts Kanla, another Baa Turanci as any Hausa speaker will call a non-English speaker, and conclusively exclaims, after a series of intermittent dialogues, that "The other day it was the Fon has Kpú, now it is Bernsa has kessin ... What is kessin?" (Jumbam 1975: 72). A comparative study of these two passages will certainly yield interesting results in the field of languages in contact. But Kenjo Jumbam's uses of names like Mainsa, Kanla and Bernsa really call for the Lámnsó' and the Nso' side of the colonial story.

Thanks to the interplay of English and Lámnsó' in which Kenjo Jumbam situates his creativity, the text captivates the reader's sense of humour as it progresses. If we examine the text further, it is clear that there is another language interplay between the English language and (Pidgin) English or a type of intermediary language with we can situate mid-way between English and Lámnsó'. Kenjo Jumbam succeeds in portraying through the intermittent dialogues: a) "The Fon as Kpú, sah", b) "The Fon as die sah," c) "Yes sah, as die sah, "The Fon Sah", the real progression of a linguistic usage current among the contemporary Nso' of the story's setting. These contemporaries were

more speakers of Lámnso' than of English. Pidgin English was almost unknown in their daily practical uses of language, and the Lámnso' which could have been the sole explanation of the pronunciation of Major Walters as Maja Watta was on their lips. Major Walters struggles with this Lámnso' when he pronounces Mainsa's name as Meynsa, thus producing a different meaning at the same time as he anglicizes it. Major Walters already has a fairly good vocabulary of Lámnso': "The Fon! Ah that's the native name for the chief". But the word kpu is unknown to him. He inquires: "What is kpu?" At the end of the day, Major Walters increased his Lámnso' vocabulary. In fact, this passage seems to give the impression that only Europeans were learning Cameroonian languages whereas the contrary used to happen.

It is not without irony that the author allows Major Walters to translate the term, Fon, with chief, rather than king. Such a translation portrays a certain mentality in keeping with the colonial philosophies of exploitation and domination whereby European languages in general and English in particular reserved a certain vocabulary for Africans and non-Westerners. It was in this manner that words like chief, magic, tribe, huts, savage, dialect, vernacular, pagan, etc, were reserved for the non-Western world, while king, religion, nation, house, civilized, language, christian or the baptized or saints, were preserved for the Western world (Kishani 1976: 104-130).

Major Walters uses an English accent: "Meynsa! Meynsa! he called in a foreign accent". In fact, what reveals this accent at the level of writing is the assimilation of the Lámnso' orthography into the English orthography: Meynsa instead of Mainsa, as regards the Lámnso' orthography, one can say that it is all Kenjo Jumbam's since there was no standard orthography then. Writers like Kenjo Jumbam who dared to introduce vocabulary from Cameroonian languages which were still labelled "dialects or exotic languages" into the English language accomplished a feat. Consequently, one should not attempt to conceal the censorship of this era by saying that to entwine this type of literary work with words from a different language was simply a rare occurrence. Kenjo Jumbam is seen here unmasking a certain mentality,

piecemeal, since he had to do this through and with the medium of the same language. The orthography of Lámnso' (Cameroonian Languages) and (Pidgin) English is basically a close copy of the English orthography, even in the hands of a Kenjo Jumban and most Cameroon anglophone writers today.

However, if the creative aspects of this particular text issue from the interplay to pronunciation or phonological elements between languages in contact here, the author is somehow forbidden from introducing neologisms in the realm of form as a monolingual would do. For, at the time of the story's setting when the Jakiri Veterinary station was still at its initial stages, English speakers could hardly imagine a type of Africanisation of the English language which, in the now classical words of Chinua Achebe, still remains "in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe 1981: 62).

Achebe's position is founded on the practical needs of the times and on the fact that he had been writing his novels long before he ever began to meditate on this linguistic problem. On the other hand, it is also clear that, as an interested party, he is advocating universalism as incarnated in European languages. "Achebe does not distinguish himself", as we had stated on an other occasion "from the struggle to resuscitate integral African cultural experiences to the exclusion of African languages ... His idea of universalism - full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its African surroundings' instead of advocating the adoption of an international African language - smacks of cultural communications which betray and suppress the use of African languages under the pretext of solely portraying or exchanging African cultural experiences" (Kishani 1989: 101). There is no doubt that many Africans like Chinua Achebe often discover themselves under the colonial yoke of the use of European languages before they can commit themselves to an accommodating and consoling rationalisation which still leaves their attachment to European languages at odds with their own African linguistic heritage and aspirations.

In a way, Joseph Anchangnayoh Ngongwikwo enables us to emphasise not only the vitality of Itángikom in his writings, but also the important role a knowledge of Itángikom would have to play in any evaluation of his novel *The Village School Girl*. For the sake of brevity, we can be content with this famous passage from his *Taboo love* which shows the need for an early beginning of writing in Cameroon language: "When all was quiet he began his message. 'Oooooooooo - kom,' he cried again, 'that kwifon' - meaning His Highness - 'has asked me to greet you one thousand times and give to him. That kwifon has asked me to greet all the young mothers and give to him. That Kwifon has asked me to greet all the old and the sick and give to him. That Kwifon has asked me to thank you all for the celebration of the sacrifice of the cleansing of the tribe"(Ngongwikwo 1984: 65). Ngongwikwo uses Itángikom and English as the main sources of his literary inspiration and creativity.

A casual critical glance at the passage above would confirm that, like most Cameroon/African anglophone writers the author derives his style, humour, etc, from the fact that the deep structure of the Cameroon language sustains the English surface structure. In other words, this example of anglophone writing really reflects both a Cameroonian cultural heritage of greeting and the linguistic context in which these same greetings are expressively lived and transmitted, thanks to a certain usage of English, languages in contact or at rivalry with other linguistic variants often appear to develop or disappear with the adoption of a foreign, variant or local language.

Really, the point at issue here is not how to develop a Cameroonian/African variant of English nor whether our Cameroon anglophone writers have been capable of writing in English, but that any usage of the English or European language in Cameroonian hands constitutes an anomaly. In this light, to express the deep structure of our Cameroonian/African languages through the surface structure of European languages become symptomatic of the silent vital presence of Cameroonian/African languages in Cameroonian/African European language writings. So far, we have been arguing that this vitality

expresses a dire need in African/Cameroonian writings of African/Cameroonian languages, as the only possible means whereby Cameroonian modern writings can have a meaning for the real Cameroonian audience. Moreover, we should share the foresight and normal expectation of the writer who states that: "For all the value and significance at the present time, modern literature in the European languages may very well turn out in the future to occupy a marginal position for us. A new surge of literary creativity may very well lie ahead of us, in which our languages will then be playing their natural role serving as the vehicle of our modern experience at every level in which that experience manifests itself (Irele 1981: 61).

In other words, far from gladdening the hearts of those eager to domesticate a regional variant of the English language in Cameroon, Cameroon's modern writings should be envisaging the emergence of our linguistic independence. In this way, our Cameroonian writers will enjoy the credence of the Cameroonian audience, promote translations from one Cameroonian language to another as well as translations into and from European languages, thereby avoiding the false idea that to become a writer simply entails selecting materials from Cameroonian languages and incorporating them within English language. In this way we can cement a linguistic unity in diversity which is at once natural and necessary within the parameters of the Cameroon State.

Another argument in favour of this is that we seem to be more bookish Anglophones than the monolingual British Anglophone in whose hands the decision to admit neologisms and the daily surveillance of the English language lies. Cameroon's colloquial handling of European languages like English and French is by and large reflected in her Anglophone and Francophone writings. Tatab H. Mbuy is therefore right to a certain extent when he considers Kenjo Jumbam's deliberate choice and use of English discourse and language as somehow irritating, jerky and unfaithful to standard English practice (Mbuy 1991: 6,7).

Cameroonians in the English-speaking context still find that they cannot easily insert words such as dash, asia/ashia, headtie/headwear

into the international English speaking world, concretely identified as *mutatis mutandis* within English and American English. This means Cameroonian languages are relegated to the background with practically no creative influence on the English or the English speaking world.

The point here is that Cameroon anglophone writings directly or indirectly tend to thwart some of our creative potentials. For example, in 1973 I came home with a Philips Tape Recorder from Europe and took it to record some of Moósér Kishaàni Yeèkpu-Kongnyù's conversations. To the best of my knowledge, there were about three tape-recorders like this at the time in the whole Kimbo' area. Moósér Kishaàni Yeèkpu-Kongnyù had never previously had the opportunity of witnessing his own conversation being recorded. What followed, was that he excitedly and creatively named the tape-recorder in Lámnso' as Yulèm, keeping (the) hearing, derived from the Lámnso' words: Yu, to hear, feel, listen, etc, and Lem, to keep, store, etc.

It is clear that Cameroon Anglophone writers are deprived of this kind of spontaneous creative use of the English language. Our consumer's use of the European languages we speak inhibit our potentials for linguistic creativity, thereby preventing any neologisms like Yulèm from emerging or obliging such neologisms to undergo the scrutiny of European censorship. In other words, we have been placing the judgement of our creativity into the hands of the wrong audience. We therefore need to make good creative use of Cameroonian languages.

Technically speaking, Cameroon's language writings entail more than what the slogan *conservez camerounais* can capture. It signifies the experience of every linguistic phenomenon in, through and with Cameroon's languages. We cannot imagine how many cultural elements we lose through a description of our Cameroon languages through European languages. Items like allographs, allomorphemes, allophones, allotones and allosemes which either crop up in the practice of writing or orality obviously escape our notice. It makes a difference whether we follow up the Fon's invitation in Itángikom or in English: "Oooooooooo kom". Even if one were to agree with Lee E.

Bohnhoff that "Ideaphones due to their distinctive characteristics are best studied separately from non-idiophone lexical items in African languages", one cannot refute the idea that the idiophone "Oooooooooo kom" has its fullest meaning in Itángikom. As a language like Yag Dii reveals, the distribution of idiophones in one language's *chaîne parlée* differs from those of the other languages, though we agree with Lee E. Bohnhoff that generally "The idiophones seem to fall into the following semantic domains: onomatopoeia, vivid descriptions of colours, manner, movements, qualities, physical and mental states, temporal or locative descriptions and intensification of an idea (Bohnhoff 1992, 8-11).

Perhaps one could attempt to gloss this over by saying that very often African language idiophones are given an archaic translation when they appear in European languages because these are their only possible approximations. Such reversals of time in linguistic usages however only emphasize the Eurocentric convictions that Africans are perhaps nothing but a fossilized people from the perspective of European evolutionary theory or that African cultural items diffuse from European cultural centres

My thesis that there is a dire need of Cameroon's languages is also based on my experience in the educational field. Most Cameroonian students would answer the following question: "Haven't you seen him?" in accordance with most Cameroonian languages as follows: (a) "Yes" (i.e. your statement is correct.) (b) "No" (i.e. your statement is not correct.). Whereas an English person would expect a No in (a). Ndongmanji J. Neba who has made an outstanding practical case-study of how our students write and speak English, came out with a manuscript entitled: *Subject-Verb Concord - A Major Problem Area to Anglophone Cameroonian Learners of English*. Although prudence demands that one should not accuse him of neglecting the influence of Cameroon's languages on the type of English we speak and write, most of the errors he corrects do have their origins in Cameroonian languages. I found the chapter on 'Un-English Expressions Or Odd Expressions' quite interesting. Its title is symptomatic of the bizarre

use of an English surface structure to express the intrusive vitality of the deep structure of Cameroonian language. Examples worth mentioning include the use of expressions like 'today morning' instead of 'this morning'; 'a new trouser' instead of 'a new pair of trousers', etc, which are reproductions of some Cameroonian languages. Lámnsò' is one of those languages which would translate 'this morning' by 'Kijävndze ke lán ki' word-for-word 'morning-Kijävndze', plus the connective ke, plus today, lán plus a noun class indicator of the Ki-Vi noun classes in a final position.

To illustrate what one loses in terms of exegesis when one writes about Cameroonian/African languages is almost impossible, not to mention the psychological sense of guilt which never ceases from haunting us. Nevertheless, let us attempt to describe what a translation of the syntagmatic expression 'this morning' as 'kijävndze ke lán ki', fails to achieve in English. It does not reveal its historical, cosmological and deeper linguistic dimensions. 'Kijävndze' as a composite nominal is based on two terms: Jav, divide, separate etc, and Ndze, universe, cosmos, all of space, etc. 'Kidjävndze' can therefore be translated into English as the 'divider of the universe' and 'kijävndze ke lán ki' really means the 'divider of lán (today's) universe'. As such, 'kijävndzè' is opposed pertinently to terms like 'kijävwdng', 'divider of the (inhabitable) world', 'kijävnsày, 'divider of the earth/soil', etc. Synoptically speaking, therefore, there is a whole universe of exegesis which the term 'kijävndzè' cocoons, but which is best revealed through, with and in Lámnsò' terms.

We are merely arguing here that Cameroonian students of European languages, as the greater proportion of Cameroonians are, are not only at home with the exegesis of Cameroonian languages, but are also justified when they come to realize the need to speak, write and use these Cameroonian languages in every possible way, openly and directly. This is also important because the deep-seated possession and mastery of the languages we speak is the key to creative invention and decision-making. In this light it is better to be an owner than a dependent-owner. So far it seems to me that Cameroon anglophone writings

have only assumed the role of a kindergarten in the original German sense of the word, whereby they nurse Cameroonian languages indirectly under the surface structure of English morphology. Consequently, some of Cameroon's cultural heritage and wealth, such as greetings which constitute an elaborate domain that is inherited, lived and transmitted through Cameroon's languages, emerge with full force to demand the languages that beget them. Proverbs, errors, interferences, code-switching, willful translations, etc, which abound in the works of most of Cameroon anglophone writers constitute a clear indication of the need to reinstate Cameroonian languages once an for all, in our opinion.

The question of numbers

The vast amount of Cameroon's 236 languages can easily scare a novice researcher out of his or her wits. And this is where the ideology in favour of 'one country, one language' steps in under the pretext of fostering some type of linguistic assistance. The linguistic presence of colonial languages in Africa has been viewed by many experts as an undeniably charitable attempt to foster this linguistic assistance in corroboration with economic, technical and educational assistance. Even Professor Bernard Fonlon, one of those early Cameroonian scholars to have delved into the problem, gave credit to this school of thought. He wrote; "Thus the cry 'One people, one language', that is heard in countries like Israel, for instance, is not an empty political slogan"(Fonlon 1969: 5). But a more scrupulous comparison of Fonlon's 'one people, one language' and the notion of 'one country, one language' shows that they are not quite the same.

As a matter of fact, no scholar concerned with the question of the number of Cameroonian languages has ever rivalled Professor Bernard Fonlon with regard to the clarity with which the problem should be stated. For him, "... the native Babel persists. To make things worse, we have inherited not one foreign language, as in the early days of the unofficial British hegemony or when we were part and parcel of

Kaiser's Reich, but two - French and English: French for four-fifths of the country, English for the remaining fifth. Faced with this many-sided problem, what is the stance of the Government?... With regard to our native languages, the Federated States are mute and there is no official policy concerning these languages. This constitutional silence, however does not wipe them out of existence nor weaken their influence: they are asserting themselves as vigorous living realities, if not getting stronger"(Fonlon 1969: 26). Nevertheless, there is still a strong enough belief in the ideology of 'one country, one language' among those holding the reins of power in Cameroon and in the world at large,³ to give credence to a linguistics of both practical and theoretical strong standing. According to Maurice Tadadjeu, the 'One Country, One Language'- syndrome expresses itself in other things such as a 'One Nation-State, One National Language' political ideology. But let it suffice for now to observe that the scope of this somewhat chameleon-like syndrome is broader than appears. In fact, regardless of the colour it assumes, as expressed in political, historical and geographical needs, it portrays psychological undertones. It also remains unsound, since it expresses itself in terms of the mathematical equation of one political entity with one linguistic entity in 'One Kingdom, One State, One Nation, One Country, One People, One Tribe, One Ethnic Group, therefore One Language'.

Our contention is that such an equation has its psychological, linguistic and cultural limits. An illustration of this can be found in the numerous historical failures of the various attempts to promote Esperanto. Every natural language, according to Ferdinand de Saussure's thesis, constitutes a system of distinctive limited signs whose functioning produce an unlimited amount of other signs of signified and signifiers, whether it is spoken by ten people of a remnant population or by tens of millions of a growing population. The Universalist attitude that permeates the political ideology of 'One Country, One Language', is evident in the Esperanto-insistence on Cosmoglossa, Universalglot, Weltsprache and Reform Neutral which corroborate European colonial and ethnocentric philosophies. Whatever the case may be, Ruritania

and Utopia are still struggling, each in their own way, to draw the greater number to its side.

If a constitutional silence concerning Cameroonian languages had reigned from independence until 1969, there has been, however, since the advent of the Fifth Five Year Development Plan of 1981-1986, a positive official policy in their favour. Conscious of these facts, Archbishop Paul Verdzev declared that "the Catholic Education Authority in the Archdiocese of Bamenda feels that it has a duty and an obligation to be a fully committed, and an active participant in the teaching of our (Cameroonian) languages in schools" (Verdzev 1987:159).

Regarding both the prelate's unconditional commitment and the Head of State's initiation of the Government's linguistic policy we can further observe a change not only of attitude, but also of language. A positive attitude is expressed in positive language with regard to the number of our languages. The Head of State now considers the number of our languages in their diversity as richness, a source of wealth. Still, motivated at the time by a certain "spirit of *reunification à l'Européenne*" in the language domain, Cameroonian scholars like Professor Bernard Fonlon fully engaged themselves in the task of nation-building within the colonial linguistic Western heritage without preparing the ground sufficiently for the centuried Cameroonian linguistic patrimony. The vocabulary they most often used when referring to Cameroon's rich linguistic patrimony tended to consider our languages as a patch-work instead of a net-work, a Babel instead of a garden etc; or on another level, some of these scholars quite often forget that thanks to some speakers of our numerous Cameroonian languages, political Reunification began to colour the programmes of most political parties in the Trusteeship Territories of either British or French Cameroons. Professor Bernard Fonlon himself observes that "Thus it is that, when political activity began, and parties sprang up, nearly all of them, on either side, had Reunification as one of their foremost slogans; and the people heard it, not as an idea completely new, but as the expression of a thought and aspiration which already pulsed in every heart and mind (Fonlon 1969: 26).

In other words, we should not be unconscious of the fact that, in spite of their number or of the contemporary official silence, Cameroon's languages in their daily vitality, and not English and French, provided some of the foundation on which our "Reunification-spirit" was laid. Today or in the future, if the writing in Cameroonian languages does not provide a more promising base for a Cameroonian national common consciousness, English and French will continue to do so artificially.

With these ideas in mind, we should go another step forward against another negative mentality with regards to the destiny of our numerous Cameroonian languages. Implicit in some ethnocentric ambitions of more than a few Cameroonians is the desire that, since there are so many Cameroonian languages, any official policy should be geared towards the elimination of all the other languages except that of their own ethnic group. Many factors are advanced in support of this type of ethnocentric choice, ranging from religious, political, economic, to cultural factors. In this way, the yearning for 'one country, one language' keeps dogging us to the detriment of a more positive attitude, which consists in embracing all our Cameroonian languages without discrimination and considering them as a real source of wealth, indeed as some of our most valuable properties.

Consequently, we can say, with the support of most of the anglophone writers of Cameroon who write, as we already saw, against the background of multiple Cameroonian languages, that the era of 'one country, one language', is past or should be considered past and gone. Yet, other options have already been put or are being put into execution. These range from the "colonially inherited bilingualism" which resulted from the "Reunification spirit", the trilingualism of the experts who felt that colonial bilingualism should also be aptly accompanied by one's Cameroonian father-mother, child language, the CRTV Provincial Programmes in which fifteen to twenty minute radio programmes are broadcasted weekly in some Cameroonian languages, along with programmes of our Cameroon inherited English and French languages, to the practical and promising ambitions of a concerted

active group like the desirable PROPELCA (Project of Operational Research for the Teaching of Languages in Cameroon) or S.I.L. (The Summer Institute of Linguistics) principally composed of experts and scholars in these language matters. Currently, it seems to me that the general ambition is to offer every member of the various Cameroonian language groups a chance of gaining access to literacy or entry to the cité of the World's spoken and written languages.

Consequently, the principle we follow consists not only of respect for the freedom to speak, write and promote literature in these Cameroonian languages, but also in striving for a language policy which can contain all of them. Such a policy cannot be anything else but a pluralistic language policy. It is, therefore, within that pluralistic language policy that we would like to insert our research. More precisely, we are convinced that Cameroon's individual Language policies should not thwart her generalized or ethnic language policies. This means that one would preferably avoid situations in which an individual imposes a different language on the rest of the community, in the name of Europeanised officiality or internationalism, simply because some members of an ethnic group or community are acquainted with his/her colonially inherited language. These language policies emulate those of the Dutch, whose generalized or ethnic language policies for the whole of Holland do not prevent them, individually speaking, to master two, three or four European, African or Asian languages to the best of their ability and according to their needs, since their language, like most Cameroonian languages is not an international language.

In other words, Cameroon's language policies should strive for an acceptance of the ethnic linguistic patrimony and for the encouragement of individual mastery of more languages. Such a general policy would do more than merely wipe out the psychological shame and doubts which still haunt the minds of most users of Cameroonian languages today. In this way, one would need not only to specify the "functions of various educational types of languages", as Maurice Tadadjeu once suggested, but also to exhibit in an acceptable manner the roles which Cameroonian languages play within their own com-

munity, neighbourhood and, at provincial and national levels. However, we are here in the realm of practice where geo-historical vitality as well as the political manoeuvres of language-speakers can follow a course of their own, irrespective of our suggestions.

The spirit of Ghá' ke'

The thought that we should at least try is more challenging than we might be inclined to think. For, far from shunning the initial drudgery which these language matters entail in Cameroon under the consumerist pretext that we ought to stick to the languages of "high technology, modern sciences and philosophies", or that our present era does not guarantee research into the Cameroonian languages, it is necessary for us to delve into and stick to the challenges involved in developing our orthographies by overcoming dialectological issues, and by eventually initiating not only the writing, but also the literature of our Cameroonian languages. Quite often, some of this literature which has already started to grow, is dumped together with their rival oral forms into the waste-paper-basket of the contradictory expression of Oral Literature. But, beneath it all, a certain fear of starting gnaws us.

The spirit of ghá' ke' is the conscious realisation that the essential difficulty lies in beginning. 'Ghá' ke'' which Karl Grebe, a Canadian linguist translated from Lámnso' as 'beginning is hard', is taken from one of my poems entitled 'Nsùyri Lam - In Praise of Language'. It was written directly in Lámnso' in 1985 for a language Documentary Film on the Nso' and the development of their written language.

Consequently, although the time factor is pertinent, we would like to suggest, at least for the time being, not so much an early beginning but rather the act of beginning, as we are eager to encourage rather than discourage enthusiastic writers; with it, too, the zeal needed to release each Cameroonian ethnic language from the hazards of languages which have so far mainly benefited from the joys of orality. In other words, we are referring here to the spirit of 'Ghá'

Ke'' which should animate and spur the ambitions of those who are willing to convert themselves from being mere Cameroon anglophone writers to Cameroon language writers or both.

In the future, there should come a time when we can choose between Cameroonian and European language writings. It is our conviction as well as the contention of many who write, like S.A. Ambanasom, that "to the extent that our creative writers are writing in foreign languages instead of in our home languages the real mediums of a genuine transmission of our cultural values, it can be said that these writers cannot be completely successful in the task of the preservation of our cultural values. For a language that a people speaks is the best embodiment of its culture. And only that language can best reveal the cultural nuances and realities of its speakers"(Ambanasom 1990: 22).

Moreover, if nothing has ever conditioned Western creative writers to communicate in an African language, what about the fact that so far we are writing all our affirmations in English or in a European language? This point often weakens and tends to discourage most Cameroonians and Africans, like Godfrey B. Tangwa who attacked Professor Abimbola and myself for using English to condemn English. He wrote successively about both of us in these terms: "All of motivation, language, medium, vehicle and style he is using in defence of African languages are clearly foreign to African culture. It may be difficult but certainly not impossible to use a different cultural background and language to comprehend other people, cultures and languages. Bongasu might have realized this by carefully considering his own collection of poems: Konglanjo ... But if he had written his konglanjo poems in Lamnso, not even a significant number of the Lamnso-speaking peoples would be able to read them". He then goes on to criticise Professor Abimbola in these words: "There is, certainly a slight touch of irony in the fact that the Professor's address was written and delivered in English" (Tangwa 1992: 31-32).

To accept such an accusation would mean that we are 'lá kilífme' with the British speakers of English, verbatim, we are licking our own

tongues in the interests of the British owners of the English language, and doffing our hats to their writers. What prevents the Yoruba and the Nso' from reading Professor Abimbola's address in Yoruba or 'konglanjo', a collection of poems in Lámnso', is neither the Yoruba language nor lámnso', but illiteracy. But what prevents the same Yoruba and the same Nso from reading an English text, be it Professor Abimbola's address or Bongasu Tanla Kishani's 'konglanjo' is two-fold: illiteracy and the English language. All we have argued so far, has been that, if illiteracy can be overcome, the English language cannot be fully mastered by every ethnic group. We should not compel the whole or our ethnic groups to be literate in English or French, or any other European languages. Illiteracy does not mean that our Cameroonian populations are not intelligent, not versed in the modern sciences, or in possession of philosophies, etc; nor do we subscribe to the belief that whole countries, ethnic groups, or any other communities as bodies, should be invited or even compelled to read and write i.e. to become literate in European languages on the pretext that European languages are "highly technical and philosophical languages", or that European languages are the only languages of science and of modern technology.

However, we are by no means against the learning of European languages. Our contention is that encouragement to learn European languages should be limited to language policy pertaining to individuals, instead of being represented as defining our African or Cameroon ethnic identity. Here we need to bear in mind the distinction we made earlier between generalised State language policies and individual language policies. We Cameroonians should be aware of the fact that Europeans learn, teach or write about other countries, languages or cultures and their corresponding sciences, technologies and philosophies, etc, with, through and in their own languages, whether the European languages in question are the so-called world languages or not. Significantly, this means that the more European languages a Yoruba or a Nso' researcher knows, the more informed he will be in his research on the Yoruba or the Nso' cultures as seen in, with, and

through European languages. This is due to the fact that European writers generally prefer to read and write in their own languages. Our main concern, then, is to discover the best strategies for learning, reading and writing the World's languages or about their civilizations in, with and through Cameroonian languages.

In fact, the point at issue here is not the learning of languages, yours or mine, or whether one language has been preserving ideas better or worse than the other, and so on, but whether whole populations should be compelled to speak, write and read languages which are not theirs. It is therefore obvious that the Yoruba or the Nso' are unable to read and write a Yoruba language or a Lámnso' text, either because they are not literate or because they may be literate only in the Arabic orthography, locally known and identified among the Nso' as 'Lam Gàsa'', in tribute to the first Moslem Hausas to have visited Nso' from Gasaka, who were probably versed in the Arabic rather than in the Latin Alphabet. It is surely odd to give the impression that the Yoruba or the Nso' do not know their languages because they cannot read and write in the Yoruba language or in Lámnso'. Literacy is a technology which would have engulfed the whole of the remnants of Nok Civilization which, spreading from the Benue Basin, covered the Tikari Grassfields, if and only if the 'Pamoum/Pamum/Mvem' script invented by Fon Njoya of Fumban, had been allowed by the colonial Germans, British and French to grow. The real irony is therefore that because we cannot use our languages, we risk becoming perpetual, passive consumers of the European material and spiritual heritage.

Conclusion

So far, we have argued in favour of the use of Cameroonian languages in our writings, without saying that European languages should be abandoned as such. We recommend that some Cameroonians should individually apply their talents to the study and practice of European languages of both the modern and ancient worlds, Asian and other

African languages as well as Australian and American languages in so far as they can profit from or find these languages beneficial to the general task of building the Cameroonian Nation.

We introduced a nuance in dealing with the use of European languages by the State, the Cameroon State, intended to discourage conditions for an eventual disappearance or abolition of Cameroonian languages. The Cameroonian linguistic patrimony needs preservation; so far it has been preserved by Cameroonians; so let Cameroonians not be the first to abolish it. The Cameroon State needs to be concerned about generalized or ethnic language policies. "All individuals and social groups have a right to live in conditions which enable them to provide for personal and family needs and to share in the life and progress of the local community. When this right is not recognized, it easily happens that the people concerned feel that they are victims of a structure which does not welcome them, and they react strongly" (John Paul II 1993: 23). It is with these words of the Roman Pontiff, John Paul II, which were intended for the Word Day of Peace, 1st January 1993, that we would like to end this article. At the centre of our main concerns is the desire for the best means of preservation, promotion and transmission of our Cameroonian cultural heritage by individuals and communities through, with and in Cameroonian languages.

Moreover, despite Cameroon's ailing economy, the complexity of her colonial heritage of English and French, and despite the difficult task which every converted Cameroonian European language writer will be faced with, Cameroonians should not be considered to be lagging behind at a time when the rest of the African continent is building solid bridges for literate education in the "mother-father-child" tongues. The written development of Cameroonian/African languages in Cameroon already possesses some of the key-factors for self-assertion, since Cameroonians have 'A General Alphabet of Cameroon Language' by Tadadjeu and Sabembouo to serve the literate needs of mother-father-child tongue learners of Cameroonian languages. In fact, what one should recommend as a key project for the Cameroon Government and other bodies of goodwill and financial

capacity is the establishment of a special publisher whose main concern will be the diffusion and advertisement of Cameroonian language literature. More down-to-earth programmes in local languages on both Radio and Television are needed, as well on topics like health, agriculture, trade in rural areas, forestry, etc. Even though the exponents of the so-called official languages seem to give us the impression that our Cameroonian languages are absent while in reality they are present twenty four hours a day, it is about time we paid proper attention to them on a long term basis.

Notes

1. Although nowadays linguists tend to use the apparently neutral expression of 'the first language', with some degree of satisfaction we have used the expression 'father-mother-child language' throughout this article because, in spite of its clumsiness, it best translates a certain linguistic situation we experience in Cameroonian families in which sometimes parents do not share a common (mother) tongue either between themselves or with their children. It is in this way that expressions such as 'domestic' or 'home' or 'family' language become inadequate here.
2. E. Chia suggests that "Cameroon would count henceforth not only 239 languages but 241" (Chia 1990: 126).
3. "L'idéal de bâtir un Etat-Nation caractérisé entre autre par une même langue parlée par l'ensemble de la communauté nationale reste donc assez vivant dans l'esprit des responsables de nos pays. Le Cameroun n'en fait pas exception, bien au contraire" (Tadadjou 1990, 17).

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COLONIALISM AND THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

a reply to Godfrey Tangwa

Chris Uroh

I

Godfrey Tangwa's article, "Colonial legacy and the language situation in Cameroon" (Quest, Volume VI, Number 1, December 1992) must have appeared to the author a viable 'solution' to the linguistic trap in which former European colonies in Africa find themselves. The present paper traces the inadequacies of Tangwa's precepts and shows that the very route Tangwa urges the former colonies to follow is one which would lead them only further into the woods.

Tangwa gives three main arguments in his essay: (1) one need not necessarily regret that the European languages introduced by colonialism overshadowed indigenous languages; (2) foreign languages imposed on the colonies can be domesticated and turned to the great advantage of the people if used as a means to foster national unity, integration and development as well as global dialogue; (3) the search for an indigenous national language is unnecessary and politically unadvisable (Tangwa, 1992, p.28).

I will argue, that: (1) Tangwa's *instrumentalist* conception of language does not take notice of the fact that, "language and its laws of development can be understood only if studied in inseparable connection with the history of society, with the history of the people to whom the language under study belongs, and who are its creators and repositories" (Stalin, 1976, p.20); (2) Tangwa's argument that there is no need for the colonies to regret the imposition of colonial languages on them is misplaced, for language is an undeniable "index of culture and identity". Therefore, any policy that relegates the indigenous languages of the former colonies would worsen the crisis of identity that already exists. Contrary to Tangwa's position we suggest: (3) that the best attitude to the language trap is not to commit cultural suicide,

but to embark on a conscious effort to rejuvenate these indigenous languages that have been assigned the unenviable position of *vernaculars* following colonial conquest. This will lead us to the following conclusion:

"The present fate of English and other European languages in Africa is a concomitant of their history. Whatever advantages English has conferred upon us, not only as an international language, but also as up to now, the language of our national unity, whatever level of our competence in its use and vigour of our energies in its promotion; it unfortunately remains true that it was a language of conquest and therefore of imposition. It also remains true that however open minded we have accepted it as our language and strained ourselves to use it as such, the cultural artifacts of which the language is an essential part, the social attitude inspired by it, its social system, its intonation patterns, its rhythm in speech and writing, its idioms of seriousness and humour - all these have always been slightly foreign to our nature and environment" (Ikiddeh, 1983, p.66).

II

Professor Peter Ekeh characterizes colonialism as an epoch "whose enduring significance [continues] beyond the life-span of the colonial situation" (Ekeh, 1983, p.5). In Africa, and indeed in most other former colonies, the colonial language is one of such enduring "social formations" to have outlived the period of direct colonisation. In most of the former colonies, European languages have, actually, been adopted as national languages.

The consequence for indigenous languages has been costly. First, the number of native language speakers has dropped, slowing down the development of many local languages. In fact, some are on their way to total extinction. In Nigeria, for instance, the indigenous languages of the former Mid-Western region have almost entirely given way to

Pidgin English. Without giving much thought to the consequences of relying on such an *adulterated* foreign language as the medium of communication, some have advocated that *Pidgin* English be adopted as Nigeria's *lingua franca*.

The importance attached to colonial languages in most African countries could be measured against the veneration of English in Nigeria, a former British colony. Not only is a credit in English a basic qualification for employment, especially in government parastatals, it is also true that, however brilliantly a student has performed in his school certificate examinations, he must pass English language at the credit level before he could be considered for admission to a Nigerian University. It does not even matter if the candidate intends to study an indigenous (i.e. African) language, as some indigenous languages are taught in the colonial languages.

Therefore Peter Abraham describes the language situation in the former colonies understandably as "torturing little traps of history" (Abraham, 1955, p.387). His pessimism here is born out of a first-hand experience of the linguistic entanglement of Africans. He was among an audience in Kenya which a speaker had urged to "reject all European ways and institutions" (ibid). Ironically, this call to jettison European culture was made with one of its most fundamental instruments - the English language. This apparent contradiction, Abraham notes, made the whole situation "tragic and poignant" (Abraham, Op. Cit.p.389).

Perhaps there is an even more tragic situation than Abraham described. During the fifteenth Convocation Ceremony of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), Professor Wande Abimbola, then the Institution's Vice-Chancellor, berated the way "successive educational policies" of Nigeria "have either avoided addressing themselves to the issue of the role of Nigerian languages or confined them to a lower status" (Abimbola, 1989, p.15). Abimbola further laments that:

"It is bad to observe that after a quarter of a century of independence, Nigerian languages are not accorded the

status which should be naturally theirs in our educational system ... Nowhere is a Nigerian language used as a medium of instruction in post primary education ... All in all, (he concludes) failure to systematically encourage the use of Nigerian languages in our educational system creates at best split and shaky personalities. At worst ... it transforms our educational system into a factory for the production of Eurocentric and mimetic citizens (Abimbola, Op.Cit., p.16).

Although Abimbola is a professor of Yoruba language, his speech was given in English. This is a typical example of the linguistic trap. Had Abimbola lived up to his advocacy and delivered his speech in Yoruba, fifty per cent of the audience would not have understood him. We shall return to this later.

III

Tangwa does admit that both colonial education and languages "were imposed on the colonized for colonial purposes" (Tangwa, Op. Cit., p. 28). He thinks however that this was to the advantage of the colonized. His words:

"By learning to speak, write and especially to read the language of the colonial master, a whole *new world of ideas*, theoretical entities, abstract meanings and possibilities they specified, suddenly opened up for the colonized....Very soon, the colonized, the enslaved ... discovered in the colonizer's very own literature, in slaver's very own language such very dangerous ... ideas as liberty, equality, fraternity, etc." (Tangwa, Op.Cit., pp.28-29).

This has several implications. First, it is assumed that abstract notions such as liberty, equality, fraternity and other related concepts were foreign to pre-colonial Africans. In support of this erroneous characterisation of traditional African socio-cultural settings, Tangwa maintains, that it was only those African *beneficiaries of western*

education, who "initiated and led" the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. To Tangwa, those illiterate Africans, who are ignorant of the meaning of political freedom, social equality and fraternity cannot fully appreciate their value. Therefore, it would have been impossible to fight for such values.

We will contradict Tangwa by showing that first of all even before acquiring western education, Africans have resisted colonial invasion, and secondly that ideas like freedom and equality were present in pre-colonial Africa.

Two examples from the Delta region of Nigeria suffice to support our contention that anti-colonial struggles pre-dated western education in Africa. Neither Nana Olumu, the traditional ruler of Itsekiri, nor King Jaja of Okpobo, were educated in the Western sense, yet both were able to resist the colonizers' attempts to take control of their domains. They were finally defeated through military assaults. Basil Davidson has a graphic account of how Nana Olumu was finally defeated. His narration:

"When the British navy was finally sent to destroy the greatest of African traders of Benin river districts (Southern Nigeria), the Itsekiri leader, Nana Olumu, Admiral Bedford and his men were up against an opponent who was well aware of the danger which threatened him. He had long fortified his headquarters on the Ebrohimi creek of the Benin river. After taking it, the naval attackers counted 106 canon, one machine gun, 445 heavy blunder buses mounted on swivels, and some 1,700 assorted flintlocks and other small arms" (Davidson, 1978, pp.124-125).

Davidson suggests that the quantum of the arsenal "says a good deal for the scale of Nana's trading operations" (Ibid., p.125). It further shows the type of resistance anticipated from Nana. This, in turn, was informed by the degree of resistance he had hitherto put up. As for Jaja, his domain was so fortified that the only option left for the colonizers was to trick him out of Okpobo from where he was exiled.

Moreover, certain political practices in pre-colonial Africa demonstrate the fact that the idea of freedom is "an integral part of man" (Sogolo, 1992, p.58) was not brought into the continent by the colonizers. Ofoegbu (1982, pp.212-227), for instance, stated that the political culture of the traditional Igbo society placed much "stress on citizen participation, consultations and free discussions of public issues" (Ibid., p.223). Any leader who attempted to overturn these political ideals was immediately rejected by the people (Echeruo and Obiechina, 1971). Sometimes, as in the case of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, they were forced to commit suicide. A society with such social practices could not have existed without some notion of freedom and equality.

IV

An important aspect of Tangwa's argument is his claim that colonial languages have been the source of political unity in former colonies. He illustrates this point by drawing attention to Cameroon, incidentally a bilingual country: French and English. "These two languages", writes Tangwa, "have made it possible for the geographical entity known as Cameroon today to become a single political entity" (Tangwa, Op.Cit., p.34). Had it not been for the two languages Cameroon would have become a country with a myriad of antagonistic warring tribes and linguistic groups "all struggling for survival, if not domination" (Ibid., p.34).

Here, Tangwa's argument amounts to qualifying political unity in Cameroon (assuming such a unity exists), as the result of the French and English languages. This assertion is essentially premised upon his belief that language (including colonial languages) unites people. However, it is clear that Tangwa has, in fact, scored against himself here. Indeed, if language really unites people of the same linguistic group, a bilingual country like Cameroon can hardly have the type of "unity" Tangwa ascribes to it. Instead, Cameroonians would be

polarised into two linguistic camps - Francophone and Anglophone. And this, I think, is hardly a subject for debate.

In spite of this objection to Tangwa's point of view, I do subscribe to the fact that "language" can unite a people. However, it is not language *qua* language that does the 'binding', it is the values that do: the common heritage of a people, their common experience of failures and achievements communicated through the medium of their indigenous languages which inspire primordial feelings. For any language to play this role, it has to be the one that 'belongs' to a people. This understanding seems to inform Whorf's assertion that "we dissect nature along the lines laid down by our native language" (Whorf, 1968, p.213). Colonial languages with markedly different cultural roots cannot be the source of any unity for the colonized. Therefore, if Cameroonians are united it is in spite of the English and French languages. The truth is that in Cameroon, just as in many African countries, the political spectrum is structured along tribal or ethnic lines.

This is understandable because if language is used to communicate experience, it follows that the language of a particular people embodies their collective experience.

"Language thus comes to embody both continuity and change in that historical consciousness. It is this aspect of language, as a collective memory-bank of a given people, which has made some people ascribe mystical independence to language. It is the same aspect which has made nations and peoples take up arms to prevent a total annihilation or assimilation of their languages, because it is tantamount to annihilating that people's collective memory-bank of the past achievements and failures which form the basis of common identity. It is like uprooting that community from history" (Wa Thiong 'O, 1981, pp.59-60).

It is this shared experience, the "totality of knowledge and behaviour, ideas, and objects that constitute the common heritage of the people" (Macquet, 1972, p.4), which is communicated through their language,

that serves "the historical links" binding "a people to their language" (Ikiddeh, Op.Cit., p.72). This is why people from the same linguistic group tend to perceive social phenomena from a similar perspective. It is in this way that language serves as a vehicle of social cohesion. It follows then that where these experiences differ, the medium through which they are communicated varies. Yet, because meanings are not free of value, perception will invariably obey the rules of the language of the perceiver.

V

Tangwa quotes Bongasu's remark that "It is impossible to use a different culture or language fully to comprehend the language of other people's culture" (Tangwa, 1992, pp.30-31). Tangwa describes the above claim as a "wide-spread fallacy". He continues:

"It is simply incorrect to think that a non-native cannot speak any language as well as a native, or that a native speaker necessarily speaks his/her language better than all non-natives" (Tangwa, Op.Cit., p.38).

Tangwa further maintains that he knows a Bali woman who speaks his own native language *Lamso* "better than many *Nsos* including [himself]". Similarly, he "once met an English lady-anthropologist who spoke *Lamso* as fluently as [himself]". The same anthropologist, according to Tangwa, could also write *Lamso* "with the greatest ease which [he could] not yet do" (Tangwa, Op.Cit., p.39).

But Tangwa misses the point here. The contentious issue is not one of *multi-lingual* proficiency, but of cross-cultural or cross-linguistic appreciation of cultural phenomena. This problem has to do with *translation* as a process, not with the *translator* as a multi-linguist.

In conclusion, differences in cultural origins will result in differences in the structure, values, vocabularies and, more importantly, in meanings attached to phenomena in different languages. Accordingly, Steiner sees translation as "the most complex type of

event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos" (Steiner, 1977, p.48). Few philosophers have argued this point more convincingly than W.V.O. Quine, who maintains that in trying to carry out a cross-cultural translation, one can hardly be sure of the correctness of what is being translated, however competent one is as a speaker of both languages (Quine, 1985, p.8). Elsewhere, Quine articulates his position thus:

"Manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the total speech disposition, yet incompatible with one another. In countless places they will diverge in giving, as their respective translations of a sentence of one language, sentences of the other language which stand to each other in no plausible sort of equivalence however loose" (Quine, 1960, p.27).

What this boils down to is that "languages that have evolved in distant times or places" usually differ "extensively in their resources for dealing with one or another range of phenomena". Therefore, "what comes easily in one may come hard in another" (Davidson, 1985, pp.183-184). It is important to note that differences between languages "may echo significant dissimilarities in style and value" (Ibid).

VI

We have attempted to show that the language of a people is their memory-bank, the repository of their collective achievements and failures. It is also the principal feature that marks them off from other people. It is their essence. Therefore it follows that to deny a people their language is to take away their essence, to alienate them from that which makes them; to detach them from their past. To deny a people their language is tantamount to taking away their ability to reflect on their past, interpret their present and project into their future.

The problem becomes more complex when foreign languages with markedly different world-views are imposed on a people in place

of their own language. In that case, they are forced to perceive themselves through an alien cultural screen, which is bound to distort their own image. Such a people will suffer an identity crisis, for they will neither really be like "themselves" nor exactly like the culture they are imitating.

In view of the foregoing discussion we suggest that the contemporary African should attempt to reverse the linguistic trend. How, I do not know. But to do otherwise, to continue to celebrate other people's language, and by implication, their cultural world-view, is to present ourselves as a people "who have carried colonialism even when it has finally ended, to the point of self-abnegation, self-contempt and ultimate self- destruction" (Ikiddeh, 1983, p.68).

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BOOK REVIEW

African Philosophy - Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities by Segun Gbadegesin. New York: Peter Lang; pp (i-xii) 298.
Review by J.A.I. Bewaji

The author of this analytically rigorous, intellectually stimulating and polemically challenging book starts from the unexceptionable presupposition that contemporary African realities is amenable to philosophical treatment, a treatment that must issue from an adequate familiarity with the historical epochs of the continent, the cultural diversities of her peoples, the economic dependency of her neo-nation-states, the political alienation of her masses of people and the intrinsic rationality of human beings in society. The central theme of the work, contemporary African realities (p. xii), is carefully and

competently discussed from a tripodal perspective: the religious view, the cultural view and the politico-economic view; laying the foundation for the astute reflections on the ethics and politics of work in the penultimate chapter of the book. The build-up to the discussion of contemporary African realities (CAR) is a survey of ongoing problematiques in African philosophy, commencing with the now ubiquitous metaphilosophical problem of definition, method and content of African philosophy, spanning the region of religio-metaphysical issues of causality, destiny and person-hood and bearing on traditional medical practice in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa.

The author's discussion of the now famous four schools in African philosophy is refreshingly articulate. He affirms the Bodunrin originated cliché that there can be no philosophical tradition without a tradition of writing, but he goes further to attenuate this with the no less popular Niaogorah-Bouahian description of writing as "the representation of word and thought by agreed signs"; hence that it "does not follow that people cannot engage in philosophical discourse in the absence of writing ...", while confirming that "black Africans have always known graphic signs for writing ... writing is therefore a habitual and familiar activity in black Africa with its roots in pre-history" (p. 16).

The impression created here is one of ambivalence. It is not clear whether he endorses the Bodunrinan position, which has left a lasting, but hastily derived, impression that writing was alien to traditional Africa, hence the so-called dearth of philosophical treatises in African intellectual antiquity; or whether he endorses the position of Niangora-Bouah, as evidences have been adduced by archaeologists, ethnologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, etc. to show the indigeneity of various forms of writing to black Africa. The attestation of honest ancient Greek philosophers of their indebtedness to Africans, with subsequent corroboration by various findings, confirm the fact that so-called Greek genius did not develop in a vacuum. Not the least relevant on this matter are fragments unearthed in various parts of

Africa, the Americas and other parts of the world, showing the antiquity of African literacy in the manner of their own languages and documentation styles. Gbadegesin's definition of African philosophy emphasizes the need for relevance. He argues that African philosophy must be concerned with understanding contemporary African experience, problems and issues African in nature (p. 22). This is understandable, as the analysis of contemporary African realities show that its problems must be resolved philosophically. However, this has the unnecessary consequence of suggesting that the author thinks that philosophical works on Kant, mathematics, scepticism, etcetera are not, strictly speaking, African philosophy.

Gbadegesin's examination of the Yoruba concept of person is very illuminating. It entails the analysis of the conceptual, physiological, moral and metaphysical\spiritual aspects of reflections on person, making a comparison and contrast between Yoruba and Akan ideas. In so doing Gbadegesin reveals insights into Yoruba psychology and psychoanalysis, baring the relationship between thought and *okan* (heart), strength and *Inu* or *it'un* (intestines) [pp. 30-311].

Gbadegesin's discussion of causality and medical practice among the Yoruba exhibits the foundational anchorage of human life, social life and the environment. In essence, Gbadegesin argues that there is a harmonious relationship between the mundane and the supra-mundane, as both are aspects of the same universe without any clarity of demarcation in Yoruba thought.

Singling out one aspect of incantation or oracular use of the spoken word, Gbadegesin emphasizes the existence of aspects beyond that which empiricism, rationalism, and, especially scientism, have been able to unveil. Such factors as telepathy and telekinesis are used to show this, noting that it will be *ad ignorantiam* to suggest that, since the Yoruba cannot demonstrate empirically the force used, it does not exist and is merely mumbo jumbo. Thus, the necessity for an effective embrasure between traditional and western medical practice is suggested as the only way forward. One can appreciate the pain taken

by the author to argue for the nonreligious foundation of ethics among the Yoruba, but it seems a bit difficult to see how that can be balanced against the touted religiosity of the Yoruba, for if the concept of person, causality, illness and good health, social, political, economic and culture are cemented in\by religion, would it not be most likely that Yoruba ethical thinking is incomprehensible outside of the religious milieu?

Now there seems an apparent incongruence between the author's supposition that the holistic conception of illness precludes an explanatory system based on disease (p. 128) and his affirmation of a traditional medical practice predicated on health and illness interpreted as functions of bodily constitution and evidence of physico-chemical constituents of the human body (p. 29). For the concept of infection by germs and viruses evident in the practice of sterilization, immunization, inoculation and anaesthesia, all show a serious grounding in empirical knowledge of health, a system which is not incompatible with medical holism in which the human being is seen as constituted by psycho-physical aspects that equilibrate.

When we come to the second part of the book, one confronts an intellectually stimulating, academically rigorous and analytically robust treatment of contemporary African realities. Here one sees Gbadegesin displaying great judgement, commencing with various diagnoses of and prognoses for Contemporary African Realities (CAR). Gbadegesin contends that an abstract debate, removed from the real life experiences, can be of no value to Africans, hence he prefers to contextualize and concretise the problems of Ultimate Reality and Meaning (URAM). This approach has the advantage of making available a critique with great relevance, addressed to an adverse audience, foreclosing false and evasive abstraction.

Under the religious view of Contemporary African Realities (CAR), the author examines the diversionary, asinine and escapist theosophy that separates the secular from the supernatural, counselling religious supernaturalism, regardless of the vicissitudes of secular life for the masses and the opulence of religious leaders. Gbadegesin thinks

nothing is incompatible in gaining everlasting life as well as enjoying decent mortal existence. Whatever the origins of religion, its future cannot be divorced from the material well-being of the society in which it exists. Emphasizing that this is the initial focus of the world religions and of traditional African religions, Gbadegesin concludes that an educated citizenry appreciates better the necessity of tolerance. Maybe, traditional African societies were by far more educated in all aspects of life, as these traditional societies practised harmonious religious pluralism. He says,

It follows therefore that if religion is to contribute to the promotion of social peace in Africa, and thus helps forward the resolution of our contemporary realities, the various religious leaders have to cultivate the spirit of tolerance that has been a characteristic feature of traditional religion. To do this, however, and get their followers in the right frame of mind, they need to jettison their selfish instrumental conception of religion in material terms and use it as a means of getting people to cooperate for the resolution of their common problem (p. 159)

The essential consequence of Gbadegesin's arguments centers on the need for a religious re-education, as it is obvious that it is not the absence of God or religion that is responsible for the dismal situation of contemporary African realities, but the inability of the religions to institute and inculcate a religious and spiritual balance in life. Those who canvass "reinstating" God as the solution must not forget that in the hands of leadership the manipulation of religion and God is very easy. Gbadegesin provides a rigorous examination of the cultural response to Contemporary African Realities which supposes that

the explanation for contemporary African reality can be traced to the fact that the majority of Africans have either forgotten or ignored their cultural roots and have assimilated foreign cultures and foreign ideas. These ideas have done incalculable damage to the social and economic reality of Africa and is responsible for the experience of the moment.

There is, on this view, an authentic African personality which is the pillar of African survival in a multiracial world.

When this personality is not developed, or pride is not taken in it, everything goes into shambles (p. 161).

He presents a good critique of variants of this view. Starting with Negritude, he asks what constitutes authentic African culture, civilization of the universal, African distinctive cultural values, vital forces, accommodative communalism. He notes that colonialism and neocolonialism have irrupted the continuity of whatever could be regarded as traditional values, devaluing and denying the existence of the cultures of the dominated peoples, thereby dehumanizing and dehistoricizing the historicity of cultures (p. 177). He contends that we must shun any form of reification of culture, as culture is dynamic and cannot be held static, while being committed to culture as an instrument for liberation from domination, subjugation and oppression.

He observes that various suggestions for the resolution of Contemporary African Realities from the politico-economic perspective are based on partial comprehension of the ramifications of the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism, which has led to transmutation from colonialism to "flag independence" (p. 190). He considered the various phases of Obafemi Awolowo's thoughts as presented in *The People's Republic* and *The Problems of Africa*, noting the fact that, in the first book, the analysis was not presented as dependent on class struggle, while in the second book, Awolowo described the competition among families as representative of class interest. Though not attempting a reconciliation of these disparate views, he sought an understanding of their rationale.

The solution that develops on the basis of politico-economic view is dual in nature: i) self-reliance is postulated as the bedrock of meaningful independence; and ii) self-actualization is a necessity for freedom from internal and external exploitation (p. 212). The development of Awolowo's "regime of mental magnitude", which rests on the tripod elements of freedom from a) the negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed; b) indulgence

in wrong types of food and drink and in ostentatious consumption; and c) excessive or immoral craving for sex (p. 198) are all dependent on eradication of such mental fetters as illiteracy and ignorance, hence the need to educate the masses in indigenous and formal dimensions.

Gbadegesin's discussion of the ethics and politics of work is very interesting. He gives a functional definition of work as an inevitable aspect of the human condition. This is in contrast with the view that work is a curse (pp. 219-224). Looking at the post-colonial Nigerian environment, he explains the current low of individual and corporate productivity as a consequence of indiscipline in society. These have led to the reversal of the traditional high regard for work as the cure for poverty (p. 229). Bearing in mind the complexities of the socio-political, economic and fiscal arrangements of modern states, he examines the obligations of societies and governments to ensure and guarantee individual rights of citizens, especially gainful employment. However, one wonders whether, in identifying indiscipline as the bane of Nigerian socio-economic polity, he was not identifying only the symptom (p. 232). Given the fact that Gbadegesin had confirmed the weakness of the vision of post-colonial administration in Nigeria, it seems those who could not properly identify the role, purpose and ramifications of governance cannot provide serious and beneficial form of politico-economic arrangement. The regime of mental magnitude of members of the various administrations which had no focus, could not define what it was to be a Nigerian in the present, the immediate future and the distant future. Indiscipline is a product of a pauperized regime of mental magnitude. Hence, if governments realize the obligation to provide work and does so, the disposition to work and the propensity to maintain a consumptive mean requires more than *ad hoc* exhortations for patriotism.

In concluding, Gbadegesin puts forward a bold and provocative statement that industrialization and bonds of family are incompatible.¹ This deserves serious consideration by Africans and members of other societies to determine the truth of this type of relationship between industrialization and social cohesion, especially as it relates to family

life and consider whether such a high price is worth paying. It is here that his recommendation becomes pertinent, that "(p)erhaps, here is an example of how traditional African values may serve the west and east to rediscover such humane values and have them incorporated in their development strategies (p. 261).

Obviously, there cannot be a more auspicious and constructive way to conclude an excellent treatise on African philosophy. The level of scholarship displayed in the book, the passionate concern for the advancement of all aspects of life in Africa, the provocative, constructive and instructive ideas canvassed through well coordinated arguments, along with the objectivity and critical acuity of the analyses presented, all combine to make Gbadegesin' book a must for all students of history of ideas, philosophy, African philosophy, political economy and religions.

Note

1. A not too dissimilar position is maintained by Luis Camacho in "Latin American Perspective", *Proceedings and Addresses of APA*, 67:6, p. 68. If it is true that such a logical relationship exist between technological advancement and cultural disintegration, then the cultures of the Asian technological giants would have been eroded and destroyed. What seems true is that the cultures of the colonial societies, even after flag independence, have not been able to survive the onslaught of technological and political propaganda and consumerism.

Alexander Rosenberg, Economics - Mathematical Politics or Science of Diminishing Returns? Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. pp. xvii, 266

reviewed by Lansana Keita

Much interesting work in the philosophy of the social sciences has focused most recently on the theoretical foundations of economics. Given its formal structure, heavily reliant on mathematical language, the important epistemological question for philosophers of science has been whether economics, especially in its neoclassical expression, possesses the characteristics of a genuine science. As we know there is much epistemic prestige to be gained for any empirically oriented discipline to attain the status of science.

The theoretical discussion has been highly contentious given that much intellectual capital investment is at stake. Some theorists have argued that neoclassical economics ought not to be regarded as a science given its poor record in terms of prediction and explanation - the two necessary criteria for any research program to acquire scientific status. Alexander Rosenberg has taken this approach for some time now. Others such as Blaug, McCloskey and Hausman, though recognizing that neoclassical economics is cognitively problematic, believe that the epistemological problems that beset it are not qualitatively different from those that philosophers of science raise against empirical science in general.

In the text Economics, Mathematical Politics or Science of Diminishing Returns Rosenberg maintains his earlier position that neoclassical economics is epistemologically deficient in terms of its pretensions to scientific status in all the usual ways: 1) the problem of accurate predictions, 2) the problematic nature of the rationality postulate - crucial for the theoretical expression of neoclassical economics, and 3) neoclassical theory is afflicted by the classical problem of the philosophy of social science, i.e., the ontological gap between mentalistic explanatory concepts such as reasons, motives, etc. and their putative behavioral manifestations. One might consider in this regard the prob-

lematic distinctions between preference and choice, and between the idea of revealed preference and subjective utility.

Rosenberg's text pursues useful discussions on the rhetorical approach of McCloskey, the applicability of Lakatos' view of science as constituting dynamic research programs, and the importance of the idea of equilibrium for a complete neoclassical theory. Rosenberg even explores the interesting idea of whether economics could be a biological science, and discusses the ideas of Friedman, Alchian and Becker in this regard.

In discussing the possibility of whether economics could be a biological science Rosenberg focuses much on the ideas of Becker. He writes that "Becker's innovation holds out hope of circumventing some of the problems of intentionality canvassed in the last chapter only if it is interpreted as a theory about the biological needs of Homo sapiens, instead of a theory about the preferences of economic agents. This is an interpretation which Becker himself encourages..." (p. 155). But can Becker's approach (as expressed in the chapter titled "The Economic Approach to Human Behavior") circumvent the problem of uninterpretable-intentionality that plagues theory construction for the discipline? The implicit goal here, as Rosenberg puts it, is "to make tastes endogenous, naturalizing them as the explicable expression of biologically accessible human needs" (p. 170).

The answer Rosenberg offers is that the teleological approach a la Becker "holds out no more hope of transcending generic predictions than the old theory. For our purposes, it is an improvement in form and not in content" (p. 176). Again the problem here is one of being sufficiently specific for the requirements of a teleological theory.

The problem with trying to confer scientific status on the analysis of economic behavior by way of evolutionary biology is that the theorist is ultimately restricted to no more than generic predictions, a result which constitutes one of the epistemological weaknesses of evolutionary biology.

Rosenberg's answer to questions concerning the status of neoclassical economic theory is that "economics is best viewed as a branch of

mathematics somewhere on the intersection between pure and applied axiomatic systems" (p. 247). The basis for this claim is that actual human behavior is best viewed as expressions of a contractarian political philosophy according to which every agent seeks to maximize his or her own self interests. And the purpose of formal equilibrium theory, in this connection, would be ideally "open in which each egoistical agent has an optimal strategy, regardless of the strategies of other agents" (p. 223).

But I believe that this solution merely brings us full circle. Rosenberg's claim that economics is best viewed as a branch of mathematics, in much the same way that Euclidean geometry has been shown to be relevant only in certain contexts, is questionable. Euclidean geometry is indeed valid for our macroscopic world as its application to modern engineering demonstrates. Our local world is an Euclidean one. On the other hand the contractarian political philosophy that formal economics attempts to describe must be understood as an elaborate normative construction. The mathematics of economics is merely its language, but that language does represent something. Is it the empirical world or is it a set of prescriptions about behavior? One must take issue then with Rosenberg's claim that "Both geometry and economic theory turn out to be branches of mathematics after all" (p. 248). Economics uses the language of mathematics (as Spinoza did for ethics) to prescribe the choices we should make for a particular anthropological structure whose cultural dictates are founded on the principle of self-interested utility maximizing behavior. But the value system embedded in this anthropological structure is complex. On the one hand the neoclassical theory in practice seeks compatibility with the utilitarian ethic of Bentham and Mill but on the other hand there are imposed limits as to what constitutes transactional behavior within the market economy. I believe that the pietistic and formalized "treat persons not as means to some end but as ends in themselves" ethic of Kant is, perhaps, the restraining principle at work here. Consider the fact that in those societies where neoclassical economics holds sway the law severely determines what items might be traded and how indi-

vidual agents ought to conduct themselves in these transactions. For example, penalties for the sale or exchange of controlled substances, and persons or parts of persons thereof are known to the public. And even the stock market, the heart of the market economy, is played according to certain ethically founded rules and principles. Yet Kant himself would indeed still have problems with how the contemporary market economy operates as formalized by contemporary neoclassical economic theory.

The issues discussed in this text, though theoretical, are important given the importance of economics in the sociology and politics of modern society. There are thus many crucial and decisive social issues settled by economic decision making. The sub-text of the Cold War was really about the validity of different schools of thought in economics. It was about the economic theories of Friedman and Keynes versus that of Marx, Lenin and Mao-tse-tung. The same economics subtext is at work in the ministrations of IMF and World Bank officials who would normally view the world from the standpoint of the neoclassical economist. The Third World government officials who often accept IMF and World Bank prescriptions with reluctance have often themselves been trained in the principles of neoclassical economics. And there would be a tendency to accept the epistemological status conferred on these principles.

Thus given the often unfortunate effects of the IMF recommendations it would certainly help were training in economics complemented by some exposure to the theory of economics. Rosenberg's text falls under such a rubric. The issues it discusses would therefore be of interest not only to students of economics in the West, but also to those in the universities of Africa and Asia.

In sum, Rosenberg's text is quite useful. It covers the main aspects of the contemporary debate about the scientific status of economics, and presents its own, though problematic, view of how to appraise contemporary neoclassical economic theory.

Réciprocité-Coopération et le Système Palabrique Africain. Tradition et Herméneutique dans les théories du développement de la conscience morale chez Piaget, Kohlberg et Habermas, Olivier Ndjimbi-Tshiende, St Olien: EOS Verlag, 1992, 424 p. Volume de 21x14,8cm. Prix: 48 DM

par P. Ngoma-Binda

Issu d'une dissertation doctorale présentée, avec éminence, à l'Institut de Philosophie de Munich, le livre de l'Abbé Dr. Ndjimbi-Tshiende, originaire du Zaïre, est un exemple lumineux d'une pratique scientifique et philosophique merveilleusement réussie. Il a pu relever le défi d'un projet complexe, immense et ambitieux, articulé à la fois sur la philosophie africaine de la palabre et sur la pensée occidentale de la conscience morale à travers, ici, trois noms des plus énormes - Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg et Jürgen Habermas - situés dans trois espaces culturels des plus significatifs du monde occidental (les espaces français, anglo-américain et germanique, dont il a fallu maîtriser les outils linguistiques. Et travaillant des objets différents à partir de disciplines diverses allant de la philosophie aux sciences morales et politiques en passant par la psychologie génétique et la sociologie, la pédagogie et l'anthropologie, l'ouvrage réalise une fresque du savoir solide et cohérente.

L'architecture du livre est d'une systématisme et d'une symétrie remarquables. L'auteur conduit son travail en cinq parties dont les chapitres comportent, chacun, un nombre presque égal de pages. Dans une minutie analytique conforme à l'ordre académique le plus rigoureux, il dégage et examine, dans la première partie, le sens comme la signification de la réciprocité et de la coopération dans la vie sociale tels que Piaget, Kohlberg et Habermas les donnent à voir dans leurs travaux respectifs. La deuxième partie, également analytique, éclaire ces mêmes catégories morales, sociales et politiques à partir du "système palabrique" de la société africaine. Si la troisième partie revient vers la première pour élaborer une théorie à partir des résultats des analyses effectuées, et pour dégager les leçons pratiques d'une juste

conception de la coopération-réciprocité, la quatrième partie revient quant à elle vers la deuxième pour construire la théorie de la "récojustice" comme signification réévaluée de la "palabre" africaine. Et enfin, harmonisant l'ensemble des résultats dans une synthèse théorico-pratique solide, la dernière partie (qui sert également de conclusion) propose, pour la survie de l'humanité au Zaïre, en Afrique et dans le monde entier, des éléments d'une nouvelle éthique réciprocaire, tirés des implications pédagogiques et socio-politiques qui concluent chacun des points consacrés aux quatre conceptions examinées, à savoir, les conceptions piagétienne, kohlbergienne, habermassienne, et palabrique africaine.

Le contenu de ces analyses et efforts de théorisation est essentiellement éthique. De la pensée morale de J. Piaget présentée par l'auteur, je retiens que dans le processus génétique de la conscience morale, la conscience de la réciprocité apparaît comme le sommet de l'évolution morale chez l'homme. Elle est la perception d'une nécessité de l'équilibre dans les actions entre les individus que l'existence même oblige de situer les uns par rapport aux autres. Elle est, dit l'auteur, une "inter-situation" ou encore "une mise en présence mutuelle et (en) une coordination des points de vue et des actions" (p.26). La conscience morale réciprocaire et coopérative se développe, selon des étapes précises (que l'auteur rappelle fort bien), en s'articulant principalement sur la conscience de la règle, de sa sacralité et de sa démocratisation, et sur la conscience de la responsabilité et de la justice. C'est grâce à la conscience réciprocaire que la coopération est possible. Celle-ci est entendue, par Piaget, comme un "rapport social d'échange entre égaux" relevant de la pensée (p.28). Et c'est grâce à la coopération que se forment des personnalités libres, réfléchies et responsables. La réciprocité et la coopération sont donc d'une signification inestimable dans la vie de l'homme et de la société. Elles permettent à la vie de fleurir, de se partager harmonieusement, de se protéger et de se conserver en dépit de la bousculade inévitable entre les humains (p.57). Et sur le plan pédagogique et socio-politique, les implications d'une telle

pensée sont l'exigence d'un déploiement de la philosophie, comme recherche amoureuse de la sagesse, dans tous les domaines de l'existence. Cela implique la nécessité d'une politique éducative qui favorise le développement des vertus morales ainsi que l'instauration, à l'école comme dans la société globale, d'une démocratie non pas absolue mais harmonisatrice de la dictature et du libéralisme, de la démocratie et de l'oligarchie (p.67).

Dans la théorie du développement de la conscience morale de L. Kohlberg, la réciprocité est saisie comme un principe central de l'éthique exprimé sous la forme de la réversibilité (l'action morale devant être évaluée par l'individu en se mettant à la place des autres) ou de la règle d'or de la morale (ne fais pas à autrui ce que tu ne voudrais pas qu'on te fasse, ou positivement), tandis que la coopération est comprise comme l'objet visé par la réciprocité. Ce développement s'articule, de manière significative, sur la notion de justice que Kohlberg considère, à la suite de Socrate et de Rawls, comme la vertu sociale par excellence. L'éducation sera donc "la mise en pratique de la philosophie" qui comporte et plaide en faveur d'une conscience aiguë de la justice (p.74). Dans un travail de fourmi, l'auteur retrace les étapes, décrites par Kohlberg, du développement de la conscience morale ordonnée sur la justice. La réciprocité comme équilibre réfléchi ou réversibilité a pour signification d'être, dans la vie de l'homme et de la société, le "chemin de la reconnaissance de l'autre comme mon prochain" et, fondamentalement, le chemin de l'harmonie et de la coopération comme effort commun de promotion de la vie, de la destinée de tous et de l'univers. Les implications pédagogiques de cette pensée sont principalement, selon l'auteur, la nécessité de comprendre la philosophie comme, exclusive-ment ou ultimement, une réflexion sur l'éducation (p.105). Dans cette perspective, "la politique comme institution se voit acculée à une fonction non pas de direction, mais de service à l'égard de l'éducation, c'est-à-dire finalement à l'égard du développement vers la coopération" (p.106). Cette éducation est, fondamentalement, une éducation aux principes éthiques les plus élevés de

la conscience morale: ceux de respect des personnes et de la vie humaine.

La pensée éthique de J. Habermas relative aux notions de réciprocité et de coopération se laisse dégager de la théorie de l'argumentation dialogique (ou de l'agir communicationnel) au sein de laquelle l'éthique de la discussion constitue une pièce importante. L'agir communicationnel s'effectue comme interaction visant l'intercompréhension au sein de la discussion, et dont la réussite présuppose la réciprocité comme "reconnaissance intersubjective des prétentions à la validité" c'est-à-dire des prétentions à la vérité, à la justesse et à la sincérité. La visée dernière de ces prétentions est l'entente, le consensus rationnel libre, à travers la reconnaissance mutuelle des sujets communicants comme identiques et égaux. La réciprocité rend possible la vérité et l'intersubjectivité i.e. la constitution des sujets comme identités différentes mais solidaires et égales en valeur, cet état impliquant le respect et le partage mutuels. Et la coopération est le but commun final recherché par des sujets en communication, comme coordination des actions au sein de la société, comme solidarité et harmonie. Il n'est pas de vie possible sans la coopération fondée sur la réciprocité. Les implications de cette pensée sur les plans pédagogique et socio-politique sont importantes pour la vie nationale et internationale: il y a urgence d'apprendre au monde les principes de base de la réciprocité et de la coopération véritables pour refaire notre monde dans lequel se réalise, présentement, "un dialogue systématiquement faussé, une communication qui ne peut conduire à une entente réelle et profonde parce que la réciprocité a été oubliée ou méconnue en ses éléments essentiels" (p.151). A cet effet l'auteur propose, entre autres éléments, la création d'une "école internationale de recyclage ou de formation permanente des politiques et hommes d'administration en exercice" (p.152), en même temps que les écoles actuelles devraient être amenées à éduquer intensément les enfants aux vertus de la réciprocité et aux principes de la coopération véritable, en utilisant la pédagogie la plus appropriée possible.

Après avoir ainsi relevé la signification de la réciprocité et de la coopération dans le monde occidental (à travers les oeuvres de Piaget, Kohlberg et Habermas), l'auteur se retourne vers la conception africaine. Et ici, c'est dans la "palabre" qu'il voit s'exprimer de manière importante le langage comme le sens de la réciprocité et de la coopération. Le système palabrique ne laisse apparaître sa pleine signification qu'à partir de l'importance accordée, par la pensée africaine, à la parole comme instrument de fraternisation familière ayant une source divine et constituant une grande force créatrice. Porteuse d'un préjugé culturel tenace issu du monde occidental qui la considère comme une pratique de bavardage interminable, la notion de "palabre" reçoit sa juste signification positive et est réévaluée par l'auteur qui, pour radicaliser ce caractère positif, propose de lui substituer l'appellation de "récojustice africaine". La palabre, mieux, la "récojustice" est ainsi comprise comme un système africain d'administration de la justice faisant intervenir un mode communautaire de discussion et de règlement des conflits par l'entente harmonisatrice de la société. Une analyse structuraliste minutieuse, et sensiblement trop abondante, de la récojustice menée à partir de deux exemples éclairants font apparaître le système palabrique comme un "multidialogue" au sein duquel la "parole est ouverte à tout le monde, mais dans le respect le plus absolu et dans l'ordre" (p.215) et ayant pour visée de "rendre une vie sociale possible et viable pour tous, beaucoup plus que d'affirmer un gagnant et un perdant..." même si, bien sûr, il y en a toujours un qui gagne ou qui perd (p.226).

La récojustice africaine est perçue comme un "processus raffiné de justice" qui se soucie beaucoup plus de la réconciliation, de la communion et de l'harmonisation des relations sociales que de l'accusation et de la condamnation d'un coupable. La "palabre", activité d'une grande importance dont la conduite ne peut être confiée qu'aux personnes sages, éloquentes et intelligentes, joue ainsi un rôle social profondément thérapeutique. Elle est un effort de recherche commune de la vérité, de la paix, de la vie, à travers la "réciprocité communian-te" pour ainsi dire, et qui est portée par des conditions de possibilité

éthiques à la fois proches de celles indiquées par Habermas et dépassant ces dernières, principalement dans la prise en compte des conditions de possibilité spirituelles (pp.267-268). Au total, la récojustice se révèle comme un système social judiciaire fondé sur une pensée éducative et politique d'ordre éthique, et valorisant la coopération réciprocaire ainsi que la réconciliation comme voie d'avènement de la paix, de l'ordre, de l'harmonie, et comme instrument de maximisation des chances de vie pour chacun et pour tous au sein de la société humaine.

Les implications ou leçons pédagogiques et socio-politiques de ce système spécifique d'administration de la justice sont d'importance capitale pour le monde d'aujourd'hui. Sur le plan pédagogique, le système palabrique est donné comme une "école de morale et de vie pour tous" et une instance de "coopération vitalisante", chemin de la paix et de la protection régénératrice de la vie. Et sur le plan socio-politique, l'auteur estime inédit le chemin d'harmonie sociale générale ouvert par le système palabrique. La réciprocité coopérative, au coeur de laquelle se situe la justice, n'est possible que par la conversion politique vers les valeurs du sacré - source de la sagesse - et du respect de l'homme dont l'aspiration sociale première est le droit à l'égalité des droits pour tous. Dans ce sens, l'organisation sociale appropriée, inspirée du système de gouvernement palabrique, est, selon Ndjimbi-Tshiende, la "démocratie oligarchique" c'est-à-dire une institution unissant harmonieusement la démocratie et l'oligarchie, réalisant un équilibre relativement parfait "entre l'anarchie et la tyrannie" (p.283).

De la confrontation des différentes conceptions de la réciprocité et de la coopération, l'auteur montre l'excellence du système palabrique comme système de pensée éthique, éducative et politique, dont les principes paraissent être les plus aptes à aider le monde actuel à acquérir une éthique universelle: l'éthique réciprocaire. Les principes de base d'une telle éthique sont ceux qu'inspirent les quatre philosophies examinées, essentiellement appliquées à rechercher les règles d'éducation morale de l'homme et de gouvernement politique des sociétés. Ce sont: le respect de la vie et de l'être humain, la culture de la réciprocité et du sens coopératif, le respect de l'histoire (ou de la tradition) en

la connaissant et en y puisant constamment "des leçons de vie" pour aujourd'hui et pour demain. Les exigences en sont que les philosophes moralistes "sont condamnés à être des éducateurs de l'homme et de la société" (p.364), et ils ont non seulement le droit mais l'obligation "de s'occuper de la chose politique, où se joue l'enjeu de la vie et de la vie humaine" (p.365).

Une éthique réciprocitaire, pouvant efficacement être au service du Zaïre et de l'Afrique dans la figure spécifique de leur misère morale et politique actuelle, doit s'organiser autour du respect strict des principes d'agir équilibré, d'harmonie, de responsabilité, de non-discrimination et de sagesse, et exige de confier le gouvernement de nos cités aux personnes compétentes et sages, respectueuses de la vie, des citoyens, de l'histoire et convaincues de la nécessité des principes de la justice et de l'éducation réciprocitaire.

L'apport fondamental de cet ouvrage se situe, en tout premier lieu, dans cette exploration originale de la signification et de la nécessité de la réciprocité coopérative qui conduit à affirmer et à valoriser une éthique de la coopération réciprocitaire comme règle de vie dans les relations inter-individuelles, intra-sociales et inter-nationales. Il y a mieux encore: puisant dans les systèmes éthiques de Piaget, de Kohlberg et de Habermas, qu'il ne manque pas de critiquer et de compléter de manière remarquable au moyen des principes du système palabrique du monde vécu africain, l'auteur nous fournit une réflexion éthico-politique pratique dont les préceptes, clairs et pertinents, devront pouvoir réguler les comportements des citoyens, gouvernés et gouvernants, de nos sociétés aujourd'hui en crise de sagesse effroyable. En particulier, l'idée d'une "démocratie oligarchique", dans laquelle je crois percevoir la figure de ce que certains appellent une "démocratie forte", est tout à fait stimulante, principalement dans son exigence de reformulation des règles du jeu électif habituelles.

Egalement, l'effort d'évacuation du terme "palabre" et son remplacement par celui de "récojustice" est admirable même si l'audace imaginative aurait dû rechercher dans le registre africain. Car le sys-

tème palabrique doit bien avoir une appellation précise dans l'une ou l'autre société sinon dans chacune des sociétés africaines. Ce vœu n'est pas une simple question de querelle de termes dans la mesure où l'on sait que les mots comportent des concepts qui entraînent des conceptions spécifiques. Une nuance africaine introduirait peut-être à une piste de conception particulière, différente, moins ou plus riche, du système. Ce qu'il y a de plus important à souligner est certainement le bel effort de dissection et de compréhension de la richesse sociale, éthique et spirituelle de la pratique palabrique, effort probablement unique jusqu'ici dans la perspective socio-philosophique. Ce beau mérite demeurerait même si la rubrique relative à la tradition et à l'herméneutique était écartée du titre comme du corps de l'oeuvre. Eu égard à la conscience morale, c'est une rubrique qui peut paraître excédentaire en dépit de sa fécondité.

Et enfin, il est indispensable de relever un concept riche qui me semble fondamental dans le système que l'auteur s'efforce de construire. C'est le concept de respect: respect de l'homme, de la vie, de l'autre dans son identité et dans sa différence. Il me semble être le coeur de la réciprocité et la base d'une pratique de coopération sociale et politique sage, éthique et promotrice de la vie et de l'humain dans la vie. Mais le projet de fondation d'une éthique réciprocitaire devrait pouvoir poser la reconnaissance, dans son double sens de compréhension remerciante et d'acceptation accueillante, comme présupposé du respect, et de toute éthique. C'est ce dernier concept qui, avec pour ainsi dire le maximum de fondation minimale (acceptable par toute personne libre et rationnelle), a droit et validité d'exiger de nous tous d'axer nos comportements ainsi que nos diverses conceptions de la coopération sociale et internationale sur les principes intellectuels et règles morales de l'éthique réciprocitaire.

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