



QUEST

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QUEST

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FOREWORD

It is as much a pleasure as it is an honour for me to provide this Foreword to this maiden issue of QUEST: *Philosophical Discussions*.

In a continent and at a time in which and when the peoples of Africa are afflicted by the ravages of underdevelopment and outraged by the indignities of racism and colonial and minority rule in parts of the continent, it is understandable that the new nations of Africa should accord top priority attention to the multiple and complex tasks of national development in order to improve the welfare and prosperity of their peoples, wiping out the vestiges of colonial and minority rule, and the total destruction of apartheid. In these circumstances, some people may question, indeed have questioned, the wisdom of embarking upon intellectual ventures which, to them, would seem to have no practical value to the perceived needs of Africa. They have sought to see excluded from our universities the pursuit of those disciplines which they consider as falling under such category. They are wrong. They need to be assisted to see the danger of undervaluing the usefulness of the so-called "useless" disciplines, such as Philosophy, Literature, etc., in the development and progress of nations. An imaginative journal devoted to a "victim" discipline can be extremely helpful in this task.

In the review of Western philosophy in his *Consciencism*, Kwame Nkrumah sought to illustrate the thesis that philosophy, however academic, is always trying, explicitly or implicitly, to say something about society. According to Bertrand Russell.

"a man's philosophy has practical importance, and a prevalent philosophy may have an intimate connection with the happiness or misery of large sections of mankind".

There can certainly be no doubt that the creation of effective and responsible government, the achievement of accelerated economic development, and the accomplishment of social and cultural renaissance can be seriously jeopardised by the cobwebs of irrationality and judgments based on crooked thinking, half-truths and unproved assertions and by the absence of a progressive national ethos. The new nations of Africa, as those elsewhere in the world, need fresh and/or re-examined and re-appraised old African philosophies to consolidate their new identities. Indeed, several emergent philosophies have come up in the continent subsequent to national independence. Thus, here in Zambia, we have the Zambian Philosophy of Humanism. It is hoped that the new journal, *QUEST: Philosophical Discussion*, will provide opportunities for reflection on and discussion of the philosophical concepts of Africa, so as to draw out a deeper meaning and understanding of them, particularly in a rapidly changing era and for exposition of the relevance of philosophy to society and possible social and political action.

There are many illusions and realities of scholarship in Africa. With regard to

what individuals have done, are doing and can do, the position assumes particular delicacy in a field such as Philosophy. As A. D. Galloway said in a lecture to the Philosophical Society at the then University College, Ibadan, Nigeria on 11th January, 1956,

“creative philosophy is never the work of an individual. It is the product of a whole society. It may come to fruition and find articulate expression in the work of the professional scholar. But its roots are in the thoughts and aspirations of the community. It is from there that it draws its strength and in relation to the community that it has its relevance”.

Herein lies the challenge of the African environment to the philosophers and to those who may seek to publish their work, pertinent to Africa, in the new journal. It is, of course, understood that not all philosophies have roots in the life of the community. But what has been and is Africa's contribution to universal philosophies? In other words, to what extent has the African environment enriched our common humanity in matters philosophical and who have been and are the actors in this endeavour? Perhaps the emergence of *QUEST: Philosophical Discussions* will encourage scholarship to provide answers to these questions.

It is now widely recognised that one of the most serious impediments to scholarship in Africa is the lack of local publishing of scholarly periodicals and other publications within Africa. For example, in the field of philosophy, there would so far appear to be only one journal, in the English language, that is published on the region and it is the one published in South Africa. *QUEST: Philosophical Discussions* is, therefore, a most welcome addition to the meagre list of scholarly publications originating in Africa. However, if it is to have real impact, the new journal must demand the highest standards of scholarship in the submissions of those seeking to contribute papers to it for publication. Furthermore, both the editors and the authors may wish to be guided by two truisms:

- (i) that philosophies do become outmoded, resulting in the impermanence of philosophical systems; and
- (ii) that it is not the business of a true philosopher to produce final and assured results which become public property by the mere fact of their publication.

It is, therefore, hoped that what is published in the journal will generate healthy further work of scholarly value.

I am glad that *QUEST: Philosophical Discussions* will cater for an international audience of both professional philosophers and intellectuals with a general interest in matters philosophical and pertinent to Africa. However, in the light of some of the observations made above, we need to remind ourselves of a remark by Bertrand Russell that “philosophy proper deals with matters of interest to the general educated public”. To meet the interests of both the professional philosophers and the general educated public will be a most challenging task for a scholarly journal.

At this stage, I wish to pay special tribute to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Zambia and to the editors of the new journal, Messrs Roni M. Khul Bwalya and Pieter Boele van Hensbroek, for this unique venture. But a venture of this kind needs good financial support and, in this connection, we

are most grateful to the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NO-RAD) and the Dutch Government for their generous grants to the journal.

The judgment of scholars on work published or intended to be published in a scholarly journal can be very harsh. This may well determine the fate of the journal. But then real scholarship is no easy matter: it lies in excellence and this can be a most demanding thing to secure and maintain. I wish *QUEST: Philosophical Discussions* every success.

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Lusaka.

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30th March, 1987.

Résumé

En prenant comme exemple l'article de Kwasi Wiredu: "Le concept de la Vérité dans la Langue Akan", l'auteur suggère que les considérations linguistique concernant les langues Africaines, ne peuvent pas, en elles-mêmes, jouer un rôle décisif dans des discussions philosophiques.

Wiredu montra que dans la langue Akan il n'y a pas de mots isolés équivalents des mots "vérité", et "fait". Les deux peuvent seulement être traduits par l'expression "nea ete saa" ("ce qui est ainsi"). A partir de cette observation, Wiredu va jusqu'à conclure que, par exemple, la théorie de correspondance de la vérité et quelques problèmes épistémologiques en question, ne peuvent pas être exprimés clairement dans la langue Akan. C'est-à-dire que quelques problèmes philosophiques alors, ne semblent pas être aussi universels qu'on le croit souvent.

Sans négliger le fait que, ailleurs, Wiredu nous met en garde contre la dérivation des clés philosophiques à partir de faits linguistiques, l'auteur suggère que même si un opinion ou un problème peut être exprimé ou pas, dans une langue particulière, cela ne montre rien qui concerne l'universalité de cette opinion ou de ce problème. Cela peut, de toute façon, indiquer que cette langue est peut développée dans ce respect particulier et pertinent.

Finalement, il est suggéré que se limiter à des particularités linguistiques des langues Africaines tend à freiner les discussions entre les philosophes Africains, à cause de la diver-

PHILOSOPHY AND AN AFRICAN LANGUAGE

A.G.A. Bello

In this paper, I wish to argue that though the language of a people can be a splendid index to their 'philosophy', linguistic considerations cannot in themselves be decisive in philosophical disputes. They can only provide additional data. Furthermore, I shall argue that the African philosopher should be wary of over-emphasising the importance of his vernacular, if only for the sake of being able to communicate with fellow African philosophers. In developing my arguments, I shall use Kwasi Wiredu as a foil.

In his *Philosophy and an African Culture*,¹ Wiredu notes that the African philosopher, by paying close attention to his language, "might bring an added dimension to his theoretical considerations."² Such close attention, he further suggests, "may often yield useful dividends in philosophical clarity."³

Wiredu also cautions against two dangers in this regard. The first warning is that "language can only incline, not necessitate."⁴ Secondly, he thinks that it is premature to seek to carry out the teaching of philosophy in the vernacular.⁵

It is obvious that, up to a point, both Wiredu and I agree on the significance of an African language to philosophy. What makes it necessary for me to press the above arguments is that Wiredu, in some places, seems to abandon the caution which he himself considers appropriate in this matter. Two of Wiredu's articles that can be cited in this regard are "The concept of truth in the Akan language"⁶ and "The Akan concept of mind".⁷

In "The concept of truth in the Akan language". Wiredu claims, firstly, that there are no one-word equivalents in Akan for the cognitive (as contrasted with the moral) sense of 'truth' and for 'fact'.⁸ (In regard to 'truth', this is because, according to Wiredu, the one-word equivalent of 'truth' in Akan, that is, *no-kware* has a primarily moral meaning.⁹) Secondly, he claims that the Akan phrase *'nea ete saa'* (literally, 'what is so') adequately captures the meaning of those words.¹⁰ Lastly, he claims that whatever can be said with 'fact' can be said using the notion of *'nea ete saa'*.¹¹

The consideration of these mainly linguistic claims, which have been contested,¹² I think successfully, is not crucial here. What we need to look at are the consequences that Wiredu draws from the claims. The first consequence is that the correspondence theory of truth, as traditionally formulated, becomes unenlightening for the Akan. This is the case especially with some variants of the theory, for example, the one which says that "'p' is true" means "'p' corresponds to fact". This translates in Akan to "*p' te saa*" means "'p' te saa", which translates back into English as "'p' is so" means "'p' is so", an unenlightening repetition.¹³ (Note, however, that an opponent may ask for the word or phrase which translates the phrase 'corresponds to' in the above example.)

The above consequence, according to Wiredu, seems to suggest a second, that

there are problems that can be posed on English but not in Akan. Such is the question: 'How are true propositions related to facts?'¹⁴ In Akan this question will translate into: 'How are things that are so related to things that are so?', an unhelpful repetition. Wiredu resists the temptation to conclude that, therefore, the relation of truth to fact is not a genuine philosophical problem, though he could not resist the temptation to conclude that some philosophical problems are not universal. Thus, the problem of the relation of truth to fact is not universal, since it is not inescapable for the Akan mind.¹⁵ As we have seen, the question cannot even be formulated without repetition.

To further illustrate this point, Wiredu takes examples from classical truth-functional logic. That logic deals with state-forms like,

- (a) 'if p then q'
- (b) 'Only if p then q'
- (c) 'P if and only if q'
- (d) 'P is equivalent to q'
- (e) "'P if and only if q' is equivalent to '(if p then q) and (if q then p)'".

According to Wiredu, only statement-forms (a), (b) and (d) can be rendered into Akan. The biconditional, that is, (c), cannot be expressed in Akan. Similarly, its equivalence with a conjunction of 'if p then p' and 'if q then p', that is, (e), cannot be expressed in Akan. What this means, according to him, is that what is a logical truth in English, that is, (e), does not even occur in Akan. Moreover, the question whether 'p if and only if q' is equivalent to '(if p then q) and (if q then p)' is not a logical problem in Akan.¹⁶ (Note that a logical problem is also a philosophical problem.)

We have seen that, according to Wiredu, the questions,

- (i) What is the relation of truth to fact? and
- (ii) Is 'p if and only if q' logically equivalent to '(if p then q) and (if q then p)'?

are peculiar to the English language and others like it. The questions cannot even begin to be formulated in Akan. It would seem to follow, and this is the third consequence, that these and such problems are not as fundamental as others which are universal to all languages. Such universal problems, according to Wiredu, are,

- (iii) Can entailment be defined in terms of implication? If so, how? and
- (iv) What is meant by saying that a statement is so, that is, what is meant by saying that things are as a statement says they are?¹⁷

The above analysis, according to Wiredu, again, as a final consequence, reflects on the correspondence theory of truth, some forms of which only attend to the less fundamental problem of the clarification of the relation of truth to fact, rather than the more fundamental problem of the clarification of the notion of a statement being so. The correspondence theory, according to him, does not shape up at all as an attempted solution of the problem of truth until it has given a satisfactory account of the nature of fact. As they stand, therefore, many correspondence theories are not of any universal significance.¹⁸

The only possible exception to this generalization is Tarski's semantic theory of truth (which is generally regarded as a form of the correspondence theory). This theory, according to Wiredu, can be interpreted in such a way as to provide a possible starting-point in the solution of the problem of truth. In comparison to all this, Wiredu says, some versions of the pragmatic and coherence theories emerge unscathed when translated into Akan. Apart from that, "they take on a new look if they are measured against the task of elucidating the notion of something being so."¹⁹ Though Wiredu does not substantiate these two latter claims, the net result of his analysis is to recommend to his readers the pragmatic and coherence theories which, according to him, are at bottom one.²⁰

In making a critical examination of Wiredu's views one has to say, firstly, that though Wiredu does not explicitly pronounce on the matter, it is not untenable to suggest that no major natural language is intrinsically superior or inferior to any other. It can, however, not be denied that one language may be more or less developed in some specific respect, for example, literature, philosophy, science, etc., than another language. It is also not impossible that, with some effort and doggedness, any language can catch up with any other in some specific respect in which it is deficient. Coining and borrowing are two of the ways in which this can be done.

Secondly, there may be nothing in principle wrong with labelling philosophical problems 'universal', 'fundamental' or even 'pseudo'. I am however not sure if such a classification can be derived from the fact that the problems either cannot at all be stated in a vernacular or cannot be stated without uninformative tautology or repetition. Translation from one language to another, especially in 'technical' matters, needs to be approached with caution.

Thirdly, it is obvious that philosophical insights can be drawn from linguistic facts. The advent of ordinary language philosophy in Britain and the United States and of the philosophy of language is an eloquent testimony to that fact. Moreover, the language of a people can be a splendid index to the people's beliefs, presuppositions and culture. However, we must be wary of using purely linguistic facts (for example, translatability or non-translatability) as knock-down arguments for philosophical beliefs or doctrines.

Take, for instance, sayings in English like, 'May his soul rest in peace', 'He is out of his mind', 'He has a sharp mind', etc. These sayings seem to suggest that the English people believe that the mind or soul may exist and act independently of the body. But this, in itself, is not enough to recommend dualism in the mind-body problem. (As it is well-known, many philosophers whose native language is English reject dualism.) Note that the reason is not that the mind-body language is not translatable into other languages. This may indeed be so; it may even be impossible to convey the dualism implied in English in another language. But the fate of dualism in this respect is also not sufficient to lend plausibility to any rival of dualism, for example, the identity theory.

Lastly, it is not impossible that two native speakers of the same language may, on the basis of their analysis of their language and culture, come to two different views on a philosophical topic. For example, though Wiredu claims that the idea of cognitive truth as *nea et saa* inclines him to the coherence and pragmatic

theories of truth,²¹ Bedu-Addo claims that this notion supports the correspondence theory of truth.²² Similarly, Wiredu claims that his reflection on the Akan concept of mind inclines him to the hypothesis that thought is an aspect of brain process.²³ However, Kwame Gyekye claims that,

in spite of some kind of materialism apparent in the Akan language, Akan philosophy of mind and body is thoroughly and undoubtedly dualistic.²⁴

It is thus not enough to say of any theory: 'This theory does not translate into my language without tautology or repetition (or, as Wiredu puts it, without trivialization); therefore, its rivals are preferable.' But this seems to be roughly what Wiredu does in his analysis. Witness what he does with the correspondence theory of truth. He says in effect: 'There is no one word in Akan which translates the cognitive meaning of truth; neither is there any one word which translates 'fact'. Both translate into 'is so' or 'what is so'. Moreover, whatever can be said with fact can be said using the notion of *'nea ete saa'*, to define truth as correspondence to fact in Akan is, therefore, to say 'what is so is what is so', an enlightening repetition. Therefore, the correspondence theory is unstatable without tautology, and thus cannot be preferred as a solution to the problem of truth. Moreover, the problem of the relation of truth to fact is not fundamental.

My reaction to this argument is that if the correspondence theory is unstatable in the Akan language, so much the worse for the language. That, in itself, says nothing about the correspondence theory; nothing about its plausibility or its being fundamental or not. However, it does say a lot about the Akan language. It means that the language is not suitable for discussing certain types of theories. It also means that the Akan-speaking peoples have to brace up to the fact that their language or conceptual apparatus needs development in this small area in which it does not facilitate clarity and exactness of thought, since it promotes the constant conflation of the meanings of 'truth' and 'fact', by rendering both as *nea ete saa* (literally, what is so).

Moreover, the claims that Wiredu makes using the Akan language can also be made using other African languages.²⁵ The question that arises is this: Is it not possible that the explanation for the lack of one-word equivalents of the cognitive sense of "truth" and of 'fact' in Akan and kindred languages is that these languages have not been exposed for long to abstract thought needing these concepts? At any rate, judging from Bedu-Addo's illustration with the etymologies of the English words 'false' and 'fact',²⁶ it is not implausible to suggest that the Akan (and other) peoples may find it necessary, after a time, to coin or borrow one word equivalents to 'fact' and the cognitive sense of truth.

A note about Wiredu's classification of problems as fundamental and universal is also in place here. His idea of a fundamental or universal problem seems to be that which is inescapable for the human mind.²⁷ It is not quite clear to me what this means. It is uncertain if there is anything which is absolutely inescapable for the human mind. The ideas of God and morality, for example, have been taken to be common to mankind, and perhaps therefore inescapable for the human mind. But there are good reasons to think that this is not necessarily so.²⁸

Perhaps what Wiredu means is that certain questions are inescapable for the human mind relative to certain problems or concerns. That may indeed be so, but that offers no comfort to Wiredu's position. For, if inescapability is relative, then it means that the question of the relationship between truth and fact is inescapable for whoever wants to talk about the problem of truth. Such a person has to tackle this question, even if only to show that the relation is inexplicable, mysterious or 'metaphysical', and that all correspondence theorists have misdirected their efforts.

Let me now make some general comments on the use of translatability as a tool of philosophical analysis. Translatability is obviously crucial to inter-cultural understanding, which is involved in translating the correspondence theory into Akan. It is indeed possible that no language can be translated into another without residue. But all the resources of the 'receiving' language should be exploited to reduce the residue to the barest minimum. What I am suggesting is that if a theory does not translate easily into a vernacular more energy should be applied to the translation. In the end, failure to translate a theory into the vernacular is in general to be regretted, not celebrated. At any rate, it is doubtful if the sort of advantage which Wiredu seeks to derive from the translation of the correspondence theory into Akan is available to him.

My concern thus far has been to show that the African philosopher cannot use the insights derived from his language and culture as knock-down arguments against a philosophical position. What I now want to do is to show some of the tasks in which the resources of an African language can be advantageously employed. From the above analysis, it is evident that Wiredu had drawn our attention to the fact that the Akan language does not have one-word equivalents to 'fact' and the cognitive sense of truth. These findings, if true, are themselves important, and, for example, point to an ambiguity in the use of '*nokware*', as also to a 'deficiency' in the Akan language in relation to these concepts. However, one is worried that Wiredu's proposal to use the phrase '*nea ete saa*' for both the cognitive sense of truth and for 'fact' already loads the dice in favour of some controversial doctrines, for example, that 'fact' means the same as 'true statement'.

African languages can also be employed in the task of supporting or refuting 'popular' (or 'unpopular') conceptions about African thought and culture, for example, that Africans are in all things religious,²⁹ that African morality is based on religion,³⁰ that African traditional beliefs are either irrational or 'non-rational',³¹ etc. A close look at African languages will also be necessary if we want to elucidate some of the concepts that 'traditional' Africans lived by, for example, predestination, sacrifice, divination, kinship, etc.

However, a danger inherent in thus employing African languages must now be pointed out, and it is this: For example, only an Akan-speaking philosopher could meaningfully have contributed to, or arbitrated in, the debate between Wiredu and Bedu-Addo on the concept of truth in the Akan language. Similarly, only an Akan-speaking philosopher can comment on the relative merits of the claims of Wiredu and Gyekye in behalf of the Akan concept of mind. Now, all Africans do not speak or understand the Akan language, and chances that the Akan language will become Africa's *lingua franca* are just as much as the chances that Yoruba, Swahili,

Hausa or Zulu will become Africa's *lingua franca*. This is partly why African philosophers have to, in the words of Wiredu himself. "temper their sense of the importance of their own language with a dose of international realism."³² The cacophonous chorus that will result from employing vernaculars for all philosophical activities will mar philosophical communication, not only between Africans and the rest of the world, but also among Africans themselves.³³ But such temperance will be out of place if vernaculars can be used in putting down philosophical positions.*

NOTES

1. Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
6. Kwasi Wiredu, "The concept of truth in the Akan language", in P.O. Bodunrin (ed.) *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives*, (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1985) pp. 43-54.
7. Kwasi Wiredu. "The Akan concept of mind", *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, October 1983, pp. 113-134.
8. Wiredu, "The Concept of truth in the Akan language", p. 46.
9. *Ibid.*, 43; and Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, p. 116.
10. Wiredu, "The concept of truth in the Akan language", p. 46.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
12. See J.T. Bedu-Addo, "On the concept of truth in Akan", in Bodunrin, *op. cit.* pp. 68-90.
13. Wiredu, "The concept of truth in the Akan language". pp. 46-47.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.
20. Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, p. 161.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
22. Bedu-Addo, *Loc. cit.*, p. 80.
23. Wiredu, "The African concept of mind". p. 125.
24. Kwame Gyekye, "Akan language and the materialist thesis: a short essay on the relation between philosophy and language", *Studies in Language*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1977, p. 237.
25. I have tried to show that these claims can be made using the Yoruba language. See A.G.A. Bello, "Truth and fact: an objectivist's reply to Wiredu's anti-objectivism", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, 1985, chapter five, especially, pp. 110-119. Each reader may try to do the same using her/his own vernacular.
26. Bedu-Addo, *Loc cit* p. 72 (for 'false') and p. 78 (for 'fact').
27. Wiredu, "The concept of truth in the Akan language", p. 48.
28. For example, in arguing against innate ideas, John Locke (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 1, Chapter 4, Sections 8 ff.) shows that the ideas of God, etc., are not common to mankind.

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29. See, for example, O.T. Oladipo, "Metaphysics, religion and Yoruba traditional thought: discussion notes on the metaphysical status of the belief in non-human agencies and powers in Yoruba traditional thought", unpublished seminar paper read to the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, 1986.
30. See, for example, Kwasi Wiredu, "Morality and religion in Akan thought" in H. Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo (eds.), *Philosophy and Cultures* (Nairobi, 1983).
31. If anyone is surprised that such a claim has still to be contended with, he may wish to see Isidore Okpewho, "Myth and rationality in Africa", *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 1, April 1981, pp. 28-49; and Femi Otubanjo "Rationality and Irrationality in anthropological theories of religion", *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, October, 1983, pp. 99-112.
32. Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, p. 35n.
33. *Ibid.*
- Professors Bounrin and Wiredu made useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper a different version of which forms part of the thesis cited in note 25 above.

SUMMARY

The present discussion is a criticism directed against those African philosophers who advocate that the philosophical enterprise should have nothing to do with (the study of) the mythopoeic modes and systems of thought that are characteristic of traditional peoples.

The author argues that it is an error to judge these modes of thought by the standards of modern philosophical thought which they do not pretend to emulate. Rather, the mythopoeic modes of thought should be viewed from the standpoint of the human context in which they function, within which they give meaning to man and human experience. Professor Irun Oluwole argues that, not only are these modes of conceiving reality not opposed to the rational but, too, they apprehend dimensions and aspects of reality which are not accessible to the rational philosophical modes of conception - dimensions in which arise questions of vital human importance to which these modes of thought offer adequate responses.

Further, it is pointed out that the radical dichotomy between the rational and the mythopoeic is misleading, since philosophical thought, from presocratic to present times, is informed in no small measure by mythical elements. Not only have thinkers like Plato and Aristotle used forms of expression that properly belong to myth but, too, philosophers and philosophers as such cannot proceed without in some measure having recourse to these forms of expression. The advocacy and attempts to totally demythify thought is, therefore, an exercise in tautology, as myth is an inalienable part of the human condition which must appear in a variety of forms as long as thought is employed in the quest to grasp that human condition in anything like its totality.

The author, contrary to the views of such writers as Elungu, Towa, Nanga, Crahay, and others, argues that, rather than abandon the study of the mythopoeic modes and systems of thought, indeed, the thought of traditional peoples in its variegated manifestations, philosophical thought in Africa must grasp it by the root - for it can root itself in these modes of thought.

MYTHE ET PHILOSOPHIE; Réponse à Elungu, Towa et autres

Irung Ishitambal'a Mulang

De nos jours, certains chercheurs qui s'adonnent à l'activité philosophique en terre africaine invitent encore, explicitement ou non, le philosophe africain ou muntu à tourner décidément le dos au mythe, pour accéder à la philosophie! Le mythe étant considéré, implicitement ou non, par eux comme étant un échec de la raison raisonnante, ou ce qui s'oppose au discours rationnel qui conduit à la vérité¹!

Il est bien difficile de se garder de réagir contre ces thèses. Il convient de revenir sur la question du rapport entre le mythe et la philosophie, pour susciter chez ces chercheurs un minimum de méfiance philosophique à l'égard de leur conception dudit rapport et les inciter à des recherches plus fouillées sur le sujet en question, recherches grâce auxquelles ils pourront, en vérité, contribuer à l'élucidation des faits culturels africains.

La chose mythique, il est vrai, est complexe. Elle ne se réduit, dans les sociétés humaines d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, ni à un seul type, ni à une seule forme. Il paraît difficile de trouver une définition qui puisse la couvrir ou qui soit acceptée par tous les spécialistes en la matière.

Toutefois, si l'on s'inspire des travaux des ethnologues, des historiens des religions, des anthropologues et des philosophes contemporains², il ya lieu de dire que le mythe, envisagé tel qu'il s'est révélé dans les sociétés prétendues primitives, apparaît comme l'élément de la littérature ésotérique, rangé parmi les histoires vraies, celles où l'on a affaire au sacré et au surnaturel. Mode particulier d'être dans le monde et "expériences vécues dans les profondeurs de l'être, des significations profondes des choses"³, il permet d'accéder à l'existential, à l'humain dans sa dimension concrète. N'ayant aucune dimension récréative, il "connait le sérieux de toute entreprise métaphysique"⁴

Le mythe n'est pas seulement, ni même surtout un récit. Il est "senti et vécu avant d'être intelligé et formulé. Il est la parole, la figure, le geste qui circonscrit l'événement au coeur de l'homme avant d'être récit fixé"⁵. De même que l'enfant de zéro à un an ne se distingue pas de sa mère, de même, par le mythe, l'homme ne prend pas conscience de lui-même en tant qu'individu ou personnalité: il coïncide avec le Réel.

Le mythe, ainsi que l'a beaucoup souligné Mircea Eliade, "se rapporte toujours à "une création"": il raconte comment, grâce aux actes créateurs des Etres Surnaturels, quelque chose (le Cosmos, une île, une manière de travailler, un remède, un gibier, etc.) est venu à l'existence. Ainsi énonce-t-il des événements qui servent de précédents, de modèles exemplaires à toute activité humaine significative. En le connaissant, on connaît donc le secret de l'origine des choses, c'est-à-dire, on acquiert un pouvoir magico-religieux sur eux, grâce auquel on peut les maîtriser et les reproduire à volonté. Il s'agit d'une connaissance non pas "abstraite", mais plutôt "vécue" rituellement. Et en "vivant" rituellement le mythe, on vit, non plus dans le temps profane, mais plutôt dans le temps sacré parce que l'on assiste de nouveau au spectacle des oeuvres créatrices des Etres surnaturels⁶.

En conséquence, le mythe répond à de profonds besoins d'ordre social, moral, religieux, voire, à des fins pratiques et vitales: offrir à l'homme des règles morales et pratiques, assurer la stabilité dans la nature et dans la société, unifier, inspirer et guider l'action de l'homme, établir un équilibre entre la nature, l'homme et l'ordre sacré, confirmer et renforcer la croyance, apprivoiser certaines bêtes et rendre les remèdes efficaces en "connaissant" leur origine, etc. "En s'accomplissant dans le rite, il sauve l'homme et il sauve la nature"'. C'est par le rite que le mythe vient à l'existence, que l'homme peut s'approprier les forces salutaires et précieuses des origines. L'expérience mythique, parce qu'elle implique la répétition des actes des Êtres surnaturels et rend présents ces Êtres, parce qu'elle provoque la rupture avec le temps ordinaire et l'intégration dans le temps sacré, apparaît comme une expérience "religieuse".

Dès que l'on a compris ce qui précède, on s'aperçoit du même coup que le mythe est une question de plus haute importance pour l'homme des sociétés où il s'est souvent manifesté intégralement et nettement. Ce qu'il relate et lui apprend touche directement à sa condition humaine.

Se contenter de soutenir implicitement ou explicitement que le mythe est ce qui s'oppose au discours rationnel qui conduit à la vérité ou un échec de la raison raisonnée, c'est soulever un problème, non pas de fait, mais plutôt de valeur. C'est appréhender le mythe en se référant uniquement à une réalité qui lui est extérieure. Mais pourquoi l'appréhender uniquement de cette manière? Envisagé en lui-même, a-t-il la prétention de satisfaire une curiosité philosophique? De quel droit canoniser un mode d'appréhension du réel? L'esprit rationnel - celui-là même qui fonctionne en philosophie - n'aboutit-il pas ainsi au totalitarisme? Peut-on appréhender le réel dans sa richesse et sa densité en recourant uniquement à la raison spéculative? Pourquoi surestimer le pouvoir des réflexions philosophiques raffinées d'une poignée de spécialistes enregistrée par l'histoire de la philosophie, et pourtant, avant leur élaboration, l'espèce humaine a réussi à subsister pendant des millénaires? "Les civilisations anciennes ne se sont-elles pas développées de toute évidence, en l'absence de toute spéculation philosophique, de toute théorie de l'être, mais par contre avec des cosmogonies et des rituels complexes, des systèmes éthiques, juridiques et politiques? C'est le cas des civilisations de l'Amérique précolombienne comme de celles de l'Orient ancien jusqu'à des âges relativement récents. Déniera-t-on toute pensée à l'Inde du Rig-Veda, à la Chine d'avant Confucius ou Lao-Tsé? Dira-t-on que la pensée n'est apparue qu'avec les systèmes philosophiques"?⁸. Au moment de la mort, qui est un grave moment de l'existence humaine, se tourne-t-on ou se retourne-t-on vers des expériences vitales et/ou profondes, notamment les expériences religieuses ou bien vers les spéculations philosophiques de très haut niveau sur l'être en tant qu'être, le néant, l'antique, etc.? Si le mythe est réellement - comme on le prétend - un échec de la raison raisonnée, celle-ci n'est-elle pas à son tour, du moins à suivre manière de l'approcher qui est, à notre sens, gênante, un échec de la communion profonde avec le réel assurée, comme on l'a vu, par le mythe?

Ce n'est pas que l'on veuille aussi à son tour sous-estimer la spéculation philosophique, poser la pensée mythique comme un mode de pensée-canon, et donc sub-

stituer "un mythe" à un autre. Ce n'est pas quel l'on veuille faire taire la raison pour s'incliner purement et simplement devant le mythe, le vécu. On sait que la philosophie relève de la *raison*, et que c'est celle-ci qui *juge le vécu*, et non l'inverse, bien qu'elle le fasse, *non pas* de manière absolue, mais plutôt en se fondant sur lui. Mais on veut tout simplement dire que l'on ne voit pas les raisons qui autorisent certains à mesurer le mythe à la pensée rationnelle, celle-ci érigée en *modèle absolu*.

Si le mythe n'est pas, ainsi que l'on vient de le voir, ni une question de moindre importance pour l'homme des sociétés où il reflète un état primordial, ni un échec de la raison raisonnante, et si le philosophe doit s'intéresser, ainsi que l'a soutenu la tradition philosophique, à l'expérience humaine dans son intégralité, pourquoi celui-ci doit-il y tourner le dos? Y est-il d'ailleurs parvenu au cours de l'histoire?

On sait que dans certaines sociétés "primitives", notamment chez les Yorubas de la Côte des Esclaves, on a des mythes dont la substance revient à ceci: il existe un Etre Suprême (Dieu) qui a créé le Monde et l'Homme, mais qui s'est éloigné assez vite de ses créations pour se retirer dans le ciel. En conséquence, il y a eu rupture des relations entre le ciel et la terre, l'Etre Suprême fut plus ou moins oublié par les hommes et sa place fut occupée par des ancêtres mythiques ou des divinités plus proches de l'homme⁹. Qui ne voit pas là à certains égards, le Dieu des philosophes épicuriens? la mort de Dieu proclamée par Friedrich Nietzsche? et l'"éclipse de Dieu" dont parle le philosophe Martin Buber? Platon et les histoires sacrées transmises par la tradition orale de son époque, Karl Marx et le mythe de l'âge d'or, n'est-ce pas là des exemples classiques? La philosophie contemporaine veut traiter ses problèmes en faisant appel notamment à l'intuition, à "cette espèce de *sympathie intellectuelle* par laquelle on se transporte à l'intérieur d'un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu'il a d'unique et par conséquent d'inexprimable"¹⁰. Ne rejoint-elle pas en partie le mythe dont on disait plus haut qu'il permet de coïncider avec le Réel? qu'il est, selon la formule de Bastide, une "expérience vécue, dans les profondeurs de l'Etre, des significations profondes des choses"? Et les présocratiques eux-mêmes, ces philosophes que l'histoire de la philosophie considère comme étant les premiers à réagir contre le mythe, sont-ils parvenus à l'abolir? Anaximandre et l'apeiron¹¹, Parménide et l'initiation à un mystère, les présocratiques et le thème de l'origine du monde¹², les confréries pythagoriciennes et l'orphisme, les mythologies de l'âme et les néo-pythagoriciens, etc., n'est-ce pas là, des exemples enregistrés par la tradition philosophique? Ces indications pourraient facilement être multipliées. On dirait que pour élaborer une pensée philosophique, il faut au moins recourir ou revenir, d'une manière ou d'une autre, au mythe, aux fragments, aux thèmes, ou aux structures mythiques.

Le philosophe peut-il d'ailleurs renoncer purement et simplement au mythe? Comment cela est-il possible? Tout philosophe est et reste un homme. Et "l'homme ne peut vivre sans mythe"¹³. Et pourtant, dira-t-on, l'homme de notre époque, plus particulièrement l'homme occidental, est entré en guerre contre le mythe. Fort bien. Il a voulu, ajoutera-t-on, tout démythifier. Entreprise, à notre sens, si pas impossible, du moins très difficile dans la mesure, où, "des notes essentielles au comportement mythique - modèle exemplaire, répétition, rupture de la durée

profane et intégration du temps primordial - les deux premières au moins sont consubstantielles à toute condition humaine¹⁴ et par conséquent irréductibles. Ainsi est-il facile, par exemple, de remarquer que les deux premières notes se retrouvent, en quelque manière, dans ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui, "éducation", "enseignement", "formation", etc.; et que la dernière se retrouve, d'une certaine manière, dans la lecture des romans passionnants notamment, dans la mesure où, par celle-ci, on "tue le temps", c'est-à-dire, on sort du temps historique pour se plonger dans le temps trans-historique.

Démythifier tout, est une entreprise, si pas impossible, du moins très difficile dans la mesure aussi où l'homme "est une machine à fabriquer des dieux"¹⁵. Ainsi voyons-nous de nouveaux cultes se créer sans cesse dans notre société: le culte de la différence avec la négritude, le culte de l'égalité avec le socialisme, le culte de la raison avec le philosophe rationaliste, etc. Tout cela n'est-il pas, d'une manière ou d'une autre, vénéré? divinisé? Plutôt que de détruire purement et simplement les mythes anciens, l'homme d'aujourd'hui les a dégradés. Il les a réduits en tronçons dispersés, sanglants, mais toujours vivants, présents, et aptes à se livrer à des folies parce qu'ils sont incontrôlés. Mais il est allé jusqu'à créer, sous une nouvelle forme, des mythes nouveaux ou à ressusciter, d'une manière ou d'une autre, des mythes anciens, La démythification n'est-elle pas, à en croire Bastide, "un mythe de plus, celui de la dé-mythification, infiniment plus mystifiant que ceux que l'on voulait abolir"¹⁶. La modernité et l'anti-modernité, ne ressuscitent-elles pas, à leur manière, Prométhée et son vautour? Certains rêves où l'on se retrouve au ciel, glissant entre les nuages et fuyant un danger quelconque, le mythe d'Icare?

On comprend, en conséquence, combien les thèses selon lesquelles il existe l'âge mythique d'une part et l'âge non mythique ou "âge de la réflexion achevée, critique, autocritique, constructive" et "technico-scientifique" d'autre part, et l'Afrique doit, à l'instar de l'Occident, accomplir son entrée dans l'âge non mythique, thèses soutenues par les Crahay, sont, à notre avis, inguérissables.¹⁷

Nous avons d'ailleurs l'habitude de trop diviser la conscience, de distinguer carrément en elle, la conscience réflexive, la conscience mythique, etc., oubliant qu'à certains égards, l'être conscient agit comme un tout: il inclut tout ensemble du réflexif, du mythique, etc., quoiqu'à des degrés différents; que la conscience réflexive - comme la conscience mythique ou n'importe quelle autre conscience - est au moins une conscience.

Elungu souhaite que toute philosophie africaine qui se veut une philosophie au sens strict et fort du terme "tourne délibérément le dos au mythe"¹⁸, c'est-à-dire, à la non-philosophie. On a déjà montré combien cela est plus que difficile à réaliser pour un être humain. On tient à ajouter que le même Elungu ne peut s'opposer à cette idée, lui qui reconnaît que la non-philosophie habite la vraie philosophie, et que l'homme n'est pas pure rationalité.¹⁹ Par ailleurs, même si le philosophe africain parvenait à réaliser le souhait d'Elungu, cela susciterait le problème de l'utilité de la philosophie africaine dans un monde où, comme on l'a montré ci-dessus, on ne saurait se passer du mythe.

On sait fort bien que Marcien Towa, l'un de grands tenors du rationalisme, a, dans son *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*, déno-

ncé l'ethno-philosophie, discrédité implicitement *les données de la littérature orale (mythes, contes, etc.)* dans leurs rapports avec la philosophie.²⁰ Huit ans plus tard, il discrédite explicitement le mythe dans son rapport avec la philosophie et en lui-même: il écrit noir sur blanc, dans *l'Idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine*, qu'il y a entre "(la philosophie) et le mythe une opposition profonde".²¹ S'il en est ainsi, ajoute-t-il, c'est parce que le mythe nous installe dans le monde des "fantasme", il "est une invitation à la divagation émerveillée de l'esprit à travers le temps et l'espace. La philosophie refuse le vagabondage en pays imaginaires et, aux croyances du dévot, elle oppose le doute, l'incrédulité".²² Elle est "ce qu'il y a de plus élevé dans le monde" et donc "guide suprême de notre conduite".²³

C'est, pourtant, le même Towa qui soutient dans ce dernier texte que la pensée traditionnelle africaine est "authentiquement philosophique"²⁴ en partant des éléments dégagés par lui de *données de la littérature orale africaine*, plus précisément de *contes* africaines.²⁵ C'est toujours lui qui dit - dans le débat sur le même texte - que "les mythes platoniciens qui illustrent simplement la pensée dialectique doivent (...) être tenus pour philosophiques".²⁶ ||

Alors que Nanga Bernard estime que le "mythe reste exclu de la philosophie"²⁷, le même Nanga, à en croire J. M. Van Parys, qualifie les études de Tempels, Griaule et Dieterlen de brillantes²⁸, celles-là où les données ethnologiques (mythes, etc.) jouent le rôle que l'on sait!

Alors qu'il considère les mythes, les contes, les légendes et les proverbes comme ne visant pas "la radicalité philosophique" et comme étant élaborés "loin de toute ascèse discursive et rigoureuse"²⁹, et qu'il demande en conséquence au philosophe africain de ne pas chercher la philosophie africaine dans ces genres de la littérature orale africaine³⁰, de ne pas l'extraire d'un quelconque fond ancestral³¹, Ngangura Kasole, parlant toujours de ces genres de la littérature orale, ose encore dire, chose surprenante, que ces "éléments de discursivité sont bien sûr porteurs de philosophie", et qu'ils la dévoileront s'ils subissent "un traitement approprié de la part du philosophe"³².

Alors qu'il estime que l'instauration d'une philosophie bantu exige que la pensée décolle franchement du mythe pour "entrer décidément dans l'âge de la réflexion achevée, critique, autocritique, et constructive"³³, Crahay ose encore dire, chose vraiment étrange: "L'instauration d'une philosophie bantoue exigerait, en outre, une sorte d'inventaire de valeurs à sauver:...(notamment) des symboles (et donc entre autres des mythes) en tant que ces symboles, comme disait dernièrement P. Ricoeur, donnent à penser"³⁴. Comment peut-on à la fois demander au philosophe muntu de se méfier des mythes et de les considérer comme figurant parmi *les valeurs qu'il doit sauver*? S'il doit sauver les symboles en tant qu'ils donnent à penser, est-ce que cela veut dire qu'il doit tout simplement renoncer au mythe? On y reviendra. Mais on ne peut en passant s'empêcher de s'étonner que ce problème soit passé sous silence et par les admirateurs de Crahay et par ses critiques.

Certains étudiants du département de philosophie de l'Université de Lubumbashi (Zaïre) qui dénigrent le mythe, eux aussi, nous étonnent. On les a vu opter surtout pour l'option "philosophie et société", l'une des quatre options organisées par le département précité. On ne serait pas carrément à côté si l'on affirmait que cela était dû, pour la plupart d'entre eux, notamment à une certaine déception

éprouvée à l'égard de la spéculation philosophique. Ils n'ont pas, en effet, manqué de nous le révéler. Ce qu'ils veulent renouer avec l'humain dans sa dimension concrète. Mais ils oublient que le mythe, comme on l'a dit, permet aussi d'accéder à cette dimension de l'humain.

On comprendra aisément, ainsi que le suggère déjà tout ce qui précède, que le philosophe africain ne peut se permettre de rejeter le mythe, contrairement à ce qu'ont suggéré, d'une manière ou d'une autre, les Elungu, Towa, Nanga, Nangura, Crahay, etc. L'individu et la société, c'est une banalité de le dire, ne sont pas seulement habités par les idées, les concepts et la raison, mais aussi par les valeurs essentielles de la vie affective: les passions, les tendances, les motivations, les sentiments, les émotions, les instincts... Ces valeurs, signifiées en mythes et vécues dans les fêtes rituelles, ont contribué jadis et contribuent encore aujourd'hui, à la direction de la vie individuelle et sociale. Le philosophe est et reste un homme: il est à la fois âme et corps, raison et instinct. Il doit vivre en paix non seulement avec son âme et sa raison, mais aussi avec son corps et ses instincts. Il lui appartient de s'accommoder au mieux de ces deux mondes. L'homme dont l'âme peut se retirer du corps comme elle veut, est inhumain. "Les instincts, selon l'heureuse formule de Gusforf, nous enracinent dans l'univers. Ils fournissent les principes d'orientation primitifs de l'être dans le monde. L'homme dont les instincts sont dérégés, c'est l'aliéné, celui dont nous disons justement qu'il a perdu la raison. Couper la raison des instincts, qu'elle prolonge en les promouvant, c'est donc se condamner à déraisonner. Mais accepter les vections instinctives, ce n'est pas pour autant s'en faire l'esclave. C'est se donner le droit de les juger. De même, on ne peut vaincre l'affectivité qu'en lui obéissant, en retrouvant en elle des éléments indéniables d'authenticité"³⁵. La raison ne peut que réduire la subjectivité et l'affectivité. Elle ne peut les supprimer. Tant il est vrai que toute raison est raison d'un sujet et tout sujet est d'une manière ou d'une autre affectivité. Que les arrières-plans subjectifs, affectifs interviennent de temps en temps dans l'appréciation des oeuvres philosophiques et scientifiques, on ne le sait que fort bien pour s'y attarder. Même un rationaliste aussi rigoureux que Gaston Bachelard s'est rendu compte que les tentatives d'exégèse rationaliste ne parviennent pas toujours à éliminer du savoir rationnel les projections psychologiques inconscientes et spontanées. "Par une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective et de la connaissance imagée, dit-il, nous sommes devenus rationalistes à l'égard du feu. La sincérité nous oblige à confesser que nous n'avons pas réussi le même redressement à l'égard de l'eau. Les images de l'eau, nous les vivons encore, nous les vivons synthétiquement dans leur complexité première en leur donnant souvent notre adhésion irraisonnée"³⁶.

La philosophie africaine doit donc conférer avec les mythes. Elle doit s'y enraciner comme en sa source. La raison philosophique - faut-il d'ailleurs le rappeler? - ne saurait prendre appui sur elle-même. Les philosophes contemporains, plus particulièrement les tenants de l'herméneutique philosophique, ont, à juste titre, fort insisté sur cet enracinement de la philosophie dans les choses non-philosophiques. Les philosophes herméneutes n'entendent pas, comme nous, sacrifier purement et simplement la rationalité philosophique sur l'auteur de la pensée mythi-

que ou symbolique et s'opposer ainsi à la tradition philosophique. Mais ils estiment que le philosophe trouvera dans les mythes, les proverbes et les contes de quoi alimenter sa pensée. D'où le célèbre aphorisme de Paul Ricoeur, "le symbole à penser": autrement dit, le sens n'est pas posé par le philosophe, c'est plutôt le symbole qui le donne, "mais ce qu'il donne, c'est à penser, de quoi penser"³⁷

Le philosophe, nous apprend Ricoeur, ne doit donc pas se dépendre de l'âge mythique pour entrer dans l'âge de la réflexion critique et achevée, comme le soutient Crahay, mais plutôt accéder à compréhension qui soit à fois dans le mythe et au delà.

Pour penser à partir du symbole, Ricoeur suggère une démarche à trois étapes. La phénoménologie constitue la première. Dans celle-ci, dit-il, on comprend le symbole par le symbole, on court d'un symbole à l'autre, sans engagement de soi, on se plonge ainsi dans le comparatisme. L'herméneutique proprement dite, cette interprétation que l'on applique chaque fois à un texte singulier, est la deuxième étape. On s'y engage dans la vie d'un symbole, on y pose la question de la vérité: celle précisément de savoir si l'on croit cela, soi-même; de savoir ce que l'on fait, soi-même, de ses significations symboliques. Enfin, la pensée à partir du symbole, étape proprement philosophique. Le philosophe s'y efforce de former le sens, dans l'autonomie et la pleine responsabilité de sa pensée, dans une interprétation créatrice³⁸.

Comment peut-on, dira-t-on, faire passer, dans l'ordre du concept et du discours, le mythe, au sens d'une "expérience vécue", sans le trahir?

Le problème soulevé est réel. Il constitue l'une des limites de l'herméneutique philosophique, de l'herméneutique tout court. Il est difficile d'exprimer le vécu avec sa pleine richesse, de la faire passer au niveau du concept de façon immédiate et absolument fidèle. Le discours n'est pas, ne saurait être "expérience vécue". Il est plutôt expression de cette expérience. Et cette expression n'est pas transposition pure et simple d'un registre à l'autre, mais plutôt interprétation, c'est-à-dire, en quelque sorte, recreation, retouche.

On doit, cependant, se garder de pousser à l'extrême le décalage entre le vécu et sa verbalisation ou sa conceptualisation. Exprimer le vécu, ce n'est pas s'y fermer, mais plutôt s'y ouvrir, s'y référer, lui permettre de se révéler dans sa propre clarté ou l'élever à la clarté du concept et donc, en un sens, l'enrichir.

En empruntant la voie d'une interprétation qui considère avec respect l'énigme originelle des mythes, ou des symboles, qui se laisse instruire par elle, mais qui, à partir de là, forme le sens, dans la pleine responsabilité et l'autonomie d'une pensée, l'herméneutique philosophique nous a fourni la clé de la conciliation entre le mythe et la rationalité. Clé que plusieurs auteurs célèbres qui ont parlé du mythe et de la rationalité, notamment Levy-Bruhl, Maurice Leenhardt et Gérard van der Leeuw, n'ont pas pu nous fournir.

Il existe, donc, pour le philosophe africain, "trois" manières, au moins, de se perdre: opter pour la raison philosophique et rejeter le mythe, surestimer celle-là et sous-estimer celui-ci, ou établir une dichotomie trop rigide entre eux.

NOTES

- (1) Parmi les nombreux exemples, on peut citer:
- Elungu (pene Flungu), *Veil philosophique africain*. (Paris; Editions L'Harmattan, 1984) pp. 113-154, surtout p. 153;
 - TOWA (Marcien), "L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine", in *Cahiers du Département de philosophie*, 1978, n. 2, surtout pp. 8-11, p. 38. Ce texte a été aussi publié sous forme d'un ouvrage à Yaoundé, aux Editions Cle, en 1979. On le citera selon la version des *Cahiers...*;
 - NANGA (Bernard), Intervention dans le débat sur M. TOWA, "L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine", in *Cahiers du département de philosophie*, 1978, n. 2, p. 102.
 - NGANGURA (Kasole), "La compétence et la qualification comme critères d'une véritable pratique philosophique en Afrique: une critique de la philosophie africaine traditionnelle", in *Dix ans d'activité philosophique en Afrique et au Zaïre. Actes du colloque sur la philosophie africaine, tenu à Lubumbashi du 11 au 15 janvier 1982*. (Lubumbashi; Département de Philosophie, 1982) surtout p. 386, 388, 390, 391;
 - CRAHAY (Franz), "Le "décollage" conceptuel: conditions d'une philosophie bantu", in *Diogène*, 1965, pp. 73-75;
 - Certains étudiants du Département de Philosophie de l'Université de Lubumbashi (Zaïre), qui, très imbus du rationalisme occidental et des critiques exagérées de l'ethnophilosophie, sont même allés jusqu'à se moquer de leurs condisciples qui ont opté pour l'un des cours à option inscrits au programme des cours du Département précité, les "Questions de pensée mythique"!
- (2) On pense aux travaux de Gérard Van der Leeuw, Maurice Leenhardt, Mircea Eliade, Louis-Vincent Thomas, Etienne, Roger Bastide, Bronislaw Malinowski, Georges Gusdorf, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Ricoeur, etc.
- (3) BASTIDE (Roger), "La mythologie", in *Ethnologie Générale*. (Encyclopédie de la Pléiade). (Paris, Gallimard, 1968) p. 1062.
- (4) THOMAS (Louis-Vincent), "Réflexions sans titre au sujet des Mythes Africains", in *Cahiers des religions africaines*, 1972, V. 6, n. 12, p. 144.
- (5) LEENHARDT (Maurice), cité par R. BASTIDE, "Mythologie", p. 1054.
- (6) On résume ici les idées longuement exprimées par un représentant éminent de la question des mythes aujourd'hui, Eliade. Voir surtout ELIADE (Mircea), *Les aspects du mythe*. (Collection Idées). (Paris; Gallimard, 1963) surtout pp. 9-31.
- (7) BASTIDE (Roger), "La mythologie", p. 1061.
- (8) DE SOUSBERGHE (Léon), "A propos de "la Philosophie bantoue", in *Zaïre*, 1951, n. 5, p. 822.
- (9) ELIADE (Mircea), *Les aspects du mythe*, p. 118 et sq.
- (10) BERGSON (Henri), cité par LALANDE (André), in *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*. (Paris; Presses Universitaires de France, 1976) p. 541.
- (11) Cet apeiron (infini) a un rapport avec le mythe dans la mesure où il est apparenté au chaos, qui - on le sait - représente dans le mythe grec, l'état originel et indifférencié du monde.
- (12) Bien qu'il soit abordé par eux d'une manière non mythologique, ce thème reste le problème central de la mythologie.
- (13) BASTIDE (Roger), *Le sacré sauvage et autres essais*. Préface de Henri DESROCHE. (Paris; Payot, 1975) p. 83.
- (14) ELIADE (Mircea), cité par G. VAN RIET, "Mythe et vérité", in *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 1960, Tome 58, p. 45.
- (15) BERGSON (Henri), *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Centième édition. (Paris; Presses Universitaires de France, 1961) p. 338.
- (16) BASTIDE (Roger), *Le sacré sauvage et autres essais*, p. 83.

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- (17) CRAHAY (Franz), "Le "décollage" conceptuel: conditions d'une philosophie ban-toue", pp. 73-75, passim.
- (18) ELUNGU (pene Elungu), *Eveil philosophique africain*, p. 153.
- (19) ELUNGU (pene Elungu), "La philosophie condition du développement en Afrique aujourd'hui", in *La place de la philosophie dans le développement culturel du Zaïre et de l'Afrique. Rapport complet du Séminaire National des Philosophes Zaïrois, du 1er au 6 juin 1976*. (Lumbumbashi; Département de Philosophie, 1976) p. 214.
- (20) TOWA (Marcien) *Essai Sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*. (Point de vue, 8). (Yaounde; Editions Clé, 1971) pp. 25-33, p. 61 et sq.
- (21) TOWA (Marcien), "L'idée d'une philosophie...", p. 8.
- (22) *Ibidem*, p. 10.
- (23) *Ibidem*, p. 36 et 38.
- (24) *Ibidem*, p. 32.
- (25) *Ibidem*, p. 26 et sq. Towa, objectera-t-on, peut-être, a analysé les contes et non les mythes qui nous préoccupent ici. Cela ne peut constituer une objection de taille. Le mythe et le conte sont tous des genres simples non liés de la littérature orale. On peut, certes, établir une distinction entre eux, en disant par exemple que "les primitifs" distinguent les mythes - "histoires vraies" - des contes qu'ils appellent "histoires fausses"; et que dans les histoires vraies, on a affaire au sacré, dans les fausses, à un contenu profane. Mais cela n'est pas toujours facile. Un grand nombre des contes que l'on tient pour de belles histoires amusantes, nous apprend l'histoire des religions, furent d'abord des mythes et un bon nombre d'entre eux le sont encore aujourd'hui chez tel ou tel peuple. C'est ainsi que les contes sont considérés comme des mythes "dégradés" ou "désacralisés".
- (26) TOWA (Marcien), Intervention dans le débat sur "L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine", p. 74.
- (27) NANGA (Bernard), Intervention dans le débat sur M. TOWA, "L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine", p. 102.
- (28) VAN PARYS (J. M.), "Philosophie en Afrique. Analyse du Séminaire sur la Philosophie Africaine d'Addis Abeba (1-3 décembre 1976)", in *Mélanges de Philosophie Africaine. Bibliographie - Histoire - Essais*. (Kinshasa; Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa, 1978) p. 38.
- (29) NGANGURA (Kasole), "La compétence et la qualification..." p. 386.
- (30) *Ibidem*, p. 388, 390.
- (31) *Ibidem*, p. 391.
- (32) *Ibidem*, p. 389.
- (33) GRAHAY (Franz), "Le "décollage" conceptuel..." pp. 73-75, passim.
- (34) *Ibidem*, p. 72.
- (35) GUSDORF (Georges), *Mythes et métaphysique. Introduction à la Philosophie*. (Nouvelle bibliothèque). (Paris; Elammarrion, 1953) p. 258.
- (36) BACHELARD (Gaston), cité par G. GUSDORF, *Mythe et métaphysique*, p. 194.
- (37) RICOEUR (Paul), "Le symbole donne à penser", in *Esprit*, 1959, n. 7-8, p. 61; ou bien *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique*. (Paris; Editions du Seuil, 1969) p. 284; ou encore
- (38) RICOEUR (Paul), "Le symbole donne à penser", p. 68 et sq.; ou bien *Le conflit des interprétations*, pp. 293-296.

On sait que NKOMBE Oleko s'est efforcé d'appliquer cette méthode dans son déchiffrement de l'homme tetela à partir de ses proverbes, en spécifiant l'aphorisme de Ricoeur. "Le proverbe, dit-il donne à penser". Voir NKOMBE O., *Métaphore et métonymie dans les symboles parémiologiques. L'intersubjectivité dans les "Proverbes Tetela"*. Présentation par TSHIBANGU T. Préface de Jean LADRIERE. (Recherches Philosophiques Africaines, 4). (Kinshasa; Faculté de Théologie Catholique, 1979) p. 115.

OKOLO Okonda estime aussi, à la suite de NKOMBE, qu'il faut penser à partir du proverbe. Mais il ajoute qu'il s'agit, chez lui, d'une pensée à découvrir, et non à inventer, comme c'est le cas, chez NKOMBE. Voir OKOLO Okonda, "Proverbes et philosophie", in *Lectures Africaines*, 1975-1976, Vol. III, Fasc. 2, p. 143; ou bien son ouvrage *Pour une philosophie de la culture et du développement. Recherches d'herméneutique et de paraxis africaines*. (Kinshasa; Presses Universitaires du Zaïre, 1986) p. 22.

Résumé

Sans renier le fait que "...il y a quelque fois des différences fondamentales entre un certain art Africain et un certain art Européen", la présente discussion est une critique de la dichotomie répandue entre l'art Africain et Européen, suggéré dans l'article du Dr. K.C. Anyanwu: "Expérience Artistique et Esthétique".

Des aspects variés de l'art Africain mentionnés par Anyanwu sont discutés, tel que le fait que l'art Africain ne peut pas être divorcé des aspects religieux, politiques et philosophiques de la vie Africaine; que l'art Africain traite de, et intervient lui-même dans, les 'forces-de-vie'; que l'artiste Africain crée toujours comme un membre de la communauté; que l'art Africain dévie fondamentalement des principes esthétiques Européens; et finalement, que l'art et la pensée imaginative sont plus près de l'Africain, alors que la science et la pensée analytique sont plus près de l'esprit Européen.

L'auteur actuel suggère que les thèses d'Anyanwu sont trop générales et manquent de justifications empiriques les plus élémentaires. Il indique que les questions les plus évidents dans ce contexte ne sont pas posées, telle que, par exemple, si les caractéristiques considérées de l'art Africain ne sont pas trouvés, aussi, dans d'autres parties du monde, - y compris L'Europe.

Une considération critique de plus est que Anyanwu n'essaie pas du tout de relier les différences suggérées entre l'art Africain et Européen, aux facteurs sociaux et historiques.

ON ANYANWU'S CONCEPTION OF AFRICAN AESTHETICS

Geoffrey Hunt

In his essay on 'Artistic and Aesthetic Experience' in *African Philosophy*¹ Dr. K.C. Anyanwu draws a very strong contrast between African aesthetics and European or "Western" aesthetics, taking aesthetics to be the set of the most fundamental and general principles implicit in a practice of art. There may be some pedagogical advantage, at an introductory level, endeavouring as Anyanwu does to make these principles explicit in the boldest fashion, simplifying them to the utmost and sharply contrasting them with other principles explicated and simplified with equal boldness. As a rule, however, generalisations should be condensations of an adequate body of empirical data. But where generalisations are conjectural or speculative they should always, at any level, and at the very least, be stated to be so. Unfortunately, we do not find in Anyanwu's essay either signs of adequate empirical grounding or the cautions and qualifications appropriate to bold conjecture. His simplistic and rash methodology cannot take us very far in understanding African art.

Anyanwu emphasizes that African art is not to be understood by considering it in isolation from religion, philosophy, politics, in short all other aspects of the African way of life.² This is undoubtedly good advice. But it is good advice to the student of the art of any society whatsoever. Erwin Panofsky has urged the view that to attain an understanding of an art work at its deepest level, what he calls its "intrinsic meaning", one must understand "the political, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation."³ Panofsky was a student of European, not African, art and his special area was the art of the Renaissance.

Anyanwu means to say, perhaps, that African art has a more intimate type of relation to other aspects of African society than European art does to other aspects of European society, or a qualitatively different type of relation. This may be true and could be a very important and fruitful line of thought, but what he tells us about the nature of this relation is not very helpful. Above all, we might expect an approach which at least allows the possibility of explaining the basis and origins of the differences, whatever they may be, between African and European art. A preliminary step would be to gain greater precision in what we mean by "Western art" and "African art." For example, is Anyanwu speaking of all Africans, or Africans of a particular historical, social, educational, class or cultural background? Then, he should provide some empirical basis, however rough and ready, for assuming that all "Western" art has certain fundamentals in common and that all "African" art has certain fundamentals in common. This he does not do on the slightest.

What Anyanwu takes as especially characteristic of the interrelation between African art and other aspects of African society is the belief in pervasive "life-forces". He says, "Material objects, in the African views, are living forces hence not inert things," and for the African "life-forces" are believed "to permeate the whole universe."⁴ This belief is expressed in myths, and the myths in turn provide

themes or content for African art works. Art works have a dynamic role in African society, he suggests, because they have a role in the human intervention in, tapping of, and manipulation of these life - forces of a social group or community."⁵

One of my problems here is understanding precisely what Anyanwu means by "life-force." He hardly begins to explain it, or give concrete examples of what this concept entails. Further more, he mentions no actual African society which holds such a belief in a specific form. Does he mean to say that African societies without exception hold this belief? This would surely be remarkable (I do not say it is impossible) given the great diversity of African cultures. Then again, are we to understand that the belief is that everything is pervaded with this "life-force" all the time? Or is it rather that anything could, potentially, or under certain circumstances, be so infused with "life-force"? There are, then, several possibilities of interpretation here, but Anyanwu gives us no guide through them. He could have done this, for example, by briefly explicating some specific African "myth". Also, it is difficult to believe that art objects, or objects which are artistic, are always conceived as having this role, that is, this relation to "life-forces". Masks are not the only art objects in Africa. For instance, some and perhaps most art objects in some African societies, are decorative or entertaining in value.

Other questions of importance do not occur to Anyanwu. Do, or did, any European (or Asian, North American, South American, Pacific, Near Eastern) societies have anything like the belief in "life-force"? What are the material conditions of such a belief? On the other hand, under what conditions does the belief in "inert" matter arise? Because Anyanwu does not raise such questions, and does not adequately answer those questions he does raise, it is impossible to make any progress in establishing what is the principle of the connection between art and other aspects of culture, and between culture as a whole and the particular form of its material conditions of existence (that is, specific mode of appropriation of nature, and specific mode of appropriation of surplus-labour, if there is surplus-labour).

Another sense that Anyanwu gives to this phenomenon of intimate interrelation and unification, or what Wole Soyinka calls "cosmic totalism"⁷ is the claim that each African art work reflects the whole universe, is a microcosm: "Art depicts the whole universe of life-forces in one image and this can be known only through imaginative methods."⁸ Presumably this contrasts with the typical European painting of "wandering dogs, apples in a dish, burning lanterns,"⁹ which are isolated, and thereby meaningless, fragments of reality. There are, it is true quite a few "Western" paintings of apples and lanterns (I cannot think of any wandering dogs). Giorgio Morandi spent most of his artistic career painting pictures of bottles. Yet at least one critic has observed of this artist, "Morandi was of that party which discovers the universe in a blade of grass."¹⁰

Again, is Anyanwu trying to persuade us that every art object created in Africa is microcosmic in this way? Surely this claim needs some conceptual clarification and empirical support? On the other hand, is Anyanwu aware that some philosophers and historians of art have, on the face of it, made similar bold claims for *all* art? For example, Collingwood writes, "Thus a work of art proper is a *total* activity

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which the person enjoying it apprehends, or is conscious of, by the use of his *imagination*."¹¹ Now, if Anyanwu's point is not the same as Collingwood's then what is the difference?

Anyanwu does mention some other aspects of the African's 'cosmic totalism': his conception of time, his employment of language, his lack of objectivity, and lack of individualism. The 'total' character of African art is also accounted for by the fact that for the African past and future are contracted into the present, so that, for example, ancestors are regarded as, in some sense, still present.¹² Also, the African does not clearly distinguish between language and its referent, between words and things: "Words are forces and they have divine qualities...(the word) has power to transform and transmute life-forces."¹³

According to Anyanwu the African does not clearly distinguish between himself and the objects outside himself: "The Western culture demands self-detachment to know reality objectively. The African culture demands self-integration with the object of knowledge."¹⁴ Nor does he distinguish sharply between himself and the society at large, so the African artist must "conform" to the expectations of the community, artistic innovation is narrowly circumscribed, and the "personality" of the artist is relatively unimportant and neglected even to the point of anonymity. The content of the work is provided by the values of the community rather than by the artist.¹⁵

It only requires a little thought and knowledge of history to see that these features, which are undoubtedly intimately connected with one another, are neither confined to Africa nor universal in Africa. Lest my own views appear idiosyncratic let me state those of a few well known students of society and history. Speaking of the concept of time in the Ancient World Toulmin and Goodfield write, "there was nothing in men's experience to stimulate any sense of historical development, as we now think of it."¹⁶ Referring to Ancient Greece W.K.C. Guthrie has observed that for most Greeks,

the name is clearly as real as the thing, and belongs very closely to it...The point of view of Cratylus in Plato's Dialogue betrays just the state of mind in which magical association is possible when he says: 'It seems to me quite simple. The man who knows the names knows the things'.¹⁷

Then, speaking of Ancient civilisations in general, Frankfort observes that the people of these civilisations,

saw man always as part of society, and society as imbedded in nature and dependent on cosmic forces...natural phenomena were regularly conceived in terms of human experience and...human experience was conceived in terms of cosmic events.¹⁸

II

One way in which African aesthetics differs radically from western aesthetics, according to Anyanwu, is in certain formal principles: "The African artist de-

viates from the principles of the Western aesthetics, namely, proportionality, balance, form etc..."¹⁹ What Anyanwu seems to be getting at is that if for example, Western art depicts a human form then the proportions of head, body, limbs and so on, correspond to the real and natural proportions, whereas African art deliberately puts things out of proportion, such as a head equal in size to the body.

But this seems to be a misunderstanding of the very nature of art. It is true that there have been some movements or genres in European art which are highly representational or naturalistic. If the 18th century artist Hyacinthe Rigaud had painted Louis XIV in his well known painting with a head equal to his body no doubt the king would have responded by separating the artist's head from his body with a blow of the guillotine. But, even then, Monsieur Rigaud did not simply copy or imitate the appearance of the king, for that might have got him into trouble too. More to the point, if he had done so he would not have been an artist but rather a photo-journalist before the invention of the camera. (I recognize that even photojournalism can, at its very best, be artistic.)

If this is true of Rigaud's work what then are we to say of the Venus of Vinca (c. 5,000 BC) which is half bird and half woman, the Greek depictions of the Minotaur (c. 500 BC), 15th century frescoes which depict cherubs which are winged heads without bodies at all, or Bacon's (20th century) distorted human portraits, to take just four random examples from 7,000 years of "Western" art?

One should not forget that there is plenty of art in Africa which is naturalistic. What could exhibit more naturalistic proportion and balance than the bronze heads and figures of Ife and Benin?

Still, it may be that much African art embodies principles of proportionality, balance and form which are different from such principles in much European art. But this is quite different from saying that African art deviates from *all* principles of proportionality etc. It would, in addition, be much more fruitful if Anyanwu could tell us something about the formal principles underlying some actual African art works. Fagg, for example, conjectures that the exponential curve conveys the idea of dynamic forces in African art and gives specific illustrations.²⁰

Anyanwu notes that "The important function of African art is not the creation of beauty (i.e. the quality which pleases the eyes of the observer) but of meaning and significance." And again, in Africa "The emphasis in all artistic forms is on content not appearance,"²¹ that is, it is on the meaning of the universe rather than on how it appears to our senses. We may wonder, with Anyanwu, why Morandi, concerned as he must have been with appearance rather than meaning, did not save himself a lot of time and trouble by buying himself a Kodak Instamatic and getting his bottles done with in a couple of snaps. Obviously, the matter is rather more subtle and complex than Anyanwu allows. If 'beauty' has been said by some European artists and philosophers of art to be their special concern, still, just as many or more have said the opposite. Thus while Anyanwu says beauty is not the concern of the African artist, Collingwood says it is not the concern of *any* artist:

In modern times there has been a determined attempt on the part of aesthetic theorists to monopolize the word (beauty) and make it stand for that quality in things in virtue of which when we contemplate them we enjoy what we recognize as an aesthetic experience. There is no such quality...²² Collingwood is not alone in this conviction.

III

There is implicit in Anyanwu's view an overstretched contrast between art and science, and this reaches breaking point when he implies, in the vein of Negritude, that science is to be identified with the European mind and art with the African mind. Thus, for Anyanwu, the African regards the art work, and indeed everything else it seems, through "imaginative methods" (but recall Collingwood's "imagination" above) whereas the European regards it and the world intellectually and analytically. "The African world-image," he says, "is purely aesthetic, sensuous and spiritual."²³ He then declares,

If by a stroke of fortune or misfortune the Western world were to perish, leaving the African alone in the world, he could never sustain and advance the science of matter. The Africans study the sciences suggested and organised by the Western culture, but this science has no inner compulsion in the African mind-set, being solely a behaviour by prescription. Most Africans would not admit this fact, because it may hurt their pride.²⁴

Admittedly, there is a danger in treating this kind of view too seriously. And that is allowing it a respect which it would more clearly not deserve had it been uttered by an advocate of apartheid. Still, as this view extends beyond the confines of Anyanwu's thought it is worthwhile perhaps to point out one crucial inconsistency in it. The frontiers of science, where the real progress is being made by a tiny minority of privileged scientists, requires imagination, intuition, creativity, boldness and an ability to synthesize rather than analyze, an ability to see relations between apparently disparate processes and entities. The enormous bulk of scientific activity is routine science, repetitive, convention-bound, particularistic and is "solely a behaviour by prescription." As Anyanwu knows, routine science is engaged in by a vast army of Europeans and Africans in universities, research institutions and hospitals. As regards frontier science it requires the very quality which Anyanwu ascribes to Africans as characteristic of their thought.

At the same time my point here need not be taken as a concession to Anyanwu's overstretched African-European dichotomy. The point is that science requires both analytic and synthetic abilities, and it seems to me that both Europeans and Africans have various proportions of these abilities. If the emphasis is on one rather than another in any historical period it is largely a result of the level and form of socio-economic organisation of the society concerned. After all, the deliberate promotion and nurturing of the analytic abilities of some Europeans is only a fairly recent phenomenon, made possible and necessary by specific socio-economic conditions. On the other hand, this ability was no doubt much

more prominent in the Ancient African civilisations of Egypt, Kush and Axum than in Western Europe (which had no civilization to speak of) at that time. If Anyanwu is inclined to bemoan the lack of an African Einstein or Darwin he should first bemoan the continuation of conditions which have to date prevented his appearance: the neocolonial stranglehold on Africa's economy and the racial discrimination against Afro-Americans, the brutality and oppressiveness of which can hardly be overstated.

The distinction between art and science is not, in any case, as sharp as is often thought. The frontier of science is always creative, intuitive and artistic. The highest products of art are always scientific, not simply in the techniques and technology employed although these are very important, but in being the result of the artist's ability to handle specific sensible forms, to make useful and detailed observations, and to analyze things into their parts before reconstituting them as integral wholes.

In conclusion, I emphasize that the aim of this brief paper is not to deny that there are fundamental differences between some African art and some European art at some times. It is rather to criticize an approach which makes it impossible to identify properly these differences and assess their historical significance. True, Anyanwu does not make it clear that the things he says about African art and aesthetics are meant to be peculiar to African art. But his whole approach strongly suggests this. In any case, he certainly says nothing about similarities and identities between African cultures and art forms and European ones, and it does not seem to occur to him that there might be some.

Only by carefully working out the identities as well as the specific differences, and explicitly distinguishing between provisional or speculative generalizations and those well founded on an adequate body of empirical data, can we begin to seek a real theoretical understanding of the principles of movement and diversification of human cultures and art forms.

NOTES

- 1 Ruch, E.A. and Anyanwu, K.C., *African Philosophy* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981) pp. 270-282.
- 2 Ibid, p. 270.
- 3 Panofsky, E., *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper and Row, Icon edn., 1972) p. 16.
- 4 Op. cit., pp. 270-71.
- 5 Op. cit., p. 271.
- 6 Consider all those European philosophers which regard the universe, including nature and natural forces, as essentially spiritual. Thus for Benedetto Croce "nature is also spirituality" and it is only impoverished scientific abstraction which renders natural things "unintelligible, makes them into external things, objects without soul, blind forces without the spirit which animates them..." "Nature as History Beyond Written History," *La Critica*, vol. 37, 1939, pp. 141-147 (my translation).
- 7 Soyinka, W., *Myth, Literature and the African World*, (Cambridge: C.U.P., p. 122. See my critique of Soyinka's aesthetic theory in Gugelberger, G. (ed), *Marxism and African Literature*, (London: James Curry, 1985).
- 8 Anyanwu, op. cit., p. 273.
- 9 Ibid, p. 272.

- 10 Mark Stevens, *Newsweek*, 7th December 1981, p. 55.
- 11 Collingwood, R.G., *The Principles of Art*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1938). p. 151, my emphases.
- 12 Op. cit., p. 276.
- 13 Op. cit., p. 280.
- 14 Op. cit., p. 276.
- 15 Op. cit., pp. 272-73, 279.
- 16 Toulmin, S. and Goodfield, J., *The discovery of Time*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1967). p. 32.
- 17 Guthie, W.K., *The Greek Philosophers* (London: Methuen, 1967). pp. 13-14.
- 18 Frankfort, H. et al, *Before Philosophy* (Harmondsworth, Pelican, 1940). p. 12.
- 19 Op. cit., p. 272.
- 20 Fagg's well known essay characterizes African art in terms strikingly similar at some points to Anyanwu's and suffers from some of the same defects. But Fagg, at least gives concrete examples and warns of the conjectural status of his thesis and even wishes it to be "tested to destruction." Fagg, W., 'In Search of Meaning in African Art,' in Forge, A. (ed), *Primitive Art and Society*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1973).
- 21 Op. cit., pp. 281, 273.
- 22 Collingwood, op. cit., p. 38.
- 23 Op. cit., p. 276.
- 24 Op. cit., p. 277.

Résumé

Cette discussion traite de la théorie de l'Humanisme Zambienne ou du Kaundaisme du Dr K.D. Kaunda, Président de la République de Zambie.

Dans cet article, l'auteur dit que le manque répandu d'appréciation et de compréhension de la théorie du Dr Kaunda est causé par l'incapacité ou bien de comprendre ou de prendre au sérieux sa fondation métaphysique. Une discussion courte montre que l'Humanisme Zambienne est basée sur une interprétation religieuse de l'histoire et de la réalité en entier. Une analyse de cette conception de la réalité conduit à suggérer qu'elle est une base insuffisante pour l'action politique, la création d'une nation et l'assurance de son développement.

ON KAUNDAISM

Roni M. Khul Bwalya.

The theory which is the subject of the present discussion was christened by its author, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda, head of State of the Republic of Zambia, the "Philosophy of Zambian Humanism". However, this 'humanism' has nothing to do with, and is in fact opposed to, the humanism of the Renaissance in its orientation to religion, as it is opposed to the humanism of twentieth century western philosophy. Because of these associations, and the resulting ambiguities which the qualifier 'Zambian' does little to alleviate, we find it useful to call Kaunda's theory "Kaundaism". This term has the added advantages that it specifies the originator of the theory as the other appellation does not, and it also leaves open the question of whether or not the theory is, in fact, of the sort that should be considered philosophical.

Although a number of works have been written on the subject of Kaundaism since it came to light exactly twenty years ago now, very few of these have been critical, and even fewer have been written from a philosophical perspective. It would not be too far off the mark to remark, then, that Kaundaism has not developed, nor its appreciation and understanding advanced, a whit more during the two decades of its existence. This is in spite of the fact that it is, officially, the guiding ideology of the sole political party in the nation its author has been the leader of since its birth in 1964; this in spite of the fact that the government of Zambia set up an entire Ministry to propagate the ideology, and; this in spite of the fact there was created an Institute (still in existence) at the nation's only University charged with the responsibility of conducting research to develop Kaundaism.²

Kaundaism is an ideology, but not in the popular sense in which it refers to "a set of closely related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristic of a group or community", though this is what it was intended to, eventually, become. Rather, it is an ideology in a second, more restricted, sense referring to the beliefs, ideas or attitudes of an important person which

"... may be peculiar to him, but they affect his actions and what he does has grave consequences for others. Or, though his 'ideology', taken as a whole, is peculiar to him, some parts of it are shared by others over whom his influence is great."³

Kaunda is such an important person, who confesses:

"I have great faith in the power of ideologies to condition peoples thinking, to mould their value system. That is precisely why we have devoted so much time to the formulation of our own ideology - (Zambian) Humanism."⁴

Kaundaism, like Nkhrumaism and Nyerere's *Ujamaa* before it, was formulated as a response to a specific need arising out of the prevailing historical circumstances of decolonisation - the need of the creation of a nation, and the establishment of the

conditions for its development. In this, the theories devised by these statesmen, the bare fact of their having been formulated at all, lend weight to the dictum credited to Johann G. Fichte that "we philosophize out of our need for redemption."⁵

Yet, whereas it is generally true that most nationalist-ideologies are formulated in such a manner as to restrict themselves to a programme of (political) action based on more or less specific socio-economic needs, Kaundaism goes beyond these confines. Though it does include such programmes, Kaundaism embeds them in a comprehensive, underlying metaphysical theory. It is with reference to this latter that Kaunda defines his doctrine as "a statement of philosophical theory on the meaning of human existence".⁶ The claim is not that other nationalist ideologies do not presuppose such a metaphysical foundation for their more or less specific socio-economic programmes. What is remarkable in the case of Kaundaism is the fact that this metaphysical ground is explicitly stated and utilised as the ultimate justification for the course the Zambian State takes with regard to fulfilling the development needs of the nation.

We contend that it is the failure to grasp this underlying yet explicitly stated metaphysic or, more precisely, the tendency to overlook and even dismiss it as being of no consequence, that has led to the appalling lack of understanding of Kaundaism in Zambia, no less amongst government officials and intellectuals than in the general populace. Our intention here is to state, briefly, the main features of this metaphysical foundation, then point out some of its shortcomings and implications. Nothing like a complete exposition will be attempted here, though it is hoped that this will be taken as a cue to that end.

II.

Kaundaism as a nationalist-ideology and programme of political action can be but ill-grasped, at best, in the absence of the perception that this aspect of the doctrine is merely a consequence of a particular, speculative, conception of history. It is only with reference to this latter, for instance, that some of the policies and practices of the Zambian State (e.g. the nationalisation of the economic sector in 1968, national prayers for drought relief and economic recovery in the 1980's) begin to make a semblance of sense.

Kaundaism is based on theism proper (as opposed to pantheism and deism), but it is a theism that belongs to religious faith rather than either theology or philosophy and, as such, is characteristically pragmatic and unquestioning.⁷ According to the Kaundaist conception of reality, God created the world. Creation, in this view, is nothing like the six-day affair recounted in the bible's Book of Genesis. Rather, at what Kaunda terms the 'Great Creation' or 'Creation-time', God set in motion 'great forces' antagonistic to each other. These forces are identified as that of Love on the one hand, and that of Evil or Hate on the other. It is the antagonism of these primordial forces which constitutes the process, and is the moving force, of history.

It is not clear, however, whether particular existing objects are created in a separate act or whether they are but the (intended) by-products of the antagonism of the great forces. What is clear is that these great forces work through

ontic, and particularly human and social, beings. Thus, on this view, creation is in fact the entire historical process in which things come into being and evolve in the course of the conflict between the force of Love and that of Evil. Creation is an evolutionary process.

It should be noted, however, that Kaunda's conception of evolution is not Darwinian. That is, there is no notion here of development through adaption and natural selection. In the first instance, Kaunda holds the idea that development in history is progressive in the sense that things evolve from lower, primitive states, to higher and higher states of perfection. Secondly, the evolution of things is not a random or chance process. Rather, the course of history, and the development of things in that process, is strictly in accordance with a Divine Design, tending towards divinely preordained ends. In particular, the goal of history, especially concerning man and society, is the attainment of Perfection. What this consists in is the fact that the force of Evil is rendered, not merely impotent, but entirely non-existent by that of Love.⁸

With specific reference to society, Kaunda holds that, in the course of history, society goes through six basic stages of development. These are, consequent to the 'Great Creation': Creation of Man, or pre-historic age; primitive society; slavery; feudalism; capitalism, and; socialism. To this basic, universal pattern of socio-economic development (borrowed from Marx and Engels without acknowledgement), it is added that between the capitalist and socialist stages society goes through a transitional phase of 'state ownership' or 'state capitalism' which, however, is not a separate socio-economic formation. Further, following socialism, society will develop into either the communist or the humanist socio-economic forms although, in the final reckoning at the end of the process of history, all societies will have become humanist.⁹

The order of the different stages of socio-economic development above is not only one of succession but, too, one of merit and relative perfection. The further away from the 'Great Creation' a particular stage is, the more perfect it is, relative to those it succeeds, in terms of the operation of the force of Evil. This latter is identified with such things as agreed, selfishness, the exploitation of man by man, and violence. That is, it is seen, as is its antagonist, as a moral phenomenon. Accompanying the process by which society ascends to greater perfection, is an evolution of man, "who stands at the apex of biology as the foremost expression of God's purpose on earth".¹⁰ Kaunda accepts the fact that mankind has evolved from lower animals. But, following Teilhard de Chardin (at no great depth, nor even for a long distance), he holds that in man evolution has proceeded on an extrasomatic level, such that "Man is evolving now in his mind rather than through his physical make-up...Within the mind of man, the evolutionary process has been speeded up immeasurably."¹¹

Yet, although the ascent of man from his animal origins to his spiritual destiny is assured by divine providence and is, therefore, inexorable, man has been granted the possibility of choosing whether to go along with God's plans or not. It would be inaccurate to state that the dimension of morality, for man, exists in virtue of this possibility, for, as we saw, reality as such is itself moral. The basic forces of reality, the 'great forces' of Love and Evil, in so far as they are not only the driving

forces of history but, too, constitute it, ensure that. Morality does not come into Being as a consequence of the advent of humanity, for humanity comes into being in a reality already moral. For the individual person, then:

“The choice is between rejoining his animal ancestors and struggling with his lower self in order to achieve spiritual freedom... And by the decision he makes, Man shows whether he belongs to the past or the future; whether he is a biological dead-end or a new departure in evolution, thrusting upwards into the realm of the spirit.”¹²

Note that the possibility of being a ‘biological dead-end’ can only be open to the individual, or group of individuals, not the human species as such - for the possibility of the abortion of God’s plans is inconceivable, on this view.

In Kaunda’s reckoning, the millions of years of human and socio-economic development have led both society and man to the present stage which is characterised by the predominance of ‘state capitalism’ or ‘state ownership’. As in Marxism, we find in Kaundism the view that different socio-economic formations coexist, though the socio-economic formation which is the leading-edge in the onward development of societies towards Perfection (Humanism) can be discerned and identified. Recalling the pattern of the development of societies in six phases mentioned above, we should expect, according to Kaundism, that present societies will presently evolve into socialism before some of them turn communist, and the rest go on directly to the final, humanist, stage of socio-economic development.

The last feature of Kaundism we will look at in connection with its metaphysics is the conception of the State. Here, one senses the odour of the spirit of Hegel stripped of its philosophical clothing and clad, instead, in the humbler garb of religious faith. According to Kaunda, “the State is a God-given instrument for the earthly protection of Man’s immortal soul”.¹³ Yet, in a move reminiscent of Marxism, it is predicted that the State will ‘wither away’:

“Man needs the State only until he moves from the present state of *im-perfection* of his *body* and *soul*... to one of perfection and therefore moves further to a clearer understanding of God. He needs the State because he is still unable to comprehend the true meaning of the teaching ‘love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength’ and ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’”¹⁴

Further:

“Law, which though guaranteed by the State, does not stem from it, is nothing other than ‘ordered power’; that ordering comes ultimately from the sovereignty of God” and “It is because there is recognition that all earthly sovereignty derives its legitimacy from God that in most States, the swearing in ceremonies of high officials... involve some form of religious affirmation. The State is not the source of power, it merely mediates the power derived from God”¹⁵

III.

A measure of the ignorance attending Kaundaism in Zambia, where it was intended to become the national ideology, and is the official ideology still, is to be found in an article by Robert Molteno ¹⁶ in which he presents the prevailing interpretations of it. The first interpretation is that put forward by the government Ministry set up for that same purpose. The other views are held mainly by some political leaders and most intellectuals who have, as yet, not dismissed Kaundaism outright.

"The first (view) has been promulgated by certain people in the Ministry of Development Planning and National Guidance and interprets (Zambian) Humanism as basically the preservation of traditional (African, pre-colonial) values... A second interpretation... is that it is in essence Reformed Capitalism ... The third interpretation of Zambian Humanism is that its dominant character is Socialism within the special context of Zambian conditions."¹⁷

In the light of the discussion in the previous section, it should be evident that, whatever their merits, none of these interpretations capture the main thrust of Kaundaist thinking. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration that most of what has been written on this subject has tended to 'secularize', and thus distort it. Kaunda's conception of the Humanist state, which his political Party, UNIP, is officially committed to attain, is that it is one in which "the will of God is done in Zambia as it is in Heaven"; Kaunda holds that "Man... has an obligation to see to it that his society is organised in such a way which expresses God's purpose",¹⁸ and, further, that Kaundaism "operates on the boundary between religion and politics as a channel for the best gifts of all true faith"¹⁹ - this explicitly stated evidence of the true foundations and direction of Kaundaism is ignored.

In my opinion, an adequate assessment of Kaundaism must begin with a critical examination of its metaphysical foundation. The logical starting point would be the theism which pervades the doctrine. Yet, as aforementioned, the theism that underlies Kaundaism is an expression of religious faith, not a philosophical hypothesis with attendant arguments. For this reason, rational argument cannot be brought to bear on this aspect of Kaundaism for there is nothing of substance to lock horns with here.

The conception of history, though grounded on this theism, is a much more accessible target. There is nothing novel in this doctrine (and this is true of most of what is contained in Kaundaism). A similar view was held by Empedocles of Agrigentum in the fifth century before Christ, and was central to the Indo-Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism (Mazdaism, Bah Din, Parsiism, or 'fire-worship'). The conception of the historical process, and existence as such, as a play between Love and Evil is an unacceptable anthropomorphism which advances our understanding not a whit. An explanation of reality in moral terms must fall short if only because it would of necessity have to be particularistic and relative to one's conception of what constitutes right and wrong, good and bad, Love and Evil. Like his theism, the conception of history Kaunda holds must be considered as belonging to pre-theoretical thought.

Further, to hold, as does Kaunda, a view of the development of society and man as a linear process leading from lower, primitive or imperfect states, to higher states of perfection reflects a disdain for actually existing knowledge. Regarding man, consistency would require that Kaunda should hold that man in the later stages (of socio-economic development) is, relatively, spiritually or morally more perfect than man in the earlier. Yet, all the historical evidence seems to point against this notion that man's evident intellectual development has been accompanied by a comparable moral ascendancy. In the words of Koestler:

"A dispassionate observer from a more advanced planet who could take in human history from Cro-Magnon to Auschwitz at a single glance, would no doubt, come to the conclusion that our race is in some respects an admirable, in the main, however, a very sick biological product."²⁰

With respect to the conception of the historical development of socio-economic formations, some confusion attends the prophecy of what occurs after the socialist stage. As indicated in the previous section, Kaundaism states that, following this stage, societies can develop into either communism or directly to the final, humanist stage. Now, the only thing that distinguishes the two stages is that the communist societies will lack, whilst the humanist one will overflow with, the belief of God. Two points need be raised with respect to this. The first is that it violates the conception of the development of society as a linear process which Kaunda propounds. Secondly, it goes against Kaunda's contention that ascendancy to higher states of socio-economic being are accompanied by an increase in the human knowledge of God. Since the communist and the humanist stages of development are on par in terms of their relative positions on the scale of historical development, there is no reason why the former should be characterised by an *absence* of the belief in God.

Finally, regarding the Kaundaist conception of the State, the view that it is a "God-given instrument for the earthly protection of man's immortal soul" betray's a curious blindness to the role that that institution has played, historically, in the life of man. Even those who would not go so far as to accept the Marxist conception of the State (and are not, like Hegel, philosophers in the pay of the State and subservient to it) would agree that, if anything, the tendency has been for men to seek protection from the violence that the State is too oft apt to visit on commoners. Keeping in mind that Kaundaism is a State ideology, the possibility that this doctrine, holding such a view as this, may be used to justify a version of the outmoded notion of the 'divine right to rule' cannot be ruled out.

Less speculative than the foregoing, but no less disquietening, is the other view that the "moral" and spiritual development (of the citizen) must also be part and parcel of the Party and Government (i.e. the State) programme. Hence it is seriously proposed that the Party's programme include moral and spiritual teaching."²¹ Given that the conception of morality and spirituality intrinsic to Kaundaism is religious, this view must in practice violate all that is held dear concerning the inviolability of the individual's conscience and consciousness. One cannot help thinking that a State which sets for itself as one of its fundamenta

tasks - nay, *the* fundamental task - that of lending a hand to God in perfecting the 'souls' and 'bodies' of its citizens so as to enable them to "comprehend the teaching: Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and heart and mind" and "Love thy neighbour as thyself" - one cannot help thinking that such a State must, in practice, surely be prepared to bring something like European religio-political practices characteristic of the mediaeval ages into being.

The crucial point, however, is that this doctrine which was formulated in all seriousness for the purposes of completing the process of liberation started by decolonisation seems to have over-shot the mark. The needs of our people at the present time are no secret, and they are certainly not those to do with their spiritual salvation in the religious sense which, anyway, we do not believe is the business of the State - any State. Since it is the official ideology of the State in Zambia, the criticism of Kaundism in theory must lead to a critical re-evaluation of political practice, which must lead us back to a re-formulation in theory of our national objectives in the light of our real present needs.

NOTES

1. See, *inter alia*: B. de Gaay Fortman (ed.) *After Mulungushi: The Economics of Zambian Humanism*, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1969); J.B. Zulu: *Zambian Humanism: Some Major Spiritual and Economic Challenges*, (Lusaka: Neczam, 1970); H.S. Meebelo: *Main Currents of Zambian Humanist Thought*, (Lusaka: OUP, 1973); T.K. Kandeke: *Fundamentals of Zambian Humanism*, Lusaka; Neczam, 1977); K.D. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation, Pt. II* (Lusaka: Division of National Guidance, 1974); Kaunda: *A Humanist in Africa*, (London; Longmans, 1966); Kaunda: *Letter to My Children*, (Lusaka: Veritas, 1973); M.A. Ranganathan: *The Political Thought of President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia*, (Lusaka: KKF, 1986).
2. Dr. Kaunda "... began to codify and promote as a national philosophy... his ideas of man's rights and duties to society." in early 1967, the same year in which the National Council of his United National Independence Party (UNIP) adopted Kaundism as its official ideology. See Richard Hall: *The High Price of Principles: Kaunda and the White South*, (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1969) p. 38. The Ministry of Development Planning and National Guidance was set up in 1969.
3. John Plamenatz: *Ideology*, (London: Macmillan, 1970) pp 15-16
4. Kaunda: "Towards Complete Independence" address to the UNIP National Council, (Matero, Lusaka, 11th August, 1969.) p. 62,
5. In J. Collins: *The Existentialists: A critical Study*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952) p. 189.
6. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation*, Pt. II, op cit., p. 1.
7. Kaunda: *Letter to My Children*, op. cit. p. 18. Here, he declares: "I believe in a Supreme Being whose Love is the great driving force working itself out in those three worlds which interpenetrate each other at any moment of time, the worlds of Nature, History and Eternity."
8. Kaunda: *A Humanist in Africa*, op cit. pp. 19-20, p. 42.
9. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation*, Pt. II, pp. 51-55; M.A. Ranganathan: *The Political Philosophy of President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia*, op cit., p. 7.
10. Kaunda, *ibid.*, p. 43.
11. Kaunda: *A Humanist in Africa*, p. 43.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

13. Kaunda: *Letter to My Children*, pp. 58-59.
 14. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation*, pt. II, p. 14.
 15. Kaunda: *Letter to My Children*, p. 71.
 16. R. Molteno: "Zambian Humanism: The Way Ahead" in T.K. Kandeke: *Fundamentals of Zambian Humanism*, op cit., pp. 212-239.
 17. Ibid., (pp 220-221)
 18. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation*, Pt. II, p. 70.
 19. Kaunda: *Letter to My Children*, p. 23.
 20. Arthur Koestler: *Janus: A Summing Up*, (London: Picador, 1983) p. 2
 21. Kaunda: *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to Its Implementation*, (Pt. II, p. 119).
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La discussion du Professeur Outlaw est centré sur le silence "assourdissant" de la philosophie usuelle Euro-Américaine au sujet de l'esclavage et de l'oppression continuelle des Américains d'origine Africaine. L'auteur discute aussi, avec le même esprit, au sujet de la négligence des oeuvres des philosophes d'origine Africaine en général dans les cercles académiques philosophiques de l'Ouest.

La discussion présente un point de vue différent concernant l'histoire de la philosophie Euro-Américaine, un point de vue appartenant à l'oppressé et négligé. La stratégie de l'auteur inclut une critique au moyen de l'exploration de la métaphore de "Lumière" dans l'histoire de la philosophie de l'Ouest. Il démontre comment cette métaphore, originellement employée par Plato, a contrôlé la pensée philosophique de l'Ouest jusqu'à l'âge moderne. Son influence a causé l'identification de la Lumière de Raison avec les races blanches, et de l'obscurité ou l'ignorance avec les peuples Nègres.

Cette discussion est présentée comme une contribution à l'effort de démystifier l'histoire de la philosophie pour inclure les oeuvres des penseurs d'origine Africaine comme Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Kwasi Wiredu et Paulin Hountondji.

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THE DEAFENING SILENCE OF THE GUIDING LIGHT:
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE COLOR LINE*

LUCIUS OUTLAW

I. THE ESSAY AND ITS TITLE

What I shall offer is a lecture that is almost exclusively metaphilosophical: that is, it is *about* particular histories of particular philosophical practices in western Europe and America which have played major roles in intellectual-and social and political-life on the two continents, and which, over time, have held dominant places in the academy with the professionalization and institutionalization of philosophy as, in my judgment, a rather truncated enterprise. What I shall be talking about is my construction of a profile of Euro-American philosophical praxes-their formation, agendas, and commitments-which I shall refer to as "The Guiding Light," a metaphor that I have produced by extracting elements from what I take to have been dominant agendas of Euro-American philosophical practices.

Nonetheless, what is to follow as a *philosophical* contribution: that is, a norm-based *critique*, an *evaluation* of philosophical agendas and practices *as I have reconstructed them* from the perspective of one who lives and works from within an African-American life-world. To this extent what follows is a contribution that is counter to the dominant American philosophical traditions, a contribution that involves a rather different view of the *history* of Euro-American philosophy from those canonized in prevailing reconstructions that constitute, for some, the "official" histories of philosophy in America.¹ My concern is with how various traditions of theoretical and practical efforts that are called "philosophy" - traditions made more complex by histories of geographical, social, political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, and class factors - failed almost totally to confront and deal with what I refer to, drawing on the words and foresight of W.E.B. DuBois, as the "problems of the color line" (i.e., racism and racist oppression) in the unfolding American society in general, in the institutionalized theoretical and practical efforts of philosophers in particular. It is this failure that I refer to when I speak of the "silence" of the Guiding Light.

My concern, therefore, is with historical instances, and their legacies, of the socio-historical, racial/ethnic grounding of Euro-American philosophy as an enterprise devoted to, among other things, specify what passes for "knowledge" and "truth". And in light of more recent developments in African and African-American philosophy as explicit fields of discursive practice, these matters are of particular significance.

Finally, this essay, in significant ways, is preliminary work. It draws on my earlier exploratory probes of these complex issues,² and is an attempt to sketch out a fuller research program for a deconstruction and reconstruction of histories of "philosophy" in America as it has been, and continues to be, practiced and taught in the academy, in particular.

II. BEFORE THE MAYFLOWER: THE SHAPING OF EURO-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

I have not come to the strategy of critique by exploration of metaphors capriciously nor as a matter simply of style. It is a technique with a long history in philosophy and was practiced with a particular fury by Nietzsche and in recent times by such persons such as Derrida, among others (who some see as Nietzsche's heir). In philosophy metaphors are important and often used media. And when the metaphors are meant to carry major weight in organising and directing our thinking in regard to crucial issues, then out of duty to principles of critique indigenous to philosophy we are required to probe the metaphors for their logic and commitments. Thus the concern with "light."

I do not think it necessary to expend much time and energy making a case for the pervasive role of "light" as the central metaphor for Western philosophy (or for understanding generally), where "philosophy" - or "science," which, up to the nineteenth century, was its synonym - was understood to mean all systematic knowledge or justified opinion. One of the more powerful (and, perhaps, initiating) uses of this metaphor is to be found in Plato's *Republic*, particularly in his discussion of the different levels of knowledge via the discussions of the "divided line" and the allegory of the cave where, in both cases, the sun, as source of light, is used as a trope for the "Good" as the source and ground of being, thus the ground of knowing. Throughout the unfolding of philosophical traditions in the West (though not in the West alone), knowing as *enlightenment* - knowledge as light - became deeply entrenched as a major construction and constituting feature. Thus "philosophy" came to designate knowledge of the highest order: knowledge of the laws or principles, the basis, of what is (of being *qua* being), and of what *man* is and ought to be. Philosophy, as a disciplinary-discursive enterprise, became the "queen of the sciences," thus became, in my words, the "Guiding Light."

But "light," as a trope for knowledge, has its dialectical other in this Manichean universe of discourse: "darkness" became the metaphor for ignorance, the absence of knowledge. The terms of philosophical discourse, then, though ostensibly devoted to setting out the objects, the possibilities, and the limits of knowledge; to setting out *man's* nature (and, in some differentiated cases, woman's as well) and what ought to be the conditions and ends of existence of persons and peoples properly distinguished and ordered (moral philosophy); to setting out the nature of the natural world and the place(s) of humans in it (natural philosophy) - all of these efforts became loaded with prephilosophical valorizations and unredeemed prejudices that were subsequently mediated across time and space often without much thematization and critique. The conditions and terms were thus set for an ongoing battle between light and darkness, good and evil.

It was no accident, then, that when Greco-Romans and Europeans encountered Africans (that is to say dark/black "others") these valorizations (i.e., light = knowledge, cleanliness, and, later, Godliness; darkness = ignorance, defamation, sin, soiled...) were readily deployed by the former in the rationalization of racial/ethnic differences into social and political relations of superordination and subordination bolstered by rationalizations in which peoples of light complexion, in the

appropriation and exercise of power, appointed themselves keepers of the "Guiding Light." Further, they appointed themselves "masters of the universe," thus appointed themselves masters of those dark complexioned. Consequently, these persons of European descent sat in judgment over peoples of color who were then designated the cursed descendants of Ham (in rationalizations, familiar to many of us, of some Christians) and the living embodiments of virtually all the negative values carried by the metaphor of darkness - a curse, we were told, that was realized in (and provided the justification for) our forced dispersion from Africa and our enslavement in the New World. We find one of the most poignant and *explicit* of these exclusions of Africans from the status of rational, historical beings in the work of one of Europe's major philosophers, one whose major efforts involved decoding and tracing the developments of the definite force (*Mind* or *Spirit*, in his words) that was the immanent principle of human and cosmogonic development (and in the process set himself up as the executor of the legacy of this principle and its development): G.W.F. Hegel:

Africa must be divided into three parts: one is that which lies south of the desert of Sahara - Africa proper - the upland almost entirely unknown to us...; the second is that to the north of the desert - European Africa (if we may so call it)...; the third is the river region of the Nile...

Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained - for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World - shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself - the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night... The second portion of Africa is the river district of the Nile - Egypt; which was adapted to become a mighty centre of independent civilization, and therefore is as isolated and singular in Africa as Africa itself appears in relation to other parts of the world... This part was to be - must be attached to Europe...

The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas - the category of Universality. In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence - as for example, God, or Law - in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality - all that we call feeling - if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character...

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it - that is in its northern part - belonging to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its

Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.

Having eliminated this introductory element, we find ourselves for the first time on the real theatre of History.³

This imperialist racism and ethnocentrism is embryonic, I think, in earlier (ancient) Western philosophy and bloomed in its Europeanization and subsequent migrations to, and transformations in, the land renamed "America" it became embedded, first, in the Greco-Roman/European projection of the idealized self-image of "rational man," a self-image that was raised to the level of paradigm through the efforts of dominant figures in Western philosophy to identify rationality as the human essence.⁴ Further, with them philosophy likewise appointed itself the sole custodian and guardian of this self-image.

The fulcrum of this multifaceted self-image was formed around the notions of *logos*⁵ and *nous*⁶ (or, in today's language, "reason" and "rationality"). Through these concepts, and with the help of others equally important (i.e., "truth," "goodness," "virtue," etc.), a fundamental, orienting, and "grounding" linkage was made between the microcosm of human existence and the macrocosm of the cosmos, between the divine mind and/or the governing principles and processes of the universe and the mind as the *essence* of humankind. On one hand, *logos* was thought to be the "code" of Being; on the other, the task of understanding (i.e., the proper and successful exercise of human *logos* or *nous*) was then to grasp and decipher this code and to bring human endeavors into accord with it. *Logos* ("rationality"), as ultimate, transcendent principle, was to the cosmos as was the sun to visible reality: the "light" that made understanding (or seeing) possible. And philosophy, as the fullest possible exercise of *human logos* - *logos* grasping *Logos* - became the "Guiding Light," that is, that endeavor to *know* the highest things and, on that basis, to steer human existence and development.

This agenda for philosophy (including the priestly control over adepts and practitioners) dominated the Europeanization and Americanization of Philosophy. In the latter case we find ample evidence of this in particular European intellectual legacies (e.g., French and British Philosophers, including Rousseau, Locke, and Mill, among others) that served as the intellectual capital that underwrote the American revolution. In particular, we see this in the rationalizations of the struggles of a rising bourgeoisie against an increasingly anachronistic feudal order, rationalizations that were framed in discourse that privileged individual reason as the highest authority, even sanctified (for some) by God.

But there was more: those articulating this agenda - particular *men* - appointed themselves its exclusive executors. Thus, deeply submerged among the facets of the constructed self-image that became embodied in the dominant voices of Greek-*cum*-European and American philosophy were generally unspoken (but at times, as in the debates over Jefferson's first draft of the Constitution, *explicitly* voiced), but nonetheless very much operative, key aspects of identity: aristocratic-bourgeois male, of European descent! Paternalistic racist, ethnocen-

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tric logocentricism rode to these shores on the Mayflower.

Let me summarize the argument so far. It centers on a number of points. First, that logocentrism⁷ in mainstream Euro-American philosophy (a tendency that reached its nadir in the twentieth century, in some respects, with the scientization of philosophy - again... - in analytic philosophy) rested on an idealized self-image articulated and mediated by restricted and privileged groupings of men (almost exclusively). Second, that the cultural, racial/ethnic, and class character of these men was in fact decisive in the fashioning of philosophical agendas according to which, in the dominant traditions, philosophy was enthroned as the guardian of the definition, and the highest realization, of "reason," the supposed neutrality and universality of the philosophizings and their products notwithstanding. Third, that these men also appropriated for philosophy exclusive rights to franchise the exercise, and to certify the achievement, of reason in other endeavors (in what we now distinguish as the natural and social sciences, for example), in history and, of crucial importance, in social affairs in general *on a global scale*.

Further, I contend that the self-assurance - in fact, the arrogance - of a number of these men⁸ did much to shape the contradictory conditions that made for, and supported, the silence regarding the oppression of African peoples that was to be so pervasive among philosophers of European descent in the U.S. In short, the assured "certainty" of knowing the "foundations" of the cosmos and of existence, the certainty of having grasped *the* Truth, provided a great deal of rationalizing support for the intellectual (and social-political) projects of the "masters" of philosophy that very quickly transformed many of them into arrogant epistemologists and social, political, and cultural imperialists. Supposed certainty regarding matters epistemological has tended historically to provide the basis for rank-orderings within the realm of human affairs, with rationalizing support from philosophical anthropology. Those who know what knowing is quickly became those - and only those - who were capable of knowing *fully*. American philosophy was the heir to this legacy and continued it, more or less systematically, well into the twentieth century, into the present decade in fact.

III. SILENT LIGHT: REVOLUTION, APARTHEID, AND PHILOSOPHY IN AMERICA

Few persons, if any, would argue that philosophy, both in the academy and beyond, has not played significant roles at important points in setting and arguing for agendas for, and in participating in steering, the unfolding of American history. And if we agree with the historical reconstructions of Schneider and of Flower and Murphey, this was certainly the case from the country's earliest beginnings, especially as various persons and groups struggled to forge, articulate, and legitimate a distinct nation-state and national identity. These struggles were waged on many fronts often dealing simultaneously with both exogenous factors (e.g., Britain and the King) and endogenous factors (e.g., debates over Jeffersonian versus Jacksonian democracy, liberty versus union, and the matter of slavery). It is this initial complexity that accounts, in part, for the pluralism in philosophical

articulations and practices as forces of American history developed toward 1776 and beyond, and gave particular historical, political, economic, social, racial/ethnic, and gender shape to America's revolution and its legacies, a pluralism that is also heavily conditioned by legacies of European thought.

But it should be noted that the term "philosophy," when applied to this historical context, does not refer to the work of professionals in schools. In the accounts of both Schneider and of Flower and Murphey, America's philosophical traditions do not have their origins in academic institutions. Rather, they are to be found in the efforts of those who were occupied with thinking through and arguing various prescriptions for the nation being born, and with their own efforts, or those of others, to realize their programs in local, regional, and national institutions and practices. Writing of the American Enlightenment of the 1700s, Schneider notes:

Never in America were philosophical thinking and social action more closely joined. Though much of the philosophizing was ad hoc, finding universal solutions for particular problems, it will not do to dismiss the thought of the Enlightenment as mere rationalization. For the conspicuous fact about American life then was that not only were the eyes and hopes of the world centred on America but also American men of affairs themselves were genuinely concerned with the wider, if not the universal, implications of their interests and deeds...Never was history made more consciously and conscientiously, and seldom since the days of classic Greece has philosophy enjoyed greater opportunity to exercise public responsibility.⁹

The academic institutionalization, and, subsequently, the professionalization, of philosophy as a discipline independent of reigning political, theological, and economic systems of thought was, according to Schneider, a development that occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (prompted by, among other things, the importation of German idealism).¹⁰

Still, even with the rise of philosophy in the academy there was no complete loss of concern for the nature and direction of America's historical development. Quite the contrary. As Schneider notes, there were those who believed that an academic awakening, an American "Enlightenment" (in New England in particular), would be "the beginning of a great reform in American life."¹¹ (The near total retreat of academic philosophy from the concerns of everyday life and the historical unfolding of the nation had to await the coming of scientific analytic philosophy after World War II.)

The hopes and promises notwithstanding, the "Enlightenment" "failed" miserably. Its ideas were soon repudiated or corrupted, its plans for the future were buried, and there followed on its heels a thorough and passionate reaction against its ideas and assumptions.¹² Nevertheless, there is still a clear legacy in philosophical praxes of relative disregard for one of the most glaring failures of the revolution to establish and consolidate a democratic America: the enslavement and (continued) oppression of people of African descent.¹³ Nor was any consideration given to the articulate voices of Africans in America, or anything that might come from African or African-American traditions, as serious candidates for discussion a

subjects of, or formal education in, philosophy. Further, the confirmation of the constitutionality of apartheid in America in 1896, with the Supreme Court's decision supporting "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites in *Plessey vs Ferguson*, during the same period of the professionalization and institutionalization of philosophy, was accomplished with the support and rationalizing constructions from some of the best minds in the country.¹⁴

Depending on one's understanding of American history, this last development should come as no surprise. For this was also the period of the dismantling of Reconstruction, when the nation, for the most part, was weary of "the Negro question"; when a Republican-Democratic compromise (i.e., the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1876-77) allowed the South to run its affairs "as it knew best," without federal intervention, including, especially, the management of the black population; when the enormous forces of the industrial revolution were coming fully unleashed portending a transformation and consolidation of the American political economy under the hegemony of industrial and finance capitalism with the consolidation of the Union victory over the Confederacy in the Civil War. These conditions, combined with a philosophy of history that continued the transformation of the imperialist, racist, ethnocentric notions discussed earlier into those of inevitable progress and manifest destiny for a chosen people/civilization (...of European descent), provided the fertile soil for the development of a social order that involves, still, the contradictory joining of forces that included triumphant *laissez faire* (eventually monopolistic, international, corporate) capitalism, representative political democracy, and civic privatism.¹⁵ Certain "philosophers," it turns out, mediating particular interpretations of the European and American enlightenments, had won their day. Others, particularly those who had argued for economic democracy and the brotherhood and solidarity of *all* person in the social order (a philosophical tendency Schneider refers to as "pre-Marxian American bourgeois national socialism"), had lost.¹⁶ And with their loss, Euro-American philosophy went into virtual total silence with respect to problems of the color line.

IV. FROM BEYOND THE VEIL

After the Agyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second - sight in this American World, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels lowness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach

the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903¹⁷

The silence is not without sound, however, particularly for those of us "behind the veil" who have heard and lived the rationalizations of our oppression, and waged struggle in word and deed against its many forms. When one looks closely and critically at the commitments grounding and structuring Euro-American philosophy in its dominant modes and the agendas set for it (by the restricted groupings of men of particular classes, and of various lines of European descent, whose commitments grounded and structured its various modes and institutionalizations) in the face of the stark realities of the enslavement and continued oppression of people of African descent; when one notes that the playing out of the African holocaust took place while "philosophy" went about its discursive business of illuminating the darkness of the "wilderness" of the New World frontier in the role of the The Guide to the spread of "Civilization" for those who would be *free*; when one sees that, in the face of the glaring realities of the screams and resolute strengths of the enslaved, then "freed," masses of African peoples, and the well-cadenced, articulate voices of the "race" men and women, slave and "free," who risked - and often gave - their lives to speak for and realize the truth of our humanity; when one understands, *feels*, the depths of this lived history of African peoples and our struggles against the highly rationalized degradation and reduction of our being to thinghood, to *property*, to ontological invisibility and marginality while, simultaneously, we were made the beasts of this region's economic burdens - and too many of us continue living some of the worst of this nation's exploitation and systematic underdevelopment - when we realize that Euro-American philosophy responded to all of this with an almost total conspiracy of virtual silence, then, perhaps, one is left to conclude that the keepers of "The Guiding Light" were made deaf by over-indulging themselves in listening to their own presumptuous voices.

Glaring examples of this silence are to be found in the Schneider and Flower and Murphey texts which reconstruct the history of philosophy in America. So far as I have been able to detect, these canonizations include *nothing* in the way of recognition and acknowledgement of the philosophical articulations and contributions of people of African descent in America. Historiography in and of philosophy discounts and completely ignores our voices and words. One looks in vain for the inclusion or discussions of works by, for example, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Henry McNeil Turner, Edward Wilmot Blyden, W.E.B. DuBois, or Alain Locke, among others.

If one is (self-consciously, critically) of African descent and commits oneself to the practice of "philosophy" and to the study of its Euro-American histories, one is struck very soon, very strongly, by this virtual silence of academic and nonacademic philosophy with regard to the problems of the color line. Where it is taken up, often it has been as "the white man's burden": i.e., the "Negro" is a "problem."

Historically, few Euro-Americans in the discipline of philosophy regarded persons of African descent as humans, thus as beings capable of "philosophy." but there were a few. We *must* note the courageous philosophical, activist men (and women) such as Frances Wright,¹⁸ William Tory Harris and Denton Harris of the St. Louis Hegelians,¹⁹ Francis Lieber,²⁰ many Abolitionists,²¹ and others who pressed (more or less, depending on the person) for the social realization for African peoples of the universalist promises of the best of the European and American enlightenments.

But contrary to the lies that continue to guide the writing of the histories of philosophy in America, there were and are other histories made by black philosophical voices, those of us who make up what Vincent Harding refers to as "the other America."²² And a number of my contemporaries are intent on the deconstruction of the lies and the reconstruction of the history of philosophy in America to include the contributions of African people in the New World and, thus, to quiet the roaring silence of the sanctioned histories and institutionalized lies. I recommend as examples of this work *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917*, edited by Leonard Harris,²³ and Cornel West's *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*.²⁴ And there are the substantial and growing bodies of literature being produced by African philosophers, including Kwasi Wiredu's *Philosophy and an African Culture*,²⁵ Paulin Hountondji's *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*,²⁶ and W.E. Abraham's *The Mind of Africa*.²⁷

These works, however, are from professional philosophers. A major part of our efforts involve securing the appreciation, as works of philosophy, of the writings and contributions of a host of stellar black intellectuals and activists. The successful completion of this effort will require more than the mere substitution or inclusion of works by black thinkers in the canon. A deeper and more important struggle must first be won. First, the dethroning of the imposed and hegemonic Euro-American "rational man" as *the* paradigm of human self-images and all that may be presumptuously attached to it in the way of life-world commitments and practices. Secondly, with that dethroning must come the silencing of the voices, whose embodiment is masked in this self-image, that speak universally by generalizing from the few to the many where the few (privileged males of European descent, historically) take themselves, simultaneously, as the ideal, the norm, and thus as able to speak for the whole of humanity (providing, of course, it is granted that you are human).²⁸

Creating and legitimizing space for African and African-American Philosophy thus involves much more than a concern with disciplinary matters conceived in narrow terms. Even in these terms what is at issue is the very idea of "philosophy," its forms and practitioners, and the deeper issues, with much higher stakes, of the meaning of "man" and "civilized human." The pursuit of these issues leads inexorably to larger matters involving the political economy of culture and history, thus to social construction and reconstruction and the distribution of power, nationally and internationally. (Along this line we should note how distinctions are constantly being made today by persons in the Reagan administration regarding what persons and/or governments are "rational" and "civilized" and those that

are "irrational" or "evil.") This struggle in philosophy is but another battle in the long war against white racism and ethnocentrism in the academy, this time on the field of what has been among its most arrogantly elitist and racist (and sexist) disciplines. Philosophy has served as court rationalist for false universalisms that, simultaneously, explicitly excluded people of African descent and women, among others. The task, as I see it, is to reopen the discussions of many of the old philosophical issues regarding "knowledge" and "truth," for example, and to probe them radically for their social, historical grounding and the cultural commitments which shape their agendas, and to share in the reconstructions of enterprises and agendas which result in, among other things, the preservation of respectful space for the contributions of African peoples and others now excluded or ignored.

For many of us involved in these struggles in philosophy these efforts are but part of larger local and international world-historic struggles on the part of African peoples, and other oppressed peoples and peoples of color. And while the particular focus may be philosophy, the larger questions still include: Who are we? What kind of society or world are we in and do we wish to have? How will we go about knowing and realizing them? These are, obviously, perennial philosophical questions. But the construction and mediation of answers will no longer be conceded to a privileged few. It is my hope that efforts at answering will take place in contexts structured by open, democratic discussion in pursuit of critical, rational consensus which will be regrounded on a revised philosophical anthropology that involves a respectful and full consideration of all of the peoples involved. This essay is another of my offerings to such a discussion.

NOTES

- * Originally presented in different versions as lectures at The University of South Carolina, Spelman College, and Georgia State University.
- 1. For example, Herbert W. Schneider: *A History of American Philosophy*, 2nd, edition (NY: Columbia University Press, 1963); Elizabeth Flower & Murray G. Murphey: *A History of Philosophy in America* (NY: Capricorn Books, 1977)
- 2. Lucius Outlaw: "American Philosophy and the Unfinished American Revolution: A Program for African-American Philosophy", *Bicentennial Symposium of Philosophy: Contributed Papers*, NY, City University of New York Graduate Centre, 1976, pp. 92-98; and Lucius Outlaw, "American Philosophy: The Unfinished American Revolution" (unpublished).
- 3. G.W.F. Hegel: *The Philosophy of History*, (NY: Dover Publications, 1956) Introduction, pp. 91-99. This work is produced from lectures delivered by Hegel in the winter of 1830-31, though there had been two previous deliveries in 1822-23 and 1824-25. See Charles Hegel's 'Preface' to *The Philosophy of History*, pp. xi-xiii. The fact that these ideas were expressed more than sixty years prior to the European cannibalization of Africa (1885), by a person who was to become one of Germany's and Europe's most famous and influential philosopher should not go unnoticed.
- 4. The construction of this self-image has sources in the works of Plato and Aristotle (and is revised and continued by Descartes, Kant and others).
- 5. A Greek word which, in the classical period, "covered a wide range of meanings expressed quite different words in most modern languages...word, speech, argument, explanation, doctrine, esteem, numerical computation, measure, proportion, plea,

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principle..." In Heraclitus' use of the term three ideas were combined: "human thought about the universe, the rational structure of the universe itself, and the source of that rational structure." The Sophists used the term for arguments and what arguments were about; Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, used the word *nous*. The greatest extension of the term *logos* as a doctrine came with the Stoics for whom "Logos was the principle of all rationality in the universe, and as such was identified with God and with the source of all activity". *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vols. 5 & 6 (NY: Macmillan, 1972) pp. 83-84.

6. "Homer used the term *nous* to refer to the mind and its functions generally, but in the pre-Socratics it became increasingly identified with knowledge, and with reason as opposed to sense perception. The term subsequently developed in two ways. For Plato it was equated generally with the rational part of the individual soul (*logistikon*) Aristotle also considered *nous* as intellect distinguished from sense perception The idea of cosmic or divine mind represents the other way in which the concept of *nous* developed.... The Stoics equated *nous* with the Logos, so that for them it was both cosmic reason and the rational element in man; the two streams of development were thus united." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, op cit., p. 525.
7. That is, the excessive concern with *logos*, or reason - the Guiding Light.
8. For example, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, and Husserl in Europe; the philosophical establishment as a virtual whole in the US, with the exception of some Abolitionists and, later, some of the Pragmatists, and a few other groups and individuals.
9. Schneider: *A History of American Philosophy*, p. 29.
10. Schneider: "American Awakening", pp. 375-388.
11. Ibid., p. 386. We see a similar concern closer in time to the present in the pragmatism of John Dewey, in particular, who had a deep concern for the realization of a democratic polity and for the ways in which that achievement might be facilitated by praxis guided by philosophical understanding in general, educational practices in particular.
12. Schneider: *A History of American Philosophy*, p. 30.
13. The Abolitionists were the clear exception, for the most part, in the academies and the larger society of pre-war eastern America.
14. See Robert H. Brisbane: *The Black Vanguard - Origins of the Negro Social Revolution, 1900-1960*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1970) pp. 27ff.
15. See Daniel Bell: *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, (NY: Basic Books, 1976).
16. Schneider: *A History of American Philosophy*, pp. 161-191.
17. In *Three Negro Classics*, (NY: Avon Books, 1965) pp. 214-215.
18. According to Schneider, this English reformer made "a pathetic attempt" to "regenerate" slaves and make them fit for self-government. To a forest tract in Tennessee she took nine adult slaves, a few negro children, and an 'overseer', who had been a Shaker. This group, "released from the fear of the lash", succeeded in clearing a few acres and erecting a few cabins. Miss Wright then expounded her more ambitious plans for Southern democracy - a mixed white and black co-operative community, in which there would be social equality, *but the blacks would do all the manual labour*. She was obliged to ship her few slaves to Haiti and take up her residence in New Harmony. *A History of American Philosophy*, p. 142, emphasis added.
19. Flower and Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, Vol. 2, pp. 463-514
20. According to Flower and Murphey, Lieber succeeded Thomas Cooper in philosophy at the University of South Carolina, and, according to Schneider, while there spoke out against slavery as by nature opposed to civil liberty. Flower and Murphey: *A History of Philosophy in America*, Vol. 1, pp. 351-352; Schneider: *A History of American Philosophy*, p. 152.
21. Flower and Murphey, while discussing developments in moral philosophy in the "Middle Atlantic and Southern States" note that as one strand of the New England tradition" ... the abolitionist's stand was essentially a moral or religious sentiment, in which slavery was seen not as a functioning economic institution, but as a violation of a higher moral law." *A History of Philosophy in America*, Vol. 1, p. 314.
22. See Vincent Harding: *The Other American Revolution*, Afro-American Culture and

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- Society Monographs, Vol. 4, Afro-American Studies Program, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, 1981.
23. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendal/Hunt, 1983.
 24. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.
 25. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
 26. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.
 27. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962.
 28. This way of speaking of the "conceptual error" in basic Western intellectual traditions of "generalizing from the few to the many" I have borrowed from Elizabeth Minnich who expressed it during a lecture at Haverford College on March, 1986.
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SUMMARY

*The land they tell of in the fire-side story
Lives in a soul-numbing, fire-scorched history,
In which yesteryear's legendary heroes of our dreams
Become yesterday's ogres named in our nightmare screams.*

*The cradle of mankind, now the species' largest grave;
Independent Africa, in which yet each is still a slave;
Scorched and flooded, peacefully warring, a saint with the pox -
Where, Africa, and who art thou, inverted tear-drop shaped paradox?*

AFRIQUE, OU EST-ELLE? by Mwamba Tchafu

Où est-elle
 L'Afrique de l'enfant noir
 L'Afrique où le serpent se faufile sous la peau
 Pour vous donner un baiser au coeur.

Où est-elle
 Cette Afrique des ruisseaux
 Qui chantent au coucher du soleil
 L'angoisse de vivre.

Où est-elle
 Cette femme noire, femme nue
 Dont Senghor peupla mes rêves
 Où est-elle que je caresse sa peau lisse d'ébène
 Que j'admire son long cou mince comme une machette
 Que ma gorge se sèche à la vue de ses hanches.

Où sont-ils ces seins fermes
 Pleins de chaleur
 Tel de la braise noire
 Pour que je les malaxe
 Je cherche, je tâtilonne
 Pouah.....du nylon, du coton sous ma caresse.

Où sont-ils ces hommes courageux et forts
 Qui, sans fusil ni lance, se brisèrent
 Contre les canons de la Bible.

Où sont-ils, ces esprits des ancêtres
 Qui partageaient avec nous larmes et sourires.

Où sont-ils ces Messies de l'histoire
 Qui devinrent des héros de nos contes.

Nkrumah, Lumumba, Neto
 Biko, Mandela.

L'écho que répercutent ces noms
 Redonne un peu d'espoir
 Que le triomphe sur les autres et sur moi-même
 Est toujours possible.

Je cherche,
 Je cherche
 Je ne trouve rien.

Ah, je les vois toutes, les femmes africaines
 Toutes, des Agathes, oh Francis Babey,
 Pourquoi ont-elles tant changé?
 Oh Manu Dibango
 'La grand-mère a cessé de préparer du poissons aromatisés
 Les hommes bercent les enfants
 Et les femmes
 Les femmes allument leurs pipes'
 Depuis que la nuit s'est étendue pour toujours
 Sur les villages de l'Afrique.

Ezeulu, tremble
 Tes fils, tes petits fils,
 Tous ont tué le Python Sacré
 Tous ont été fasciné par l'école
 Et....ils ont oublié leur mission.

Samba Diallo, veine a été ta mort
 Les choses ont gagné sur l'Esprit
 'Les morts qui ne sont pas morts'
 Sont dans Toyota, ils sont dans Texas Instrument

Tout a été mangé par les choses
 Tout a été noyé par le sang.

Je vois bien
 La bâtardise des soleils des indépendances
 Je sent bien cette odeur de sang
 Qui, comme un brouillard
 Enveloppe nos cases
 De Soweto à Casablanca.

J'entends bien cette musique de Live Aid Band
 Ces chants pleins de tristesse
 Qui nous viennent de partout
 Pour nous remplir les écuelles
 Des ces enfants décharnés de l'Ethiopie, du Soudan....de partout

Afrique, Afrique, Afrique esclave
 Afrique, libre

Afrique riche, Afrique pauvre

Blanche, Noire

Afrique malade

Afrique hier, aujourd'hui

Afrique

Secheresse, Inondation, Guerre, Paix, Crimes, Prisons

Coups d'etats

Afrique

Belle, Laide

Je t'embrasse.

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SUMMARY

In the present discussion, the author presents an interpretation of the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics as both a retrospective and prospective reflection upon metaphysics.

In the prospective phase, he attempts to show how Nietzsche's destructive critique ends in the declaration that traditional metaphysics, which is "human, all too human", is in ruins. But the ruin of metaphysics carries with it a threat to the existence of that which is human. The author attempts to show that this stripping of that which is all too human, and the human world as such, constrains us to discover a new interpretation of Being which will raise and lead the "human, all too human" towards the superman.

In the prospective, constructive, phase, the author attempts to show that this Nietzschean critique of metaphysics constitutes a significant interpretation with the capability of contributing to the liberation of Africa and the African. The author argues that the Nietzschean critique may be seen as an invitation to a revolution in thought, to a serious exercises in criticism in an unending quest for the meaning of man, the permanent development of the African and African society.

Beyond all criticism, metaphysics remains the inevitable and indispensable science of Man and, in this particular, African Man in search of his Meaning, Happiness and Development.

CRITIQUE NIETZSCHEENE DE LA METAPHYSIQUE: AURORE OU CREPUSCULE?

Muhigirwa Rusembuka S.J.

“Or, pour autant que toute métaphysique s’est principalement occupée de substance et de la liberté de la volonté, on pourra la caractériser justement comme la science qui traite des erreurs fondamentales de l’humanité, mais en les prenant pour des vérités fondamentales”.¹

Mettre en exergue cette citation de Nietzsche, “philosophe essentiellement critique” (K. Jaspers), c’est, d’une manière succinte, révéler le projet qui anime cet article sur la critique nietzschéenne de la “philosophie méta-physique”. Nous nous proposons, dans ce travail, de réfléchir, sous le double versant de la critique et de la construction, sur son dépassement de la métaphysique: Aurore ou Crépuscule? Nous nous engageons ainsi dans la voie du dialogue philosophique avec Nietzsche puisque nous croyons, par le biais du dialogue, à la possibilité et à l’importance d’un enrichissement philosophique.

Dans le présent exposé, nous traiterons d’*abord* de la critique de la philosophie métaphysique qui aboutit à la conclusion: “Humain trop humain”. Si la méta-physique pratiquée jusqu’alors nous fait sombrer dans la médiocrité (humain) et la servitude (trop humain), nous examinerons, *en deuxième lieu*, comment, sans nier en assumant l’humain, nous pouvons aspirer au surhumain. Et comme il est possible et légitime, dans toute investigation philosophique, non seulement d’apprécier l’effort de pénétration de la pensée d’un auteur, mais aussi de relever les fêlures de son discours, nous interrogerons *enfin* sur la prospective métaphysique. Nous terminerons par une suspension conclusive: retrospective et critique.

I. CRITIQUE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE METAPHYSIQUE

1.1. Position du Problème

S’il demeure vrai qu’il n’existe pas de métaphysique en dehors de l’homme, il reste non moins vrai que l’homme qui assume radicalement sa contingence existentielle ne peut pas ne pas faire de la métaphysique: *L’homme est essentiellement un être métaphysique* c’est-à-dire un être en quête d’un sens à donner à sa vie. Et pour comprendre la métaphysique, il faut, nous semble-t-il, se tourner vers l’homme immergé dans la métaphysique saisie comme dimension et lieu spécifique du déploiement de l’humain. Avant de parler de la métaphysique en général et celle de Nietzsche en particulier, il nous paraît logique d’émettre quelques considérations sur l’œuvre de Nietzsche et sur Nietzsche lui-même.

L’OEUVRE DE NIETZSCHE, par delà certaines critiques passionnelles (de la religion), les perspectives idéologiques (du nazisme, du capitalisme), le pseudo incohérence (de la philosophie classique), *demeure une œuvre positivement critique et absolument originelle* à l’égard du théorique et de la morale. Et au-delà des visions réductionnistes et fantaisistes sur la personne de Nietzsche: freudo-chrétiennes, gauchistes, nihilistes, révolutionnaires, révoltés, folles, barbares, etc.,

nous saluons en Nietzsche un philosophe vraiment critique, réaliste, "pourfendeur" des systèmes et un héros authentique d'une ère dionysiaque de l'existence humaine. La diversité voire l'opposition des commentaires sur l'oeuvre et la personne de Nietzsche révélo, à notre avis, non seulement la richesse et la profondeur de la philosophie de Nietzsche, mais aussi l'impossibilité d'une saisie totale du sens pluriel de son oeuvre et du "cas Nietzsche".

Avant Nietzsche, la métaphysique était définie comme étant la science des fondements, la science qui cherchait les premiers et les derniers principes de la totalité du réel. La métaphysique est "recherche de l'Être en tant que fondement de tout être". Et tout au long de l'histoire de la métaphysique, certains philosophes comme Descartes et Kant ont tenté de procurer à la métaphysique de bases scientifiques solides. Pour Descartes, la métaphysique est la racine de l'arbre de la connaissance, de la "methesis universalis". Kant va affirmer la suprématie de la morale sur la métaphysique, de la croyance sur le savoir. Alors Nietzsche, que pense-t-il de la métaphysique?

1.2 La Philosophie Métaphysique

En pensant son temps, Nietzsche arrive à un constat général; chute et décadence du monde occidental. En dialoguant avec les philosophes antérieurs, il fait un diagnostic amer: leur péché originel c'est leur manque du sens historique. Pour Nietzsche, la métaphysique est la science qui s'acharne à comprendre les erreurs fondamentales de l'humanité mais en les considérant comme des vérités fondamentales.

Pourquoi est-il ainsi plutôt qu'autrement? Parce que, ponctue Nietzsche, jusqu'ici, "toute métaphysique s'est principalement occupée, de la *substance* et de la liberté de la volonté". L'Être, objet de la métaphysique, est, pour toute la philosophie métaphysique, substance. Rien d'étonnant donc si, sous des termes divers, utilisés par les philosophes, l'être dont ils parlent soit substantifié. "Depuis l'"un" de Parménide jusqu'à l' *Absolu-identité* de Schelling, en passant par l'*idée* platonicienne, l'*ousia* d'Aristote, la *res* cartésienne, la *substance* spinoziste et la *chose en soi* kantienne"², la métaphysique est l'étude de l'Être substantifié conçu comme fondement. Comme fondement, l'Être réclame les propriétés d'unité, de stabilité, d'identité, de transcendance, de permanence, d'éternité, d'autosuffisance, d'absoluité, de logique, etc....

Comment expliquer cet égarement et cette croyance de la philosophie métaphysique? Cette croyance de l'Être comme substance s'origine dans le rêve. "L'homme, affirme Nietzsche, a *crû* découvrir dans le rêve un second monde réel, c'est l'origine de toute métaphysique"³. En d'autres termes, les philosophes non contents d'approcher, par la raison, le monde réel, sensible et changeant, sont allés à la recherche d'un arrière-monde irréel, transcendant et éternel. Voilà pourquoi, depuis longtemps, les philosophes métaphysiciens étaient à la recherche des erreurs fondamentales telles que l'Idéal, L'Essence, l'Être, la Chose en soi. Ils n'ont pas encore compris que "ce qui est ne devient pas et qui devient n'est pas, maintenant, ils croient tous, même avec désespoir, à l'Être". Ce qui veut dire que

Nietzsche préfère le flux héraclitéen (l'être devient) à l'affirmation parménidienne de l'Être (l'Être est). Car, si déjà l'Être est, il ne peut devenir et s'il doit devenir, il n'existe pas encore. Pour Nietzsche, tout est "résultat d'un devenir". Comme l'Être n'est pas, on comprend pourquoi "les adorateurs des formes" désespérés font de l'Être non un objet de connaissance mais un objet de croyance; et expliquent "en quelque sorte pneumatiquement le livre de la nature".⁴

Nietzsche ruine le fondement (rêve, croyance) de la philosophie métaphysique. Il récuse la philosophie classique et systématique en adoptant pour sa philosophie un style poétique et aphoristique. Il s'oppose à une métaphysique des Essences fixes et éternelles et par ce biais, à la négation d'une conception de l'Être comme réalité stable, identique, éternelle et transcendante. Bref, la philosophie métaphysique est, aux yeux de Nietzsche, humaine, trop humain même.

1.3 "Human trop Humain"

"Humain, trop humain" appartient, d'après certains auteurs,⁵ à la période seconde des oeuvres de Nietzsche. Pendant cette période, Nietzsche prend distance vis-à-vis de Schopenhauer et de Wagner et développe le thème de l'esprit libre, condition indispensable de libération contre les servitudes aliénantes de la métaphysique, de la religion et de la morale. Sous la plume de Nietzsche, trois ouvrages vont paraître "Humain, trop humain" (1887), "Aurore" (1880), "Gai savoir" (1882).

"Humain, trop humain" est un livre que Nietzsche dédie aux "esprits libres", "ces fils de demain" et "d'après demain", "les prédestinés", "les vainqueurs". Dans cet ouvrage, Nietzsche brosse, avec critique sans complaisance, le monde de la médiocrité dans lequel sont immergés les hommes de son temps. Pour les tirer de la bassesse vers la grandeur, de la mort vers la vie, de la nuit vers le jour, pour briser leurs chaînes d'esclavage, pour libérer leurs esprits prisonniers et passésistes, Nietzsche leur propose "Human, trop humain" comme thérapie, comme "une cure intellectuelle, un traitement antiromantique spontané" afin qu'ils accèdent à la liberté d'un esprit autonome et novateur. Au sein d'un monde décadent on vit un homme déchu qui croit absolument à "un fondement ultime et définitif, sur lequel tout l'avenir de l'humanité est désormais obligé de s'établir et de s'édifier",⁶ "Humain, trop humain" vient désillusionner, réveiller les esprits abattus et redonner confiance et espérance aux hommes d'avenir, ces (esprits) ces "hardis lurons". Ceux-ci portent en eux le désir ardent de la création d'un monde nouveau.

Les hommes habités par le ressentiment n'ont pas pu accéder à la liberté d'esprit à cause des chaînes solides de la métaphysique, de la morale et de la religion. Cette "trilogie" a pour fondement, sol nourricier "la passion, l'erreur, l'art de se tromper soi-même" et pour acteur principal, l'homme éthique qui affirme: "ce qui me nuit, cela est quelque chose de méchant; ce qui m'est utile, est quelque chose de bon. Et derrière cette vraie folie se cache l'arrière-pensée la plus présomptueuse, à savoir que nous-même devons être le principe du bien parce que nous sommes la mesure du bien et du mal".⁷ Ce passage montre comment Nietzsche scrute les symptômes du *mal* de l'homme qui, pour son *bien*, se pose, d'une façon arbitraire, comme la référence ultime du bien et du mal. L'homme se crée des valeurs et en décide; il refuse ce qui est et recherche ce qui doit être. La mé-

taphysique comme la religion naît sur le terrain original de la morale.

Cette morale qui recherche les valeurs va être récupérée par la métaphysique et la religion. Nietzsche la définit comme "une indiosyncrasie de décadents guidés par l'intention cachée de se venger de la vie, intention d'ailleurs couronnée de succès".⁸ Les hommes décadents n'acceptent pas le monde tel qu'il est, ils n'ont pas l'"Amor Fati", ils sentent qu'il y a quelque chose de méchant contre lequel ils doivent lutter et se venger. Pire, c'est contre toute la vie qu'ils veulent se venger. S'ils suspectent cette vie, ce monde, il va de soi qu'ils le refusent et recherchent un au-delà de la vie et un arrière-monde.

La religion, elle, supplée et complète la morale. Au refus de soi et au manque de confiance en soi, la religion offre "le désir de certitude" et la Foi en Dieu; pour confirmer l'homme dans son mépris de la vie, la religion crée des concepts comme l'ascèse, la soumission, l'humilité, le péché...; et au refus du monde, la religion fait espérer un ciel; lieu d'éternel repos. La métaphysique vient parachever l'oeuvre inaugurée par la morale et poursuivie par la religion en lui procurant, avec rigueur et méthode, les principes et les fins ultimes de l'existence désincarnée. Le prêtre est le prototype, le "désir incarné de l'"autrement", de "l'autre-part".

Sous cet angle, et la morale et la religion et la métaphysique sont des interprétations pneumatiques de la réalité humaine, ce sont "des ombres évanescentes, de fausses conceptions du monde et de la vie". Hallucinée par un désir effréné des arrière-mondes, la métaphysique se présente comme une fabulation autour du néant, d'une idole. Pourquoi les philosophes en sont-ils arrivés là? Parce qu'ils ont créé des catégories logiques, des valeurs utilitaristes à la mesure de leur Moi, au service de leurs intérêts humains, mais incapables de les conduire vers la vérité. Avec la métaphysique, la morale et la religion - des pseudo-sciences - nous n'atteignons donc nullement de cœur des choses, "nous ne touchons pas à l'essence du monde en soi, nous sommes dans le domaine de la représentation et aucune intuition ne saurait nous porter plus loin".⁹

Si, au sein de la philosophie métaphysique, aucune intuition ne peut nous faire saisir l'essence de l'Être, ne faut-il pas renoncer à la pratique de la métaphysique? Celle-ci est, en fondement, récusée par Nietzsche. Ce dernier ruine l'ancienne métaphysique pour braquer un nouvel éclairage sur la manière de concevoir rationnellement l'Être et l'interpréter. Le crépuscule de la philosophie métaphysique (recroquevillée sur l'humain) inaugure l'aurore de la "métaphysique sans danger à l'avenir" (ouverte au surhumain).

II. HUMAIN, SURHUMAIN

II.1 Dépouillé de l'humain

Dans la première partie, Nietzsche philosophe à coup de marteau et détruit jusqu'aux fondations le faux savoir métaphysique et déblaye le terrain pour un nouveau mais difficile savoir: le monde dépouillé de l'humain. Nous entrons ainsi dans la phase positive, constructive de la conception nietzschéenne de la métaphysique. Mais, que faire concrètement si le monde est un lieu saturé du divin? L'homme, un esclave idéaliste? Et la vie, un authentique non-sens?

If faut dépouiller le monde de tous les prédicats, de toutes les étiquettes qui sont, en définitive, une transvaluation, mieux, une idéologie: un ensemble des jugements des valeurs. La transvaluation, à son tour, est une sérieuse intrusion de l'humain (norme absolue du bien et du mal) dans le monde neutre des apparences. La neutralité, la transparence et la beauté du monde étaient souillées, falsifiées et troublées par les attributs de l'homme, lui-même noyé dans le trouble de la pensée onirique. L'homme, quêteur des principes et des fins utopiques, a fini par humaniser le monde. Ce monde était capté par un homme captif, esclave. "Mais quand en aurons-nous fini de nos soins et précautions? Quand cesserons-nous d'être obscurcis par toutes ces ombres de Dieu? Quand aurons-nous complètement "dédivinisé" la nature?"¹⁰

Dédiviniser la nature, c'est la libérer de tous les anthropomorphismes car les ombres de l'homme ont leur source en Dieu. Les arrières-mondes et les arrière-pensées doivent tomber pour que l'homme s'assume pleinement en assumant le monde.

Et la vie idéalisée par la morale et la métaphysique? Dans la "Généalogie de la morale", Nietzsche parle "contre la morale, en dehors de la morale" puisque c'est elle qui est génératrice des valeurs qui favorisent l'aliénation idéaliste et empêchent l'homme à être "fidèle à la Terre", à la vie qui, elle au moins, n'est par l'oeuvre de la morale". Pour redonner à la vie sa pureté, pour la démoraliser, Nietzsche prône le "renversement des valeurs", le "*kehre* éthique" qui explique le nihilisme comme dévoiement du néant de toutes les valeurs éthiques idéales. L'homme n'est pas le principe du bien et du mal; Dieu est une pure et simple invention; la chose en soi et l'être sont des représentations dignes "d'un rire homérique". Que reste-t-il? L'apparence qui n'est pas le contraire d'un être mais elle est "la vie et l'action même, la vie qui se moque assez de soi pour me faire sentir qu'il n'y a la qu'apparence, feu-follet, danse des elfes et rien de plus".¹¹ L'interprétation morale et humanisante avait figé l'apparence en être. Désormais, il faut nous placer "au-dessus de la morale", il faut renoncer aux masques du monde, de la vie et de l'Être pour voir et accueillir, dans leur absolue altérité, la transparence de leur visage.

11.2 L'Être interprété

Nietzsche s'oppose à la prééminence des valeurs morales, religieuses et métaphysiques. Dans "l'idole et la distance". Marion écrit que "L'être, interprété métaphysiquement, est assimilé à la catégorie de l'idéal. La transcendance n'est qu'un ailleurs, un arrière-monde, une fuite". La philosophie métaphysique était le règne des vérités illusives. Nietzsche assigne à la philosophie le but de déchiffrement de l'Être dans ses manifestations visibles et plurielles. Comment va-t-il procéder? Si le platonicien pose des questions (qu'est-ce que la vérité?), Nietzsche, lui, questionne les questions (pourquoi préférer la vérité à la fausseté). La critique généalogique de Nietzsche consiste à demander ce qui, derrière les raisons, reflète la situation existentielle du philosophe. Le questionnement sur les questions devient un questionnement sur le questionner c'est-à-dire interrogation sur les raisons d'être de telle ou telle interprétation ou perspective. C'est le monde propre des philosophes du soupçon: Nietzsche, K. Marx et S. Freud.

Le refus des essences substantifiées, due néant sacralisé: Dieu, l'Être et l'idéal conduit Nietzsche à une autre conception de l'Être. Positivement, l'Être n'est ni essence, ni substance, ni chose en soi. Il ne'est pas à chercher ou à rechercher au-delà du réel, de la vie, du monde, de l'humain. Dans l'Être, rien n'est fixe, définitif, éternel. Positivement, l'Être est l'ensemble du réel en devenir, en perpétuel avènement. L'Être déborde la sphère du concevable et du connaissable.

En récupérant et en critiquant Kant, Nietzsche propose une refonte de la théorie Kantienne du phénomène qu' il définit comme "une réalité agissante et vivente en elle-même". Il n'existe plus de chose en soi qui serait la raison ou la cause suffisante du phénomène qui s' offre. Et l'être du phénomène n'est pas un fond substantiel ou essentiel, mais bien " l' abîme d'un fond", l' absence d'un fond. La nouvelle interprétation théorique de l'Être n'est positivement pratique qu'au moment où l'homme, esclave d'hier, veut absolument, dans l'aujourd'hui, dépasser le nihilisme qui l'enveloppe. Le dépassement du nihilisme s' opère par une conversion décisive de l' existence, par un amour inconditionnel de la vie et une adhésion dionysiaque à l' éternité du retour en devenir.

Cet homme nouveau qui refuse le nihilisme "souhaite revoir toutes les choses telles qu'elles ont été et telles qu'elles sont, pour l'éternité; celui qui insatiablement adresse un da capo non seulement au spectacle mais au fond à l'Être qui a besoin de ce spectacle et le rend nécessaire" ¹² Comprendre l'Être c'est consentir à son total avènement-dévoilement, c'est dire oui, un oui nouveau et créateur à tout ce qui est, c'est renoncer à tout en toute indifférence (sans joie ni regret), c'est "vouloir l'éternel retour de paix et de guerre". Plus profondément, comprendre que l'Être est en perpétuel devenir c'est, dans la même logique, comprendre que L'homme se fait toujours et inlassablement, qu'il es convoqué par l'Être pour devenir, accéder à "la liberté de la raison", pour un homme supérieur, un "surhomme".

11.3 Invitation à la Surhumanité

'L'humain reste bien pour Nietzsche le point de départ vers le surhumain. Après avoir déploré la marche implacable de la philosophie métaphysique vers le nihilisme, Nietzsche veut, par le dépassement (au sens hégélien: conservation et suppression) de la métaphysique, aller au-delà de ce qui est trop humain en l'homme. On découvre chez Nietzsche, écrit A. Bernard, "une soif positive de réhabilitation des valeurs terrestres, des richesses de la vie de ce monde. Il veut réhabiliter l'humain contre ce qu'il pense être son aliénation par le divin".¹³ Le renversement de toutes les valeurs de Nietzsche est aussi une plaidoyerie pour les valeurs authentiques de l'humain en marche vers le surhumain. Ce renversement des valeurs devient une réhabilitation, une récupération de certaines valeurs pour l'avènement du surhumain.

Le surhumain n'évoque pas une fuite vers l' "ailleurs et l' autrement" du monde et de l'homme mais signifie essentiellement une assumption résolue et décisive d'élever l'humain vers le surhumain, de redonner du poids à l'humain, mais un humain bien enraciné dans le terreau de ce monde.¹⁴ L'homme tendu vers le surhumain n'est pas le commun des mortels, c'est l'homme qui a dépouillé

le monde de l'humain; et qui s'est dépouillé lui-même de tous les anthropomorphismes d'ordre métaphysique, religieux et éthique. C'est l'homme qui, en proclamant la mort de Dieu et de l'Être, annonce, en même temps, l'ouverture d'un espace nouveau à l'existence. C'est l'homme du renoncement "qui a dit oui à l'éternel retour des choses".

Cet "oui" est un accord de vouloir sans fin au mouvement et au jeu du monde. L'homme est-il capable de prononcer un oui infini dans une vie finie, dans ce qui ne demeure jamais? L'homme de l'avenir ne croit plus, ne prie pas, ne supplie pas. Il veut une chose: être soi-même selon M. Richard, "la cause et l'intention, la fin et le commencement de l'humain".¹⁵ Pour les êtres supérieurs, il n'y a pas de Dieu qui serait le principe créateur du monde, il n'y a pas de fin comme but vers lequel l'homme doit nécessairement tendre. Les triomphateurs du temps" sont auteurs de leur vérité, inventeurs de leur sens et surtout créateurs de leur propre existence. Comment, au sein de l'éternel retour, ils peuvent concilier leur création libre avec l'implacable" "amor Fati"? Cela est peut-être ressort du Surhomme. Qui est-il? Le Surhomme que Nietzsche nous invite à devenir n'est pas un homme extrêmement doué par ses qualités et ses talents. C'est l'homme qui ne rejette rien, qui accepte tout, qui vit l'affirmation dionysiaque du monde tel qu'il est. Le Surhomme jouit d'une volonté de puissance créatrice, associatrice de tout le réel, "par delà le bien et le mal". Le surhomme est maître de soi, de son destin, et ne perd jamais "cette liberté qui le place au-dessus des choses". Le surhomme est un concept dynamique pour les être supérieurs qui ne sont jamais mais deviennent toujours en passant par des étapes provisoires, mieux, par des signes du chameau, du lion et de l'enfant. Bref, le surhomme est en perpétuel événement comme, du reste, la métaphysique.

III. PROSPECTIVE METAPHYSIQUE

III.1 L'Africain et Nietzsche

Dans quelle mesure le message de Nietzsche constitue-t-il une interpellation significative et libératrice pour l'Africain? Nous épousons le point de vue de F. Guibal sur l'oeuvre de Nietzsche: "une invitation à aller de l'avant, à libérer en chacun toutes les potentialités vitales, à se créer une relation innocente, non réactive, aux différences et à l'altérité".¹⁶ L'Africain s'est-il réellement pris en charge? Est-il vraiment en marche vers l'avant? A-t-il réellement libéré toutes ses potentialités vitales? Pourquoi les Africains se distinguent-ils par un désir effréné pour le mimétisme dans tous les domaines: philosophique, politique, économique, social et culturel? Comment pouvons-nous avoir un avenir propre, non hypothéqué si nous n'avons pas confiance en nous-même? Comment nous assumer et inventer l'avenir si nous sommes étrangers à nous-même? Ces questions légitimes et fondamentalement métaphysiques - car il est question de l'être de l'Africain - nous provoque et nous convoque à une lecture de la métaphysique de Nietzsche dans un sens prospectif. Ainsi, de Nietzsche, les Africains peuvent retenir trois points.

Primo, la métaphysique de Nietzsche a pour thème central le sens de l'humain. La philosophie en Afrique doit redonner à l'Africain la confiance, la fierté et la

dignité de vivre pour qu'il puisse s'assumer en assumant son histoire. Car, il n'y a d'avenir que pour celui qui, dans l'actualité du présent, intègre, le passé. Cette option mobilise l'Africain pour une lutte légitime contre tous les opiums d'ordre culturel, politique et économique qui le plongent dans un "sommeil dogmatique" et aliénant. Les Africains ne doivent pas attendre leur salut, leur développement, leur bonheur des autres (européens ou américains), ils doivent d'abord et surtout compter sur leurs propres forces. "C'est en eux-même, en renforçant leur unité, en plaçant dans tous les cas les intérêts supérieurs de l'Afrique - et de ses habitants - au-dessus de toutes les autres considérations, en resserant leurs liens avec tous les peuples qui, comme eux aspirent à la suppression des inégalités entre les pays et entre les peuples, que les Africains contribueront la mieux à l'instauration d'une ère de paix, de coopération et concorde universelle".¹⁷

Secundo, Nietzsche est considéré comme le "dé-codeur du monde occidental" à cause de son esprit critique et d'analyse radicale. Est-ce que, en Afrique, nos philosophes exercent sérieusement leur esprit critique dans leurs pays respectifs où règnent des démocraties à Parti-Unique? Ont-ils comme les vrais philosophes l'esprit libre, la volonté d'autonomie, ou du moins, le désir de cette volonté d'indépendance pour que leurs investigations philosophiques ne soient pas à la remorque des idéologies régnantes et pour que leurs "semences de vérité" n'acceptent pas de solde? Quand nous regardons l'Afrique, les Africains, leurs modes de vie et leurs écrits, nous sommes convaincus que, sur le plan métaphysique, il est question d'une crise d'identité, d'authenticité. Les mimétisme dans les domaines politiques, économiques et culturels sont les conséquences d'une dichotomie et d'une non-assomption de soi en tant qu'individu, collectivité et nation (le soi est aussi pluriel). Que faire pour pallier à cette dés-articulation de soi? Il suffit, propose Eboussi Boulage, "Que l'Africain habite sa diversité et celle du monde, par et dans son projet d'être par soi et pour soi par la médiation de l'avoir et du faire. Le courage d'être, de faire et de se faire".¹⁸ Cette proposition d'Eboussi nous invite à ne pas considérer l'authenticité comme une état de fait, un déjà là saturé, une recette. L'authenticité se présente comme une réalité historique en devenir, un processus dynamique; elle est à faire, mieux, c'est un "à faire" individuel et collectif qui exige et réclame, hic et nunc, assomption et épanouissement de l'Africain dans l'aujourd'hui des situations multiples et variées qui les sont aiennes. En tant que conquête en quête d'accomplissement, l'authenticité nous convie à vivre, à actualiser nos modes d'être vrais c'est-à-dire en étant nous-même et en devenant nous-mêmes, pour le bien de la Grande Famille africaine et de l'Humanité entière.

Tertio, la métaphysique exige, de l'homme en quête de son sens un dépassement continu. Pour Nietzsche, le surhomme n'est pas, il devient en créant et en se créant. De même, l'Africain n'est pas essentiellement une donnée, un fait. En effet, il est de l'essence de l'homme d'être un être prospectif, "une mouvance jamais achevée" (N. Mayugi), "un néant qui doit sans cesse se faire" (J.P. Sartre). L'Africain doit être un être créateur, un inciteur et un producteur de culture. Avec A. Chenu, nous pensons que le développement est "le nom socio-économico-culturel de la *création*". Celle-ci se présente à nous comme étant plus une révolu-

tion, une nouveauté qu'une réforme, une adaptation. Nous tendons vers la conquête, la création du développement de l'Afrique, mais sachons et prenons conscience que c'est à la fois une mission inaliénable car personne ne peut l'accomplir à notre place et une mission indépassable car, affirme J. Ki-zerbo, "on ne développe pas un peuple, il se développe". Mais, aujourd'hui, l'Afrique, des Africains convoitée, étranglée, sollicitée, téléguidée, idéologisée, commercialisée, divisée, etc.... sourat-elle se frayer librement une voie originale et spécifique pour le bien de tous? Placés dans l'immédiat "devant des choix redoutables, des finalités à définir, des options à formuler, saurons-nous éviter les erreurs des civilisations mécanisées, fondées sur le profit et l'argent, tenant le progrès matériel comme une fin en soi, et n'ayant éprouvé jusqu'ici aucun scrupule à saccager, joyeusement la planète pour en tirer bénéfice? Sauront-ils (Africains) à côté du "plus" accorder sa juste place au "mieux", à côté de l'"avoir" laisser à l'"être" celle qui lui revient? Donneront-ils à l'humanité la haute leçon d'un continent sachant conserver la sagesse dans l'exercice de la puissance?"¹⁹ La conversion du "sauront-ils" en "ils font effectivement" annonce l'âge d'or et l'aurore de l'Afrique et de l'Africain.

III.2 Aurore ou Crépuscule

La critique nietzschéenne de la métaphysique annonce-t-elle l'aurore ou le crépuscule de la métaphysique? Nous estimons que cette critique inaugure le début d'une autre métaphysique. Bien plus, c'est toute la philosophie qui, avec Nietzsche, selon M. Richard, "connaît une fin, peut-être sa fin, mais elle est porteuse d'un nouveau commencement". Le "Crépuscule des idoles" de Nietzsche s'éclipse au profit de l'"Aurore" et du "Gai Savoir" qui trouvent leur complément et leur achèvement dans la théorie du Surhomme.: "Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra".

Le crépuscule de la métaphysique c'est le règne de l'Être, de l'Idéal et des Essences immuables et éternels, c'est l'éclat des valeurs religieuses et morales éliénantes qui étouffent tout élan de liberté de l'homme pour son accomplissement. L'aurore de la nouvelle métaphysique c'est la critique positive de la fausse métaphysique comme déclin; c'est la dédivination du monde, la dé-christianisation de la vie et la démoralisation de l'homme.

Plus concrètement, il est question de l'homme comme crépuscule et comme aurore. Comme crépuscule, l'homme est trop humain, aliéné par les servitudes de la métaphysique, de la morale et de la religion, noyé dans la bassesse et la médiocrité. L'aurore annonce l'au-delà de l'humain qui n'est pas l'inhumain ni l'antihumain. Cet aurore se présente comme une libération jamais totalement acquise de l'homme, comme une tension jamais achevée, comme une croissance toujours en quête de maturation. Bref, cet aurore est une révolution toujours en marche de soi et des autres, - révolution faite en l'homme, assumée par lui et pour sa cause.

Comme toute philosophie contient en elle-même son aurore et son crépuscule, celle de Nietzsche n'échappe pas à la règle. La théorie nietzschéenne du Surhomme se révèle, à notre avis, à la fois comme positive et négative. Sa positivité

réside dans cette invitation lancée à l'homme à s'élever, à se dépasser toujours, "à bondir constamment par delà lui-même". Cette même théorie recèle une négativité parce qu'elle est une utopie qui ne montre pas comment, concrètement et effectivement, l'homme avec ses contours existentiels socio-économico-politico-culturels, peut devenir surhomme et se dépasser continuellement. Or, le dépassement exige ce qui doit être dépassé, le processus à suivre et le but à atteindre. Mais, curieusement, Nietzsche affirme l'inexistence et du processus et du but. Nous pensons que l'aurore de la théorie du Surhomme porte en lui-même son crépuscule; il serait peut-être indiqué de parler du "crépuscule du matin".

Méconnue, critiquée ou exaltée, niée ou mal aimée, la métaphysique reste bien vivante au coeur de l'homme qui, en quête de sens, découvre les enjeux de son existence et se décide à les assumer. Plantée droit au coeur de l'homme et du monde, la métaphysique ne peut être niée sans que l'homme ne se nie. Sans métaphysique, l'homme sombre dans la perfection du non-sens. Car, plus qu'un discours qui procède avec méthode, regueur, clarté et cohérence, la métaphysique est une science du sens, "un effort vivant" (Sartre), "une découverte de l'étrangéité fondamentale de l'expérience quotidienne" (Meleau-Ponty), un combat amoureux, inaliénable, lucide, authentique et indépassable de l'homme avec lui-même, autrui, le Monde et le "Tout Autre". Vouloir se passer de là métaphysique, c'est encore la pratiquer, Critiquer la métaphysique, parler de l'"oubli l'Etre" comme M. Heidegger, c'est nécessairement lui chercher des fondements solides. Rien de ce qui vit, rien de ce qui est et même de ce qui n'est pas (le néant) n'échappe à l'étreinte et à l'exigence métaphysique (réflexion).

CONCLUSION

Nous voici à la fois au terme et au seuil de cet article: inévitable paradoxe. Car, le crépuscule d'un essai philosophique, déployable à l'infini, ne constitue nullement l'épuisement du sujet mais relève plutôt d'une suspension de la part de son auteur.

Dans la réflexion sur la critique nietzschéenne de la métaphysique, nous avons d'abord montré comment Nietzsche proclame la ruine de la philosophie métaphysique: humaine, trop humaine. Et comme celle-ci porte atteinte à la promotion de l'humanité de l'homme, nous avons ensuite essayé de comprendre que le dépouillement de l'humain et du monde accule à une nouvelle interprétation de l'Etre qui, à son tout, convoque l'humain et l'oriente vers le surhumain. Enfin, nous nous sommes interrogé sur le prospective métaphysique. Il nous appert que *la métaphysique demeure*, malgré les critiques toutes relatives et accidentelles, autrefois comme aujourd'hui et demain, *une science fondamentalement indépassable et inaliénable de l'Homme, de l'Africain, en quête de Sens, du Bonheur et du Développement.*

En paraphrasant Rousset parlant de Kant, nous pouvons, à notre tour, affirmer que s'il est difficile de rester toujours nietzschéen, il est probablement souhaitable de commencer par l'être. L'avons-nous été? Nous n'en savons pas trop. Nous esti-

mons, cependant, avoir fait oeuvre de pensée comme tentative de compréhension de la critique nietzschéenne de la métaphysique. Et, en ami du savoir, nous faisons nôtre cette maxime de Nietzsche: "En avant, sur la voie de la sagesse, d'un bon pas, en toute confiance"

NOTES

1. Nietzsche, F. *Humain trop humain*, Tome I, (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 45.
2. *Encyclopedie Universalis*, Volume XI, Paris, 1975 p. 804. (Souligné par nous).
3. Nietzsche, F. *Op. cit.* p. 26
4. Nietzsche, F. *Ibidem*, p. 29
5. Aurox, S. et Well, Y. *Dictionnaire des auteurs et des thèmes de la philosophie*. (Paris Hachette, 1975), p. 200.
6. Nietzsche, F. *Op. cit.* p. 40
7. ----- *Aurore*, No. 102
8. *Encyclopedie Universalis*, volume XI, Paris, 1975 p. 805.
9. Nietzsche, F. *Op. cit.* p. 30.
10. ----- *Gai Savoir*, part 3, No. 109.
11. ----- *Humain trop humain, op. cit.* No. 54.
12. ----- *Par delà le bien et le mal*, No. 56
13. Bernard, A. *L'homme chez Nietzsche et chez Teilhard*, (Kinshasa: Saint Paul, 1984), p. 44.
14. ----- *Op. cit.* p. 45.
15. Richard, M. *Le pensée contemporaine. Les grands courants* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), p. 79.
16. Guibal, F. F. *Nietzsche ou le désir du moi créateur in Revu Philosophique de Louvain*, février, 1984 p. 78.
17. Amadon Mahtar M'Bow in *Préface du Grand Atlas du Continent Africain* (Paris: Jeune Afrique, 1973) p. 8.
18. Eboussi Bouyaga. *La crise du Muntu* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1977), p. 229.
19. Monod, T. in *Préface du Grand Atlas du Continent Africain*, Paris: Jeune Afrique, 1973), p. 10.

Résumé

Dans cet article, l'auteur donne une discussion critique de la possibilité d'employer la philosophie de la science de Thomas Kuhn pour des buts de justifier le caractère scientifique des sciences sociales.

Une présentation de l'avis de Kuhn fait sortir les clarifications du concept d'un 'Paradigma' que Kuhn elabora dans son oeuvre dernière, et souligne l'importance des notions de 'exemplars' et de 'Puzzle-solving' dans la philosophie de la science de Kuhn. Prenant l'interprétation stricte de la philosophie de la science de Kuhn donnée dans ses dernières oeuvres et l'appliquant aux sciences sociales, ces dernières sont jugées négativement. C'est-à-dire, elles ne se qualifient comme sciences de succès à cause de l'existence parallèle de différentes 'écoles' de pensée, le manque du consensus et le manque conséquent du 'puzzle-solving' progressive.

Il est disentié que les tentatives fréquentes de donner une interprétation moins stricte de Kuhn, en considerant son concept de 'paradigma', dans un sens plutôt vaste, violet les positions fondamentales de la philosophie de la science de Kuhn, et, en plus, cela rend ce concept trop vague pour avoir aucune application claire. L'auteur discute qu'à moins de dilluer les avis de Kuhn au-delà toute reconnaissance, ils ne peuvent pas être employer pour justifier le caractère scientifique des sciences sociales en assumant par exemple, qu'ils sont "multi-paradigmatiques".

Alors pour comprendre le caractère spécial des sciences sociales, nous ne devrions pas nous attendre à aucune aide de la part des philosophies de la science (telle que celle de Kuhn), basées sur une analyse des sciences naturelles, en transferrant ces analyses entierement aux sciences sociales.

KUHN'S PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.

Pieter Boele van Hensbroek

Throughout the course of their existence, the social sciences have been haunted by an inferiority complex, namely, that they are "less scientific" than the natural sciences. The social sciences, so it seems, can never get rid of methodological problems, there is always disagreement about fundamental assumptions concerning man, history and society, and it looks as if the practitioners are eternally divided into different 'schools'. Comparing this state of affairs in his science to the high degree of progress and consensus in the natural sciences, it seems the social scientist can only feel ashamed.

Since the publication of Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*¹, however, it looks as if the situation can be viewed differently. The social sciences can be seen as fields of study where different, competing 'paradigms' are at work, - that is, different, but equally justifiable fundamental views on social reality. The natural sciences themselves are ruled by paradigms (e.g. Newton's dynamics and later Einstein's theory of relativity). The absence of consensus, then, is nothing to be ashamed of. With the help of the concept of 'paradigm' the social scientists can get rid of their sense of inferiority.

Can Kuhn's Philosophy of Science be used in this way to justify the social sciences' claim to scientific status, despite the situation of permanent disagreement described above? In order to discuss that question I will first clarify the main points of Kuhn's Philosophy of Science, especially his concept of 'paradigm'. Armed with this clarification I will discuss whether the above sketched application of Kuhn's ideas is tenable.

I. Kuhn's Philosophy of Science.

Positivism and Critical Rationalism, the main traditions in Philosophy of Science before Kuhn, developed their views on science in order to justify its rational character. They gave us reasons to believe in science, or at least to respect science as a very special branch of human culture, claiming that it is the pre-eminent road to true knowledge. Being in the first place a historian of science, Kuhn is not interested in justification, but in description. He addresses the question: How does the fabric of science work and develop?

Kuhn's Philosophy of Science brings out the social, more than the rational character of science². A scientific discipline, and especially the research speciality is, according to Kuhn, a kind of culture in which people are socialised through education in that branch of science.³ Thus they learn to accept its assumptions and methods of working without seriously questioning them. Scientists are, according to Kuhn, very rational and critical in their treatment of the research questions of the day, but only at the price of uncritically accepting the body of background-knowledge shared by the group. There is nothing to blame the scientists for here, because without the unquestioned acceptance of a lot of basics, they could not work effectively on more specialised questions of research. In

Kuhn's terms: they could not dedicate themselves to 'puzzle-solving'. Consensus is the only possible basis for fruitful dissention.

Another important aspect of Kuhn's views is his unconventional idea of the development of science. Kuhn does away with a clear cut idea of cumulative, linear scientific progress and of approaching the truth. The history of science consists, according to Kuhn, of a sequence of paradigmatic periods, with revolutionary transitional periods in between. The paradigmatic periods form blocks, within which progressive, cumulative scientific development is possible. Between the blocks, however, it is difficult to speak of 'progress'. We can never know if one paradigm is nearer to the truth than another.

Kuhn introduces various key terms to make his ideas clear: paradigm, revolution, normal science, revolutionary science, exemplar etc.. In his original book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the concepts 'paradigm' and 'scientific revolution' are most widely used. But the term 'paradigm' especially proved to be ambiguous⁴. Kuhn defined 'paradigm' initially as: "...universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners"⁵. At the same time this model implicitly contains a body of assumptions about e.g. methodological directives, metaphysical principles, fundamental laws, experimental techniques etc.. So one could say that the model instance of scientific research *exemplifies* a particular view of that science and the object of study that that science investigates. These exemplified views were sometimes also called 'paradigm' by Kuhn. His description of paradigm as: "...the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community"⁶ corresponds to this use of the term. Thus the term 'paradigm' is given two different meanings: the example (the universally recognised scientific achievement..) and exemplified (the entire constellation of beliefs..).

In his later work⁷ Kuhn clarifies this double meaning of 'paradigm' by introducing the term 'Disciplinary Matrix'. A 'disciplinary matrix' then designates the body of assumptions shared by the scientific community in a certain branch of science. The elements that he mentions are: basic symbolic generalisations (like 'f = m. a' or 'action equals reaction'); ontological and heuristic models (like 'heat is kinetic energy' or 'gas molecules are like elastic billiard balls'); values about what 'good' explanations, predictions and theories etc. are; and lastly 'exemplars', the paradigmatic example cases of good scientific work⁸.

The vital embodiment of the disciplinary matrix, however, continues to be the 'exemplar', the model scientific achievement. It is the 'deeper' sense of paradigm according to Kuhn.⁹ An exemplary study in the natural sciences has been e.g. Newton's *Optics*. For the social sciences one could take e.g. Marx's *Capital* as an exemplar.

Why is the exemplar so central for Kuhn? Because it shows what is the most important aspect of a paradigm, that is its *function*. It forms the focal point of consensus of opinion within the scientific community. It embodies those unquestioned background assumptions that form the consensus-basis that allows the scientific community to work on new, specialised problems, i.e. puzzle-solving. One could say that the exemplar generates the social prerequisite for

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successful science, that is, the scientific community. Another important function of the exemplar is that of 'guide-line' in the research process. The exemplar directs our attention towards certain problems, it suggests an ordering of the object and suggests how to proceed if new research questions or problems come up.

Quite a few people who claim to be enthusiastic about the concept of paradigm do not take into account the clarifications which Kuhn suggested first in his 1969 'Postscript' to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. They tend to stick to a meaning of paradigm as a kind of scientific worldview, not as an exemplar. 'Paradigm' is then used in its widest possible meaning, just a new word for 'theoretical tradition' or 'approach'.

What is missed then are exactly the new contributions which Kuhn makes, e.g. on the consensus and community-generating function of the exemplar, necessary for 'Puzzle-solving', on the guide-line function of the exemplar, and on the importance of socialisation in a paradigm. We should further note that adherence to a paradigm in the strict Kuhnian sense is the product of a long process of socialisation (scientific education), just like our other cultural attitudes. Even pioneers of scientific revolutions, like Galileo Galilei, never shifted completely to a new paradigm in a lifetime. One of the consequences of the wide concept of paradigm is the idea that we can 'design' a new paradigm. Paradigms in the Kuhnian sense however, are not generated at will, they are products of history.

II Kuhn and the Social Sciences.

Let us now turn to the social sciences and ask how Kuhn's Philosophy of Science applies here.

At first sight Kuhn's ideas seem to be very profitable here. In the social sciences, dividing lines between different schools of thought are often determined by either methodological issues or metaphysical assumptions about man and society, often both together. It looks as if Kuhn's concept of paradigm applies here quite well. Different schools can be called paradigm groups or scientific communities, and their fundamental frameworks of ideas paradigms. Another phenomenon that the Kuhnian ideas fit very well, is the situation of 'paradigm-clash': two theoretical traditions meet in a discussion, but any common ground between them seems to be missing, such that the discussion is totally fruitless. The significance of a scientific community as the social basis for a scientific tradition is another point where Kuhn's Philosophy of Science fits the social sciences very well.

The applicability of Kuhn's Philosophy of Science in these situations, however, disguises the fact that the social sciences are, for the most part, in an essentially *non-Kuhnian* situation. For Kuhn, successful research in a branch of science derives from consensus on exemplars as 'universally recognised scientific achievements.'. This consensus, however, is precisely *not* achieved in most branches of social research. Because of disagreement between schools at this level, fundamental assumptions of the various schools and methodological issues remain objects of discussion, and progressive puzzle-solving, the hallmark of successful science, is thereby seriously hampered.

Calling in Kuhn's Philosophy of Science in order to justify the claim to scienti-

fic status of the social sciences is, therefore, bound to fail. A strictly Kuhnian analysis will tend to lead to a negative judgment concerning the scientific status of most branches of social research.

Puzzle-solving, based on an exemplar, is certainly not absent from the social sciences. Certain traditions have set in motion a cumulative, puzzle-solving enterprise.¹⁰ Some methodical canons have also acquired 'paradigmatic' status. These are, however, isolated cases that can not overcome the general state of affairs in which basic assumptions and methodological issues remain an important part of social-scientific discussions. Kuhn explicitly states that it was the contrast of consensus in the natural sciences with the lack of consensus in the social sciences that initially brought him to the recognition of the importance of paradigms.¹¹

III Kuhn adjusted.

A strict application of Kuhn's Philosophy of Science leads, as we have seen in the last paragraph, to a quite negative judgment about the lack of consensus in the social sciences. But we are, of course, free to adjust Kuhn's views somewhat to make them a useful tool to analyse the social sciences. We might in this way retain the attractive aspects of his teachings, while avoiding a negative, judgment about these sciences.

Authors applying Kuhn's ideas to the social sciences have in general adjusted his views in two ways.¹² Firstly they assumed that fruitful scientific progress is possible even with the parallel development of various paradigmatic approaches in the same field of study. Secondly, they have taken 'paradigm' in its wide sense, as shared background assumptions.¹³

With these two adjustments, however, some of the most central aspects of Kuhn's Philosophy of Science are at stake. Let me first discuss the consequences of the first adjustment.

Allowing competing paradigms to function parallel to each other must, in Kuhn's view, affect the dynamics of the research field. As indicated above, successful puzzle-solving is, in Kuhn's view, only possible on the basis of a shared paradigm. Allowing parallel paradigms implies, at least partly, giving up Kuhn's idea of the dynamics of 'normal science'.¹⁴

A second consequence of allowing the parallel existence of competing paradigms is the danger of justifying a dogmatic, narrowminded attitude towards people 'in another paradigm'. Kuhn's recognition of the incommensurability of paradigms comes in a new light if we conceive of paradigms as existing parallel to each other, at the same time. Saying that Aristotle's dynamics and Newton's dynamics are incommensurable, amounts to saying that there is no strict way to evaluate their relative scientific merits. But saying that two paradigms in the same field, at the same time, are incommensurable, can easily be taken as a recognition that it is not necessary to argue with opponents as agreement is anyway out of reach. The incommensurability of paradigms in the Kuhnian sense tends, in a situation where paradigms function parallel, to endanger an 'open', debating attitude of scientists.

A third consequence of the parallel existence of paradigms is that the socialisation process in the social sciences will not follow the Kuhnian pattern. Socialis-

ation will, in that case, have less the character of uncritically adopting the assumptions and rules of the game of the research-field. Unless one imagines the possibility of being socialised exclusively in one paradigm in a field of social science, socialisation in the social sciences will always include a more conscious confrontation with theoretical assumptions and methodological options than socialisation in the natural sciences does. In actual fact the comparison of theoretical options and discussion of methodological issues and other issues from the Philosophy of Science, are current elements of social science curricula. This deviates from Kuhn's description of scientific education.

The second adjustment of Kuhn's Philosophy of Science, namely, taking 'paradigm' in its wide meaning and disregarding the role of exemplars, is also not without consequences. The interesting aspects of Kuhn's thought relating to the role of the exemplar in scientific education and in the heuristics of the research process are lost.

With the wide meaning of the term 'paradigm' we import, as well, the problem of the vagueness of the term in this sense. Applying it to the social sciences it becomes very unclear what should count as a paradigm and what should not.

In a review of applications of Kuhn to the social sciences, Eckberg and Hill complain: "...the paradigms spoken of by sociologists are nebulous, shifting entities, indicating whatever one wishes them to indicate, and limited only by the theorists imagination."¹⁵ "...Any interrelated set of beliefs, values and methods that have been held by a substantial number of practitioners can be dubbed paradigm in this sense...".¹⁶ Eckberg and Hill come up with no less than thirteen proposals by various authors to identify the 'paradigms' of sociology. Only a few of the assumed paradigms are identified by more than one author, so there is hardly any overlap in the proposals.¹⁷

The suggested adjustments of Kuhn's views seem to be minor. But if we realise what the consequences are with regard to Kuhn's views on puzzle-solving, incommensurability, the function of exemplars and the specificity of the term 'paradigm', then the changes are substantial. One could say that in order to use Kuhn to justify the diversity in the social sciences, Kuhn's views are adjusted to such an extent that they are capable of justifying an essentially un-Kuhnian situation!

The foregoing should not be taken as a denial of the extraordinary appeal of some of Kuhn's ideas for the social scientist. The community nature of science and in some cases e.g. the role of exemplars, are relevant in any field of science. Using Kuhn's ideas should for that reason not be prohibited. If we, however, cail in Kuhn's Philosophy of Science to find justification for the situation in the social sciences where discussion on fundamental assumptions, on methodological issues and debates with an ideological background are common, then we are at the wrong address.

Kuhn's Philosophy of Science is a quite coherent whole, of which you can not easily change parts without losing the main idea or creating contradictions. Even more important, Kuhn's Philosophy of Science is very much a philosophy of the *natural* sciences. Using Kuhn to justify the claim to scientific status of the social sciences will become the same kind of exercise as that which the positivistic Philosophy of Science propagates: judging the social sciences by comparing them to

the natural sciences.

My conclusion therefore is that calling in Kuhn for the justification of the social sciences' claim to scientific status does not work. A Kuhnian analysis (unless Kuhn is watered down beyond recognition) casts a negative judgment on the scientific status of the social sciences. Beyond that, using Kuhn, the exercise of justification is again one of comparing the social sciences to the natural sciences.

A final objection against applying Kuhn's Philosophy of Science to the social sciences is that it breeds an illusion. Applying Kuhn always carries with it in the background the assumption that the social sciences will step by step eliminate theoretical plurality. The social sciences are young, it is suggested, but when they are fully grown, they too, will find their paradigms and consensus. This expectation, however, I consider quite illusory. The methodological nature of the social sciences and their peculiar relation with praxis and the non-scientific aspects of culture and society in general, make them an intellectual enterprise in which conflicting approaches are inherent. Theoretical debates and influences from outside science (e.g. politics) co-determine the movements of the social sciences and will continue to do so. Comparing the social sciences to the natural sciences by using Kuhn, tends to disguise the situation that the 'debating' character of the social sciences is part of their very nature.¹⁸

NOTES

1. T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (hereafter *SSR*), (Chicago UP, 1962, 1970).
2. "... I regard scientific knowledge as intrinsically a product of congeries of specialists' communities." In T.S. Kuhn's 'Reflections on my Critics', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), p. 253.
3. Kuhn's paradigms are to be found in relatively restricted specialised areas of research. Communities comprising of less than 100 people. Paradigms should not be looked for on a discipline-wide scale.
4. See e.g. M. Masterman, 'The Nature of the Paradigm', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, op. cit.. Masterman identifies a multitude of meanings of the word 'paradigm' in Kuhn's *SSR*.
5. *SSR*, p. VIII.
6. *SSR*, Postscript, p. 175.
7. Kuhn's later work: 'Postscripts-1969' in the second edition of *SSR* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1970). 'Second Thoughts on Paradigm' in F. Suppe (ed.), *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974). 'Reflections on my Critics', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, op.cit.
8. See *SSR*, Postscript, p. 182-187.
9. *SSR*, Postscript, p. 175.
10. It has been argued by some authors, successfully I think, that in certain fields of research, at certain times, there have been 'normal science' and 'puzzle-solving'. W.S. Weimer and D.S. Palermo mention in their article 'Paradigms and Normal Science in Psychology' in *Science Studies*, 3 (1973), p. 211-244. Wundt's Structural (or 'New') Psychology and Neo-Behaviourism. The shortlived character of these Normal Science traditions, however, make the development of the field over somewhat longer periods of time still very discontinuous: a series of abortive cumulative periods.
11. *SSR*, p. VIII.
12. E.G.R.W. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970);

- A. Effrat, 'Power to the Paradigms' an editorial introduction in *Sociological Inquiry* 42 (1972), p. 3-34. T. Bottomore, 'Competing Paradigms in Macrosociology' in A. Inkeles et. al. *Annual Review of Sociology* (Palo Alto, 1975) p. 191-202. G. Ritzer, *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science* (Boston, 1975). Interesting is also: S. Wolin, 'Paradigms and Political Theories' in P. King and B.C. Parekh (eds.), *Politics and Experience* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986) p. 125-152
13. See par. I of this paper and note 6.
 14. 'Normal Science' is Kuhn's term for the period of cumulative growth of knowledge between scientific revolutions.
 15. D.L. Eckberg and L. Hill, 'The Paradigm Concept and Sociology: A Critical Review', *American Sociological Review* 44 (1979), p. 925-937. reprinted in G. Gutting, *Paradigms and Revolutions* (Notre Dame/London, 1980) cited p.122.
 16. G. Gutting op. cit. (Note 15.). p 14.
 17. See G. Gutting op. cit. (Note 15.) p. 132-133. Examples are: T. Bottomore, who identifies 1) Structural-Functionalism; 2) Historical; 3) Structuralism; 4) Phenomenological, as paradigms. L.W. Sherman, 'Uses of the Masters' in *American Sociologist* 9 (1974) p. 175-181 finds as paradigms: 1) Nomological; 2) Interpretative; 3) Critical.
 18. In an article 'Social Science as Cultural Debate' (forthcoming), that constitutes a follow-up to this article, I give more solid ground to the contention that the social sciences are, and will always remain, a battleground for conflicting approaches and interests.

Résumé

Cette discussion est centrée sur la présentation influente de A.K. Sen sur la théorie de la choix social: 'L' Impossibilité du Libérale Paretien'. Dans cette présentation Sen argumente que les principes Paretien sont, dans un sens très fondamental, en conflit avec les valeurs libérales.

Dans la discussion présente, Keita dirige sa critique contre deux éléments essentiels de la thèse de Sen:

- 1- Le principe du libéralisme de Sen (condition 'L'). Il est suggéré que ce principe ne réussit pas à exprimer le fait qu'un caractère fondamental du libéralisme est concerné de discuter les droits, la liberté et les libertés individuelles.*
- 2- L'argument de Sen, que le principe Paretien peut être considéré comme l'expression de liberté individuelle: L'auteur suggere que, au contraire, le principe Paretien est, plutôt, un domaine de l'économie du bien-être social moderne, et n'est pas beaucoup lié aux questions de liberté individuelle.*

Par conséquent, il est suggéré que la thèse de Sen essaie de faire l'impossible logique, c'est-à-dire, montrer l'incompatibilité du principe Paretien d'un côté, et le libéralisme, de l'autre côté, puisque les deux manquent d'index commun de mesure.

Enfin, l'auteur discute au sujet des critiques contre la thèse de Sen, par des auteurs comme Nozick, Levi et Chapman.

SEN, INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND THE PARETIAN LIBERAL LANSANA KEITA.

I

The purpose of this paper is to comment once again on A.K. Sen's influential paper in the theory of social choice, "The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal."¹ In that paper Sen attempts to show that the Pareto principle, regarded seriously by economists and also thought to be an expression of individual liberty, appears to have illiberal consequences for choices involving more than two alternatives. Sen's thesis is that "in a very basic sense liberal values conflict with the Pareto principle." (Sen, 1970, p. 157).

Sen's argument (Theorem I) is that there is no social decision function that can satisfy the following three conditions: U (Unrestricted Domain), P (Pareto Principle) and L (Liberalism). The three conditions are defined as follows:

Condition U: Every logically possible set of individual orderings is included in the domain of collective choice rule.

Condition L: For each individual i , there at least one pair of alternatives, say (x, y) such that if i prefers x to y , then society should prefer x to y , and if i prefers y to x , then society should prefer y to x .

Sen then weakens Condition L by restricting it to at least two individuals. He calls this condition L^* (Minimal Liberalism) and then proves that "There is no social decision function that can simultaneously satisfy Conditions U, P, and L^* ". Sen's proof, by way of his example, is as follows: Two individuals 1 and 2 view a controversial text differently. Three alternatives concerning the text are as follows:

Individual 1 reads the text: x

Individual 2 reads the text: y

No one reads the text : z

Person 1 (prudish) has the following ranking: z, x, y . Person 2 (Libertine) ranks the alternatives thusly: x, y, z . If the choice is between x and z for person 1 then Sen's Condition L^* requires that z be the social preference. Similarly for person 2 the choice between z and y should yield y as the social choice. The Pareto principle requires xPy since both 1 and 2 express this preference. But condition L^* also yields yPz and zPx . Thus we have $xPyPzPx$, which is a social preference cycle. Thus minimal liberalism (Condition L^*) according to Sen is inconsistent with the Pareto principle.

Sen's result has provoked a number of commentaries,² and as he himself has pointed out they focus mainly on the possible weakening of L^* as a means of obtaining a viable resolution of the problem. But the majority of the critical reviews of Sen's result do not question the fundamental assumptions of his thesis; they seek only to revise some of its formal aspects.

In this paper, however, I propose to question both the fundamental assumptions of Sen's theorem and its formal aspects. I propose to show that Sen's results are unwarranted because his definition of liberalism is questionable and that his claim that the Pareto principle may be viewed as an expression of individual liberty

is unacceptable. I will also argue that the kinds of objects that occupy the domain of the Paretian universe are qualitatively different from the kinds of entities involved in a discussion of genuine liberalism.³ In this connection, it is not logically possible to demonstrate the incompatibility of the Pareto principle and the Condition of Liberalism. I will argue that in the context of social states, liberalism entails rights to make preference among alternatives while the Pareto principle concerns the social expression of possible preferences. In short, liberalism entails the justification of rights mechanisms while the Pareto principle involves the implementation of such mechanisms in quantifiable terms. Any proof of the incompatibility of the principle of Liberalism and the Pareto principle would require necessarily a common index of measurement. This is not the case with both principles

II

Notwithstanding the innocuous examples Sen employs in his discussion, the issues at stake are quite important. Discussions on liberalism are generally concerned with the important issue of individual freedoms in society, the Pareto principle on the other hand is a key assumption of modern welfare economics, that branch of economics that attempts to offer economic answers to the important questions of economic equity and the general social welfare. In fact much of the ideological debate that theorists in economics and political theory constantly engage in derive from a perceived qualitative difference between questions of liberty and economic welfare.

Sen begins his discussion with the claim that in individual choices concerning the colours of one's walls or one's sleeping position, the preference of other members of society should not be decisive. Of course, there are no known societies in which innocuous concerns regarding the colour of one's walls or one's sleeping preferences are subject to social evaluation. But assume that the colour of one's walls or one's sleeping bag position are subjects of social concern, then the issues of liberalism, rights social legislation, etc. arise. In this context, the immediate question is: what could be the reasons that other members of society offer for their preferences in these instances? From the liberalist standpoint the pertinent question is what are the appropriate criteria for determining those choices that would make a majority decision illiberal. Sen's example concerns "Pink walls," but what could one make of his argument if instead of "pink walls" the discussion concerned "nuclear weapons.?"

Yet a strictly utilitarian approach would not establish an adequate set of criteria that would allow us to determine under what circumstances a minority preference should be allowed. To say that the preferences of some individual are to be tolerated because the material or psychological discomfort to the other members of society is tolerable or minimal, cannot be sustained if those other individuals disagree. What may be viewed as tolerable from the standpoint of a given society may be viewed as intolerable by members of another society, or even by subgroupings within the given society itself. The sociological literature is replete with examples of such. The problem cannot be resolved unless it is possible to formulate some publicly accessible index of measurement that could

quantify such psychological givens as pain and pleasure. This problem is well-known to economists who have arrived at the conclusion that it is not possible to quantify psychological states according to some objective measure.

It seems to me that one could not really sustain the liberalist thesis unless certain assumptions are made about the possible rights of individuals as persons. This approach would require an analysis of the psychological and physical constitution of the human being as a biological organism and as a social being. Having established what it means to assert that "P is a person," it follows logically that person attributes would apply to all individual persons. The formulation of person attributes would necessarily entail discussion of concepts such as "freedom," "rights," "self-fulfilment," etc. In order to ground this thesis it would be necessary to take into consideration those peculiarities of the human cerebral structure which dispose human beings to conceptualize and act in particular ways. It is immediately evident, in this connection, that man's cerebral structure disposes him to multiply mental constructs and to act according to these constructs. In other words, the capacity to express a multiplicity of preferences and choices is a natural mode of human expression. Note that the issue discussed here is essentially one of biological science.

In this regard, theorists who discuss the structure of human social organizations must necessarily evaluate the important concept "freedom" and its function in the establishing of social orders. The reason for this is that the ability to express preferences and choice depends on the existence of freedoms to do so. Granted this, the important question that follows is what restrictions should be placed on individual freedoms, since the structure of any social state is determined much by the accepted scope of individual preferences and choices, i.e. individual freedoms. As stated above utilitarian considerations will not work. They necessarily founder on attempts to measure utility interpersonally.

A discussion of the foundations of liberalism begins, therefore, with the concept of freedom and its relationship to the idea of liberty. On the assumption that all persons have similar disposition to freedoms, the formulation of any social state must take into consideration sets of competing liberties. Its viability must then be seen to depend on restrictions placed on those liberties ascribable to all persons. Such liberties must, therefore, be posited and their formulation, given the grounds discussed for so doing, would entail talk not only of intellectual and moral freedoms but also those that are political and economic.

Given our statement above that any social state of more than one individual will be characterized by competing freedoms, it is the social legislature that necessarily determines the extent to which each freedom is limited by every other freedom. Consider, for example, the conflict between the freedom of expression and the freedom to privacy. It is the social legislature that enforces the socially agreed on individual freedoms by appeal to the idea of rights — a right as a legally sanctioned freedom. Our discussion leads us to making the following observation: preferences are meaningful within the context of a social state only in the sense that they entail rights, actual or potential. Any meaningful definition of liberalism must take this idea into account.

Given the above discussion, it would appear that Sen's Conditions L and L* are

hardly representative of liberalism. Sen recognizes though that questions could be raised about his definition of liberalism when he writes in a footnote (Sen, 1970b, p. 153) that the term is "elusive" and "open to alternative interpretations." He also adds that:

Some uses of the term may not embrace the condition defined here, while many uses will. I do not wish to engage in a debate on the right use of the term. What is relevant is that Condition L represents a value involving individual liberty that many people would subscribe to. Whether such people are best described as liberals is a question that is not crucial to the point of this paper.⁴

Given the above, it is curious that Sen chose to relegate to a footnote a point crucial to the viability of his thesis. Furthermore, his definition of liberalism is questionable since it does not take into account the possible freedoms or rights of all members of society, and he does not state what the alternatives x and y in L and L^* might be. It is indeed important to recognize that negative freedoms involving pink walls or white walls are qualitatively different from positive freedoms involving physical violence against other members of society. Liberalism, in the context of our discussion, does not at all entail decisiveness of preference of any single individual vis à vis the other members of society. It entails rather the exercise of already prescribed rights. Of course, in a given society new rights may be added as a result of negotiation or social conflict, but such rights, ideally, should be universally applicable to each individual. The discussion has raised questions about the acceptability of Sen's definition of liberalism, it is instructive now to comment on the role of the Pareto principle in Sen's proof.

III

The Pareto principle (weak) is a foundational premise of modern welfare economics and states that "if every individual prefers any alternative x to another alternative y , then society must prefer x to y ." This principle is rather general and it is surprising that Sen accepts the belief that "the Pareto criterion has been thought to be an expression of individual liberty." (Sen, 1970b, p. 157.) One can easily imagine a social state characterized by political authoritarianism and extreme disparities in wealth satisfying the Pareto principle. Assume that all members of society in this case express a preference for less taxes (x) over more taxes (y), and that this preference is implemented as a social decision function. This situation though representative of the Pareto principle can hardly be regarded as an instance of liberalism. The Pareto principle is evidently neutral on matters concerning both political and economic freedoms, and should be properly understood as essentially an instrument of economic efficiency.

But consider too the fact that in the case of the Condition of Liberalism "preference" and "choice" are synonymous, although this is not unambiguously the case with regard to the Pareto principle. Some individual i may prefer x to y yet may not necessarily choose x over y . While the principle of liberalism entails the idea of decisiveness this is not the case with the Pareto principle. Of course, one

could argue that if each individual i in society is decisive in favour of x over y then society prefers x to y . But then there could not be any logical inconsistency between conditions U , P and L , since P would then represent the generalization of L .

One might also add that although the Pareto principle could be applied in any choice situation, i.e. in any situation involving preferences among any set of alternatives, there are good grounds for claiming that in discussions concerning liberalism the principle may not be fully applicable. The Pareto principle as an integral part of welfare economics is not properly applicable to freedoms which, we argued, are unquantifiable, but rather to measurable quantities such as income and costs. Of course discussion in welfare economics begins with the idea of a strictly ordinal utility, yet applied welfare economics must appeal to measurable quantities for purposes of cost-benefit analysis, compensation payments, equity determinations, etc.

Given the above argument then one could also claim that the transitive inference which generates the social preference cycle, allegedly derived from Sen's proof, is not logically acceptable. For if there is no common index of measurement that allows the comparison of preferences then preference cycles are not possible. For example, $xPyPz$ does not necessarily deny the possibility of zPx since, without some consistently applied measuring rod, we can vouch only for xPy and yPz . xPz is allowable only if empirically instantiated, given our reservations about preference measurements. On this basis $xPyz$ and zPx are not logically incompatible. This is further evidence that Sen's claim of the inconsistency between liberalism and the Pareto principle is open to question.

The discussion in this section leads to the following observation: liberalism, as we have defined it in this paper is not incompatible with the Pareto principle. On the one hand liberalism entails discussion of freedoms and one's rights to these freedoms. On the other hand, the Pareto principle, as an integral part of welfare economics, concerns qualitatively different objects such as incomes, costs, and other measurable quantities.⁵

IV

In this section I propose to examine Sen's thesis further in the light of the more important analyses offered by other authors such as Nozick, Levi and Chapman. Nozick argues, in response to Sen, that "rights do not determine a social ordering but instead set the constraints within which a social choice is to be made, by excluding certain alternatives, fixing others, and so on."⁶ Nozick's libertarianism compels him to argue that on matters concerning purely individual rights the social choice mechanism could not make choices between relevant social states, which Nozick implicitly would regard as equivalent. Nozick's point is that in an individual's rights-protected sphere choices should not be included in any ordering of social states.

Sen's response is that it is hardly a recommendation for liberalism that an individual's choices within his protected sphere be a matter of indifference to the formulation of social orderings. Sen writes:

Does it then make no difference to our idea of social welfare whether the choice between *x* and *y* differing "in a matter private to individual *j*" (and thus declared "socially equivalent" and let to be "determined by private decisions") is, in fact, decided the way *j* wants it, rather than some other way, e.g., as strong-armed *k* wants it? If it does not make a difference, then in what sense is this a "liberal" approach?⁷

Sen's argument is justified. In fact, one would make a stronger argument in support of Sen by claiming that the idea of "right" is meaningful in a social context only if sanctioned by the social legislature. If some individual *i* claims that he has a right to choose *x* over *y* (both of which are private acts) then he is indeed comparing social states. Thus Sen's rather innocuous examples of sleeping positions, color schemes, and choice of reading material may be decided upon in terms of variants of the right to privacy, already legislated in many liberal societies. The problem with Nozick's thesis is that it offers no solution as to how individual rights are to be enforced within any given social state. One could envisage a society in which some individual may not have the right to choose *x* over *y* despite the fact that such a choice may never come to public attention.

A similar argument could be made against I. Levi's⁸ criticism of Sen's thesis that individual rights do not determine social states but rather aspects of such states. Levi claims that what an individual "chooses to be true in exercising his rights is that a disjunction of social states be true without choosing that one of the disjuncts be true."⁹ Levi would be correct only if the choices in question did not entail rights. If *x*'s choice to sleep on his back or otherwise involves a right then whatever his choice, this does entail a social state although the condition of the rest of the world is not given to him. Whether *x* is aware of the social state of the rest of the world does not negate the fact that if the act in question entails a right then this would have been established already by the social legislature thereby positing a specific nonseparable social state.

B. Chapman¹⁰ argues however that Nozick's argument has not been fully responded to by Sen. Chapman argues that in the case of decision-making:

choices constrained by rights are choices from a subset of the originally possible alternatives (contraction) and, second, that alternatives rejected in the choice from the original set must continue to be excluded in a choice from the subset (exclusion).¹¹

This approach would not be justified, however, in cases involving "maximizing" kinds of choice "where we are somehow trying to choose the 'best' alternative, whatever the nature of our value judgments" (Chapman, p. 6) Chapman argues that if, for example, Nozick has the right to choose where to live then if he chooses Massachusetts then it is not the case that other alternative residences could be elements of a set of residences examined by the legislature. Chapman writes: "More reasonable is the view that the legislative choice is from a subset *M* of *S* and this, I suggest, was Nozick's original point." (*Ibid.*, p. 7)

But I would want to support Sen's thesis despite Chapman's objections. Chapman does not recognize that Nozick's right to live in Massachusetts is not an un-

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qualified right as long as there are more than one right and person in society. Under such circumstances, if Nozick has the right to live in Massachusetts then that right hinges on whether, for example, he has not committed a crime in another state where extradition is sought, etc. In other words all subsets M of S are conjoined. Chapman's thesis rests on the assumption that there are absolute rights insulated from the reach of the social legislature. But given the linkage between rights it is "necessary to treat all choices as taking place at the same level, rather than at different levels..." (*Ibid.*)

But endorsement of Sen on this point is not to support a framework of preference maximization, the source of cyclic preference results. We have argued that liberalism entails freedoms which in turn entail rights as sanctioned by the social legislature. One either has the right or does not have the right to do x.

I have argued that a basic premise in the thesis proposed here is that all individuals as persons theoretically have the same rights and that in the event of competing rights, compromise would determine the outcome. In those situations where there is no evident compromise, there should be debate and the subsequent intervention of the legislature. For example, a child *qua* person can order rights similar to those of its adult parents, but some of those rights may be compromised by the rights of its parents in certain matters. Of course, the criterion which determines the ranking of rights in terms of priorities is to be founded on notions such as "intellectual maturity", "responsibility", and the like. It would appear that although the ethical model appropriate to the formulation of rights is deontological, in matters concerning Pareto welfare economics utilitarianism is the model implicit in the analysis. Chapman does recognize this but fails to note that consistency ought to be maintained in the application of this idea to social choice theory. A consistent application of the notion that rights and preferences based on utility considerations are contextually different matters would not yield Chapman's concerns that we may not always choose our preferences.¹² Chapman writes in a supporting footnote that the:

'sense' in which we do this may be peculiarly economic. If we interpret different sets of alternatives (even overlapping ones) as different 'agendas' or 'different choice situations', in which different principles for choice might apply, then there may be nothing so very odd about 'preferring' A over B, B over C and C over A, as well as preferring B 'most' from the triple (A, B, C).¹³

Although it is a fact that agent behaviour is frequently irrational in terms of orthodox model of choice theory in welfare economics, in matters concerning economic choice (as distinct considerations on rights) welfare economics assumes maximizing choices according to some ordered model of utility. It is difficult to see how theory construction could take place otherwise.

V

Sen's response to the results of his thesis is that:

the ultimate guarantee for individual liberty may rest not on rules for social

choice but on developing individual values that respect each other's personal choices.¹⁴

The conflict posed here is concerned with societies where such a condition does not hold and where pairwise choice based on liberal values may conflict with those based on the Pareto principle. But given the above discussion it must be pointed out that unless individual liberties are sanctioned as rights by the social legislature then Sen's prescription would most likely not hold.

Furthermore, the ultimate guarantee for individual liberty can be established by ensuring, by means of the social legislature, that the socially sanctioned set of rights necessarily include certain economic rights. A program of this nature will do much to overcome the traditional ideological debate between those who argue that the idea of individual liberty does not entail economic rights, and those who argue conversely that economic rights should not imply individual liberties.

In this essay I have attempted to show that Sen's thesis cannot be proved according to his definition of liberalism. I have also argued that Sen's thesis is not viable since the objects to which the Pareto principle applies are different from those naturally applicable to notions of liberalism. Liberalism refers to rights; the Pareto principle, as an important constituent of welfare economics, refers to the maximization of ordinal utility derived from empirical quantities. It was also pointed out by reference to Chapman that Nozick's libertarian response to Sen does not take into account the fact that the freedoms that an individual enjoys vis à vis his protected sphere are necessarily implemented as rights by the social legislature provided that these rights constantly satisfy constraints imposed by other competing rights.

NOTES

1. Amartya Sen, "The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal," *Journal of Political Economy*, 1970, pp. 152-157.
2. See "Liberty, Unanimity and Rights," *Economica*, 43, 1976, pp. 217-245. In this paper Sen examines the several commentaries on his results, and offers new insights into the problem.
3. There is a hint of this in Sen's "Liberty, Unanimity and Rights," p. 239, and Bruce Chapman's "Rights as Constraints: Nozick versus Sen," *Theory and Decision*, 15, 1983, pp. 8-9.
4. Sen, "The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal," p. 153.
5. Note similar concerns expressed in John Craven's "Liberalism and Individual Preference," *Theory and Decision*, 14, 1982, pp. 351-360.
6. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) p. 166.
7. Sen, "Liberty, Unanimity and Rights," p. 232.
8. Isaac Levi, "Liberty and Welfare," in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, edited by Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 244.
9. *Ibid.* p. 245
10. Bruce Chapman, "Rights as Constraints. Nozick versus Sen".
11. *Ibid.* p. 6.
12. Chapman "Rights as Constraints: Nozick versus Sen," p. 9.
13. *Ibid.* p. 10.
14. Sen, "The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal," pp. 155-156.

JOURNAL REVIEW: PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL

Pieter Boele van Hensbroek

Throughout Africa (and perhaps elsewhere, too), the adoption of socialist alternatives for socio-political and economic organization have not brought about the intended and expected results. To be sure, the Marxist-Leninist regimes, the African Socialist and the 'Humanist' ones claim having scored impressive successes. But it is palpably evident that the realities are nowhere near the expected (or predicted) results of socialist practice.

Of course, we can blame reality for the sad and often disillusioning states of affairs in these States; capitalism remains vital, colonialism, far from being dead, has merely taken on many new forms and guises, etc. But, from the point of view of the intellectuals, it is more relevant and honest that they blame their own analyses of reality and the subsequent actions that have ensued, ostensibly based on these analyses. Serious intellectual discussions are needed to indicate the pitfalls of existing conceptualisations, and better analyses of social movements and social transformations.

One of the publications that explicitly directs itself to this task from a humanist-Marxist standpoint (though not concerning itself specifically with African socialist practice and reality), is *Praxis International*. Several African philosophers have contributed to *Praxis International*, and it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the publication.

Praxis International was started in 1981 as a newly conceived follow-up to the now defunct Yugoslav publication *Praxis*. The original *Praxis* was the initiative of a group of non-orthodox Marxist theorists in Yugoslavia known as the 'Praxis group'. For more than a decade (1964-1975), the group, their journal, and their famous summer school at Korčula, flourished. This was probably the most dynamic and important centre of non-orthodox Marxist theorizing in the world at the time. Some important names associated with *Praxis* were: G. Petrović, S. Stajanović, and M. Marković, the latter a long standing editor of *Praxis International*. The 'Praxis group' drew its theoretical inspiration from the more dialectic and humanistic interpretations of Marx by such thinkers as Lukács, Gramsci, Fromm, and Marcuse. For most part, they directed their attention to both the theoretical issues in Marxism, and to the interpretation and criticism of contemporary Yugoslav society.

The peculiar position of the Yugoslav state, being Marxist and, at the same time, not within the Soviet-bloc, was certainly fertile soil for Marxist revisionism. The tightening of the political regime in the 1970's, however, spelt the untimely death of *Praxis*. It was shut down by the authorities in 1975 for its criticism of the economic and political developments in Yugoslavia. Most of the members of the Praxis group lost their posts at Belgrade University as a consequence.

The theoretical task of the Praxis group was that of "restoring the creative potential of Marxism" by reestablishing authentic Marxist thought. The credibility of Marxism had to be restored.

the form of the 'Diamat' doctrine in 'official' Soviet Marxism and the rather inadequate representations of Marx's thought by bourgeois scholarly critics. Recovering the truer Marxism, including his humanistic views and dialectical approach, directed attention to such themes as that of 'alienation', 'reification' and 'bureaucracy'.

A journal with the title *Praxis* cannot, of course, remain a purely theoretical enterprise. On the more practical level, *Praxis* was concerned with reconsidering the Marxian heritage in the light of new socio-political phenomena in the 1960's. A multitude of social movements remained quite unsatisfactorily explained by Marxist orthodoxy. To mention but a few, massive youth and student protests in the industrialised world, the Prague Spring in the Soviet bloc, the movement for women's liberation and, of course, the nationalist liberation movements in many Third World countries. Liberation and emancipation seemed to be primary in the political scene rather than, as the Diamat asserted, class-struggle.

The new journal, *Praxis International*, pursues the same political ideas as those *Praxis* did, but in a substantially altered world. The resurgence of conservatism, neo-colonialism, and the growing disbelief in revolutionary alternatives, for instance, pose new problems for progressive thinkers. The themes which *Praxis International* focuses on include the crisis in post-industrial society and the welfare state; new forms of imperialistic domination; the meaning of the struggle for human rights; the roles of ethnicity and religion in revolutionary contexts, and; the growing cynicism concerning the real possibilities of reform and revolution.

In a recent programmatic reformulation of *Praxis International* (October 1986), we find an updating of the focal themes of the journal. There is now mention of e.g. exploring the possibilities of change in 'really existing socialism', the rise of neo-capitalism, and the unmasking of romantic views on Third World revolution. More important, however, is that there has been a theoretical reorientation in the journal. The growing interchange and debate between Marxist and non-Marxist socialist thinking has urged the editors to widen *Praxis'* theoretical scope from 'Marxist-humanist' to 'democratic-socialist'. Thus indicating that Marxism is only one of the theoretical approaches of interest in democratic socialist thinking. As a result the leading question of *Praxis International* is now: "What is the meaning of democratic socialism today for late-capitalist societies in Western Europe and North America, for the countries of the Third World in Asia, Africa and South America, and for the restructuring of 'really existing socialisms' ".

However, looking at the real practice in *Praxis International*, it is clear that the lion's share of the contributions come from, and are often concerned with, the industrialised societies. There is some imbalance here between the objectives and actual practice of the journal although quite a number of the subjects it includes are of interest, not only to the industrialised but, also, to the Third World societies. For instance, the interpretations of the ideas of classical thinkers like Hegel, Marx, Gramsci and Lukács, analyses of the relation between ideology and truth, of the ideological legitimization of one party rule, and even of the crises in the welfare state.

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Contributions from *Africa to Praxis International* have been quite frequently published, proving that it is a potentially good forum for African thinkers.

Praxis International is a quarterly published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, England.

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