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RÉSUMÉ

L'article traite du concept du "sësëë" chez les Dangme du Ghana (le terme "sësëë" est souvent traduit par "destination", ce qui ne couvre pas vraiment le contenu). L'article soulève quelques questions et cherche à y répondre dans le cadre de ce concept: les actions d'une personne sont-elles déterminées ou choisies volontairement? L'hommes dans la société africaine sont-ils destinés au bien ou au mal? La moralité africaine traditionnelle est-elle issue de la conduite ou de l'existence, ou des deux? Quel genre d'éducation morale serait approprié?

La thèse de l'article est que les croyances et les pratiques des Dangme relatives au "sësëë" peuvent contribuer au débat sur le déterminisme, même le clarifier. Elle soutient que les actions apparemment morales peuvent être soit déterminées, soit choisies volontairement. En se basant sur les croyances et pratiques des Dangme, l'auteur analyse quelques publications du professeur J.S. Mbiti, savant africain bien connu. Il critique l'idée de "moralité de conduite", de Mbiti, en argumentant que la moralité africaine est plutôt une moralité d'existence qu'une moralité de conduite.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE DANGME CONCEPT OF *SëSëë* FOR MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND MORAL EDUCATION

Joshua N. Kudadjie

I. Introduction

The Dangme live in the south-eastern corner of Ghana, and comprise the Ada, Ningo (Nugo), Prampram (Gbugbla), Kpone (all four along the coast), and the Shai (Së), Yilo Krobo, Manya Krobo and Osudoku, who live further inland. They are a homogeneous ethnic group, with a common early history. They also speak a common language, Dangme. Although each of the seven or eight different groups speaks a dialect of Dangme, the dialects are mutually intelligible.

The article has two objectives: (1) to share some of the research findings, and (2) to share some reflections on an aspect of the Dangme concept of man - specifically, the concept of *sësëë* - and some implications of this concept and belief for moral philosophy and moral education. A study of the beliefs and moral practices of the Dangme would show that certain implications for ethics ought to follow from the Dangme concept of *sësëë* and the beliefs and practices associated with it. In the reflection, we hope to indicate how this African concept may contribute to the perennial discussion on the conflict between freewill and determinism in ethics. We shall advance the view that *sësëë* (a term sometimes inadequately translated by the English word "destiny") can be used to show that both freewill and determinism are true of moral acts.

We shall also consider the issue whether African traditional morality is more a morality-of-conduct as held by Mbiti and Sarpong; and whether moral worth can be ascribed to moral agents, not just on the basis of their external acts but also, and more so, because of their inner nature - that is, of their being.

On the basis of the Dangme concept of *sësëë*, we shall point out the need for a more appropriate type of moral education and

counselling for moral recovery, in the bid to mould responsible moral persons.

II.   The Dangme Concept of Man and Sësëë

According to Dangme belief, human beings are not simply biological, physical animals. They are also spirit and spiritual beings. A person is believed to be a composite being, with three main aspects.

The first aspect is the *nömlö tso*; that is, the physical body, made up of the *he lo* (flesh), *pani* (sinews), *wu* (bone) and *muö* (blood). The *nömlö tso* comes from a person's parents. Of itself, the physical body cannot and does not do anything.

The second aspect of man is *mumi* (spirit). *Mumi* is the force or principle that animates and makes the body function; when it leaves the body, a person is said to be dead. *Mumi* is believed to come from *Kuajamo,* God the creator of heaven and earth.

The third aspect is *kla* or *susuma* (soul), (or *nini,* which actually refers more to shadow than soul.) *Kla* and *susuma* (used interchangeably) are sometimes taken to refer to spirit, while *susuma* is also used to refer to shadow. *Kla* is often spoken of as a person's real self or double. It is believed to pre-exist the body and post-exist earthly life. It is that which gives a person his or her individuality and personality. The body is its vehicle, which it inhabits on earth. The Dangme believe that before a *kla* leaves its *huanim,* the world of spiritual pre-existence sometimes called *ahlumaje* (the world of spirits) for earth, the *kla* bids farewell to its *huanim* 'parents'. (These are not the same as a person's earthly parents, or even the souls of the earthly parents.) The *kla* tells them what it wants to be on earth. This, it freely chooses. The spirit mother gives it advice on how to live on earth, what type of person to marry, and so on. *Kuajamo* (the creator God) then blesses and gives *kla* its *sësëë* (literally, message, errand, parting word, or farewell address.) *Sësëë,* which is partly chosen freely by itself and partly given by *Kuajamo,* embodies the type of being that the

kla will be; the major events and undertakings in his earthly life; whether he will be a success or a failure; his span of life; and the time and mode of his return to the spirit world, i.e., manner of death, and so on. It is believed that *sësëë* cannot be revoked; but this does not mean that each person necessarily or inescapably fulfills or realizes his or her *sësëë* or mission on earth.[1]

The term *sësëë* is usually, but inadequately, translated by the English word 'destiny' which connotes some kind of pre-determined, inescapable course of events, or even fate. As we shall see, *sësëë* is not quite as rigid as destiny or fate connotes.[2]

Kla acts through its bodily vehicle - the man or woman it has become on earth. The bodily vehicle, or person it inhabits, does not necessarily act according to *kla's* wishes or the *sësëë* it has brought. Thus a person may live and act contrary to his or her *sësëë*. This may happen for one of several reasons: sometimes because the body has refused to heed the guidance of his or her *kla,* (functioning as his or her conscience); or because the *kla* itself has departed from its bodily vehicle and consequently is not available to give guidance; or remains indifferent because of the body's persistent disobedience; or because the power of *kla* to influence the body has been annulled through the work of evil persons or other spirits. Whatever the case, the Dangme believe that what a person does externally or what happens to him or her, is a manifestation of the state of the *kla* - that is, its quality, its state of 'health' or well-being, its action or inaction. It is generally believed also that people are born with their character or traits pre-determined to varying degrees. But it is also acknowledged that part, at least, of a person's character is acquired and moulded here on earth by a person's actions and habits, the influence of associates and the community in general.

The belief that what a person is and the way she/he behaves can be understood by reference to her/his *sësëë* - i.e., who or what he/she really is - explains some Dangme attitudes and practices: ethical, religious, social and so forth. For example, when people are puzzled by a person's peculiar behaviour or notoriously unbecoming conduct, or

failure in life, and when normal corrective measures have failed to effect an improvement, the explanation is usually given in the observation: *E sësëë 'i.* Literally, that means, 'that is his/her farewell message'. In other words, it is believed that the person behaves the way he does because of who or what he really is in his/her original nature.

If the person or his family desires to have him change his ways, steps are taken to 'change' his *kla* and, apparently, his *sësëë.* Diviners are consulted to find out the cause of the problem. Depending on the findings, appropriate rituals are accordingly performed. The rituals may be to 'wash' or 'cleanse' or pacify the *kla*, if it has been offended by the person himself or by others; or they may be aimed at 'untying' (i.e. redeeming) the *kla* or personality, if the finding is that the *kla* has been bound by some enemy, human or spirit. The *kla* having been thus cleansed, or reconciled, or redeemed, it is expected that the person's conduct or lot will automatically change for the better. Much empirical evidence has borne out the expectation.[3] This possibility of 'changing' a person's *sësëë* seems to contradict the belief that *sësëë* is irrevocable. The paradox may be compared to the grace and nature or the old man and the new man relationship in Christian doctrine.

There is also the practice among the Dangme of 'feeding' one's *kla* with a view to making it happy, and thus making the person more successful in his undertakings. Often, when a person makes a spectacular success, or miraculously recovers from a deadly illness, or escapes death in an otherwise fatal accident, the soul is ceremonially 'congratulated' and feted. At such feeding and feasts, sumptuous dishes, usually made of the meat of slaughtered domestic animals (often fowl or sheep), are served to the person's friends, peers, mates and relations. Such feasts are usually held on the person's birth day (i.e. day of the week, not birth date).

Another practice related to *kla* is communication with the soul of an unborn baby or the foetus, through mediums, to find out what sort of a person she/he is. In cases of over-term pregnancy, it is inquired of the *kla* what must be done in order for birth to take place.[4] What is more common, however, is to consult the soul a few days after birth to

ascertain who the person is or what she/he will be. This is usually done when there is something strange about the baby, such as some scar or other mark on the body, or if the baby closely resembles a deceased member of the family, or if there are signs of its dying. The information is vital for understanding the future life and conduct of the person, and how she/he may be handled by the parents and the entire family.

As a consequence of the belief in dualism (one may even say 'triunism'), physical sickness is often seen as reflecting the unhealthy condition of a person's inner being or metaphysical being. Therefore, a sick person is usually given two kinds of treatment: herbal treatment or other medication to heal the physical body; and, in addition, various rituals ending in a ritual bath, to heal and cleanse the soul whose sickness is believed to be what the body has manifested.

These beliefs, sayings, and practices all go to show that in Dangme thought a person's external condition, actions and conduct are a reflection of the condition of the person's *kla*, his real being and the bearer of his *sësëë*, which, as we have noted, is a composite of his God-given nature and the nature moulded by his own pre-existence free choices as well as his earthly choices and actions. No one, therefore, acts but acts from what he is. In other words, a person does what he *does* because of what he *is*.

III. Issues Arising From the Concept of *Sësëë*

A number of issues and questions can arise for moral philosophy from this concept of man. The following are examples.

1. To what extent is a person a free moral agent, free to choose his acts? And to what extent are a person's actions the unavoidable consequences of his *sësëë* or predetermined character?

2. To what extent are a person's actions his acts, i.e., conscious acts, freely chosen by him? To what extent is a person responsible for

his actions? Is it justifiable to punish or reward a person for the
actions he performs? To what extent may this be done?

3.   The Dangme concept of man could provide an alternative model
      for understanding the apparent conflict between freewill and
      determinism in human conduct.
4.   One could contend that Dangme ethics (and for that matter, Afri-
      can traditional and indigenous ethics) is an ethic of *being* as well
      as of *conduct* or *action*; possibly more of *being* than of *conduct* or
      action. In other words, that the determination of moral worth goes
      beyond mere external acts to an antecedent factor, namely, the
      nature or quality of the inner man itself.

5.   To what extent can one be morally educated and his character
      moulded by parents, church, school, society, and so on?
6.   In order for moral education, enforcement of morality and
      counselling for moral reformation to be effective, it is important
      that the psyche, and not just the mental and physical aspects of a
      person, be affected.

Other issues could arise from the Dangme concept of *sësëë* which will
be of interest to the metaphysician and philosophical theologian. For
instance:
1.   belief in the separate existence of a soul, and the possibility of
      conscious survival after death vis-a-vis denial of both by natural-
      istic humanism;
2.   the problem of personal identity, and responsibility for acts per-
      formed in earthly life, if life after death, particularly reincarnation,
      is true; and
3.   the adequacy of the traditional Judaeo-Christian teaching on one
      death only, and the simultaneous final judgement of all humanity.

Only three of the issues will be discussed here, namely:
1.   whether freewill and determinism are mutually exclusive or com-
      patible;

2.   what makes a person a morally good or bad person: the external
     acts, or the quality of the inner self or both; and

3.   making people moral.

IV.   Implications of Sësëë for Moral Philosophy

We now analyze and discuss three of the issues arising from the con-
cept of *sësëë*. Our conclusions may not be entirely new or
earth-shaking insights. But we think it desirable to draw them out, at
least, for emphasis; not only for academic discussion, but for practical
use as well. Much of the current confusion in understanding human
action, in moral judgement, and the failure in private as well as public
morality are due to factors such as an inadequate understanding of
man; the failure to fully draw out the implications of the nature of man
for morality; wrong ascription of moral worth; and faulty methods of
moral education and enforcement of morality. We are aware that our
conclusions may not be the last word, for the inferences could be
controverted; moreover, the Dangme metaphysics and concept of man
on which they rest could be disputed as to their truth and adequacy; for
instance, in the light of biblical revelation which contradicts some of
the Dangme beliefs and practices. However, that is neither here nor
there. For we put our case no stronger than that we are drawing out
what we see to be logical and reasonable implications, as far as we are
able, from the beliefs and practices of the Dangme.

IV.1   Freewill and Determinism

The issue of whether human acts are free or pre-ordained has been a
perennial problem for moral philosophers as well as for theologians and
jurists alike. The problem has been variously posed thus: (a) if a
person's actions are determined (or pre-ordained), then is a moral agent
free, and is he/she responsible for his/her actions? (b) If God is
omnipotent and pre-ordains what a person will be or do, has man

freewill? And if a person can change his/her mind (or things), is God omnipotent? One typical rendering of the problem in the literature is: if Oedipus was ordained to kill his father and marry his mother, is he culpable of patricide and incest?

Three possible positions can be taken in this matter of the relationship between freewill and determinism. One view supports universal determinism - that is, the view that every event is determined and nothing can be other than it is. An opposite view is that there is unlimited freedom and, therefore, determinism is not true. Both these can gain support. A third position - as in Kant's two standpoints view - is that both freewill and determinism are true, depending on the angle from which one views, for example, the behaviour of a moral agent. Considered from an observer's perspective, the actions may seem determined, while the agent may see them as freely performed. (See his *Groundwork* sections 104-107).

The Dangme concept of man and *sësëë* provides an insight into the problem, and gives an alternative model for seeing how both freewill and determinism are both true. The concept does not support closed determinism or fate, as some wrongly think.

In the first place, it is important to note that *sësëë* includes only the major details of one's life. For example, a *kla*, before leaving the spirit world, may choose to be mothered by a *type* of woman: quiet, not wealthy, hardworking, rural; and yet not a *particular* woman. There may be many such women A, B, C, J. Any of the particular women A, B, C, J could become the earthly mother of the particular *kla* or person. Again, a *kla* may choose to be a great person on earth; but this could mean becoming a statesman, queen mother, religious or social reformer, an intellectual, and so.

Secondly, *sësëë* is not a blue-print for life, as if it contained all minor details of one's life; as for example, that at 1.30 a.m. on 7th June, 1995 I should be typing this sentence!

Thirdly, the supposed irrevocability of *sësëë* refers only to major details and events. For instance, one cannot change one's *sësëë* to be a female and become a male, or change from being a great person into

an errand boy. But within these limits, variations are possible, and there is freedom to choose. So one could change from being a successful chief farmer into a successful divisional chief.

Determinism itself may be understood in different ways, depending on how one looks at it. If an event is considered with a hindsight, it will seem closely determined - it could not have been otherwise, given all the antecedents. But when seen with foresight, that is, if an event is predicted, it cannot be said, in advance, to be determined, i.e., bound to occur, no matter how certain we may be about its occurrence. For a new set of factors or causes could always be introduced into the situation that would change the course of events, and thus falsify the prediction. The point is that after an event, one can only explain what has happened; one cannot undo what has occurred, whereas before an event, one can always do otherwise. For example, if a stone was thrown and it hit somebody, then after the event, we might say it could not have been avoided, because it was thrown in a particular direction, the victim did not see it, did not move, etc. and so he was hit by the stone. But while the stone was yet to be thrown, or was still in motion, its hitting somebody could be avoided: either by the thrower changing his mind and withholding throwing the stone, changing the direction, or somebody parrying the stone aside, or warning the person at whom it was thrown to dodge or move away, and so forth. In theory, a prediction can always be falsified. If it is predicted with a kind of divine foreknowledge and, therefore, 'bound' to occur, then, strictly speaking, it is no longer a prediction but, as it were, a 'post-diction' with 'eternal hindsight'. In this case, the event cannot but happen, not of necessity, but because it is as if it has already happened. And what has happened cannot-not-have-happened.

From another angle, there is a sense in which every event may be said to be determined (i.e., caused) by some antecedent factors; for a particular set of causes and conditions would determine what effect should occur. To deny determinism in this sense, would be to suggest that events do occur at random. But many who support determinism

claim more than just that every event has a cause or causes; they deny the possibility of deviations once a causal chain has been set in motion. Their doctrine of logical determinism or predestinarianism claims that the future is as fixed and unchangeable as the past just as what has been, has been and cannot be altered; so that what will be will be, despite anything anybody may do. It is similar to theological determinism which teaches that from all eternity God has foreordained everything that happens. Such hard determinism - more commonly known as predestination or fatalism - is hard to defend.

The Dangme notion of 'destiny' does not wholly support this brand of determinism, for *sësëë* is not always fulfilled. There have been reports among the Dangme of corpses weeping when laid in state, apparently for leaving the earthly plane too soon, or for not having fulfilled themselves. It is also commonly believed that some souls are not allowed entry into the spirit world for non-fulfilment of their *sësëë* on earth. It is also held that some persons reincarnate in order to complete their unfulfilled *sësëë*. It would be unacceptable to argue that in cases such as these, it is the *sësëë* of those persons that they should not fulfill their *sësëë*. For when *sësëë* is fulfilled, even if it is bitter, one gets fulfilled. Thus, if non-fulfilment were their *sësëë*, they would have been fulfilled, and there would not have been any frustration or denial of re-entry into the spirit world. This shows that there is room for non-fulfilment, thus refuting predestination while proving freedom.

Another proof that the Dangme believe in freewill is that moral agents are held responsible for their actions. People are praised or blamed, rewarded or punished because it is believed that they do what they do because they choose to do them. If they do the wrong thing, they are punished (variously by the spirit powers, society, parents, etc.) because it is believed they could have done otherwise.

From the above discourse, we can draw at least two conclusions. First, judging from a Dangme stance, freewill can be said to be true. This can be substantiated by the following affirmations: (1) each person chooses his/her own *sësëë;* (2) one has freedom to obey or disobey one's *kla,* resulting in fulfilment or non-fulfilment of *sësëë;* and (3) a

person can work out the minor details as means to the ends contained in *sësëë*.

The second inference is that while freedom is upheld, determinism (and predestination) is also true, in that there is a limit already set, which is irrevocable. That limit, e.g., personality type, social status, cannot be out-stepped. In this sense, freedom is limited. Yet, within that limit, freedom is unlimited. The possibility of such paradox can be illustrated from everyday life experiences. A prisoner may be limited to the confines of his cell, but he can be free to move within the cell itself without limitation. Similarly, one may be free to fatten oneself, but one cannot grow fat beyond a certain naturally pre-determined size for human beings.

We conclude, then, that the concept of *sësëë* and various Dangme beliefs and practices demonstrate not only that freewill and determinism are both true; but also that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Within what has been determined, there is freedom. This finding can make an important contribution to discussions on freewill and determinism, and moral responsibility among moral philosophers, theologians and jurists.

IV.2   The Morally Good Person in Dangme Thought

There is a popular Dangme saying that *Se ngë nö fëë nö he* (literally, there is a *but* about everybody; in other words, no one is perfect.) This is true in the moral realm as in others. However, there is also a Dangme belief that every person is born innocent, without any moral blemish. This is held to be true of all persons until they attain the age of discernment, usually taken to be the age six or seven, when they are believed to attain conscious knowledge of right and wrong. Children under this age are not, however, regarded as being morally good simply on account of their innocence. Nothing - positive or negative - can be ascribed to them; they are morally neutral. After the age of

discernment, a person could be described as being morally good or bad, according to whether he does the right or the wrong thing.

It would seem, then, that for purposes of ascribing moral worth to a moral agent, moral knowledge and conduct are important relevant factors to take into account. From answers obtained during individual interviews and group discussions, however, it appeared, at first sight, that in actual practice, moral goodness is linked almost exclusively with conduct. For example, from answers given to the question, how a person is adjudged to be morally good, it was evident that the over-whelming majority of Dangmes judged by supposedly 'counting'. That is, if they found that a person did more good than bad things, he was adjudged to be a morally good person. A much smaller number of people said that they judged by 'weighing' rather than by merely counting. For this smaller group of respondents, if the usefulness of the good things outweighed the harmfulness of the bad things, then the agent was considered a morally good person. (Cf. utilitarianism, where the total good is weighed against total evil of alternative acts or poss-ible acts in order to determine which acts are right or wrong.) Thus, a person who has committed one act of murder is considered morally bad, irrespective of how many other acts of, say, generosity he may have performed. To some of the respondents, a moral agent proves his moral worth according to whether he conforms to tradition and custom. Yet others based their judgement on the agent's behaviour towards them in particular. A few of the informants claimed that they ascribed moral worth to people who acknowledged their faults and endeavoured to correct them. Others were contented to ascribe moral goodness to a person whose general behaviour was good.

It is to be noted that these different standards are not mutually exclusive, for more than one could be used by the same person to judge the moral worth of an agent. The impression remains, however, that the general tendency is to judge on the basis of what may be described as 'quantitative goodness' rather than 'qualitative goodness.' Overt, external action or inaction, i.e., what people do or do not do, is what normally makes one judge a person to be morally good or moral-

ly bad. We believe that research along the same lines in other tradi-
tional African societies will show similar tendencies in moral judge-
ment.

All this would seem to give empirical support to the commonly
held view, that African traditional morality is one of onduct. Mbiti,
discussing moral goodness and moral evil in his book *African Religions
and Philosophy,* has asserted that African traditional morality is a
morality of 'conduct' rather than a morality of 'being.' That is to say,
"it defines what a person does rather than what he is." (Mbiti 1969:
214 and 1990:204). Sarpong (1972), writing on aspects of Akan Ethics,
follows Mbiti very closely and makes the same affirmation, that Akan
morality is one of conduct and not of being. To some extent, Gyekye
(1987) also supports this view, although he admits also that one acts
from his nature, his *suban.*

I shall argue later to show that this popular view does not do
justice to the African traditional (and for that matter the Dangme)
experience. I shall contend that a full explication of the Dangme con-
cept of man and of certain practices, as already indicated, would show
that Dangme and, thus, African traditional morality is one of conduct
as well as of being.[5]

IV. 3   A Criticism of the Morality-of-Conduct View

I noted earlier that because the normal basis for ascribing moral worth
is a person's outward conduct (and, perhaps, that is the most practical
way that humans can do it), there has been the tendency for people to
resort to 'counting' or 'weighing' the actions of moral agents and their
consequences for patients, in order to ascribe moral worth. This has led
to the view that African morality is a morality of conduct. Both Mbiti
and Sarpong who hold this view apparently recall the common African
belief that every person is born pure and innocent, but that moral
goodness or evil is acquired by action or inaction. Consequently, a
person is commonly considered to be morally good or evil because of

what he does or does not do, and not because of what he is. This is the basis for Mbiti's conclusion, which Sarpong supports, that African morality is "a morality of 'conduct' rather than a morality of 'being' ... for it defines what a person does rather than what he is." (Mbiti 1969: 214). In other words, their view is that, it is what a person does that makes him what he is morally; it is not what he is ontologically, that makes him do what he does or gives him his moral quality.

This morality-of-conduct view may be correct insofar as it says that conduct is a basis for *ascribing* moral goodness or moral evil to people. However, it is mistaken in giving the impression that ontologically, moral goodness or evil has nothing whatsoever to do with what a person is. Mbiti writes (ibid):

> ... a person is what he is because of what he does, rather than that he does what he does because of what he is.
>
> ... Man is *not by nature* (my italics) either 'good' or 'bad' ('evil') except in terms of what he does or does not do. This, it seems to me, is a necessary distinction to draw in discussing African concept of morality and ethics."

The morality-of-conduct view, in my opinion, rests on four basic deficiencies:

1. The denial of inherent or intrinsic (moral) goodness and evil.
2. The over-emphasis on external consequences of acts as they affect other members of society.
3. The failure to take into account African traditional beliefs about the nature of man, and the related psychological question of why a particular person acts in some ways rather than in others.
4. The non-consideration of certain African beliefs and ritual practices related to what people do and what happens to them.

It may well be that if Mbiti had treated these matters differently - and in accord with the empirical data - he most probably would have arrived at a different view of African morality. It seems to me that Mbiti confused a person's being morally good or evil with actual ascription of moral quality to the person by other people. In my opin-

ion, the two are not the same. Ascribing the quality is only a declar-
ation of what already *is* the case. Mbiti seems to be under the mistaken
impression that until the declaration has been made, the agent is neither
morally good nor evil. This mistaken assumption comes out more
clearly where he says (1969: 213; 1990: 208), for example, that:

> something or someone is 'bad' or 'good' according to the
> outward conduct. A person is not inherently 'good' or 'evil',
> but he acts in ways which are 'good' when they conform to
> the customs and regulations of his community, or 'bad' (evil)
> when they do not.

Again, he writes (ibid.):

> To sleep with someone else's wife is not considered 'evil' if
> these two are not found out by the society which forbids it.
> ... It is not the act in itself which would be 'wrong' as such,
> but the relationships involved in the act: if relationships are
> not hurt or damaged and if there is no discovery of breach of
> custom or regulation, then the act is not 'evil' or 'wicked' or
> 'bad'.

Here again, Mbiti tends to over-emphasize external action or inaction,
and the external consequences of an act. It certainly cannot be correct
to say that in a society which forbids sleeping with other people's
wives, the forbidden act is not wrong or evil when committed, as long
as it remains undiscovered! Surely, a person who has unlawfully taken
things that do not belong to him is a thief whether or not he has been
found out, and whether or not a court of law has found him guilty of
such an offence. The discovery or declaration of the breach is not what
makes the person morally evil or guilty. Talking about traditional
African society, one finds it even more difficult why Mbiti entertains
the possibility of undiscovered breaches. Africans commonly acknowl-
edge that their societies comprise both the living and the dead. Indeed,
Mbiti himself reports (1969: 83; 1990: 82) that the dead, or living-dead
(as he prefers to call them):

> are still part of their human family. They *know* (my italics)
> and have interest in what is going on in the household. ...

They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics
and activities.

To infringe against any tradition or moral rules:

is an offence against the forefathers who in that capacity act
as the invisible police of the families and communities.

If this is so, how could any breaches not be found out by the society
which forbids them? Surely, their commitment must be known to some
members of the 'family' and the society, at least the living-dead "who
... act as the invisible police"!

Therefore, actual ascription of moral quality by other persons, or
punishments meted out to offenders, are *not* what determine whether a
person is morally good or evil. The act itself as it relates to existing
moral rules is what determines the moral quality of the act and of the
agent of that act.

If our argument is accepted, however, it still leaves unresolved the
question whether there is anything, other than series of action or
inaction, that determines the moral quality ascribed to a person. Is there
any such determining factor apart from acts? I think there is; namely,
what a person *is*, his 'being'.

The morality-of-conduct view, in denying the 'being' of a person
as a factor in his moral goodness or evil, is inadequate - whether
considered specifically in relation to Dangme morality, or as a general
description of African traditional morality, or, indeed, of human mor-
ality as such. It does not seem to have come to grips with the meta-
physical (and even biological) question of the nature of man and
human actions; or the psychological consideration of why particular
persons act in the ways they do rather than in other ways; or why
people in similar circumstances act differently.

A comprehensive consideration of the matter would lead to the
conviction that a person does what he does because of what or who he
really is. Among others, this contention is based on the Dangme view
of man, and on certain beliefs and ritual practices of the Dangme,
which are common in other African societies also, which we have
already expounded. These beliefs, sayings, and practices all go to show

that in Dangme thought, a person's state and actions are a mani-
festation of the condition of his *kla* (the soul), his real self or being.
They also show that a moral agent is not only a bundle of moral acts,
but the embodiment of the sum total of his God-given nature and the
nature moulded by his own 'pre-existence' as well as his earthly
choices and actions. No one, therefore, acts but acts from what he *is*. In
other words, a person *does* what he does because of what he *is*. An
analogy may be drawn here with a tree and its fruits. What makes a
particular tree produce a particular kind of fruit, and not others, is the
tree's being, its nature, its essence. In the Bible, there is also talk of the
old man and the new man, that is, the inner nature or predisposition
which makes a person perform godly or ungodly acts.

Moreover, as we have shown, the people themselves say that they
ascribe moral goodness or evil to a person not only because of isolated
morally worthy or unworthy acts; they do so primarily on the basis of a
person's *general, overall* conduct, attitudes, approach to people and
situations, or on account of the number or weight of the good or evil
things he does. I would contend that a person's general conduct, atti-
tudes, approach, etc. are nothing but a reflection of traits that lie in
him. They constitute a window into his inner life, into his nature and
character, what he is; into his being.[6]

Therefore, moral goodness or evil is, and can be, most fully
explained both by *what a person does* and by *what he is in himself*.
This being the case, Dangme morality is as much a morality-of-being
as it is a morality-of-conduct. One might say it is more a morality-of-
being than one of conduct. Admittedly, until a person acts (or refrains
from acting), no moral quality can be ascribed to him by another
person - owing to the limitation of human knowledge. But something's
being the case does not depend on its being perceived or declared to be
so by other people. A coconut tree will still be a coconut tree, whether
or not observers recognize it to be so.

V   Implications of Sësëë for Moral Education, Enforcement of Morals and Moral Recovery

Every human society desires a community of moral persons. To have such a community requires a three-fold system: (1) of moral education, to inculcate concepts of rightness and wrongness, and desirable values; (2) of enforcement of morals; and (3) of moral recovery and reform. In all three systems, an approach based on the morality-of-being view promises both theoretical and practical advantages over the morality-of-conduct view.

V.1 Moral Education

If morality were determined solely by external conduct, then it would be sufficient to get a person, through habituation, to perform the right or correct external acts in order to become morally good. Aristotle did prescribe habituation as a way of training children to perform morally right acts. Habituation, however, has been found to be inadequate for moral character formation. Since morality, as we have shown, has to do with both external conduct and inner life, moral character must be moulded not just through habituation and learning to perform the correct acts, but also, and more so, by moulding the inner man through inculcation and internalization of right values and attitudes - particularly through spiritual and personality formation. Indeed, Aristotle himself indicated that in order for people, both adults and youth, to become good, there is need for habituation or practice, regulation of behaviour by law, and predisposition to virtue or character that has a natural affinity for virtue, loving what is honourable and hating what is disgraceful (Aristotle: Book X, Chapter IX, Sections 6-9). It is of the utmost importance to mould the inner man in order to foster good and positive traits. (See also Frankena 1973: 61-79; 129--130) who espouses a morality of being.) In this task, religion has an important contribution to make because it affects and transforms a

person's total being, sharpens his conscience and moral sense, and gives him positive values as well as the will and power to live the morally good life. Where moral education has neglected the cultivation of the inner man and, at best, has emphasized external acts, it is easy for external circumstances and influences to erode a person's moral fibre. On the other hand, where the inner man and goodwill are in place, it is almost second nature to live the moral life.[7]

V.2 Enforcement of Morality

Human nature being what it is, knowledge of right and wrong is not always enough to keep people doing the right thing and avoiding what is wrong. For this reason, societies have evolved measures for enforcing their shared moral values and rules. Enforcement usually takes the form of rewards, both positive (e.g., praise, award) and negative (e.g., blame, punishment). People are usually rewarded or punished on the basis of their responsible external acts. To a lesser extent, intentions and motives also form the basis of moral judgement and rewards. In both cases, it is the consequencs of acts or likely consequences of probable acts on patients that determine what reward or punishment is given. Generally speaking, the consequences of one's acts on oneself, especially as they affect one's being, are not taken into account in distributing rewards. Yet, one's habitual acts go to form one's character from which future acts will proceed.

For this reason, it is desirable to work out ways of enforcing morality that are not only punitive or preventive; for, at best, these only suspend further evil acts by the evil-natured person. What is needed, much more, is the kind of enforcement that will deal with the source of the evil act, such as a person's traits, beliefs, thoughts, fantasies, motives and intentions. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that in recent times penal theory and practice has shifted significantly from punitive to reform measures. The objective is to transform the personality and not

merely stop or suspend particular external evil acts. In a sense, this shift is a result of the recognition of the truth of the morality-ofbeing view. In our opinion, it is superior to and more effective than the earlier practice in correcting moral offenders.

V.3 Moral Recovery

Moral failure is a common human experience. When one falls, it is important that one rises again. Such moral recovery does occur. But experience has shown that genuine and lasting moral recovery occurs not so much by one refraining from undesirable conduct through external effort. Rather, it comes through transformation in the inner being of a person. Kant, in the *Religion*: 40-49, spoke of a moral revolution, a radical change that occurs in a person effecting a "restoration of the original predisposition to good," which enables him to resume the moral life. He observes that:

> man's moral growth of necessity begins not in the improve-
> ment of his practices but rather in the transforming of his
> cast of mind and in the grounding of a character; though
> customarily man goes about the matter otherwise and fights
> against vices one by one, leaving undisturbed their common
> root.

Woods (1966: 86-87), in his defence of theological ethics, has showed that the experience of forgiveness of wrong done and of moral recovery and transformation is a mystery that comes through the grace of God; it is an inner experience. Many have testified that moral recovery has come to them in a mysterious way through the freedom and radical transformation of the inner man, often following religious conversion. This is another evidence that what a person is, deep within himself, affects his outward conduct.

All this makes it compelling that in any effort to create or recreate a strong moral society, it is not enough to resort to force or other methods meant to coerce people into conforming to certain images or

ideals; it is not enough even to recite platitudes or pledges, or give moral talks and sermons. These need not be altogether neglected; but it is more important to appreciate the non-external dimension. Here religion, which has a unique access to the inner man, is in a unique position both to ensure a person's true freedom, and to mould his inner self and make him the type of moral being that a civil human society would desire. There is empirical evidence, for example, that in Christianity, when a person has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit works in him and makes him a radically new creature, with a new outlook on life, new desires and inclinations, and power to live the moral life. It can be said that a similar experience occurs when a Buddhist devotee meditates on and practises the teachings and exercises in the Eight Noble Path, and perseveres in the various stages of holiness. Such a person is affected at a deep level of his personality, and he is able to live a life of serenity.

If, then, the inner person can be moulded to be good, the good traits will show in the person's morally good life. The Dangme say that, *Aniyo fö we bö, a*nd, also, *Mëmëëmë tê ngo buë mi* - meaning literally, 'a bird does not beget a roan antelope' and 'a salt-storage pot always has a taste of saltiness in it. These mean that something's real nature will always show up. And as has been well said (Luke 6: 43-45 RSV):

> No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

VI   Summary and Conclusion

We have tried to explain that the Dangme - like most other Africans - understand a person to be a complex being, comprising a physical body, spirit, soul, etc. A person has a *kla* which pre-exists his earthly existence. The *kla* brings along to earth a *sësëë* which determines in broad terms what the person will be. The *kla* and *sësëë* which are the essence of a person also influence how a person behaves. Nevertheless, the person has freewill and sometimes actually acts in ways that are contrary to his *sësëë* - thus demonstrating that both determinism and freewill are true. The Dangme understanding of the relation between *kla*, *sësëë* and conduct shows that moral behaviour can be adequately explained both in terms of a person's conduct and of his being. Consequently, discourse on moral education, moral responsibility, the enforcement of morals and moral recovery can be enhanced, while more effective methods to make people moral can be fashioned, if account is taken of the Dangme insight of reality, as exemplified in the concept of *sësëë*.

Notes

1. It is conceivable that students of various disciplines can interpret the concept of *sësëë* differently. E.g., a biologist may explain it in terms of DNA, genetic traits, heredity; a psychologist may speak of disposition or traits; a moral philosopher may speak of inherent, innate or intrinsic qualities; and a theologian may speak of human nature and grace, or the old and new man, etc. One may also use the medieval concept of essence to understand *sësëë*. However, none of these is identical to the oncept of *sësëë*.

2. I have chosen to use the Dangme term *sësëë* instead of the English term 'destiny' because, although it gives a good idea of what is meant, 'destiny' is not an adequate equivalent of the Dangme *sësëë*.

3. Dr. Margaret Field, from her research among the Ga of Ghana, documents instances where people who had been given up as destined for failure experienced a dramatic transformation after expiation and cleansing rites had been performed for them. See her book *Religion and Medicine among the Ga People,* London: OUP, 1937.

4. Many years ago, during a weekly visit to a village where I was cultivating a farm, I conversed with an old 'retired' traditional priestess regarding mystical and mediumistic experiences. Among other things, she confirmed the possibility of contacting human souls, whether of the yet-to-be-born, the living or of the dead. She pointed to her grandchild, then about two years old, as a case in point. When the child's mother, who had not been married, was pregnant, the man responsible for it denied responsibility. She had carried the baby in an over-term pregnancy for well over one year without the slightest sign of labour at any time, although the child was active in the womb. It was suspected that something was wrong. At the suggestion of a diviner, the soul of the unborn baby was contacted through a medium to find out why the baby was still not delivered. The soul of the baby revealed that because the man responsible for the pregnancy had denied responsibility, she and her mother had been disgraced and contaminated; she would not come into the world with the stigma of being 'fatherless.' If she was to be born, the father must own up, perform various rituals to cleanse and pacify both herself and her mother for the shame he had brought on them. When approached and told the mediumistic communication, the father owned up this time, and did what was demanded. Within a few days that child,

whom I saw myself, was born. Other people in the village confirmed the story.

5.   I must hasten to state that in March 1995, I mentioned my criticism personally to Prof. Mbiti. He agreed with the morality-of-being idea, and stated that if he were writing on that issue again, he would certainly add that a person does what he does partly because of the influence of his inner being and also of society and the environment. I, however, retain my criticism, not as against Mbiti himself, but in order to bring out the other side, and also in the interest of scholarship.

6.   Prof. Heinz Kimmerle of Erasmus University, Rotterdam has made the insightful observation that the notion of 'being' connotes that which is fixed, rigid; whereas in human actions things are not so fixed. People have dispositions or possibilities which may issue forth in action in a variety of ways. He suggested the use of a term that more accurately reflects this reality in moral behaviour. I very much appreciate the point. However, I am concerned to represent the Dangme view. Although *sësëë* includes some amount of freedom, it connotes rigidity more than anything else. As such, I would retain the notion of 'being' in the mean time, in the absence of a better one.

7.   See my book *Moral Renewal in Ghana: Ideals, Realities and Possibilities.* Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1995. In Chapter 3, I have made extensive suggestions for effective and transforming moral education in Ghana, which I believe are applicable in other African countries as well, if not everywhere else.

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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE[1]

Kwasi Wiredu

Philosophers are apt to try, at the start of a discussion, to explain what it is that they are talking about. I cannot resist this occupational propensity. I am to talk about African philosophy and intercultural dialogue. Neither term is, in spite of appearances, easy to define. As a matter of fact, the question "What is African philosophy?" is one that has absorbed a great part -too great a part, according to some outsiders, as well even as some insiders- of the energies of contemporary African philosophers. I am all the more motivated to address this question, as its importance in contemporary African philosophy is connected with historical circumstances of an intercultural character. The present condition of Africa is due in many respects to the historical adversity of colonialism. After independence there was a movement for self-rediscovery that, starting in West Africa in the sixties, had swept through most of the sub-Saharan regions of the continent by the seventies. This movement manifested itself in various spheres of African life: cultural, political and literary. In philosophy it took the form of a quest for self-definition.

This quest was also a creative quest, for it was essentially an effort to initiate the modern discipline of African philosophy, as far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned. The need for this creativity was due to the fact that during the colonial period African philosophy, as an *academic* discipline practised preponderantly by Africans, was nonexistent. There were, indeed, earlier in this century some works of philosophy, notably J.B. Danquah's *Akan Doctrine of God* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968 (1944)) and Father Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* [1969 (1959), first published as *La Philosophie Bantoue* in Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, in 1945]. In the previous century, there had also been works by people like Edward Blyden, Africanus Horton and Casely Hayford which, though political and cultural in intent, had considerable philosophical dimensions. But these, obviously, did not occur in or define the framework of an academic discipline. It has thus been only since independence that a large group of Africans who are

professional philosophers in various parts of Africa and the world have begun to profess a subject known as African philosophy in academia. It quickly began to strike many Africans that to be an African and a philosopher did not necessarily guarantee that your philosophical productions, if any, would constitute an African philosophy.

But why not? The reason seemed simple enough, but actually shrouded an ambiguity. For some participants in the discussion the reason was that the philosophy of a people must have its basis in their own culture. In the way of an illustration of this standpoint, consider an African who, having studied in Europe or the Unites States, has become a specialist in phenomenology or, say, analytic philosophy. Suppose he writes a brilliant treatise on phenomenology or analytic philosophy with absolutely nothing to distinguish it from the work of a European phenomenologist or analytical philosopher except perhaps an African-sounding name on the title page. What rational warrant would there be to call such a work a contribution to African philosophy? The answer was: "None!" Plausible as it sounds, further thought may easily suggest a contrary hypothesis. Imagine, for example, that, for some reason having no connection with African culture, the overwhelming majority of Africans who are philosophers in Africa and abroad think and write exactly in the same phenomenological manner and, furthermore, that this habit is sustained over many generations. Then, most certainly, that body of writing, that tradition of thought, would be just what modern African philosophy is. In the face of this thought it must become clear that the reason why our original African phenomenologist could not rationally be considered a contributor to African philosophy is because he was too lonely. It is for the same reason that one swallow does not make a summer, but multitudes of them in appropriate formations do. However, unlike swallows, the activities of human beings and the intellectual seasons they foreshadow or precipitate are susceptible of normative evaluations. And if we ask whether it would be to Africa's intellectual good health, at this historical juncture, to be overtaken in this way by European phenomenology or Anglo-American analytic philosophy, the answer must be "no" for the following reason.

Because the philosophical possessions and potentials of African cultures received little attention in colonial times, it is reasonable to suspect that philosophies that have emerged in the context of the concerns and perhaps conceits of other cultures may be oblivious to some vital imperatives of life in Africa or to some philosophical promptings of her cultures.

It must still be granted, in the abstract, that even after scrutiny through the lenses of an African culture, phenomenology or analytic philosophy may still take a total hold of the African mind. But in that case the phenomenon will have occurred because of rational reflection cognisant of African culture rather than previous colonisation. It just may be that phenomenology or analytical philosophy is universally the right mode of philosophical thinking and that anyone who considers it rationally must come to that conclusion. In concrete reality, however, such an outcome is unlikely. Philosophy, as it now exists in various continents, cultures and countries, is demonstrably tied in some respects to the particularities of their languages and social formations. It stands to reason, therefore, to expect that if Africans take adequate cognisance of their own languages and cultures in their philosophical meditations, they might come up with philosophical options that are in some respects different from those, for example, of the Western cultures within which ways of philosophical thought such as phenomenology and analytic philosophy have their home. Such options, as I will suggest, do in fact exist.

The taking account of ones cultural self to which reference has been made is something that contemporary African philosophers may find that they need to make a conscious effort to do, because if you receive your philosophical training exclusively in a foreign language, as has been the case with all of them (i.e. us), it tends to become your most natural language for philosophical reflection. It seems fair to say that any African unwilling to do such self-reference, or incapable or unappreciative of it, betrays what might be called a colonial mentality. As should be apparent, this process of conceptual self-examination is not one that must necessarily lead to the rejection of ideas coming from

our former colonisers. It just ensures that our philosophical persuasions are not simply owing to a colonial or neo-colonial circumstance. This thought process may be called intellectual or, more specifically, conceptual decolonisation. It follows that if Africans were to betake themselves to, say, the phenomenological way of philosophising without a moment's thought about how that may square up with the conceptual framework embedded in their own languages and cultures, they would not be doing African philosophy in the right way. Or to put it more positively, the thought is that good African philosophy must have a basis in African culture. And this is true not only for African culture, but, *mutatis mutandis*, for any culture whatever.

Note, however, that the notion of having a basis in a culture is a minimal concept which can only mean something like 'having been excogitated, viewed or reviewed in the light of the conceptual framework discernible in the language and usages of a given culture'. Since both the truth and falsity of a given proposition might be compatible with this test, it is clear that the proposed condition does not determine the truth or falsity of a philosophical thesis. In fact the viewing or reviewing in question may actually lead to the reformation of the conceptual framework concerned. For this reason, it would be excessively restrictive to interpret the notion of having a basis in a culture as requiring that it be suggested by it. Of course, if it is suggested by the culture, it has a basis in it, but if it has a basis in it, it does not follow that it is suggested by it.

A further rider is that in some connections, the question of this viewing or reviewing may not arise at all. Consider the philosophical problems arising out of Einstein's relativity theory. It may well be that there are aspects of it regarding which the conceptual intimations of a culture have no bearing one way or another. In that case a philosopher working within that culture has no viewing or reviewing of the kind we have been talking about to do. He or she only needs to be reflectively aware that this is the case. Yet the theory could be relevant to the culture, as to all cultures. In our particular example, relativity has such a relevance, because it is about the nature of the world in which we all

- African, Chinese, American, European - live, move and have our struggles. Here again, we need to take note of a *non sequitur*: If a thought construct has a basis in a culture, it is relevant to it, but, if it is relevant to it, it does not follow that it has a basis in it. It should be noted, furthermore, that the appropriateness of the cultural requirement under discussion is relative to philosophy as it has so far been done and as it is done at present. The extreme importance of this rider for intercultural dialogue will become apparent in due course.

If we now return to the suggestion that good African philosophy must have a basis in African culture, it is clear at once what the ambiguity alluded to earlier on is. What we have just seen is that, with a number of somewhat subtle riders, this suggestion is correct. But it does not follow that for a thought construct to count as African philosophy it must satisfy this requirement, for an African philosophy is not necessarily a good African philosophy. Indeed, as shown by the hypothesis of a possible universal colonisation of the African mind by, say, phenomenology, it is false to say that African philosophy in the descriptive sense logically implies any foundation in African culture. This is only true of African philosophy in the normative sense. The hypothesis just mentioned is not a whimsical one. When some African philosophers caution their colleagues not to be supinely receptive to the Western philosophies in which they were trained, they are evincing a sense of the live possibility of some such scenario. The only trouble is that, because of a confusion of the descriptive with the normative sense of the concept of African philosophy, it seems often to be thought that if such a scenario were to become actualised, the result could not be called African philosophy. Ironically, the possibility of that scenario is significant for intercultural dialogue, because the malleability of mind that underlies the possibility of intellectual colonisation is the same mental attribute, in its basic form, that makes intercultural dialogue possible.

But what is intercultural dialogue? Before addressing this question, let us summarise the conception of African philosophy which the foregoing discussion suggests. Descriptively, it is the historical and

contemporary tradition of philosophical thought produced mainly by
Africans. In many parts of Africa the historical part of this tradition
consists principally of a body of oral thought transmitted over many
generations. In some parts of Africa, such as Ethiopia and, as I under-
stand, Senegal, however, there is a historical tradition of written philo-
sophy. (Regarding the Ethiopian case Prof. Sumner of the University of
Addis Ababa has published a multi-volume work on this tradition.
More recently he has published a book on *Classical Ethiopian Philo-
sophy*, Los Angeles: Adey Pub. Co., 1994, which is convenient and
easily accessible). The contemporary part is the problematic aspect. It
consists of the writings of contemporary African philosophers who are
predominantly professional philosophers trained in Western or Wester-
n-style institutions. Their thinking (that is, our thinking) is often condi-
tioned by that training in ways of which we may not be conscious.
Here is where the normative concept of African philosophy comes in.
The suggestion is that in order to cure ourselves of any unexamined
assimilation of Western ways of thinking, we should form the habit,
despite writing in some metropolitan language, of trying as much as
possible to think things through in our own vernaculars and from the
standpoint of our own social formations as a necessary condition for
the establishment or enhancement of a sound tradition of contemporary
African philosophy. This, I repeat, is only a necessary condition for a
sound African philosophy. No one, unfortunately, can give the suffi-
cient conditions of good philosophising in the African or any other
tradition.

   But the fact, noted already, that intellectual decolonisation does
not necessarily mean the rejection of Western conceptions suggests that
a sound African philosophy can expect to avail itself of possible
insights from the Western philosophical tradition, leading to a synthesis
with insights from indigenous sources. I mention the Western tradition
since the present reflection involves decolonisation. But, ideally, such a
programme of synthesis must, in principle, be based on an attitude of
respectful curiosity about all cultural traditions. The idea of such a
synthesis already presupposes not only the possibility but also the

desirability of intercultural discourse. Which brings us to the meaning of intercultural dialogue. The intercultural part presents no difficulty. It just means that, in the literal sense, one is envisaging a kind of discourse involving at least two different cultures. But subtle problems arise with respect to the concept of dialogue. We start with the fact that not every discourse between two parties constitutes a dialogue in any but the most trivial sense. Not only can real dialogue elude discussants who talk at cross purposes, but it can also be out of reach to parties who both argue to the point but can foresee no possibility of a change of position as a result of the exchange. Much political and religious and, perhaps, some philosophical exchanges are of this kind. The participants regard themselves as infallible in all but explicit declaration. Sometimes the illusion of infallibility is operative at only one end of the debate. But that is enough to effectively frustrate dialogue.

It is necessary to be clear about the moral, or more strictly, immoral implications of such an approach to inter-person or inter-group discussion. One who enters a debate or discussion ipso facto demonstrates a desire to persuade the other party. Not to acknowledge the possibility that one might oneself become the persuaded is to display in ones conduct a highly objectionable asymmetry. It is an unethical asymmetry in that it obviously flouts the Golden Rule. No respect, or an insufficient degree of it, is accorded 'the other' as a person, as a possible source of rational persuasion.

It makes no difference whether the discussion is about a policy of action or a point of theory, or whether it is interpersonal or intercultural; this point holds, regardless, and implies that genuine dialogue entails the recognition of a certain moral equality of all concerned. In this sense dialogue presupposes respect for 'the other'. It is this respect that some disputants lack either in their heads or in their hearts.

Interestingly, the problem in African philosophy regarding dialogue with the intellectual legacy of colonialism has often been that there is too much rather than too little respect for 'the other'. And this is what was meant, in moral terms, by our earlier allusion to the

excessive malleability of the colonised mind. If the popular adage that too much of everything is bad is true or even probable, then that alone supports a program of intellectual decolonisation. This is not a nationalistic enterprise, for a nationalistic reaction is apt to swing to the other extreme, draining the mind of the respect necessary for dialogue. In African philosophy one level of thought is a sort of intercultural dialogue that goes on between two different cultural sectors of the African consciousness. Colonial education and Christian evangelisation -substitute 'Islamisation' for 'Christian evangelisation' in the appropriate regions of Africa- have ensured that there is a substantial involuntary component of a foreign provenance in African culture. As yet this component coexists with the indigenous one in a confused amalgam crying for rationalisation. I have studied some aspects of this situation as regards ethical theory and practice in *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996; chap. 6: "Custom and Morality: A Comparative Analysis of Some African and Western Conceptions of Morals") and in "Morality and Religion in Akan Thought" in *African American Humanism: An Anthology* (edited by Norm Allen Jr., New York: Prometheus Books, 1991).

Philosophy at least must try to introduce some coherence into this admixture of cultural elements at the theoretical level through a critique in the spirit of the programme of synthesis. African philosophy has, in any case, to be comparative, because in colonial times much of the vaguely philosophical body of literature relating to Africa was written not by philosophers but rather by anthropologists and religionists who formulated their accounts of African thought in terms of the intellectual categories of their own culture without a prior investigation of their conceptual appropriateness. No opprobrium is intended. Conceptual speculation was neither their motivation nor occupation. Nor was intellectual dialogue among their priorities. Even in those rare cases when somebody like Father Tempels undertook a serious exposition of an African system of philosophical thought, the motive was quite patronising. Tempels had committed what in his own circles was the

revolutionary heresy of supposing in print that an African people, the Bantu, in their traditional condition had a coherent philosophy (though a false one, since it was pagan); (Tempers, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris: Presence Africain, 1959, chap. 1) But his reason for recommending a careful study of that philosophy was so that 'these primitives' might the more easily be civilised, i.e., Christianised. Farthest from his mind was anything like dialogue as a process of discourse in which there was any possibility of his being proved wrong.

African philosophy in our time, however, in seeking to evaluate those earlier accounts of African thought, has to proceed in the spirit of dialogue, not only because that is the morally right way to interact with others intellectually, but also because the discourse is, at least in part, self-reflexive in the manner already explained. That evaluation has to be with respect not only to the propositional import of the accounts in question but also to the conceptual framework within which they were formulated. For illustrative purposes it suffices to take but a few instances: Africans are held to entertain a world view in which spirits and spiritual forces play a very prominent role and in which the relig-ious outlook predominates. The religion involved is claimed to revolve round the ancestors, whose commandments constitute the basis of African morality, and a great host of minor gods and other spiritual beings whose activities impinge upon the projects and daily life of mortals, inspiring worship but also frequently fear and trembling. Mor-tals themselves are supposed to be conceived as combinations of a material body and multiple souls, the latter ensuring for all an immortal afterlife in a supernatural world of the dead. According to this type of account, this world of ours is understood by Africans to have been created out of nothing by an almighty God, but the objects of their religious devotion are the ancestors and the assortment of spirits whose interventions in daily life are palpable and constant.

Categories are highly fundamental concepts in terms of which wide ranges of items of thought and experience are conceptualised. What is called a conceptual framework is an interconnection of such concepts. Discernible in the generic account summarized in the last

paragraph is a conceptual framework featuring categories familiar in many Western systems of thought.

We find the notions of the material, the spiritual, the supernatural and the religious prominently deployed. These are wide-ranging enough to be called categories. Less wide-ranging but no less important, particularly in the context of the propositional message, are the concepts of God, gods, creation, spirits, souls, ancestors, morality and immortality. It may surprise a Western observer to be told that (in my opinion, at any rate) hardly any of the categories (i.e., the first group of concepts) assembled here fits unproblematically any African thought items known to me. Let me explain, before going on, that because the conceptual claims to be made in what follows require a level of linguistic understanding to which I cannot pretend in regard to any African language other than my own which is Akan, the language of the Akans of Ghana, I will base my considerations on that specific language. On the basis of available information, it seems to me probable that the considerations are valid for a great number of African peoples, but I see no need to generalise beyond the bounds of personal confidence.

What, then, are the reasons for the inapplicability of those categories? Take, first, the category of the spiritual. Informative definitions of this notion are difficult to come by in Western philosophy. The spiritual seems to be simply that which is non-extended. Not to protest so negative a definition too much, we simply observe that in the Akan language the concept of existence is locative, and because of this, no such category of existents as that of the unextended is admissible. Unless the notion of the material is defined otherwise than in necessary contrast with the spiritual, that too will have to go. Consider, next, the concept of the supernatural. If the spiritual has no leg to stand on, the supernatural can hardly stand either. The Akan ontology, if you view it from inside the Akan language, seems to dispense with sharp dualisms. Whatever exists belongs to one framework of existence starting from the top with the supreme being, the architect of the world order, down to the most modest item in the furniture of the universe. Everything happens according to law, but some laws of the cosmic order are more

familiar in ordinary life than others, so that the notion of a miracle as that which contravenes any such law is unintelligible.

The ancestors, on this showing, cannot be said to live in a supernatural world, nor can they, or, for that matter, the class of beings often called lesser gods, be described as spiritual. The ancestors, who, in fact, are supposed to live rather close to the living and are held to be in constant touch with them, are venerated, but simply in the sense of being accorded a higher degree of the respect that is considered to be due to elders. If worship means more, the concept is inapplicable to the attitude of Akan mortals to their ancestors. Indeed, as Abraham observes in his *The Mind of Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 52), worship is a concept that had no place in Akan thought. Nor, therefore, is the notion of worship any more appropriate in relation to the spirits or lesser gods. These are beings that are supposed to be capable of helping people in various ways but to whom homage is paid strictly in proportion to their perceived efficiency in delivering benefits. Consistent failure attracts to them nothing but contempt, culminating in the withdrawal of attention, a state of affairs which is known to be capable of leading to the demise of such spirits; from which it can be inferred that these 'spirits' are not all that spiritual or godly. Moreover, such utilitarian attitude hardly invites a religious description. Actually, the plural word 'spirits', even in the English language refers to quasi-material entities, by which I mean entities that are material in imagery but less restrictively governed by the ordinary laws of motion than bodies such as our own. The remarkable difference here between English and Akan is that in the former it seems intelligible, at least in a preliminary way, to talk of material, quasi-material and immaterial (spiritual) entities, whereas in Akan only the first two can be spoken of with any show of sense.

In what sense, then, does the concept of religion apply to any aspect of Akan life and thought? It does so only in the rather minimal sense that the Akans have an unconditional reverence for the supreme being and a sense of total trust in and dependence upon him. No ideas of worship, and, consequently, no religious institutions are associated

with this attitude to the supreme being, who, by the way, is conceived of as a divine architect rather than a creator ex nihilo. Obviously, the Akans did not think that there was any rationale for the worship of a being supposed to be perfect. Given all this, it should come as no surprise that neither the commandments of God nor of any spirit were considered the basis of morality in Akan thought. That God does not like evil is one of the commonest sayings in Akan life. But the Akans considered evil to be evil because it was thought to disrupt and injure the harmonious pursuit of human interests in society; which is why God was believed to dislike it in the first place. To define evil or its opposite in terms of the commands of God or any being, for that matter, would mean putting the cart before the horse, as Plato's Socrates pointed out long ago in another tradition. As for the ancestors, whatever part they are supposed to have in the enforcement of morals is simply a contribution to the promotion of good conduct defined on pre-mortem criteria.

These last four paragraphs merely delineate some conceptual options; they do not demonstrate them. They constitute only a brief summary of the critique of the sort of colonial and colonial-inspired accounts of African thought summarised even more briefly above. In neither case is anything like completeness approached. (For more details, though still not completeness, see Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, chaps. 5-9.) Despite this brevity, there is enough here to support two observations. First, counterposing my account to the other is already an act of intercultural dialogue, though it is an intercultural dialogue in one head. Second, in so far as the account calls attention to a number of categorial and doctrinal options alternative to the ones frequently met with in Western thought, it is an invitation to dialogue to all Western observers given to abstract reflection on such issues. Exposure to alternative categories of thought always has mind-broadening possibilities. Even if the experience should lead, in the final analysis, to the reaffirmation of one's old conceptual framework, one cannot then be accused of living the unexamined life.

Intercultural dialogue can be initiated in all manner of ways. But contemporary African philosophy, by virtue of its historical circumstances, seems to invite intercultural dialogue with the Western world by much of its intrinsic concerns in our time. There is today evidence of a growing interest in African philosophy in the Western world. But it is not always clear whether this interest goes beyond mere exotic curiosity. The gesture of the Prince Claus Fund responsible for my presence here certainly suggests that it does, at least here. I would like to conclude with some remarks on the larger implications of intercultural dialogue in philosophy. As I have argued, any dialogue implies the recognition, on all hands, that the truth may turn out to lie on any one side rather than the other. In the intercultural context this means that discussants acknowledge the possibility of common canons of philosophical evaluation. They cannot therefore be relativists. But, beyond this last consideration, it follows that the parties to the dialogue must foresee the possibility of the eventual evening out of the differences between the philosophies that are, as of now, resident in the different cultures of the world. It is for this reason that I subjoined a temporal qualification to the requirement that a sound African philosophy must have a basis in African culture. Obviously, the possibility we have lately been considering implies that the time might come when the cultural origins of philosophers will not even loosely determine the character and content of their views. Such a prospect must be very far indeed into the future. But philosophers are people who are not afraid to look that far into the future. In any case, we can reflect that if and when that happens, it will facilitate understanding among all the members of our species. Furthermore, any small gains in that direction are gains in peaceful human interaction. They would be gains in which the Prince Claus Fund can claim some part.

Note   Lecture delivered at the ceremony announcing the 1997 *Prince Claus Award* winners (see later in this issue) in Amsterdam, 18-12-1997.

LE DISCOURSE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

Abou Karamoko

Nous voudrions vous proposer ici ces quelques lignes, autour de certaines questions bien difficiles, celles qui concernent la façon dont le discours et le pouvoir, en tant que réseaux dynamisant le fonctionnement social, traversent les matières signifiantes dont le développement. Pour cela, nous vous invitons à suivre les contours dispersés mais reconnaissables de leurs objets, ou plutôt de leurs tissus de sens.

Tout système productif peut être considéré comme un ensemble de contraintes dont la description spécifie les conditions sous lesquelles quelque chose est d'abord produit, circule ensuite et est enfin consommé. Il en est de même pour le sens.

Or ces contraintes, pour ce qui est du sens, tel qu'il est repérable dans les matières signifiantes qui circulent dans une société, ne constituent certainement pas un ensemble homogène. Elles ne découlent pas d'une même source. Elles n'ont pas toutes les mêmes fondements non plus, ni ne renvoient au même type de "*lois*".

Nous nous intéresserons ici à ce qui, parmi ces contraintes multiples dans la production du sens, se présente non seulement comme une condition essentielle du développement, mais renvoie aussi aux liens que le sens entretient avec les mécanismes de base du fonctionnement social, c'est-à-dire à ce qui touche à l'ordre de la communication et à l'ordre du pouvoir.

Mais, le pouvoir dont il est question n'épouse pas seulement les contours étroits de l'Etat moderne qui n'est que l'un de ses moments. Il y a aussi l'Etat dit traditionnel. Il convient de souligner que le discours qui dépend du pouvoir quel qu'il soit, se définit conséquemment comme ce qui, sur le registre des effets de vérité ou des valeurs de vérité, s'avère congruent à l'ensemble des conditions d'oppression et à leur maintien. Le discours du pouvoir est aussi lié à l'existence et à la reproduction d'une certaine hiérarchisation de la société, à tout ce qui y prend place, relevant de (ou requis par) ses structures et son organisation, par où se développent des *réseaux*

d'effets de sens qui reflètent les positions interdiscursives ou de domination.

On pourrait simplement appeler discours social, tout ce qui se dit, s'écrit ou se représente dans un état de société. Ce sont, en d'autres termes, ces systèmes génériques, ces répertoires topiques, ces règles de dissémination d'énoncés qui, dans le social, organisent le dicible. Nous pensons au tout de cette vaste rumeur où il y a les lieux communs de la conversation et les blagues du café du commerce, du maquis, les espaces triviaux de la presse, du journalisme, des doxographes de "l'opinion publique", qui viennent à l'oreille de l'homme en société.

C'est une sorte de rumeur cacophonique, de surface étalée de l'ensemble des énoncés, des textes, des discours réels qui se produisent en société, quels que soient les lieux, les positions de légitimité. "*Je gardERais "discours social"*, dit Régine Robin, *pour désigner seulement ce qui se produit en surface, mais non la pure cacophonie anémique: ce qui, en surface, fait le plus de bruit, s'exprime le plus fort, se répète en plus d'endroits, migre et se reformule "un peu partout" et se donne comme de l'absolument différent alors qu'il n'est que des formes du même. La "surface"*, poursuit-elle, "*est faite de bosses et de creux: le "discours social", ce sont les bosses!*"[1]

Ce serait donc commettre une erreur fondamentale en pensant que le discours social, en un certain sens, serait pure cacophonie aléatoire ou juxtaposition de langages et de genres autonomes. Car, dans la diversité des thèmes, des opinions, des langages, des jargons et des styles, etc., le discours social ne forme pas un ensemble de complexes imperméables les uns aux autres. Ils sont soumis à ce que Bakthine appelle une "*interaction généralisée*", pleine d'échos et de rappels interdiscursifs et intradiscursifs.

Et, au-delà de la diversité des langages, de la variété des pratiques signifiantes, des styles et des opinions, il y a, dans tout état de société, des dominances interdiscursives, des manières de connaître, de dire ou de signifier ce qui est ou qui devrait l'être. Elles sont le propre de cette société et régulent, transcendent la division des discours établis: ce que Antonio Gramsci appelle "*hégémonie*".

Ainsi, comme nous l'avons déjà dit, le discours social n'est pas un espace indéterminé où des thématisations monadiques se produisent de manière aléatoire. Il n'est pas non plus cette juxtaposition de sociolectes, de genres et de styles renfermés sur leurs traditions propres et évoluant selon leurs enjeux locaux. Il fonctionne à la polyphonie et à la polysémie, depuis l'oralité, tant dans les formes éthérés de la recherche esthétique, de la spéculation philosophique ou de la formalisation scientifique, que dans les slogans ou les discours politiques. Çà et là, on assiste à une volonté d'omnipotence du pouvoir des discours, forme totalitaire de la "*servitude volontaire*".

Tout discours établi a pour fonction majeure, concomitante à son "*monopole de la représentation*", de produire et de fixer des légitimités, des validations, des légalités rendant alors manifeste la légitimation de certaines pratiques, de certains pouvoirs, de certains statuts. Dès lors, le pouvoir légitimant du discours est la résultante d'une infinité de micro-pouvoirs, d'arbitraires formels et thématiques. Car, l'hégémonie désigne qui peut parler et de quoi, quand, comment et où. Elle fonctionne donc à la fois comme censure et auto-censure.

Ainsi que Roland Barthes a pu le dire, "*la vraie censure ne consiste pas à interdire (...) mais à nourrir indûment, à maintenir, à retenir, à étouffer, à engluer dans les stéréotypes (...) L'instrument véritable de la censure, ce n'est pas la police, c'est l'endoxa... La censure sociale (...) est (...) là où on contraint de parler*"[2], ou de ne pas parler.

Michel Foucault a systématisé de façon hyperbolique la réflexion sur le pouvoir des discours, sur la fonction de contrôle, le rôle d'"*incarcération*" du corps et des désirs par les discours de savoir et d'autorité. Alors, il en est venu à voir toute la communication sociale comme n'étant rien d'autre qu'un épicycle de la Machine du pouvoir. "*Je ne voudrais pas avoir, dit le désir, à entrer moi-même dans cet ordre hasardeux du discours; je ne voudrais pas avoir affaire à lui dans ce qu'il a de tranchant et de décisif; je voudrais qu'il soit tout autour de moi comme une transparence calme, profonde, indéfiniment ouverte, où les autres répondraient à mon attente, et d'où les vérités,*

une à une, se lèveraient: je n'aurais qu'à me laisser porter en lui et par lui, comme une épave heureuse."[3]

Et l'institution de répondre: *"Tu n'as pas à craindre de commencer; nous sommes tous là pour te montrer que le discours est dans l'ordre des lois; qu'on veille depuis longtemps sur son apparition; qu'une place lui a été faite, qui l'honore mais le désarme; et que, s'il lui arrive d'avoir quelque pouvoir, c'est bien de nous et de nous seulement, qu'il le tient."*[4]

Mais pourquoi tant d'inquiétudes à l'égard du discours, dans sa matérialité comme chose pensée ou écrite? Qu'y a-t-il donc de si périlleux et de pernicieux dans le fait que les gens parlent et que leurs discours, sous diverses formes, prolifèrent indéfiniment?

En effet, dans toute société, aucun discours n'est brisé, tant il est vrai que sa production, aussi bien l'exercice de son autorité ou son absence, sont soumis à certaines procédures par où le discours est extériorisé d'abord, contrôlé et sélectionné ensuite pour être, enfin, organisé et redistribué de manière à en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers. Ainsi, il faut, dans un état de pleine conscience, tourner sept fois la langue avant de parler. C'est le premier interdit qui implique un enchaînement de procédures d'exclusion. Car il nous enseigne là que l'on n'a pas le droit de tout dire, que l'on ne peut pas parler de tout dans n'importe quelle circonstance, que n'importe qui ne peut parler de n'importe quoi.

Le malade mental par exemple, celui qu'on appelle communément le fou, c'est celui dont le discours d'emblée n'a pas d'autorité. Il ne peut donc pas circuler comme celui des autres. Sa parole est parfois tenue pour nulle et non avenue, *"n'ayant ni vérité, ni importance, ne pouvant pas faire foi en justice, ne pouvant pas authentifier un acte ou un contrat."*[5] Cependant, il arrive quelquefois qu'on lui prête du sens en lui conférant *"d'étranges pouvoirs, celui de dire une vérité cachée"* ou insoupçonnée, *"celui de voir, en toute naïveté, ce que la sagesse des autres ne peut pas percevoir."*[6] C'est donc dire que tantôt, la parole du fou n'est pas entendue et on la rejette aussitôt que proférée, elle tombe dans le néant; tantôt, elle est reçue comme parole de vérité et on y

déchiffre "*une raison naïve ou rusée, une raison plus raisonnable que celle des gens raisonnables.*"[7]

La vérité, le sens donc ne résident pas dans ce qu'est le discours, mais plutôt en celui par la bouche duquel elle est dite. Comme entre Hésiode et Platon où un certain partage s'est établi, qui sépare le discours vrai du discours faux, il faut distinguer un certain discours porteur de vrai savoir, d'un autre, porteur de faux savoir. Il faut aussi faire la démarcation, entre le discours vrai porteur de savoir et le discours faux porteur de savoir ou le discours porteur de faux savoir.

Désormais, le discours vrai n'est plus le discours cohérent ou logique... mais celui qui est lié à l'exercice du pouvoir. La volonté de vérité s'appuie sur un support institutionnel, qui la met en scelle et en scène par la manière dont le savoir est mis en oeuvre, valorisé, distribué, attribué dans la société.

A ce sujet, on pourrait rappeler le vieux principe grec qui dit que "*l'arithmétique peut bien être l'affaire des cités démocratiques, car elle enseigne les rapports d'égalité, mais que la géométrie seule doit être enseignée dans les oligarchies puisqu'elle démontre les proportions dans l'inégalité*".[8] La volonté de vérité est donc comme une prodigieuse machinerie destinée à exclure. C'est une exclusion externe caractérisée par la mise en place de dispositifs extra-discours. Ce sont, (outre la grammaire et ses nombreuses règles qui régulent l'usage de toute langue), ce que Louis Althusser appelle les appareils idéologiques d'Etat ou A.I.E. (censure, écoles, églises ou mosquées, etc.) et les appareils d'Etat répressifs et coercitifs ou A.E. (armée, police, prison, justice, etc.).

Ces dispositifs extra-discours servent à filtrer le discours pour le rendre digeste. Ainsi, "*la méthode de la vérité n'a pas été inventée pour des motifs de vérité, mais par des mobiles de puissance et de domination*".[9] Au nombre de ces dispositifs, le plus tenace, le plus régulier est la censure, cette instance juridique spécialement aménagée afin de désigner et de réprimer la transgression d'une sorte de code linguistique. Gare aux fauteurs de trouble et aux pêcheurs en eaux troubles, qui tiendront des discours subversifs compromettant la paix

sociale, l'ordre établi et surtout le progrès et le développement social et économique. La parole est ainsi confisquée, à moins qu'elle se situe du côté du pouvoir dont elle chantera toujours les louanges et, pour assurer sa pérennité, se gardera d'en faire une critique sérieuse.

Il existe aussi des procédures internes d'exclusion, où ce sont les discours eux-mêmes qui exercent leur propre contrôle marqué par des principes de reconnaissance et d'intronisation, de classification, d'ordonnancement et de distribution. On oublie ainsi que, non seulement le comportement humain n'a pas la transparence de l'activité mathématique, mais aussi, que *"l'expérience de la pensée peut être simplement l'expérience du dire."*[10] Il y a toujours quelque chose derrière ce qui est dit, un non-dit ou en appendice.

La libération de la parole est donc une condition essentielle du développement, car elle permet la contradiction qui n'est pas iconoclastie. Au contraire, elle fait briller la vérité (un singulier pluriel) dans l'éclat de son apparaître. Ainsi, l'on pourra distinguer ceux qui disent la vérité de ceux qui ne la disent pas et qui, *de facto*, disent son contraire ou la dissimulent. La contradiction donc, par la libération du discours est une condition essentielle du développement quel qu'il soit, c'est-à-dire économique, technique, technologique, physique, psychologique, moral, intellectuel, etc., culturel en un mot. Car, rien dans ce monde n'existe qui ne soit de culture. Nous disons bien de culture et non culturel.

La première expression (de culture) signifie que la culture est le ferment nourricier de l'Existence, là où la seconde expression (culturel) qui est un qualificatif, en est une coloration.

Pour en revenir à notre préoccupation, nous voulons rompre avec le mimétisme des chapelles pour dire, d'abord, qu'il n'y a pas de sujet tabou, et ensuite que, (nous n'innovons pas en le disant) toute culture, pour se développer a besoin de rencontrer une autre, les autres. C'est pourquoi, dans son rapport à la culture dite cultivée, les termes de tradition, Us. et coutumes, synonymes d'anhistoricité, pour désigner la culture des peuples infériorisés sont impropres. Car, la tradition ici se fait gloire de ne représenter que nos sociétés africaines et fonctionne

comme un "*eidos*", c'est-à-dire une forme occulte et occultante. Celle-ci voile, par l'unité d'une dénomination, la diversité et l'hétérogénéité de phénomènes culturels dispersés, inégalisés et parfois contradictoires, en leur conférant une homogénéité et une unité immédiates, indifférenciées, saisies dans l'intuition du temps. D'où l'"*identité culturelle*" qui méconnaît dans nos sociétés africaines, la réalité de la pluralité des cultures, des savoirs et des techniques hétérogènes voire antagoniques et qui conforte ce "*mythe de l'unanimité primitive*", qui dit qu'en Afrique, tout le monde a toujours été d'accord avec tout le monde.

Dès lors, le dualisme "*Tradition*" vs. "*Modernité*" dessine idéologiquement une valorisation inversement proportionnelle des termes en présence. Il produit un effet de miroir, celui de l'Occident à travers lequel les sociétés africaines "primitives" regardent leur passé, leur présent et leur futur. Dans une telle perspective, l'Afrique inférierorisée se trouve à jamais prise dans les rets d'un retard définitif et absolu. Entre l'Afrique des traditions et l'Occident technique, technologique et informatique, c'est la course à handicap entre Achille "*aux pieds légers*", immobile et à grands pas, et la tortue, définie dans les paradoxes de Zénon l'Eléate.

En effet, comme Achille n'atteindra ni ne dépassera jamais la tortue, l'Afrique ne rattrapera ni ne dépassera jamais l'Occident. La cime est encore loin. Car, de même que dans l'imaginaire du célèbre logicien Zénon d'Elée "*l'espace perdu ne se rattrape jamais*", du fait de la divisibilité du temps à l'infini, de même, dans la logique de ce raisonnement, l'état de "*développement*" non conquis par l'Afrique lui sera, par rapport à l'Occident, à jamais inaccessible. A moins que... à moins que l'Afrique fasse comme ces intellectuels nostalgiques qui, faisant contre mauvaise fortune bon coeur, ne parlent pas de retard, mais plutôt d'identité culturelle. La différence, l'inégalité est ainsi consommée.

Mais, de quelle identité culturelle faut-il tenir compte dans un projet de développement qui ne se lit que dans un transfert de technologie qui est, en dernière instance, le transfert d'un modèle

spécifique de développement et de culture?

D'ailleurs, la question de l'identité culturelle chez nos élites "africanologues", "africanistes" ou "négrologues" fonctionne comme l'idéologie de la *tabula rasa* de Descartes[11], qui décide de faire table rase de tout pour mieux chercher (et trouver) la vérité dans les sciences. Mais il sauve du domaine du doute, le *cogito* et les enseignements de l'Eglise. Il se forme *"une morale par provision"*[12] doublée d'une méthode qui le guideront dans ses recherches. Ainsi, de même que la table rase de Descartes était une table bien garnie, attendant les convives pour le festin philosophique, de même, la table rase des chantres de l'authenticité africaine s'effectue avec des appels du pied sous la table, aux valeurs occidentales. Ce discours de l'authenticité est d'ailleurs périmé aujourd'hui, du moins, on l'entend de moins en moins.

Pouvait-il en être autrement? Avouons-le, notre identité culturelle ne peut plus s'entendre en termes identitaires et fixistes, anhistoriques et inamovibles. Elle s'inscrit aujourd'hui, comme toute identité culturelle, dans la mouvance de l'histoire des modes et des rapports de productions économique, technique, technologique et informatique.

Dans l'étape actuelle de son développement, l'Afrique doit assurer son historicité, par la transformation de l'acquis scientifique disponible dans notre horizon actuel. Il lui faut, pour se prendre en charge soi-même, rompre avec les schèmes, les modèles, les copies qui sont des idoles crépusculaires.

Il faut tirer les enseignements de la leçon de la Grande Royale (de l'*Aventure Ambiguë* de Cheick Amidou Kane) à son jeune cousin: *"Va savoir chez eux comment on peut vaincre sans avoir raison"*.

Allons au pays du soleil levant! Mais peut-être que les voies sont-elles sans issues?

Notes

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5   Michel Foucault, op. cit., p. 12.

6   Michel Foucault, op. cit., p. 13.

7   Michel Foucault, op. cit., p. 13.

8   Michel Foucault, op. cit., p. 20.

9   Nietzsche Fr. *La volonté de puissance* (Paris, Gallimard, 1947-1948), trad. Geneviève Bianquis, p. 96.

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RÉSUMÉ

Suite à la mort récente du professeur H. Odera Oruka, fondateur du programme de recherche philosophique dit *philosophie de sagacité*, la question que l'on se pose maintenant est de savoir où il faut aller. Avec la disparition de son fondateur, on pourrait même se demander si le programme doit se poursuivre.

Cet article soulèle quelques questions sur ce plan qui actuellement exigent des réponses. En premier lieu: pourquoi Odera Oruka s'est-il engagé à sélectionner et à s'entretenir avec ses "sages"? Qui mérite de figurer parmi ces "sages"? Et enfin, quel chemin devrait suivre la philosophie de sagacité en choisissant les sujets de ses futures entrevues?

Le désir de convaincre les Européens de la capacité philosophique des Africans était la force motrice de l'action de Odera Oruka; son programme a même rapidement dépassé cette attente. Si le programme mérite d'être continué ou même d'être élargi, cela constituerait une vraie trouvaille: les idées perspicaces des "sages", pour la plupart, de vieux hommes à la campagne. En élargissant le programme original, aux les femmes et aux plus jeunes, on aura la possiblité d'exploiter une riche source de perspicacité philosophique.

SUMMARY

With the recent death of Prof. H. Odera Oruka, founder of the "sage Philosophy" school of research, based at University of Nairobi, the question has arisen, where do we go from here? Should the sage philosophy project continue? This paper looks at some now-problematic issues: who should be considered a sage; why Odera Oruka considered it worthwhile to interview sages in the first place; whether the same conditions still hold or have changed; and what path sage philosophy should pursue regarding future interview subjects.

While Odera Oruka argued that the impetus for sage philosophy was to prove to Europeans that Africans could philosophize, the project has outgrown its original impetus and is now worthwhile as a pursuit because of the valuable insights the sages provide. While the first sages interviewed were mostly elder males, the change in focus now means that a wider range of persons can be seen as valuable sources of philosophical insight, broadening the scope of the project.

WHO COUNTS AS A SAGE?
PROBLEMS IN THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION
OF SAGE PHILOSOPHY

Gail M. Presbey

With the recent death of Prof. H. Odera Oruka, founder of the "sage philosophy" school of research, based at University of Nairobi, the question has arisen, where do we go from here? Should the sage philosophy project continue?

   This paper will look at some now-problematic issues: who should be considered a sage; why Odera Oruka considered it worthwhile to interview sages in the first place; whether the same conditions still hold or have changed; and what path sage philosophy should pursue regarding future interview subjects.

Odera Oruka's own criticism of sage philosophy

Despite his pride in launching what many consider an important project in African philosophy, the writings of Odera Oruka himself express some doubts about the project. For example, in his essay "Philosophy in East Africa and the Future of Philosophical Research in Africa", he seems to refer to his own project as one of passing historical significance. There, after criticizing Tempels and other ethnophilosophers, he admits that he himself "indulge(s) in some kind of anthropological-cum- philosophical research." He said projects like his own sage philosophy and Sumner's researches into historical texts of Ethiopian philosophy were necessary at that historical point, but would soon give way to nationalist-ideological and professional- technical philosophy, creeds he saw as more central to the future of African philosophy.[1] In *Sage Philosophy Revisited*, he states that "sage philosophy started as a reaction to a position which Europeans had adopted about Africa that Africans are not capable of philosophy."[2] So, does this imply that once Europeans change their perceptions of

Africans, there will no longer be a need for professional philosophers to search out the ideas of wise rural sages? Even in this late essay, Odera Oruka continues to suggest that his work merely serves as a 'base' for other forms of philosophy which will emerge in the future, but which he can't imagine right now. By 'base' he seems to mean a collection of texts to which professional academic philosophers can turn, instead of always consulting European ones [Odera Oruka (1997: 184-185)]. In some places he refers to the written interviews with rural sages as the 'raw material' professional philosophers will need as the focus of their work in the future.

Odera Oruka, in the earlier essay on the future of philosophical research in Africa, goes on to say that although research into the traditional beliefs of African society would be a significant contribution of Africa to the world, such research "...will be of no or little scientific and philosophical value in the modern sense. And this is not because African traditions in particular offer no contribution to science or philosophy in the modern sense, but because ethnological beliefs in any society are not much of a contribution to the current level of scientific and philosophical thoughts" [Odera Oruka (1997: 237-238)]. One must wonder how Odera Oruka can possibly make such a cutting and dismissive critique of his own project. I can only surmise that, although he refers to his entire book, Sage Philosophy, as the site of his anthropological-cum-philosophical project, his criticisms regarding the limited value of the study are actually aimed only at those he calls 'folk sages', those who uncritically hold the beliefs of their community.

Yet, in his August 1995 interview with Kai Kresse, Odera Oruka instead voiced much enthusiasm and hope about the expansion of studies in sage philosophy. He suggested that many more sages should be interviewed [Kresse (1995)]. But along with this insistence that research continue came a redefining of who should be considered a sage, and therefore what kind of interviews should be done. In fact, in the 1993 radio broadcast he explained how he answered the charges of sceptics, that since sages must be illiterate, and there are now projects to decrease illiteracy in Africa, sages will disappear and sage philos-

ophy will become obsolete. Odera Oruka clarified, stating that sages don't have to be illiterate. He explained the historical reason why illiterate sages were chosen first (to debunk certain European sceptical remarks regarding Africans and philosophy). But he explained that "...in the future it will not be so... sage philosophy should not be restricted to rural areas and in a place where people are illiterate... We have done research on non-educated sages. There is still a large room for somebody else to do the research on the educated sages" [Odera Oruka (1997: 185)]. He suggested that his interview of Oginga Odinga should be seen as the first in a series of expanding works on sage philosophy [Kresse (1995)]. Certainly Oginga Odinga is not illiterate; he has written a famous book.

Who counts as a sage?

In a way, Odera Oruka's expansion of the term 'sage' is helpful, in that it answers certain charges of inconsistency in his earlier position. For example, Jay van Hook has argued that in these times, it is impossible to do what Odera Oruka said he was accomplishing in the early study of his sages, which is to find people not influenced by contemporary Western ideas and education. Van Hook notes that of the twelve sages presented in *Sage Philosophy*, "three are identified as Christians, one a preacher in the Anglican church; one attended a colonial school; another talks about Socrates; one is identified as the son of an anti-European activist; and still another is described as inseparable from his radio and as having satisfied all his ambitions except owning a car" [Van Hook (1995: 54-65, esp. 58)]. One could add that Odera Oruka praises Paul Mbuya Akoko when he exclaims, contrary to the beliefs of the average Luo, that the Luo god and all other gods are One; for there is only one God [Odera Oruka (1990: 137)]. Yet this concept was probably the first thing that Christian missionaries taught people on entering Luoland; if Akoko said he had learned it from foreign

missionaries, however, it would have undercut the rationale for the study.

While Odera Oruka praises the wisdom of the sages, he is frustrated with the way in which most rural people focus on them. He argues that philosophy is popularly misconceived as "having to do with wisdom and conventionally acknowledged wise persons." He notes, in a reductio ad absurdum argument, that if this were true, philosophy departments would be impossible to manage, since the real philosophers, the elders, would lack qualifications to teach at the universities [Odera Oruka (1997: 230)]. Indeed, Odera Oruka insists that neither age nor gender should be considered a requirement for being a sage. Yet, overwhelmingly, his designated sages have been elder men. In his book, out of twelve sages, one is young, and one is a woman.[3] The social connotations of the word make identifying particular 'wise old men' as sages too easy, while the young or women are immediately met with suspicion. As in other cases of discrimination, they have to 'try harder' to merit the same laudatory title. Although Odera Oruka defines 'sage' as someone with wisdom, insight, or ethical inspiration who uses his or her talents for the betterment of the community [1991: 9-10], not all who show such commitment are regarded as 'sages'.

As a case in point, a prominent Kenyan woman had asked me to interview her as a sage. On hearing this request, several of the Kenyan sage researchers (all of whom were men, albeit young men with academic degrees), reacted with scepticism or outright denial. Many frowned; "she can't be a sage..." was muttered. Yet I, as a researcher, was led to her by remarks from university people who knew her well and thought her exceptionally wise and insightful. This method of being led by others is the same one used in the rural areas of Kenya. The appropriate procedure would be to do the interview, and then weigh the results. The woman in question possesses an M.A. in Social Work and has had a career in family planning. She sees herself as devoted to improving family life in Africa through advocating smaller families and championing the cause of women's rights and freedoms.

Since Odera Oruka has expressly said that women, the young, the urban, and the literate can be sages, this woman should not be peremptorily denied the title. If we invoke his positive criteria, her clear dedication to the moral furthering of the community, and her public reputation for being reflective, critical, and constantly subjecting the traditions of her community to rational scrutiny, make her case a weighty one.

Such an example points to a crisis of meaning and definition at the heart of the sage philosophy project. In a radio interview, Odera Oruka stated "'Sage' simply means... a wise person, but sometimes it is more complicated than that" [Odera Oruka (1997: 181)]. Sometimes philosophers are known for giving a common, everyday term a narrower, stricter meaning than in common usage. Conversely, 'sage' has acquired a very wide scope, given Odera Oruka's modifications, while it has a much narrower scope in daily conversation. However, its extension to women, the young, the urban, the literate, is not adequately reflected in his own researches, nor in most M.A. and Ph.D. theses subsequently written as exercises in sage philosophy. In fact, in recent research he conducted on ideas of family planning in Africa, he interviewed two groups, 'sages' and 'non-sages', particularly making sure that the group of non-sages comprised at least 50% women. Although he did so specifically to include women in his study, since there is no documentation of the percentage of sages who were women, it reinforces the perception that women possess common sense and general wisdom, but not enough to warrant the title of sage [Odera Oruka (1995)]. Thus, it can be said that Odera Oruka failed to provide a clear model in his own actions for those who would follow him.

It could be that the decision to emphasize the word 'sage' in 'sage philosophy' originally reflected the desire to secure for some Africans (mainly elder, rural men whose reputations made them good candidates) recognition as philosophers. This was a useful apologetic strategy in the fight against cultural imperialism. Only later did the desire arise to extend the word's application, as the aim of fighting cultural imperialism became nuanced by concerns to bring the excluded

and marginalized into the study. For example, in his article "Cultural Fundamentals in Philosophy: Obstacles in Philosophical Dialogue," Odera Oruka shows sensitivity to the plight of women who feel excluded by the language used in philosophical discourse.[4] With this increased concern to avoid exclusion, and a decreasing need to prove that someone not exposed to the West could philosophize, the category of 'sage' grew more inclusive.

In a 1993 interview with Kai Kresse, Odera Oruka complained that many recent dissertations submitted in Africa focused on sage philosophy or, relatedly, on African philosophy of culture. Regarding this trend, he counselled that this was not 'the only area' of philosophy in Africa needing growth and attention. He then referred to the need to help "get Africa out of its turmoil" by philosophical analysis of its social, political, and legal problems.[5] Coupled with his remarks about national-ideological and professional philosophy being the 'growth areas' of philosophy in the future, this seems to designate sages as a passing phase of African philosophy, needed at one historical moment, but ultimately to be sidelined. Certainly, Odera Oruka did not limit his research to sage philosophy, but continued to write articles on contemporary topics of professional philosophy, such as environmental ethics.[6]

His reference to his book on Oginga Odinga as the first in a proposed series of in-depth interviews of sages illustrates a tension in Odera Oruka's views about his own project. Although, by the larger definition of 'sage', Oginga Odinga's literacy does not disqualify him, one might wonder if he better exemplifies the very nationalist-ideological trend that Odera Oruka said needed more attention from African philosophers. This particular work also raises questions of the importance of the interview format for sage philosophy. Is Oginga Odinga, when writing his own book, a practitioner of nationalistic-ideological philosophy, and a sage when he is interviewed? Since part of Odera Oruka's stated rationale for sage philosophy is to create texts for professional philosophers to analyze, we can say that Oginga Odinga has already created his own texts. Odera Oruka helped create yet another text by publishing a collection

of interviews with Oginga Odinga. But it can't be the method or format alone that makes someone a sage. Otherwise, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvior would qualify as sages just because someone has published interviews with them. Certainly no one would question a philosopher's desire to interview the two French philosophers, but would the resulting interview be considered part of a French sage philosophy project? And did Odera Oruka himself become a fitting subject for sage philosophy when he was interviewed by Kai Kresse?

Odera Oruka further complicated matters by referring to the delegates attending the World Conference of Philosophy an 'assembly of sages'.[7] The majority of attenders were professional philosophers. In context Odera Oruka seemed to be suggesting they were sages as well, since they were attracted to the topic of the conference, which concerned the well-being of the global community and the environment. Although I agree it is a good idea to encourage philosophers to become sagacious, insofar as it would benefit the world if philosophers, beyond their detached interest in the pursuit of truth, were also interested in the betterment of their communities, the noun 'sage' becomes problematic when it is too easily applied to almost anyone who cares about the world and thinks about its problems.

On scientific indigenous knowledge and sagacity

Deciding who qualifies as a sage is further complicated by the term's application to both 'folk' and 'philosophic' sages [Odera Oruka (1983: 383-393, esp. 386)]. This could be due to the folk sages' commitment to the ethical betterment of their communities. But Odera Oruka's use of terminology is marked by inconsistency. In an article entitled "A Project on Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Western Kenya", he renames his two categories 'folk philosophy' and 'philosophic sagacity'. These terms imply that both groups are philosophers, but that only members of the second qualify as sages. In the article, he comments on a research project undertaken by several groups seeking

to preserve biological diversity by tapping the knowledge of rural peoples in touch with their traditions. Such projects research what are now called Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS); the studies are inspired by Agenda 21 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. Since their main goal is scientific knowledge, he suggests that they adapt his categories to their purposes, and seek out both 'folk science' and 'scientific sagacity'. Folk science would be like folk philosophy, he explains, in being the common knowledge of a given community. He believes this was the emphasis of much of the research he had seen in Kenya. But he charges researchers not to neglect 'scientific sagacity', which would be "finer and deeper knowledge of the environment as held or taught by the wise men and women of the community who have specialized in the study of some aspects of their environment" [Odera Oruka (1997: 271)].

This use of terms is very confusing. It calls into question the real meaning of folk sages and philosophic sages. First of all, the 'folk science' sought by the study group is solicited from all members of the community. He imagines that this knowledge would be "highly seasoned with myths and make-beliefs", although he does not point to specific examples. If this term truly paralleled the philosophy term, then folk sages would not be philosophers at all, because Odera Oruka holds to the definition of philosophy which distinguishes it from myth. He himself notes that Dr. Rocheleau, in charge of one of the studies, is satisfied with her pool of informants, because her goal is to get the community's perspective on given topics. But Odera Oruka charges that her study remains on the level of folk science, not scientific sagacity, and so he seems to find it defective, even if she doesn't.

There are several problems with Odera Oruka's criticisms of Rocheleau. Firstly, in this context, the term 'sagacity' seems to entail the idea of being an 'expert', and the idea of something being 'folk' means it is a view of the common 'man-in-the-street', (or 'in-the-field' in this case). Now, though Odera Oruka may have judged 'folk sages' as in some ways deficient, they certainly were not just the average person. Certainly, one could call many, as he calls the scientific sages,

"experts in say herbal use, midwifery, hunting, animal knowledge, crop farming, stars, dream interpretation and rain making among others" [Odera Oruka (1997: 271)]. Secondly, to equate sagacity with specialization and expert knowledge neglects several requirements of a sage he has specified in other contexts, such as ethical commitment to the community.

Thirdly, Odera Oruka's criticism that Dr. Diana Rocheleau neglected scientific sages in her study is unfounded. In his own account, her study involved key informant interviews with "women's groups and church leaders, traditional elders, local teachers, herbalists, midwives and resident research assistants." It is hard to see who has been left out of this list. Nevertheless Odera Oruka advises that Rocheleau has not yet found the experts she needed to complete her study. "In researching into the knowledge held by such experts, the first step is to use the method of folk science to help the researcher detect the specialist. Once a specialist is detected, the method to be employed in investigation should turn to be that of sage philosophy and the outcome would record itself as scientific sagacity" [Odera Oruka (1997: 275-277)].

It seems to me a case of conflating the issues to think that in the context of a scientific research on indigenous plants, something is amiss because no one made a distinction resembling Odera Oruka's division between folk and philosophic sages. Certainly, if there were any plant experts in the area, they would not have evaded the attempts of the scientific research group to interview them and in other ways learn from them. This shows that the folk/philosophic sage distinction was made specifically in philosophy because of the widely felt need to prove that traditional Africa possessed critical- minded individuals whose views diverged from the community's. Since the goal of the scientific study is to amass knowledge about plants, whether the information comes from several people or only one person is not a crucial issue, and so doesn't warrant a separate scientific category. Perhaps Odera Oruka was eager to apply his philosophical categories to this environmental study because he had been invited along as an

expedition consultant based on his experience with sage philosophy and environmental ethics [Odera Oruka (1997: 280, endnote)].

Perhaps Odera Oruka's criticisms of the IKS projects stem from their narrow focus on scientific topics, and their lack of interest in the philosophy or world views which, for community members, form the larger context of their knowledge. So, perhaps, Odera Oruka would have liked more control over the discussion with herbal experts - topics more in line with his, and not the biologists', interests. That such larger questions might indirectly lead to scientific understanding is possible. Articulating such criticisms may have made for a better critique; as it is, complaining that Rocheleau and others overlooked the 'scientific sages' in their midst, or neglected to use the proper format in finding or questioning them, is a weak and mostly groundless criticism.

However, Odera Oruka's comments on this alternative research project point out tensions in his own estimations of folk sages. He wants to uphold the dignity of African indigenous traditions; yet he is glad when they are subject to scrutiny - not by pushy outsiders and cultural imperialists, but by African people themselves.

Where to go from here

It seems that many young researchers are attracted to sage philosophy as a project because they are interested in finding and explicating the philosophical ideas of certain ethnic communities. Usually researchers are interested in studying communities whose pre-colonial cultures are somewhat intact. Their studies differ from ethnophilosophy insofar as individual informants are named and quoted at length, and differences in views between informants are noted.[8] Since this is the group most attracted to sage philosophy, how is one to find those interested in interviewing, for example, bright, articulate, young urban African women intent on solving social and political issues of their day? And if one found a researcher eager to undertake such a project, would the title 'sage philosophy' then sound like a misnomer?

Naming this method 'sage philosophy' has the consequence of putting the emphasis on the status of the author of any particular idea, rather than the idea itself. Sometimes Odera Oruka suggests that anyone who's thought up one pithy saying should be considered a philosopher; at other times he complains that people are using the term too loosely, applying it to anyone. The method would change significantly if the goal were to search for good ideas, wherever they may be found, rather than searching for the right people, and then hoping they have good ideas.

Projects which sought good ideas more than people culturally recognized as sages would perhaps more easily be understood as studies of contemporary culture. There has been room in philosophy for those who study, for example, Woody Allen films, for their significance; directors have been interviewed as part of this process. Leading political figures are interviewed and studied. Novels are analyzed for their philosophical content; authors are interviewed. Key thinkers of this century like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi did not possess degrees in philosophy, yet their wisdom is revered and they would certainly be considered sages. What about Alice Walker? Vaclav Havel? Spike Lee? Should philosophers in Kenya begin a study of the thinkers of their society, be they politicians, doctors, novelists, or social workers, not so much to confer 'sage' status on them, as to see if new ideas offering solutions to Africa's problems could thus be found? Certainly this could be a project, not only for Kenyans, but for philosophers anywhere.

Such a change in focus should not overlook, however, the need to guard against sidelining rural people, considering them 'backward' or out of touch with the pulse of the present. Part of the attractiveness of sage philosophy was the idea of finding wisdom where the world did not expect it. Indeed, in the contemporary world context before 'sage philosophy', the wisdom of rural African male elders was belittled; they were the marginalized, even if in their own communities they commanded considerable power and fame. Philosophers should not, therefore, run after the 'limelight' and court only the famous and

successful; we should take our cue from Odera Oruka and listen especially for overlooked voices and ideas.

Such an approach mirrors the ambivalence and restless search found in Odera Oruka's own writings. He loved the wisdom of the rural elders in Africa; he wanted to protect them from being maligned in the larger world of philosophy. But he also wanted change; he loved most those rural elders who could criticize their own traditions and look for improvements of ideas and practices. Whether, and in what way, sage philosophy continues and grows will be determined in part by the ideas of those who have the will to continue it; their works will help define the terms 'sage' and 'sage philosophy' in the future. As Tsenay Serequeberhan puts it, as contemporary Africans in a post-colonial context, "we are all historical beings and the bearers of multiple identities", here referring both to ethnic identities, and identities born in the context of modernization and domination. As "inheritors of a past... which constitutes our lived present and the possibilities of our future" [Serequeberhan (1996, pp. 110-118)], the challenge of African philosophy as a whole and sage philosophy as well, is to understand the contemporary African people and context for what it is, a mix of ideas and influences, some good and some bad, from many different sources.

As Odera Oruka states, "Philosophy is a perspective of the whole or part of the whole human predicament and an insightful suggestion... This sort of perspective can be found in anybody (white, black, yellow, female or male). But in every community, there are always persons who specialize in offering or studying such perspectives. In traditional Africa, this role was left to the sages" [Odera Oruka (1997: 206-207)]. While we owe proper attention to the traditional African sages, it seems that Odera Oruka is suggesting to us that we look to anyone who is able to offer perspectives and helpful suggestions regarding the challenges facing Africa today.

Notes

1. "Philosophy in Eastern Africa and the Future of Philosophical Research in Africa," in *Teaching and Research in Philosophy*, UNESCO, Paris, 1984, pp. 169-181. Included in H. Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy: In Search of an Ethical Minimum*, 1997, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1996, chapter 23, especially pp. 237-239.

2. Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy*, chapter 17: "Sage Philosophy Revisited." Based on a Kenya Broadcasting Corp. interview for the program "Forum for Understanding" conducted by Andrian Mak'Akumu, Goro wa Kamau and Bernard Mbengei, 1993. See p. 181 for quote.

3. Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*. Nevertheless, his inclusion of one woman and one young person reinforces his point that sages do not definitionally have to be elder males.

4. H. Odera Oruka, "Cultural Fundamentals in Philosophy: Obstacles in Philosophical Dialogue." Previously published in *Quest* Vol. IV, No. 2, December 1990, pp. 20-37, and *Philosophy and Theology Journal*, Vol. V No. 1, Fall 1990. Forthcoming in *Practical Philosophy*, chapter 20, pp. 196-197

5. Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy*, chapter 21, "Africa and the World in Philosophy," an interview with Kai Kresse and Odera Oruka on 27 October 1993. See p. 214.

6. See for example other essays included in *Practical Philosophy*, such as those in Part IV on "Philosophy, Ethics and the Environment." Also see "Parental Earth Ethics," in *Quest* Vol. VII No. 1, June 1993, pp. 20-27.

7. Odera Oruka, *Practical Philosophy*, chapter 25, "Philosophy and the Environment." Based on his opening address to the World Conference of Philosophy, Nairobi Kenya, July 21-25, 1991, unpublished.

8. See, for example, Dikirr Patrick Maison, "The Philosophy and Ethics Concerning Death and Disposal of the Dead among the Maasai," M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994.

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RÉSUMÉ

La littérature africaine en anglais résulte de l'imposition aux pays africains des langues et systèmes d'éducation européens pendant la colonisation. Si la colonisation a été une mauvaise affaire, comment apprécierait-on l'introduction des langues coloniales et la littérature écrite en ces langues par des Africains? Certaines personnes regrettent l'utilisation des langues européennes par des Africains; elles développent l'argument selon lequel une littérature africaine authentique doit se servir des langues africaines indigènes. Il y a même des personnes qui doutent de la possibilité ou même de la signification de l'expression "littérature africaine en anglais".

Dans cet article, je veux argumenter que -bien que le phénomène du colonialisme en général soit à regretter- l'acquisition des langues coloniales, spécialement l'Anglais, par les Africains pourrait être jugée comme dérivé nonintentionnel favorable du colonialisme. Mon autre argument est que, bien que la langue soit essentielle et indispensable pour l'activité littéraire comme "le moyen par lequel l'écrivain révèle son âme" (Kuene, 1992), aucune langue particulière n'est essentielle ou indispensable à un écrivain particulier.

La conclusion cumulative de mon argumentation serait qu'une littérature africaine authentique peut être écrite en anglais et que la littérature africaine en anglais certainement est une bonne chose, bien que l'origine et le développement de celle-là soient basés sur des évenements historiques malheureux. Ensuite, je voudrais recommender de faire la distinction entre la littérature africaine en anglais de l'Europe et l'Amérique et la littérature africaine en anglais de l'Afrique.

CAN THERE BE AN AUTHENTICALLY AFRICAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH?

Godfrey B. Tangwa

What I want to say in this paper is very simple and straight-forward. In fact, I mainly want to tell a short story, modeled on the oral tradition of Nso'. But, before telling the story, I need to say, a few things without the saying of which the meaning, significance and moral of my story may be too elusive. And what I have to say here should, ideally, be taken in conjunction with some other things I have said before which bear no repeating here.[1]

African Literature in English whose authenticity is here in question is a consequence of the imposition of European languages and systems of education on Africans following colonisation. That colonialism was an evil is beyond dispute. But what about the colonial systems of education and the colonial languages that came with it and the literature that has been and continues to be produced by Africans in these languages? Some people bemoan the use by Africans of the colonially inherited languages and argue that the use of indigenous African languages is indispensable for an authentically African literature. Some people even go as far as questioning the very possibility or even meaningfulness of an expression such as "African Literature in English". These sceptical concerns have grown side by side, in the post-colonial period, with increasing academic interest in African indigenous languages within Western universities and similar institutions.

My simple and straight-forward position on this issue is not only that there can be an authentically African literature in English, but that such literature actually exists. And while colonialism in general is to be regretted, the acquisition by Africans of the colonial languages, especially English, can be considered rather as an unintended beneficial by-product of colonialism.

Africa's Linguistic Riches

Literary activity is impossible without language. Language is "the means by which the writer reveals his soul".[2] Nevertheless, no particular language, be it one's mother language or not, is essential or indispensable to any particular writer. Language is not an ontological datum and all language is acquired through learning as means of communication. Because of this, it is quite possible for an individual to master, more or less equally, several languages and there is no other mysterious reason for mastering the mother language best apart from early exposure, greater familiarity and more frequent usage.

The language that a particular writer chooses for expressing himself/herself and his/her ideas and/or for communicating depends on the resources at his/her disposal and his/her intentions, purposes, aims, feelings, etc. Outside of these, there is no such thing as the language in which any particular writer *ought* to write. Choice of language, just like choice of subject and genre, is an inalienable prerogative of the writer. That is why Amos Tutuola[3], for instance, wrote his novels or narratives in English even though some people might feel that he would have done better to write in Yoruba. And, if he had written in Yoruba, his works might not, in fact, have the status that they do have.

Before colonisation, Africa was already a continent of the richest linguistic diversity. On this rich diversity of indigenous African languages, colonialism further added European languages, thereby causing a veritable linguistic boom. There is hardly any African who is strictly monolingual. In Cameroon, for instance, which has experienced German-cum-English-cum-French colonisation, Pidgin, English, French and 236 indigenous languages are available, and an average Cameroonian speaks at least three of these.

Africans should be able to make use of the linguistic resources at their disposal without any apologies or complex. It is very significant that when, say, a European or any other white westerner, whose mother language is not English masters English, s/he uses it without any qualms or self-consciousness and no one ever thinks of asking him/her:

"You speak/write English incredibly wonderfully! Where did you learn it? Did you study in England? And what is your own mother tongue?"[5]

Varieties of African English

There are several varieties of African English of which the one I am now using is only one variety. It happens to be the most internationally comprehensible variety and, for that reason, may be more "valuable" or "recommendable" or whatever other adjective may be deemed appropriate in describing it. But that doesn't make it a non-African variety of English. This is an important point that scholars have over-looked and this has led to the apparent plausibility of the argument that an authentically African literature can only be written in indigenous African languages.

But how "indigenous", in fact, are indigenous African languages? My own "indigenous" language, *Lamnso'*, is an amalgam or composite of the originally indigenous languages of the so-called *Mntar Nso'*, *Visale*, *Nkar* and the language of the original followers of Ngonnso', the acknowledged foundress of the Kingdom of Nso', among other elements. I recall that one of the most powerful and respected Kings (Fon) of Nso', Seem III, alias Mbinkar Mbinglo (reigned 1947-1972) used to speak *Lamnso'* with a distinctly "foreign" accent that often made one feel like exploding with suppressed laughter. There are also several varieties of *Lamnso'*.

I learned all my English in Nso' where I had my primary school-ing, in Sasse where I attended secondary school and in Nigeria where I did all my University studies. Rarely were my teachers non-Africans and rarer still indigenous speakers of English. I improved my grasp and use of the English language through formal schooling, through reading and writing, and through communicating daily with other Africans, sometimes with non-Africans, both non-native and native users of English. On what grounds then can it be suggested that the English I write and speak is anything other than African (Cameroonian) English?

Paul Mbangwana (1992)[4] has attempted to identify what he calls the "grammatical sign-posts" of "Cameroon Standard English". But, while I think that it is perhaps important to provide the identification signs of Cameroon Standard English, it appears to me that *some* of Mbangwana's "sign-posts" can more appropriately be described as "understandable common errors" in Cameroon English. Personally, I see no reason why the identification marks of Cameroon Standard English should be sought in the variety of English Mbangwana is describing in his article rather than the one he is using in describing it.

There are many varieties of African English. Let me demonstrate another variety, different from the one I have been using so far, with the following message, once left for me by an African colleague:

Massa Nna, long time no see! I come troway salut and make you invite but you no dey. I de happen for my end Saturday night, eight sharp! Make you no fail-o. You fit bring Madam come or nevertheless. No problem sha. Small small ngonderes go boku.

Nearly all non-African users of English would require the services of an interpreter to understand the above simple message. And no one would contest that it is in African English. But why does a problem seem to arise when we turn from that variety to the one I am now employing? Of course, the above message is in a variety of African English that differs significantly in its grammar, syntax and vocabulary from what may be called British Standard English.

But there is another variety which respects the grammar, syntax and, to a slightly lesser extent, vocabulary of British Standard English but which, nevertheless, cannot be easily followed by a native Briton without interpretation. This other variety uses African proverbs, folk tales, allegories, parables, similes, metaphors, images and modes of expression. Victor Epie Ngome, a Cameroonian with a very good mastery of the English language frequently used this variety of African English in a Radio Programme he called "The Rambler", a 5-minutes slot in which he usually severely castigated the highly dictatorial, repressive and corrupt regime in Cameroon. But only "West-of the Mungo" English-speaking Cameroonians, his target audience, could

follow him completely. In an article in *Focus on Africa* magazine, Epie Ngome himself says of this programme which was, of course, like many other critical programmes, suppressed after some time:

> ...for five minutes every week, I would say virtually anything I wanted to. My saving grace may well have been the gate-keeping code I developed. Using folk tales, parables and allegories, I communicated quite effectively with the anglophone elite, over the heads of most foreigners and francophones.[6]

Two Types of African Literature in English

An authenticity problem would seem to arise with African Literature in English, I believe, only because some of this literature is not at all directed at an African readership. Some African Literature in English has been inspired by the western world, is directed generally at a western reading public and calculated to impress westerners and to satisfy western reading tastes. Around this literature has grown an edifice of literary criticism, measured, constructed and tested against the demands of the so-called "western canon". The *relevance* of this literature and its surrounding structures to Africa may be a matter of dispute and certainly a matter of degree in individual cases, the degree of relevance being further a matter of critical appraisal. There is nothing wrong with this literature and/or its supporting structures. Nevertheless, a line ought to be drawn between this western African Literature in English and african African Literature in English which addresses or arises from African needs and problems, is mainly directed to an African audience or readership, is meant to satisfy African tastes and is, thus, indisputably *relevant* to Africa. This line would have to be a thin line and the criterion of demarcation necessarily *plastic* rather than *cast-iron*. This has to be so because it is quite possible that a work in the second category could gain international recognition for several putative reasons such as sheer profundity and/or relevance to human problems in general while a work in the first category could possibly turn out to be also strongly relevant to Africa.

The recent works of Ben Okri, for instance, would seem to have an appeal for Western readers which they do not seem to have for African readers especially in Africa itself. The enthusiasm of African readers living and "doing business" in the West to Ben Okri's writings might be attributed to milieu-influence and band-wagon effect or as part and parcel of "doing business" in the West, given that African readers in Africa itself have been characteristically unimpressed by these writings. Ben Okri certainly seems to satisfy some need in the western literati, something, perhaps, they can identify with; or else fellow Africans are certainly missing something important in Okri's works.

Ben Okri won the Booker Prize for literature in 1991 for his *The Famished Road*. Two years later, he came out with *Songs of Enchantment* as a "sequel to The Famished Road". Until 1994 I had not had the opportunity to read any of these books although I had heard about Ben Okri and his winning of the Booker Prize in 1991. In October 1994 I went to Germany on a fellowship of the Alexander von Humbolt Foundation. The underground train I took from the Munich airport where I landed brought me to the underground station of the University of Munich (*Geschwister-Scholl-Platz* 1). As I emerged from the underground station, a huge beautiful poster advertising *Songs of Enchantment* greeted me. I could not wait to read it and went out in search of it the very next morning, and found it in a nearby bookshop in the University area. But how disappointed I was when I read it! It sounded to me like a pointless invitation to madness and I really wondered if that was the sort of stuff that had won the Booker Prize for Okri. I had to read *The Famished Road*. At Bayreuth, Eckhard Breitinger lent me a copy. It appeared to me much better than *Songs of Enchantment* and I thought that should have been a more appropriate title for it than *The Famished Road*. Its imaginative novelty was quite striking and its unusual turn of phrases quite startling. Nevertheless, I wondered how it could have won the Booker Prize against such competitors as Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savana*. Then I read the

opinions of the western judges on the cover, epitomised by Linda Grant who opined:

> Okri is incapable of writing a boring sentence. As one startling image follows the next, THE FAMISHED ROAD begins to read like an epic poem that happens to touch down just this side of prose...when I finished the book and went outside, it was as if all the tress of South London had angels sitting in them

and it occurred to me that an African literary work might be appreciated very differently by Africans and Westerners, respectively. A Nigerian friend of mine with whom I was discussing this issue joked:

> The man (i.e. Ben Okri) get sense too much. He don say to himself: "I go really show this Oyinbo people. I go come write one kind nonsensical nonsense for dem and dem go praise me and worship me like masquerade and pay me plenty plenty of their pound and dollar, and I go say i never do, make dem pay more". Fair heart never won faint lady. I salute the man well well.

I propose Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment* as paradigms of Western African Literature.

It is sometimes really amazing how very differently Africans and Westerners appreciate the same work of art. From 09/12/94 - 20/12/94 I witnessed an art exhibition in Bayreuth by an Enugu-born Nigerian artist by name Dil Humphrey Umezulike, married to a German lady. Each of the works exhibited was a jumble of scrap metals, discarded cans and half burnt pieces of wood (abundantly available on any rubbish heap) welded together into funny shapes to which very interesting captions were given such as "Broken Hive of the Aggrieved Spirits", "The Moonman", "Public Toiletting" etc. I honestly felt like laughing and wondered if the "artist" could put up such a thing as an art exhibition anywhere in Nigeria; but I discovered that all the Germans at the exhibition were very excited and full of superlative praise for the works and were falling over each other to buy them.

I am, of course, only a lay person with regard to both literature and art in general.

But unless the distinction I am here recommending is made, we cannot escape

> ...that disquiet felt in some quarters that African literature is being taken away, distanced, made strange from and difficult to those societies which produced the authors who write it. Not that African critics and scholars can't master this critical language and the theoretical ideas that generate it, of course, and indeed generate their own versions of it, but that such criticism becomes another elite, exclusive and excluding barrier between the broad mass of African people and the literature which is in some ways 'representing' them.[7]

This recalls Geoff Goodfellow's remark that western academicians seem to be "trained to use language as a means of keeping information to themselves, rather than making it public".[8] To read some of the stuff that passes for contemporary western literary criticism, one might be excused for going as far as suspecting that some academics use language as a means of keeping information even from themselves. It is as if the main purpose of language is no longer to communicate. One plausible explanation of why some academics indulge in unnecessary complexity and obscurity in language is that, under constant pressure to be "productive", they sometimes really don't have anything new or significant to say or, sometimes again, the hidden real motive is to rebuke, reproach, abuse or run down one of their own kind without appearing to do so, rather than to communicate any knowledge, information, ideas or opinion. So, they start heading East whereas their destination is West. And, by the time they arrive, they would usually have weaved an intricate tapestry of unnecessary complex words, concepts and theories. If some literary artists were to read some of the "literary criticism" of their own work, they might not understand a word of what the literary critics are talking about. Would this be a normal state of affairs? I believe that clarity and simplicity are quite compatible with profundity; in fact, that they are the unmistakable identification marks and necessary, though by no means sufficient, conditions of profundity.

Here is the folktale I set out to tell.

Keri and Tani

Once upon a time there were two maidens, Keri and Tani, who lived in the same village of Wong. Keri was from a very wealthy family but she was rather ugly. But, as they used to say in Wong, ugliness is not a crime. Tani was very beautiful but from a very poor family. But again, as was commonly said in Wong, poverty is not a person's character. Keri was always dressed in the richest clothes and ornaments while Tani was always dressed in rags.

One day there was to be a big celebration in Wong which attracted people from all the four corners of the earth. Keri asked Tani whether she would be going to the celebration and Tani answered that she didn't want to go there to be laughed at in her rags. But Keri persuaded her and offered to lend her some of her fine clothes and trinkets. Tani happily accepted her kind offer.

On the day of the Feast, as Keri and Tani were making their way to the village square, venue of the celebration, they drew admirative remarks from all onlookers and passersby. Keri felt very proud of Tani and remarked that the dress and trinkets she had lent her fitted her wonderfully. They were both happy and proud to be friends and gracefully walked hand in hand into the public square to the thunderous applause of the crowd.

Then the dancing began. As Keri and Tani danced, the crowds cheered and came closer to see better. Loud remarks and questions could be heard from all around:

"Whose daughter can this be?"

"Does such a beautiful creature really come out from this our Wong?"

"What graceful dancing!"

"But why on earth would someone with such a beautiful daughter choose for her such an ugly companion?"

Keri soon realized that all the admirative excitement was directed, not at both of them, but at her friend and companion, Tani. Her jealousy was tickled. In a voice loud enough for many to hear, she said to Tani:

"Please, as you are dancing so vigorously, throwing your arms and legs so recklessly all around, just be careful with those my trinkets. They are very expensive and I wouldn't want anything to happen to them."

Tani heeded her and tried to keep her neck, arms and legs as still and steady as possible while dancing. She now swayed only her head and waist. Taking this for a deliberate change of dancing style, the crowd exploded with admirative excitement and rushed forward to "spray" her with money, sticking it on her forehead, cheeks, ears and every other exposed part of her body.

Keri's jealousy instantly transformed into envy and she told Tani:

"You are shaking your waist so carelessly. Do you want that my dress to tear at the seams? It is a very delicate and expensive dress! Please, let me have my dress and trinkets. I am going!"

"Alright" replied Tani, "let's go".

"Go where?" demanded Keri angrily. "From here I am going directly to an exclusive private party where poor wretches like you cannot be admitted. Please, just give me my things at once and stop wasting my precious time".

In shame and disgrace, Tani undressed right there in the village square before the enchanted eyes of the world, gave back all of Keri's expensive stuff and, with as much dignity and self-respect as she still had left, covered her "sacred triangle" with the palms of her hands, and returned home to fetch her rags from where she had earlier abandoned them.

Notes

1.   (1) "Colonial Legacy and the Language Situation in Cameroon" in *Quest: Philosophical Discussions*, Vol. VI, No. 2, December 1992;
      (2) "Colonial Legacy and the Language Situation in Cameroon: A Reply to Dissenting Voices" in *Quest: Philosophical Discussions*, Vol. IX, No. 1, June 1995; and
      (3) "Colonialism and Linguistic Dilemmas in Africa: Cameroon as a Paradigm" paper read at the international conference: "1995 AFRICA: Breaking Boundaries: Beyond the Land of Cush. New Critical Encounters with Languages and Literatures of Sub-Saharan Africa", Tel Aviv University, 18-23 June 1995 (still unpublished).

2.   Daniel P. Kunene, "African Language Literature: Tragedy and Hope", in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Spring 1992.

3.   A Nigerian (Yoruba) creative writer who writes in what some have described as "atrocious" English. For some of his works, see the following Faber and Faber publications: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town* (London, 1952); *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (London, 1954); and *The Brave Huntress* (London, 1958).

4.   I have myself often been the addressee of such and similar remarks.

5.   Paul Mbangwana, "Some Grammatical Sign-Posts in Cameroon Standard English", in Joseph Schmied (ed.), *English in East and Central Africa 2*, Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies 24, 1992.

6.   See "Victor Unvanquished" in *BBC Focus on Africa*, January-March 1995. In a weekly newspaper column "No Trifling Matter" in the *CAMEROON POST* between 1990-1994, I occasionally also made use of this variety of African English.

7.   Steward Brown, "Review Article: Plain Speaking, Rhetoric and Outlandish Concatenations: African Literature and its Critics", in *African Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 376, July 1995, p. 414.

8.   See, "A Letter from Germany", *Overland*, 130-1993.

"But what is done in the West does not contain all the truth about human life and experience, nor does it exhaust the modes of doing philosophy."

Interview with the philosopher Kwame Gyekye, on April, 3rd 1997 in Legon/ Ghana, by Ulrich Lölke.

Ulrich Lölke
Professor Gyekye, let me begin with a question about your academic career. You did your Ph.D. at Harvard University in Graeco-Arabic philosophy and logic?

Kwame Gyekye
That is correct.

Ulrich Lölke
And you returned to Ghana after your Ph.D.

Kwame Gyekye
Yes, after I obtained the Ph.D. from Harvard, I returned to Ghana to the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ghana to teach. I have since been teaching here for the past twenty-seven, or so, years.

Ulrich Lölke
At this time when you returned Prof. Wiredu was the Head of the Department?

Kwame Gyekye
When I first entered the Department, the Head of Department was a British man, by name Edmund Collins, who has since died after retiring from this University in 1982. He died, I think, in the early 1990s. Wiredu took over in the middle of the 1970s.

Ulrich Lölke
Could you please describe the Department at this time? Who was teaching what?

Kwame Gyekye

Well, when I entered the Department of Philosophy, for the next four or five years, we were about eight teachers: Mr. Collins, who was teaching political philosophy and what he called philosophical history. Mr. Derek Gjertsen, also British, was mainly interested in philosophy of science, epistemology and logic. And then there was Prof. Wiredu, who was interested in logic, philosophy of language, and epistemology. Then Mr. Archampong, who was interested in epistemology and metaphysics. And Mr. Kissi, Prof. Wiredu's younger brother. He was interested in ethics and metaphysics. Then there were two other young men, both with graduate degrees from Oxford: John Arthur, who died in 1980 in a motor accident. John Arthur was teaching ancient Greek philosophy and epistemology, as well as philosophy of the social sciences. And there was Dr. B.E.Oguah, who died three years ago in the United States. He stayed here for just a couple of years, teaching metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of mind.

Ulrich Lölke

What were you teaching yourself?

Kwame Gyekye

And then myself. At that time I was teaching ancient Greek philosophy, metaphysics, and general problems of philosophy - an introductory course in philosophy. A couple of years after my return from Harvard, I began to do serious research in African philosophy. There was no such thing as African philosophy in the syllabus of the department until my arrival. I started doing serious philosophical studies on African culture from the professional point of view. And I have since then been working on African philosophy. At that time, also, I was still doing some work on Graeco-Arabic philosophy, which, as you said, constituted the subject of my Ph.D. thesis at Harvard. It was published in two volumes. Volume I of the thesis was an edition of a medieval Arabic philosophical and logical text. The edition of the Arabic text was published in Beirut by Dar al-Mashreq in 1975. The

English translation plus the philosophical analysis of that text was published in 1979 by the State University of New York Press at Albany, with the title "Arabic Logic". But of late, in the past 15 years, I have not been doing much work in Arabic philosophy, since my attention has really switched to inquiries into African philosophical thought. Of course, I have not lost interest in Arabic philosophy. I still read books and articles in Arabic philosophy. I still read a lot, but I have not had much time to do some writing in that field.

Ulrich Lölke
Let us please come back to the problematics of an African philo-sophy. When you look back, how would you describe the change of academic philosophy in Africa from the time when you started in Legon up to today?

Kwame Gyekye
Yes, I think it can be said that since the early 1970s interest - academic interest - in African philosophical thought has been growing steadily. Even some African philosophers, who probably thought that there was no such thing as African philosophy, are now showing interest in it. The realization is dawning on many of us that philosophy is really a profound examination and analysis of the cultural and historical experience of a people. Philosophy is essentially a cultural phe-nomenon, you know. And, therefore, to do African philosophy, African philosophers will have to come to grips - analytical grips - with the cultural experience of the African people, with the multi-faceted prob-lems of the African society and intellectual life.

Ulrich Lölke
Which questions from the beginning, from the 1970s, are still relevant today in African philosophy? At that time there was a lot of discussion about the question: Is there an African philosophy?

Kwame Gyekye

Yes, I just wanted to say that. In much of the 1970s, the question that exercised the minds of most people was this question: Is there an African philosophy? I think since that time much has been written by both African and non-African philosophers in the attempt extensively to explore that question. I think that that question is not of much interest now, a quarter of a century after serious studies have been made on African philosophy. After all, the question of, what philosophy itself is, has always been a problematic question, even among Western philosophers themselves. If you ask Western philosophers what philosophy is, they would give different answers to this question. So, that question, "What is philosophy?" is itself a philosophical question, a metaphilosophical question. The question, "What is African philosophy?" is just as problematic as the question what philosophy itself is. And yet, in spite of these questions there is something called Western philosophy and Western scholars who call themselves philosophers, are doing something that they call philosophy. So I think that to answer the question, "What is African philosophy?" fully and adequately, people should just do African philosophy, that is, make fundamental inquiries and analyses into the African cultural and historical experience. And what African philosophers write, which has a basis in African cultural experience--itself many-sided--will constitute a body of knowledge that we can characterize as African philosophy.

I, on my part, have lost interest long time ago in the question, "Is there an African philosophy?" because I simply started by assuming that there is an African philosophy. There is always a philosophical component to the culture of a people, even though that component may be inchoate and less explored in some cultures than in others. There is a dynamic relationship between the language of a people and their thought, beliefs, and their values. These are all materials that can attract the attention of the philosopher. So I have never had any doubt.

As a matter of fact, when I was completing my thesis at Harvard, one of my thesis advisors, an erudite scholar and philosopher, Harry A. Wolfson advised that on my return to Ghana, I should do research into

African philosophy. And when I said that nothing has been written on that, he said, "Well, that doesn't matter. There is language, the beliefs-- the religious beliefs of the people". He pointed out to me that when Aristotle began his philosophical inquiries, he started on the language, providing technical meanings to the expressions of the Greek language. In the same way, we need to give philosophical attention to the language, values, and beliefs of our people.

Ulrich Lölke
So, briefly, what new questions are being raised in African philo-sophy today besides the question, is there an African philosophy? What is the main question today?

Kwame Gyekye
The main question, or questions today turn on, what should be the *content* of African philosophy. There have been some of us, like Paulin Hountondji, who think that, when an African philosopher writes commentaries which contribute to the thought of, say Plato or Karl Marx or Hegel, he would be pursuing an authentic African philosophy. I have rejected this view of Hountondji concerning African philosophy. I think that if an African philosopher, like myself, writes commentaries on, let us say, Kantian philosophy, what he would be doing essentially is contributing to the understanding and enlargement of Kant. I do not think that, what I do, that is the commentaries, the studies I make on Kantian philosophy, will contribute to African philosophy. Because if I write papers on Kant and some philosopher in Germany who teach Kantian philosophy, recommend my papers for his students, he would not say that he is recommending articles on African philosophy, you know. As far as the German philosopher is concerned, my papers make contributions to studies of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. This, of course, is the reason why he would recommend my articles for a course on Kantian philosophy.
So the questions we should now explore are related to the *content* of African philosophy, how we to do African philosophy: that is, what

sort of material should constitute African philosophy? From my point of view, there are two aspects to this question: one, I think African philosophers should pursue analytic investigations into traditional beliefs and assumptions. And the other relates to the philosophers' analyses of contemporary African experience. I think modern African philosophy will have to be constituted by studies or researches on contemporary African issues, postcolonial, if you like, post-colonial African problems. But we should not do this to the neglect of the examination of traditional African philosophical thought.

Ulrich Lölke

I would like to come back for a moment to your interest in Arabic and Greek philosophy. When I hear that a philosopher from Africa is doing research in Arabic philosophy I immediately think about Cheik Anta Diop's search for a link between ancient Greek, Egyptian and Black African thinking, philosophy, cultures, etc.. What was your intention about Arabic philosophy?

Kwame Gyekye

Well, my intention has nothing to do at all with the Cheik Anta Diop's. I was a classical student in my secondary school days. I studied Latin for six years and Greek for five years and have always been interested in the ideas of the ancient Greek thinkers. My interest in Arabic philosophy was really an extension of my interest in Greek philosophy. I was interested in studying the extent of the influence of Greek intellectual or philosophical culture on other cultures, on particularly Near Eastern cultures. After Plato's academy was closed down by the emperor, around 540 A.D., most of the philosophers moved to the Near East and North Africa. Alexandria in Egypt in particular became an important centre for the cultivation and pursuit of Greek philosophy. Thus we have the Alexandrian commentators on Aristotle's works by philosophers such as Elias, Themistius, Ammonius, and Alexander of Aphrodisia, and others. So my main interest was on the influence of these scholars on Arabic philosophy. And my doctorate thesis was a

study of an eleventh century Arabic philosopher's commentary on Porphyry's "Eisagoge". Porphyry's "Eisagoge" itself is a commentary on Aristotle logic and metaphysics. So, my interest was not on Islam as such; my interest in studying Graeco-Arabic philosophy was just an extension of my interest in Greek philosophy.

Ulrich Lölke

Is there today any main influence from Arabic philosophy on African philosophy? Is there any exchange between Arabic and African philosophy?

Kwame Gyekye

I think to the extent that one might say that religious beliefs or assumptions are part, or can insinuate themselves into the philosophy of a people, one can say that there must be some influence, because of the pervasive influence of Islam on some African societies generally. So, the answer to that question is *yes*, even though one is yet to really explore this question and to identify the specific influences of Islamic or Muslim philosophy and religious thought on traditional African thought systems.

Ulrich Lölke

Let me switch to the Western influence on African philosophy, and let me formulate it in a quite provocative form: Is philosophy in Africa today more than just an appendix of the discourse in the West, as some students might believe?

Kwame Gyekye

That is a very good question, particularly in view of the fact that practically all of us, African philosophers, doing some work in African philosophy, have all been trained in Western philosophical milieux or environments. This question often comes up. It is coming up all the time. When I was giving lectures in the US last year and the year before, I was always having to deal with this question. My answer is

that, if we were, that is if African philosophers were to accept a prescription, such as Hountondji's, that making commentaries on Western philosophy will constitute an African philosophy, then of course, that kind of thing would be an appendix. I still do Western philosophy, but I say that I am doing Western philosophy. I am making a contribution to Western philosophy, to Plato, to Aristotle, or to Thomas Hobbes, you know. I do not say that I am doing African philosophy. But if we really did African philosophy in the way that it should be done, like the way philosophy has been done in other cultures, namely, as an analytical study of the assumptions of African thought, of the basic concepts in African thought, if we investigated the foundations of African thought, culture and experience, then the product will be African, even though one cannot say that it will be uniquely African in the sense of its not containing elements from other cultures or philosophical traditions. I think that African philosophy will not be an appendix of European or Western philosophy, if African philosophers paid attention to the fundamental assumptions in African traditional thought and to analytical interpretations of the African cultural experience. Then, their philosophical output and their creations can be called African philosophy, a kind of philosophy that would not be an appendix to European philo-sophy, because it will have at least some characteristics of its own.

Ulrich Lölke
How would you then sketch something like the "Africanness" of an African philosophy? Could you summarize what you think would constitute the "Africanness" of an African philosophy?

Kwame Gyekye
Oh, the "Africaness" of an African philosophy. Okay, simply put, what characterizes, or what will characterize African philosophy?
What will characterize African philosophy? It is what I have just said, namely, paying an analytical, reflective attention to the values and assumptions of traditional society, or traditional thought system.

Second, paying analytic attention to contemporary African cultural and historical experience. This is, to me, what will bring out the "Africaness", as you say, of African philosophy. The "Africaness" will consist in paying attention to African cultural values, to the cultural and historical experience of the African people.

Ulrich Lölke

A colleague from Togo was once asked, if he is religious and I remember that he answered: "Well, I am just a normal African." For me it is quite a typical assumption that most Africans would describe themselves as religious. So, how should philosophy in Africa deal with this religiosity of the people. Can philosophy in Africa be as secular as it might be in Europe?

Kwame Gyekye

I don't know whether philosophy is really secular in Europe. Philosophers think about several things. Philosophy is such a comprehensive or an all-encompassing intellectual discipline. It deals with concepts in language, religion, science, and so on and so forth. Philosophy is a huge discipline. It is the most comprehensive of all the intellectual disciplines, quite different from the specific sciences, both natural sciences and social sciences. And I don't know what secular means. If secular means that God has been banished from the domain of human thought, the answer to this question is, *no*. Western philosophers are still thinking and talking about whether God exist. These ontological questions about God are still being asked. The problem of evil still exercises the minds of philosophers. So I do not think that Western philosophy has wholly been secularized, that Western philosophers are paying attention only to this worldly, mundane matters. No, a number of metaphysical questions are about religion, or deal with religious matters. And in the same way African philosophers, those of them interested in metaphysical matters, will also have to explore the religious beliefs of their people by providing some philosophical articulation of these beliefs and either rejecting them or,

where they accept them, try to provide firm rational foundations for those religious beliefs. So that question is really a matter for an individual philosopher to deal with.

Ulrich Lölke
I was asking because, following Max Weber, at least for the German tradition, it is still a high ideal to separate religion and philosophy and for them not to interact too much.

Kwame Gyekye
But has this really succeeded?

Ulrich Lölke
Well, that is a good question.

Kwame Gyekye
No, it has not, as I point out in my forthcoming book. Americans talk about the secular society and so on, but the question of prayer in school is still a burning question. Some people want prayer out of the school and religion not taught at school. Others do want it; and in the American congress and the British parliament there are chaplains who pray for God's guidance and direction in their liberation. I do not know whether they do that in Germany?

Ulrich Lölke
No, I don't think we do that in Germany.

Kwame Gyekye
You don't do that in Germany, okay. But in America they do that. In other words, religion has not been totally banished from public life and just relegated to the sphere of the private. Maybe in Germany they have. But Kant, the great German philosopher, was also a very religious person and was a believer; he was a Christian. I don't think Kant will argue the banishment of religion from public life.

Ulrich Lölke

But I think these are two questions. I mean, whether philosophers are religious, or philosophers deal with religion in their work. And I would say in Germany these questions are separated. I mean philo-sophers are religious, but only a few will talk about religion in their philosophical work.

Kwame Gyekye

Well, if a German philosopher wants to teach a course on the philosophy of religion, he would certainly talk about God. If he does not want to teach any things at all related to religion, that will be okay. But if you want to teach the philosophy of religion, you certainly have to talk about God, the problem of evil, and things like that.

Ulrich Lölke

Max Weber understood the modern society in a process of secularization of at least the public sphere, and so I would like to know how a process of 'modernization' in Africa would look like in terms of secularization? Do you think African societies do have to secularize in a process of modernization?

Kwame Gyekye

I think I have said somewhere, maybe in my forthcoming book, that a society does not need to become secular in order to become modern. In the development of the Western culture we see attempts to separate religion from public life. But these attempts have not fully succeeded. One does not need to regard this particular development as a model for modernity, particularly in the way modernity sometimes is understood in terms of advances in the economy, industry, technology, and so on. You can make advances in technology, industry, political systems, and material livelihood of the people without banishing God from public life. We can still believe in God, we can take interest in religion and still develop our economies, develop our industries and technology, unless it can convincingly be argued - unless there is an overwhelming

evidence - that religious beliefs hinder interest, concern, and the pursuit of industry, technology and science, and the development of the economy. It will take some doing to succeed in persuade other people that religion hinders the development of these very important enterprises of the human or societal life. I think that it will not necessarily be correct to say that to become modern a society has to become secular. I don't see any logical relation between secularism and modernity.

Ulrich Lölke

So, then please let us talk about your most well known book, the "Essay on African Philosophical Thought". What was the idea in writing about the "Akan conceptual scheme"?

Kwame Gyekye

Well, the assumption here is that, for me every culture produces a philosophy; there is a philosophical component to every culture, as there is a religious component, a moral component, and so on. In other words, in any society there are few individuals who have given - or do give - a reflective and analytic attention to the basic ideas and assumptions about human life and thought. They raise questions about, who we are, how this world emerged, whether this world will come to an end, whether there is some being behind this creation, whether the human being has a destiny, and so on. These questions have exercised the minds of thinkers at various times in all cultures. Philosophers, these thinkers or, if you like, *sages*, in some cultures have given some answers to these questions. Some of the answers may probably appear more sophisticated, more elaborate, more satisfactory, than the answers given by other sages of some other cultures. Nevertheless these sages will be grappling with philosophical, that is fundamental, questions. For me, whenever you talk of philosophy, we are talking about fundamental ideas, fundamental questions, underlying human thought and human experience. To me this is what distinguishes philo-sophy from social sciences. It is a moral or political philosopher, who will ask the

question, what is justice? like Socrates did some 2300 years ago or so.
The political scientist will hardly raise this question. He will describe
political institutions and political practices. But it is generally the
philosopher who raises normative questions and seeks to set up or
recommend standards of political or moral behaviour.

I started doing research for the book by going into the villages or
towns to have contact with the traditional thinkers or sages, and it was
interesting. In any village or small town I went to, I will first go to the
chief and the chief will ask about my mission. I tell him my mission.
Almost invariably the next statement he would make is: well, these
questions are difficult questions and in this our town, our village, only
such and such a man will be interested in having discussion with you
on them.

Ulrich Lölke
So you came with a particular question to the chief?

Kwame Gyekye
No, the chief will ask me my mission and I say, well, I am here
because I want to contact some individuals who have given thought to
such questions as this and that and the other. And then the chief or his
spokesman may keep quite for a couple of seconds and then say: "well,
these questions are difficult questions, but in our town, in our village,
you should see this man living near such and such a place; let this boy
take you there; perhaps he will be able to have some kind of a
conversation with you on the kinds of questions you have in your
mind." So, I go to these sages and have discussions with them. I often
do more listening than talking, and write down the things he says.
Unfortunately the traditional culture is a preliterate culture and didn't
have writing. So a lot of these thinkers, traditional sages, are not
known, so they cannot be identified, you cannot mention their names.
But of course it is possible to have some knowledge of some of the
ideas of these individual sages. Some of their thoughts, some of the
results of their thinking, may still survive in, for instance, proverbs and

the general beliefs of the people. One can examine some of these proverbs (or maxims, aphoristic statements). I mention in the book that some of the philosophical ideas of the pre-Socratic thinkers in ancient Greece were presented in aphoristic statements, in short, pithy sayings, like those of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and others. Early Indian philosophy is expressed in aphorisms. We have the same method with the philosopher Confucius of ancient China. His philosophy is expressed also in aphoristic statements.

Ulrich Lölke
So you would say, these sages are not only critical individuals, but they are also related to a tradition, they build a kind of institution in these traditions?

Kwame Gyekye
Yes, of course, all thinkers work out their thought in a cultural context. So, they are right from the outset embedded in a social or cultural context. And while they normally tend to be critical of some aspects of this context, the context itself also influences the types of argument that they may make, as well as the direction of their thought. Sometimes, also, the language influences them.

Ulrich Lölke
How would you describe the differences between your project and Odera Oruka's "sage-philosophy" project?

Kwame Gyekye
Oh, I think ultimately, my work, or rather approach, regarding studies on traditional African thought is pretty much similar to the late Professor Henry Odera Oruka's. The only difference is that he usually just puts down what the traditional sages say directly, while I not only put them down but I also look at the relevance, if you like, the importance, of these things. Just like when I am studying Plato, I do not only read what Plato says, but I also examine it. So, when one examines

Plato one is sort of studying Plato's philosophy and perhaps enlarging his thought. This is what I try to do when I study the thought or statements made by traditional sages. Odera's is alright. He will record all that the traditional sage will say, on the question of fate, the nature of the human person, and that's it. And what he puts down will be the thought of that traditional sage, just as we say that this written piece is the thought of Plato or Aristotle. One can study the ideas of the traditional sages just as one can study the ideas of Plato or Aristotle.

Ulrich Lölke
How was the reaction to your book, particularly from African scholars?

Kwame Gyekye
I think my book has been quite successful and influential. It is, now, perhaps the main textbook being used in courses on African philosophy in the United States and perhaps elsewhere. In the last few years a lot of anthologies have been published. Anthologies are all right because they help disseminate ideas in published books. But they do not really add to what one knows already. I wish that people will do more research, that they do more reflections and produce more original works on African philosophy, rather than just collect into books already published ideas. Now there is a barrage of anthologies being produced because people use these as textbooks and they make money. When I was in Washington D.C. in 1993/94, at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for scholars, I received more then a dozen of requests from scholars in America asking for permission to reprint this or that chapter or part thereof from my "Essay", particularly the chapters on person, the problem of evil, and the foundations of ethics in the book. But to come back to your question, I can say that I think my book has been successful and influential. People who are still sceptical about the existence of African philosophy, its traditional setting, perhaps will be a bit cynical, or sceptical about the book, but on the whole it has been influential. Even those who are sceptical are forced to examine my arguments and perhaps may decide to abandon at

least some of their prejudices about African philosophy. Some people look at philosophy from the point of view of what is done in the West. But what is done in the West does not contain all the truth about human life and experience, nor does it exhaust the modes of doing philosophy.

Ulrich Lölke

After the "Essay" you published quite a few articles on various topics, like democracy, technology, the concept of the person, development, etc.. In 1996 you published a book entitled: "African Cultural Values" which is, in my opinion, an introduction for the non-philosopher into African value systems. And there is another book on "Modernity and Tradition" in print...

Kwame Gyekye

The latter is in the making, not yet in print. But you are right that "African Cultural Values" was not intended to be a particularly philosophical work; it was intended for the general reader.

Ulrich Lölke

So, what was your main research interest after you published the Essay?

Kwame Gyekye

Ah, that is a good question, yes. After I published the Essay and, remember, the "Essay" was mainly a study of the philosophical ideas of the traditional sages, I decided that, as a sequel to this study, I should do some work on the contemporary situation. So, since the publication of my "Essay", I have tried to do some conceptual and interpretive analysis of the contemporary African situation. The "Essay" was a study or an analysis of traditional thought. Even though traditional thought cannot be divorced from the modern life of the African people, we can nevertheless say that there are some values, institutions, in postcolonial Africa that can be distinguished from traditional thought.

So, I decided that I should do some work on contemporary African philosophy. This is what led me to do this work on postcolonial African theory. It is being published by the Oxford University Press under the title "Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience." In this book I deal with such notions as community, tradition and culture, ethnicity, nation-state, and nation-building. I deal with matters of political corruption, and matters relating to political legitimation, i.e., the legitimation of political power. I also explore in some detail the whole question of modernization and it's relation to Westernization. I deal with questions about (how) the African attitude to our own traditional values ought to be. I suggest that our attitude to our inherited, ancestral values should not simply be one of either revivalism or antirevivalism (in the strong sense of 'or'). For the attitude to our cultural values seems to have divided scholars into two camps, one camp arguing the rejection of the whole corpus of traditional values because these values are, in their view, totally out of harmony with modern trends and are a hindrance to development. The other camp argues the revival of the whole gamut of our traditional values and practices, maintaining that African life today is in a total mess or at a low ebb because we have rejected our traditional values.

My attitude to such matters is that we should take a **specific** approach, we should deal with specific problems, specific questions, specific values, and that, therefore, we should not just generalize, you know, saying that this is good, therefore, everything is good, or that this is bad, therefore, everything is bad. It's a matter of making normative analysis, giving normative considerations to the traditional values, beliefs, and practices. What we really need to do, I argue, is to re-evaluate, re-interpret, and re-assess the cultural values, practices, and institutions that we have inherited from both our own traditions and the colonial heritage. The colonial heritage cannot be completely jettisoned. We live in a postcolonial era, but this era, surely, does not necessarily mean the rejection of all the colonial values and institutions that we have adopted. Even though they were all originally imposed on us, we have come to adopt them; we are practising them; and we are trying to

function within them. Whether we are doing so successfully or not is another matter.

So these are some of the questions I think a contemporary African philosopher concerned about contemporary issues should come to grips with. There are also questions of what types of educational systems we should evolve. There are questions of what sort of ideology (or ideologies) are to be considered appropriate for matters of societal development. How do ideologies emerge? Should we allow our values to impinge on the ideologies that we choose, or are we just to go to Europe and take on their ideologies and try to practise them? These are some of the questions that I think are very important. They are not only of philosophical interest, but they also generate practical concern, a practical relevance. And I think that an African philosopher should have interest in the practical relevance of his thought.

Ulrich Lölke

Professor let me ask you as a final question about your plans for the future?

Kwame Gyekye

My plans for the future? Well, just to read, publish, and philo-sophize. In a few years time I retire from this University, even though it is likely that I will continue to do some teaching in philosophy and to write. I have some titles in mind. I want to do a book on what I tentatively call, "Beyond Cultures, Beyond Communities: A Philo-sophical Essay on Humanity." I believe in humanity -in the unity and brotherhood of humankind. I think that we should look at all these cultures in basic terms, that is, in terms of fundamental human values, in terms of the basic needs and wants and goals and purposes of human life. Various cultures are trying to deal with such matters in different ways. So we should try and look beyond these cultures and look for "the ties that bind"- our basic humanity.

Ulrich Lölke
Professor Gyekye, medaase. Thank you very much.

Kwame Gyekye
Danke schön.

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LE LANGAGE, LA LOGIQUE, LA PENSÉE, L'HISTOIRE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE ANALYTIQUE ET L'ÉTHIQUE DANS UNE PERSPECTIVE ANTIRÉALISTE

Un entretien avec Michael Dummett

Fabrice Pataut

L'entretien a eu lieu le 10 septembre 1992 à Oxford, au domicile de Ann et Michael Dummett. Je remercie Ann et Michael de leur très généreuse hospitalité à cette occasion.

Michael Dummett est un Fellow de New College, Oxford et a occupé la chaire Wykeham de logique à l'université d'Oxford jusqu'en 1993. **Fabrice Pataut** est chargé de recherche au C. N. R. S., Institut d'Histoire et Philosophie des Sciences et des Techniques, Université de Paris 1.

Frege et Wittgenstein

Fabrice Pataut
Vous êtes l'un des philosophes les plus éminents de la tradition analytique et vous avez consacré une grande partie de votre travail à l'étude de Frege qui l'instaura il y a un peu plus d'un siècle. C'est assez inhabituel. Les philosophes analytiques s'intéressent peu aux auteurs. Ils ont plutôt tendance à aborder les problèmes directement sans se soucier de ce que tel ou tel philosophe a pu en dire.

Vous dites que nous devons différer toute discussion des doctrines frégéennes tant que nous ne sommes pas parvenus à un accord sur leur contenu fondamental[1], mais en un certain sens la philosophie analytique *est* une discussion de ces doctrines, un travail et une remise au point des éléments frégéens et nous sommes loin d'un accord unanime sur l'interprétation de Frege.

Qu'y a-t-il donc de si particulier dans le cas de Frege - si vous voulez bien excuser la fausse naïveté de cette question - et que pensez-vous de cette situation?

Michael Dummett

Votre remarque sur Frege et la philosophie analytique est tout à fait juste parce que nous pouvons envisager les questions frégéennes telles que Frege les a lui-même formulées. Quand on étudie les philosophes du passé, dans la grande majorité des cas il faut commencer par reformuler les problèmes avant de pouvoir les discuter. Le cas de Frege est différent. Nous ne sommes pas encore assez loin de Frege pour trouver que la formulation de ses questions est trompeuse.

Fabrice Pataut

Ni même pour penser qu'elle est inadéquate?

Michael Dummett

Non. Il y a bien évidemment beaucoup de choses que Frege n'a pas vues et dont il n'avait pas idée, mais il reste que pour toute une famille de problèmes philosophiques, nous gagnons énormément à commencer par lui.

Le phénomène dont vous avez parlé concernant l'interprétation de Frege m'a surpris au moment où j'ai écrit mon premier livre et me surprend toujours quelque peu[2]. J'ai toujours pensé qu'il fallait pousser les questions frégéennes plus loin, mais plus pour en déterminer les tenants et les aboutissants que pour découvrir ce que Frege voulait dire. Au fur et à mesure que mon travail avançait, je me suis rendu compte qu'il y avait un grand nombre d'articles et de livres qui proposaient des interprétations radicalement nouvelles et divergentes. La plupart m'ont paru être dans l'erreur. Je ne peux expliquer complètement ce phénomène. La phrase que vous citez a probablement été écrite dans un moment d'irritation.

Fabrice Pataut

C'est une manière pour le moins radicale de concevoir les choses.

Michael Dummett

Oui, et je ne chercherai pas à défendre cette position aujourd'hui. Je ne

sais pas pourquoi Frege en particulier attire ce genre de choses.
Personne ne fait cela avec Russell, ni même avec Kant.

Fabrice Pataut
Wittgenstein est une proie rêvée.

Michael Dummett
C'est tout à fait vrai, mais bien évidemment Wittgenstein est beaucoup
plus obscur que Frege. Il laisse le lecteur déterminer où il veut en
venir. Ce qu'il dit est sujet à interprétation. Vous vous demandez
souvent pour quelle raison il a placé tel paragraphe à tel endroit plutôt
qu'à tel autre. C'est donc beaucoup plus compréhensible dans son cas.

Je pense d'ailleurs que nous sommes très loin d'avoir entièrement
compris Wittgenstein. La situation de Frege est différente. Nous devons
bien évidemment évaluer ses doctrines, mais il me semble que leur
contenu est tout à fait clair.

Fabrice Pataut
Vous avez dit qu'au début de votre carrière philosophique, vous vous
êtes considéré comme un disciple de Wittgenstein, tout au moins
jusqu'en 1960[3].

Michael Dummett
C'est tout à fait vrai.

Fabrice Pataut
J'ai trois questions à vous poser à ce propos.

Qu'est-ce que cela voulait dire pour vous, à l'époque, d'être un
disciple de Wittgenstein? Vous êtes-vous engagé dans votre étude de
Frege en adoptant une perspective philosophique que l'on pourrait
appeler wittgensteinienne et, finalement, concevez-vous votre propre
travail philosophique, votre argumentation en faveur d'une sémantique
anti-réaliste, comme un travail séparé de l'étude de Frege?

Michael Dummett

Non, parce que personne ne peut aborder un auteur sans faire aucun cas de ses conceptions personnelles, mais je ne me suis jamais dit que j'allais aborder Frege du point de vue de Wittgenstein. Quant à mon propre travail, les deux choses n'étaient pas séparées et ne le sont toujours pas. L'étude de Frege a été pour moi un point de départ pour aborder un certain nombre de questions philosophiques. Bien évidemment, lorsque vous écrivez sur un auteur, vous devez consacrer un certain temps à l'exposition de sa pensée mais, comme vous savez, il y a beaucoup de choses dans mon premier livre qui ne concernent pas du tout Frege.

Fabrice Pataut

Pour revenir à Frege *et* Wittgenstein, vous avez dit que la thèse frégéenne de l'objectivité du sens anticipe implicitement la doctrine de Wittgenstein selon laquelle la signification, c'est l'usage ou, en tout les cas, toute une famille de doctrines exprimées par ce fameux slogan[4]. Est-ce à dire que la thèse frégéenne anticipe l'idée que la signification possède un caractère social qu'on ne peut éliminer?

Michael Dummett

Je ne suis pas sûr. Frege insiste sur le fait que les pensées, les *Gedanken*, sont communicables, communes à nous tous.

Fabrice Pataut

Par opposition aux représentations, aux *Vorstellungen*, qui restent essentiellement incommunicables et privées.

Michael Dummett

Exactement, mais nous ne trouvons pas le même type de rejet de l'incommunicabilité de la vie mentale interne chez Wittgenstein. Frege insiste sur la communicabilité de quelque chose qui est accessible à tous, mais il n'en propose pas une exploration détaillée.

Fabrice Pataut

Il n'y a pas d'explication du phénomène de la *saisie* des pensées.

Michael Dummett

Non. Il y a simplement le fait que nous les saisissons.

Fabrice Pataut

Pensez-vous que l'idée de Wittgenstein soit un moyen de mettre à plat l'intuition de Frege, de lui donner un contenu non métaphorique?

Michael Dummett

On peut certainement concevoir les choses de cette manière. C'est difficile à savoir. Wittgenstein était profondément influencé par Frege, mais une grande partie de cette influence ne fait pas explicitement surface. Il me semble que ses critiques de Frege sont en général extrêmement grossières. Il est probable que la genèse de ces idées est redevable de sa lecture de Frege, mais je n'en suis pas certain.

Fabrice Pataut

Il y a un deuxième élément tout à fait remarquable dans votre lecture de Frege : l'insistance sur l'idée que comprendre la signification d'une phrase, c'est connaître ses conditions de vérité ou savoir si elles sont satisfaites ou non[5]. Pourtant, à moins d'une omission de ma part, Frege ne la présente explicitement qu'une seule fois, au §32 des *Grundgesetze*[6]. Vous y voyez néanmoins un des piliers de son réalisme et votre propre argumentation contre le réalisme est directement dirigée contre la théorie dite « véruconditionnelle » de la signification. Pensez-vous que Frege accordait une grande importance à l'idée que la signification d'une phrase est constituée par ses conditions de vérité?

Michael Dummett

Oh oui, absolument. C'est en rapport très étroit avec son opposition à l'intrusion de la psychologie dans la logique. Regardez ce qu'il dit des définitions psychologisantes dans les *Fondements de l'Arithmétique*[7].

Lorsque vous ne savez pas comment définir un concept mathématique fondamental, vous en donnez une définition en termes des opérations mentales nécessaires à sa saisie. Frege remarque qu'il est impossible d'utiliser ce genre de définition pour *prouver* quoi que ce soit.

Cette remarque ne porte pas directement sur les conditions de vérité. Mais après tout, quand peut-on utiliser une définition pour prouver quelque chose? Précisément quand la définition vous dit à quelles conditions une phrase contenant le terme défini est vraie. Si la définition fait cela, ou aide à le faire, alors vous pouvez l'utiliser pour prouver que telle ou telle phrase est vraie. Je pense donc que cette doctrine est, pour Frege, fondamentale.

Vous avez parlé du débat réalisme/antiréalisme. Il est tout à fait remarquable que Frege se garde toujours de dire que cela est en rapport avec la manière dont *nous* sommes capables de reconnaître les valeurs de vérité.

Fabrice Pataut
Il ne dit rien, ou très peu, à ce sujet.

Michael Dummett
Loin de là! La plupart du temps, il prend la peine de nous avertir, par exemple lorsqu'il dit que les prédicats devraient toujours être définis et que le fait qu'un objet tombe ou ne tombe pas sous un certain concept est quelque chose qui doit toujours être déterminé. D'habitude, il prend la peine d'ajouter : *nous* ne sommes peut-être pas en mesure de le déterminer, mais *c'est* déterminé. C'est la réalité qui le détermine, ou quelque chose comme cela. Il refuse de manière tout à fait consciente de prendre les choses comme Wittgenstein les aurait prises, en termes de ce que *nous* pouvons faire.

Inconsistance, harmonie et intuitionnisme

Fabrice Pataut
Puisque nous revenons à Wittgenstein, j'en profite pour revenir également à la devise « La signification, c'est l'usage ». Contrairement à ce que vous tenez à soutenir, beaucoup de gens pensent qu'aucune interprétation de ce slogan ne peut conduire à une révision des lois de la logique classique[8]. Je ne parle pas ici des gens qui sont uniquement concernés par la *parole* de Wittgenstein, ce qu'il a vraiment dit, etc...

On a simplement envie de résister à l'idée que quelque chose d'aussi banal que l'idée selon laquelle la signification de nos phrases doit être liée d'une façon ou d'une autre à la manière dont nous les utilisons, puisse conduire à quelque chose d'aussi fatal qu'une révision des lois de la logique classique! Pourquoi le pensez-vous?

Michael Dummett (rires)
Je vais essayer de vous répondre... Fondamentalement, parce que je n'accepte pas le holisme au sens où Wittgenstein l'acceptait ou, tout au moins, au sens où il aurait dû s'engager explicitement à l'accepter.

Vous connaissez l'idée de Wittgenstein dont on a fait grand cas, selon laquelle la philosophie ne peut rien changer à rien, mais peut seulement décrire, etc... Je pense en particulier à l'idée qu'il est impossible de changer la pratique linguistique. Wittgenstein a été conduit à soutenir l'idée absurde qu'on ne doit rien changer à une pratique, même si elle s'avère inconsistante. Vous devez simplement l'accepter.

Fabrice Pataut
Notre pratique *effective* est souvent inconsistante.

Michael Dummett
Tarski pensait que la nôtre l'était, fondamentalement. Vous parlez de «pratique effective». Encore faut-il préciser ce qu'on entend par là. Le fait que des gens affirment des contradictions ne peut certainement pas

faire partie d'une pratique.

Fabrice Pataut
Pourquoi pas? Les gens se contredisent.

Michael Dummett
C'est indéniable.

Fabrice Pataut
Sans arrêt. C'est même chronique. N'est-ce pas une pratique? Pourquoi ne pourrait-on pas dire qu'ils *pratiquent* la contradiction?

Michael Dummett
Si vous tenez à affirmer qu'une pratique est contradictoire, vous devez également supposer que les gens sont capables de reconnaître à quels principes ils soumettent leur propre pratique. Si nous exigions plus d'eux, ils pourraient déterminer lesquels de ces principes conduisent à des contradictions.

Il faut faire une distinction entre un *individu* qui se contredit et qui pourrait reconnaître l'origine de son erreur, et un *langage* inconsistant. C'est la deuxième chose qui troublait Tarski. Pensez aux paradoxes. Lorsqu'ils se trouvent face à des paradoxes, les gens ne savent pas quoi faire parce que des étapes qui leur semblaient justes et contraignantes les ont conduits à une contradiction.

Le point important en ce qui concerne le holisme est le suivant. Wittgenstein pensait - et je suis absolument en désaccord avec lui sur ce point - que rien dans la pratique linguistique, et en particulier dans l'utilisation de certaines formes d'inférence, ne requiert de justification et ne peut être critiqué. Il me semble que cela est faux parce que les inférences ne sont pas des choses séparées du reste du langage. A la différence des jeux comme les mots croisés, qui ne produisent aucun effet, les inférences conduisent à des assertions et à des conclusions. Ces conclusions peuvent contenir des constantes logiques. Comment réagissons-nous à ces assertions? Comment les utilisons-nous? Quelles

conséquences en tirons-nous?

Il me semble qu'il peut y avoir un désaccord entre la manière dont nous raisonnons et la manière dont nous utilisons les conclusions auxquelles nous arrivons à l'aide du raisonnement. Nous ne pouvons justifier un processus de raisonnement que s'il nous conduit à des choses que nous sommes justifiées à affirmer en fonction de la signification que nous leur attachons.

Fabrice Pataut
Que nous attachons aux constantes logiques?

Michael Dummett
Oui. Il y a en quelque sorte une exigence d'accord entre les différents aspects d'une pratique linguistique. C'est quelque chose d'extrêmement complexe, qui fait que nous ne pouvons pas nous contenter d'affirmer que nous raisonnons de telle ou telle manière et que c'est cela que nous appelons « raisonnement », comme si les choses pouvaient en rester là.

Fabrice Pataut
C'est donc l'exigence d'harmonie qui nous conduit à rejeter le holisme. C'est elle qui nous oblige à interpréter « La signification, c'est l'usage » comme quelque chose qui doit nous conduire à réviser certains modèles de raisonnement, notamment du genre de ceux qui sont codifiés dans les règles d'inférence formellement valide de la logique classique[9].

Michael Dummett
Oui.

Fabrice Pataut
C'est décidément très peu wittgensteinien.

Michael Dummett
Oui. C'est en cela que je m'écarte complètement de Wittgenstein. Je

pense qu'il est complètement injustifié de dire que la philosophie ne peut interférer avec quoi que ce soit. Notre pratique linguistique peut être déréglée tout comme notre comportement peut être déréglé. La philosophie a le droit de le faire remarquer.

Fabrice Pataut
Pensez-vous que les lois de la logique classique sont inconsistantes, que leur application conduit à des contradictions?

Michael Dummett
Non. Je ne pense pas qu'elles conduisent à quelque chose d'aussi grave que la contradiction, mais elles peuvent conduire au défaut d'harmonie dont nous parlions. Nous utilisons certains modèles d'inférence qui nous conduisent à affirmer des choses qu'en réalité nous ne sommes pas autorisés à affirmer, étant donné la signification que nous attachons aux mots de notre langage.

Fabrice Pataut
Prenons un cas standard. Supposons que quelqu'un recoure à la loi d'élimination de la double négation, autrement dit infère une phrase *p* à partir de sa double négation *non-non-p*. Qu'avez-vous à objecter à cette pratique? Ce doit être, bien sûr, que nous ne pouvons affirmer *p* en nous fondant sur *non-non-p*. Mais pourquoi pas? Pourquoi *non-non-p* ne pourrait-il constituer une raison suffisante?

Michael Dummett
La double négation ne peut *à elle seule* constituer une raison suffisante. Bien sûr, dans un grand nombre de cas, il n'y aura aucun problème et cela inclut tous les cas que nous pouvons décider. Mais lorsqu'il s'agit de quelque chose que vous n'avez pas les moyens de décider, il y a un problème.

Tout dépend de la manière dont vous comprenez la négation. Si, comme nous avons naturellement tendance à le faire, vous pensez que pour justifier votre affirmation de la négation d'une phrase *p*, il vous

suffit de montrer que vous ne pourriez pas être en mesure d'affirmer *p*, alors le fait que vous ne soyez *pas* en mesure d'affirmer la négation de *p* ne garantit certainement pas que vous soyez justifié à affirmer *p*.

Fabrice Pataut
Cela constituerait donc une raison suffisante seulement au cas où nous pourrions déterminer la valeur de vérité de *p*?

Michael Dummett
Oui, sinon vous avez tout simplement quelque chose de plus faible. L'illusion que vous avez quelque chose de plus fort vient de cette image d'une réalité déterminée que nous n'avons peut être pas la possibilité d'observer mais qui doit néanmoins être déterminée d'une manière ou d'une autre.

Fabrice Pataut
Que nous puissions reconnaître ou non la manière dont elle l'est.

Michael Dummett
Exactement. Comme si les choses pouvaient être aussi tranchées : si ce n'est pas vrai, alors c'est faux. C'est une image psychologiquement contraignante à laquelle nous avons constamment recours[10].

Prenez le cas du déterminisme appliqué aux systèmes chaotiques. C'est assez éloigné de la question des règles d'inférences, mais c'est très proche de la question des images réalistes. Je me suis laissé dire par les partisans des systèmes chaotiques *déterministes* que si nous avions en main, de manière *précise*, les conditions initiales, alors les états postérieurs de ces systèmes seraient complètement déterminés. Mais le problème est précisément que nous ne pouvons jamais avoir en main ces conditions initiales de manière précise et qu'une infime variation peut introduire une variation d'une amplitude considérable à un moment ultérieur.

Ces gens vous disent que c'est imprévisible mais néanmoins déterminé. Dire que c'est déterminé revient à supposer qu'*il y a* des

valeurs précises pour les conditions initiales des quantités, données par des nombres réels. Mais il n'y a là rien de plus que l'imposition d'une image du continu mathématique sur la réalité, une image qui ne concorde pas du tout avec notre expérience. On n'a de cesse de nous répéter que nous n'effectuons nos mesures qu'avec un degré relatif de précision. Si vous ne supposez pas que ces quantités ont des valeurs précises, il ne vous reste plus rien en faveur du déterminisme. Le fait que nous ayons du déterminisme n'est rien de plus qu'une remarque sur les mathématiques.

Fabrice Pataut
Rien de plus, pour ainsi dire, qu'une caractéristique du modèle mathématique?

Michael Dummett
Oui. Rien de plus que la supposition réaliste sous-jacente que toutes ces quantités ont des valeurs *absolument déterminées*, données par des réels.

La plupart des physiciens acceptent le continuum classique comme un bon modèle de la réalité physique. Je pense qu'ils feraient mieux d'accepter le continuum intuitionniste.

Fabrice Pataut
J'aimerais justement que nous parlions des rapports entre Wittgenstein et l'intuitionnisme[11]. S'il y a bien une chose que les gens n'aiment pas dans l'intuitionnisme, c'est le genre de philosophie subjectiviste et même solipsiste qui l'accompagne. C'est une critique assez générale que l'on fait d'ordinaire à l'encontre de Brouwer. Pensez-vous vraiment que la conception wittgensteinienne du caractère social de la signification nous permette de sortir de ce solipsisme?[12]

Supposons que « La signification, c'est l'usage » nous conduise pour de bon à une révision de la logique classique ou, mieux, à l'adoption d'une logique de type intuitionniste. Pensez-vous que si nous acceptons cette interprétation de la philosophie du deuxième

Wittgenstein, nous pouvons tirer l'intuitionnisme du mauvais pas solipsiste?

Michael Dummett
Brouwer... Evidemment, c'est tout à fait vrai de Brouwer. Il semble bien qu'il ait été un vrai solipsiste. J'ai l'impression qu'il n'a jamais sérieusement cru à l'existence d'autrui.

Commençons par une opposition. Prenez le cas du phénoménalisme[13]. Pensez au langage supposé des *sense-data*, qui est en soi un langage solipsiste. S'il y avait vraiment un langage de ce genre, il faudrait effectuer un travail considérable pour arriver à un langage portant sur les objets physiques en le prenant comme point de départ. Mais le cas des mathématiques est très différent et Brouwer se méprend complètement sur l'incommunicabilité des structures mathématiques.

Ce qui est frappant à propos des mathématiques, c'est précisément leur communicabilité. Il n'y a pas un seul élément dans une idée mathéma-tique qui ne puisse être communiqué. Ce qui est encore plus frappant, c'est qu'il n'y a pratiquement rien à faire pour y arriver. Si vous disposez de la description d'une théorie mathématique en termes des constructions que le mathématicien individuel élabore dans sa tête, il ne vous reste pratiquement plus rien à faire pour transformer cela en une description des constructions qui peuvent être communiquées par un mathématicien à un autre.

Pourquoi? Parce que la théorie de Brouwer est facilement transformable en une théorie de ce que nous pourrions appeler les mathématiques *communautaires*. Cela ne pourrait arriver dans aucun autre secteur du discours. Dans le cas du monde physique, il y aura toujours un écart considérable entre le monde que *nous* habitons tous et le monde que j'observe *moi*. Mais dans le cas mathématique, il n'y a aucune place pour un écart de ce genre. C'est pour cela que je pense que le solipsisme qui, comme vous l'avez dit, faisait partie de la philosophie générale de Brouwer, n'a en réalité aucune importance.

Carnap, le vérificationnisme et la distinction analytique/synthétique

Fabrice Pataut
J'aimerais revenir à des questions plus générales sur la philosophie analytique qui ont trait, une fois de plus, à Wittgenstein.

Vous avez dit que le genre de travail que faisait Wittgenstein - tout au moins, j'imagine, dans les *Investigations philosophiques* - vous avait vacciné contre l'influence d'Austin[14].

Michael Dummett
C'est vrai.

Fabrice Pataut
En quel sens l'influence de Wittgenstein vous a-t-elle protégé de la philosophie du langage ordinaire, de l'étude cas par cas pratiquée par Austin? Son influence était immense à Oxford. Mais Wittgenstein, dans les *Investigations*, n'apparaît pas du tout comme un philosophe systématique, au sens où, par exemple, Carnap l'était.

Pensez-vous à ce propos que la philosophie analytique devrait être systématique, ou quelle pourrait l'être?

Michael Dummett
La remarque sur l'influence d'Austin n'était rien de plus qu'une remarque historique sur moi-même, mais il est vrai que cette opposition au système était commune à Wittgenstein et à la philosophie austinienne du langage ordinaire. Je pense que l'énorme différence entre Wittgenstein et, tout au moins, ce qu'Austin professait, tient au fait que Wittgenstein commençait toujours avec un problème philosophique et se battait avec. Austin pensait qu'il fallait oublier les problèmes philosophiques et commencer par s'occuper des mots et de la manière dont ils sont utilisés pour mener des analyses très précises sans se soucier de ces problèmes. Ils étaient censés disparaître par la suite comme par miracle. C'est cela qui me semblait le plus destructeur pour la réflexion philosophique telle que je l'entendais.

Fabrice Pataut

Il y a une autre manière d'envisager la philosophie analytique. Je pense
à l'influence de Carnap aux Etats-Unis, une influence immense, c'est le
moins qu'on puisse en dire, sur Reichenbach, Quine, Goodman et
Putnam. Des générations entières de philosophes ont envisagé la
philosophie *grosso modo* à la Carnap, sinon au sens étroit, comme la
construction d'un système complet, tout au moins en un sens large,
comme l'analyse systématique d'une pièce qui a joué un rôle important
à un moment ou à un autre dans le système carnapien.

      Pensez-vous que Carnap, en tant que philosophe systématique,
était plus proche d'une conception correcte des questions
philosophiques? Je sais bien que Carnap avait une très mauvaise
réputation en Angleterre.

Michael Dummett

Absolument. A cause de Ryle. Au fait, pour en finir avec Austin, j'ai
toujours pensé que c'était un homme remarquablement intelligent et
que son influence était désastreuse. Ce n'est pas ce que je pensais de
Ryle. Pas à l'époque. J'y suis venu petit à petit. Quand j'étais étudiant
à Oxford, Ryle était le roi. Son influence était énorme et je croyais la
plupart des choses qu'il professait. Il était inimaginablement virulent
contre Carnap. Il pensait que ses erreurs étaient triviales et c'est pour
cette raison que je n'ai pas lu de Carnap pendant très longtemps. Je
pensais qu'il n'était même pas nécessaire d'y prêter la moindre
attention, simplement parce que Ryle en déconseillait la lecture. Mon
cas est donc très différent de celui de tous ces gens pour qui Carnap
était la grande autorité.

Fabrice Pataut

Si l'on pense à son influence sur Quine et Goodman...

Michael Dummett

Elle est tout à fait évidente. Le premier livre de Goodman, *The*

Structure of Appearance[15], était un effort dans la direction du *logische Aufbau der Welt*[16]. Je pensais à l'époque que cette entreprise est entièrement vouée à l'échec. Je le pense toujours.

Je ne suis pas particulièrement impressionné par les théories élaborées par Carnap. Elle contiennent quelque chose de très stérile. Je comprends très bien la révolte de Quine.

Comment vous dire? Vous connaissez la fameuse histoire de l'Irlandais?

Fabrice Pataut
Non, pas du tout.

Michael Dummett
Un homme qui a perdu son chemin demande à un Irlandais comment il faut faire pour se rendre à Dublin. L'Irlandais réfléchit un petit moment et répond « Si j'étais vous, je ne partirais pas d'ici ». Il me semble, en ce qui concerne Goodman, que c'était une très mauvaise idée de partir de Carnap *(rires)*

Fabrice Pataut
Vous avez un bon nombre de préoccupations en commun avec Carnap. Je pense au long article « Testability and Meaning » de 1936[17].

Michael Dummett
Oui, c'est tout à fait vrai.

Fabrice Pataut
Je pense à la théorie vérificationniste de la signification comme pierre de touche ou point de départ de la réflexion carnapienne et à la manière dont Carnap essaye de l'amender et de la modifier pour remplacer la notion de vérifiabilité par une notion plus respectable de confirmation graduelle comprise en termes probabilistes. Je pense également à son abandon de l'idée naïve que les énoncés invérifiables n'ont pas de signification, signe infaillible que le critère d'attribution

de signification utilisé au départ par les positivistes était mauvais. Tous ces problèmes sont incroyablement proches du genre de problèmes auxquels les gens engagés dans le débat réalisme/antiréalisme ont affaire.

Michael Dummett
C'est probablement vrai. Le peu d'intérêt que j'ai porté à Carnap est probablement un effet prolongé de l'enseignement de Ryle.

Fabrice Pataut
Bon, alors laissons Carnap de côté. Quoi qu'il en soit de cet auteur, je ne voudrais pas que nous abandonnions le sujet. Revenons à la question de la vérification. Beaucoup de gens ont l'impression que l'antiréalisme que vous défendez est un vérificationnisme ou un béhaviorisme déguisé. Je pense par exemple à la critique de Michael Devitt, qui repose sur ce type d'interprétation[18], et également à Stephen Schiffer qui, dans *Remnants of Meaning*, porte une accusation hésitante de vérificationnisme et de béhaviorisme[19].

Personne n'oserait défendre le vérificationnisme et le béhaviorisme aujourd'hui. Qu'est-ce qui distingue ces positions de votre antiréalisme?

Michael Dummett
Vous dites que personne n'oserait être vérificationniste. J'ai utilisé le terme « vérification » par le passé et ce choix n'est pas heureux. «Justification» est préférable et je veux dire par là que la signification d'un énoncé et déterminée par le genre de justification qui pourrait en être donnée.

Il y a une différence énorme entre le vérificationnisme du Cercle de Vienne et le genre de théorie de la signification que je défends. Elle tient à mon rejet du genre d'atomisme qui était implicite dans l'idée directrice des positivistes.

Les positivistes parlaient comme si l'on pouvait considérer que chaque phrase a une signification indépendamment du fait qu'elle

appartient à un langage et que d'autres phrases sont en relation avec elle. La vérification était censée consister en une séquence d'expériences sensorielles.

C'est d'une absurdité évidente. Une théorie de la signification ne peut passer sous silence le fait que nos phrases font partie d'un langage et qu'elles sont en relation avec d'autres phrases. En règle générale, la justification d'une assertion ou d'un énoncé est quelque chose qui fait appel non seulement à l'expérience, mais également à l'inférence. C'est exactement le genre de constraste que l'on trouve chez Quine dans son article célèbre « Les deux dogmes de l'empirisme »[20]. Il finit sur cette image du langage comme structure articulée avec des choses à la périphérie et d'autres plus vers l'intérieur.

Je ne dis pas que la conception de la signification à laquelle il fait appel me satisfait entièrement mais ce qui est important, c'est qu'il n'attaque pas le positivisme pour cause de vérificationnisme. Il se retrouve pour finir avec une image qui a précisément tout à fait à voir avec la conformité de l'ensemble structuré des phrases, ainsi que des valeurs de vérité qui leur sont assignées, avec l'*expérience*. Il est donc clair que Quine conçoit toujours les choses en termes de vérification ou, si vous préférez, de falsification[21], en termes des ajustements qu'il faut opérer sur la structure au vu de l'effet produit par l'impact de l'expérience. Ce qu'il attaque, c'est la conception selon laquelle chaque phrase attend de voir, en quelque sorte toute seule, si quelque chose aura un impact sur elle.

Fabrice Pataut
Chaque phrase étant isolée du reste du langage.

Michael Dummett
Exactement. L'impact peut être transmis de la périphérie en direction du centre et la transmission se fait bien évidemment par le biais de connections inférentielles. Quine ne nous donne pas les détails de ce mécanisme. Ce qui est important, c'est qu'il montre qu'il ne faut pas penser la justification sur un modèle empiriste, comme si elle pouvait

se réduire à des séquences d'expériences sensorielles. Je ne nie pas, par ailleurs, qu'elle puisse éventuellement prendre cette forme. C'est pourquoi les positivistes ont été conduits à faire cette distinction entre les phrases empiriques et les phrases mathématiques, entre...

Fabrice Pataut
les phrases formelles...

Michael Dummett
... qui ont un genre de signification complètement différent de celui des phrases empiriques, et les autres. Je défends une conception tout à fait différente selon laquelle il y a en quelque sorte un éventail de phrases. Il y a, à une extrémité, des phrases qui peuvent être vérifiées par l'observation directe, sans aucune médiation inférentielle - si toutefois cela est possible - et, à l'autre bout, des phrases qui sont établies purement et simplement par le raisonnement, comme les théorèmes mathématiques. La plupart occupent une position intermédiaire. En fait, tout dépend de ce que vous entendez par « vérification ». Si, en ayant recours à ce terme, vous parlez de la manière dont nous établissons la vérité ou la fausseté d'un énoncé, alors je suis tout à fait d'accord pour dire que la sémantique que je défends est vérificationniste. Mais je n'ai aucunement l'intention d'insister sur l'idée qu'il y a un moyen d'établir de manière concluante *tous* les énoncés. Je suis tout à fait prêt à admettre qu'il y a des énoncés dont nous ne pouvons établir la valeur de vérité de manière concluante. Pensez à tous les cas où nous serons enclins à la révision, à tous les cas où un énoncé pourra être abandonné un peu plus tard. Le genre de sémantique que je défends peut tout à fait prendre cela en ligne de compte. Il est caractéristique de la signification de certaines phrases qu'elles peuvent être confirmées mais pas établies avec certitude. Vous pouvez donc dire, si vous voulez, que ma sémantique est vérificationniste en un sens général, mais pas dans le sens atomiste, et sans préjuger de la forme que peut prendre une justification.

A l'origine, j'ai utilisé le terme « vérificationniste » pour choquer.

On entendait dire de partout que le positivisme avait été réfuté, mais personne n'était capable de proposer une bonne explication de ce phénomène. On savait simplement qu'il ne fallait plus y croire. A mon avis, c'est Quine qui l'a réfuté. Alors les gens ont été choqués que je parle de théorie vérificationniste. Ce que je voudrais dire, pour finir, c'est que ce n'est pas l'ingrédient vérificationniste mais l'ingrédient atomiste qui était fautif dans le positivisme.

Voilà, si vous voulez, la différence essentielle entre une sémantique antiréaliste et une sémantique vérificationniste au sens des positivistes.

Fabrice Pataut
Vous tenez à la distinction analytique/synthétique?

Michael Dummett
Oui, absolument. Je pense que nous aurions tort de nous en débarasser complètement.

Fabrice Pataut
Pour résumer, vous pensez d'une part que la signification d'un énoncé est déterminée ou fixée par ce que nous devons appeler ses conditions de justification ou, mieux, de justifiabilité, autrement dit par les conditions auxquelles nous sommes en principe capables de le justifier et, d'autre part, que nous ne pouvons analyser ces conditions de manière atomiste.

Michael Dummett
Oui, c'est tout à fait juste. De plus, ces conditions comporteront d'ordinaire un ingrédient inférentiel. Le langage dépend en quelque sorte du langage.

Fabrice Pataut
N'est-ce pas faire un pas en direction du holisme?

Michael Dummett

Je ne crois pas. Vous héritez du holisme si vous abandonnez la
distinction entre la périphérie et l'intérieur. Vous êtes d'accord?

Fabrice Pataut

Je n'en suis pas certain. Vous voulez qu'il y ait une différence entre ce
qui distingue la périphérie de l'intérieur et ce qui distingue l'analytique
du synthétique?

Michael Dummett

Je veux qu'il y ait une *direction*. Bien évidemment, les mécanismes
d'inférence fonctionnent dans les deux sens, mais je veux une relation
de dépendance de la signification qui aille, en gros, dans *une seule*
direction, parce que je pense que nous ne pourrions pas maîtriser un
langage si le holisme était correct. Je pense, en tout les cas, que nous
ne pourrions pas donner une description systématique de son
fonctionnement.

   Puis-je ajouter quelque chose?

Fabrice Pataut

Bien sûr.

Michael Dummett

L'attaque dirigée contre la distinction analytique/synthétique repose en
grande partie sur l'observation tout à fait correcte d'une caractéristique
des langages naturels, à savoir qu'il y a dans une très grande mesure
une part de *jeu*.

   Si vous voulez construire une théorie systématique de la
signification, vous devez assigner un sens aux différents mots et aux
différentes constructions d'un langage. Vous devez en quelque sorte
morceler le sens. Mais il n'y a probablement pas de manière univoque
de faire cela. Si on nous demandait d'expliquer ce qu'est la
signification d'une expression, ou ce que quelqu'un doit connaître pour
comprendre ce qu'une expression signifie, nous assignerions

probablement la même signification à des expressions distinctes. Cela introduit une sorte de holisme dans le langage.

Il faut mettre cela en contraste avec un schéma rigide de type frégéen à l'intérieur duquel chaque expression a un sens parfaitement déterminé. C'est un idéal que nous nous efforçons consciemment d'atteindre lorsque nous en avons besoin. Nous en avons besoin précisément lorsqu'il y a des querelles ou des incertitudes concernant la nature de la justification. Nous construisons des théories et lorsque nous faisons cela, il faut nous mettre d'accord sur ce qui devra compter comme constituant le sens ou la définition d'un certain terme. C'est alors que nous remettons les choses dans l'ordre et que nous essayons de les rapprocher le plus possible du schéma frégéen.

Je ne veux pas soutenir que la distinction analytique/synthétique a une application absolument déterminée à notre langage tel qu'il se présente. Mais je ne pense pas qu'il faille s'en débarasser. C'est au contraire quelque chose dont nous avons besoin pour surmonter nos désaccords et apporter des justifications à ce que nous ne croyons que vaguement.

L'histoire et l'avenir de la philosophie analytique au vu de la thèse de priorité

Fabrice Pataut
Vous affichez un intérêt récent pour l'histoire de la philosophie. Dans *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*[22], vous dites qu'il est important que la philosophie analytique comprenne sa propre histoire. Je suppose que c'est l'un des effets de la critique de Sluga[23].

L'intérêt général, historique et culturel mis à part, quel est l'intérêt proprement philosophique d'une compréhension historique de la philosophie analytique? La plupart des philosophes analytiques ne s'y intéressent pas du tout. Ils pensent même pour la plupart que c'est absolument dépourvu d'intérêt.

Michael Dummett

Je dois admettre que les critiques de Sluga étaient dans leur ensemble justifiées, mais pas quant aux détails. Il est vrai que lorsque j'ai écrit mon premier livre, je n'ai pas pris en compte la situation historique dans laquelle se trouvait Frege. Je pense que lorsque vous abordez un philosophe, vous devez vous demander à quoi ressemblaient les problèmes à l'époque où il les a abordés, au vu de ce que les autres pouvaient en dire. Mais le cadre historique de Sluga ne me convainc pas. En particulier, j'ai trouvé choquant son refus de prêter la moindre attention à Husserl. Il me semble que c'est justement ce que vous devez faire si vous écrivez un livre sur Frege et son cadre historique. Il n'y a rien de très fécond dans tout ce débat avec Lotze.

Au tournant du siècle, disons au moment où Husserl a publié les *Recherches Logiques*[24], la phénoménologie n'existait pas en tant qu'école. La philosophie analytique n'existait pas non plus en tant qu'école. Il y avait un grand nombre de courants et on aurait volontiers rapproché Frege et Husserl. Pourquoi ont-ils tant divergé? C'est une question très importante. Nous comprendrons beaucoup de choses le jour où nous pourrons y répondre.

Je pourrais également exprimer les choses de la manière suivante. A l'intérieur même du courant analytique, il y a un certain nombre de gens qui rejettent ce que j'ai appelé l'axiome fondamental de la philosophie analytique : la thèse de la priorité du langage sur la pensée[25]. Gareth Evans a été l'un des premiers à le faire. Pourtant, Evans reste très clairement dans la tradition analytique. Je ne pense pas qu'il ait jamais lu une ligne de Husserl de toute sa vie. Russell, Frege et Moore sont les piliers de son livre[26]. Il y a aujourd'hui d'autres personnes comme, par exemple, Christopher Peacocke qui rejettent également l'axiome fondamental. Cela nous conduit à nous demander ce qui est essentiel à la philosophie analytique. Comment comprendre cela sans revenir aux origines? Avant, on aurait pu penser que la thèse de priorité distinguait le mouvement analytique de tous les autres. Tout le monde l'acceptait. C'est fini.

Ceux qui la rejettent sont-ils toujours des philosophes analytiques?

Il est tout à fait clair qu'ils le sont parce que le genre d'analyse qu'ils se proposent de mener à bien ressemble de très près à une théorie frégéenne de la signification, à une sémantique frégéenne. Tout au moins ces analyses sont-elles développées à partir d'une sémantique de ce genre.

Il y a une autre chose dont je n'ai pas parlé dans ce livre mais qui est très importante. Nous ne comprenons pas encore la nature des rapports entre Wittgenstein et le Cercle de Vienne, à cause du *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein avait une attitude de révération envers Frege. L'ouvrage est pourtant beaucoup plus école-de-Russell qu'il n'est école-de-Frege. Il a été écrit dans l'atmosphère de Cambridge. Les problèmes auxquels il s'est attaqué dans ce livre étaient les problèmes de Russell et de Ramsay, puis l'ouvrage a eu un impact formidable sur des gens complètement différents, à Vienne, dans une toute autre atmosphère.

Que s'est-il passé? Quelles relations Wittgenstein entretenait-il avec ces gens? C'est quelque chose que je ne comprends pas bien. Il me semble que lorsque nous aurons compris cela, nous aurons beaucoup appris, pas seulement d'un point de vue historique, mais également d'un point de vue philosophique.

Fabrice Pataut
Vous dites au début de ce livre que vous ne vous intéressez pas aux relations causales entre les auteurs et les théories, mais à la postérité des idées qui étaient dans l'air du temps au tournant du siècle[27], à des idées que l'on retrouve chez des auteurs qui n'appartiennent pas au mouvement analytique, comme Brentano et Husserl. A un moment donné, vous donnez une précision décisive, vous dites que ce qui vous intéresse, c'est la postérité *légitime* de ces idées.

Y a-t-il des intrus, des gens qui prétendent appartenir au mouvement analytique mais qui n'y appartiennent pas?

Michael Dummett
Ah! C'est une très bonne question.

Fabrice Pataut
Qui nous ramène à la thèse de priorité.

Michael Dummett
Oui, exactement. Les seuls intrus qui me viennent maintenant à l'esprit sont des gens qui pensent que, d'une manière ou d'une autre, la philosophie est finie. Il y a parmi eux plusieurs adeptes supposés de Wittgenstein. Il y a bien sûr Baker et Hacker[28], qui pensent qu'il n'y a plus de problèmes philosophiques à résoudre. Une fois que vous avez comme eux atteint le nirvana, vous comprenez que toute discussion philosophique ne peut être que du non sens. La seule chose qui vous reste à faire est d'en débiter l'historique et de faire remarquer que tous ces gens racontaient absolument n'importe quoi.

Fabrice Pataut
Il n'y a plus de problèmes authentiques. Il ne reste que l'histoire des pseudo-problèmes.

Michael Dummett
Exactement, et l'histoire de la série des solutions sans queue ni tête qui ont été proposées pour les résoudre. Rorty, aux Etats-Unis, prêche essentiellement la même chose, dans une perspective un peu différente.

Fabrice Pataut
Ce genre de chose est prêchée sur le continent depuis longtemps.

Michael Dummett
Ah oui? Par qui?

Fabrice Pataut
Par Derrida, par exemple, d'une manière détournée, mais je dirais également, d'une manière plus générale et plus diffuse, par tous les gens qui sont convaincus qu'il y a une discontinuité fondamentale entre les différents problèmes philosophiques qui ont été posés à différentes

périodes de l'histoire (ou, plus subtilement en apparence, entre leurs différentes variantes) et qui prennent appui sur ce fait supposé pour diagnostiquer le caractère d'inefficacité des solutions proposées.

Michael Dummett
Oui, mais Derrida ne prétend pas appartenir à la tradition analytique.

Fabrice Pataut
Bien sûr que non, mais l'influence continentale est tout à fait notable, précisément sur des gens comme Rorty.

Michael Dummett
Oui, je sais.

Fabrice Pataut
Et à travers Rorty, curieusement, sur des gens comme Putnam.

Michael Dummett
Oui, mais Putnam rejette un grand nombre de thèses avancées par Rorty... En fait, c'est vrai, il est un peu influencé par lui... Allez, classons tous ces gens dans la catégorie des intrus!

Fabrice Pataut
Alors comment identifier la philosophie analytique? Il y a là une véritable difficulté. On ne peut pas dire qu'il existe un ensemble de positions que tous les philosophes analytiques doivent défendre par le seul fait qu'ils sont des philosophes analytiques. On présente parfois les choses de cette manière sur le continent : les philosophes analytiques sont tous, d'une manière ou d'une autre, des empiristes ou des positivistes. On ne peut le faire, disons *par le contenu.* Il serait tout aussi impossible, me semble-t-il, de le faire *par la méthode.* On ne peut identifier de méthode unique, commune à tous les philosophes analytiques.

Michael Dummett
Je crois que c'est également sans espoir.

Fabrice Pataut
Alors comment faire? Dans *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*, vous concevez la chose de manière très restrictive lorsque vous dites que *seule* une analyse philosophique du langage peut nous conduire à une analyse philosophique de la pensée[29]. Si c'est cela qui définit la philosophie analytique, le travail de Gareth Evans n'appartient pas vraiment à cette tradition, sinon de manière marginale.

Michael Dummett
Mais historiquement, il est très clair que son travail appartient à cette tradition, n'est-ce pas?

Fabrice Pataut
C'est tout à fait clair d'un point de vue historique et, du coup, il y a vraiment un problème.

On peut l'envisager sous un autre angle. Pensez par exemple à la manière dont Goodman s'explique sur le nominalisme, ou tout au moins sur *son* nominalisme. Il ne se préoccupe pas tant d'expliquer ce qu'*est* un individu - bien qu'il y parvienne finalement - que d'expliquer comment on *décrit* le monde comme un monde composé d'individus[30]. On pourrait dire : voilà une manière de procéder qui est typiquement analytique! La question métaphysique est différée jusqu'à ce que la question linguistique soit résolue, ou tout au moins correctement posée et comprise. On pourrait même être moins circonspect et prétendre que la question métaphysique est *remplacée* par une question sémantique correspondante.

Mais c'est à l'analyse des pensées singulières proposée par Evans dans son article « Understanding Demonstratives » que je pense en particulier, une analyse qui, justement, présuppose le rejet de la thèse qui, selon vous, permet de distinguer la philosophie analytique d'autres projets philosophiques.

Evans propose que « nous assignions un sens frégéen à un terme singulier [en disant] qu'il y a une façon particulière dont on doit *penser* [*je souligne*] son référent (comme étant le référent) si le terme est compris »[31]. Si nous suivons la suggestion de Evans, notre explication ira de la pensée au terme et à la phrase. Nous commençons par expliquer ce qu'est avoir une pensée et ce n'est qu'ensuite que nous caractérisons le sens de la phrase contenant une occurrence du terme singulier comme renvoyant à *cette* pensée particulière ou l'indiquant.

Au vu de ce genre d'approche, quel rôle devons-nous attribuer à la thèse de priorité dans l'identification de la philosophie analytique?

Michael Dummett

Comme vous l'avez dit, on ne peut certainement pas le faire *par le contenu*. On pourrait prendre le parti de dire qu'une fois que la thèse de priorité est rejetée, nous sommes dans la philosophie post-analytique, ou quelque chose comme ça. On pourrait faire de cette thèse *la* caractéristique qui permet de définir ce type de philosophie, mais il me semble que nous aurions tort. En tout les cas, cela ne serait pas très utile.

Je pense que la grande différence entre les philosophes analytiques et les autres tient probablement au fait que tous les philosophes analytiques présupposent quelque chose qui ressemble au genre de sémantique qui sous-tend la logique mathématique, autrement dit une sémantique frégéenne. Il n'est pas nécessaire qu'ils soient tous d'accord sur tous les points de détail. Le fait est qu'ils présupposent une structure de ce genre, dans laquelle les composantes des phrases ou des pensées - à supposer que l'on puisse prendre la structure des phrases comme modèle de la structure des pensées - contribuent à la valeur sémantique des phrases et des pensées complètes. Cette contribution sert à fixer leur vérité ou leur assertabilité.

Fabrice Pataut

C'est donc la compositionnalité qui constitue le trait caractéristique?

Michael Dummett

Oui, pas seulement la compositionnalité en tant que principe général, mais la compositionnalité accompagnée de l'idée d'une syntaxe proche de celle de la logique standard des prédicats. C'est assez vague et il est possible qu'il soit difficile d'appliquer ces critères à certains des philosophes du langage ordinaire, mais je pense que ces notions font partie de leur formation et que c'est cela qui distingue les philosophes analytiques des autres. Elles font partie intégrante de leur manière d'envisager les questions de la signification et du contenu.

L'antiréalisme et la philosophie de l'esprit

Fabrice Pataut

J'aimerais que nous parlions à nouveau de l'opposition entre la philosophie du langage et la philosophie de la pensée. Nous avons abordé ce problème brièvement tout à l'heure lorsqu'il a été question de la thèse de priorité et de son rôle dans l'identification de la philosophie analytique. Je voudrais que nous revenions sur les détails, notamment sur la possibilité d'une perspective antiréaliste en philosophie de l'esprit.

  Vous avez soutenu que le fondement de la notion de vérité d'une unité linguistique, d'une phrase ou d'un énoncé, consiste dans la distinction qu'il faut faire entre le fait qu'un locuteur a objectivement raison ou, au contraire, objectivement tort dans ce qu'il dit lorsqu'il produit une assertion[32].

Michael Dummett

Oui. C'est juste.

Fabrice Pataut

Si c'est le cas, la notion d'assertion est, d'une manière ou d'une autre, plus fondamentale que la notion de vérité.

Michael Dummett
Oui.

Fabrice Pataut
On voit mal comment on pourrait donner une analyse de la notion d'assertion sans prendre en compte des notions psychologiques, des notions comme celles de croyance, de désir, d'intention, etc...[33].

Si la notion d'assertion est plus fondamentale que celle de vérité, si nous avons besoin de cette notion pour donner une analyse philosophique de la notion de vérité et si nous devons faire appel à des notions psychologiques pour expliquer la notion d'assertion, alors les notions psychologiques joueront un rôle dans notre théorie de la vérité. Le devraient-elles?

Michael Dummett
Je comprends la question. Vous voulez que je réponde tout de suite où allez-vous en dire plus?

Fabrice Pataut
Non, non. Allez-y.

Michael Dummett
Je voudrais commencer par dire quelque chose pour clarifier ma position, bien que cela ne constitue pas une réponse directe à la question. Je pense que la notion d'assertion correcte ou incorrecte est beaucoup plus primitive que la notion de vérité.

Très souvent, vous entendez les philosophes dire « Les énoncés de tel ou tel type n'ont pas de conditions de vérité déterminées ». Il y a des gens qui soutiennent cela à propos des conditionnels. Hilbert le pensait des énoncés arithmétiques avec des quantificateurs non restreints. Ce que ces gens font valoir, c'est que vous devez interpréter ces élocutions [*utterances*] comme constituant des assertions [*claims*]. C'est particulièrement clair dans les cas les plus simples, par exemple

dans l'interprétation hilbertienne des énoncés existentiels en termes de communications incomplètes. L'idée est que je suis justifié à les énoncer seulement si je suis capable de produire une instance. La distinction en jeu n'est pas entre la vérité objective et la fausseté objective, elle a trait à ce que *je* peux faire pour justifier *mon* assertion. Cela est tout à fait en accord avec l'idée d'assertion correcte ou incorrecte.

La différence entre cette perspective et le fait de considérer que l'assertion a une valeur de vérité objective tient au fait que la condition de vérité doit être indépendante de ma condition épistémologique ou de ce que je suis capable de faire, à moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'un énoncé qui porte sur ma propre personne. L'assertion est vraie ou fausse de manière déterminée, indépendamment du fait que je puisse ou non apporter une justification, alors que dans l'autre cas, nous concevons les choses en termes d'une possibilité de justification de ce que j'affirme.

C'est cela que je voulais dire lorsque j'ai dit que nous avions là un chemin en direction de la notion de vérité. Pour arriver à la notion de *vérité à proprement parler*, vous devez aller beaucoup plus loin, vous devez vous demander : Pourquoi ne puis-je prendre cela comme n'étant rien de plus qu'une assertion? Pourquoi dois-je lui conférer un caractère objectif, indépendant de moi?

L'étape que je rejetterais dans votre argument est l'idée qu'il faut expliquer l'assertion en ayant recours à des notions psychologiques. Je sais qu'à un certain moment Russell et Wittgenstein ont tous les deux soutenu cela, mais je n'y crois pas.

C'est une question embrouillée. Il y a l'acte d'assertion comme acte externe et la phrase que vous comprenez comme étant énoncée assertoriquement, et puis il y a l'acte interne du jugement, ce que vous effectuez lorsque vous jugez que quelque chose est vrai. Je pense qu'il est préférable de considérer que l'acte de jugement est une internalisation de l'acte externe d'assertion que de considérer que l'assertion est l'expression d'un état ou d'un acte interne.

Il y a, quelque part dans les *Investigations*, cette question :

Qu'est-ce que le jeu de langage de l'assertion? En fait, Wittgenstein pense que l'assertion n'est pas *une seule* chose, mais qu'il y a au contraire des cas différents et variés. Je pense néanmoins que cette question est tout à fait pertinente.

Nous sommes assez peu tentés d'expliquer ce qu'est donner un ordre en termes psychologiques[34]. D'ordinaire, si une personne se trouve dans une relation d'autorité par rapport à une autre au moment où elle lui donne un ordre, vous présupposez qu'elle veut que l'autre fasse ce qu'elle lui commande de faire. Vous n'avez nullement besoin de supposer qu'elle peut avoir d'*autres* motifs pour donner l'ordre. Le fait est que, si elle est *réellement* en position d'autorité, elle donne un ordre, et que cela a certains effets quels que soient les motifs pour lesquels elle l'a donné. Vous devez donner une description du jeu de langage qui consiste à donner des ordres et à les recevoir, et je pense que nous devons faire la même chose avec l'assertion. Ce n'est pas aussi évident dans le deuxième cas, parce que les conséquences des assertions ne sont pas aussi définies que celles des ordres. La description est donc beaucoup plus difficile à réaliser. Mais je pense que c'est cela qu'il faut décrire comme étant le langage de la communication, un langage qui consiste à *dire* des choses aux autres, plutôt que de parler des états internes. Je ne crois pas qu'il faille recourir à l'intention et à la croyance, sinon à un stade ultérieur.

Fabrice Pataut
Une description de l'acte linguistique d'assertion est donc tout ce dont nous avons besoin?

Michael Dummett
Oui, exactement.

Fabrice Pataut
Et nous pouvons faire cela sans jamais faire appel aux intentions, aux croyances et aux désirs, ou à quelque attitude propositionnelle que ce soit?

Michael Dummett

C'est ce que j'espère. Maintenant, si vous me dites « O.K. Allez-y. Faites le! », j'en suis incapable, parce que cette entreprise repose entièrement sur la théorie de la signification et que, au stade actuel, je ne sais pas comment m'y prendre. C'est néanmoins mon espoir.

Fabrice Pataut

Alors je ne vous le demanderai pas. Revenons de manière plus précise au réalisme et à la philosophie de l'esprit. Cette querelle du réalisme, telle que vous la concevez, ne peut concerner uniquement les phrases et les énoncés, pour au moins trois raisons.

Premièrement, parce que nous évaluons également les croyances en termes de vérité et de fausseté. Deuxièmement, parce que la notion de signification est une notion *cognitive*. C'est ce que les usagers et les agents compétents comprennent ou connaissent lorsqu'ils comprennent les mots et les phrases d'un langage. Troisièmement, il est clair que la querelle porte sur la question de savoir quel *concept* de vérité nous pouvons légitimement former.

Le débat ne porte donc pas uniquement sur la compréhension ou la compétence linguistique, mais également sur la formation des concepts. Ne pourrait-on pas ou, mieux, ne *devrait*-on pas comprendre ce débat comme un débat de philosophie de l'esprit à part entière, un débat qui ne concerne pas seulement la signification des phrases, mais également le contenu mental?

Michael Dummett

Il est possible que je sois d'accord avec vous. Je ne penserais certainement pas que ce problème est d'une grande importance pour les querelles métaphysiques du réalisme si je pensais qu'il ne s'agit de rien de plus qu'une affaire de langage, de rien de plus qu'un peu de sémantique.

Nous parlions il y a un moment de la thèse de priorité. Si vous êtes un disciple de Evans ou de Peacocke et si vous pensez que vous devez décrire la structure de la pensée indépendamment de son

expression linguistique, vous vous trouvez en présence de la même dichotomie entre une analyse en termes de conditions de vérité, de ce qui doit être le cas pour que la pensée soit vraie, et une analyse en termes de justification, en termes de nos capacités à reconnaître que la pensée est vraie. La même question se pose et elle est explicitement posée chez Evans et chez Peacocke.

Fabrice Pataut

Il n'y aurait donc aucun avantage à concevoir ce débat comme un débat de philosophie de l'esprit?

Michael Dummett

Non, je ne le pense pas. Comme vous savez, je crois à la thèse de priorité. La différence entre ces deux approches est que l'approche par le biais de la philosophie de l'esprit ou de la pensée penche en direction du solipsisme. Il y est question des sujets individuels et du contenu qu'un sujet individuel peut donner à une pensée, de la manière dont *il* reconnaît la pensée comme vraie, etc... En règle générale, cela n'a pas grand chose à voir avec la communication. Je pense au contraire que vous ne trouverez pas de bonnes réponses si vous ne discutez pas ces questions en termes de communication. Evidemment, nous ouvrons là un débat très large.

Fabrice Pataut

Il faut distinguer deux points à propos de la thèse de priorité. Il y a d'une part une question de méthodologie et, d'autre part, une question qui a trait au contenu du débat sur le réalisme. Il faut d'une part décider si les questions de la philosophie de la pensée ne peuvent être approchées que par le biais de la philosophie du langage, autrement dit si le langage est prioritaire par rapport à la pensée dans l'ordre de l'explication. C'est, disons, la question méthodologique.

Michael Dummett

Oui. O.K.

Fabrice Pataut

Une *autre* question est de décider si le débat envisagé concerne
également le contenu mental. Il me semble que nous devons répondre
par « oui » à cette deuxième question, parce que ce qui fait l'objet du
débat est tout autant de savoir si la signification d'une phrase est
déterminée par ses conditions de vérité que de savoir si le contenu de
la pensée qu'elle exprime l'est.

Il y a donc deux questions : la question méthodologique et la
question du contenu du débat, et il me semble que la position très
tranchée que vous adoptez quant à la première est logiquement distincte
de celle que vous pourriez vouloir adopter quant à la deuxième. Le
renversement de la thèse de priorité, de ce que vous appelez l'axiome
fondamental de la philosophie analytique, ne ferait alors aucune
différence. Comme le montrent les travaux de Evans et de Peacocke,
nous héritons simplement des mêmes problèmes.

Michael Dummett

Oui, je crois que c'est tout à fait vrai. C'est une question de
méthodologie et vous héritez des mêmes problèmes. C'est pourquoi,
dans une large mesure, comme vous l'avez dit, le renversement de la
thèse de priorité ne constitue pas un obstacle à la communication entre
les parties en jeu. Il reste néanmoins un point possible de désaccord
qui, lui, concerne la méthodologie : le philosophe de la pensée ne
prendra pas sérieusement en compte ce qui a trait à l'échange verbal,
bien qu'il soit évident que le langage soit prioritaire dans l'ordre de
l'explication. Le langage est une chose communautaire. C'est avant tout
un instrument de communication.

Fabrice Pataut

C'est donc pour cette raison que vous tenez à défendre la thèse de
priorité, parce que le langage est une chose communautaire, une chose
que nous partageons?

Michael Dummett
Oui.

Fabrice Pataut
Mais les *pensées* frégéennes sont également une chose communautaire. On pourrait très bien tenir à la thèse de priorité pour des raisons essentiellement frégéennes, par peur qu'une tentative d'analyse de la pensée nue, sans son vêtement linguistique, nous conduise à une confusion entre les pensées, les *Gedanken*, et les représentations internes subjectives, les *Vorstellungen*.

Michael Dummett
Oui. Tout à fait.

Fabrice Pataut
Quelqu'un pourrait donc invoquer un argument frégéen en faveur de la thèse de priorité en faisant valoir qu'elle a l'avantage inestimable de nous empêcher de tomber dans le piège du psychologisme. Mais qu'est-ce que le piège du psychologisme sinon croire que les pensées (objectives) font partie du courant de conscience (subjectif)?

La question cruciale est donc de savoir si la confusion entre *Gedanke* et *Vorstellung* est une conséquence inévitable de l'abandon de la thèse de priorité. Supposons que nous suivions la suggestion de Evans mentionnée tout à l'heure. Sommes-nous par là-même en train de faire de la psychologie au sens critiqué par Frege et Husserl? Sommes-nous obligés de soutenir que la façon particulière dont le référent est pensé, son mode de présentation au niveau de la pensée, fait parti du flux de la conscience?

Michael Dummett
Pas nécessairement. Je pense que vous avez raison.

Fabrice Pataut
Ce que voulais suggérer, c'est qu'il est peut-être possible de suivre la

suggestion de Evans sans s'empêtrer dans les choses abominables que
Frege et Husserl ont fustigé sous le nom de « psychologisme ».

Michael Dummett

Bien sûr, il serait beaucoup trop précipité de dire « Dès que vous faites
cela, vous tombez dans le psychologisme ». Ce n'est pas ce que je dis,
mais je crois qu'il est nécessaire que le philosophe de la pensée, tout
comme le philosophe du langage, respecte le principe du contexte. Si
nous considérons la manière dont Evans parle de cette façon
particulière de penser, des références singulières, de la pensée
singulière, etc..., il nous faut reconnaître que la manière de penser un
objet fait partie d'une pensée complète. Cela n'a aucun sens d'en parler
indépendamment...

Fabrice Pataut

...du contexte dans lequel le mode de présentation est enchâssé.

Michael Dummett

Exactement, c'est-à-dire indépendamment du contexte déterminé par la
pensée que, comme on dit, « quelque chose est le cas » [*something is
the case*] avec l'objet en question. Vous devez vous demander ce
qu'est avoir une pensée complète. A moins de tomber dans les
explications psychologisantes, vous devez traiter cela à la Frege,
comme l'objet d'une attitude propositionnelle.

C'est exactement ce que fait Peacocke. Il construit tout en
commençant par caractériser les attitudes propositionnelles qu'un être
qui pourrait très bien ne pas posséder de langage peut néanmoins
rendre manifeste.[35]

Fabrice Pataut

Et ces pensées sont des pensées au sens frégéen.

Michael Dummett

Absolument. Elles le sont et ce sont les objets des croyances, des

désirs, etc...

Je ne pense pas que ce programme fonctionnera, mais je ne pense pas non plus qu'on puisse l'accuser sans plus attendre de psychologisme. Si on peut caractériser les attitudes propositionnelles sans faire référence à leur expression, cela marchera. Je ne pense tout simplement pas que les gens convaincus par ce genre d'approche aient réussi à faire cela.

Fabrice Pataut
Vous êtes vraiment très pessimiste quant à l'avenir de la philosophie de l'esprit. Que pensez-vous des sciences cognitives?

Michael Dummett
Je suis pessimiste quant aux sciences cognitives, mais je ne suis pas pessimiste quant aux gens qui s'orientent vers la philosophie de l'esprit. Premièrement, je pense qu'il feront un grand nombre de découvertes même si leur travail est fondé sur une mauvaise prémisse, même s'ils ont tort de renverser la thèse de priorité. Ce qu'ils découvriront restera comme un acquis et ils pourront même le transposer à la sphère du langage si jamais ils reviennent à la thèse de priorité.

Deuxièmement, je pense que même si la thèse de priorité doit être rejetée, il sera très intéressant de voir exactement où un programme fondé sur le rejet de cette thèse peut aller.

C'est une question très difficile. Même Frege pensait que la thèse de priorité ne valait que relativement à *nous*. Il reste la question de savoir ce qui fait que nous pouvons saisir les pensées par le biais du langage. Si ces gens ont raison, ils nous doivent une explication de ce fait contingent.

Fabrice Pataut
Il y a une tendance très nette, à l'intérieur même du mouvement analytique, à abandonner la philosophie du langage en faveur de la philosophie de l'esprit. Cette tendance est certainement très forte aux

Etats-Unis et la distance semble se creuser considérablement entre les anglais et les américains.

Michael Dummett
Oui et cela ne me trouble pas particulièrement.

Fabrice Pataut
Vraiment?

Michael Dummett
Non, parce que je pense que la philosophie américaine est dans une très large mesure sur une mauvaise pente.

Fabrice Pataut
Vous voulez parler de la philosophie de l'esprit, du matérialisme, du physicalisme?

Michael Dummett
Oui. Cela ne mènera nulle part.

Fabrice Pataut
En tous les cas, pour revenir à la philosophie de l'esprit, cela nous a amené à une situation diamétralement opposée à celle dans laquelle se trouvaient Brentano et Husserl. Ils voyaient dans l'intentionnalité la marque du mental. Nous avons très nettement tendance à nous concevoir comme des êtres en chair et en os, comme des choses physiques, et nous nous demandons : Comment *cela* pourrait-il bien avoir des croyances et des intentions?[36]

Michael Dummett
C'est une très bonne question philosophique, mais je préférerais que les philosophes anglais se tournent vers ce qui se passe dans d'autres pays européens plutôt que vers les Etats-Unis.

Fabrice Pataut

Il est curieux de voir que votre travail y a très peu d'écho, mis à part les critiques dont nous avons parlé tout à l'heure. Très peu de gens prennent la peine de vous lire.

Michael Dummett

Il y a Putnam.

Fabrice Pataut

Bien sûr, il y a Putnam, Brian Loar, Paul Horwich.... On peut dire la même chose à propos de Gareth Evans. Très peu de philosophes américains se sont donnés la peine de le lire.

Michael Dummett

C'est vrai et c'est vraiment dommage. Putnam est en partie responsable de cela. Il a écrit un compte rendu de lecture, stupide à mon sens, de *The Varieties of Reference* expliquant qu'on pouvait simplement ne pas en tenir compte. C'est une erreur de jugement très grave de sa part. Il y a des trésors dans ce livre.

L'antiréalisme et l'éthique

Fabrice Pataut

Je voudrais vous poser une question sur l'éthique. Ce sera la dernière.

Il n'existe probablement pas de position philosophique que l'on pourrait définir comme un antiréalisme *global* et qui consisterait dans la somme de tous les antiréalismes, disons locaux : l'antiréalisme en mathématiques, l'antiréalisme à propos du monde naturel, de la vie mentale d'autrui, du passé, des valeurs, des qualités secondes, etc...

Michael Dummett

Il y en a peut-être une.

Fabrice Pataut

Peut-être, mais le fait est que vous n'avez jamais proposé d'argument en faveur d'une position de ce genre.

Michael Dummett

Non, jamais.

Fabrice Pataut

En revanche, vous avez très souvent insisté sur le fait qu'il y a un ensemble de querelles philosophiques qui ont la forme commune d'un conflit entre une interprétation réaliste et une interprétation antiréaliste de différentes classes d'énoncés. Ce débat, tel que vous le concevez et tel que d'autres comme Crispin Wright l'ont conçu après vous, s'applique très certainement aux énoncés éthiques. Il s'agit alors de la question du réalisme vis-à-vis des énoncés portant sur les faits moraux ou les valeurs morales. Je voudrais vous poser la question suivante : Quelle forme doit prendre une critique du réalisme en éthique?

  Laissez moi donner quelques précisions. Il me semble qu'il y a au moins deux manières d'exprimer le réalisme moral, une première en termes de faits et une deuxième en termes de valeurs. En termes de faits cela devrait donner la chose suivante : Il y a des faits moraux objectifs qui font partie intégrante et constitutive du monde et le but de la délibération morale est de les découvrir.

Michael Dummett

Oui, tout à fait.

Fabrice Pataut

Disons qu'il y a par exemple le *fait* moral objectif que l'esclavage est injuste.

  Nous pourrions également exprimer le réalisme moral en termes de *valeurs* et nous dirions alors que le réaliste est celui qui pense que le but de la délibération morale est de découvrir quelles valeurs nous devons adopter ou rejeter et que, lorsque nous découvrons cela, nous

découvrons quelque chose d'objectif. Certaines actions, pratiques et institutions doivent être adoptées ou critiquées précisément parce qu'elles laissent s'épanouir ou encouragent l'adoption de valeurs que nous sommes *objectivement justifiés* d'accepter ou de rejeter. Pour en rester à notre exemple, le réaliste qui voudrait condamner l'esclavage exprimerait sa position en faisant valoir que les valeurs associées à l'institution et à la pratique de l'esclavage doivent être rejetées et que les raisons que nous avons de le faire sont *objectives*. Le but de la délibération morale est de trancher les cas éventuellement plus délicats que ceux de l'esclavage, par exemple ceux de l'euthanasie et de l'avortement.

Il me semble qu'un argument antiréaliste contre le réalisme moral *exprimé en termes de faits* devrait être un argument en faveur d'une forme de non cognitivisme : Les affirmations morales sont vides du point de vue cognitif au sens où nous ne pouvons pas rapporter de faits moraux.

La question que je veux vous poser est la suivante : A quoi devrait ressembler un argument antiréaliste contre le réalisme moral *exprimé en termes de valeurs*? Un antiréaliste doit-il soutenir une position de type relativiste, qui consisterait à faire valoir que nos actions, pratiques et institutions ne sont justes ou injustes que relativement à un ensemble de croyances culturellement conditionnées qui sont à l'arrière-plan de nos justifications? Si c'est le cas, l'antiréaliste n'est-il pas conduit à affirmer que nos « justifications » en matière d'éthique sont fondées sur des préjugés que nous ne pouvons éliminer?

Avez-vous l'intention d'argumenter en faveur d'une position de type antiréaliste en éthique? Si oui, quelle est cette position et comment comptez-vous faire?

Michael Dummett
Je ferai de mon mieux pour vous répondre. Ma réponse ne pourra être que programmatique. Je dois malheureusement vous avouer que je n'ai jamais pensé à ce problème. Ce n'est pas que je croie que nous

pouvons nous passer de cette réflexion. Je ne lui ai tout simplement pas consacré beaucoup de temps.

Il semble assez certain que l'application des idées antiréalistes à l'éthique doit changer les termes du débat, pour la raison suivante. Le genre d'antiréalisme que j'envisage ne revient en aucun cas à une forme de subjectivisme. La position à défendre doit être complètement objective, ou supposer l'objectivité, au sens où la question de savoir si un énoncé, par exemple un énoncé éthique, est justifié ou non est une question qui doit être tranchée objectivement. Prenez le cas des mathématiques. Disposer d'une preuve ou, au contraire, ne pas en disposer, est quelque chose d'objectif.

Ce qui nous préoccupe n'est pas qu'un énoncé éthique dise quelque chose de vrai d'une réalité morale indépendante. Nous sommes en train de parler d'affirmations [*claims*] dont la justification est objectivement valide [*sound*] ou ne l'est pas. Si l'on doit adopter une position antiréaliste en éthique, il ne fait aucun doute que cette position ne peut être une position subjectiviste. Je pense que nous aurions également tort de la qualifier de non cognitiviste. La justification *est* une affaire cognitive.

Il faut se garder de penser que la seule chose qui puisse s'opposer à une conception subjectiviste de l'éthique se réduit à l'idée que les énoncés éthiques décrivent une réalité qui existe indépendamment de nous, ou sont objectivement vrais ou faux en vertu du fait qu'ils réussissent à la décrire ou, au contraire, qu'ils n'y réussissent pas. L'explication de ces énoncés doit prendre en compte le fait que ceux qui les produisent doivent en principe être capables de les justifier. Il faudrait aller plus loin dans cette recherche et je ne peux pas vous dire maintenant en quoi une justification dans ce domaine devrait consister.

Fabrice Pataut
La question de savoir en quoi pourrait consister la justification d'un énoncé *normatif* me parait particulièrement intéressante pour un antiréaliste.

Michael Dummett

Oui. Je ne peux pas vous dire grand chose sur ce sujet. Je ne vais pas m'y essayer ici et maintenant, mais le genre de chose que vous devez faire si vous tenez à savoir à quoi doit ressembler l'antiréalisme en éthique, est de chercher en direction d'une élaboration de la notion de justification morale. Pour finir, cela ressemblera probablement à une position mitigée.

Fabrice Pataut

Comme celle de Wiggins, peut-être, qui tente de défendre quelque chose qui ressemble au cognitivisme, mais avec une sous-détermination des revendications morales[37]?

A première vue - mais si Wiggins a raison, c'est tout simplement superficiel - il semble que le cognitivisme soit un allié naturel du réalisme, tout comme il semble que le théisme soit également un allié du réalisme.

Vous parlez du théisme dans les dernières pages de *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*[38].

Michael Dummett

Très peu.

Fabrice Pataut

Très peu, soit, mais assez pour suggérer, si je ne me trompe, que le théisme n'est pas nécessairement un allié du réalisme.

Michael Dummett

C'est vrai qu'il ne l'est pas. Je voudrais bien évidemment argumenter en ce sens.

Je vais passer illégitimement à quelque chose d'autre mais tant pis. Revenons à Platon et au bon vieux dilemme : Est-ce que quelque chose est bon parce que Dieu le veut, ou est-ce que Dieu le veut parce que c'est bon? A. J. Ayer faisait preuve d'un grand enthousiasme pour argumenter que la seconde partie de la question n'est rien de plus

qu'une suggestion   invalide et que, par conséquent, la considération de Dieu n'est pas pertinente pour les jugements éthiques[39]. Wittgenstein, en revanche, penchait très nettement en faveur de la première suggestion et considérait que la deuxième est complètement superficielle.

Il me semble qu'une personne qui pense avoir des raisons de croire que Dieu commande, veut, ou désire que nous agissions d'une certaine manière, a par là-même une raison suffisante d'agir de cette manière. Elle doit donc recourir à un moyen particulier de savoir quelle est la volonté de Dieu. La conception traditionnelle a au contraire consisté à faire valoir que nous percevons ce qui est bien et ce qui est mal, et que nous déduisons à partir de là ce que Dieu veut que nous fassions. Je ne vous cache pas que je pense que *notre* argument doit certainement emprunter ce deuxième chemin.

Fabrice Pataut
Nous avons parlé pendant très longtemps. Nous pourrions peut-être nous arrêter là. Je vous remercie.

Michael Dummett
Merci à vous. J'ai beaucoup apprécié notre discussion.

Notes

1.   *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, Duckworth, Londres (2ème éd., 1981); Préface à la deuxième édition, p. xv.
2.   *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, Duckworth, Londres (1973; éd. revue 1981); a été suivi de *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*, Duckworth, Londres (1981), de *Frege and other Philosophers*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1991) et de *Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics*, Duckworth, Londres (1991).
3.   *Truth and other Enigmas*, Harvard U.P., Cambridge, Mass. (1978) p. xii.
4.   Pour ledit slogan, on se reportera à Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Investigations*

philosophiques, Gallimard, Paris, 1961, I, § 43 et également à *Le cahier bleu et le cahier brun*, Gallimard, Paris (1965) p. 30. En ce qui concerne l'interprétation de Dummett, on se reportera à "What Is A Theory of Meaning(II)?" in *Truth and Meaning - Essays in Semantics*, G. Evans & J. McDowell, eds., Clarendon Press, Oxford (1976) p. 135.

5.   Voir par exemple: *Philosophie de la logique*, Les éditions de minuit, Paris, ch. 1, sect. 2 et ch. 2, sect. 3.

6.   Gottlob Frege, *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik, Begriffsschriftlich abgeleitet*, Band I: H. Pohle, Jena (1893); Band II: H. Pohle, Jena (1903); trad. angl. partielle et int. par M. Furth: *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic - Exposition of the System*, Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley (1964).

7.   Gottlob Frege, *Les fondements de l'arithmétique*, trad. et int. C. Imbert, Le Seuil, Paris (1969).

8.   L'idée est défendue par Dummett dans l'article "La base philosophique de la logique intuitionniste" in: *Philosophie de la logique*, ch. 2.

9.   Sur les questions de l'harmonie et du holisme, on pourra se reporter au très utile article de Pascal Engel: "Holisme, molécularité et constantes logique" dans: *Essais sur le sens et la réalité*, D. Laurier, éd., Vrin-Bellarmin, Paris-Montréal (1992) et à Neil Tennant: *Anti-Realism and Logic*, Vol. 1, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1987) notamment aux ch. 6, 7, 9 et 10.

On trouvera une critique détaillée des systèmes classiques de déduction naturelle dans Michael Dummett: *Elements of Intuitionism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1977) aux ch. 1 et 7.

10.   Voir "La vérité" dans *Philosophie de la logique*, ch. 1.

11.   On consultera à ce propos l'ouvrage de Jacques Bouveresse: *Le pays des possibles - Wittgenstein, les mathématiques et le monde réel*, Les éditions de minuit, Paris (1988). Pour une introduction rapide et informelle à l'intuitionnisme, on peut se reporter à A. Heyting: *Intuitionism - An Introduction*, North Holland Publishing Comp., Amsterdam (1971) ch. 1.

12.   Voir par exemple *Philosophie de la logique*, p. 97.

13.   Dummett l'envisage en détail dans l'article "Realism", *Synthese*, vol. 52, n°1, (1982) pp. 55-112.

14.   *Truth and other Enigmas*, p. xii.

15.   Nelson Goodman: *The Structure of Appearance*, Harvard U. P., Cambridge, Mass. (1951). On peut lire le compte rendu critique de Dummett, "The Structure of Appearance: dans *Truth and other Enigmas*, pp. 29-37.

16. Rudolph Carnap: *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, Weltkreis-Verlag, Berlin
     (1938) trad. angl. de R. A. Berkeley: *The Logical Construction of the
     World*, University of California Press, Berkeley (1967).

17. R. Carnap: "Testability and Meaning", *Philosophy of Science*: vol. 3
     (octobre 1936) pp. 419-471 (pour les sections I-III) et vol. 4 (janvier
     1937) pp. 1-40 (pour la section IV).

18. Michael Devitt: *Realism and Truth*, Princeton U.P (1984) ch.12.

19. Stephen Schiffer: *Remnants of Meaning*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass.
     (1987) sect. 8.4. J'ai essayé beaucoup trop brièvement de répondre à ces
     accusations dans la préface de *Philosophie de la logique*, sect. 4, pp. 21-
     25.

20. Willard v. O. Quine: "Deux dogmes de l'empirisme" dans *De Vienne à
     Cambridge, l'héritage du positivisme logique de 1950 à nos jours*, P.
     Jacob, éd., préf. et trad., Gallimard, Paris (1980).

21. Dummett a également proposé de considérer que la notion de falsification
     est plus primitive que celle de vérification dans: "What Is A Theory Of
     meaning (II)", *Truth and Meaning - Essays in Semantics*, G. Evans & J.
     McDowell, eds., Clarendon Press, Oxford (1976) sect. V.

22. *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*, trad. fr. M.-A. Lescourret,
     Gallimard, Paris (1991).

23. Hans Sluga: *Gottlob Frege*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Londres (1980).

24. Les *Logische Untersuchungen* ont été publiées pour la première fois en
     1901 chez Niemeyer, à Halle. La deuxième édition, considérablement
     remaniée, date de 1913. Pour la traduction française, on consultera:
     Edmund Husserl, *Recherches Logiques*, Tome 1: *Prolégomènes à la
     logique pure*; Tome 2 [2 vol.]: *Recherches pour la phénoménologie et la
     théorie de la connaissance*; Tome 3: *Eléments d'une élucidation phéno-
     ménologique de la connaissance*, tr. fr. H. Elie, A. L. Kelkel et R.
     Scherer, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris (1959-1962).

25. On consultera à ce propos les articles "The Relative Priority of Thought
     and Language" dans *Frege and other Philosophers*, Clarendon Press,
     Oxford (1991) pp. 315-324 et "The Philosophy of Thought and the Phil-
     osophy of Language" dans *Mérites et limites des méthodes logiques en
     philosophie*, J. Vuillemin, éd., J. Vrin, Paris (1986) pp. 141-155, suivi
     d'une discussion avec Pascal Engel, pp. 155-168. Jacques Bouveresse
     adopte une position sceptique vis-à-vis de l'abandon de cette thèse dans
     sa *Présentation générale* à *Philosophie de la logique et philosophie du*

langage I, Lectures Philosophiques, vol. IV, Odile Jacob, Paris (1991) pp. 7-23.

26. *The Varieties of Reference*, J. McDowell, ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford (1982).

27. *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*, pp. 11-12.

28. G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker: *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning, Vol. 1 of An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations*, B. Blackwell, Oxford (1980); Vol. 2: *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, B. Blackwell, Oxford (1985).

29. *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*, p. 13. J'ai distingué deux formulations de la thèse de priorité dans un compte rendu de lecture de ce livre intitulé "Les origines de la philosophie analytique" dans *Lettre de l'Association Henri Poincaré* n°6 (avril 1992) pp. 19-21, à la page 20, colonne 1. La thèse doit être formulée comme une thèse de préséance méthodologique qui accorde la prérogative du rang au langage et qui écarte a priori la possibilité d'analyser la pensée sans analyser au préalable le langage. Qu'une analyse philosophique *puisse* simplement conduire à une théorie philosophique de la pensée relève bien évidemment d'une considération beaucoup plus faible. C'est le principe dans sa formulation forte qui est au cœur de l'objection dummettienne de fond à une approche de type husserlien à la question de savoir ce qu'est saisir ou avoir une pensée. On ne peut à la fois recourir à la notion husserlienne de noème, qui résulte d'une généralisation de la notion frégéenne de *Sinn* à la sphère des actes en général *et* appliquer le principe méthodologique qui exclut précisément que l'analyse de la pensée puisse être menée à bien sans l'analyse *préalable* du langage. Voir également sur ce point les articles "Conscience" et "Pensée" dans mon glossaire pour *Les origines de la philosophie analytique*, pp. 219-226.

30. Nelson Goodman: "A World of Individuals", réimp. dans *Problems and Projects*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Indianapolis et New York (1972) p. 159.

31. Clarendon Press, Oxford (1985) pp. 291-321. La phrase citée se trouve à la p. 301.

32. *Truth and other Enigmas*, p. xvii.

33. Dummett, *loc. cit.*

34. Sur la distinction entre les ordres et les assertions, on se reportera à *Philosophie de la logique*, ch. 1, sect. 2, pp. 53-62.

35.   Christopher Peacocke, *Thoughts: an Essay on Content*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford (1986).

36.   On trouvera un aperçu juste et concis de cette situation dans l'article de Jerry Fodor, "The big idea: Can there be a science of the mind?", *TLS* (July 3, 1992) pp. 5-7.

37.   David Wiggins: *Needs, Values, Truth*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford (1987). Pour une introduction au débat entre réalistes et antiréalistes en éthique, on pourra se reporter aux articles réunis dans le volume *Essays on Moral Realism*, G. Sayre-McCord, ed., Cornell U. P., Ithaca et Londres (1988) et à l'article de Stephen Schiffer: "Meaning and Value", *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 87, n°11 (Nov. 1990) pp. 602-614. J'ai présenté un argument en faveur du réalisme moral dans "Vérité morale et justification morale", *Le réalisme moral*, éd. R. Ogien, Presses Universitaires de France (1998) Paris.

38.   Michael Dummett: *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, Duckworth, Londres (1991) ch. 15, pp. 348-351. Sur la question du théisme et de la croyance religieuse, on pourra également consulter l'entretien avec Dummett réalisé par Mary Tiles et Kim Davis, "Philosophical Doubts and Religious Certainties-An Interview with Michael Dummett", *Cogito*, vol. 1, n° 1 (1987) pp. 1-3.

39.   On trouvera une critique de la théologie au chapitre VI de son *Language, Truth and Logic*, Gollancz, Londres (1936), réimp. par Dover Publications, Inc., New York (1952).

Note biographique et bibliographique sur Michael Dummett

Michael Dummett est né en 1925 et vit à Oxford. Il a enseigné aux universités de Berkeley, Princeton, Harvard, Stanford, Bologne et du Ghana. Il a occcupé jusqu'à sa retraite la chaire Wykeham de logique à l'université d'Oxford.

Il est l'auteur de plusieurs ouvrages décisifs sur Frege: *Frege - Philosophy of Language* (Duckworth, Londres, 1973), *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Duckworth, Londres, 1981) et *Frege - Philosophy of Mathematics* (Duckworth, Londres, 1991). Ses articles de philosophie du langage, de la logique et des mathématiques sont réunis dans trois volumes: *Truth and other Enigmas* (Harvard U.P., Cambridge, Mass., 1978), *Frege and other Philosophers* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991) et *The Seas of Language* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993). On lui doit aussi une contribution importante à la logique et à la sémantique intuitionnistes: *Elements of Intuitionism* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977) et un livre historique sur l'histoire de la philosophie analytique, *The Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Duckworth, Londres, 1993). Ses conférences William James, prononcées à Harvard en 1976, ont été publiées sous le titre *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Duckworth, Londres, 1991).

Michael Dummett a également contribué à la théorie du vote. On lui doit à ce propos *Voting Procedures* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984) et *Principles of Electoral Reform* (Oxford U.P., Oxford, 1997).

Il faut enfin mentionner sa contribution d'expert mondial sur le jeu de tarot, établie par *The Game of Tarot* (Duckworth, Londres, 1980), *Twelve Tarot Games* (Duckworth, Londres, 1980) et, en collaboration avec R. Decker et T. Depaulis, *A Wicked Pack of Cards* (Duckworth, Londres, 1997).

Michael Dummett a joué un rôle important dans la campagne contre la discrimination raciale en Angleterre, notamment en participant activement à la *Campaign Against Racial Discrimination* jusqu'à son démantélement en 1967. Il est l'un des fondateurs du *Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants*, qui lui a succédé.

Book review

B.J. van der Walt, *Afrocentric or Eurocentric? Our Task in a multi-cultural South Africa*, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education: Institute for Reformational Studies, 1997.
Reviewed by Sam Radithlalo.

When I was asked to do a review of B.J. van der Walt's book, *Afrocentric or Eurocentric? Our Task in a multicultural South Africa*, I was uneasy. I confess to not being a philosopher. As I read it, however, I began to reflect on how my cultural baggage made me more attuned to the text's slippages, strengths and weaknesses, how I felt untouched by its interpellative strain. As a text seeking to mediate the uncertain rapids of South African democratic changes, it reveals and obscures a great deal of cultural, economic, political and religious tensions presently rippling through Mzantsi Afrika.

My immediate observation is how the author inscribes himself firmly in the text, so there is very little ambiguity about where his loyalties lie (Van der Walt, 9;11). To judge by the book, it is directed at students who wish to take the compulsory Christian Philosophy course in the Faculty of Arts. Being a South African of the *ntu* cast, I have had my share of this brand of textbooks, i.e., written by white middle-class male authors with a virulent Christian (preferably Protestant) streak. These are usually produced by lecturers who may prescribe them where they work, or elsewhere in the country. For example, in the Eighties it was not unusual for a University of South Africa (UNISA) publication to be prescribed for all first year students in, say, Philosophy of Education I at the University of Zululand (UNIZUL). It was hoped that such students would emerge from the course all thinking the same, like cattle after the dip tank, which come out of it smelling the same. In this instance, one recalls a scene from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Penguin: 1952; 33-34). Standing at the bronze statue of the Founder of the Black college shown lifting a

metallic veil of ignorance from a kneeling slave, the unnamed narrator, about to be expelled, rhetorically asks if the veil is being truly lifted or firmly lowered into place. This review is, therefore, for me an interrogation of the past and, simultaneously, a configuration of the future.

The attempt to place Afrocentricism and Eurocentricism in South Africa under scrutiny is to be welcomed. It is a serious, far-reaching debate with no easy answers: for instance, since most of the Black population believe in the non-western doctors, should the Ministry of Health incorporate them in the hospitals for easier accessibility, with full medical aid schemes? Should this be countenanced by the various medical schemes in the country? Should business executives be competent with at least one African language in order to better understand their employees and trade union representatives? We have entered the soul-searching era. As the van der Walt book shows, whoever controls the agenda will emerge the stronger component of the polity.

My disappointment with the text is its outright Christian predicate. This predicate is used as a battering ram, notwithstanding the author's numerous disclaimers, to legitimize the Christian community's assertions that this is a truer religion emanating from culture that, with all its imperfections, is the way forward. Interrogating the very basis on which this culture-religion couplet rests is a good starting point. Those South Africans who have experienced the idiocy and horror of this couplet retain a healthy dose of scepticism born of self-preservation when confronted with it, particularly under the guise of scholarship. The parameters used to define/confine communities as 'Western' and 'African' need to be stretched to determine their strengths and fault lines. If these parameters are religiously inclined, then clearly it is incumbent on us to scrutinise this fundamental structural predicate. It is worth noting at the outset that recent scholastic investigations from Germany into the DNA of Europeans has conclusively shown that the former have little or nothing to do with Neanderthals but are Africans

whose genes underwent eons of mutations to produce what we now call 'White' people (*eM&G,* 15:07:1997).

Briefly, *Afrocentric or Eurocentric?* is divided into seven chapters that discuss, in an ascending order, the following concerns: the necessity of understanding cultural diversity; communalistic or individualistic cultural traits; conceptions of time from a Eurocentric or Afrocentric viewpoint; how, on discovering that one is 'western or African', one's thought processes conform to the cultural world view of either; which identity should South Africans subscribe to - 'western' or African; economic considerations emanating from the distinct diversity of the two paradigms, and lastly the transformation of culture in the name of God.

Van der Walt deploys two paradigms as a way of exposing cultural conflict between 'Africans and Westerners': one holds that religion and world view determine people's cultural perceptions, values, behaviour etc (*religious paradigm*) and the other which holds that socio-economic-political circumstances influence cultural perspectives and behaviour (*contextual/secular paradigm*). While he necessarily states that he 'rejects "religionism" as well as "contextualism" as explanations' , nevertheless he goes on immediately to lambast the reader with a religious perspective (*Afro or Euro?*, 12 & 15):

> Our first point of departure is the Biblical perspective that God reveals Himself as well as information about creation to all peoples and nations. We distinguish (not separate) this way of revealing Himself (so called "general" revelation in the history of theology) from His scriptural revelation in the Bible by calling it his creational revelation.

This is an imposition on the reader: while he chooses to reject 'religionism', van der Walt foregrounds the very religion of his choice, deploying his version of how religion may be seen as necessary to understand cultural dimensions of communities in South Africa. To reject religionism as a paradigm while working within its intercess is a problematic that van der Walt never fully resolves. While he claims that the two paradigms are 'the age-old false chicken and egg debate',

he never, not once, interrogates why we should believe him when he writes about 'God's creational revelation' as being absolute in humanity's cultures: 'The Christian faith, when truly based on God's Word (in creation, Scripture and Christ), is unique amongst all other religions. To me Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only Truth (John 14:6. Compare also Acts 4:12)'. No, we must all come into the Christian fold, whether we are 'aware or not' of God's creational revelation.

The most difficult aspect of the opening chapters is one which unproblematically couples Christianity with Europe, for by using 'white Westerners' (assuming that there are no 'black' Westerners, of course) van der Walt goes back to the days of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Statements such as these do not help to convince one of any progressive thinking on his part (*Afro or Euro?*, 19):

> If we compare with the West, we find a totally different
> perspective. From its starting point of individualism the
> relationship towards God is regarded as something indivi-
> dual requiring personal conversion, confession of guilt , faith
> and finally also personal salvation.

If the West itself is deconstructed, it will be found that far from being an integral part of this geographic expression, Christianity was rejected at precisely the same time that the mercantilist spirit of enterprise, leading to individualism, became prevalent. V.Y. Mudimbe (*The Idea of Africa*; 1994:30), whom van der Walt uses selectively (as with other scholars whom he does not consult), aptly shows that, having lost the papal states, the Roman Catholic Church began conniving with colonialists to 'spread christianity' and divide the material wealth not with non-Christians but with the secular authorities who made such adventures possible. For, in his 1493 *Inter Coetera* bull, Pope Alexander VI states:

> Among other works pleasing to the divine majesty and
> cherished of our heart, this assuredly ranks highest, that in
> our times the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be
> exalted and everywhere increased and spread, that the health

of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be over-
thrown and brought to the faith itself.
Following van der Walt, surely colonialism is part of 'God's creational
revelation'? As Mudimbe rightly points out, this implies that as God's
representative, the Pope is above kings whom he can 'give, grant and
assign forever [to European kings] countries and islands [newly] dis-
covered'. So, no natives anywhere outside the domain of the Christian
world had any right to the land on which they lived. For van der Walt,
supposedly a scholar of some distinction, to refuse to contextualise the
mercenary aspect of Christian intrusion in Africa while upholding, with
characteristic zeal, his euro-christian credentials in judging black
Africa, is the height of academic arrogance.

Further, it is contestable that Christianity is of Western origin. As
a scholar van der Walt ought to interrogate even the beginnings of
Christianity itself, not link it *apropos* with Europe and then impose it
on the reader. An interesting book by Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*
(London: Zed, 1988; 17-18) problematises the matter further by assert-
ing

> the fact that certain of these mythologies (such as the Bible)
> have survived from antiquity and have been integrated into
> medieval thought and ideology does not mean that they have
> any intrinsic value....Before any other people, the Egyptians
> introduce the concept of eternal and immanent moral justice,
> opening the way for humanist universalism Everywhere else,
> including pre Hellenistic Greece, the status of what one will
> later call the "soul" and the fate of the human being after
> death remain uncertain and vague....The universalist moral
> breakthrough of the Egyptian is the keystone of subsequent
> human thought. It takes several centuries, however, before
> this Egyptian invention becomes commonplace.

So, having borrowed heavily from the Egyptians, centuries later
Christians return to colonise the very people who gave them the basis
of a monotheistic religion. Surely, as a Christian scholar that he pro-

fesses himself to be, van der Walt is aware of Mourad Kamel's text, *The Civilization of Coptic Egypt* (Cairo, 1961)?

We can complicate matters still further by invoking Cheikh Anta Diop's assertion, in his text, *The African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1974; 1&4) that Egyptians were in fact Black:

> In contemporary descriptions of the ancient Egyptians, this question is never raised. Eyewitnesses of that period formally affirm that the Egyptians were Blacks. On several occasions Herodotus insists on the Negro character of the Egyptians and even uses this for indirect demonstrations...Undoubtedly the basic reason for this is that Herodotus, after relating his eyewitness account informing us that the Egyptians were Blacks, then demonstrated, with rare honesty (for a Greek), that Greece borrowed all the elements of her civilization, even the cult of the gods, and that Egypt was the cradle of civilization. Moreover, archaeological discoveries continually justify Herodotus against his detractors.

Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding Diop's assertions and findings, a scholar who wishes to inform and let students form their own, considered opinions ought to make them aware of such texts, not excise these from their knowledge. For van der Walt, it is enough that 'Historical research should also keep cognisance of the divine mystery in historical events' (*Afro or Euro*?, 84).

The objectionable and easily the most despicable mistake that van der Walt commits , even after having spoken to supposedly eminent scholars such as Professor Bob Goudwaard of the Free University in Amsterdam, is to become decidedly 'culturalist' in his text. 'Culturalism' will here mean a tendency to treat cultural characteristics as transhistorical constants (Amin, *Eurocentrism* , 6). A vignette from South Africa will hopefully reveal how shallow van der Walt's totalising strategy is of lumping every white person and every Black person as transhistorical beings. In the volatile past, South Africa produced an athlete of modest achievement, viz., Zola Budd. Since we

were then barred from the Olympics, she decided to run as a British
person. Paul Gilroy ('*There ain't no Black in the Union Jack*' London:
Hutchinson, 1987;62) writes:

> The problem [of national identity] appeared in somewhat different
> form during 1984 when the South African runner Zola Budd
> obtained British Citizenship within ten days of her application.
> Though her father claimed citizenship by descent, Ms Budd was
> not granted hers under the patriality rules which operate to
> exclude blacks. The Home Office admitted that her ancestry had
> been taken into account in their decision, but she was not natural-
> ized; she did not need to be. The ties were there for all to see.
> Her grandfather's house in now decaying inner-city Hackney was
> discovered by the *Daily Mail* and paraded as evidence of her
> historic roots. Even when she spoke in Afrikaans, the possibility
> that her culture might create obstacles to her being truly British
> was unmentioned. Unlike black settlers and their children, Zola
> was recognized as being of 'kith and kin' - an important category
> in the folk grammar of contemporary racism. The term is used to
> indicate the durability of national identity of the sons and daugh-
> ters of Britannia who come to inhabit what is known as the old
> commonwealth: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and now the
> Falklands.

Clearly van der Walt (and the British Home Office) neglects a funda-
mental principle of the discipline he is supposed to profess: Heraclitus's
injunction that 'One cannot step into the same river twice'. Things are
in constant flux, ever-changing and therefore not identical to
themselves throughout history. What we are made to realise in this text
is the use, through localisation, of 'the indiscernibility of identicals'.
The remarkable point that Gilroy puts forth with this episode may be
explained thus: if we invert the Serbian battle cry, then, for van der
Walt and his ilk, it means that wherever we may chance upon a white
person, there ends the West. More puzzling, still, is the collapsing of
Westerner with Afrikaner. At which point are these categories distinct,
or do they merely follow the 'Zola Budd stream of national identity'

through time? If we follow van der Walt's numerous charts and comparative tables, it would mean that every white person, irrespective of nationality, creed and culture, shares in the same unmediated culture throughout time: **all whites** are individualistic; eat to acquire new energy; are more intolerant and inclined towards conflict; need gargantuan personal space; are thorough planners, irritated with slow African time; are very punctual, etc., etc., etc. They are what **all Africans** are not. Accordingly, A is A but can never be Non-A (The Law of Contradiction) and, A cannot be different from itself ('white Westerners'); it is either A or it is not A (the law of the excluded middle). It is this essentialist stance that sees culture as fixed, immutable, unchanging. This is reductionist fallacy. What we are ultimately faced with here, notwithstanding denials to the contrary, is a systemic revisitation of 'racism without races'. Since biological racism is no longer valid, and fascism is on the retreat everywhere, a new form of racism, predicated on cultural differences, diversity and identity is possible. The dominant theme here is the emphasis on cultural diversity, difference, specificity and diversity which of course are the bane of right-wing parties: Jean-Marie Pen and Enoch Powell serve as ready examples. For instance, how can we explain this jibe: 'Africans may be aware of the fact that something should be completed by the end of the day, but they are not going to start hurrying. If they should hear about a friend in hospital, they may simply stop working and first visit their friend'?(*Afro or Euro?*, 68). This is directed at a people mercilessly exploited for three centuries, a people who made South Africa what it is today through unremitting sweat and toil. Another example: 'When one notices the impatience of small children from the western culture, one realises that they have already fully internalised the Western way of thinking about time because they keep asking the time and how long something is still going to take' (*Afro or Euro?*, 69). Without taking anything away from (hyper)active children, this clearly reveals the truism in Taguieff's assertion that 'Racism does not just biologize the cultural, it acculturates the biological' (*Telos*, 83; 109-122). Of course, the text is littered with such essentialist postulates,

unproblematically rendered as scholastic nuggets of wisdom. Crucially, this is a text supposedly meant to help lecturers 'understand' the African while making the African student 'understand' the Western mind. For example: 'Africans find the Western way of thinking and practising science difficult to understand. Obversely Western people find it difficult to gauge how African students think' (*Afro or Euro?*, 72). Nowhere, apart from Sibusiso Bhengu, South Africa's Minister of Education, is the African depicted at any lever of power, so the 'Westerner' must be made to 'understand' that under the 'new' South Africa propagating an open society, it is imperative to 'understand' the native's cultural orientation. In the past it was acceptable for students to put up with all sorts of racist practises and utterances from lecturers, lecturers, it needs to be added, who are not now facing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One wonders what happens at South African institutions where the opposite is true.

IV

Ultimately, this reviewer's sympathies and disappointment lie with the students who took the test and essay in helping the author come to an understanding of how cultural identity is perceived by the younger generation in South Africa (*Afro or Euro?* 95 ff). The effects of apartheid are clearly visible in the answers given by the students as one reads of the categories pertaining to their opinions about Western culture, notions of time, the spiritual world, customs and so forth. For instance, asked to gauge positively or negatively Western culture in Africa, Black students write on how appreciative they are of the Westerners having brought 'health services, food, hygiene, and higher standards of living...'. Further: 'The most important thing is that Westerners have brought education to Africa. Most of the important people in our country are important because of education' (104-5). Clearly these are students who have not been exposed to, say, Walter Rodney's text *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1981), Chinuweizu's *The West and the Rest of Us* (Enuu: Fourt Dimension Publisers, 1980), or Frantz Fanon's *The*

Wretched of the Earth (London: Penguin, 1978). White students also reveal their insularity: 'African culture never bothered me much. It is not as if I were unaware of the culture, also not that I was wholly against the people and their culture. It is more a case of it always having been there and me never being directly in contact with it'. Further: 'About the world of the spirits and religious views of the African (ancestral worship, witch doctors, initiation practises, etc.) no white student had anything positive to say. The standard reaction was that these were pagan superstitions'(109). One wonders if the text listed in the Bibliography of van der Walt's book, *African Philosophy in Search of an Identity* (D.A. Masolo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) was ever referred to or made available for the students' perusal. Given the schizophrenic nature of South Africa, both sets of students are caught in a time warp that this text does not alleviate. Nor is there any suggestion that, at a state university, students will be allowed to seriously engage in enquiries that they cannot now fathom. A ready example (*Afro or Euro?*, 117-119):

> The information with regard to ancestral worship...is very important. It indicates that prominent African theologians who want this to be an inherent part of African Christianity, are not merely fabricating - it is a living tissue also with ordinary people... [M]y question is whether this synthesis may be allowed... A white theologian, K. Nurnberger (1995), could not accept this... I agree with him.

Here, as elsewhere, the language of control is apparent. There is no attempt to bridge the divide: what the West has ordained is finite, and no amount of debate will convince 'white Westerners'. So, instead of seeing how the alienated Black South African students may benefit, at an institution of higher learning under the so-called new dispensation, from a short/long course on ancestrology for instance, we are necessarily referred to the Scriptures, the panacea of all our doubts. What 'white Westerners' deem *verboten* holds. To imply that we are witnessing a revelation is false: we are in fact witnessing a more efficient blinding, just as Ralph Ellison's narrator suspected.

V

The question, then, of what our task in multicultural South Africa is, is fraught with unnecessary complications of cultural tranhistoricity, what Paul Gilroy calls 'cultural insiderism', essentialism, and sheer obstinacy to seismic change. And it does not only happen at PUCHE, as the Makgoba Affair at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, has aptly demonstrated (see W.M. Makgoba, *Mokoko - The Makgoba Affair: A Reflection on Transformation* Florida: Vivlia, 1997). Van der Walt would have us take him seriously when he says, to wit: 'Because figures and numbers are precise signs, black students often find it difficult to cope with statistics in science. They do not think in such exact terms and do not understand why this is important. (It is probably also a reason why it is so difficult for the African to plan meticulously)' (*Afro or Euro?*, 85). The issue of Bantu education is not addressed, for we are in the 'new' South Africa. Nevertheless, Makgoba's sheer intellectual achievements make a mockery of van der Walt's preening assertion. Nor should we forget the achievements of Gordon Sibiya, a South African nuclear physicist. Malegapuru Makgoba is a world-renowned scientist, with honourable and distinguished academic work behind him. He has received thirty career honours and distinctions internationally, having worked at Oxford, the NIH and the PRMS. He was head-hunted to become Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at Wits. His one fatal flaw was to promise to Africanise and democratise the University 'kicking and screaming'. But in the process of engaging a powerful, 'incestuous' cabal who dared challenge his *curriculum vitae*, Makgoba himself forgot that: ' Once ideology, identity, culture or race are fundamentally challenged, both logic and rationality disappear even from the best minds' (*Mokoko*, 132). For five gruelling months, Makgoba and his detractors held the country spell-bound in a battle of CVs, allegations of research slush funds, mediocre teaching and research standards, Africanisation and/or the folly thereof overarched by an inept leadership. Perhaps symptomatic of this bitter struggle is the following (*Mokoko*, 178):

The...issue in the Africanisation debate is the fact that the word African has become synonymous with race rather than humanity - the diverse people and cultures of Africa that stretch over centuries. While most White South Africans accept that they are South Africans, they have yet to accept psychologically that they are African. For them an African is Black not White. This is largely due to our long history of racism that continues to exist among whites in various forms. So, the mention of Africanisation to them becomes a form of exclusion rather than inclusion.

I would recommend both texts (van der Walt and Makgoba's) to all who work in the South African Ministry of Education. It is important, now more than ever, for the Ministry to realise what Alvin Toffler speaks about when he notes that: 'A "powershift" does not merely transfer power. It transforms it' (*Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century* New York: Bantam: 1991; 4). For, as Njabulo S. Ndebele has observed (*The Sunday Independent*, August 24 1997), perhaps those in the business of education seriously need to be educated since, clearly, the debate about Afrocentricism or Eurocentricism are merely labels that have little or nothing to do with the full reality of national development In Mzantsi. If anything, this simplistic use of labels kills intellectual development rather than enhance it (Ndebele, *The Sunday Independent*, September 28 1997).

I am rooting for the students.

Book review

Gerald Joseph Wanjohi. *The Wisdom and Philosophy of the Gikuyu Proverbs. The Kihooto World-view.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 1997, 271 p.

Asnath Elelwani Khuba. *The Proverbs as Mirror of the Vhavenda Culture and Philosophy.* Sovenga: University of the North, MA-thesis 1985, 276 p. (Also available in the Special Collection of the Library of the University of Venda at Thohoyandou.)

Reviewed by Heinz Kimmerle.

It is an important issue of the work on African philosophy to use proverbs as a source of philosophy. Let me give a few names as examples: P. Tempels, W.E. Abraham, J.S. Mbiti, K. Gyekye. More recently, the theologian St. Nussbaum has launched a very comprehensive 'African Proverbs Project' which is sponsored by the PEW Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia and which has documentation centres in West Africa at Legon, in East Africa at Nairobi and in Southern Africa at Pretoria. W. Mieder, a scholar in literature who works at the collection of proverbs worldwide, has joined this project. He has already published an annotated bibliography on *African Proverb Scholarship* which contains 279 titles. I myself have tried to give a contribution to the methodological question of how a philosophical use of proverbs is possible. And I may regard it as a result of the cooperation between the Philosophy Departments of the University of Nairobi and Erasmus University Rotterdam over a number of years that G.J. Wanjohi has published the above mentioned book on philosophy in Gikuyu proverbs. During a stay as a visiting professor at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Venda, from May to October 1997, I came to know the MA-thesis of A.E. Khuba (see above), a colleague of the Department of Tshivenda at this university.

Here I want to indicate these two important studies on philosophy

in Gikuyu and Venda proverbs, and to give a short comparative review of them. Both studies start by giving an introduction to the history, world-view and culture of the (Ba)Gikuyu and (Vha)Venda people. This is regarded necessary because "proverbs are situational" (Kh, 186), they can only be understood adequately if the situation of their origin is reconstructed as far back as possible and if the situation in which they are used is taken into consideration. In this connection, one has to be aware of the fact that "one proverb can serve various situations" (Kh, 265), that it may offer "a variety of different truths" (Kh, 38, 63). And of course, proverbs must be given in the original language and interpreted within the context of that language. Wanjohi tells us, that it would be correct to speak of Gi-gikuyu language, but parallel to the habit that Ki-swahili is often spoken of as Swahili he chooses to simply say Gikuyu language (W, 33). The official name of Venda language is Tshivenda (which is commonly used now) or Luvenda (to which refers the MA-thesis of 1985). Here I follow Wanjohi's suggestion and speak of Gikuyu and Venda languages. Not being familiar with these languages I cannot give literal quotations, and in the names of the languages the diacritical signs are left out.

Khuba who has collected Venda proverbs, interprets them mainly as "aspects of oral art expressed within the whole social and literary context" (Kh, 186). Repeatedly, she refers to the literary form of proverbs, especially their shortness, pithiness, succinctness, and terseness, their forcefulness and allusiveness, their "abbreviated form", "figurative nature", and the relevance of rhythm for their interpretation (Kh, 11, 16, 18, 64, 179-181), most of which is already stated in R. Finnegan's work on oral literature.[4] Also Wanjohi, who concentrates on the philosophical impact of Gikuyu proverbs, examines in chapter two of his book *Proverbs as Figures of Speech* (W, 56-74). He finally comes to a "third degree of symbolization" in proverbs by distinguishing a "literal meaning", a "metaphorical meaning", and a "polysymbolical" and "multifarious" symbolization. The origin of proverbs is mainly an "inductive generalization" (W, 70-72). His favourite example for all that is: "A tree by the roadside does not lack

a scar". The literal and metaphorical meanings are rather easy to understand. But beyond them, there is some "universal truth" in it, which could be formulated as its meaning "that *anything* or *anybody* that is exposed to other things or people will not fail to display a mark or effect of this exposure or interaction" (W, 70/71).

It needs no special argument that proverbs are more important and more frequently used in cultures with primarily oral than in those with primarily written forms of communication and tradition. Their literary form makes them apt to effectively support memory. Therefore, it can be stated that traditional "African culture finds an embodiment in proverbs" (Kh, 19). They can be used in anthropological research; one can find the Venda people portrayed in them "as a hard-working and peacemaking nation", the main activities of which "revolve around the chief and his kraal" (Kh, 267). We encounter them as hunters, shepherds and farmers; the proverbs are affluent with generalizations of natural phenomena and particularly of the behaviour of animals (Kh, 26-29). But there are also many proverbs which have an ethical impact; they can "act as a guidance towards good living and a deterrent from deviant behaviour" and they recommend a "well ordered society". Finally, there are those which can reveal "a deeper meaning", "wisdom" or "philosophy" (Kh, 9, 11, 185).

Wanjohi's focus is from the very beginning on "wisdom" and "philosophy" in Gikuyu proverbs. These proverbs have a "literal" or "symbolic" meaning, but need more explanation and interpretation beyond these two levels of meaning than those which more directly tell about the culture and the general way of life. A sapiential or "wisdom proverb ... states a universal truth or gives a practical counsel or advice", and a "philosophical proverb ... is easily amenable to a further and deeper analysis". Really "philosophical proverbs ... unlike wisdom proverbs ... eschew practical matters and concentrate on stating how things are" (W, 40-44). They often have a specifically dialectical structure by depicting "reality in *terms* of antithetic statements". However, thesis and antithesis do not lead to a synthesis in the Hegelian sense, but they point at a mean in which the extremes are

reconciled. Just let me give one example: "What is said can always be contradicted" is confronted by Wanjohi with "A word once spoken cannot be retrieved". According to him, the mean (?) between these two statements is expressed again in a proverb: "Elders choose their words" (W, 45-48).

On the whole, the philosophical proverbs contain the "the kihooto world-view", which not only means reason in a theoretical sense: "rationality/intelligence/knowledge", but also in a practical sense: "justice, equity, fairness" and in a logical or epistemological sense: convincing statement, proof, unanswerable argument (W, 49-50). As such kihooto is very powerful, it "is wealth", it "fords a flooded river", and it "breaks a taut bow" (W, 246).

The philosophical impact of a proverb comes to the fore all the better if one stays patiently with its possible meanings. Khuba refers to the proverb "A human being is like an elephant which eats different trees", being an example for "cleverness" (Kh, 21). This can be worked out more in detail. In a literal sense human beings like elephants need a variety of food which they choose themselves. In a more popular symbolic interpretation people do not speak of a "human being" but of "man". In the context this proverb, according to this interpretation, it expresses the fact that a Venda man usually has several women as wives or as concubines and that a Venda woman has to tolerate this. A more general or even universal meaning is found in this proverb if it is read as an expression of cleverness. However, it is not just cleverness which makes a human being choose out of different possibilities, and of course, not only with regard to food, but a general characteristic of his or her existence. Thus the human being is described in an ontological sense as free.

The strongly patriarchical structure of the Venda family corresponds to the unquestioned authority of the chief which is spoken of in many proverbs. "The chief's laziness is in the mouth" is interpreted by Khuba as the readiness of the people "to do what the chief tells them" (Kh, 4). The resistance of Venda women against this family-structure can be found in their 'ngano'; these are symbolic

stories which they tell each other and which are characterized in this
way by Ina le Roux. She says about 'ngano': "A theme which occurs
repeatedly is the resistance of the powerless (the child, the woman or
the meaningless person) against the powerful (the king, the man,
dominating family-members or traditional structures)." However,
"although there are clear articulations of resistance and critique against
the traditional order and against the powerful, ngano seldom dare to go
beyond the traditional religious-philosophical borders".[5] This kind of
resistance against patriarchical and authoritarian structures is also
expressed in the proverb: "The chief's cream is his people" (Kh, 32).
According to Khuba, it is important for the interpretation that 'cream'
is the most valuable product of milk which is highly estimated by
Venda people.

Unlike the Venda and "several other ethnic groups in Africa, the
Gikuyu had neither king/queen nor chiefs ... They were governed by
two super age groups called Mwangi and Maina". Because these
always "alternated in holding power", the proverb says: "Mwangi's fire
does not burn twice". And there are many proverbs which express the
limitations of political power in Gikuyu-society. Wanjohi stresses two
of them: "A leader who does not heed advice is not a leader", and "He
who refuses to obey cannot command" (W, 207-208). A more detailed
discussion of 'Democratic elements in Gikuyu proverbs' and 'in the
sagacity of Senegal' between Wanjohi and M. Diallo from the Cheikh
Anta Diop University at Dakar is documented in the volume H.
Kimmerle / F.M. Wimmer (eds), *Philosophy and Democracy in
Intercultural Perspective / Philosophie et democratic en perspective
interculturelle.*[6]

In the entire study, Khuba deals with various aspects of proverbs
as a form of oral literature, as an expression of the way of life and way
of thought of Venda people; while Wanjohi unfolds the different
disciplines of "Basic" and "Applied philosophy" in Gikuyu proverbs. I
do not intend to go through and critically assess all the different
chapters of these texts.

In a final remark I want to state that through the use of proverbs

as a source of African philosophy, language has become a central issue in this philosophy as a whole and that this is in accordance with the 'linguistic turn' in world philosophy at large. There are in Gikuyu and in Venda language proverbs on proverbs which underline the importance of them in these languages, and there are proverbs on language and its central meaning for the human society and the human being as such. The Gikuyu say: "We speak in proverbs; he who is intelligent will understand". And, as we have seen already, the opposition between contradictions in speech is mediated by the saying that elders know to 'choose their words'. It is again a sign of the egalitarian structure of Gikuyu-society that they have a proverb which is also well-known in its ancient Latin version: "When the people has spoken, it is God who has spoken" (W, 246, 249). The political will of the people in its absolute dignity has to be formulated in language.

The Venda proverb: "The mouth is louder than the big drum", needs an interpretation on different levels to show its meaning for the philosophy of language. Spoken language as information 'from mouth to ear' is not only superior to the messages of the big drum which can be heard in a wide environment, insofar as the spreading of news is concerned. It is more powerful, too, in an ontological sense: human beings have not only speech, they *are* speech, because they can speak and listen to each other. This brings me to a comparison with Western philosophy of language which is concentrated in short formulations similar to those in proverbs. Firstly, I am thinking of Heidegger's formulation: "Language is the house of Being". He means by that: Language - like Being - is there already before human beings use it, and it will not continue to be there without human beings who use it. And secondly, I want to mention Wittgenstein's investigations of "language as different language games". They make clear that human speaking is applying various sets of rules which cannot be put together in one systematic whole.

Notes

1.   P. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Presence Africaine, Paris (1969); W.E. Abraham *The Mind Of Africa*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago (1966); J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Doubleday, New York (1970); K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, University Press, Cambridge (1987).

2.   Colorado Springs, CO: African Proverbs Project 1994.

3.   H. Kimmerle, "Proverbs as a Source of Philosophy" in: W. Saayman (ed), *Embracing the Baobab.* Proceedings of a Conference of the 'African Proverbs Project' at the University of South Africa, Pretoria (1995) [forthcoming]

4.   Oxford University Press, Nairobi (1970) p. 393.

5.   I. le Roux, *Net die woorde het oorgebly: 'n godsdienswetenskapelike interpretasie van Venda-volkeverhale (Ngano)* University of South Africa, Pretoria (PhD thesis, 1996) p. I-II.

6.   Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA 1997, Rodopi, *Studies in Intercultural Philosophy 3*, p. 185-202.

REVIEW

Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*. Bloomington;
Indiana University Press, 1996. ix, 237 p.
Reviewed by Lansana Keita.

In an age of cultural relativism the idea of ethical or even cognitive
universals is seriously being questioned. Since the rise of modern
science with its foundations on universal principles referred to as laws
of nature, there was a tendency on the part of those cultures that bene-
fited technologically from this phenomenon to apply universal
principles to all aspects of human experience. The cultures that first
benefited from modern science and its technologies were those of
Western Europe. As history informs us those cultures as nations
employed their newly found scientific knowledge and technologies to
conquer and colonize large parts of the globe.

   The colonized people of the globe not only saw their technologies
deemed inferior to those of Western Europe, but their cultural values as
well. But the application of scientific technologies to the pursuit of
warfare in Europe and elsewhere and the physical responses of those
colonized in the form of wars of liberation brought into question the
universalizing claims of European cultural theories. Matters were
compounded by the frequent changes in scientific theorizing
culminating in the relativistic physics of Einstein, the relativistic history
of science proposed by Thomas Kuhn, and, more recently, the general
epistemological relativism of the post-modernist programme.

   More specifically, all this has led to the prominent
epistemological view that not only are there incommensurable cultural
beliefs and practices, but also that the source of such incompatibilities
may spring from cognitive incommensurabilities. The Strong
Programme in the sociology of knowledge evidently sought much
epistemological support from the reports on the thinking processes of
the Azande reported by British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard. One
important implication of this is that different human societies inhabit
culturally and epistemological distinct worlds. The basis then for
linguistic and epistemological interchange is thus cast in doubt.

It is in this context that Kwasi Wiredu's text *Cultural universals
and particulars* is to be welcomed. Wiredu, writing from the context of
contemporary African philosophy, presents cogent arguments in defense
of the thesis that although humans express themselves in culturally
diverse ways there is an irreducible common human basis that makes
human communication and interchange possible.

In a collected set of essays spanning a period of fifteen years,
Wiredu engages in comparative analyses and discussions of topics such
as religion and morality in the Akan culture complex of Ghana,
epistemological issues involving cultural universals, and democracy and
human rights.

On the issue of cultural universals Wiredu argues that since
intercultural communication exists there must be cultural universals,
and that our recognition of this springs from "our biologico-cultural
identity as *homines sapientes*". But what are these cultural universals
specifically? According to Wiredu these universals are the human
capacity for reflective perception, abstraction, and inference (p. 23).
Wiredu also claims that these capacities are mental and are universally
distributed across all cultures.

But are such capacities really cultural universals? I want to
believe that a cultural universal would be some cultural item or practice
that was instantiable in divers forms in all human cultures. In this sense
the human capacities for abstraction, reflective perception and inference
would not be cultural at all, since these are not empirically ostensible
items. I would prefer arguing that Wiredu's universal trio are functions
of the human brain that manifest themselves subjectively in the forms
that he suggests. I would also venture to state that some animals do
seem to demonstrate some form of Wiredu's universalizing trio of
dispositions. Pavlov's experimental dogs were understandably
concerned about making the correct inferences under the appropriate
circumstances.

Yet I do believe that cultural universals exist. And these are
exactly what anthropologists and sociologists spend their careers study-
ing. Cultural universals are items and practices that are found in all

cultures thereby warranting a general term for such despite their extensive variability. Examples are: social organisation, burial customs, child-rearing, kinship relations, forms of social punishment and restitution, and so on. What makes for interesting sociology are circumstances where a practice normally viewed as culturally universal is non-existent in a particular culture, or is expressed in a very unusual way. But generally, there are certain practices which seem to have some expression in every known human culture. Wiredu is correct in arguing that there are cultural universals, but they are none other than the general forms of what we refer to as cultural particulars. Such cultural particulars are the very customs that he has carefully described as historically belonging to the Akan culture, for example.

This brings us to Wiredu's discussion of the issues of custom and morality. These are germane to the question of cultural universals because one of the complaints against Western colonialism is that it used its unequal power relations with African societies in general to make moral judgments and impose rules on cultural particulars that diverged from the perceived norm of the universal. Wiredu argues that what occurred in this instance was that the colonial enterprise interpreted aspects of African cultural customs as having moral content.

In keeping with this idea of human universals, Wiredu argues for an epistemological distinction between morality and custom. Wiredu writes: "In this strict sense morality, from the standpoint of conduct, is the motivated pursuit of sympathetic impartiality" (p. 30). And there are certain values such as truthfulness, honesty, justice, and so on, that are examples of "sympathetic impartiality" that express universals in all cultures. Wiredu justifies this definition of morality with the claim that a moral rule is one whose continued infraction would lead to the breakdown of human society (p. 63). There is an obvious parallel with Kant's ethics, but Wiredu argues that Kant's ethical principle is deficient in that it lacks a component reflective of human interest (p. 64).

But this is exactly what Kant tried to avoid: to found a rationally informed universalist system of ethics on human interests. For such interests will always be contingently restricted to particular individuals

or groups. Wiredu's system of ethics would seem to require both universality and particularity of human interest. This could work, but only in a very ideal world. It is on this basis that Wiredu accuses Kant's ethics of being non-humanistic. But it is only because human beings do not in a consistent way express their sympathy impartially that a system of ethics whose principles could be universalised is an ideal. After all, systems of ethics are ideal constructs whose positions are merely prescriptive.

The practical problem with this approach though is that an universalising system of ethics, given the link between custom and morality, would have to pass judgment on those customs of every society that have an ethical basis. There will thus be ethical customs that are universally valid and those that are not. I believe that implicit in this is Wiredu's answer to the ethical relativists and cultural traditionalists who argue that because some practice is customary or traditional in a local setting, it is *ipso facto* shielded from external critique, on the basis of some universal ethic.

Though Wiredu makes the obvious point that there is a distinction between what are perceived as customs and ethical rules the important questions are: 1) how do we determine whether a particular rule is customary or ethical?, and 2) how do we settle the possibility that every customary rule might have an ethical basis? Matters are compounded by the fact that a rule that may be mere custom in society A may be a strong ethical principle in society B.

Wiredu's thesis of ethical universalism allows him to make the case for an Akan ethics consistent with his universalist programme. We are introduced to the social structure of the Akan peoples in terms of their interpretation of rights, communitarianism, democracy, and so on. I have no quarrel with Wiredu's exposition here. It constitutes indeed a counter argument to those who naively believe that the principle of political accountability, democratic communitarianism, and orderly government are uniquely Western. All this is discussed in the section on "Democracy and human rights".

On the question of philosophy proper Wiredu discusses the need for a "conceptual decolonisation" in African philosophy "and the possible paths for post-colonial African philosophy". Concerning the issue of a conceptual decolonisation in African philosophy, Wiredu stresses the problems African philosophers confront given the fact that they must write in languages imposed during the colonial era. There are languages that are appropriate for philosophical analysis in Africa, but political considerations and intellectual inertia militate against their present adoption. The linguistic issue is of importance for post-colonial Africa, and especially so for areas such as literature and poetry where local sensibilities need to be captured the best way possible, that is, in local languages.

My approach to philosophy is to regard it, in its most meaningful sense, as the theoretical and critical component of the natural and social sciences especially. Philosophy as mere conceptual or linguistic analysis is to be regarded as an intellectually sterile pursuit, reflective of a discipline drained of its significant theoretical and empirical content with the maturation of the disciplines it created: the natural and social sciences. Discussions of issues in the traditional areas of philosophy such as ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology are most meaningful when engaged in from the contexts of the natural and social sciences, and humanistic literature.

We recall that historically philosophy played a crucial role in the formation and maturation of the natural and social sciences and their particular methodological and ideological orientations. In Europe, for example, medieval philosophy as metaphysics served the ideological defense of the existing social order. The methodology of modern science grew out of the philosophical movements of empiricism and rationalism. Thus philosophy from an African perspective would be at its most effective when serving as a critical auditor of the methodologies and claims of the natural and social sciences, which are crucial for the shaping of the structures of modern Africa. In fact, Wiredu's discussion of issues such as "the problem of human rights," "democracy and consensus," and so on, are examples of critical and

creative thinking in political philosophy - necessary for the intellectual and political life of contemporary Africa.

Wiredu's text is to be recommended because it engages philosophically. It is replete with many provocative ideas and argumentations which cannot be fully discussed in a few pages. More specifically, *Cultural universals and particulars* presents an approach to philosophy that explores a diverse set of issues with seriousness and in depth. We have an analysis of issues such as historical Akan thought, epistemological linguistics, and the concepts of democracy and rights in historical and contemporary Africa.

Book Review

Anke Graness and Kai Kresse (eds.) *Sagacious Reasoning: Henry Odera Oruka in Memoriam.* Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt am Mein, 1997, pp. 267.
Reviewed by Godfrey B. Tangwa

This book is a significant addition to the steadily growing literature on African Philosophy as against "the question of African Philosophy" which, in its polemical dimensions, can now be considered as being only of historical interest. There is, of course, a sense in which African Philosophy will always remain a controversial issue, in as much as the question of the definition of philosophy and its functions is in itself a perennial philosophical question. The resolution of "the question of African Philosophy", which, for over two decades, seemed to be the only item on the philosophical agenda of academic African/africanist philosophers, and which, while it lasted, often generated more heat than light, owes much to people like Odera Oruka whose premature and untimely death on 9th December 1995 constitutes a great loss to African Philosophy. *Sagacious Reasoning*, fittingly dedicated to him, is a testimony to his immense contributions to the cause of African Philosophy as well as to the fact that significant progress has been made within the discipline beyond the heated and often sterile debates about its existence. These debates were, at bottom, a controversy between advocates of so-called ethno/folk-philosophy and advocates of philosophy in the so-called strict sense.[1]

Sagacious Reasoning is divided into two main parts, the first consisting of a spectrum of selected essays by Odera Oruka, spanning a cross-section of the varied philosophical problems which preoccupied him between 1972 and 1995, and the second of essays on him by a mixed group of scholars united in their interest in African philosophy and their knowledge of Oruka and his own works. An opening "Prologue" by Kai Kresse states the purpose of the book, its organisation and contents and justifies its rather unusual title. An "Epilogue" by Anke Graness highlights the main critical problematic underlying the contributions and the philosophy of Oruka itself. Delicious dessert is provided in the form of an "Appendix", being an

interview Odera Oruka granted Kai Kresse on the subject of Sage
Philosophy and related issues on 16th August 1995, shortly before his
tragic death. A chronological bibliography of all of Odera Oruka's
known writings is also provided. *Sagacious Reasoning* is very readable
in spite of a number of awkward expressions and linguistic inelegances
in some of the essays, not entirely unworthy for users of English as a
second language, but which should not have escaped the meticulous
attention of the text editor.

Of the part two essays, the first ("Remembering H. Odera Oruka")
is written by a first generation academic African philosopher, peer,
close friend and collaborator of Odera Oruka's: Kwasi Wiredu - the
most eminent among contemporary African philosophers - whose only
other philosophic peers are people like Paulin Hountondji, Peter
Bodunrin, and Olubi Sodipo. The second essay in this section
("Oruka's Mission in African Philosophy") is written by a second
generation academic African philosopher and PhD classmate of mine at
Ibadan University, Sophie Bosede Oluwole, who is perhaps better
equipped than any other person of our own generation to make
significant contributions to the cause of African philosophy. The third
essay in this section ("Popular Wisdom vs. Didactic Wisdom: Some
Comments on Oruka's Philosophic Sagacity") is also by a second
generation African academic philosopher, 'Muyiwa Falaiye. Three
essays in this section: "Philosophic Sagacity Revisited", "Sagacity in
the Maasai Concept of Death and Immortality" and "Sagacity and
Freedom" are all by former students and veritable disciples of Oruka
and his Sage Philosophy project: F. Ochieng'Odhiambo, Dikirr Patrick
Maison and Oriare Nyarwath, respectively. Two essays in this section
are by Western scholars engaged in African philosophy: Gail M.
Presbey ("Is Elijah Masinde a Sage? The dispute between H. Odera
Oruka and Chaungo Barasa") and Ulrich Lölke ("Parental Care as a
Principle of Development"). The last essay in the section ("Decentering
the Academy: In Memory of a Friend") is fittingly written by Dismas
A. Masolo, a former colleague and academic collaborator of Oruka's at
the University of Nairobi, where together they laid the foundations of a

very vibrant philosophy department.

Oruka's Sage Philosophy project was a response to the dispute between African advocates of so-called ethno/folk philosophy and advocates of so-called professional/ academic philosophy; a dispute in which Oruka tried to play a mediatory role which led him to try to forge a compromise between the two. I believe that the dispute arose from a very simple muddle connected with the conception and definition of philosophy. The essence of Oruka's thesis is that in Africa (both traditional and modern) there exist independent critical thinkers, that is, philosophers, who have benefited from neither formal training in nor any influence of Western philosophy. It can be said that, through his Sage Philosophy project, Oruka sufficiently convincingly proves his thesis. But I see no need for qualifying such philosophers or their philosophy as "sagacious". As can be seen through several of the articles in this book, Oruka's division of the individuals whose ideas he presents in written form in his project, into "folk" and "philosophic" sages, bristles with problems. First of all, since sagacity is synonymous with wisdom, and since there is no definition of philosophy which does not include or, at least, imply the idea of wisdom, the term "philosophic sagacity" is a bit of a redundant tautology. To the extent that anyone is a philosopher, his/her philosophy is no more nor less sagacious than any other philosophy, individual or communal. The philosophic content of a thought, statement, work or discourse (verbal or written) is, of course, a matter of degree which can be determined by critical appraisal. Furthermore, the degree of sagacity (philosophic content) in the statements, utterances, discourses, works, etc. of one and the same individual varies and can also be determined by critical appraisal. It makes perfect sense to say, for instance, that one of Oruka's works is more philosophical (sagacious) than the others. You may be wise or philosophic but that does not mean that you exhibit this enviable quality or attribute in every respect every time. There is no good philosopher who has not, at least sometimes, made questionable or even outrightly false or foolish statements. That someone is basically a prophet, artist, custodian of religion or of tradition, political activist

or entertainer does not exclude such a person from philosophy. This is particularly so within traditional African culture where strict compartmentalisation of knowledge and specialisation are not so pronounced. The sagacious content of any utterance or text can be determined without prejudice to its author or his/her occupation or state in life. I believe that Oruka's project and method of enquiry will survive him and flourish, but that the nomenclature he adopted would be discarded.

Secondly, Oruka shared with most other so-called academic philosophers, including critics of his Sage Philosophy project, the assumption that any philosophy worth its name must be the work of an identifiable individual. It is this assumption, moreover, that compelled him to try to categorise his sages into folk and philosophic. This assumption, received from Western philosophy and culture in general, is questionable. Western culture and philosophy are fiercely individualistic both in theory and practice. By contrast, other cultures and philosophies, especially African culture and philosophies, are deeply communal in outlook and practice, to the extent that, within African culture, for instance, some inventors, creative workers, specialists, etc. usually do not take any personal credit or derive any personal benefit from their work. This was particularly so in traditional Africa. Forgetting this, African philosophers, on all sides of the debate, have seemed to agree that, to qualify as philosophy, a discourse (oral or written) not only must be the work of an individual but be known to have emanated from an identifiable individual. But it is clear that, if an individual's philosophy is really convincing, it would be influential and, if it is influential, it would tend to become folk philosophy within the community where it is influential. Hence, a really successful individual philosophy would normally be transformed into a folk philosophy. To denigrate folk philosophies would therefore be to denigrate successful individual philosophies and to hold in high esteem rather those which, by their failure to convince, have remained the exclusive property of their proponents. It is quite paradoxical that the idea that any philosophy worthy of its name must be the creation of an

identifiable individual, has been uncritically received by African philosophers from the Western world where it enjoys the status rather of a folk philosophy, exhibited in extreme individualism and emphasis on such things as personal autonomy and privacy. There is no human culture or community without its own folk-philosophies because there is no human culture or community without its own peculiar world-view or Weltanschauung. Furthermore, a folk-philosophy is the cumulative result of influential individual philosophic positions, just as a Weltanschauung is of folk-philosophies.

The only necessary and sufficient condition for philosophy is critical reflection, whether such critical reflection is communal or individual in origin, whether its object is abstract or concrete, whether its results are oral or written, and whether they are accepted and used or disputed and rejected by either individuals or entire communities. This is very important because, even though we are justifiably celebrating the resolution of "the question of African philosophy", some African philosophers have continued to talk and write in a manner that puts into question our conception and definition of philosophy and the main sources of traditional African philosophy. For instance, in a recent article in *QUEST*[2], Chukwudum Okolo distinguishes folk-philosophy from academic/professional philosophy in terms of the former being collective, communal, uncritical and dogmatic etc. But, clearly, uncritical dogmatism is the very antithesis of philosophy and anything that can correctly be so described should not be called a philosophy. And, even though a folk-philosophy might be described as a result of collective thinking and communal consensus, this is only in a figurative sense, for, strictly speaking, a community or any collectivity of persons has no mind and is therefore not a thinking thing. Some traditional African philosophy does come in form of myths, fables, poems, aphorisms, proverbs, songs, idioms, etc. - inevitable didactic vehicles in any oral culture - but the philosophy they contain can be considered as "philosophy at the second moment of vision".[3] That this is not all that traditional African philosophy is, has been convincingly demonstrated by Odera Oruka through his Sage Philosophy project. Anyone not

convinced by Oruka's demonstration has probably never participated in or listened to discussions and arguments in a purely traditional African setting such as in the reception hall (ngai) of any lineage head in Nso', for instance.

The importance of writing for modern African philosophy and its absence for traditional African philosophy cannot, however, be denied. Although orality is not without some advantages over writing, no one can argue that a culture which has writing at its disposal should remain an oral culture. For preserving and promoting a culture, writing is to orality what tractors and harvesters are to the hoe and machete in the domain of farming. When a farmer changes his/her hoes and machete for tractors and harvesters, s/he certainly improves his/her technical efficiency and sophistication, but not necessarily his/her status as a good farmer. Being a good farmer cannot be determined simply by examining the implements of whoever is concerned but rather by the quality and quantity of the food s/he produces. Writing is now a new and powerful instrument at the disposal of African philosophy. The written style of philosophising is a recent cultural borrowing of African philosophy. No culture is an island unto itself and there is no human culture which is not indebted to others for borrowing. But how borrowed elements are integrated into a culture and the use to which they are put are what really count. From this perspective, it can be said that intercultural comprehension is not possible without good translators and interpreters, understood in a broad sense. Now, an indispensable condition for good translation and interpretation is a good grasp of both languages (cultures), one of which is to be translated/interpreted into the other[4]: In other words, an African who wants to write African philosophy in Western style and idiom needs to master not only Western language and culture but also African language and culture. Among the first generation of Western-trained African philosophers, it is only someone like Kwasi Wiredu who seems to have fully realised this from the very beginning. One of the main tasks facing African philosophers, scholars and beneficiaries of Western education in general, is that of properly indigenising, among other

cultural borrowing, the written as opposed to the oral mode of express-
ion.

The mastery of a foreign language and culture is not a bad thing.
But colonisation, Western education and languages have alienated
every Western-educated African, to some extent, from African culture
and way of life,and integrated some of them irretrievably into the
Western intellectual culture, modes of behaviour and paradigms of
thought. For this reason, it cannot be taken for granted that, because an
African has learned philosophy in school, s/he can write African
philosophy. It is necessary for Western-educated Africans to make the
effort to master traditional African culture, languages and patterns of
thought if they wish to correctly interpret traditional African philosophy
and render it in a more modern form and idiom. It is a very good thing
for African philosophy that this is increasingly being realised. It is very
instructive to compare, say, Sophie Oluwole's 1996 article on the
Yoruba system of Ifa with Akin Makinde's 1988 article on the same
subject.[5] Makinde's article is an unconvincing ramble in spite of his
creative coinage of such terms as "Ifalogy" and his equation of
"Orunmila" with Laplace's "Omniscient Intelligence". Oluwole's article
is very illuminating and a clear contribution to African philosophy.
What Makinde's article seems to lack is not a grasp of Western
philosophical concepts and language but rather a convincing grasp of
Yoruba language and culture which would have enabled more fruitful
translation and interpretation. By contrast, Oluwole's grasp of both the
Yoruba language and culture and the Western language and culture into
which she is interpreting and translating are quite evident. It is in the
interest of African philosophy that African philosophers and all others
engaged in the discipline should strive, like Odera Oruka, to be good
interpreters and translators.

Notes

1.   A good glimpse of some of the more formal arguments in the debate can
      be got from the critical essays in part three of Odera Oruka's *Sage
      Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African
      Philosophy* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1990). There is, however, a lot that was
      said in the debate that is not recorded in writing and a lot in writing that
      has not been published. I remember how between the seventies and
      mid-eighties, the debates used to animate the annual meetings of the
      Nigerian Philosophical Association as well as departmental seminars in
      various Nigerian Universities, sometimes dividing the people into two
      opposing camps reminiscent of rival political parties.
2.   See Chukwudum Okolo, "The Ontological Status of African
      Folk-Philosophy", *QUEST*, Vol. IX, No. 1, June 1995.
3.   See Godfrey B. Tangwa, "AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: Appraisal of a
      Recurrent Problematic, Part I, the Sources of Traditional African
      Philosophy" in *COGITO*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1992.
4.   For more on this, see Godfrey B. Tangwa, "Bioethics: An African
      Perspective" in *Bioethics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, July 1996, pp. 187-188.
5.   See and compare: Sophie B. Oluwole, "African Philosophy as Illustrated
      in Ifa Corpus", *IMODOYE: A Journal of African Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No.
      2, 1996 (pp. 1-20) with M. Akin Makinde, "Ifa as a Repository of
      Knowledge" in *PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE: Proceedings of the
      XVIIth World Congress of Philosophy*, Canada, Editions Montmorency,
      Vol. IV, 1988 (pp. 289-293).

Book Review

Mahmood Mamdani. *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp, xii + 353.
Reviewed by Lansana Keita.

Despite disclaimers Africa continues to be a source of intellectual fascination for Western scholars in the humanities and the social sciences. But Africa also continues to fascinate the West in a rather perverse way through the media that present a simpleminded and essentialist view of that continent's contemporary sociology and politics. The so-called quality newspapers, whenever they cover events in Africa, tend to degenerate into tabloid journalism by their sensationalist and frequently simple-minded analyses of events on the continent.

An analysis of recent African history would tell us that in the last five hundred years Africa has been subjected to two events of monumental importance: the Atlantic trade and colonization. Africa is still experiencing cause and effect phenomena from these two events. In the popular media and academic circles Africa is perceived as underdeveloped or more euphemistically "developing", with the bulk of research being of the static analysis kind with voluntaristic ahistorical explanations of the contemporary political and sociological behaviour of its inhabitants.

This kind of research is evidently coloured more by ideology than by scientific rigor. Implicit in most theses is the assumption that African history and sociology is exceptional when compared to those of Europe and Asia. Given that much of the research on Africa tends to be carried out and published in the West, that approach tends to assume normalcy. It is for this reason that Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*, a study of contemporary Africa and its legacy of late colonialism, is important. Mamdani tells us that his "book, then, is about the regime of differentiation (institutional segregation) as fashioned in colonial Africa -and reformed after independence— and the nature of resistance it bred" (p. 7).

The importance of Mamdani's text derives from the fact that he underscores the political and economic logic with which the British,

French, and Boer settlers distorted, invented and destroyed social structures during the colonial era. In writing *Citizen and Subject* Mamdani claims that he has four objectives in mind, two of which warrant noting here. Mamdani wants to show that "apartheid usually considered unique to South Africa is actually the generic form of the colonial state in Africa" (p. 8). He also argues that "although the bifurcated state created with colonialism was deracialized after independence, it was not democratized" (ibid.).

With an eye for much detail focusing on peasant and worker movements in Uganda and South Africa respectively, Mamdani explores what he perceives as the two main contradictions in contemporary African society: the rural-urban and the interethnic divides. The dynamics of these two major contradictions, according to the author, can both be traced back causally to the polities of the colonial era.

According to Mamdani the practice of colonialism involved the forceful formalization of what became known as "the customary." The logic of colonialism required that colonial exploitation take place by way of the imposing of local authority on specific populations who would pay taxes and carry out forced labour in construction or agriculture for the benefits of the colonial authorities. Although historical social structures were distorted, invented or destroyed for this purpose, the whole process nevertheless became known as instances of African customary sociology.

It was the normalization of such structures that led to the current ethnic sentiment in Africa. Eurocentric ideology would have us believe that ethnic conflict in Africa is a phenomenon that existed in its present form before the irruption of the Europeans. The best example of this is the current Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Rwanda and Burundi, which, in fact, derives from the historical handiwork of German and Belgian colonial policy. What we must recognize is that the central feature of the colonial experience of the inhabitants of Africa was that their group and individual agencies were maximally reduced. Such was the distortion of the structure of historical Africa that what is now taken as "traditional Africa" is not so at all, but deformations of the colonial era.

The so-called chiefs, whether created or not, were, for the most part, agents of the colonial enterprise.

The carving out of areas of customary society led, according to Mamdani, to the Janus-faced nature of the colonial state. This state "contained a single a duality: two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the power of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition" (p. 18).

Despite the belief held by orthodox theorists that the racial principles of South African apartheid were not invoked by the colonizers of the rest of Africa, Mamdani disabuses us of this by arguing that the "history of civil society in colonial Africa is laced with racism. That is, as it were, its original sin, for civil society was first and foremost the society of colons" (p. 19). One recalls the writings of Fanon and Memmi on this issue. The resulting colonial formula was the racialization of civil society and the "tribalization" of Native authority. In principle then, the African's home base was governed by customary law while in the non-designated areas the colons enjoyed full rights and privileges on purely racial grounds. But the dynamics of the colonial economy soon produced the following class of persons "urban-based natives, mainly middle- and working-class persons, who were exempt from the lash of customary law but not from modern, racially discriminatory civil legislation" (p. 19).

It is this model proposed by Mamdani that allows us to interpret the post-colonial history of Africa. What seems to have happened in Africa is the following: on the account of the exploitative pressures put on the customary areas by the colonial governments by way of sanctioned authority of the "chiefs," and the frustrations experienced by those who were employed in the urban areas (Mamdani's third group) to assist in the colonial administration, the push for "independence" became inevitable. At independence, however, the transformations were little more than cosmetic: the European official was merely replaced by the African who gained the extra trappings of "prime minister" and "president." One interesting phenomenon though: the "chiefs" in charge

of the customary areas were shunted aside in terms of their influence in the customary areas. Here we witnessed a fusion of the customary and the civil under the authority of the new president or prime minister. This fusion at "independence" marked the new era of neocolonialism. The new president was merely the old customary chief with expanded powers. He had at his disposal the colonial militia now upgraded to "army."

There was one interesting permutation to this new phenomenon: South Africa. Because of the dictates of settler capitalism in the sense of European settlers investing capital directly in Africa instead of extracting raw materials for the metropolis, it was necessary for the customary areas to be formalised as Bantustans. Without the anchoring role of the Bantustans the rural and the urban would have been completely fused, as was the case in post-feudal Europe. But racial considerations militated against this.

In order to maintain the rural-urban divide the logic of apartheid (the formalization of the customary-civil dichotomy) employed the a customary "chief" of the largest Bantustan to stem the tide of radicalism fomented by the PAC end the ANC. This was the historical role of Inkatha and Buthelezi in KwaZulu. The dynamics of capitalism created the fluid population movements between the designated homelands and the urban areas. And the basis for attacking the radical ANC was the "hotel-based Zulu migrants who were participants in the hotel-based violence that engulfed the Johannesburg region in the early 1990s" (p. 219). But despite the violence South Africa had to go the way of the rest of Africa: a fusion of the rural and the urban under the authority of the state. The dynamics of these political struggles and sociological transformations are spelled out by Mamdani in the chapter "The Rural in the Urban: Migrant Workers in South Africa."

Given the weakness of the state, on account of the incomplete fusion of the rural and the urban in post-colonial Africa, the neocolonial African state is periodically wrecked by the ongoing tensions between the state, usually under the influence of particular ethnic groups and members of the customary areas. Mamdani

recognizes the seriousness of this issue when he writes that "a key institutional legacy of the colonial period is the bifurcated state" (p. 217). His solution is that "a successful democratic reform needs to straddle both spheres. A successful political reform of the bifurcated state needs to be simultaneously rural and urban, local and central" (p. 217). Mamdani's discussion includes analyses of the agenda of radical and populist residents such as Quadaffi, Sankara, and Museveni. The problem here is that although these militant leaders introduced reforms in both civil and customary society they did so from above (p. 300).

I venture to argue that the solution to the dilemma of the post-colonial African state with its modern state structures imposed on colonial sociological arrangements requires first of all a general cultural revolution. This would require a deemphasizing of ethnicity (encouraged or even fabricated by colonialism), a breaking asunder of the colonial borders to establish larger economic units with single regional currencies. The African cultural revolution would involve the formulation of new ways of creating capital for development purposes. The ongoing control of Africa's economies by the IMF and the World Bank is simply an expanded version of the colonial control of the customary by way of the erstwhile colonial office in London, Paris or Lisbon. A new political will expressed under the umbrella of a populist and radical Pan-Africanism (incorporating the problematic of the one hundred West Africa descendants now living in the Americas) affords the promise of a new Africa. Mamdani's text merely lays bare the facts of the African situation.

COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR
L'ACCUMULATION DU SAVOIR:
GESTION DES CONNAISSANCES ET DEVELOPPEMENT
AUJOURD'HUI

Cotonou, 26-28 Mai 1997

DECLARATION DE COTONOU

POUR

UN NOUVEL ORDRE SCIENTIFIQUE MONDIAL

Les participants au colloque international sur "L'accumulation du savoir: gestion des connaissances et développement aujourd'hui" réuni à Cotonou, en République du Bénin, du 26 au 28 mai 1997, après examen des conditions actuelles de la recherche en Afrique et dans les pays en développement, appréciant la portée et les limites des efforts déployés à ce jour, tant par les chercheurs du Sud, individuels ou organisés, que par les Etats et la communauté internationale, pour mettre la science et la technique au service du développement, ont décidé de rendre publique la déclaration suivante:

Il ne suffit pas, pour qu'une région du monde se développe par la science et la technique, qu'elle ait produit un nombre plus ou moins grand de savants et d'ingénieurs. Il ne suffit pas non plus qu'elle ait été étudiée plus ou moins abondamment, avec plus ou moins de rigueur et de manière plus ou moins exhaustive, par des spécialistes de diverses disciplines, ou qu'elle ait fait l'objet de nombreux rapports d'experts internationaux.

Il faut visiblement quelque chose de plus. Pour que les conquêtes de la science servent réellement au développement du "Tiers-Monde", et singulièrement de l'Afrique, pour que les solutions virtuelles deviennent des solutions réelles, il faut, au minimum, instituer dans les pays concernés eux-mêmes et dans leurs rapports aux pays industrialisés un

autre mode de gestion du savoir et du savoir-faire que celui qui prévaut actuellement. Les sociétés pauvres ne surmonteront de façon durable leurs difficultés actuelles que si elles parviennent à s'approprier effectivement et collectivement le savoir existant pour le développer librement, si elles renforcent leur propre capacité d'invention et ne se contentent pas d'appliquer, sans les maîtriser, les résultats d'une invention effectuée ailleurs.

L'organisation actuelle de la recherche dans le monde est encore régie par une sorte de division internationale du travail, qui paraît réserver aux pays du Nord le monopole de la création intellectuelle et condamner ceux du Sud à consommer tant bien que mal les produits de cette création. Les pays en développement eux-mêmes favorisent parfois cette situation par leur acceptation passive de l'ordre scientifique actuel, la place très réduite qu'occupe la politique scientifique dans leurs préoccupations et leur stratégie de développement, le peu de valeur qu'on y accorde au savoir localement produit, l'extraversion de certains chercheurs et leur indifférence à l'usage qui est fait de leur travail, l'absence manifeste de tout souci de conservation, de préservation et de valorisation des supports documentaires et autres véhicules de ce savoir. Dans ces conditions, l'instauration d'un nouvel ordre mondial en matière de production et de gestion du savoir suppose à la fois une modification sensible des rapports Nord/Sud et, au Sud même, le développement d'un comportement nouveau, favorable à l'épanouissement de projets scientifiques et technologiques autonomes.

Les participants au colloque de Cotonou reconnaissent l'importance des savoirs et du savoir-faire endogènes. Pour que ces connaissances jouent pleinement leur rôle, les communautés scientifiques et autres décideurs du Sud doivent mettre en place des procédures de vérification, de validation et, au besoin, d'amélioration qui permettent non seulement d'en apprécier la solidité, mais encore de les intégrer, de façon dynamique, au mouvement de la recherche vivante.

La science est un patrimoine commun de l'humanité. Tous les peuples du monde y ont contribué et y contribuent chaque jour à des degrés divers. Tous doivent aussi pouvoir s'en approprier les résultats, les maîtriser, les développer et les appliquer de façon responsable à la résolution de leurs problèmes. Les pays du Tiers-Monde et l'Afrique en particulier ont besoin, à cet égard, de mettre en place des stratégies cohérentes d'accumulation, condition essentielle d'une réelle appropriation du savoir.

Par rapport à ces objectifs, une bonne maîtrise de l'outil informatique et des nouvelles technologies de l'information est aujourd'hui indispensable. Le développement de ces technologies permet, entre autres avantages nouveaux, d'accéder sans se déplacer à une masse de plus en plus importante d'informations, minimisant du même coup l'obligation pour le chercheur du Tiers-Monde de voyager lui-même vers les grandes métropoles scientifiques et industrielles. Ces techniques doivent rester, toutefois, des moyens au service de fins conscientes. Les chercheurs du Sud doivent résister à la tentation de consommer passivement toute l'information aujourd'hui disponible. Ils doivent la sélectionner et la traiter de façon responsable, en fonction de leurs propres questions et préoccupations. Ils doivent en outre développer entre eux les échanges horizontaux nécessaires pour assurer la complémentarité de leurs travaux et leur donner une plus grande pertinence par rapport aux problèmes et préoccupations de l'Afrique. Le Tiers-Monde en général, l'Afrique en particulier, se doivent de produire une information scientifique et technologique originale qui valorise le travail intellectuel important effectué par leurs chercheurs, et en facilite l'application au profit de leurs propres populations.

Un des moyens susceptibles d'aider l'Afrique à reprendre l'initiative sur le plan scientifique est la création de centres d'excellence fonctionnant comme de hauts lieux de capitalisation du savoir, et offrant aux chercheurs du continent et d'ailleurs, pour des périodes limitées, des conditions de travail matérielles et intellectuelles comparables à celles

qui les attirent si souvent vers le Nord. De tels centres contribueraient fortement à freiner l'exode des cerveaux et à promouvoir en Afrique l'inculturation de la science, le développement de traditions de recherche autonomes.

Les participants soutiennent, pour cette raison, le projet de création à Porto-Novo, d'un "Village africain des sciences" (African Centre for Advanced Studies). Ils décident de mettre en place un groupe de contact international chargé d'appuyer le "Comité béninois Afrique-Synthèse", organisateur du présent colloque, en vue de préciser le Plan d'action du Centre à court et moyen terme et de mobiliser les ressources à l'échelle régionale et internationale. Pour que se développent au profit de toutes les populations du globe, y compris celles du Sud, un meilleur partage du savoir disponible et une coopération scientifique véritable.

Les participants constatent avec satisfaction l'existence d'un mécénat local disposé à soutenir l'effort de la communauté intellectuelle et scientifique. Ils en appellent à ces mécènes pour qu'ils poursuivent leur effort et contribuent de plus en plus amplement au financement de projets de développement endogènes, véritablement initiés par les Africains, et en particulier par les communautés scientifiques africaines. Ils en appellent à la communauté scientifique mondiale pour qu'elle se mobilise d'une région à l'autre pour un accès plus équitable au savoir disponible, une solidarité plus forte dans la construction d'un monde plus juste et plus humain. Ils en appellent, enfin, à la communauté internationale pour qu'elle soutienne les efforts du Sud pour s'approprier lui-même, appliquer en toute responsabilité, maîtriser et développer la science et la technique aujourd'hui disponibles. Pour que la mondialisation n'exclue pas, mais se fonde au contraire sur la libre initiative de centres de décision multiples, négociant les uns avec les autres dans une parfaite égalité.

Fait à Cotonou, le 28 mai 1997.   LE COLLOQUE

Notes on Contributors

Reverent **Joshua N. Kudadjie** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana. His areas of interest are Philosophy of Religion, Christian Ethics and African Traditional Ethics. He has done much research in African (especially Dagme) Traditional Ethics. In the last few years, he has been studying Ga and Dagme proverbs for use as pedagogical tools for teaching Christian values and moral philosophy.

Professor Dr. Kwasi Wiredu (born in Kumasi, Ghana, 1931) is Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Florida, USA, since 1987. He studied philosophy at the University of Ghana (1952 - 1958) and at Oxford University, U.K. He taught philosophy at the University of Ghana from 1961 to 1983. He has been Visiting Professor at the Universities of California, Los Angeles, USA, (1979), Ibadan, Nigeria, (1984), Richmond, Virginia, USA, (1985), Carleton College, Minnesota, USA, (1986) and Duke University, North Carolina, USA, (1995). He has published on African philosophy, the philosophy of logic and general philosophy in Africa, Europe and the USA. His books include *Philosophy and an African Culture* (1981) and *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (1996).

Dr. Abou Karamoko is lecturer at the Université de Cocody, Department of Philosophy, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Gail M. Presbey teaches philosophy at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, U.S.A. She did some research at University of Nairobi during her sabbatical in 1995. She will be returning to Nairobi this coming year as a Fulbright Fellow to continue her research on sage philosophy.

Dr. Godfrey Tangwa teaches philosophy at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Yaounde in Cameroon.

Professor Lansana Keita is professor in Philosophy at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone. He taught at a number of American universities and published a large number of articles and several books.

Professor Heinz Kimmerle was professor in Intercultural Philosophy at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. He is editor of the series *Studien zur interkulturellen Philosophie / Studies in Intercultural Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi).

at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. He is editor of the series *Studien zur interkulturellen Philosophie / Studies in Intercultural Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi).

Ulrich Lölke is a PhD-candidate at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf in Germany. He studied Philosophy, Fine Art, Art History and Theology in Berlin, Frankfurt an Mein and Hamburg and worked on Phenomenology and Political Philosophy. The PhD-thesis entitled "Development in Dialogue" is concerned with a comparative analysis of concepts of development in the philosophical discourses in Africa and Europe. During the academic year 1996/7 he was a research student of Prof.Dr. Kwame Gyekye at the University of Ghana in Legon. He teaches Medical Sociology at the Universität Hamburg.

Fabrice Pataut a enseigné la philosophie à l'Université de Californie du Sud à Los Angeles, puis à l'Université de Paris 1. Il est aujourd'hui chargé de recherche au C.N.R.S., à l'Institut d'Histoire et Philosophie des Sciences et des Techniques. Il est l'auteur de *Realism, Decidability and the Past* (U.M.I., Michigan, 1996), ainsi que d'articles de philosophie du langage, de la logique et des mathématiques, et plus récemment de philosophie morale, parus entre autres dans *Philosophical Investigations*, *L'Age de la Science* et *Lettre d'Information de l'Association Henri Poincaré*, ainsi que dans des volumes collectifs aux Presses Universitaires de France et chez Walter de Gruyter. Il a traduit *De la liberté* de John Stuart Mill (Presses de la Cité, Paris, 1990) et *Philosophie de la logique* de Michael Dummett (Les éditions de minuit, Paris, 1991). Il a également publié trois volumes de fiction: *Cinq portraits de Lol* (U.R.D.L.A., Lyon, 1991), *Les gants aux mains d'I.* (Manière Noire, Paris, 1996), tous deux illustrés par Gilles Ghez, et *Sirletti* (Alessandro Vivas Editions, Rome, 1996).

Sam Raditlalo is a lecturer in the Department of English Studies, University of the North, South Africa. His areas of interest are African and Southern African Literatures, together with the literature of the African Diaspora.

COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINAIRE
ETAT ET SOCIETE CIVILE EN AFRIQUE
ENRACINEMENTS ET PROJECTIONS

Université d'Abidjan-Cocody du 13 au 19 juillet 1998

Le Département de Philosophie de l'Université d'Abidjan-Cocody organise du 13 au 19 juillet 1997 un colloque international sur le thème: *Etat et société civile en Afrique. Enracinements et projections*. Le colloque est ouvert en priorité aux spécialistes des disciplines suivantes: anthropologie, histoire, philosophie, sciences politiques, sociologie, littérature et à tous les hommes de culture.

Problématique
Les années 90 en Afrique ont démarré comme la décennie de toutes les promesses: fin du régime d'apartheid en Afrique du Sud, conférences rationales pour certains pays, multipartisme, commission électorale indépendante pour d'autres, multipartisme et ajustement structurel pour tout le monde. Pour ce démarrage enthousiaste, quel parcours et quelle fin de siècle: les guerres en Angola, au Libéria, en Sierra Leone, la tragédie rwandaise, la reconquête militaire du Zaire, la guerre civile au Congo, les coups d'arrêt violents au processus démocratique au Nigéria, puis au Niger, le retour au pouvoir, par la voie des urnes des dictateurs d'hier... L'intellectuel africain peut-il fonder en raison tous ces évènements qui sont encore d'actualité?

Objectifs
L'objet du présent colloque n'est pas de se constituer en tribunal de l'histoire immédiate africaine. Il s'agit plutot:
- de discuter entre Africains des problemes de l'Afrique;
- de répondre aux questions essentielles suivantes: où va l'Afrique? d'où vient-elle? et comment va-t-elle ? quelle peut être la contribution des intellectuels à une culture de la bonne gouvernance?
- de penser à nouveaux frais les concepts et les valeurs à l'oeuvre dans l'ordre politique: l'état-nation, l'ethnicité, la democratie, le développement, l'Etat de droit...
- d'identifier les formes d'ancrage de la parole critique dans la société

civile;
- d'imaginer des modes de réalisation de la société civile dans la construction d'un ordre politique et social à la mesure des défis d'aujourd'hui et de demain.

Démarche
Les participants proposeront chacun une introduction de 2 ou 3 pages qui résument leur réflexion sur l'un des points ci dessus évoques. L'ensemble de ces introductions sera publié et disponible dès le début du colloque. Les communications feront l'objet d'une publication a part. Seules les personnes dûment invitées par le colloque présenteront une communication.
Les introductions doivent parvenir au secrétariat du colloque au plus tard le 15 avril 1997. Les communications doivent parvenir au secrétariat du colloque au plus tard le 30 mai 1997. Chaque séance du colloque sera placé sous l'autorité scientifique d'un président qui dirigera les debats. Un rapporteur introduira sur la base des communications impliquées dans la problématique de la séance. Les auteurs des communications interviendront pour étayer leurs analyses. Les langues de travail sont le français et l'anglais. Une équipe de traducteurs sera mise à contribution.
Responsables scientifiques: Prof. Yacouba Konaté - Prof. Dibi Kouadio Augustin - Prof. Lou Bamba

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PRINCE CLAUS FUND FOR CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The newly established *Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development* presented its first awards in Amsterdam at December 19, 1997. The Principal Award of US$ 100,000.- was presented to the *Zimbabwe International Book Fair*. One of the nine other award winners was Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba involved in QUEST.

The *Prince Claus Fund* was established in 1996. It supports activities in four major directions, namely:
1-   granting awards to individuals, groups or institutions;

2- organizing and supporting conferences and networks related to culture and development;

3- initiating and supporting publications and translations;

4- supporting original initiatives related to culture and development.

The *Prince Claus Fund* aims at supporting artists and intellectuals, also those in a hostile environment and those who are not yet well-known. It wants to facilitate exchanges, debates and innovative thought with an intercultural dimension. The fund supported the conference "Crisis and Development in Africa: the role of intellectuals" at the occasion of the tenth anniversary of QUEST.

The *Prince Claus Awards* recognise and encourage excellent achievements in the field of culture and development. An award appreciates quality, innovation and social engagement. It can be presented to 'thinkers' in society or to organisations which contribute to the intellectual climate: to academics such as philosophers, cultural theorists and critics, to writing performing and visual artists, to journalists covering culture and to organisations engaged in research, promotion and dissemination of culture. The *Prince Claus Awards* honour those committed to preserving culture as well as those engaged in critique and change. The recipients live or are based in African, Latin American and Asian countries.

The 1997 *Prince Claus Award* winners are:
Zimbabwe International Book Fair (Principal Award)
CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa)
Index on Censorship (a London-based magazine supporting persecuted writers)
Malangatana Valente Ngwenya (Mozambican performer and painter)
Joseph Hanson Kwabena Nketia (Ghanaian musicologist and composer)
Sardono W. Kusumu (Indonesian choreographer and dancer)
Bruno Stagno (Costa Rican, Chilean-born architect)
Jim Supangkat (Indonesian art critic and curator)
Adbdeljelil Temini (Tunesian historian)
Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (Congolese philosopher and historian)

QUEST **Philosophical Discussions** est une revue africaine de philosophie qui sert de moyen d'expression pour les penseurs en Afrique et qui vise à stimuler une discussion philosophique sur les problèmes surgissant des transformations radicales dont l'Afrique et les Africains sont témoins.

QUEST contient des points de discussion actuels se rapportant à l'Afrique et des questions d'intérêt philosophique général, et s'adresse à un public international de philosophes professionnels et d'autres intellectuels qui sont intéressés par la philosophie. Des articles originaux écrits en anglais ou en français sont publiés, avec un résumé en français ou anglais respectivement.

QUEST paraît deux fois par an.

Contributions: les articles ne devront pas dépasser les 6000 mots et devront être accompagnés d'un résumé d'un maximum de 200 mots. Le résumé devra être en français de préférence quand l'article est en anglais, et *vice-versa.*

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