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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette discussion, Professor Hountondji traite de deux questions bouleversantes: Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? et, Qu'est-ce que la philosophie peut faire? Dans la première partie de la discussion, l'auteur réitère les points principaux de sa critique de l'ethnophilosophie, ce qui ouvre le chemin à une caractérisation plus productive de la "Philosophie Africaine". De cette façon, la notion d'une philosophie implicite, racialement universelle, est rejetée. Sa place est prise par une notion de "Philosophie Africaine" basée sur l'origine des auteurs des textes qui sont conscients de leur caractère philosophique. Il y est argumenté que cette procédure nous permet non seulement de distinguer les intérêts des Philosophes Africains de ceux des Africanistes variés (Africains et autres), mais aussi nous conduit à une confrontation beaucoup, plus dynamique et riche entre l'activité philosophique et la réalité Africaine.

Sur la question de ce que la philosophie peut faire, l'auteur méprise le fait que, malgré l'existence d' Emanuel Kant, beaucoup refusent encore d'admettre les limites de la raison. Non seulement on attend de la philosophie de donner des solutions aux problèmes métaphysiques traditionnels, mais aussi on exige d'elle de donner des solutions révolutionnaires aux problèmes politiques, sociaux et économiques. L'idée que la philosophie ne peut avoir une place dans la réalité Africaine que si elle est "engagée" ou "responsable" est analysée sur la base de la pensée Marxiste révolutionnaire. L'auteur argumente que la philosophie seule ne peut ni résoudre les problèmes métaphysiques traditionnels, ni en réalité faire quelque chose pour résoudre les problèmes pratiques. Plutôt, la solution de ces problèmes cités à la fin, doit inclure l'aller au-delà, et ainsi réaliser la philosophie.

WHAT PHILOSOPHY CAN DO

by

Paulin J. Hountondji*

We can distinguish two currents in contemporary African philosophical production.

The oldest, which is till today the dominant current, is that one which is used to reconstruct the collective thinking system of Africans, or more specifically of one or another African ethnic group. I have qualified such a current as *ethno-philosophical*¹ in order to emphasize its hybrid character, because, giving itself as philosophical discourse, it reduces itself in practice, to a particular chapter of ethnology or, if one wants, of cultural anthropology.

Ethnophilosophy thus understood is a philosophy in the third person. It prefers to hide unproductively behind the thinking of the group, by abstaining from taking its own position and from expressing itself on problems to which that thinking of the ancestors reacted in its own way.

The second current is characterized by its unanimous repudiation of ethnophilosophy. It includes authors for whom philosophy cannot be reduced to a descriptive discourse, and who require of the philosopher that he should engage his own intellectual responsibility in the way he presents problems, as well as in the way he solves them.

The second current is therefore described negatively. It is evident that this repudiation of the ethnological concept of philosophy and of the tasks of the philosopher, far from solving all problems, has the effect, on the contrary, of uncovering more "real" and "true" problems, those which were precisely veiled by the parasitic and unproductive recourse to the thinking of the group. It is normal that in the face of such problems, opinions are divided, even among the adherents of the repudiation. The discussion has only just started. What is important is that it should be made possible, it should conquer ethnophilosophy, that the heavy obstacle pressed on it by the thesis of obligatory unanimity amongst all Africans should be removed.

Among the problems thus revealed, I want to mention only two. Two problems recently hidden because of the unanimist prejudice, two problems which, literally, *did not exist* and *could not exist* for the naively descriptive ethnophilosophy, but which appear today in the open as theoretical problems *which have always been existing*, and which were simply suppressed up to now in and by

ethnophilosophy. I name them simply, without being able to elaborate them fully, because of the limitations of this presentation:

- firstly, what is philosophy?
- secondly, what can philosophy do?

African Philosophy and Philosophy

The classical, i.e. scholarly resonance of the first question could be perceived by some people as a sign of futility and as sufficient argument for the African philosopher not to ask it. The whole history of ethnophilosophy has precisely been edified on the suppression of this question. The anthropological concept of philosophy, the idea of a philosophy spontaneously understood, as a collective system of beliefs, has never been thematised clearly, even less, established and justified by all the ethnophilosophical literature. The non-theoretisation of the concept was precisely a condition of its efficacy. There was need indeed, in order for that notion to establish such an abundant literature, to seemingly move independently, not to be put into question at any time, and not to be interrogated, or grounded. The anthropologist, on this basis, could only proceed blindfolded, his theoretical blindness conditioning, by necessity, the happy accumulation of empirical results: an accumulation which could thus continue indefinitely, if it was not for the evidence, more and more pressing, and if not for contradictions within, and of insufficiencies of the obtained results.

I am not going to develop those insufficiencies here. They have been developed abundantly in other works.² I will note only the immense deception brought on the young African by the reading of sensational works on the "Bantu Philosophy", the "Dogon Philosophy", the "African thought", etc. When attracted by the publicity headings, he throws himself on them, in the hope of rediscovering in them part of the intellectual and cultural heritage of his people. It had to be expected: such works, possessing a theoretical consistency which is inversely proportional to the abundance of accumulated empirical materials, had to deceive any mind which is not sufficiently exacting. The existence of an African philosophy is in fact demonstrated there only at the expense of an extraordinary dilatation of the concept of 'philosophy', admitted practically as a synonym of 'culture'. The argument always comes back to the observation that there is no nation without *culture*—against which nowadays nobody can dare contend anymore—whereas promises were made, from the beginning, to show that there is no nation without *philosophy*. Ethnophilosophy lives only from that petition of principles, from that surreptitious introduction of concepts. By

substituting one term for another, it veils, in fact, the otherwise essential problems of the relation of philosophy to other sectors of culture, and to culture in general, considered as a whole.

For the ethnological conception of African philosophy, I have proposed to substitute another one: African philosophy is the African philosophical *literature*, the ensemble of philosophical *texts* produced by Africans. Properly speaking, this is not a definition. It is still an external characterisation of the object to be defined, having the effect of determining its nature, while waiting to be able to specify its proper differentiating aspects. This characterisation of African philosophy is *polemical*: it discards at once the idea of an implicit philosophy, silent, latent, and brings us to the really elementary fact that there is no philosophy except in and by means of discourse.

I know well that this position itself is not without problems. That, even in Europe, in this culture where nobody would think of denying *the existence* of a long and rich philosophical tradition, one speaks easily of "silent philosophy",³ of "spontaneous philosophy of scientists",⁴ of "metaphysics of the physical"⁵ etc. In Europe, the philosopher attempts voluntarily to surprise the 'hidden philosophies' at work and determining from inside non-philosophical discourses. These hidden "philosophies", not explicitly formulated, are embodied in certain practices and manifest themselves only by their structural effects on those discourses. Better still: *the philosophical discourses themselves*, one learns nowadays to decode, from the manifest text, a latent text, an unthought-of, a 'not-said', the indirect effects of which are also perceived in many ways between the lines of the visible text.

This is not the place to question the grounds of such a practice. What is certain is that it is testimony of a turning back upon itself of Western thought by considering itself as the object, taking another view of itself, warned by the teachings of psycho-analysis and by the theory of the unconscious and from now on afraid, suspecting its own steps, passing from the most naive and most arrogant positivism to a methodical questioning of its own foundations. No doubt also that the ethnophilosophical project, as a European theoretical project, is inscribed in that structure and, consequently, inseparable from the transformations of the European self-conscience. The questioning of "primitive philosophies", by trying to uncover the collective unthought-of belonging to the so called primitive people proceeds from the same theoretical hypothesis as the questioning of Europe by itself, of which she is just a temporary moment.

But it would be destructive for the Third World to take into its account, uncritically and without discernment, this European project, of which the Third World is itself just one experimental ground among others. It is dangerous for Africa, under the pretext that Europe has invented an "African Philosophy", to consider itself forever exempted from producing philosophers, or from assigning as an exclusive task to its philosophers the creation of that same "African philosophy", and to be satisfied occasionally by defining it differently. It is the ethnophilosophical project itself that the Third World philosophers must re-examine critically, before allowing themselves to be imprisoned into it and subordinate their theoretical initiatives to it. It is to the origin of the project that they must climb again in order to grasp its true nature, as an expression of the self-seeking of Europe, having some sense only in relation to that self-seeking, in relation to a particular era in the history of European culture. Instead of allowing themselves to fall into the trap, they must accept the evidence that, even in Europe, there must be philosophers to think the unthought-of^{of} other philosophers, there must be philosophers to think of the philosophical unthought-of of scientists, there must be philosophers, finally, to think of the "philosophical" unthought-of of other peoples.

The existence of texts is, therefore, something that cannot be overlooked. Philosophy as a project is a metamorphosis of discourse. And it remains such even when it wants to think its own opposite, to explode the limits which constitute it as philosophy. By defining African philosophy as a collection of texts I have no more than just recalled the minimum meaning of the concept of philosophy which is, in fact subscribed to even by those who question it.⁶ In this way, I go beyond the machinations of a metaphysical anthropology which brings fire on everything and draws a pretext from the most recent themes of Western philosophy itself.

I have also been blamed for that "definition" (of which I have just recalled the voluntarily extrinsic character), which has been curiously called "geographical criterion".

The African origin of authors, it has been said, presented as necessary and sufficient condition for a philosophy to be called "African" would be a way of "avoiding the debate on the content of African philosophy", and a true "imposture".⁷

In reality, the imposture is on the side of ideologists and other masters of rhetoric who, for various reasons, try to immobilize Africa by identifying her as a determined cultural, religious or ideological content, by fixing her to a specific

being, by making her prisoner of herself or, more precisely, prisoner of their discourse concerning her.

My definition of Africanity, like that which I propose for philosophy, is primarily polemical. It aims at reminding us that, in the most current meaning of the term, Africa is a continent, not a philosophy or a system of values. The term just refers to a portion of the world, the concept is a geographical concept *empirical* and contingent, not determinable *a priori*. The African is not necessarily someone who believes in God—as so many well-thinking anthropologists like to claim continuously . . . someone who practices the cult of ancestors and believes in the reincarnation of the dead. He is not even—from a different perspective—someone who, by use of force, struggles for the liberation of his people (in the sense in which one is sometimes tempted to speak of the “true African” as opposed to the false African or of the African who is insufficiently African). He is simply somebody who is attached, by his biological ascent, to that portion of the world called Africa, be he a believer or an atheist, pious or impious toward the ancestors, patriot or politically unconscious, revolutionary or reactionary, etc. Africa understood as a geographical concept, is the recognised possibility of a plurality of concordant or discordant values, a place for multiple contradictions which, by their movement, give birth to the movement of history itself. There was, therefore, need to start by *demystifying* Africanity by reducing it to a *fact*—simply the fact, and, in itself, perfectly neutral, of belonging to Africa—by removing the mystic halo of values arbitrarily grafted upon this fact by ideologists of the African identity. There was need, in order to deal with the complexity of our history, to bring back the scene of that history to its original simplicity, in order to deal with the richness of African traditions, there was need to *impoverish* resolutely the concept of Africa, to *free* it from all connotations, ethical, religious, philosophical, political, etc., loaded on it by a long anthropological tradition, the most evident effect of which was to close the horizon, to close history prematurely.

There is more: that definition of Africanity, which is a going back to the primary meaning of a word that has been arbitrarily overdefined, creates in principle the possibility of a separation between African literature and literature about Africa, African philosophy and Africanist philosophy. It allows, consequently, to reveal (therefore to dissipate or to prevent) a classical contradiction which consists of considering as African philosophy the philosophy produced by Africanists (European and African) from African ethnological material. It makes us go beyond Africa-object, Africa *spoken about*, the Africa of Africanists and other Third World specialists, to Africa-subject, producer, among other practices, of a plural and multifarious discourse; a concrete ground where, for

millenia, a complex adventure has been taking place of which nobody today can predict the future. A place, that is, of multiple practices whose only destiny cannot be of feeding the discourse of other people. By relating the African philosophy to its producers, by characterising it as a collection of texts owed to the Africans (and not simply to European Africanists, nor forcibly to African Africanists), I was not, therefore, formulating a claim of the nationalist type, neither was I intending to define, by that single "geographical criterion", the content itself of African philosophy. I was, on the contrary, delimiting the location of a problem: for once the confusion is dissipated between African and Africanist, African and Africanologist, once African philosophy is returned to its pluralism, to its contradictions, to its tensions, briefly, to its life, one could at last investigate its history, determine its problematic or better, its problematics, its tendency or better, its dominant tendencies, ask oneself what factors have influenced its evolution and, at the appropriate time, its mutations, what effects, direct or indirect, it has exercised on the development of the society, what have been, at different stages, its productions, its function, its limits.

Illusions of Speculation

I tackle now the second question: What *can* Philosophy do?.

Many, we must say, look to it for miracles. They require of philosophy to solve all problems: metaphysical problems of the existence of God, of the nature of man, of life after death, etc. Political problems, economic, social, of ways and means of national liberation, of the emancipation of exploited masses, briefly, of revolution. This enumeration, without being exhaustive, indicates two categories of quite distinct problems; consequently, two different, but complementary, ways of expecting from philosophy more than it can give, of overestimating its capability, two apparently opposed forms, but essentially identical, of dogmatism. What we must try to understand is, on one side, the inevitable character of such problems, taken at their own legitimate level and, on the other side, why it is illusory to expect philosophy to solve them.

Kant, the good old Kant, was asking himself the same question on the first form of dogmatism, and we know his answer, shocking, demonstrative, convincing, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I readily make on my part the following vow: it seems to me unthinkable today, from whatever country one is and whatever philosophical doctrine one professes to act as though Kant never existed, to make dissertations peacefully, with a quiet assurance, about God, immortality, free will etc., in order to prove either their existence, or their impossibility, to assign

as task to philosophy the unending ruminations of these problems, without first of all having been preoccupied with determining their meaning and their status and without having shown that it is effectively possible to resolve them rationally. One can no longer be so sure of himself after Kant, so naively positive when one tackles this type of questions. As long as one is not able to refute him, as long as one has not, patiently, methodically, removed the doubts with which he has covered speculative reasoning, one cannot perceive the need for philosophy to change its grounds, to exclude from its field traditional themes of the pre-critical metaphysics by leaving them to mythology, to religion, to poetry for instance.

Kant, it is true, was not an African. This, however, does not necessarily mean that his conclusions do not hold for Africa, or that the philosopher from Butare or from Abomey-Calavi is endowed with supernatural powers unknown to the philosopher from Königsberg, and is more capable than the latter in resolving transcendental problems. It is true also that outside Africa, post-Kantian philosophy has not always kept in mind the good lesson of modesty and rigour to be learned from Kant. Just to quote an example, speculative tendencies have appeared, from the end of the last century, within a tradition as strict and radically critical, as Marxism, drawing the latter in the direction of the metaphysics of nature, as dogmatic and catechistic as one could ever want. Those tendencies are not dead. It is against them that there was forged, at the beginning of this century in Russia and inside the Marxist tradition itself, the neo-Kantian doctrine known under the name of empiriocriticism.⁸

The fact that this doctrine in its turn has been fought against with his known vigour by the great proletarian leader Lenin, certainly leads to thinking about the limits of empiriocriticism itself.⁹ This does not make empiriocriticism any less justified historically as a reaction against metaphysical speculation which threatened any time to deviate from its primary object a doctrine aiming, before all else, at conceiving the conditions for the possibility of a revolution. Beyond Lenin's severe criticism, beyond the incoherences of empiriocriticsists themselves, so clearly brought to the fore by that criticism itself, one must still, today, understand the deep cause of that neo-Kantian reaction against Plekhanov, of the truth of that critique of speculative Marxism, within Marxism itself.¹⁰

Coming back to the ethnophilosophers, we must surely look for the ultimate reason for their illusions and for their naive assurance in this heavy speculative heritage of precritical philosophy.

The ethnophilosophers have received from the pre-Kantian tradition, and have accepted without any criticism, a certain idea of the object of philosophy: God, immortality, the origin of the world, etc. . . . From that moment the critical

form of reflection on these problems did not matter much, this form, in which resides par excellence, according to this same tradition, the specificity of *philosophical* reflection. For them what was important was the result, the system of answers to which that interrogation was leading, not that interrogation itself. What is indeed the sense of covering so much ground, if at the end of everything, we are assured of finding nothing more than what we possessed already? Why philosophy when we have religion? Why ask ourselves about the origin and the end of everything when the answer to that question is already supplied by so many cosmogonies available in the surrounding culture? Finally, where is the difference between a philosophy which is uselessly anxious, avoiding the system of beliefs transmitted by ancestors just to come back to it at the end or to replace it by another system of beliefs which fulfills the same function, and a more prudent philosophy, which retains jealously the convictions transmitted by the society?

We must consequently clearly see that a certain idea of the *object* of philosophy authorises and justifies, fundamentally, the ethnophilosophical movement. This movement which is the apt short-circuit by which the anthropologist, economizing on the interrogative and methodical form of the classical philosophical discourse and tacitly appropriating its system of questions, tries to discover in the collective culture the system of answers already available. It is not sufficient, in order to break radically with ethnophilosophy, to have paid attention to the *critical form* of the pre-Kantian philosophical discourse, since to the ethnophilosopher that form appears quite useless and sterile. It is also necessary to observe that philosophy, understood in this way, has never been able to solve a single one of the transcendent problems which she tackled deliberately, and to have admitted the necessity for her to change grounds. It is necessary, in all, to have applied to the matter itself of classical philosophy, i.e. to its problematic—and not only to its form—the act of criticism. It is found that, with Kant, that radical criticism takes the form of a “Copernican revolution”, consisting of questioning the power and the limits of reasons itself. The philosophical criticism can today engage itself into other directions. It can rectify, redress, rethink, overtake and even refute Kant. It will never be able to simply ignore or by-pass him.

Let us now turn to the second group of problems, those dealing with national liberation, the emancipation of exploited classes, the struggle against misery and underdevelopment or, in a word, the revolution. Many expect of philosophy to solve these problems, without asking themselves how, in which measure, by which means it can do so. Philosophy, for them, has a meaning in Africa only if it is an “involved philosophy”, “a philosophy of action” or accord-

ing to one expression of Gramsci which has begun to be popular among us, "a philosophy of praxis".¹¹

In truth any African who is even slightly patriotic, conscious of the historical situation of his suppressed peoples and is concerned about their liberation, recognises forcibly, at least up to a certain point, that demand for a militant thought. Any African intellectual, any writer, man of science or African thinker knows in advance that he faces, if he is not careful, the unbearable reproach of being a proud aristocrat, of direct or indirect complicity with the oppressor:

"What do you want your ideas to do for me, if you do not bother about my plight".¹²

Yet, look: once one rejects the comfort of indifference, admits the necessity for the philosopher to participate in the struggles of his peoples, the problem remains that of knowing whether his being a philosopher makes him more capable than any other intellectual, even any other militant, to work for the collective liberation.

Indeed we can with ease understand what an "involved literature" might be. The militant writer can describe usefully, in novels, various aspects of foreign domination or of imperialist exploitation; he can put in pieces of theatre one or another personality, one or another aspect of the political, economical, social and, if necessary, military drama of his peoples; he can write poems aimed at inspiring the people or at maintaining in it the courage of the struggle, the patience of sacrifice, and obstinate hope. In brief, the writer can, and if he is militant must, put his profession directly or indirectly to the service of the political struggle. He can reach this by *mentioning* directly or in a more subtle way, by *insinuating* without explicitly mentioning it, that which is unbearable in exploitation.

We understand, also without difficulty, what can be an "involved history." The historian can, and if he is militant, he must, demonstrate patiently, rigorously, and methodically, the imperialist falsifications of the history of his peoples. By re-establishing the facts of civilisation veiled or refuted by imperialist historiography, by reconstituting the struggles of classes or social groups, the victories achieved in the past by the exploited masses, their defeats and the circumstances of those defeats, the conditions for the formation of great empires, the achievements, the weaknesses of those empires, the historical conditions of the triumph and then, where necessary, the failure of colonialism, etc. In these and other ways the historian of the Third World, and of Africa in particular, can contribute effectively to the knowledge and to the progress of today's struggles.

As much as, and maybe more than history, political economy and sociology can contribute to opening the eyes of the oppressed people by undressing the

mechanisms of economic exploitation and of political domination, by identifying the actual interests, the nature and function of the struggling social classes, and the price to be paid in the short, medium and long terms. The science of economics has that exceptional privilege of being able to relate itself directly to politics, by supplying it with the data on which its decisions must rest.

However, it is as yet unclear what the specific contribution of philosophy can be in this area. Do we expect it to describe the misery of the people and accelerate the process of raising their consciousness regarding their exploited situation? But literature achieves this even better: we have demonstrated this above. Do we expect the philosopher to analyse the economical mechanisms of the exploitation, the methods of the political oppression, the characteristics of class violence? The economist, the historian, and the political scientist are better placed to achieve this. Could the task of the philosopher be to point out the reasons for the dissatisfaction confusedly felt by most of the people, to say out loud what everybody thinks silently, and sometimes with an insufficient clarity, to demonstrate the motives for revolt which are at work here and there in the population, to unite those motives into a coherent whole capable of inciting to action and of mobilising — literally of making mobile, pushing into movement — the population? It is clear that this task is indeed important, determining. But it belongs to every revolutionary intellectual, to every militant in general, and not to the philosopher in particular.

Would one say, finally, that the specific role of philosophy is to translate the aspirations of the people, to put forward in order to guide action, a clear vision of the aims and ends, a model of the society to be achieved, and, at the extreme, an utopia?

No doubt, indeed, that utopia (taken in its elementary sense) exercises in history, in the determination and orientation of practical struggles, an irreplaceable function. But, in the first place, and exactly for that reason, it cannot be the exclusive preserve of the philosopher. The minimal utopia necessary for action stems itself from the criticism of the present. In order for an utopia not to be a purely arbitrary construction but an effective motive for action, it must proceed, not from fantasy, but from a critical imagination exercising itself on reality, leaning on an effective knowledge of that reality and aiming at transforming it, starting from and in accordance with its objective laws.¹³ But, neither that knowledge (which must be drawn, as we have demonstrated, from the positive sciences), nor that critical imagination (essential to every revolutionary in general), are the exclusive property of the philosopher.

In the second place, if we take utopia in its fantastic meaning, if, that is, by this word we mean an artificial construction, an arbitrary and free vision of the mind, we must admit that in fact, philosophers have often demonstrated a strong inclination towards utopia thus understood. But it is precisely by this tendency that they have proved to be least convincing, least rigorous, and least useful. Utopia as a hallucination of the mind, the abstract, speculative utopia does not bring anything to politics. The latter on the contrary, starts by reducing the former. Therefore it is far from being a compliment to the philosopher to make him a specialist of utopia. It is, rather, to point a finger at one of the temptations against which he must protect himself constantly in order to gain at least some credibility as a philosopher.

It stems from this analysis that the relationship between philosophy and politics is infinitely more complex than one would be led to believe, that its practical effectiveness cannot be as direct, as automatic, as so many militants demand with a haste which is, however, quite understandable.

Of course, there has been the famous "11th thesis on Feuerbach": "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."¹⁴

Many of our comrades quote it readily, projecting into the statement their intense desire, simply forgetting that, in that thesis which has the form of an aphorism, Marx does not claim that philosophy can change the world; on the contrary, he is urging that *we get out of philosophy* in order to tackle the practical tasks of transforming the world.

There have been also, of course, before the *Theses on Feuerbach*, the emotional and highly enigmatic formulae of the *Contribution to the Critique Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction*: the "becoming-world of philosophy", the "suppression of philosophy by its realisation", the "weapon of criticism" as a prologue of the "critique of weapons", etc.; the famous sentences of this type:

"Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses (. . .) Just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy *Philosophy* is the *head* of this (human) emancipation and the proletariat is its *heart*." ¹⁵

But it must not be forgotten that this text belongs to Marx's youthful days, to that "philosophical conscience of the past" with which Engels and himself, afterwards, had to start "settling their accounts", in that severe criticism of philosophical illusions that is the *German Ideology*.¹⁷

The idea of a philosophy that is directly effective, possessing in itself,—under the sole condition that it incarnates itself in the “masses”,—the power to transform reality, the idea of a philosophy becoming a will, cannot be considered as the most original theoretical contribution made by Marx. It represents, on the contrary, and in spite of whatever attraction it may have, a survival of the young-Hegelian philosophy and its idealistic voluntarism. It must be evident that it is not by philosophy, but by political practice, that the world is transformed, and that this political practice is never satisfied with “realising” a philosophy, but always consists of inscribing into the facts practical objectives fixed by will, taking into account the existing material conditions, the circumstances, the situation.

The knowledge of these material conditions, of the natural tendencies and of the objective laws of their evolution, constitutes, of course, where it exists, a precious trump for political practice. It is exactly such a knowledge which historical materialism offers to the working class and to the exploited classes in general as Lenin said, applied to “the concrete analysis of concrete situations”. It is clear, on the other hand, that the practical objectives fixed by will in the form of political tasks are, in the best of cases, only a minute part of a *system of practical objectives*, of a *system of practical motivations and practical ideas*, of that which we called not long ago, in a first approximation and in an “elementary” meaning of the word, a *mobilising utopia*, and which usually, since Lenin, carries another name: ideology.

But neither the Marxist science of history, nor the proletarian ideology founded on it, possess in themselves the magical virtue of transforming reality. They *become* effective only when exploited and put into action by political practice. Better: neither that science, nor that Marxist ideology constitute in themselves a philosophy. It is still today a real, and otherwise complex problem to define the relationships between the Marxist science of history and Marxist philosophy, between Marxist ideology and Marxist philosophy, and finally the specificity of this philosophy in relation to traditional idealistic and speculative philosophy.

I am not going to tackle here the difficult problem of the right to existence of a “Marxist” philosophy, in the wake of the death sentence pronounced by Marx, at a given time of his professional career, and several times repeated by Engels, against philosophy in general. Further, there is the acute awareness which one and the other of the two had from a certain moment on, that the transformation of the world had to be realized *elsewhere*, out of philosophy, by science and political practice. One thing is certain: even in the event of a positive

answer to the question of the right to existence of a Marxist philosophy, we cannot reasonably attribute to the Marxist philosophy thus postulated—to dialectical materialism—the mysterious power of immediate efficiency. If it is definitely concluded that such a philosophy, supposing it exists, cannot be satisfied with interpreting the world; if it is concluded that it must contribute *in one way or another*, as the case may be, to its transformation, it is also quite certain that it cannot fulfil this vocation directly, but only through a series of unavoidable, decisive mediations: through its effects, which would remain now to be defined, on the Marxist science of history, on one part, and on the ideology of rising social classes on the other.

Let us come back to Africa, for a counterproof of our thesis: of what concrete use have the various “philosophies of action” been which appeared there, “the philosophy of the praxis”, if we speak like Yai and Niamkey Koffi, and what have been their fate in our countries? They have been, so far, not only superfluous, but pernicious. Superfluous because they were superimposed, artificially and without any need, as a hair on soup, on a political discourse which could be fully self-sufficient. Pernicious precisely because they were superfluous and could function consequently as a powerful means of diversion, used to divert the attention of the “masses” from real political, economical and social problems, and to fix it on abstruse metaphysical questions.

I have analysed a doctrine of this type: the “consciencism” of Kwame Nkrumah, presented by the Ghanaian leader himself as a “philosophy and (an) ideology for decolonization and development, with particular reference to the African revolution”.¹⁸ I have shown the extent to which Nkrumah’s metaphysical choices were arbitrary, as were the answers which he suggests to the old question of the basic nature and of the origin of being. And still more arbitrary was the biunivocal correspondence which he was claiming to establish between various forms of philosophical discourse and the forms of political discourse:

“There is only one real philosophical alternative. The terms of that alternative are idealism and materialism (. . .) Idealism favours oligarchy, materialism favours egalitarianism.”¹⁹

To this massive affirmation, based on speculation alone, we have opposed the very simple fact which is usually observed, that there exist progressive idealists and materialists who are fairly reactionary, atheists whose atheism and the extraordinary intellectual liberation that follows it, does not prevent them from being wretched fascists, and believers whose faith in God, far from being a pretext not to be interested in the day-to-day miseries of the people, is on the contrary a

decisive reason to fight for the triumph of justice and fraternity, here and now on this earth of men.

Nkrumah seems to have been among those who perceived the problem in the same terms in which we have just presented it, but from inside a theoretical field that could not allow him to deploy it, not even just simply to grasp it *as a problem*. On behalf of what he calls "categorical conversion" (and which is nothing else, if we look at it well, than what Engels called "qualitative leap"), he believed he could arrive, in the final analysis, at a reconciliation of materialism and the thesis of the existence of God, matter being for him not the only reality, but the primary reality from which all the others are directly or indirectly derived.

"Although deeply rooted in materialism, Consciencism is not necessarily atheistic."²⁰

Here Nkrumah is seen struggling in a contradiction which is visibly insurmountable. The impossible synthesis between materialism and religious belief, the incoherence of a system claiming to reconcile materialism and theism—that fine flower of idealism—and ends up, consequently, with a perfect eclecticism. That is where Nkrumah's obstinate effort to found his politics metaphysically leads him to. The final reason for this having been a dead-end theoretical route is that the Ghanaian leader admitted, on one hand, that all political projects necessarily require a philosophical foundation, which could be found, in the case of a *revolutionary* political project, only in *materialism*. On the other hand, that he believed it was his duty, out of respect for the African cultural traditions of the moment, to admit the possibility and the legitimacy of religious faith.

The only true solution would have been, as we have indicated above, to discard the problem itself as a false problem, to question courageously and, finally, to repudiate the tacit hypothesis of the existence of a profound metaphysic of politics. In other words, to admit that a political position requires *political* justifications, in the widest and most comprehensive meaning of the term, and not philosophical justifications.

However, Nkrumah's *consciencism* was just an example. In more than one African country, the tendency today is towards the cautious, or else untimely, affirmation of a State philosophy which is supposed to express the last word on matters concerning fundamental political, economical, social and cultural choices. At the same time, it is supposed to answer the most classical problems of traditional metaphysics. Certainly the regimes concerned have the merit of having taken into account the irreplaceable role of ideology as a guide to political action. They have the merit of having been able to escape from political empiricism, from think-small pragmatism, from technocratical economism which speaks of develop-

ment where, however, the question is, more fundamentally, to give back to a people its historical initiative in all spheres. But it is one thing to recognize the importance of ideology, and quite another to fall into the traps of ideologism. What we call ideologism is, on one hand, that tendency by which ideology, moving out of its legitimate field of application—the political field in the widest possible meaning of the word—claims to solve by itself, to begin with, non-political problems in regard to which it lacks all competency—scientific problems for instance, or, in order to keep to our subject, pseudo-problems of speculative metaphysics. Ideologism is, on the other hand, in the political field itself, the illusion, real or pretended, that ideology can alone by itself, solve all problems.

Facing these excesses, it is important to recall the irreplaceable role of *political practice*, and to recall that the only real mission, i.e. the only legitimate function of ideology is to promote and to enlighten that practice. In the same way, we must recall that, if that mission and that function belong to ideology in the sense specified above—ideology as a system of practical motivations and ideas—they do not belong to philosophy as such, whatever meaning (precritical or critical) may be given to the word "philosophy".

Tasks of the Philosopher

Two apparently negative conclusions stem from the above analysis: philosophy can *neither* solve the transcendental problems in which traditional speculative metaphysics delights, *nor* can it substitute itself for practice as a means of transforming reality.

We must consequently define its authority in another way. We can best do so only by following, once more, the two axes of thinking utilized above, in consequence of the two classical forms of the philosophical illusion, themselves determined by the two fundamental forms of human activity: knowledge and action.

Indeed we must reflect on the double critique which we have just exercised. If we want to define its status, we are obliged to characterize it as a *critique relevant to philosophy*, as a *philosophical critique*. We are even better placed to carry out our reflections given the following three conjectures. On the one hand, that this critique requires to be elaborated more systematically (it is enough, in order to be convinced, to think of the magnitude of the two great classical works in this domain, the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *German Ideology*). On the other hand, that this critique, whatever its magnitude is, cannot be carried out once and for all, but must continuously reformulate and update itself, taking

on various forms, always new, of the philosophical illusion—of the *double* philosophical illusion. Finally, that the classical illusion of the power of the philosophy is only the reverse of a real, positive power, the fantastic interpretation of an effective competence in the field of theory as well as that of practice.

The real power of philosophy is therefore itself double. Under its first aspect, it is illustrated by the whole gnoseological tradition. This tradition, in all classical doctrines, practices philosophy in the form of a theory of knowledge, and has, therefore, not been invented but only taken up again in a particularly elaborated and radical form in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's analysis itself must also be placed within the theoretical and ideological context of his era. It is still, in many ways, a speculative critique, be it only by its reference to a fixed human nature, defined by forms and categories the number of which (two for the first, twelve for the second) is not justified by any theoretical necessity, as by the belief in the unity of science as phenomenal knowledge. All of post-Kantian theoretical history shows us how, under pressure of facts—*facts of knowledge*, and particularly of scientific events—the old theory of knowledge, even as radicalized by Kant, had to be discarded. On one hand, it was forced to explode into a complex system of regional histories of sciences, of positive methodologies linking themselves in a specific way to different disciplines and tending more and more to be taken care of by specialists of those same disciplines. On the other hand it was forced to reduce itself, generally, to an analytical philosophy engaged in the elucidation of the conditions and limits of natural language.

The African philosopher cannot ignore that evolution. It is in order to draw lessons from there that I risked, inspired by Althusser's teachings, to define philosophy as a theory of scientific practice, a theory whose development depends, and rightly, on the real development of scientific knowledge.²¹ We must without doubt today widen that definition in order to take into account, on one hand, the indisputable contribution of analytical philosophy, and on the other hand, the relationship no less indisputable, although infinitely more subtle than our ideologists suspect, between philosophy and politics. The theory of science, through its different specializations, and without detriment to the difficulty of really coordinating those specialisations, remains an essential nucleus of philosophy in general.

What remains is to ask ourselves what philosophy can do, when it is considered under this first aspect, and finally, of what use it is.

I am not going to insist on the utilitarian and pragmatic presuppositions of

such a question, presuppositions which are visibly linked to the dominating technocratic ideology. I will answer simply, supposing that the question has an innocence of which it can be rarely proud. On the one hand the critique of the false knowledge—of metaphysical illusions, for instance—is in and by itself infinitely useful, because it forces the mind to avoid dead-end roads where it lets itself naturally be trapped, and to invest itself into more productive fields and directions of research. On the other hand the theory of the methods and of the history of the sciences, the knowledge of real particularities of their constitution and of their development can contribute, under certain determined conditions, to the acceleration, by making it conscious, of the process of development of the sciences themselves.

In the case of Africa, philosophy as a meditation on the logic of sciences, on the conditions of their constitution and their development, on the theoretical and historical relationships that they have between them and, as the case may be, between them and their technical applications, on the forms of ways of their social insertion, the modes of social appropriation of their theoretical and practical results, briefly, philosophy as theory of science in the widest meaning of the term, can today play a considerable role by illuminating with a new light the problem, henceforth classic, of the contribution of science and of technology to the development of our societies.

There remains now the second aspect. The power of philosophy is not limited to the field of theory or of linguistic practice. It extends also to the domain of social practice. I have suggested above that Marx and Engels' great work, the *German Ideology*, (a work which paradoxically was not published during the life of its authors who resignedly "abandoned" it, for want of something better, "to the gnawing critique of mice"²²), represents, in the area of political practice, a critique as radical, as revolutionary as had been, in the area of knowledge, the *Critique of Pure Reason* of Kant. Never had a philosopher denounced with such vigour the illusions of philosophy about its own powers in the political field. What is excoriated in this work which is available today, unfortunately, only in an incomplete, reconstituted form, what is denounced under the heading of ideology, is the belief of the German Young Hegelians of that time, but which is today again to be found held just as strongly by so many intellectuals, philosophers or otherwise, that in order to be a free man it is sufficient to replace false ideas by correct ones; that the demystification, the liberation from chimeras—those of religion for instance—is not only a necessary, but also a sufficient condition for emancipation. In other words, what is held questionable is the idea of a revolution in and by the ideas which mistakes a purely ideal critique for some-

thing constituting "revolutionary danger".

Now, what is the result of the Marxian critique? It is first of all an invitation to the elaboration of a "real science", positive, trying to expose the "process of practical development of men", instead of speculative ideology and "empty phrases on consciousness".²³ It is also a call to social practice, which alone is capable of transforming material conditions which beget the mystifications which pretend to denounce that empty rhetoric of the young iconoclastic ideologists. What is remarkable is that Marx achieves, by one and the same action, the transition from speculation to science. It is not a coincidence that the *German Ideology* constitutes precisely the foundations of historical materialism - and the transition into politics.

This result—this *double* result—shows how productive criticism can be, the apparently negative criticism of ideology as an illusory belief in the autonomy of ideas and in the immediate practical efficiency of philosophy.

But here is the question: has philosophy still got, beyond this critical function, some role to play in the promotion of political enlightenment? Taking literally the rupture achieved by Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology*, the answer would be, of course, no. But it would be to forget, on the one hand, that the science of history founded on that rupture exists in that book only in the form of plan, that the book has, consequently, a programmatic character and its contents presented, because of that, in the language of philosophy. It would be to forget, on the other hand, that *ideology*, as the political illusion of philosophy cannot be once and for all removed from the minds of men, but that it takes in every era new forms which invite a renovated theoretical critique again and always expressing itself in the language of philosophy. Finally, and most important, it would be to pretend to ignore that, beyond the innovation of the *German Ideology*, beyond ideology as (self-) mystification, political practice needs, as an absolute necessity, a coherent system of mobilising ideas, an ideology in a new sense, which was not unknown to Marx and Engels, but the confirmation of which was due principally to Lenin. That ideology, in this new sense, has relationships with philosophy which are not simply negative, complex relationships which need to be elucidated with a renewed effort.

Thus appears the real power of philosophy relative to political practice, and beyond the illusion of an immediate efficiency of the ideological discourse. As a critique of "ideology", it plays a clarifying role of the first importance, by which it contributes to clear up, to tidy up, to liberate the proper field of politics in its relationships with the productive activity, with the interests and the conflicts

of material interests, and, finally, with the class struggle. But beyond this clarifying function, and precisely on the basis of the positive discoveries that it promotes, philosophy makes an *indirect* contribution on the basis of the new insolubly critical and scientific approach which such a philosophical clarification allows to be applied to society. That is to say the contribution, by the necessary detour through the science of history,—the science of production and of class struggle—, renders possible an ideology in a new sense, directly linked to political practice; a “scientific ideology”, i.e. founded on “science”—on the “concrete analysis of concrete situations”, as Lenin would say—and inciting the exploited masses to apply the results of this “science” to the practical transformation of the prevailing social relationships.

However, when we reflect upon it, that political power does not belong to philosophy in general, but more particularly to the Marxist philosophy. For, what constitutes, in this context, Marx and Engels’ exceptional force, is their not having been satisfied with repudiating verbally the ideological illusion, but their having been able to *explain* it from its material conditions of existence. The critique of ideology requires, in order to be convincing, to be conducted from a resolutely materialistic point of view.

Only historical materialism can, by revealing the real relationships between the diverse instances of the social whole, relate the ideological phantasms to their true origin, put them back in their right places, and bring to the fore the laws of their genesis and of their evolution. Only the discovery of the first theoretical principles of historical materialism, therefore, allowed Marx and Engels, in the *German Ideology*, to inaugurate that productive critique of ideology which, as we have just seen, will always have to be repeated.

The irony of history requires that Marxism itself, as a radical criticism of ideology, if it is that, be able to function, in its turn, in some determined historical circumstances, as a mystifying ideology, an alibi, in the precise sense in which that phenomenon is denounced in the *German Ideology*. Let the proletarian revolution triumph, for instance, in a country, and let the party armed with the Marxist ideology (in the Leninist sense of a liberated and effectively liberating ideology) cut itself from the masses after having, thanks to it, taken power. Then, if due care is not taken, there will arise the real risk of falling back into the mystifications of speculative ideology, of snatching from the masses the Marxist theory and ideology by confiscating them for the benefit of an oligarchic State machinery, and turning them against the masses themselves.

It is therefore always possible, in principle, to apply to Marxism itself, in-

asmuch as it has become ideology, the Marxist critique of speculative ideology. It is not only possible, but necessary, to maintain as Marxists the greatest critical vigilance in relation to different uses, to different modes of social appropriation of Marxism, to identify the different roles which it is made to play in the existence of nations, as theory and as ideology.

The term "ideologism", created and proposed above, has as its function, among others, to begin such a critique. In order to remain faithful to itself, Marxism, as a combat ideology, must guard itself at any price, from becoming again "ideology" in the sense of the *German Ideology*. More exactly, the ascendant classes in society must prevent by all means that deviation of Marxism to speculative and reactionary ends. They must sharpen more and more, everyday, their critical insight, develop more and more everyday, that solid good sense, that reflex of defense which forces one, naturally, to see beyond words, beyond declared propositions, be they Marxist and still more if they are not, to see, that is, objective social practice, the facts and actions of a partner.

Let us conclude in one word. The actual responsibility of the African philosopher comprises, at least, in the following tasks:

- firstly, a task of criticism and of ideological clarification consisting in dissipating the illusions, the mystifications and the enormous layer of sedimented lies which obscure the consciousness of the oppressed African masses;
- secondly, the rigorous study, the assimilation, the deepening of the best that the international philosophical tradition has produced, up to and including, necessarily, Marxism, the only theory which gives us today the means of understanding the mechanisms of the exploitation of which our societies are victims;
- finally, thirdly, a paradoxical task consisting in getting out of philosophy, in transgressing continuously its limits in order to have with reality another type of theoretical and practical relationship, in such a way as to contribute to a positive solution of problems which are masked by the pseudo-problems cloaked in mystification.

I have hitherto confined myself, principally, to the first task, through the criticism of ethnophilosophy and of the ideological inflation whence, in the final analysis, ethnophilosophy itself proceeds. That necessary attempt at clarification has irritated some of those criticized, who are surprisingly in a hurry to proceed to concrete reality, taking their rhetoric as politics itself, and fiercely hostile, for that reason, to those whom they, curiously, call "speculative-abstract" philo-

sophers. But reality, unfortunately, is much more complex than they think. It is not sufficient, in order to get to it, to merely formulate one's prejudices or one's spontaneous convictions. Never, no, never shall we be able to economize on theory. The critique of ideologism, far from emanating from pure speculation is, on the contrary, a critique of that abstract speculation which obscures the real political problems by furnishing them with purely rhetorical solutions. It is the need of a return to the things themselves, in their complexity and their real significance, beyond the falsifications of a simple discourse.

But this necessary, unavoidable critique cannot constitute the whole of the philosophical task in today's Africa. First of all, as critique, it needs to acquire theoretical instruments, which it must draw first of all from the existing philosophical tradition. Then, the international philosophical tradition and, where the occasion arises, the national, whatever its worth, has any sense only when it is taken in charge, updated, reactivated and thus enriched and developed by the African society itself using the best means at its disposal. There is not a single reason why, under the pretext of being *African* philosophers, we should work actively in order to become *bad* philosophers. Should that be the case, African philosophy will not develop the acquisitions and the intellectual level of non-African philosophical traditions. It will be fully itself only by taking up positively the historical challenge, by assimilating and, if possible, going beyond, in their application to the actual problems of Africa, the most productive lessons of exogenous theoretical traditions, in the same manner as with those lessons of the African traditions of thought.

Finally, to convince the sceptics who are led into error by the ambient rhetoric, it is desirable that the philosopher should acquire, in the domain or the domains where his critique is readily exercised, the information and the formation necessary for reformulating in more rigorous terms and contributing to the positive resolution of real problems badly presented by the dominant rhetoric. Thus, for instance, the critique of ethnophilosophy points, as a confirmation, to a positive investigation of African thinking put back into its historical, its social, economical, political contexts, its different tendencies, its contradictions, its evolution, and its mutations. Such a study does not depend any more on philosophy, but on what might be best termed sociology or anthropology. The sociologist, having received a philosophical formation and warned by the cul de sacs of ethnophilosophy, the philosopher having become sociologist and having remained faithful to that requirement of rigour and of coherence essential to his initial discipline, can no longer be satisfied with the rash simplifications of ethnophilosophy nor cannot he let himself be led, in his investigation, by the reigning

empiricist and technocratic ideology.

We can say the same about the philosopher who has become a linguist, a historian, a specialist of one or another branch of what is called today "African studies". Law, of course, and ideally speaking, any particular science, including mathematics, physics or communication, is able to play that role of positive counterweight to philosophical critique. But the actual scientific conjuncture is characterised, on our side, by the invasion in all sciences called human, of that form of particularism which is called: "Africanism", the ravages of what has been very correctly called "African exceptionalism",²⁵ the abundance of models of interpretation aiming, one or the others, at surrounding that imaginary but never questioned reality, *the African difference*. Briefly, given the special function of the social sciences, as phases of manifestation and privileged vehicles, in the field of knowledge, of all the ideological phantasms, on one hand, and on the other, the importance of those sciences in the determination of social classes and of the modalities of their transformation, the analysis of the forces in motion and of interests involved inside society, push me to think that it is principally in this sector that the African philosopher can today, by acquiring a positive formation, or, if not, the broadest and the most possibly precise information, render the greatest services.

Finally, the African philosopher, man among men, intellectual among others, belongs to a determined social class, forcibly takes part, whether he likes it or not, in the field of political struggles, declared or not. Rather than being the M. Jourdain of politics who recites, without knowing, the daily prose of interests and of conflicts of interests. It is better for him to become conscious, himself, of his membership to a class and to the political choices to which that class predisposes him. It is better, above all, that after becoming conscious of those predispositions, he disposes of them in his turn freely, putting to work that possibility always offered to men conscious of being traitors to their class, and that he sets himself effectively on the path of collective liberation and of the emancipation of the working classes.

Let us not deceive ourselves: not all the African philosophers will set themselves on this way; not one automatism, not one mechanical necessity pushes them to that. It is desirable only that, for the sake of the future of our people, the greatest possible number of philosophers, and more generally, of intellectuals and men of science, will take this direction, will *effectively* pass to proletarian positions and will, in this way, directly or indirectly put their

knowledge to the service of the people. It is easy to say, more difficult to do. To be a militant is not only a matter of conviction or of political courage. It is also, well often, a banal question of material time. One must find time to attend meetings (political, syndicalist, corporate, etc.) sometime unproductively long, to have the patience to listen, occasionally, to the brilliant interventions which have simply nothing to do with the problem, to take time oneself to stammer calmly or vehemently, depending on the circumstances, about things which seem to have a will of their own, which are yet not obvious to everybody, and which can practically even prove to be false. Briefly, to be a militant is to accept, not only the law, but the rhythm, sometimes desperately slow, of political work. The intellectual militant will always find some difficulty to reconcile, with the level of petty daily servitudes, his scientific passion and his political passion - from the time when one must, after the initial inspiration, translate them into a series of practical, exact and limited tasks, by which, precisely, the seriousness of one's involvement is measured. It is often, alas, only a banal question of *the use of time*. But the essential thing is to try, day after day, to make oneself as fully available as one can, to devote oneself to the very limit of one's abilities to the cause of the people, on the different fronts on which one feels the least badly prepared.

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1. See P.J. Hountondji: *Sur la "Philosophie Africaine"*, ed. Maspero, Paris, 1977.
2. See P.J. Hountondji: op. cit. Also M. Towa: *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*, éd. Clé, Yaoundé, 1971; F. Eboussi-Boulaga: *La Crise du Muntu: authenticité africaine et philosophie*, ded. Présence Africaine, Paris, 1977.
3. See Jean Desanti: *La philosophie silencieuse, seuil*, Paris, 1975.
4. See Louis Althusser: *Philosophie et philosophie spontanée des savants*, Maspero, Paris, 1974.
5. See Judith Miller: "Métaphysique de la physique de Galileo" in *Cahier pour l'analyse*, No. 9, Paris, 1968.
6. See, for instance, Niamkey Koffi: "L'impensé de Towa et de Hountondji", paper delivered at the International Seminar on *The Problematic of African Philosophy*, Addis Ababa, December, 1976. Also my response, given during the same seminar, "Sens du mot philosophie dans l'expression philosophie africaine", published in *Koré, revue ivoirienne de philosophie et de culture*, National University of Ivory Coast, numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8, 1977. Finally, see Niamkey Koffi's counter-attack in the same issue of *Koré*, "Les modes d'existence matérielle de la philosophie et la question de la philosophie africaine". I could be the case that, in my first analysis, I gave the impression that I was defending the ideological theme of the philosopher who is perfectly self-conscious, author of the discourse not only explicit but completely *univocal*, complete and infallible, entirely devoted only to the will of the subject. It is clear that such a pretension would not be defensible, and that no philosopher, however rigorous, would be able to prevent an excess of meaning, an inexhaustible richness of the text, an irreducible *polysemy*. However, the ideological confusionism which would fain make any word say anything and attributes arbitrarily to a people, in the name of ethnological "science", the conceptual phantasms of some individual, is far from that honest inquiry where philosophy discovers the challenges of perpetual renovation and the impossibility of its own proper limits.
7. This is what, in all confidence, the linguist from Benin, Orabiyyi Joseph Yai, declared during a conference held, successively, at the University of Ife, Nigeria, on May 4th., 1978, and the National University of Benin at Cotonou on August 23rd., 1978, under the title: "Théorie et pratique en philosophie africaine: misère de la philosophie spéculative (critique de P. Hountondji,

- M. Towa et autres)". Yai's text was due to appear in English in *Positive Review* Vol. I, Number 2, Ibadan, 1978, and in French in *Présence Africaine*, Number 108, Paris, 1979.
8. This is, of course, a simplification. As is well known, the Russian empiriocritics that were so violently scolded by Lenin (Bazarov, Bogdanov, Lounatcharski, Bermann, Hellfond, Iouchkévitich, Souvorov, Valentinov, etc.) only took into their own account, for the purpose of a critique of speculative Marxism which they saw incarnated in Plekhanov, the thesis elaborated in Germany by Mach and Avenarius.
 9. See V.I. Lenin: *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow. On the merits and limits of the critique of idealism in this text, see our: "De Lénine à Descartes: le personnage du fou et l'argument du rêve", in *Annales du Delish, Université du Dahomey*, Cotonou, 1975.
 10. To me it seems particularly important today, in Africa, to recall those tempestuous debates within the Marxist tradition and the international working class movement, in order to eliminate from our own midst, the unanimist illusions whose most evident effect is to encourage intellectual passivity. What must not be lost sight of is the unity of the doctrine and its primary vocation, which is that of enlightening social practice, giving to the proletariat, and the exploited masses in general, the intellectual weapons for their emancipation. Yet, the urgent need for action should not lead to the sacrifice of the theory; in its turn, the unity of the theory cannot be based on a pure and simple *intellectual resignation*. On the contrary, it must be the fruit of work, of an effort to assimilate and develop the complex heritage of the Marxist tradition.
 11. A cherished expression, notably by O.J. Yai and N. Koffi in the articles cited here above.
 12. Reproach of the character of André Malraux to Miguel de Unamuno in *L'Espoir*..
 13. That is all the difference — need we remind ourselves? — that there is between the utopian socialism denounced by Marx and Engels, and "scientific" socialism.
 14. K. Marx: *Theses on Feuerbach*, in F. Engels: *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in Marx/Engels, *Selected Works*, (Moscow, (1951), Vol. II.
 15. See Marx: *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in J.J. O'Malley (ed. & transl.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), and the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction".

16. See K. Marx: *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, (London, 1971), "Preface".
17. Marx and Engels: *The German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964).
18. See *Sur la "philosophie africaine"*, op. cit., pp. 189-218: "L'idée de philosophie dans le *Consciencisme* de Nkrumah".
19. K. Nkrumah: *Consciencism*, (Londón: Heinemann, 1964, 4th. ed. 1966; 5th rev. ed. London: Panaf Books, 1978).
20. Ibid.
21. See *Sur la "philosophie africaine"* op. cit., pp. 121-127, and 214-216.
 The proposed definition is explicitly presented, in these pages, as a "working hypothesis", (p. 214), a "rough hypothesis", "a possible element of an answer" (p. 121) inviting "new and difficult analyses of the history and philosophy of the sciences (. . .), new analyses of the history of philosophy in order to discover the specific relationship between each of the great problems of philosophy and a given science or, as the case may be, one in gestation," (p. 123). I can, therefore, but envy the clear conscience of some critics, linguists or philosophers who are "involved" — in which way?—who are certain a priori, prior to any analysis, that philosophy has nothing to do with the real development of the sciences, and that its only vocation is to be "practical". The same critics carefully avoid reading the several pages of *Sur la "philosophie africaine"* explicitly devoted to the analysis of the political implications and political functions of ethnophilosophy. At the same time, this analysis, albeit sometimes in veiled terms, shows the *political* significance of the critique of ethnophilosophy.
 I find of greater distinction and much more coherent the reproach of the Senegalese, Mamousse Diagne, who regrets that his political intention, evident to the attentive reader, is not reflected in the definition itself of philosophy. Further, that the "political premise" of the book is, so to speak, suppressed in favour of the "scientific premise", the only one mentioned in the proposed definition. See M. Diagne, "Paulin J. Hountondji ou la psychanalyse de la conscience ethnophilosophique", in *Psychopathologie africaine*, Vol. XII, Number 3, 1976.
22. The expression is from Marx in the preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, op. cit.
23. "Where speculation ends — in real life — there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place." (*The German Ideology*, op. cit., Part I.)
24. Yves Benot: *Indépendances africaines: idéologies et réalités*, (Maspero, Paris, 1975).

SUMMARY

The question of the justification of violence in liberation struggles is tackled, taking examples from the struggle against apartheid. After a conceptual clarification of 'violence', by the use of the concepts 'limited active violence' and 'passive violence', various positions in the question of violence are clarified.

Gandhi's insistence on passive violence (passive resistance) as the only human way; Kaunda's reluctant acceptance of violence; Nkrumah's pragmatic acceptance of (non-) violence; and Fanon's full acceptance of the positive, creative and 'cleansing' force of violence.

Wiredu concludes that violence can not be a means of creating the Good Society and can hardly be accepted unconditionally as a moral good (Fanon). At the same time completely denouncing active violence (Gandhi) does not seem to be sufficient to sustain a liberation struggle.

LA QUESTION DE LA VIOLENCE DANS LA PHILOSOPHIE CONTEMPORAINE AFRICAINE

Kwasi Wiredu

Bien que la plupart des pays Africains soient maintenant indépendants, il y a encore une partie importante de l'Afrique — dans le sud — qui reste non-libérée. Le problème ici est aggravé par un racisme particulièrement enraciné. Naturellement, la question de savoir la meilleure façon de déloger la domination raciale de cette partie de l'Afrique a préoccupé l'esprit de bien des gens. Une question très urgente est celle de la violence. Est-ce que les Africains opprimés devraient avoir recouru à la lutte armée ou bien devraient-ils employer des méthodes non-violentes? La question concerne la lutte des peuples du Tiers Monde en général et aussi les peuples qui luttent partout dans le monde.

Deux positions bien connues concernant la question de la violence sont: la philosophie de la non-violence de Gandhi comme seul mode de lutte moralement acceptable et le point de vue de Fanon considérant la violence comme le moyen de lutte anti-colonial le plus efficace. Gandhi maintenait que la violence en-soi est un mal moral alors que Fanon défendait que la violence pratiquée par les colonisés contre le colonisateur avait quelques vertus importantes. Tous les deux points de vue ont influencé la pensée et la pratique des leaders politiques Africains contemporains. Ce qui est intéressant: toutes les deux influences ont opéré d'une façon obscurément dialectique dans la pensée des leaders individuels Africains.

L'influence de Gandhi, naturellement, existe plus longtemps que celle de Fanon. La résistance non-violente était pratiquée sous l'influence Gandhienne avant que Fanon ne soit né en 1925. Depuis 1906, au moment où Gandhi dirigea personnellement une campagne non-violente en Sud Afrique jusqu'à la fin des années cinquante, la résistance non-violente de la façon de Gandhi était le mode principal de lutte dans ce pays. Le niveau le plus élevé de cette forme de lutte en Sud Afrique était atteint en 1956 quand le Congrès National Africain (CNA) sous la direction d'Albert Luthuli en concert avec le Congrès Indien et l'Organisation des Gens de Couleur et même avec quelques organisations soutenues par des gouvernements démocratiques pour le pays en tant qu'une communauté multinationale. Luthuli, qui a été octroyé le Prix Nobel de la Paix en 1960, était peut-être le leader noir le mieux respecté qui a émergé en Sud Afrique. Il était un admirateur explicite de Gandhi et avait une foi en la non-violence qui était inséparable jusqu'à sa mort en 1967. Malgré son prestige international et sa position morale — il était en quelque sorte une personnalité plus sainte que Desmond Tutu,

le divin noir irréprouvable, qui récemment a gagné le Prix Nobel de la Paix et est le premier noir jamais à devenir Evêque de Johannesburg, un homme qui semble être destiné à jouer un rôle important dans la lutte contre l'oppression raciale — malgré ses mérites immenses, en d'autres mots les efforts de Luthuli ont rencontré peu autre qu'une répression renforcée. Il est compréhensible que certaines sections du CNA perdirent confiance dans les méthodes de Gandhi, ce qui conduisit à la création en 1959 de l'organisation séparée militante et nationaliste appelée Congrès Pan-Africaniste sous la direction de Robert Sobukwe. Les deux organisations étaient bientôt bannies par le gouvernement Sud-Africain à cause de leur campagne contre les Lois de Permis de Laisser-passer, un aspect très haineux de l'apartheid, qui exigeait que les noirs devaient porter des cartes d'indentité lorsqu'ils entraient une cité blanche. Cela se passait en 1960 l'année durant laquelle la police Sud-Africaine de Sharpville ouvrit le feu sur un groupe large du peuple noir non-armé, protestant contre les Lois du Permis de Laisser-passer et tua 67 d'entre eux. Cela donne une idée de combien de valeur était l'habitude pour un homme blanc de placer sur la vie d'un homme noir de réaliser qu'un ministre de état pouvait blâmer ouvertement la police pour s'être débarrassé d'un petit nombre seulement du large groupe d'Africains impliqués. J'étais pendant ce temps un étudiant gradué à Oxford et je me souviens encore vivement de l'effet de cette atrocité terrible sur les étudiants Africains. Notre peine était indescriptible.

La conséquence la plus signifiante du massacre de Sharpville en termes d'attitude Africaine envers la violence, était la création d'un mouvement appelé "La Lance de la Nation" par Nelson Mandela en 1961. Dans son manifeste, le mouvement n'a pas caché son désenchantement avec la politique de lutte non-violente:

Le refus de recourir à la force a été interprété par le gouvernement comme une invitation à l'usage de force armée contre le peuple sans aucune crainte de représailles. Les méthodes d'Umkhonto We Sizwe (La Lance de la Nation) marquent une rupture avec le passé. . . La politique de force du Gouvernement, répression et violence ne sera plus désormais affrontée seulement avec une résistance non-violente. Le choix n'est pas le nôtre; il a été fait par le Gouvernement Nationaliste qui a rejeté toute demande pacifique du peuple pour ses droits et sa liberté et a répondu à chaque telle demande par la force et encore plus de force. . .

Notez la séquence des événements. Un effort d'agitation non-violente est affronté par la répression violente. Le processus change la signification et le moment d'emploi de ce mode de lutte du côté des victimes. Ce qui est révélé ici est ce qui semble être une limitation à deux côtés de l'approche de Gandhi: il semble être peu utile contre les oppresseurs incorrigibles. En plus, sa prise sur l'esprit des

mortels ordinaires ou même assez extraordinaires, tend à être aggaiblie par des représailles brutales. A partir des mots de la citation ci-dessus il semble être évident que l'attitude de Mandela n'était pas née d'un dégoût inné des méthodes non-violentes.

Il serait sans doute utile pour l'intérêt de cohérence de la pensée et du comportement par rapport à la question de violence si toutes les critiques, hautes et basses, qui ne sont pas elles-mêmes vouées à la non-violence absolue, portaient vivement dans leur esprit le point fait par Mandela disant que le choix de violence est en réalité antécédemment fait par l'opresseur et non par l'oppressé. Cependant, on doit accepter que ceci n'est pas une réponse parfaite pour le vrai Gandhien. Si la violence de l'oppressé est évoquée par celle de l'opresseur, il ne s'en suit pas qu'il soit moralement correct pour ce dernier de réagir ainsi envers le premier. L'on peut argumenter que même le fait que le succès ne s'accroît pas rapidement par les méthodes de Gandhi ne sert pas comme preuve de leur futilité éternelle. Il est intéressant de noter qu'en dépit de toute perte de foi en la non-violence, exprimée dans la citation à l'étude, il y avait encore, quoi qu'il en soit dans les périodes initiales, un certain résidu de Gandhisme qui pouvait être discerné dans la politique du mouvement. La politique était pour la violence contre des choses telles que les installations plutôt que contre la vie humaine.

Faisons maintenant quelques distinctions concernant la violence. Il y a une différence tout à fait cruciale entre les deux formes de violence qui viennent d'être mentionnées, c'est à dire, la violence contre les choses et la violence contre la vie humaine. Toutes les deux vont au-delà de l'application simple de la force physique; ils renferment additionally une intention de causer de la peine ou un sentiment de perte ou de blocage de volonté à certains êtres humains. Or, il serait tout à fait compréhensible de baser un certain pacifisme sur la notion sacrée de la vie humaine. Tel pacifisme exclurait toutes formes de violence, y compris par exemple la destruction internationale de la vie humaine par la guerre, cependant sans promettre de renier d'autres formes, telles que l'emploi limité de la force physique pour corriger les citoyens. Lorsque les gens se proclament des pacifistes, c'est probablement à cette sorte d'abstention de violence qu'ils signifient très souvent se vouer, bien qu'ils ne réalisent pas la nécessité d'ajouter le cavalier en question, une circonstance qui donne souvent l'impression que le pacifisme comme telle est contradictoire en soi-même. Il est certain que les pacifistes ne sont pas connus comme des gens qui désapprouvent toujours toute sorte de violence par la police.

L'expression "violence par la police" dans ce contexte peut paraître un peu déplacée du fait que le mot "violence" est souvent utilisé pour faire allusion à l'usage illégitime de la force. Nous pouvons vite noter que dans cette discussion nous ne sommes pas concernés de la violence dans ce sens-là, autrement il n'y aurait pas d'issue à discuter. Personne ne pourrait normalement se présenter comme défenseur ou défenseuse de l'usage illégitime de la force physique. Pour retourner aux deux formes de violence mentionnées ci-haut, on pourrait presque

affirmer que même si le Gandhisme par sa nature même ne permet pas toute violence conduisant à la destruction de la vie, il n'exclue pas nécessairement la sorte de violence qui dénonce cette intention. Peut-être on ne remarque pas souvent suffisamment que la méthode de Gandhi ne signifiait pas une inactivité confortable, mais au contraire, c'est une méthode qui pouvait infiniment exiger plus de courage physique que la méthode de la lutte armée. Une part d'une campagne Gandhienne pouvait être par exemple, pour un groupe d'individus non-armés, de s'asseoir exactement sur le chemin d'une colonne armée ou même blindée des forces de sécurité pour les stopper, en dépit des conséquences. On peut dire que cette sorte d'action engage, en quelque sens, de la violence car certainement placer son poids corporel sur le chemin d'un autre, c'est en fait d'essayer de contrôler son mouvement et ainsi bloquer sa volonté au moyen d'une contre-force. Il semble en effet qu'à la fin, la différence réelle entre la méthode Gandhienne de résistance et une politique de la violence contre des choses telles que les installations gouvernementales, est que la première méthode est passive mais la dernière est active dans un sens purement descriptif. Ceci alors, et non pas l'absence complète de violence, est ce qui explique la terminologie "résistance passive" par laquelle l'approche Gandhienne est connue. Je pense que nous devons nous rappeler qu'en décrivant cette approche comme non-violente, nous employons le terme "violent" dans un sens plutôt limité pour signifier violence "active".

en cette matière. J'avais l'habitude d'être grandement confus par Martin Luther King durant les meilleurs jours de sa campagne. D'un côté il supportait une politique de la non-violence absolue. De l'autre côté il persistait dans un programme d'action qu'il devait avoir su qu'il conduirait à la violence par l'intervention de la police. Le problème était qu'il semblait en effet être inconsistant de prêcher la non-violence absolue et en même temps de poursuivre un cours d'action connue pour finir en violence d'une façon ou d'une autre. C'était seulement à la lumière du point qu'on vient de faire au sujet de la distinction entre violence passive et violence active que j'ai compris que le grand partisan noir de Mahatma Gandhi n'était pas en réalité inconsistant.

Nous observons, à ce point, des degrés de violence, c.à. dire, violence passive, violence active limitée et violence libre. J'utilise cette dernière expression un peu non-élégante pour faire allusion à la politique de la violence qui n'hésite pas à détruire la vie humaine si c'est nécessaire. Des groupes variés en Sud Afrique se sont sentis contraints d'utiliser tous ces degrés de violence à certains moments dans la lutte contre l'apartheid. Le programme de Nelson Mandela, qu'on peut maintenant appeler violence active limitée et dont l'abstention à l'homicide était, je crois, une sorte d'hommage au Gandhisme, était bientôt remplacé par une campagne de violence de guérilla complètement sanglante par son organisation et aussi bien par d'autres, bien que cela n'était pas sur un plan massif. Résultat final:

Mandela était arrêté, jugé et mis en prison, où il est resté depuis 1964. Le leader actuel de l'apartheid en Sud Afrique, lui-même non-apôtre de la non-violence, pend devant les yeux de Mandela la possibilité de la liberté en échange d'un désaveu de la violence. A la vue des choses, le leader légendaire noir reste intenté.

Cependant, on ne doit pas supposer que la progression — je ne dis pas progrès — à partir de la résistance passive aux formes plutôt non-retenues de résistance a été un processus linéaire qui signifie une foi pour toute le triomphe de la lutte armée dans la pensée des Noirs Sud-Africains. En effet, une phase plutôt importante de la lutte contre l'apartheid était le Mouvement de La Conscience Noire dirigé par Steve Biko. Ce leader était en même temps un théoricien et un homme d'action. Il cherchait à développer chez les Noirs Sud-Africains un sentiment d'identité, une confiance en leur propre culture et après ça a les unifier dans l'action pour leur propre libération. Dans tout ceci, cependant, il envisageait un mode de lutte non-violent. Mais le gouvernement de l'apartheid du Sud Afrique, non touché par aucune trace de sentiment de honte Gandhienne, se jeta sur Biko et l'enferma. Il mourût en 1977 comme résultat de l'interrogation par la police, avec des marques éloquentes de blessures sur le corps et au cerveau. L'influence de Steve Biko, cependant, continue à agir. Un groupe qui était définitivement unifié dans l'action par l'enseignement de Biko était les enfants d'école de Soweto. La cause immédiate de leur saut dans la bataille était l'ordre du gouvernement en Mai 1976, disant que les enfants Noirs devaient dorénavant apprendre leurs leçons de géographie, mathématiques et histoire en Afrikaans, la langue de leurs oppresseurs. Il y avait bien sûr des facteurs innombrables de pauvres conditions de vie. Mais dans tous les événements, l'inspiration de Biko était décisive. Les enfants s'engagèrent sur une série de boycottages et de protestations que se transformèrent progressivement en formes relativement plus substantielles de la violence par la brutalité de la police, conduisant à la mort de quelque centaines des jeunes. Nous notons encore comment une philosophie de la non-violence, saisissant une large masse d'êtres humains est capable, par quelque sorte de situation logique, de conduire à la violence pratique actuelle.

Les méthodes Gandhiennes avaient eu une influence moins compliquée dans les luttes des peuples Africains contre le colonialisme dans ces parties du continent où la situation n'était pas compliquée par le facteur d'installation du colonisateur. Au Ghana par exemple, comme cas distinct disons du Kenya où il y avait une population très substantielle des colons installés, l'incidence de la violence dans la lutte pour l'indépendance était complètement insignifiante. A l'exception du battement régulier des masses nationalistes par la police coloniale (une pratique dont j'étais moi-même victime une fois), la seule destruction intentionnelle de la vie humaine apparut tout au début de la lutte lorsqu'un officier de police blanc ouvrit le feu sur un groupe d'ancien combattants Ghanéens non-armés qui marchaient vers la résidence du Gouverneur Britannique du pays pour présenter une liste des plaintes et des pétitions, et tua l'un d'eux. L'action était causée plutôt par la panique que par une politique préméditée de

repression armée. On a souvent dit que les méthodes Gandhiennes peuvent apporter du succès seulement là où la lutte est contre un régime plus ou moins des gentlemen comme dans un cas pareil contre l'administration coloniale Britannique au Ghana ou en Inde.¹

Quelle que soit la situation, il est intéressant de noter que Kwamé Nkrumah l'homme qui a conduit le Ghana (en ce temps-là connu comme la Côte d'Or) à l'indépendance en 1957, et certainement le leader Africain le plus remarquable et le plus influent de ce siècle, puisa son inspiration en Gandhi durant la phase qui précédait l'indépendance. Il persista dans sa défense d'une politique qu'il appelait "action positive" qui, comme il expliqua dans son autobiographie, signifiait "agitation politique légitime, campagnes des journaux et d'éducation et comme dernier recours, l'application constitutionnelle des grèves, des boycottages et de non-coopération basée sur le principe de la non-violence, comme utilisé en Inde par Gandhi."

Il est cependant important de noter que la foi en la non-violence de Nkrumah était, comme c'est devenu clair plus tard, plutôt pragmatique que doctrinaire. En ceci il était radicalement différent de Gandhi, son inspirateur originel, ou même de Martin Luther King. Considérant l'inégalité des ressources pour la violence entre les autorités coloniales et les peuples indigènes et en vue de l'expérience du premier groupe dans les tactiques armées appropriées, il lui sembla imprudent de recourir à la violence active. Mais lorsque les conditions semblaient être mûres pour des méthodes armées dans la lutte de libération Africaine, il ne cédait terrain à personne dans sa défense et même son financement de la lutte armée. Regardez le titre de son livre appelé Livre de poche de la lutte Revolutionnaire: Un Ghide a la Phase Armée de la Revolution Africaine.² Par contre, Martin Luther King, par exemple, resta doctrinalement voué à la non-violence jusqu'à la fin, malgré les nombreuses occasions qui encourageaient le contraire.

Dans le livre qu'on vient de mentionner Nkrumah argumentait que la violence en-soi n'était ni bonne ni mauvaise. La question importante pour lui était son contexte historique. "Notre lutte armée," dit-il, "n'est ni morale ni immorale, elle est une nécessité scientifique historiquement déterminée." Si on presse le défenseur d'un tel point de vue de dire s'il est moralement juste de faire ce qui est "une nécessité scientifique et moralement déterminée," il peut à peine rester neutre en permanence. L'on peut discuter que le fait qu'une chose est nécessaire ne le rend pas inaccessible à l'évaluation morale, comme la notion généralement acceptée d'une "mal nécessaire" le suggère positivement.

Celui-ci est un sujet intéressant que nous ne pouvons pas poursuivre jusqu'à

sa conclusion logique. C'est suffisant seulement de faire remarquer que le point de vue de Nkrumah s'oppose à ceux de Gandhi et Franz Fanon, qui doivent bien sûr, être opposés au point de vue plus raisonnable disant que même si la violence est en soi-même un mal, elle peut être acceptée dans certaines circonstances comme le moindre des deux maux. Certainement pour Gandhi un tel point de vue va trop loin du côté de l'indulgence, tandis que pour Fanon il va trop loin du côté de la pusillanimité. Dans son enthousiasme pour la violence anti-coloniale, Fanon semble avoir laissé dans son cœur peu de place pour la reservation morale, même la plus fortuite, envers la violence. Une position généralement digne d'attention par rapport à ce sujet est que chaque attitude véritablement humanitaire, chaque attitude extérieure, c.-à-dire qui est née à partir du respect et de la sympathie envers les être humains en tant qu'êtres humains, doit montrer quelque traces au moins de regret concernant la violence quoiqu'inévitable qu'on l'imagine. Un point fort du "Manifeste de Lusaka," le Manifeste sur les relations Africaines avec le Sud Afrique, la Rhodésie d'alors et le Portugal, qui était agréé par quatorze Etats du Centre et de l'Est d'Afrique le 16 Avril 1969 sous l'influence du Président Kenneth Kaunda de Zambia, un autre grand admirateur de Gandhi, (approuvé ensuite par l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine (1969) et l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies), un point fort de se manifeste est qu'il démontra très clairement juste ce sens d'inconfort moral envers la nécessité, qu'il sentaient être réelle, pour la lutte armée dans le processus de libération Africaine.

Pour retourner à Gandhi, le point important concernant sa position envers la violence est qu'il va bien au-delà de toute méditation morale de l'esprit. Pour lui il n'y a absolument pas de place pour la violence (c.à. dire la violence active) dans les activités humaines; la violence est naturellement bestiale. Comme citation de lui, "La non-violence est la loi de notre espèce comme la violence est la loi du brute". Il doit être évident que Gandhi ne peut pas parler ici de loi expérimentale de notre espèce; il parle, apparemment d'une loi morale de quelque sorte.

Qu'est-ce qu'il y a alors dans la violence qui fait qu'elle soit, disent-ils, irréductiblement illégitime? Apparemment ce n'est pas le fait qu'elle inflige fréquemment de la peine aux autres. C'est compréhensible de soutenir que la peine est naturellement mal, mais il faut seulement un peu d'imagination pour penser à des cas pareils comme le traitement médical, dans lequel la peine peut être acceptée aussi bien par le patient que par l'auteur comme un moyen légitime conduisant à un certain bien plus grand. Une hypothèse en quelque sorte plus probable est que Gandhi considère la violence si moralement déplaisante parce qu'elle engage à essayer de forcer un être humain de faire ou d'éviter de faire quelque chose en dépit ou en violation de sa volonté propre. Mais ceci n'a même finalement rien, puisque les méthodes de Gandhi lui-même produisaient exactement la même chose en fléchissant à ses demandes une volonté récalcitrante. On ne peut dire non

plus que ce qui est si résolument mauvais en la violence est qu'elle contient le fait de faire du mal aux êtres humains, parce que, comme on l'a vu, ce n'est pas toute forme, même de la violence active, qui contient cet élément. Certainement ce que nous avons appelé violence active se dispense de l'intention de faire du mal aux êtres humains. A la fin nous devrions simplement remarquer que le point de vue de Gandhi sur la violence avait peut-être une dimension mystique, et que le loi de notre espèce dont il parle est une loi morale fondée sur ce que certaines gens appelleraient une perception "spirituelle". Ainsi donc, il ne serait pas contraire à certaines traditions bien-connues de son pays natif oriental.

Tournant de Gandhi à Fanon - une transition qui n'est pas très différente d'un saut au-dessus d'un chiasme sans point - il est bon de faire remarquer, comme on l'a fait souvent, que Fanon a trop romantisé la violence. Ce n'est pas le fait que c'est faux, comme Fanon soutenait, que la violence du côté des colonisés contre les colonisateurs puisse prêter à "leur caractères des qualités positives et créatrices", mais en négligeant de remarquer les effets négatifs que la violence a parfois sur la psychologie de ceux qui la pratiquent, colonisés ou non, il donna un point de vue biaisé sur une question importante. L'un des effets les plus négatifs causés par la violence est sa tendance de développer une mentalité autoritaire chez ceux qui la pratiquent. Ça doit être très facile de comprendre la causalité puisque, par sa nature-même, la violence nécessite la négligence ou le blockage ou même la destruction de quelque volonté humaine.

Sur la base de cette considération concernant le potentiel autoritaire de la violence, il serait possible

de violence, il serait possible de bâtir un argument libéral en disant que, même si certains buts limités (telle que la libération coloniale) peuvent être atteints à travers la violence, toute tendance réelle à la Bonne Société est obligée d'éviter les méthodes violentes.

Malgré cela, on doit noter que si une chose comme la libération coloniale peut être obtenue à travers la violence, alors c'est un objectif suffisamment grand, tant soit-il limité en apparence par comparaison avec des perspectives plus utopiques. (A propos, je utilise ici le mot "utopique" sans aucune intention péjorative). Fanon dit qu' "au niveau des individus, la violence est une force purificatrice" (Les Misérables de la Terre). Comme ça a été dit ci-dessus, ceci est vrai sur condition d'une modification. Au niveau des individus, la violence est parfois une force purificatrice. Fanon pensait ici de l'effet de la violence sur les activistes violents eux-mêmes. Mais nous pouvons aller plus loin en disant que, même en relation avec ceux contre lesquels la violence est appliquée, la violence peut-être une force purificatrice.³ Ceci peut par exemple amener, plus spécifiquement obliger un oppresseur de réévaluer sa position et, consciemment ou plus ou moins consciemment se rendre compte du manque de sa défense morale. Ceci était souvent le cas dans les luttes de libération anti-coloniales de périodes récentes.

Les combattants nationalistes ont quelquefois, gagné la liberté nationale par une lutte armée; mais c'était rarement par une capitulation directe des armées des pays colonisateurs sur le champ de bataille. Ce qui s'est passé souvent est que la lutte armée des colonisés a soudainement causé la formation de/ou le renforcement de l'opinion anticoloniale dans les pays métropolitains eux-mêmes, ce qui a contribué d'une façon ou d'une autre à l'octroi d'indépendance aux peuples colonisés. Une victoire de cette sorte, apportant avec elle, une réévaluation morale, est certainement préférable à une victoire militaire directe qui laisse les anciens sentiments intacts. Si, comme il semble difficile de le nier, le présent climat d'opinion international contre le colonialisme n'a pas émergé indépendamment des luttes, tant violentes que non-violentes des peuples colonisés, alors on pourrait dire que la violence peut parfois être moralement éducatrice. Ceci s'oppose à la philosophie de Gandhi du caractère naturellement brute de la violence.

Il n'y a pas de suggestion ici que la position de Gandhi sur la question de la violence peut entièrement être omise. Le fait qu'il y a un grand degré de vérité dans cette philosophie a déjà été reconnu en acceptant que La Bonne Société ne peut jamais être créée par la violence. C'est exact de noter que même dans Marx et Engels fréquemment considérés comme apôtres de violence, il y a au moins une réalisation allusive que la société idéale ne peut se matérialiser par la violence. Apparemment, la violence peut seulement entraîner à une dictature du prolétariat; le millénaire de la Société sans classes doit attendre le temps où, comme Engles le dit, la société "n'a pas seulement les antagonismes des classes mais les a même oubliés dans la vie pratique".⁴

En plus, historiquement parlant, la loi absolue en la non-violence a rarement été capable de soutenir continuellement des mouvements et des organisations politiques sur un plan massif. En Inde même, l'adhérence du Congrès National Indien aux méthodes de Gandhi était notablement pragmatique. Plus tard, l'accession au pouvoir, à l'indépendance en Inde apporta des déviations même plus radicales de la philosophie de la non-violence. Le gouvernement du Congrès hérita tous les moyens de violence par l'état de leur ancien gouvernement colonial et bientôt s'engagea à les utiliser contre les envahisseurs Pakistanais. Gandhi était inconsolablement triste. Une leçon est évidente. La non-violence absolue est incompatible avec le pouvoir gouvernemental. Le Gandhisme total conduit à quelque forme d'anarchie. Cette perception n'était pas étrangère ni à Gandhi, ni à Kaunda, probablement le Gandhien le plus fervent parmi les leaders Africains contemporains. Mais, alors que la non-violence absolue a conduit Gandhi sur le chemin de l'anarchie, elle a conduit Kaunda à devenir un défenseur de la violence malgré-lui. L'opinion, teintée de religion, de Kaunda sur la violence, est que malgré que la violence ne peut jamais être justifiée, elle peut être pardonnée—pardonnée seulement par le Seigneur Puissant.⁵

LA QUESTION DE LA VIOLENCE

C'est remarquable qu'en Inde, en Afrique et aux Etats-Unis, des périodes de non-violence étaient succédées par des périodes de violence.⁶ D'autre part, la violence ne peut à peine être une ligne de conduite permanente sans mettre en considération le changement des circonstances. Il semble qu'il y a peu de justification pour une séparation exclusive entre la violence et la nonviolence comme options politiques. Avec les inégalités et les injustices rudes du monde contemporain, les hommes réfléchis doivent permettre une combinaison sélective des méthodes violentes et non-violentes. Ceci, en effet, a été le cas dans la pensée et la pratique Africaine contemporaine.

NOTES

1. A propos, on ne devrait pas se dépêcher de supposer que ce comportement des gentlemen était un attribut invariable du colonialisme Britannique car, bien sûr, là où les intérêts des colons Britanniques étaient en jeu, comme c'était le cas au Kenya pendant la lutte des Mau Mau, les Britanniques pouvaient résister par une répression armée.
2. Nkrumah, *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A guide to the Armed Phase of the African Revolution* (London: Panaf Books, 1968.)
3. Le Président Kaunda a exprimé des réservations éloquentes sur cette revendication que la violence peut avoir un effet purificateur sur ceux contre qui elle est utilisée dans son livre *Kaunda sur la Violence*, Colin M. Morris, ed. (London: Collins, 1980). Quelle purification y-a-t-il à faire en réalité, dit-il, si la violence conduit à la mort de la personne contre laquelle elle est utilisée? Considérée en termes d'individus, cette objection est, je pense, finale. Mais les luttes violentes qui concernent particulièrement notre discussion sont des luttes entre larges groupes, et malgré que beaucoup d'individus périssent, les groupes, en ensemble survivent pour apprendre les leçons.
4. F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring* (Moscou et New York. Progress Publishers), p. 132.
5. Voir, *Kaunda sur la violence*, op. cit; Ali Mazzrui "Mahatma Gandhi et le Nationalisme Noir", dans: *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, (Berkeley: Press de l'Université de Californie, 1978).
6. Pour une documentation étendue de cette fluctuation dans les luttes des Noirs d'Amérique, voir *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, ed. par A. Meier, E. Rudwich et F. Broderick (Indianapolis: Bobbs - Merrill, 1971).

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette communication l'auteur examine l'assertion selon laquelle les valeurs morales dans les sociétés traditionnelles Africaines découleraient directement de la divinité qu'ont les gens et que l'on ne peut pas dissocier les deux sans risquer des conséquences fâcheuses. Prenant le Yoruba comme point de repère, et — afin d'assurer la concrétion et la rigueur de l'analyse — se limitant aux points de vue exprimés par un éminent expert dans le domaine de l'interprétation des croyances traditionnelles Africaines (le Professeur Bolaji Idowu) il soutient que l'existence de la notion du bien et du mal, voire même l'admission qu'il s'agit là d'un don divin, n'explique pas suffisamment la nature des valeurs morales et l'autorité qu'ils exercent sur les gens dans les sociétés Yoruba. Il affirme par ailleurs que, puisque'elle est inextricablement liée à l'action humaine, la morale comprend un champ plus vaste que la religion qui n'est qu'une dimension de la vie.

MORALITY IN YORUBA THOUGHT: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

by

Olusegun Oladipo

What is morality? How is it related to other means of regulating human conduct, for example law, in society? What is its origin and on what does its hold on persons in society rest? What is the logical structure of moral language? Are moral statements propositions, commands or mere expressions of feelings? These, and many other questions, have been central to moral discourse in the history of (Western) philosophy. In this essay, however, I do not intend to address (at least directly) any of these intricate issues. My concern is, rather, a modest one. It is to examine the nature of morality in Yoruba thought with a view to determining, through philosophical analysis, the extent to which it is tenable to assert that:

With the Yoruba, morality is certainly a fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two, and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences. What have been named *tabu* took their origin from the fact that people discerned that there were things which were morally approved or disapproved by the Deity.¹

In this essay I argue that this is an unnecessarily one-sided interpretation of the Yoruba ethical system. It fixates overmuch evidences tending to one end of the axis to the neglect of their complements, and thus arriving at partial or utterly erroneous conclusions.² I also contend that it rests on a misconception of the nature of morality and its relationship to religion. But, first, what are the basic elements of Yoruba ethics? On what basis is the assertion made that, in Yoruba thought, morality and religion are inseparable?

The Yoruba stress the importance of character (*iwa*) in human life. This, we are told, is the case, not only because 'man's well-being here depends on his character',³ but also, and perhaps more importantly, because 'his place in After-life is determined by *Olodumare* (the Deity) according to his deserts'.⁴ Morality in Yoruba thought is therefore given expression in the concept of *iwa*.

Iwa, according to the Yoruba, is the very stuff which makes life a joy because it is pleasing to God. It is therefore stressed that good character must be the dominant feature of a person's life. In fact, it is one thing which distinguishes a person from the brute A person of good character is called *Omoluwabi* "One who behaves as a well born; and a person of bad character is *enia - k'enia* - "A mere caricature of a person".⁵

The components of a good character include the following: chastity before marriage, particularly on the part of the woman, hospitality, particularly to strangers, opposition to selfishness, kindness involving generosity, abhorrence of wickedness, high regard for truth and rectitude, condemnation of stealing, covenant breaking and falsehood, and hypocrisy, protection of women by men, high regard for honour and due respect to old age.⁶

The question then is this: What is the basis of these components of good character that constitute the defining elements of Yoruba ethics? Are they, essentially, social in origin?

For some scholars on Yoruba beliefs, these elements of good character are inextricably linked to the people's religion, particularly their conception of the Deity. Prof. Bolaji Idowu, for instance, writes:

The real source and norm of the unrestricted, universally recognised and binding moral values in the religion of the Yoruba is *Olodumare*. They derive immediately from His own divine nature as revealed to the Yoruba In Him alone can be resolved the ever-baffling problem of right conduct which are inevitably encountered in the divinities or ancestral sanctions.⁷

And the argument in support of this position, simply put, is this: That since the sense of right and wrong is necessary for morality and since, for the Yoruba, this sense of right and wrong is an endowment of *Olodumare* (he is the one, we are told, that put in a person *Ifa aya* - 'the oracle of the heart' which 'guides man and determines his ethical life',⁸) then it follows that Yoruba moral values cannot be separated from their conception of the Deity. The implication here, of course, is that without their conception of the Deity the people's moral orientation may have been other than we know it to be.

In examining this position I consider two interrelated issues: First, the issue of whether the existence of a sense of right and wrong sufficiently explains the set of moral rules given expression, in Yoruba thought, in the concept of *Iwa* and the patterns of conduct these engender. Second, the issue of whether, in fact, the people's moral values cannot be separated from their conception of the Deity.

Let us, in considering the first issue, grant a point. This is that a sense of right and wrong, whatever its nature, is necessary for morality. Without this sense, the question of what constitutes proper conduct within society would not have arisen in the first place, and, of course, without this there would not have been any need for classifying human conduct or behaviour, according to whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. Consequently, neither would the need for prais-

ing or blaming people for their actions or training them to behave in certain desirable ways in the society have arisen. It is because we are able to recognise certain actions as good or bad, right or wrong that we are able to define the limits of proper or permissible conduct within society, praise or blame people for their actions, and also shape their moral outlook in ways that we think will enable them to function as good members of the society. Having granted this point, however, we need to ask: what is the nature of this sense of right and wrong?

Let us, for our purposes in this essay, agree with Prof. Bolaji Idowu that this sense of right and wrong is a faculty (what is called in Yoruba *ifa aya*) and, since the Yoruba believe that *Olodumare* is the maker of human beings and every other thing in the universe, also agree that it is an endowment of the Deity. But does it follow from this that the Deity also determines the nature of the set of rules which a person should obey and the modes of conduct he should adopt in society, in giving fulfilment to the sense of right and wrong with which he is endowed?

If we follow Prof. Idowu in giving an affirmative answer to this question and assert, as he does, that *Olodumare* is the real source of the unrestricted universally recognised and binding moral values of the *Yoruba*, then we shall have to explain the following issues. First, we have to explain how it comes to be that 'contradictions and confusions' result from 'taking the divinities as the norm of moral obligation',⁹ particularly when we are wont to maintain that these divinities are ministers of *Olodumare*? Second, we have to explain the fact which is revealed in their institutionalized practices that the Yoruba are 'a pragmatic people who place great stock on expediency . . .'.¹⁰ I take these issues in turn with a view to bringing into sharper focus the errors (theoretical and factual) the position under examination harbours.

In considering the first issue, it should be noted that, apart from the belief in a Deity (*Olodumare*), another important element of the Yoruba cosmological world-view, which makes many writers on African beliefs to regard them as an 'incurably religious' people, is the belief in 'minor gods'. But, as Prof. Bolaji Idowu observes, there are certain incompatibilities in the norms of behaviour and moral obligations 'inspired by the cults' associated with them. We have an example of this kind of 'contradictions and confusions' 'about what should be done and what should not be done' in this Yoruba poem quoted by Prof. Idowu. (Here I only give the English translation).

Olufon it is who gave me birth, I must not drink palm-wine, *Orisa - Ogiyan*
it is who gave me birth, I must not drink palm-wine, *Osun* of *Iponda* how-
ever, forbids me maize-wine palm-wine it is which he orders me to drink'.¹¹

But why is this so? Prof. Idowu, rather than tackle this important question, simply disregards these divinities as norms of moral obligation and proceeds, unperturbed, to declare that: 'The real source and norm of the unrestricted, universally recognised and binding moral values in the religion of the Yoruba is *Olodumare*':¹²

This certainly cannot be a satisfactory posture on this matter. For if these divinities are, as Prof. Idowu and many other writers on African beliefs are wont to argue, ministers who 'serve the will of *Olodumare* in the creation and theocratic government of the world',¹³ then the question of how it comes to be that there are 'contradictions and confusions' in taking them as norms of morality has to be seriously tackled. In tackling this question one thing is clear: we cannot disregard these divinities as norms of morality, for it is a fact of life in Yoruba societies that certain moral obligations flow from the people's conception of them. The only option that is left for us then is to have another look at the people's belief about the nature of these divinities, with a view to reassessing their nature.¹⁴ The hypothesis I put forward here in this regard is that these divinities do not have, strictly speaking, the kind of direct connection with the Deity many of our writers say the Yoruba believe they have. For, besides the fact that they are 'generally acknowledged to be in every case traceable to a human being'¹⁵ and that the value attached to each of them is dependent on the 'strength and universality of the course to which it ministers',¹⁶ we can also see that the attitude of the people to them – because it is essentially pragmatic and utilitarian – cannot be regarded as a religious attitude, the kind one would expect the people to have towards them if they are believed to have any direct links with the Deity.

It thus seems to be the case that, for the Yoruba, there are other sources of moral obligation than the Deity, and unless we are able to show that these other sources are of a typically religious nature – a proposition we may not be able to defend given the evidence available¹⁷ – then we shall have to admit that other considerations that may not have anything to do with religion also serve to underpin the moral rules and patterns of behaviour we associate with the Yoruba.

This brings us to a consideration of the second issue which anybody who asserts that morality in Yoruba thought is inseparable from their conception of the Deity will have to contend with. This is closely connected with the fact that a look at some of the proverbs and institutionalized practices of the people, rather than reveal a consistency and coherence of outlook we would expect a world-outlook totally anchored on a conception of the Deity to display, betrays what one would call an essentially this-worldly and pragmatic orientation.

It is not uncommon, for example, to find in the repertoire of Yoruba

proverbs those which, when taken together, are inconsistent and also some which sanction moral values that are clearly at variance with the values we would expect of a religion-based moral system. Here are some examples'.¹⁸

1. *fija f'Olorun ja f'owo leran* (Let God fight for you don't try and avenge yourself.)
2. *O fun mi l'ewugudugbe, mo fun o l'eboto,ro, afinju iwo lajo fun ra wa* (You fed me with poison that turns me into a bloated, swollen-up sack, I gave you a poison that peeled off your skin. We have fed each other with vantage poisons).
3. *Eni ti ko gbon ni aawe ngbo* (only a fool suffers from hunger while he is fasting.)
4. *Kaka ki omode pa agba l'ayo, agba a fi ogbo agba gbe e* (rather than loose a game of *ayo* to a child, the older person should save the day by resorting to the wisdom of the elders).

Now, it can be seen that the first two proverbs recommend certain moral values that appear inconsistent; whereas the first one abhors retaliation, the second one recommends it. The third and fourth proverbs, on the other hand, seem to suggest that there is nothing bad in resorting to some unconventional methods to achieve one's objectives. The implication of the third one, as Prof. Oyekan Owomoyela rightly points out, is that: 'if one proclaims to be fasting and remembers to appear hungry, there is no reason why one may not gorge oneself in the secrecy of one's home'.¹⁹ And the fourth one says that an elder may simply cheat in a game of *ayo* to forestall a situation in which a child defeats him.

What these proverbs seem to make clear is that the Yoruba do not have a set of timeless, internally consistent moral values which directly derive from their conception of the Deity and therefore can consistently be used for adjudging human actions as right or wrong, good or bad; the rightness or goodness of an action is determined by certain factors, not the least of which is the interest of the human agent himself. So much for proverbs.

Let us now consider some institutionalized practices of the people. Do they, in any fundamental sense, reflect a religion sanctioned system of moral values? Our answer here, again, cannot but be negative. We are not unfamiliar, for instance, with the notoriously famous, and perhaps peculiar, method of collecting debts – the *Osomalo* strategy – from 'an incorrigible debtor' which is described by Samuel Johnson in his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, in these terms:

When a creditor who has obtained judgement for debt finds it impossible to recover any thing out of the debtor, he applies to the town authorities for a licensed distraitor. This individual is called *Ogo*, he is to *d'ogo ti* i.e. to sit on the debtor (as it were). For that purpose he enters the premises, seeks the debtor, or esconces in his apartment until he makes his appearance, and then he makes himself an intolerable nuisance to him and to the members of the family generally until the money is paid.²⁰

This, perhaps, is done without any consideration for the debtor's financial health. Yet this is a society in which, we are told, hospitality, opposition to selfishness, abhorrence of wickedness, kindness involving generosity are components of a good character that derive from the people's conception of the Deity! But, lest the objection is raised that the payment of debts is a purely contractual and, therefore, legal matter which should be removed from the realm of the moral, thereby underplaying this glaring inconsistency we note in the interpretation of the people's moral beliefs in terms of their conception of the Deity and this institutionalized method of collecting debts, I should quickly give another example; this time from the realm of business transactions. Here I quote Oyekan Owemoyela. He writes:

Their conduct of market transactions in general provides corroborative proof of the Yoruba belief that the cunning shall inherit the earth. It is well known that Africans hardly ever assign fixed prices to their merchandise; rather the buying and selling of commodities match the wits and patience of the seller and the purchaser, awarding the ultimate benefit to whichever party is endowed with those qualities. Among the Yoruba the process has been developed into a fine art with well-understood rules. Even though each of the participants knows that the other is in effect maneuvering to "cheat", she is not incensed because she too is scheming to profit at her expense.²¹

A business ethics based on people's conception of the Deity indeed!

Now, when we add to the institutionalized practices we have mentioned the fact that even the 'verbal art form, *oriki* (eulogistic address)' is used to celebrate 'subjects—people, animals, diseases, natural formations and human actions'²²—that are 'not necessarily benevolent or edifying', then we cannot but wonder whether the interpretation of the nature of Yoruba moral values under consideration in this essay is not a deliberate distortion designed to serve some nationalistic or religious ends.

But perhaps we are unfair in our interpretation, after all, it may be argued,

we do not, because of the existence of divergencies between Islamic or Christian ethics enunciated in the scriptures and the practice of the believers, deny that these norms of behaviour are really there to guide conduct. This would have been an appropriate riposte but for the fact that, in the case of the Yoruba, the institutionalized practices we have mentioned are not at all seen as being inconsistent with the belief in a Deity who is their maker, the way a deviation from the norms of Islamic or Christian ethics would be regarded as an egregious deviation—a sin. In any case, how do we establish the claim that Yoruba moral values are products of the religion of the people directly linked to their conception of the Deity, particularly when it is realized that in Yoruba traditional religion, as in the religions of many African traditional societies, revelation simply has no place?

We may even ask: what explains the separation which many of our Christian converts, for example, often try to effect between 'Christian ethics' and what they now call, as a result of conversion, 'pagan ethics', if indeed the Deity is the source of all moral values and observances and if, as Prof. Idowu says, there is only one God of which people have different conceptions?²³

The major implication that follows from our analysis thus far can be put in the following terms: whereas it is the case that certain norms of behaviour can be associated with the people's conception of the Deity, these norms certainly do not exhaust the variety of such norms we have in Yoruba societies; there are certainly other moral values that arise out of the attempt by the people to grapple with the various dimensions of human existence. The reason why this is so should be clear. Morality, because it is inextricably linked to human action, covers a wider range of human activities and experiences than religion. This explains its variety and the range of its diversity, not only from one society to the other, but also, within the same society, from time to time. And so the diversity in Yoruba moral values and the apparent contradictions between some of them we earlier on noticed in our analysis, do not constitute a negative commentary on the character of the people. It is, besides being a clear reflection of the dynamic character of traditional Yoruba societies—which are noted, not only for the sophistication of their political systems and the intensity of their economic activities, but also for their robust, if at times inconsistent, world-outlook—also, as Dr (Mrs) Oluwole points out, an indication of the fact that the Yoruba 'give due cognizance to human interests in moral matters'.²⁴

It should be clear then, from this analysis, that the existence of a sense of right and wrong, even, the admission that this is given by the Deity, does not sufficiently explain the nature of moral rules, and the authority they have on people's conduct, in Yoruba societies. The interpretation of Yoruba moral values

wholly in terms of religion can thus be seen to be an expression of the tendency on the part of our experts on African beliefs, particularly those in Religious Studies, to give a one-sided view of the beliefs they interpret thereby distorting them. Religion 'is *part* of life, not an orientation towards the whole of it'.²⁵ It cannot therefore serve as an adequate means of explaining the nature of morality which—whether understood as 'a set of rules for the regulation of conduct'²⁶ or as 'patterns of conduct viewed in relation to such rules'²⁷—necessarily 'accompanies all deliberate human actions'²⁸ and thus has a wider scope. To realize this fact is, not only to begin to pave the way for a clear understanding of the reason why 'many African societies in times past have generated diverse ethics', but also, and more importantly, to begin to lay a solid foundation for an adequate comprehension of the set of factors that shape our ethical orientations and moral preferences in contemporary society.²⁹

NOTES

*The Yoruba can be found in South-Western Nigeria and some parts of the Republic of Benin and Togo.

1. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1962), p. 146.
2. Oyekan Owomoyela, "The Pragmatic Humanism of Yoruba Culture", *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 8, Number 3 fall 1981, p. 126.
3. E. Bolaji Idowu, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
4. E. Bolaji Idowu, *ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
6. For a comprehensive discussion of these components of Yoruba ethics, see E. Bolaji Idowu, *Ibid.*, pp. 154-166.
7. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Ibid.*, p. 154.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
10. Oyekan Owomoyela, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
11. E. Bolaji Idowu, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
14. It should be noted that this is a very large issue which cannot be treated in detail in this paper.

15. N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, edited by Francis Olu Okediji and Oladejo O. Okediji, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), p. 262.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Among these divinities, for instance, we have deified ancestors and, even deities 'introduced in response to certain diseases and life hazards.'
18. The first two of these four proverbs and their translations are taken from Dr. Niyi Oladeji's paper, "Language signposts in Yoruba pragmatic Ethics: An Analysis of Selected Yoruba Proverbs", an unpublished paper read at the conference on Ethics in African Societies organized by the Department of Philosophy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1st - 4th July 1987, p. 3. The last two are taken from Oyekan Owomoyela, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
19. Oyekan Owomoyela, *Ibid.*
20. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, (Lagos: C.M.S. (Nigeria) Bookshops, 1948), pp. 130-131.
21. Oyekan Owomoyela, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
22. *Ibid.*
23. CF. E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), p. 146.
24. S.B. Oluwole, "The Rational Basis of Yoruba Ethical Thinking", *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy: Journal of the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos*, vol. 4, Nos 1 & 2, 1984, p. 23.
25. Venon Pratt, *Religion and Secularisation* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 45.
26. Kwasi Wiredu "Morality and Religion in Akan Thought", paper presented at the 2nd Afro - Asian philosophy conference, October/November 1981, p. 2. The paper is published in H. Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo (eds.), *Philosophy and Cultures*, (Nairobi: 1983) The reference here is to the original manuscript.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Emerita S. Quito "Value as a Factor in Social Action", *International Social Science Journal*, vol. XXXVI, No. 4, 1984, p. 604.
29. This is a slightly modified version of a paper read at the conference on Ethics in African Societies, organized by the Department of Philosophy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1st - 4th July 1987. I am grateful to Dr. A.G.A. Bello of the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, for his useful comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article vise à présenter une nouvelle approche au sujet du nationalisme, surtout dans la mesure où ce concept concerne les mouvements de libération dans la corne de l'Afrique, au moyen d'une analyse conceptuelle et historique de la notion d'auto-détermination.

L'auto-détermination est, par cette analyse, l'aspect majeur de l'existence de l'être humaine et elle est enracinée dans le concept de liberté, à son tour analysable en une série d'aspects intrinsèques.

Appliquant le concept d'auto-détermination, ainsi analysée, au discours concernant le conflit dans la corne de l'Afrique, il s'avère qu'il s'éloigne de ce qui est la vue dominante Marxiste/Leniniste de cette région — la. Dans une longue discussion portant sur divers aspects du concept de liberté, appliqué à la situation qui prévaut dans la corne de l'Afrique, ce concept fait apparaître ses mérites en indiquant les perspectives larges de la lutte pour la libération.

THE CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

by

Teodros Kiros

In a period in which the concept of self-determination has become a cliché, it seems astonishing that it occupies the center of the historical stage in the various searches for a community in the horn of Africa. Thus, the concept itself might indeed have been a cliché, but not for the millions of human beings that have sacrificed, and continue to sacrifice, their lives for the sake of a way of life that the concept promises.

This paper seeks to introduce a fresh approach to the exceedingly difficult and important question of nationalism, as it is practiced in the horn of Africa, via a conceptual and historical analysis of the notion of self-determination. My claim is that a comprehensive and substantively meaningful understanding of nationalism, national consciousness, continental consciousness, and even international consciousness must be grounded upon a philosophically coherent conceptualization of self-determination. In what follows, I attempt to engage in providing just, but no more than, that. The analysis begins with a conceptual discussion of self-determination, which in a sequel to this paper will be followed by a historical interpretation. For the purpose of this paper, I attempt an examination of the following four questions:

- (1) What is designated by the concept of self-determination?
- (2) How is the concept appropriated in the horn of Africa?
- (3) To whom does the concept apply? Whose needs does the concept determine?
- (4) Is self-determination (as an objective) the final step toward concrete freedom for "all" in the continent of Africa in general and the horn of Africa in particular?

(1) What is designated by the concept of self-determination?

The concept of self-determination is as old as the history of human beings; wherever men and women have lived, and whenever they have thought about the meaning of life—most particularly about their own individual lives; and specifically reflected on how they should live their particular lives and what they

should do and not do—they do so within the context of the concept of self-determination. It has always been, and shall always be, the human self, the self that is at once the most intimate, the most private but also the most sensitive to the social or the public that can ask the primordial questions: How should I lead my life? What must I choose? How do I choose? What must I do to choose correctly? Can I know the nature of what I seem to want? Should I know what I choose? Should my choices be based on knowledge? These are some of the most exceedingly difficult questions that the human self, when it engages in reflection inevitably faces. I do not intend to answer these questions in this paper; for now, I merely want to share with you what the concept of self-determination encompasses when we seriously think through the concept of human self, as the self deeply thinks about what it wants to do, how it must choose, and how it must live. It is the spirit of wanting, choosing and living that motivates the human self to want, to choose and to live; and, as all of us are intimately aware, wanting takes place within the context of many things that we want; choosing is enveloped by a plethora of choices; living is infused by many ways of living our lives.

The self that wants to determine itself, then, can do so within a world—a world that is filled up with “things” that human beings want; a world that seems to provide opportunities for choice; a world that offers many styles of living; a world that is already formed by politically charged values, norms, interests, and desires; a world which during the formative stages did not allow the participation of all human beings with the inherent capacity to think for and by themselves; a world which is divided into competitive families, fragmented groups, nations and nationalities, continents, and regions. The single world within which the human self is destined to live and die often appears to be a world divided against itself, a world of many antagonistic worlds within. It is within such a frighteningly fragmented and alienated world that the human self is destined to live, to want, to choose, to reflect, to struggle, and to die. It is precisely about these modes of wanting, choosing, and living that I would like to reflect with you.

It is a well-known, and consequently least thought-about, fact that we human beings are destined to exist.¹ Existence as such, particularly the human way of conscious existence, is a gift to human beings. Of course, we human beings can use language in the form of crafting propositions by saying either “yes” or “no” to the fact of our destination to exist. By developing propositions, that is by speaking human languages, we can certainly say, while still cemented to existence, “I do not want to exist, I cannot stand, endure my existence.” Such

denials can always be made; what cannot be propositionally denied or affirmed is the facticity, the absolute and a priori gift of our existence. Existence, thusly understood, is beyond language's power to deny or erase. Man, the human being, who is destined to exist, and who is also equipped with the particularly essential human power of speaking a language, can at all times say "yes" or "no" to existence, but cannot deny or affirm his/her existence because existence is beyond language—in fact, existence envelops and protects language.

We human beings are destined to exist; our linguistic power makes it possible for us to describe the ways of our existence. In this particular sense, language comes to aid us to coherently, movingly and accurately characterize our existence. The fundamental fact of existence, you may say, is really not peculiar to human beings. In fact, you may correctly add, existence in the form of facticity is a condition which we share with all other beings or animals. You would indeed, be right; but there is a distinctively human essential power—speaking as such, the speaking that allows us to engage in thinking—that we human beings alone possess. That power is a magnificent capacity that human beings are privileged to possess. Of course, the mere possession of a capacity to do A is meaningless and hardly comprehensible until we do, or attempt to do, something with the capacity. It is in the realm of action, in the realm of the visible stance, and in the human realm of choosing to be or not to be that the meaning, and hence the human power of thinking, fully discloses itself. The capacity A thusly becomes some action B only in the realm of choosing within the sublime context of human existence.² Existence thus provides the indispensable condition for the appearance of speaking and thinking, or thinking by speaking.

Human beings are destined to exist. They are also endowed with speech and thought. Their humanness is fully disclosed when they engage the capacities of speech and thought in the realm of doing, wanting and choosing in the course of living their lives after they affirm their existence. For us human beings, as most of you are intimately aware, mere existence is not enough. We also want to live; we wish to be able to answer the self-generated questions: how should I live my life? Who should choose for me the way(s) I should live my life? Must I let anybody do the choosing for me? Of course, one must minimally assume one's existence—an existence that is reasonably equipped with the biologically constituted needs of food, shelter and clothing; the bodily needs as such—in order to be able to engage in speaking and thinking, and to be provoked to think about the needs of the soul—freedom to reflect and freedom to choose.

Within the context of existence, individuals begin to live their lives. For some, it seems to be not very important to reflect on how a given existence must be lived; such individuals simply exist, they exist unreflectively. For such individuals, the concept of self-determination does not guide or intervene in their everyday existence. The self that wants to determine the content of its everyday existence continuously and tenaciously reflects on the presence and absence of freedom. For such a self, freedom, as the concrete exemplification of self-determination is sought after on an everyday basis. Freedom is a goal and a point of departure for the self that wants to determine the way it ought to live. But what is freedom? This is a course a difficult concept to define, but it is not impossible to characterize freedom although it is impossible to define it for all ages and times. I will thus characterize freedom in the following intrinsic aspects:

- (a) the self-imposed duty to choose to be or not to be;
- (b) the willingness, which again must be self-chosen, to weigh, to balance, to offer, and to listen to reasons as one chooses from a number of options;
- (c) the need to learn from mistakes committed as a result of choosing wrong things, or from letting others choose and decide for oneself;
- (d) the need to be cautious of thinking, deciding, choosing, and judging one-sidedly;
- (e) the willingness to separate "beliefs" handed on from traditions, customs, and prejudices of others to inform and infuse the content of one's life, from the indispensable task of thinking and deciphering for oneself;
- (f) self-reliance in all aspects of a person's everyday living;
- (g) the indispensable task of imposing self-generated principles, which, if sufficiently interiorized, can guide one's everyday living, particularly in the realm of looking at other human beings as one's human extensions for whom one must care profoundly;
- (h) the recognition of the importance of not unduly loving only one's own kind, one's own members of a favoured group, or nationality, etc. with a disregard for a certain human community;
- (i) an expanded notion of thinking for others as duty, a fulfillment of one's own fully rounded humanity;
- (j) self mastery;
- (k) creativity, the founding of values via action.

(2) How is the concept of self-determination currently appropriated in the horn of Africa?

I will now seek to reflect on how these several aspects of the self-determining individuals' understanding of freedom apply to the political scene in the horn of Africa. My comments here will be very brief,³ the essential arguments may be summarized under the following propositions.

(A) The identity of individuals in general and the identity of a nation in particular is grounded upon the quest for a community. A community is a definite home of people, out of which grows an authentic nation, a nation that provides a real sense of community. An authentic nation is not racially or tribally constituted. Thus for example, the modern Italian nation is not exclusively composed by Romans, but also Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs and so forth. The same can be said of the British, the Germans, and others. Therefore, "a nation is not racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people."⁴

(B) Historical constitution of a community of people is a necessary condition for the existence of a nation but it is not sufficient; for a nation to become fully constituted, it requires other ingredients. They are:

- (a) a nation must be settled by a community of people that share a common language,
- (b) the people must live in a common territory,
- (c) the people must develop a coherent economic life that is commonly used, and
- (d) the people must find a common culture which itself is grounded upon the existence of a common psychological make-up.

When all the above features are available then one could draw an absolute definition or characterization of a nation. For Stalin (from whom I gathered the four necessary and sufficient conditions that constitute a nation):

A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.⁵

A nation, following Stalin's strict definition, must at all times possess those four features. It is only then that a nation can determine its destiny. Note here that Stalin does not say the individuals within a nation can determine their destinies. Rather, it is the abstraction—nation—that can determine their destinies. Individuals as such do not individually choose, deliberate on, and constitute

rights; the rights of individuals are the rights of their nation. It is the nation that gives individuals rights, some kinds of rights; the individuals themselves cannot give rights to themselves. This highly idealized conception of the nation, one could justifiably argue, does not provide an adequate space for the self's unconditioned vision of determining its future prospects and possibilities; the nation, understood as an abstraction of individualities, considers the individual self's longing for taking a risk to decide, to choose and to constitute rights as bourgeois, therefore unacceptable to the strict definition of the nation that Stalin left for the Marxist-Leninist tradition.

It is this particular conception of the nation, and the derivative conception of self-determination, that African thinkers appropriated in their analysis of the quests for self-determination in modern Ethiopia and Somalia. The Stalinist formulation became the chief discourse in the horn of Africa. I would like to briefly reflect on the adequacy of this view of self-determination in light of the view of self-determination as a struggle for freedom—a view that I wish to submit via the third question that I promised to analyze.

(3) To whom does the concept apply? Whose needs does the concept determine?

I would like to recall with you that the concept of freedom, as the grounding of self-determination, is characterized by many features. I enumerated above the following features: (a) self-imposed duties, (b) self-choosing, (c) learning from mistakes, (d) acting from multi-sided perspectives, (e) thinking for oneself, (f) self-reliance, (g) following self-generated principles, (h) living within the context of the community of others, (i) an expanded horizon, (j) self-mastery, and (k) creativity through action.

Consider the feature (a) *self-imposed duties*. The human self is truly free when it performs act X out of a self-imposed sense of duty. Let this sense of duty be the wish to be, given an opportunity, a law-abiding citizen of the modern nation of Ethiopia. An individual Eritrean, Tigrean, or Oromian wishes to be law-abiding, basically satisfied, productive, unalienated citizen of Ethiopia. That sense of dutifulness, however, cannot be imposed from outside. The derivative sense of citizenship and belongingness via the route of establishing a common culture grounded upon the existence of a conducive psychological make-up, as Stalin presupposed, cannot be extracted by force or the threat of the use of force. *That genuine sense of duty can only come from the inner depth of the*

human heart guided by the gentle direction of reason. Of course, the experience of many nationalities in Ethiopia, as many of you are intimately aware, betrayed the satisfaction of the sense of self-imposed duties, characteristic of freedom; the result is the ensuing of a protracted war that is still being fought without any near end. The war is intended to force dutifulness out of the unwilling nationalities in Ethiopia. However, misguided, unknowledgeable, brain-washed the nationalities are perceived to be, citizenship belonging to the Ethiopian nation cannot be forced upon them. They are bound to resist it, they are determined to risk their lives for the sake of determining their destiny. They may not know where they are going, but they surely want to go somewhere; they surely want to learn how to lead their lives. They want to be, and to radically be.

The second characteristic of freedom is (b) *self-choosing*. To be human is not only to be gifted with the fact of existence, but it is also about living. In the course of living our lives, we are confronted with numerous options, varied ways of living. The objects, modes of living, even distinctive forms of political lives—to which the question of nationalism, the question of self-identity belongs—compel us to choose. Some choose unthinkingly, they let tradition, religion, admired and trusted others do the thinking for them. They themselves do not directly think; such individuals, I wish to call non-reflective choosers. They prefer to simply be. Those individuals who consider themselves citizens of whatever nation they were born to, and do not in one way or another feel alienated because they happen to be members of a favoured class, dominant class, choose to be. Their sense of freedom is restricted to the privilege of choosing not to think, not to think in a way that complicates the exercise of choosing. Even those who are not members of a favoured class might choose as dominated human beings until they themselves wake up to the realization of their domination and the need to overcome it by choosing not to just be, but to radically be. This form of choice, however, incorporates the important element of reflecting on the nature of what is being chosen; choosing in this sense is not just *resoluteness* (Heidegger) but also critical thinking in the act of choosing. Choosing and thinking become inseparable. For most individuals, however, such as those nationalities in Ethiopia, who critically reflect to secede from Ethiopia, and who offer good reasons to do so, choosing incorporates, not to be what the nation's rulers would like them to be, but to be what they want to be.

Freedom is also characterized by (c) *committing mistakes and drawing lessons from them*. The struggling nationalities in the horn of Africa may not know what they are doing, in that in choosing to free themselves, to found an alternative nation, they may be actually committing the serious mistake of

choosing a worse, much more oppressive nation; but they reason and say "so be it." It is enough that we have chosen to lead our lives however mistaken our choices may turn out to be. Choosing has provided us with an identity, a sense of self-empowerment, a sense of efficaciousness. An individual nationalist has the choice to risk his/her life for the sake of wishing to found a nation outside of the self-proclaimed big nation; such a choice initially involves an outright rejection of all the values of the big nation, no matter how mistaken the individual is to lump the good and bad values and indiscriminately reject them. We may wish to call this phase the rejectionist one. At this stage, the nationalist engages only his/her emotions, and through the emotions comes to believe that his/her rejectionist — anti—reason phase is an absolute choice, and deliberation is unnecessary. In order to recognize mistakes, one must first commit them. Indeed, committing mistakes might not be a virtue, and avoiding mistakes may be preferable to making them. This reasonable intuitive rule, however, does not compel all individuals. In fact, some individuals prefer to understand freedom as the privilege of making errors, then retrospectively discovering that the errors could have been avoided if alternatives were carefully weighed and options appropriately chosen, and then individuals promise themselves not to repeat those errors. In short, the individuals draw the appropriate lessons and from then on conduct their lives, exercise their choices differently. The struggle for self-determination in the horn may be characterized through a similar mode of reasoning on the part of the individuals who have committed themselves to the armed struggle.

Freedom involves (d) *acting from multi-sided perspectives*. In the quest of self-determination, it is inevitable that those who wish to be free from the nation in power begin to resent and be bitter toward those real individuals, the favoured and unfavoured ones alike, that the big nation is composed of. At this stage of bitterness, individuals are not differentiated, the nationality that is waging a war, forgets that there are individuals within the big nation who did not choose to be the enemies, who were simply born to that nation, who are products of *historical circumstances* beyond their control. *Human beings engaged in war are forgetful of the uncuttable human ties that constitute human bonds, brotherhood and sisterhood, love and solidarity*. War compels warring individuals to magnify their differences and narrowly focus their bonds. A consequence of these dispositions, dispositions that are inevitably structured by the experiences of war and by the sustained subordination of the dominated nationalities, is the emergence of one-sided and narrow forms of thinking. One-sided perspectives, by definition, disable individuals to think both from their individual standpoints as well as from the standpoint of others, such as the standpoint of innocent individuals that war

has made them to be perceived as enemies. One way of controlling this inevitable one-sidedness that impoverishes freedom is the consciously chosen struggle to develop judicious, or multi-dimensional thinking by way of enriching freedom.

Freedom could come into being by the aid of judicious thinking grounded upon the conscious decision to think for oneself. Therefore, a crucial aspect of freedom is (e) *thinking for oneself*. I contended earlier in (c) that individuals learn how to choose "correctly" by making mistakes and then drawing lessons from them. Similarly, individuals learn how to think by being set free to learn how to think for themselves; just like one learns what swimming is by swimming in water, one learns how to think by thinking for oneself. Thinking for oneself is unmistakably visible in those rare moments of life in which an individual rejects what others say and what tradition, custom, group pressure, family influences, blind nationalism would prefer him/her to say. To stand above all these humanely understandable prejudices is the most impressive—albeit exceedingly difficult—dimension of thinking, thinking autonomously, that is.

Thinking for oneself eventually leads to the possibility of (f) *self-reliance*. Social philosophers have, of course, convincingly argued that human beings are crucially distinguished from other beings in that (1) they are social beings (a theme that I will develop shortly) but also that (2) within their social existence, they are also capable of leading their lives in self-sufficient manners, and that sociality need not preclude the need of individual self-reliance. In fact, human beings become fully developed when they are both socially sensitive and individually self-reliant. From their sociality, individuals learn how to live with others; from their self-reliance, they learn how to be independent and responsible. The different nationalities in Ethiopia, in spite of the smallness of their territories, the size of their populations, and the limitedness of their material resources, have resolved to self-reliantly found their own nations. Cognizant of the risks that such ventures entail, outsiders are often struck by the determination of the fighters in spite of the odds that stand against them. The fighters, on the other hand, are determined to follow their own paths. I think that the determination deserves our praise only because the virtue of self-reliance, upon which is grounded the struggle of self-determination, is itself a noble moral virtue. If self-reliance ever becomes an authentic practice as promised by some nationalities such as the Eritreans, it truly has a potential of serving as a model for the continent of Africa. Again, such a model is applaudable, and is worthy of our acknowledgement and our conscious struggle to follow it and not obstruct it by meaningless condemnations.

Thinking for oneself, (g), in concert with its intimate companion, self-reliance, has the potential of instructing individuals to develop as rational and moral beings. By rational and moral beings, I mean human beings who are capable of (1) giving rules to themselves, and (2) capable of subsequently guiding their lives in accordance with those self-generated principles. Freedom then is crucially characterized by the wish to found, and once founded, the action to consistently follow principles.⁶ I now wish to move on to answer my fourth and last question.

(4) Is self-determination (as an objective) the final step toward concrete freedom for "all" in the continent of Africa in general, and the horn of Africa in particular?

The tradition of social and moral philosophy, as I asserted earlier, has consistently characterized man as a *thinking being* destined to live within a community as a social animal. Aristotle, to whom we owe this particular conception of man, wrote: "Man is by nature a social and political being."⁷ Man, when thus conceived then, is really a particular citizen born to a specific homeland: a town, province, region, sub-continent, or continent. The particularity that man acquires as a result of the natural fact of his birth does not in the least erase the ultimate universality of his humanity. By virtue of their particularities, human beings become citizens of specific nations; by virtue of their human universality, human beings are social beings that belong to a world.⁸ The world belongs to everyone of us—a human fact that we realize we thoughtfully orient ourselves to the world. True, individuals will always remain as particular citizens of the world. Often, it is easier for individuals to think in the interests of their immediate families, friends, members of a class, nationality. The facts of the privileged families, races and classes invariably affect those particular interests that unite and divide human beings. The class struggle, the will to power, racial consciousness, national non-consciousness, infuse the quest for self-determination. The various nationalities in the world, before they became united to form nations, without exception grounded their quests of determining their destinies as particular members of a group, nationality, race, and class. In the initial period, the demand for self-determination refuses to penetrate the particular so as to see the hidden universality, the fact of our belonging to a common world. The armed struggles in the horn of Africa could presently be identified as being at this particular phase, a phase in which they see themselves as historical articulations of resolutely particular needs informed by the experiences of group, family, national and colonial dominations. Their responses to these experiences are not the affirmation of

invisible universality belonging to a common world, but the affirmation of their belonging to particular homelands that they wish to territorially, economically and culturally liberate. So they say. The affirmation of the particular makes it difficult for the fighting nationals to realize that they live in the context of a community, that is composed of others—the citizens of Ethiopia, for example, with whom they are tied by brotherhoods, sisterhoods, and universal love. True freedom, however, requires (h) *the realization that the invisible others, those who have been labelled “enemies” are our human extensions, members of a common world.* The affirmation of the particular in the horn of Africa will become authentic if and only if it is oriented toward the recovery, or restoration, of the invisible universal, the goal of founding a community in the horn of Africa, which is part of a potential African community.

The translation of the particular affirmation of the historically necessary quest of self-determination into the universally necessary founding of an African community requires (i) *the need of expanding the horizon of particular thinking.* The expansion of one’s horizon means developing our self-chosen growth toward becoming thoughtful, ponderous, and reflective. Thoughtfulness, ponderousness, and reflectiveness are merely capacities that, very much like plants and flowers, require delicate, devoted, and sustained nurturance. Our full flowering into complete human beings requires of us to cultivate the above moral virtues. By the aid of the expansion of our limited horizons, we may come to see the intricate relationship of moral immaturity, the impulse of dominating other human beings when they wish to be themselves, and our refusal to acknowledge our social nature, our universality. *“Meditative”*, as opposed to power-centered, *“calculative thinking”*, may expand our horizon to think, to care, to acknowledge, and to respect the absolute dignity, freedom, and humanness of others, those very others who want to determine their destinies, who wish to found new communities. If we grant recognition to others, recognition may be granted to us in return. It is a matter of time, trust, and moral and emotional maturity.

(J) *Self-mastery.* One reading of human history is that in the course of developing values and norms in particular, human beings tend to be deeply motivated by the hunger of power at the expense of the quests for equality, peace and fraternity. The aggressive movement toward grasping and holding power has historically produced human beings who are money, status, and domination oriented. These orientations have in turn rendered exceedingly difficult the possibility of cultivating individuals capable of mastering (in the sense of controlling) their passions, impulses, and prejudices. For humans in particular, it is considerably easier to be insensitive, thoughtless, indifferent to the plights of others;

easier still—however astonishing it may seem—is to dominate and inflict pain upon others. These vices, we humans have no problem in readily practicing; what is not at all easy to learn, but which is morally and rationally necessary to learn for the sake of living an authentically free life is self-mastery, the mastery of our desires.

Think of the nationalist, or think of the fighter for independence. The nationalist and the fighter both feel and think that they have been wronged by the powers who do not want them to free their dominated nations. They are also both angry. The anger could sustain itself for so long that it could convert itself into resentment and vindictiveness. Resentment and vindictiveness feed on our passions becoming so one-sided, so unwilling to cooperate with our reasoning gifts that we could easily lead ourselves astray. The nationalist and the fighter—unless they exercise maximum caution in the form of the mastery of the passions—could easily be controlled by the passions instead of controlling them, and becoming truly self-controlled. Freedom then is not exhausted by the feature of choice as I argued earlier, but also by choices that can be ordered as excellent, best, better, very good, and good. Thus, the nationalist or the independence fighter can hate and love meaningfully, resentment and vindictiveness can certainly be justified as valid emotions—emotions that individuals could be cleansed of, delivered from, but not be formed and frozen. The understanding of the inner constitution of an emotion is not to justify it. A resentful individual is not virtuous. In fact, the individual may have been put in a context in which he/she has become resentful, dominated by the passions, dehumanized, and not necessarily by conscious choice. Such a nationalist or independence fighter may actually choose to be delivered from, to be cleansed of this vice, and determining one's destiny. *Defining one's identity may actually be a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the characterization of freedom as self-mastery, as the self-overcoming of hate, resentment, and vindictiveness.*

(K) *Creativity through action.* It is typical of a human being wishing to be free not to know where his/her action would take him/her; at the point of action, freedom is more certain of where it begins but not as certain of where it ends. A person does know the end result of, say, making a chair, which is the finished form of the chair, hopefully an excellently crafted chair. The same person, however, cannot be as certain of the end of a given beginning, a route or a path of action that is being undertaken. Hannah Arendt is right when she said the individual who acts,

. . . never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes "guilty"

of consequences he never intended or ever foresaw, that no matter how disastrous and unexpected the consequences of his deed he can never undo it.⁹

The struggles for self-determination in the horn of Africa, as all human struggles toward freedom—in the various senses in which I have characterized freedom—, are fated by the absolute uncertainties of the end of action. The unknown ends of the struggles, however, cannot be used against the imperatives of action. Indeed, it seems that human beings, as acting beings, are tragic in the strong sense that for the sake of action, they may be indirectly choosing an end—the tragic form of which, they were not gifted to either anticipate or fully know. As acting beings, we are condemned not to ever know where we are going. We are destined to act for the sake of founding something new, for the sake of discovering and cultivating values, and finally, for the sake of giving to ourselves a self-chosen identity, a sense of well being and dignity. When we act, we are acting as possibilities, as the infinitely inexhaustible human creatures. Any attempt to intervene into the movement of an action that is in motion with the end purpose of stopping it, is bound to be met by a fierce resistance, by the absolute refusal of “kneeling down.” The application of force against action is destined to embitter and worsen the moral and emotional conditions of human self, which has already chosen to radically be at any cost. I will end my reflections here in the form of four propositions.

(1) The quest for self-determination in the horn of Africa must be viewed as a necessary point of departure with a *pragmatic intent*. The intent is that granting the highly sought independence to those who are doggedly pursuing it has the strong potential to enable the combatants be delivered from the hatred, resentment, and bitterness that the protracted experience of war has imposed on them. Independence then has the very important purpose of providing the fighters and the masses who follow them with a sense of identity, dignity, and the new attitude of the readiness for *reconciliation*.

(2) The struggles for self-determination must aim at a higher goal of solidarity with the people of the horn as such. One of such goals may be the founding of a sub-community in the horn itself. A new nation of Ethiopia, for example, could be founded by the wills of all the nationalities on an equal basis of discussion free of domination.

(3) The pursuits of the peoples of the horn must be tied up with the higher goal of founding an African community as well, a community founded on the fundamental principles of equality, liberty and self-reliance.

(4) The ordinary people of the horn must at all times be sensitive to the possibility that the content of their wish to lead their lives is truly a product of their own reflections; because it is conceivable that what they think is their own might actually be that of *manipulative and power hungry politicians*. The ordinary person is then at all times advised to separate appearance from reality, misleading representatives from authentic transitional leaders, self-serving politicians from genuine voices of the community. Of course, one never really knows how to separate the jumbled phenomenon of high politics, but one must thoughtfully try.

NOTES

1. Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986). For an original interpretation of existence in the sense of "facticity" of 'thrownness' as Heidegger has it, see the detailed discussions on pp. 171-199. I am largely following Tugendhat's reflections here, but I also add my own reflections on what existence means or could mean to conscious human beings.
2. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 19.
3. See *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), pp. 5-16. Lenin's writings on self-determination are scattered throughout his varied writings of which this one, consisting of three articles, is the most accessible. A fuller analysis of the matters broached here will be provided in another paper that will strictly focus on the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of self-determination that has by and large dominated the literature dealing with self-determination in Africa as a whole, and the horn in particular. What is given here is but a summary of the fuller analysis, p. 8.
4. Bruce Franklin (ed.), *The Essential Stalin* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 57.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
6. I have at great length elaborated on this theme in a forthcoming book, Teodros Kiros, *The Human Condition in Africa*. See the last two chapters in the book for the arguments.
7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (New York: The Boobs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962), p. 15.

8. I have dealt with this theme in Teodros Kiros, *Toward the Construction of a Theory of Political Action; Antonio Gramsci: Consciousness, Participation and Hegemony*, (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1985). See particularly, pp. 227-233.
9. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie les divergences de vue qui persistent entre experts en sciences sociales en ce qui concerne des sujets scientifiques. Ces divergences de vue ont leur origine dans les idées contradictoires quant à la manière d'étudier une science sociale, le rapport entre la science sociale d'une part et la pratique sociale et politique d'autre part, et, enfin, au fait que, presque inévitablement, la science sociale touche aux problèmes socio-politiques sensibles.

L'auteur conteste l'idée selon laquelle les querelles en sciences sociales seraient liées seulement aux idéologies politiques conflictuelles, et soutient qu'elle reflètent aussi des tendances culturelles opposées.

On soutient que le débat n'est pas une anomalie en soi qui doit, et peut, être évincé de la science sociale. En effet, le débat est inhérent à la science sociale, et cela pour trois raisons: 1. Chaque science laisse une large place aux interprétations théoriques divergentes 2. La 'double-herméneutique' des sciences sociales accroît davantage cette place pour les interprétations théoriques divergentes 3. La science sociale est associée aux significations des termes et à la définition des problèmes de la vie quotidienne.

Enfin, on soutient que le fait d'admettre le débat dans le domaine des sciences sociales n'enlève pas à ces dernières leur caractère scientifique, bien au contraire. Si le débat scientifique revêt un caractère rationnel la science sociale le sera également.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AS SOCIETAL DEBATE

by

Pieter Boele van Hensbroek

A current view of the social sciences is that, although the subject which they are dealing with is of more importance than that of any of the other sciences, this advantage is vitiated by their lack of scientific rigor. The problem that seems to do damage to the scientific status of the social sciences is the persistent disagreements among practitioners about theoretical and methodological issues. Even debates with an ideological background have, after some 150 years of their existence, not disappeared from the social sciences.

All the 'great traditions' in philosophy of science have problems with this 'debating' character of the social sciences. From a neo-positivistic point of view persistent disagreement is a bad sign for a science, as scientific statements should be true statements. As there is only one truth, disagreements seem to prove that the particular science fails to do its job. Critical Rationalists are more open to theoretical plurality, as they believe in scientific progress as a step by step improvement of the theoretical alternatives available. But even so, theoretical plurality is, for the Critical Rationalist, only a means to a better informed, but definite choice of the (for the time being) best theoretical alternative. Persistent disagreement indicates for the Critical Rationalist a failure to apply the strict methodological rules for choosing the best theoretical alternatives. Even for the philosophy of science of Thomas Kuhn theoretical pluralism is an anomaly. Successful accumulative research ('normal science') is only possible, in Kuhn's view, when there is a normally unquestioned acceptance of shared assumptions and exemplary research. Persistent theoretical debates are a sign of the immaturity of a branch of science.

The various approaches in the philosophy of science, when applied to the social sciences, share one tenet, that is they evaluate the social sciences by comparing them to the natural sciences. The theoretical pluralism and 'debating' character of the social sciences are judged in this manner, but without being investigated and understood. Apparently, the assumption is that the disagreements are just a sign of immaturity or biasedness, which can be eliminated as time goes on. Instead of accepting this assumption we would do better to investigate the origins of the persistent disagreements in the social sciences. In that way we may

at least know the nature of those aspects of these sciences that seem to inform the judgements of the philosophers of science.

In the following I shall first take a fresh look at the nature of theoretical controversy in the social sciences. Subsequently I shall trace the origins of disagreements in the various fields of social research to the very nature of the social scientific enterprise and argue that debate is inherent to social science. Finally, I shall defend the view that the 'debating' character of the social sciences as such does not harm their scientific status.

A quick look around suggests that debate arises around several basic issues. There are, e.g. fundamental disagreements about what social science is all about, and disagreements about the relation of social science to social and political practice. Another source of disagreements is found where conflicting ideas about man or society have conflicting social and political implications. Let me give some examples.

There are strongly diverging opinions about the aims of doing social science. Some will argue that social science is an exercise to trace the universal laws which determine social, cultural and psychological phenomena. These laws can be used to change or manipulate these phenomena. Others will argue that social science is a hermeneutic exercise to 'understand' meaningful human action and to reconstruct the interpretation of the world of a people group or an individual. Hermeneutics could help to overcome persistent misunderstandings of, e.g. a mental patient, a minority group in a society or a foreign culture. Thus, it paves the way for reasonable communication or well directed therapeutic or political-administrative action.

We find radically diverging views, also, on the relation between social science and social practice. Some social scientists will say that knowledge of social laws is the only proper basis for policy-design. Social science is seen here as intimately connected to the practice of social and political management: the social scientist as a technocrat. Others will be more modest and say that social science can only determine what the appropriate *means* are, whereas defining the *ends* has to be a political matter.

Both these views have been severely criticised by protagonists of an emancipatory view of social science. The human enterprise 'science', they say, is intimately connected to the human endeavour to construct a rationally directed world, that best suits the humans living in it. Therefore the practice of science is, or should be, related to the practice of changing this highly unrational world to one that serves human ends, i.e. that serves human emancipation.¹

The plurality of opinions in the social sciences becomes even more apparent where the issue at hand has political implications. Such is the case in the so called IQ-debate in relation to education policies for the poor, and e.g., in the debate on the legitimacy of gender roles etc.

It is, however, not only in the last type of debates that we can see that controversies in the social sciences have a political or cultural component. The other types of debate do not stand in isolation as purely scientific matters either. Positions taken in debates in the social sciences often correspond to positions taken in 'debates about cultural or social issues, debates that go on outside the realm of science. In many cases the scientific controversy is *one of the forms* in which cultural and political matters are disputed. The racial theories in 19th century anthropology can be seen as an expression of white superiority thinking, and as a justification for colonial subjugation and colonial educational policies. The IQ debate within psychology forms part of discussions outside science on educational reform and racism. 'Culture of poverty' theories form part of discussions on policies for the poor,² and theories about international economic exchange are part of the general debate about 'development', 'neo-colonialism' etc.

What I want to defend here is not the type of theory characterising social science as just 'class-struggle in the theory'. Social and class-struggles influence positions in scientific debates, that is true. But there are two complications. Firstly, the scientific discourse is a separate discourse from the political one, with its own rules and customs of the game, aimed at a reasonable interaction, taking due account of the factual evidence available. Secondly politics is only one influencing factor, debates of a more general, cultural type also reflect themselves in scientific controversies. Pro-, or anti-religious orientations, scientific or romantic views on science, cultural chauvinism, feminism, traditionalism or progressivism, all these cultural trends make themselves felt in debates in the social sciences.

Looking back at several specific disputes in the social sciences which I mentioned before, we can clearly see that a reduction of theoretical dispute to political orientations does not work. Whereas we could still confidently call the emancipatory view of social science left-wing (it aims at changing the social status quo), and the one according to which science provides means for pre-established ends as right-wing (it puts science into the service of any political line, especially the one in power), what can we say of the technocratic view? It is clearly a strong factor in capitalist welfare states, but equally strong in the communist ideal of a 'scientific policy' by the state. The technocratic view of science seems

better clarified by considering it an element of a scientific, undemocratic cultural tradition.

The positivistic, law-finding, view of the social sciences is equally difficult to fit into one particular political orientation. It is strongly present in Leninism, but also in anti-Leninistic leftism of the Vienna Circle logical positivists, and even on the conservative side in the so called 'Positivism-struggle' in sociology in the 1960s; there it defended the 'value-freedom' of science. Positivism can probably be better interpreted as a cultural tradition, where people derive their optimism about the future from the belief that science is the ultimate fountain of human progress.

Even the debates about particularly hot issues in the social sciences involve a lot more than political ideologies. It is cultural themes as much as politics that are at the background of these debates. In the IQ debates e.g. there are general views involved about the equality and perfectability of man. In the opposition against socio-biology it is beliefs about human dignity and the moral accountability of individuals and of society which play a role, next to immediate political implications of socio-biological findings. In the debate about 'development' there are very clearly diverging views about the value of preserving cultural identity in the developmental process as opposed to the assumed universal appreciability of the consumer society. All these views are of a wider nature than just political. Another example of the impact of the cultural factor is feminism. The feminist movement is probably the most massive and explicit attempt these days to transform our cultural attitudes. The impact on the social sciences is clearly there, not only in the multitude of studies concerning 'the position of woman', but mostly because of theoretical issues brought up about the essential equality of the sexes or, by others again, the presumed specially female human qualities and even female modes of reasoning.

By stressing the cultural and political backgrounds of social scientific debate, there is one inevitable counter argument. People will object by saying: You focus exactly on instances of bad, biased and ideological science. You should discard those instances in social science where debate is rife instead of taking them as your standard examples.

In the next section I hope to show that dissention and cultural-political influence in social science, so unacceptable from an objectivistic view of science, cannot be avoided. It is the epistemological nature of the social sciences themselves, and their peculiar relation to social practice that makes them as they are. Despite some 150 years of crusading for pure, objective and value-free social sciences, they are still many-headed dragons susceptible to variations in the

cultural and political winds. This is not an accident, I want to argue, it is precisely what social science is: both science and part of cultural evolution.

Three Origins of Debate

In order to trace the theoretical reasons for persistent lack of consensus and for cultural and political influence in debate in the social sciences, we have to look at three things: 1) theoretical pluralism in science in general; 2) the so-called 'double hermeneutics' of the social sciences; 3) the relation between social science and social practice.

1. Developments in the general philosophy of science have greatly influenced discussions on the methodology of the social sciences.

Up to at least the 1950s the general image of the natural sciences was a neo-positivistic one. Science, it was maintained, is based on observation of facts and the formulation of laws and theories as generalisations, based on these facts. As long as observation is done objectively and methodically, the established facts can be considered certain pieces of knowledge. When theories are properly verified by the facts, they are also true and certain knowledge. The neo-positivist standard image of science made the social sciences fall short of this standard.

Both philosophical and empirical investigation into science however, proved the standard image of the neo-positivists to be untenable. The assumed 'rock bottom of facts', and the principle of verification of theories, were successfully criticised by Karl Popper. Scientific theories are conjectures, he said, that we compare methodologically with each other. The mistaken ones are discarded and the others are, only for the time being, retained.

Popper's philosophy of science itself has subsequently been criticised. The strictly methodological comparison and choice of theories proved to be frequently violated in real science, even by the greatest of scientists. In actual practice the process of accepting and rejecting theories is a more complicated process. Imre Lakatos' renovations of the Critical Rationalist programme tried to do justice to this more complicated nature of the actual process of theory-choice in science. According to Thomas Kuhn and more recent philosophers of science the choice of theories is not guided by a method. At the same time the whole notion of observation as a means to acquire objective knowledge appeared to be problematic. Observation itself is dependent on the theoretical framework of the observer. The observational data are not a 'rock bottom of facts' (neo-positivists), not even a 'swamp' (Karl Popper), but they are partly a theoretical construction.

The resulting image of the natural sciences is one where science is an exercise in constructing consistent and useful interpretations of physical reality, rather than one of describing a pre-ordered reality.

With this new view of science the contrast between the natural and social sciences disappears, according to many philosophers of science. It is just the mistaken, neo-positivistic, view of the natural sciences which made them appear much more rigid and objective than the social sciences. In reality theories in the natural sciences too are interpretations, human constructions, whose acceptance depends on the consensus of the scientific community.

The modern philosophy of science can thus account for (part of the) theoretical plurality in the social sciences by recognising such a plurality of interpretations as an aspect of science as such.

Theoretical debate will tend to be more animated and persistent in the social sciences because of the moral and political implications of the issues under discussion. It is, however, not necessarily a sign of the immaturity of a science.

2. There are however other reasons for expecting that a clear-cut consensus in the social sciences is further out of reach, and will be less stable, than elsewhere in science. This has to do with the epistemological status of the social sciences. The social sciences have a special relationship to their objects of study by adding a second hermeneutic aspect to the interpretative, 'hermeneutic' character of all scientific activity as explained above (namely theorising as the construction and confrontation of theoretical interpretations of the object of study).³

The additional hermeneutic aspect of the social sciences comes in at a specific point, namely, with the study of human action. In order to identify an action as a certain type of human action, we can, in many cases, not resort only to the standard scientific means of observation to inform us about our object of study. In order to identify the type of action an actor performs, we have to identify the meaning of the bodily movements involved. We have to attribute ideas and intentions to the observable behaviour of the actor. Let us look at an example.

Suppose a people can vote for their president by voting 'yes' or 'no', to a proposed candidate. Suppose a majority votes 'no'. What does this action mean?

It could of course simply mean that the majority of the people want the president to go, because of his policies. But we are not certain at all that this case of casting 'no'-votes has been properly interpreted by referring to the 'official' meaning of voting. If the political system is such that there are very few means of making your views on politics known, voting 'no' might mean that the people

are generally discontent with the direction of politics and not, in particular, with the president. In that case voting 'no' is just a political signal.

It could also be the case that there have just been large increases in food prices and that by voting 'no' people want to indicate their protest against pricing policy.

Finally for a specific group of voters voting 'no' could mean that, because of local historical events or tribal alliance, they vote against the president. Their vote is not related to the politics that the president has implemented for the last few years. 'No' votes in this case have a different meaning again from the 'official' meaning of voting.

In order, now, to do any theorising about the majority of 'no' votes, it is necessary to first *identify* which of the contenders is, in fact, the meaning of the action that took place. We have to interpret, 'understand' the action involved.

The meaning of an action can not be identified by studying the observable behaviour of the actors involved alone. In all the interpretations I mentioned of voting 'no', above, the observable behaviour was the same, namely the majority casting 'no' votes. What we have to do is reconstruct the thoughts and intentions of the voters. This can be done by asking them, or by relating the particular action under study to other actions of the same persons and making sense of them together.

The act of understanding, of interpretation, of the meaning of actions of the people under study is a second level of interpretation, peculiar to the social sciences. It comes in addition to the construction of theoretical interpretations, which is common to all scientific disciplines.

In how far can this 'double hermeneutics' of the social sciences be said to affect the degree of disagreement and debate in the social sciences?

The theoretically 'deepest' consequence of the double hermeneutics is the intrinsic connection that it shows between social scientific interpretation and actor-interpretations of human actions. The theoretical discussion on how strong this connection should be is itself the basis for a substantial controversy in the social sciences. In this debate we find, on one extreme, people who take social science as a purely hermeneutic 'narrative' science, content with only identification of the proper meaning of actions. Here the discipline of history is mostly taken as example-science for the social sciences. The other extreme is represented by the idea that social science is a purely explaining and predicting science, taking the natural sciences as example. Between these extremes there is of course a multitude of views.

There is a second way in which the consequences of the double hermeneutics of the social sciences for possible consensus are even more radical. As the reconstruction of the meaning of actions is never a clear-cut affair, it leaves the possibility open for various competing interpretations of the same action. This increases the possibility of dissension and pushes the idea of reaching an 'ultimate' interpretation of any action under study beyond the horizon. If we, further, take into account the arguments from the mainstream of the hermeneutic tradition of Dilthey and Gadamer, then we realise that the interpretation exercise is never complete. Interpretation, they argue, is always a circular movement, where the frame of interpretation of the interpreter himself is involved. It is only from his understanding, the understanding of his time and culture, that the interpreter interprets any phenomenon. When culture, time, or he himself changes, his interpretation will also change. Interpretation is an ongoing affair.

With these considerations we are clearly more in the humanities, like history or literary interpretation, than in sociology or psychology. But, as my example of the analysis of voting behaviour shows, it is clearly not absent from the social sciences. If we turn to clinical psychology and the activities of the psychotherapist, then interpretation of human action is quite central again. In cross-cultural investigations in the social sciences it is the same.

The double hermeneutical character of the social sciences leaves these sciences with two sources of continuous debate. The first is about how social science should be practiced, especially the question in how far we should bother about actor-interpretations of human action. The second source of debate is the identification of the meaning of observable pieces of behaviour. As interpretation of meaning is never a clear-cut affair, there is a legitimate possibility of disagreement. Differences in theoretical and socio-political orientation of the researcher can make themselves felt here in social science.

3. Let me now discuss a third source of diversity of opinion in social science. This concerns the relation between social science and where social scientific knowledge is used, i.e. social-political life itself.

There is something curious about the relationship between social science and social life, because the scientific understanding of social phenomena encounters a competitor from social life itself, namely our common sense understanding of social phenomena. Most of the things which we try to understand through social science are already interpreted in our common sense understanding of the world.

Both interpretations, the scientific and the common sense, appear to be

interrelated. The interrelationship consists mainly in shared concepts and shared problems. Many concepts that we use in our common-sense language also figure in social science, e.g. 'intelligence', 'education', 'development' and 'security'. Also many problems that are perceived and conceptualised in daily life become problems of central attention in social science. Examples are: criminality, discrimination, deviant behaviour, and democracy.

It is these shared concepts and problem-conceptions that tend to tie our social scientific understanding of phenomena to our common sense understanding. Changes in the one will tend to influence the other and vice-versa.

Theoretically, we can, of course, try to divorce social science completely from our common sense terms and problems. Then the social scientist would define his own terms and deal with problems which the theoretical development of the particular science itself suggests. This divorce of science and concepts and problems in common sense cannot be done, however, without certain costs, namely, the danger for social science to become irrelevant for social practice. Let me discuss as an example the concept of 'intelligence'.

In social life we use the concept of 'intelligence', and we attach great importance to what it designates, namely the mental capacities of a person. In all kinds of situations in life, e.g. choice of school, job-selection, or accountability in court cases, it is a major factor in our decision.

The science of psychology also discusses intelligence and has designed tests to measure it, the IQ tests. The scientific use of the concept 'intelligence' is now tied to the common sense use of it through the pretension of the scientific test to measure something like what we mean by the term in ordinary life.

Of course the scientist can divorce himself from the common sense use and give an operational definition of intelligence, like: 'Intelligence is what the IQ test measures'. The price he pays, however, is the claim of the practical use of the test. In everyday life we have no reason whatsoever to take 'what the test measures' as an indicator, for example, for school choice, unless the test measures what we want, namely intelligence.⁴

There is of course always a tension between the scientific and common sense meaning of a term. The scientific use tends to be more restricted and precise, the common sense use more ambiguous. The scientific use can only try to 'keep in touch' with the common sense use.

The situation is complicated again by the fact that both uses of a term will change over time. The scientific use through theoretical development, the common sense use through socio-cultural changes. The IQ test, for instance, became an object of increasing criticism when people, due to socio-cultural changes,

started emphasizing creative and social proficiency in education, relative to purely intellectual schooling. The question came up whether 'creative intelligence' and 'social intelligence' should not also be measured. Social and cultural changes can in this manner have their influence on discussions within the scientific community.

The participation of social science in social and cultural changes becomes even more visible if we realise that the concepts that we use determine the definition of the problem that we deal with. If, in social reality, the view of what central problems are changes, then immediately the scientific definition of the problem and the concepts used therein come under pressure.

Take as an example the problem of 'development'. The attitude of looking at 'development' as an essentially economic affair, has pulled the science of economics to the centre of scientific thinking about 'development'. Economists subsequently came up with a handy indicator of 'development', by looking at the Gross National Product (GNP). Absolute level and growth of GNP became (and still is) the most widely used measure of 'development'.

The GNP-ism, however, came under attack with the political awakening of the less privileged (nations) and the expression thereof in social science. It was observed that defining 'development' as 'growth of GNP' covers very inadequately the common sense understanding of the problem of 'development'. There can, e.g., be growth of GNP and, at the same time, a substantial deterioration in the living conditions of the majority of the people. Thus there can be 'development' in the scientific sense of the term, and 'de-development' in the common sense use of it. So people argued that the concept of 'development' should, at least, include the aspect of distribution of wealth.

In the above discussion we have seen that there are at least three reasons why persistent lack of consensus and frequent debates on theoretical and methodological issues are intrinsic to social science. Firstly, every science has these characteristics to a certain degree. Secondly, the 'double hermeneutics' of the social sciences raises extra methodological issues and extra room for disagreement about interpretations. Thirdly the concepts and problem-definitions which social sciences share with common sense, makes these sciences, at some distance, connected to the development of concepts and views in the wider society.

So social science is of necessity more prone than other sciences to influences from the wider society and to theoretical disputes. They constitute, so to say, one of the battle-grounds for the various cultural and political currents in society.

All the same: it is science

It is especially social scientists themselves who will most likely hesitate to accept the above argument. They will fear that the argument implies a negative judgement about the scientific character of the social sciences.

There are at least two assumptions that seem to prompt this fear: firstly, the idea that a rational scientific attitude automatically leads to unanimous conclusions of scientists; secondly, the idea that cultural and political influences in scientific discussions contradict the rational and methodological nature of science. Both assumptions, however, appear to be mistaken in the light of the philosophy of science and empirical science studies of the last decade or so.

If we follow the (neo-) positivistic conception of science, then we expect the scientists to 'let the facts speak', and to let those facts determine whether a particular theory is true or not. Clearly, if science is such a 'truth-finding-machine', unanimous conclusions and pure science should be the rule. But, as Karl Popper has shown, facts do not speak for themselves, but need interpretation, and the establishment of the truth of a theory is a logical impossibility.⁶ So science can not be the positivistic 'truth-finding-machine'.

The Critical Rationalist alternative is to depict science as a purely rational, 'methodological-machine'. In science we choose, they say, the best or most promising theory according to the strict criteria that the scientific methodology supplies us with. Consensus (within a reasonable time-span) and freedom from external, e.g. ideological, influences can be guaranteed as long as we strictly follow the scientific method.

The image of science as a strictly methodological enterprise, however, appears to be illusory, too. Both research into the history of science and into current scientific practice shows that in almost all situations there is, despite methodological prescriptions, ample space for differences in interpretation of e.g. factual information, measuring procedures, theoretical alternatives, etc. Ideology, rhetorics and power-politics can play their role in science too, and empirical investigations into scientific practice seem to show that they do.⁷

In the 1980's it has become fashionable, in the light of the foregoing, to deny the rational character of science all together. One could, however, also follow Jurgen Habermas and take a fresh look at our concept of rationality itself. Is not *rationality* just marked by the willingness of a person to *argue* about his views, to *give reasons* if asked to do so?⁸

Armed with such a concept of rationality we can justify the rational, scientific character of the social sciences. Scientific debate within the social sciences can be of a 'reason-giving' type, without necessarily leading to unanimous

conclusions. Even for perfectly rational participants in a discussion, it is possible to disagree. A rational debate, also, does not exclude the possibility of extra-scientific factors to play a role in the positions of the participants. As theoretical choices in science are underdetermined by methodological criteria, there is room for extra-scientific factors to influence the positions of the participants. As long as the participants are willing to change their views if confronted with better arguments, extra-scientific factors do not harm the rational character of the scientific debate. To the contrary, a high degree of agreement can make one suspicious that the rational character of scientific discussion is low, or that there is pressure on the scientists to follow some official ideology.

NOTES

1. The classical formulation of these three ways of perceiving the relation between science and practice is derived from Jurgen Habermas. See, e.g., his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (London, 1972).
2. An interesting new stage in this discussion can be found in the discussions on 'Black Neo-Conservatism' in *Praxis International*, Vol. 7, Number 2, 1987.
3. See, e.g., Anthony Giddens: *New Rules of Sociological Method*, (London, 1976).
4. That is, in fact, the way in which the natural sciences developed. See, e.g., Thomas Kuhn: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago, 1962/1970), and the studies of the famous Starnberg-Group in West Germany - J. Schafer: *Finalisation in Science* (Dordrecht, 1983).
5. Or the social scientist will have to indicate that the 'something' which he measures (and mistakenly calls 'intelligence') gives a better indication of future school performance than what is commonly called intelligence.
6. See, Karl R. Popper: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York/London, 1959), the German edition dates from 1934.
7. A good overview of the developments in empirical science-studies can be obtained from the Journal '*Social Studies of Science*'.
8. Jurgen Habermas: *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*. Vol. I. (Frankfurt a.M., 1981).

RÉSUMÉ

Dans ce compte rendu critique du livre du Dr. Ranganathan, qui s'intitule, The Political Philosophy of President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia, on soutient que l'ouvrage présente un exemple caractéristique d'une attitude complaisante et subordonnée, voire même hypocrite, qui prévaut chez la plupart de l'intelligentsia nationale vis-à-vis de l'idéologie officielle de l'état — le Kaundaisme.

On considère que cet ouvrage, avec d'autres du même genre, ignore l'abîme qui sépare les idéaux de l'idéologie de la réalité dure du passé récent de la Zambie, la situation actuelle et les perspectives d'avenir.

A moins qu'un changement radical n'intervienne dans l'attitude dominante à l'égard de l'idéologie officielle de l'état, comme celle reflétée dans le livre passé en revue ici, il est à craindre que le développement de la théorie et de la pratique sera noyé dans le flou de la rhétorique véhiculant de contre-vérités et des demi-vérités.

Jonathan Ranganathan: A Critical Review

by

Roni M. Khul Bwalya

Questionable: a capital word, I have always ascribed a high philological value to it. It challenges one to both go in to and to avoid; anyhow a very cautious going-in; and it stands in the double light of the remarkable and the disreputable, either in a thing – or in a man.

Thomas Mann -- Doctor Faustus

In the opening statement to the work that is the subject of the present discussion, Ranganathan states: "The subject I have chosen to analyse is the Political Philosophy of President Kaunda of Zambia."¹ He misrepresents. Ranganathan does not analyse, he asserts; and what he asserts he neither qualifies nor, worse, does he question. Above all, he mystifies.

At the present time in this country, amongst the politicians and the intellectuals—including the intellectuals *of* the politicians—we may discern at least two types. There are those who wittingly or otherwise propagate illusions, and those who do not question when it comes to the question of the ideology that is *Zambian Humanism* or, as we would prefer to precise it, *Kaundaism*, and its intended practical manifestation: the *Zambian Humanist Revolution*. Both types of persons betray a bad intellectual conscience, and both lack intellectual integrity. Each is as ridiculous, each as anti-national, as bourgeois, as the other.

For that, at the present time, *is* what the question of the *Zambian Humanist Revolution*, of the revolutionary praxis of the *Zambian State*, or the fate of the *Kaundaist Idea* in practice, is about: a betrayal. A betrayal by a class which, from the beginning and still, has "... its soul set at peace into shocking ways—shocking because anti-national—of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois."²

At the present time, there is not one of us who does not *know* this that the Zambian Humanist Revolutionary Idea may be graphically depicted as a gangrened, moribund foetus still afestering within the conceptual womb in which it was born and, for a very short while, developed. It was not even an abortion. Yet there are still those who would pretend, in word though certainly not in deeds or modes of social being as such, that the Zambian Humanist Revolution *is*. They lie, for there is *no way they cannot know* this that is so knowable concerning this nation or, rather, the prospects of the creation of a nation on this soil. Hence, no one is henceforth allowed to 'err innocently' or to 'speak in ignorance' on this matter. To unquestioningly assert the actuality of the Zambian Humanist Revolution at the present time is not to err: it is to consciously seek to misrepresent, misinterpret and mystify.

Then there are the many who are mute, who do not want to get involved, who for all practical purpose do not question, and dare not even lie - except to themselves. Fanon has spoken of ". . . the intellectual laziness of the national middle-class, of its spiritual penury. . ." which, in independent Africa, is in part responsible for the ". . . cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression and is so harmful and prejudicial to the national effort and national unity."³

This same 'intellectual laziness' can also be seen as a lack of what Nietzsche calls "*The Intellectual Conscience. . . By far the most lack an intellectual conscience. . . by far the most do not find it contemptible to believe this or that and live according to it, without having first become conscious of the last and surest reasons pro and con, and without even taking the trouble to consider such reasons afterwards . . . Not to question, not to tremble with the craving and to joy of questioning. . . that is what I feel to be contemptible.*"⁴

In fairness, one should mention that their muteness is, in a sense, understandable in the circumstances. There are questions of *Self*- not so much selfishness as healthy self-interest. An indication of the dumbening nature of the environment we find ourselves in can be found in the report on the teaching of and research in philosophy in Africa. Kwasi Wiredu reports: "It can therefore be suggested that the obligation to teach a particular ideology is harmful to a department of philosophy not because ideology is not a legitimate matter of philosophical interest, but simply because *state authorities are frequently not interested in the rational discussion of ideology, but only in its dissemination through propaganda. . . .* If people came to believe both that philosophical communication must be by rational discussion, . . . and that ideology is closely connected with philosophy or is actually an aspect of it, the chances are that they will cultivate

the habit of discussing ideological matters rationally. *At the present time, this is generally not the case in Africa.*"⁵ (emphasis added).

We cannot all of us be a Socrates, one understands, but I do not think one is thereby obliged to forgive as well. 'Not to question' that *is* contemptible, an abdication of all intellectual—that is, *human*—integrity. It is not just as irresponsible and anti-national as are the utterances of those who wittingly or otherwise falsify that which is most questionable at the present time. In a sense, the unquestioningness of the mute amongst those who could, if they would, help fruitfully shape national opinion is worse. At least the creators of illusions, when they are good at their nefarious task, do drop clues as to what, in the circumstances, should pass for truth.

Ranganathan. Ranganathan combines the traits of the two types we have discussed above. He is far from being mute, yet he does not even begin to question that which, in the work we will be discussing below, he is about, that which is most questionable. He mystifies.

Listen to this. Speaking about what happens when one 'analyses the Zambian scene', Ranganathan states that: "The stupendous accomplishment in all fields clearly reveals that the approach for building a strong Zambia through the philosophy of Humanism was wholistic. This philosophy when translated into action *produced* marvelous results in all directions - material and spiritual."⁶ (emphasis added) One asks: When? where? did all this, *in fact*, take place?

Again: "The Party *has* ensured that all public institutions, State owned enterprises and popular mass and similar organizations are led by persons who are members of the Party and who are uncompromisingly committed to the achievement of Humanism."⁷ (emphasis is added) Party members the Party-and-its-Government's functionaries, as well as the parastatal bosses, might be; but 'uncompromisingly committed to the achievement of humanism'? Surely not even the most sympathetic observer could go quite that far in characterising the ideological commitment of the nation's politico-economic leadership. The plain truth is that State-run and-owned institutions do not, at the present time, run along anything like lines that point towards future humanist praxis - unless we have completely misunderstood that ideology.

Ranganathan's analysis (read: mystification) has this strange quality whereby that which is but ideal, is indistinguishable from what is actual. Witness that after making the above quoted preposterous statement concerning the ideological commitment of the national bourgeoisie, he is able, with a clear conscience, to state: "I have to point out at this stage that the greatest majority in the leadership and amongst followers alike have *not* clearly understood the true meaning of

the Humanistic Revolution in Zambia."⁸ (emphasis added) How does one hold two such contradictory views?

Perhaps this is a symptom of our times. Maybe even our contempt for those who mystify and do not at the present time question that which we consider to be most questionable, has its roots in the same ground as their lack of intellectual integrity. This ground may be what Hermann Hesse called ". . . the sickness of the times themselves. He goes on to say, ". . . there are times when a whole generation is caught in this way between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standard, no security, no simple acquiescence. Naturally, everyone does not feel this equally."⁹ No standard, no values, no intellectual integrity.

Today we live suspended between the twilight of tribal reality and the blindingly sudden modern present; we are suspended between the brilliant dawn and promise of political independence, and the gathering dusk of uncertain and insecure morrows. The nausea that rises in the gorge of an honest intellectual conscience arises precisely from that feeling of suspension, and the dizzying glance into the darkening void of the future of the nation. But then, so, too, does the instinct to mystify, misrepresent and misinterpret. Therein lies the danger of passing in silence over works such as the one under review here. For, in the national milieu, that instinct to create illusions is bound, by the laws of probability, to discover kindred instincts only too grateful for such additional anaesthetic to cushion them from the pains, and plain absurdities, of our present lives.

A philosopher in the employ of the State need not be a joke. He will, however, *almost* certainly be forced, by his dependence for a living on the State, to compromise some fundamental aspect of his thought, not to mention his integrity as a philosopher. Witness Hegel, who was no mental midget, but was forced to compromise his potentially revolutionary socio-political philosophy.¹⁰ Yet, if the philosopher who so compromises is one worth his salt, it is still possible to follow his reasoning and discover *where* he allowed "concepts, opinions, things past, and books," to step "between himself and things."¹¹ This Marx and Engels did with Hegel. By jettisoning that which was servile in Hegel they were able to contribute to the debate on political reality.

With Ranganathan, in relation to the ideology of Zambian Humanism and the ideal of the Zambian Humanist Revolution, one is confronted with the worst possible case of the subservience of thought to lowly, priestly, instincts. For, here, nothing of substance is left once the subservient and unrestrained applause is removed. Unlike in the case of Hegel, one cannot even begin to discover where this author's thought went astray—to discover, that is, whether and what he thought at

all. To begin with, the content of the work here in question, taken as a whole, almost belies its title. Only about ten pages, at the very most, have any direct bearing on the subject-matter—to wit, the 'introduction' and the third chapter.

The first chapter is a condensed biography of President Kaunda of Zambia culled from *Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia—Selection from his writings*, edited by Thomas Patrick Melady.¹² This is a tale that has been oft told, and no doubt will be told yet again - but not, we do not believe, quite like Ranganathan tells it. Telling an anecdote concerning the President's teen-age, he writes: "The perseverance of the potential leader of Zambia can be seen from the fact that in the mile race, though he was lagging far behind he kept doggedly on till the end. . . . Today, President Kaunda, with the same spirit of perseverance, is leading his countrymen in the race of eternity leading to peace, prosperity and happiness where ignorance will vanish and its offshoots of hunger, poverty, disease and exploitation of man by man will become a thing of the past Success is a certainty because President Kaunda has created a nice path - and that path is the philosophy of Humanism."¹³ One is reminded of a primary school religious education teacher who tells what he does, not in order to make his audience think, but merely believe. Perhaps the point of the chapter is to demonstrate the fact that the ideology that is called *Zambian Humanism* is, in part, the natural consequence of the particular life-experiences undergone by Kenneth Kaunda as an individual. But the connection that could in fact be established between those life-experiences and fundamental aspects of the ideology is lost in the Ranganathan account of Kaunda's life, which is a veritable pro-canonization speech, a panegyric which concludes with the declaration: "Dr. K.D. Kaunda is a great humanist, philosopher, and a great leader of international standing. Dr. Kaunda has hated nobody. . . he has not only been the Saviour to liberate Zambia, but made a major contribution to the liberation of Namibia from the illegal South African regime and also to remove apartheid leading to majority rule in South Africa. The philosophy of Humanism advocated by Dr. Kaunda opens the scope for the development of man in all the three spheres - physical, mental and spiritual. It is interesting to delve into this philosophy in depth."¹⁴

To delve into this philosophy in depth certainly is interesting—more so for us of the soil, for, for us, this is an *existential issue*. For us, it is a question of the realization of our truth, of the truth whose seed was the animating spirit of the decolonization movement—the glowing promise of the creation of a nation—that *Kaundaism* poses. Yes, let us hate nobody, and contribute to the liberation of all peoples—by all means, let's! But these basic truths are vitiated, are trivialized, vulgurized, in so far as our aspirations to realize them do not rest on the realiza-

tion of our own truth,—rest, that is, on the betrayal of which we, “officially”, proclaim *is* our truth.

The second chapter, entitled ‘United National Independence Party’, referring to the sole political party (since 1972) in the land, Ranganathan starts with the promise: “In this chapter, I wish to discuss what the philosophy of Humanism is all about.”¹⁵ Yet, it turns out that the chapter is in fact a summary of the UNIP Constitution of 1983. The point of the chapter, it seems, is to present ‘. . . in brief the structure of the United National Independence Party in order to verify that it conforms to the ideals of the Philosophy of Humanism.’¹⁶ One, however, notes that, first, hitherto the philosophy itself has not been discussed, except for some brief remarks in the ‘Introduction’. Secondly, what is to be verified from the comparison of the ideals of the ideology with the constitution of the Party, without taking into account the Party’s *practice*? For that is the issue: the discrepancy for over two decades between ideological pronouncements and the practice of the national bourgeoisie—a bourgeoisie which perversely follows the carbon copy of the Fanonian script to the letter.

In the chapter called ‘A Critical Survey of the Political Philosophy of Humanism Part I’, for the first time we get something like what is expected, given the title of the work. The content of the chapter is revealing in a true Heideggerian sense. What is objectionable about this chapter is not the falsehood that is its title, alone. There is also the fact that it does not question that which it takes as its subject for philosophical scrutiny, that which is, first and foremost at the present time, questionable.

What is revealed? That which we, who have gone beyond, by first going under, Zambian Humanism—Kaundaism have known for so long—and expressed differently. The revelation (such terms are very at home in the context of the discussion of Kaundaism, as shall be seen) is that “The basic principles of Humanism are deep rooted in the Bible philosophy.”¹⁷ “Thus,” so goes on the ‘Introduction’ which coalesces with the third chapter being discussed here in giving anything like what the title of the work promises, “the basic principles of the philosophy of Humanism affords an opportunity to use the teaching of the Holy Bible in our practical lives supported actively by the State.”¹⁸

One cannot help being grateful to Ranganathan, for all that which is contemptible in his work, for cutting through the cobwebs and going down to the airy grounds upon which Kaundaism rests. The ‘Bible philosophy’ might be a loose way of stating the foundations of the ideology that underlies the Zambian Humanist Revolution that has yet to begin. But it captures the essence—nay, let

us be allowed to say the 'soul'—of Kaundaism. No matter that it is claimed that the ideology is 'eclectic', ". . . that the basic principles of Humanism . . . are universal"¹⁹—or that the originator of the ideology might be considered by some theologian as a . . . 'syncretist—someone concerned to bridge the gap between different religions and to incorporate into his experience the best elements of them all."²⁰ No matter that Ranganathan claims that "The Philosophy of Humanism conforms to the beliefs of every religion in the world" and that "The Philosophy of Humanism is rooted in the moral values and the riches of spirituality, based from all the religions of the world (sic.)"²¹

The simple, most questionable, truth, is that the basic values of the national ideology, the political philosophy of the Head of State of Zambia, are based on a Protestant interpretation of reality and the place and role of man in the universe, based on a 'heretical' (apologies) biblical interpretation of that reality.

The core of the ideology is provided in the following words that Ranganathan quotes from he that he calls the 'Father of the Nation'²³ "If we accept the teaching: 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength', and also 'love thy neighbour as thyself', so leading man to do unto others as he would have them do unto him, and finally *achieving the objective which we as humanists see as 'God's will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven'*, then society must begin to re-organise itself in so far as moral and spiritual responsibilities are concerned."²⁴ (emphasis added)

From the 'Introduction', two important features of Zambian Humanism emerge. The first is that the attainment of Socialism is a necessary precondition for the attainment of the Humanist mode of being. In Ranganathan's words: "Thus one can be a socialist without being a humanist, but the converse is untrue."²⁵ In the Zambian Humanist context, Socialism is characterised as ". . . a way of organising the society in such a way that in the final analysis, exploitation of man by man is eliminated. All the major means of production are controlled by the State. Socialism if developed to the next stage comes out as Humanism which is the final stage (of human historical development)"²⁶ (brackets added).

The second feature of Zambian Humanism that emerges from the 'Introduction' underscores the essence of the ideology. Contrasting the Humanist mode of being with the Communist mode of production, both of which are said to follow from the Socialist stage of socio-economic development, Ranganathan tells us that the main difference between the two lies in the fact that a ". . . Communist believes in what is generally called Scientific Socialism" whereas a ". . . Human-

ist believes in the presence of a Super-Being—the source of all life.”²⁷ This is a telling difference, for it indicates that it is not the similarities or differences in concrete socio-political arrangements that matter in distinguishing the two modes of being, the Communist and the Humanist. Rather, it is a psychological state, a state of the social consciousness, *a mere belief*.

Is that not what is most questionable? This belief. It is not even just that our likes are, as Nietzsche would put it, “. . . too inquisitive, *too questionable*, too exuberant to stand for any gross answer. God is a gross answer an indelicacy against us thinkers—at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think!”²⁸

The theoretical foundation of the doctrine, too, taken as a whole, begs questions, begs to be questioned. What are we to make of a philosophy “rooted in the moral values and the riches of spirituality, based from all the religions of the world”? What can that possibly be, and what would it have to do with us? Nor are the implications of the theory for practice any more reassuring. Ranganathan calmly explains that: “In this philosophy moral and spiritual responsibility are *the main* concern of the State . . .”; “In propagating morality and spirituality ‘every individual and each institution of the State must become part of the struggle’,”²⁹ (emphasis added); and, finally, that “. . . moral and spiritual development must be part and parcel of the Party and Government programme”, which also means that “. . . the Party through its Government has to work hand in hand with the spiritual leaders for the benefit of man.”³⁰

By what magical means did that which is so very human and profane becomes sanctified? Whence the compulsion to turn the political into the religious, the this-worldly into the other-worldly? One cannot help but feel that in the first second of the conception of the Kaundaist idea, a veil has been drawn here between the ideology and what, for us, passes for reality. To make of the promise that was born with the attainment of political independence primarily an exercise in the ensoulment, through the Christianization of the population, the basic strategy in the task of the creation of a nation—that is too ‘beyond’ for us. Not that we do not believe that matters moral and spiritual have an important place in the development of a new mode of socio-political and economic being. They do. What we do deny is that those matters are or should be the primary concern of the State, either in theory or in practice.

Ranganathan, characteristically, sees things from the perspective “. . . where heaven and earth is formed. . .”,³¹ and with a straight face declares that: “Rooted in the Bible philosophy and the philosophy of other religions (sic), Zambian political philosophy has given guidelines regarding every aspect of man and his

needs. . . . Whatever area we consider the aim is clear 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'"³²

Those who would reject the Socratic dictum that "An unexamined life is not worth living" would no doubt also most likely reject the observation that any doctrine not based on an examination of *this* life is not worth believing. Although its practical implications are clear enough up to a point—State capitalism to *socialism to the Perfect Humanist State, equity, social justice and fairness, etc.*—the theoretical foundations of *Zambian Humanism* remain other-worldly.

"If one shifts the centre of gravity of life *out* of life into the 'Beyond'—into *nothingness*—one has deprived life as such of its centre of gravity."³³ Thus one begins with a millenia-long misinterpretation of reality, and interprets that to achieve a third-hand misrepresentation as a guide for basically political action. Here we will not even begin to enquire into the vexing question of how Jesus the Nazarene, that most *apolitical* of men who, in the words of Kaunda ". . . after all, was a middle-Eastern peasant",³⁴ can ever be termed as ". . . Lord and Saviour and teacher, the *Revolutionary Christ*"³⁵ (emphasis added), and his word taken as a guide for basically political activity. Eclectic the doctrine may claim to be, and syncretic its originator may be—but both remain basically modern Christians at heart.

Further, one can put forth the claim that the blindness to actuality, the utterly unempirical spirit of the doctrine (its manifestation in development plans and programmes inclusive) stems from the nature of the theoretical foundations. Not to question these foundations, to accept them uncritically as does Ranganathan, is unpardonable.

The outcome of this accepting, unquestioning and uncritical attitude towards the doctrine has been that the experiences of our peoples during the past two decades have been denied the possibility of informing Kaundaism and bringing it closer to our actuality. For, as even Ranganathan does recognise, Kaundaism is not just a theory, but one that from its inception has been inextricably linked to the practical life of the *Zambian State* and the lives of the *Zambian peoples*. For that reason, it should not be treated, as Ranganathan and others do, as something complete and inviolate, to which actuality should conform just because the doctrine claims that actuality does conform to it.

This late in the day, no analysis of Kaundaism can claim to be either honest or in any measure complete in the absence of an accounting of several actual experiences in the past two decades of the official existence of the *Zambian nation*, which actual experiences have a direct bearing on fundamental aspects of the doctrine of Kaundaism. What come immediately to mind are what Kaunda

has termed “. . . first economic programme of humanism,”³⁶ that is, the Economic Reforms that began in 1967. The *ideological* justification for these reforms, aimed at the nationalization of key elements in the economic sector and the indigenization of the positions of control in that sector, was couched in terms of the logic of the historical process according to Kaundaism. According to Kaunda, in “. . . the whole of human history we may see six important stages in Man’s development from the time of the *Great Creation* to the time when Man will reach the stage of perfection (i.e. the Humanist stage).”³⁷ The six stages are given, in order of succession, as: Creation of Man or Pre-historic age; Primitive society; Slavery; Feudalism; Capitalism, and; the transitional stage of State Capitalism, which eventually leads to the attainment of ‘Humanism through Socialism’.

It is the failing of most to mistake their intentions, pure inventions, for verities to come; and their intending and inventing for prediction. They ignore Hegel’s dictum: “The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.” Moreover, should the intention not be realized, as a genuine prediction would be, then the most divorce their theory, mere elaborated intentions explicitly stated, from actuality. The twain they treat as actualities existing side by side with equal ontological claims though they be separated by a chasm. That the ‘first economic programme of humanism’ turned out in fact to be the seed out of which grew a privileged indigenous economic and bureaucratic class, bourgeois as bourgeois can ever be; that, far from laying the foundations for future socialist practice, the economic reforms were utilized by interest groups and individuals to entrench capitalistic tendencies; these and other disparities between what actually has been the case and that which was intended to be the case have not yet come to the attention of the Kaundaist doctrine as such. Not surprising, since neither does Kaundaism (any longer) interrogate reality, nor is Kaundaism itself interrogated. In failing to critically question Kaundaism in the light of our actual experiences, the likes of Ranganathan perpetuate this split between the doctrine and actuality.

It is not our intention to discuss the other instances of the divorce between what was intended by the doctrine which is the official guiding ideology of the State, on the one hand, and Zambian actuality on the other. Rather, it is to point out that the prevailing intellectual attitude in this country as regards this doctrine needs to change radically if the breach between theory and practice is to be mended. To choose, as Ranganathan and others seem to have chosen, to straighten all the question-marks that should be hung around the neck of Kaundaism and turn them into exclamation marks denoting uncritical enamourment

with the doctrine; to choose to ignore the question of the Leadership Code; or the fiascos of the Cooperative Movement and Rural Reconstruction programmes; to choose to ignore these policies and programmes inspired by the doctrine, and rebuffed by actuality, when analysing Kaundaism is to choose to live in an atmosphere of accredited mendacity.

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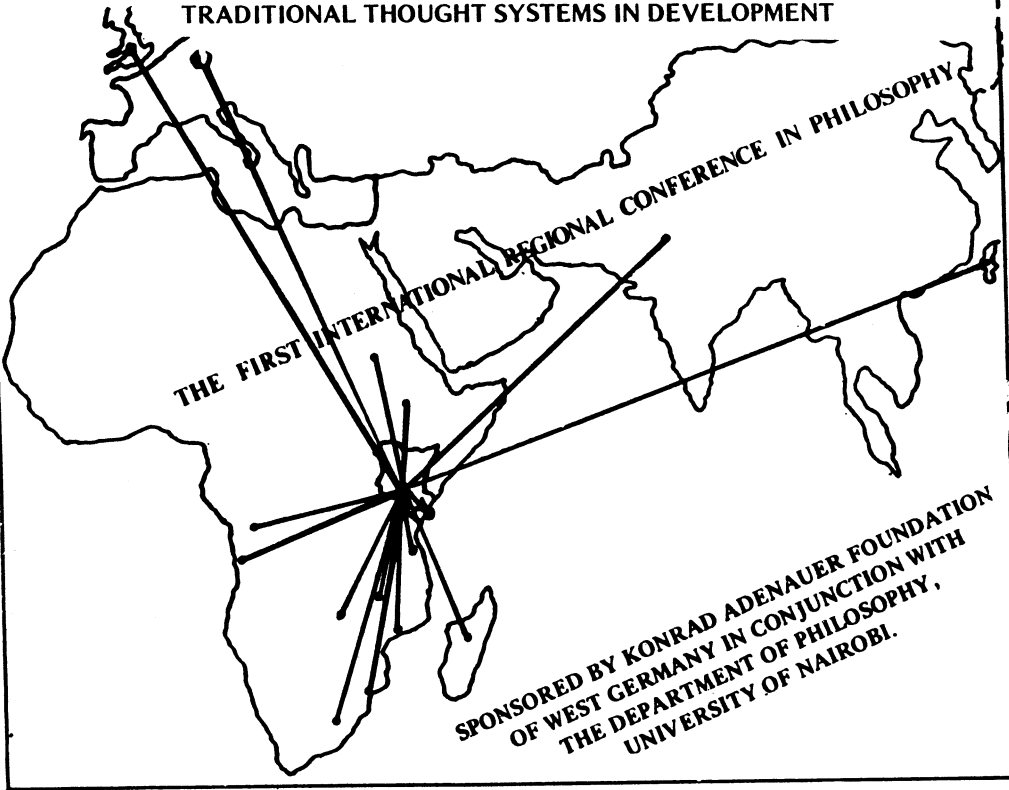
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