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ON THE QUESTION OF IDEOLOGY, LITERARY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETAL PROGRESS

By

E. KOLA OGUNDOWOLE

The global history of literature is a process of the enrichment of humanity with new literary values, which by truly reflecting their epoch, acquire unfading worldwide historical significance. The masterpieces of earlier periods have a powerful influence on the minds, feelings and will of new generations, evolving vital interests, poetic associations and emotions. In literature new works do not cancel and replace those that preceded them.

So the comparative significance of different historical epochs, for the literary development of humanity depends on the degree to which the social relations of these epoch disclose the human in the human being, on whether they promote (and if they do, to what degree) the human aspirations of literature, what part the populace play in the creation of literary culture, and to what extent its values belong to the populace. These factors are bound to affect the comparative aesthetic value of literary pattern in different epochs and within the framework of each epoch, the character of literature, its ideological, aesthetic essence, and its ability to understand the truth, and to know the essential needs of social development.

Every budding writer finds in the existing literary world a certain level of material and spiritual culture, a certain amount of intellectual "material" which he cannot afford to ignore, certain ideas that had been cumulated and are circulating about the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, certain literary tastes. Jean Antouanne Condorcet,¹ a French philosopher of the Enlightenment school in the eighteenth century, spoke of laws of artistic taste, without elaborating what they were. This was perhaps so because he did not fully understand what they were as much. Yet hardly would anyone deny the fact, that clearly expressed literary taste in society, the capability for emotional cognition and experience of the beautiful in nature and in society cannot fail to

influence the development and formation of art as a whole, and literature in particular. This is equally true when the writer breaks through the "barrier" of traditional forms of literary thinking and aesthetic perception than when he follows them, at least unconsciously. Thus, the audience for literature, the ability to respond aesthetically, the possession of literary taste are shaped by the whole life of society, all social conditions, and not only by literary creativity. In other words, the practice of writing, people's ideological and aesthetic development, although specific in their aims, character and forms, are always connected with all other forms of human practice, with all aspects of the life of society. Politics, philosophy and morality in literature cannot be regarded as something outside aesthetics, as some theoreticians who seek to divorce literature from political, moral and philosophical ideas would want to maintain. On the contrary, moral, political and philosophical ideas in literature acquire a specific, aesthetic significance to the extent that they are woven into the literary fabric of a work after passing through the crucible of the individual's aesthetic and literary consciousness, his emotional sphere. This means that literature is connected with life, with its social patterns not only directly but also through other forms of social consciousness, which incidentally, are bound to leave their imprint on all aesthetic values created by the populace and by gifted writers. In the course of historical development the links between literature and science, between morality and philosophy are perfected and deepened, thus enriching human intellectual world and practical activity.

This is not to suggest, of course, that literary works that reflect life have no room for fantasy and creative imagination. Great writing which truly reflects life does not, of course, reject fantasy and imagination. Such a work is never a mechanical reproduction of certain facts of life. It is always a generalisation of life's phenomena and is, therefore, not averse to intensifying the presentation, to using symbols and grotesque, if any of these things, help to achieve an authentic literary reproduction of reality. The form of the literary presentation may also be based on convention or fantasy, but one thing is indispensable under all circumstance; the basis of literary truth is knowledge of the truth of life in its essential connections and relationships.

Progress in literature is a process of gradual self - liberation from the impediments that distort the true picture of the objective social and historical relations. By liberating itself, literature is able to

reveal man's social and spiritual world more deeply and fully, thus reinforcing man's confidence in his creative powers.

Pierre Simon Ballanche once wrote that people discover themselves in their forebears and their progeny. They habitually judge the future and the past from the standpoint of their own time, by direct analogy with the past, thus elevating their own aesthetic ideas to the status of an absolute or eternal principle.

If ancient Greek literature of the Periclean period still retains its significance as an ideal, as an unattainable model, it is because this was where the adequately recorded face of the development of human community manifested itself in its most beautiful relatively harmonious forms, because ancient Greece experienced the fullest and most dynamic development of all social forms. There could be many reasons for this.

As history shows, the assessment of literature according to the categories of "progress" and "regress" becomes particularly important in the transitional periods of societal development, periods which mark a turn from one social arrangement to another. Such periods reveal the conflict between the new and the old. At such times the populace become more active in social and political life of the society thus the transformation embraces social consciousness, culture and literature. A new understanding of the world arises, the self-awareness of social groups increases and a new type of culture, including literature takes shape. A new system of aesthetic relationship replaces the old system and a fundamental reappraisal of values begins: new traditions linking present with past and future literary development come into being and new moral and aesthetic ideas formulated. It was such a turning point in French colonial relationships in Africa that bred such orientation in literature as the Negritude.

The weakness in human thought are subject to law of "negative conclusions". We do not know what may prove obsolete in the future, but we can be sure that there are some ideas which are ageless and certain borderlines that distinguish the thought of the serious but fallible writer from the sheer nonsense of the dilettante. It is possible that tomorrow these borderlines will be shifted one way or another, but this does not mean they do not exist. This only goes to show that these borderlines are approximate, drawn with a characteristically human lack of precision. There is need, therefore, for a fundamental guiding principle, a unifying ideology that helps shape and direct our cultural orientation and literary activity.

There is no need to be afraid that a common language grounded on a unifying ideology, will erode or stifle the originality of individual creative work as some conservatives would want us to believe. True talent, capacity for work, genuine individuality can stand out only on a general background, and such distinction is far more difficult than originality for originality's sake. When there is no common foundation, when the main thing is to scream louder than any one else, get into the limelight, make use of some kind of advertisement through the yellow journalists or self - advertisement, all the true distinctions between people, all the different degrees of talent are obliterated. And this marketplace equality in no way contradicts arbitrary command.

Life would be much easier if good and evil were not sometimes so persuasively similar that the human brain recoils in horror from the bottomless pit thus revealed. "Reason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form" - writes Marx.² But there is a choice.

To prevent us from making a wrong or fatal choice under the guise of bold innovation, our own critical efforts must be subjected to an objective thorough critical analysis. To do this effectively and fruitfully too there is need for a fundamental objective common criterion with which to judge.

There is difference between a self-styled innovation, which under the pretext of intolerance of all dogma drags us back to the old ghost ideas that have been abandoned or ought to have been abandoned for ever owing to prevailing intimidating stubborn facts of life as obsolete, and true originality in the development of ideas, which presupposes that a certain standard be maintained in the process of scientific criticism and literary evaluation.

The feverish "yearning for the new" should not inspire our contemporaries with a desire to go back to crawling on all fours as being preached by some centrality theorists.

A free exchange of opinions (which is by no means a pure abstraction) is necessary precisely in order to achieve the unity of thought that the very process of thinking presupposes. Freedom is a civil, state and even interstate right. As important as it is it should not be confused with pluralism of truth, that is, with a multiplicity of points of view all of which are to be regarded as true.

Some would say that any unity of world-outlook and therefore of ideology is "repressive". But is this always true, or is it really so?

Repression gets along very well with so-called pluralism and makes extensive use of anarchy of thought to smother any serious opposition to the prevalent social system.

Wright Mills contends that it is the very lack of coherent content that accounts for the absence of political, moral, and intellectual clarity which characterises contemporary western capitalist society.³

Wave after wave of sensationalism disorients the populace. What was unthinkable yesterday is drummed into their ears today as the latest trend, making mind incapable of taking any independent position, essentially distinguishable from the herdlike movements that support the established order. This method of literary control I call here "repressive tolerance". Repressive tolerance is a wonderful invention! It helps to evolve Herbert Marcuse's "one-dimensional man"⁴ far better and perhaps quicker than the most extreme dogmatism or any other form of taboo.

The basic meaning of pluralism is that there exist a large number of viewpoints, structures and mental patterns such as the so-called "Standard types". They are all as good as one another, all are right in their own way, and all are "not transparent" for each other. This banality of the century is reinforced by the huge accumulation of information about the history of culture, art, literature and philosophy, which in itself owing to the huge volume involved has a repressive effect on the average person's brain and pushes him towards relativism, loss of faith in the possibility of comparison or gradation amid such a chaos of ideological forms.

This kind of pluralism is what Nigeria and any other underdeveloped country under pressure for rapid uninhibited development can ill afford now, at the approach of twenty - first century.

Unanimity is better, of course. General unanimity for the whole human race is as much as ideal as absolute truth. But for Nigeria that needs the active participation of all segments of the society for the goal of effective rapid advancement, a unifying ideology is as necessary as development itself.

In the realm of repressive tolerance people quietly hate each other, while concealing the fact with polite phrases; and any serious striving for the truth is completely ruled out. Any nation at the bay of human societal development and thus in dire need of rapid advancement as dictated by historical circumstances of our time can hardly be guided without a proper acquisition of the objective true

knowledge of the conditions, tendencies and laws of the given historical epoch.

"Repressive tolerance" is a kind of forced unanimity, and the two often go together. The goal to strive for, however, is voluntary unanimity and making the universal nature of truth a bogey responsible for "repression" is barking up the wrong tree.

It is at times said that the cripple who knew the right road would reach his destination sooner than a rider mounted on a fiery steed galloping wherever fancy took him. It is a good saying but not so simple in practice. A cripple may take a very long time to reach his goal or he may never get there at all. While a rider on a fiery steed may get lost completely in the whirl wind.

The best thing then, is a rider on a good horse, who knows the way.

Thus, there is no need to blush over the issue of ideology on the claim that it restricts thought. If it does "restrict" thought in any way, it does so only as rhyme or measure restricts the poet. This is quite different from "repressive tolerance". Such restrictions lead to perfection, they are the foundation of all human culture, which expresses infinity of meaning in relatively perfect forms. Where there is no intelligent, voluntary self-control, permissiveness and stupidity dominate the scene. Anarchy of thought is the embodiment of stupidity.

The question then is not whether or not there should be an ideology, rather it is "what kind of ideology should Nigeria and our writers uphold?"

Life raises its own problems and even has its own tensions.

Given the socio-historical circumstances of the life endeavour of our people and contemporary world environment, *Self-reliance* seems to be the most appropriate philosophical world outlook to serve as the foundation for national development and societal progress.

Some may argue why self-reliance? Why not capitalism or socialism? Can there be any alternative to capitalism and socialism? What is self-reliance? While others may contend that the principle of self-reliance can fit properly into either of the two major ideological systems - capitalism and socialism. As such they may wish to conclude that self-reliance may be viewed, therefore, as a subordinate ideological form.

Our response would be that, capitalism is structurally dependent and naturally parasitic, it can never be a self-reliant system. It is utterly dependent. A fundamental reason why the advanced capitalist world deliberately encourages, promotes and complicates debt cycle in the underdeveloped world. The capitalist world shall always, in that context of being parasitic, be interested in the "underdevelopment"⁶ of the backward area, and in some cases consciously obstruct the backward area's development prospect in a bid to preserve the backward area as a shock-absorber for the neocolonialist world-wide economic vehicle. Since capitalism is intrinsically dependent, a new state within the underdeveloped area cannot make any meaningful development within that realm.

Like capitalism, socialism is the product of a definite period of human history designed to tackle problems that differ essentially from contemporary's.

Problems and issues of our times call for a new approach, new concept, new theory, new philosophy and a new ideology. Philosophy is historically determined and socially conditioned. The Lockean *Treatises on Government* which underlay the American Constitution and from which the 1979 Nigerian Constitution derived its principles were written for 18th century England and on the basis of social, political, economic and overall developmental needs of the society of that epoch.

The Lockean philosophy, like the whole of which it is a part, the *laissez faire* philosophy, cannot work under our present situation and historical condition because our epoch is qualitatively different from the 18th century historical environment:

- (a) the 18th century did not know a world divided along capitalist and socialist lines;
- (b) it did not witness a tripolarized world, either;
- (c) the impact of the external historical environment on the internal process of national development was not as significant and domineering as it is today;
- (d) today, the impact of the external world on the efforts of individual nation at development is so great that in some cases the external factor wholly determines the process of development to the extent that it promotes underdevelopment in place of progress-enhancing development, i.e. consciously promoted stagnancy has been made to take over the genuine meaning of progress.

This is very fundamental. It is the crucial departing point of any analysis or assessment of the position and possibility of the backward area of the world.

It is the comprehensive analysis of the totality of conditions, variety of problems and multiplicity of dimension the problems exhibit in the backward new society that led to the simple, yet an all-crucial conclusion that the road to prosperity of the underdeveloped new society lies in disengaging itself from all external hooks and nooks that tend to keep the backward society in a state of perpetual underdevelopment. Self-dependent development is effective when it is based on self-effort.

The principle of self-reliance is derivative of this conscious self-effort and the full awareness of the entire process involved, its possibilities, real and potential, and its limitations. The complete awareness of this full awareness has its expression in self-reliancism as a philosophical worldview.

Thus self-reliancism stems neither from any speculative postulate arbitrarily construed nor from a reasoned theoretical argument simply carried out in an armchair, but is the practical conclusion drawn from the lessons that history has taught and still teaches about the whole range of misfortunes suffered by nations dominated by foreign interests.⁷

The concept of self - reliance has now grown from a mere category into theory and from theory into philosophy, a comprehensive philosophical worldview, of nature, society and human thinking pattern.

Societal development is a manifold process. It implies the development of the individual person in the society, it implies also social change, the transformation of culture and literature, the entire society as a system. At the level of the individual person it means an increased skill and capacity, freedom, responsibility, self-discipline, creativity and material well-being. At the latter plane, since the attainment of these qualities by the individual person is intrinsically linked with the totality of the cultural heritage and the situation of the entire society, a meaningful self - reliancist development of the society implies necessarily an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and especially external relationships.

From such a standpoint it is not difficult to comprehend and in fact, it is sufficiently clear that until the structures of colonialism and neocolonialism are demolished, there can be no positive

development or progress in the underdeveloped area. There can be no progress-enhancing development in this area of the world without first breaking the neocolonial stranglehold. Failure to do this is a condition for the continued development of the Western and North American capitalist states, with the necessary implications of a continued underdevelopment and undevelopment of the backward areas of the world.

The self-reliancist philosopher must engage in theoretical and practical pursuit to destroy this stranglehold, its basis, its roots and its metamorphoses as it affects every aspect of the life of our populace, including literature and its development.

Under a conflicting and confusing world literary development, self-reliancism provides us with necessary relevant criterion by which to judge the value of possible actions and objectives and consequently affects direction of our choice of literary development. For an essential attribute of the philosophy, Self-reliancism, is conscious purposive activity. The conscious purposive activity envisaged here is not impelled by any simple event or state of affairs, to occur in the future. Rather it is the continuous endeavour to generate and maintain in the self-conscious writer's activities and thought patterns directed towards the attainment and satisfaction of the principle of self-reliance which are consistent and harmonious with a corresponding system of social and inter-state, international relations.

It is only the pursuit of a literary pattern chosen for the sake of attaining and sustaining a self-reliancist society that ranks in this context as conscious purposive and reasonable action. For in the course of organising our literary objectives and praxes in the manner described, it comes about that priorities are redirected, with varying success, but often wholly, from literary patterns which do not satisfy the principle to those that do, and only the latter become seen as, in proper sense, desirable. The importance and characteristic feature of such a philosophical orientation in evolving a literary pattern and indeed in the practice of writing is its high degree of variability in the maintenance of a constant and uniform literary direction.

In practical terms, the writer must be guided by the selfreliancist viewpoint. The watch-word always must be, "relevance" - relevance to the national cause of building a self - reliancist society. This

means that what is worthy of writing about is defined in terms of the selfreliancist national goal.

In order to remain relevant thorough and thorough to the national objective of selfreliancism, literary practice must strive to achieve, and once achieved, must adhere to and protect its independence from visible and invisible external forces and influences.

The inimical effect of foreign manipulative literature compels all of us to set to work at once organising the whole literary process in our environment on new lines. Literature must be attuned to the national cause of building a just, selfreliancist humane society.

In contradistinction to Western customs, to the profit - making, commercialised literature, to Western literary careerism and individualism, neocolonial anarchism and drive for profit for profit's sake, the emerging Movement for new literary order must put forward the principle of national self - reliance, must develop this principle and put it into practice as fully and completely as possible.

What is this principle of national self - reliance? It is not simply that, for the selfreliancist writer, literature cannot be a means of corruptly enriching individuals or groups; it cannot, infact, be an individual undertaking, independent of the common cause of national emancipation, recovery and societal progress. Literature must become part of the common cause of national self-reliance, "a cog and screw of one single great self-reliancist mechanism set in motion by the entire underdeveloped world. Literature must become a component of organised, planned and integrated selfreliancist national endeavour.

Certainly all comparisons are lame, according to a proverb. So is my comparison of literature with a cog, of the Movement with a mechanism. I am aware there can be some hysterical intellectuals who may raise a howl about such a comparison, which in their view degrades, deadens, politicises the free battle of ideas, freedom of literary effort, etc. Such outcries, in point of fact, would be nothing more than an expression of neocolonial intellectual individualism. There is no question that literature is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment of levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority. There is no question, either, that in this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual creative inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content - a point discussed earlier. All this is undeniable; but all this

simply shows that the literary side of the national self-reliant cause cannot be mechanically identified with its other sides. This however, does not in the least refute the proposition that literature must by all means and necessarily become an element of national self-reliant endeavour, inseparably bound up with the other elements. Literature must become the springboard of the various aspects of national emancipation and members of the literary profession in Nigeria must by all means become members of the world Movement for a New Information Order. Literature is an effective medium of information!

I am not suggesting of course, that this transformation of literary practice which has been defiled by the North American and Western European domination and control, can be accomplished all at once. I am far from advocating a kind of solution by means of a few decrees. Cut-and-dried schemes are least of all applicable here. What is needed is that the whole of our society, and the entire ideologically conscious writers throughout Nigeria in particular, and the underdeveloped world at large should become aware of this new problem, specify it clearly and everywhere set about solving it. Emerging from the captivity of colonial and neo-colonial forces, we have no desire to become, and shall not become prisoners of master-shopkeeper literary relations. We need to establish, and should establish a free literature, free not simply from the neocolonial subjugationist politicking, but also from multi-national capital, from careerism, and what is more, free from anarchistic individualism.

These two last words may sound paradoxical, or an affront to the audience. What! some intellectuals, "ardent champions" of liberty, may shout. What, they may ask, you want to impose collective control, the collective common weal on such a delicate, individual matter as literature? You deny the absolute freedom of absolutely individual ideological endeavour! they may conclude.

I must say to such individualists that their talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective freedom in a world based on the power of money, in a world in which the mass of people in the underdeveloped part of it live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites. Are the hired writers, the hired myth-makers, free in relation to their employers? Yet, are writers free in relation to certain kind of public, which may demand that they provide it with a kind of frame of mind? One cannot live in world and be free from world. The freedom of the

Western literary enterprise is simply masked (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the power of money.

And so, exponents of Self-reliancism, expose this hypocrisy and rip off the false labels is, not in order to arrive at a detached literature, but to contrast this hypocritically free literature which is in reality linked to the Western neocolonialism, with a really liberated one that will be openly linked to the selfreliancist cause of our people.

It will be liberated literature, because the idea of Selfreliancism and sympathy with the underdeveloped world, and not greed or careerism, will bring over new forces to its ranks. It will be a free, liberated literature because it will serve, not some satiated heroine, not the bored "upper ten thousand" suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and tens millions of people in the underdeveloped world of which the Nigerian is a prominent part, and in which Nigeria has a vital role to play.

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CAN LAW BE DIVORCED FROM MORALITY?

By

FRIDAY N. NDUBUISI

Philosophical questions and their relevance to our contemporary societal issues should attract the attention of all who are anxious to get to the roots of matters that are of crucial importance to the society. The answers to these questions determine the bearing of philosophical issues on social policy.

One of such questions is the issue of the relationship which exists between law and morality. The orientation of social policy towards moral questions in our society suggests a certain degree of misconception about the boundaries of law and morality. The general tendency has been to place these two concepts in two water-tight compartments.

Thus the purpose of this essay is to ascertain the extent of distinctiveness of these two concepts and consequently redirect our conceptions of the relationship that actually exists between them. When this is thoroughly examined, law or policy makers shall be in a position to proffer suitable definition of problems in this sphere and thus be able to see clearly in carrying out their assignment (promulgation of laws).

Concepts Clarification

Law may be seen as 'a social institution' instrumental for the resolution of diverse claims, interests and pursuits. From Plato's perspective, the function of a lawgiver is to lay down those things that are viewed as social maladies as well as those that are commendable and desirable. Law is concerned with the norms of human behaviour. It is both normative and prescriptive; Its interest is on how man ought to behave in the society. In essence, the central focus of law is to state modes of behaviour. That is to say that it is the duty of law to regulate people's conduct in the society. In essence we are guaranteed a stable and orderly society because of the existence of law. "Any law sets a standard according to which a being of some sort is moved to act or restrained from acting"¹

Morality on the other hand can be seen as a set of rules, feeling or a kind of behaviour. It entails compliance with the principles of

good, moral or virtuous conduct. It is expected that every rational being should have a sense of morality and as a result be able to make moral judgements from time to time. Morality can also be seen as man's attempt to harmonize conflicting interest.

It has become an intellectual debate as to what extent morality should come to bear on law. The issue at stake is whether it is possible to have laws that have no reference to morality. That is to say that there is a kind of situation where laws are just made without a consideration of their moral implications.

The legal positivists are the strongest advocates of laws that should have nothing to do with morality. Their reasoning is that laws could be explained without recourse to morality or Natural laws. Their idea of law is only laws as made by man—positive laws.

Legal positivism however is not a unified school of thought. All the members do not have the same ideas or conception of what law is all about. A fraction of them perceive law as command while the others see law as command that is backed by sanctions. Those that see laws as commands include Bentham and Austin. Holmes on the other hand sees law as command backed by sanctions. Kelsen and Hart conceive law in terms of norms prevalent in a system.

Seeing law as a command is what is normally called the imperative theory of law. Jeremy Bentham and John Austin share this view. Austin "uses the expression 'positive morality' to stand both for general commands of non-sovereign human beings, and also for those so-called rules which are supported by public opinion but are not commands of anyone."² In delimiting positive law, he draws the line between those general commands of individuals attributable to the sovereign and those which are not, in terms of commands being issued in pursuance of legal rights. "This appears to mean that general commands issued for a man's even benefit are not positive laws, whilst those issued in a fiduciary capacity are; for Austin indicates that the term 'positive law' encompasses the commands of a guardian, not those of a master"³

Positive laws, according to him, are made by authors of three kinds. By monarchs, or sovereign bodies as supreme political superiors: by subjects, as private persons in pursuance of legal rights.

The use to which legal positivism is applied most of the times is as a designation for a thesis concerning the nature of moral judgement including those made about the justice or injustice,

goodness or badness of human laws. There is a view among the legal positivists that law and legal judgement should be devoid of emotional feelings which they see as an attempt to bring in morality into law. It is in line with this reasoning that Kelsen maintains that "laws are not part of natural reality but norms by which reality may be measured"⁴

Some legal positivists argue that law and morality may often overlap or be related casually, but that there is no necessary connection between the two. They reason that "correct legal decisions are uniquely determined by pre-existing legal rules and that the courts either do or should reach their decisions solely by logical deduction from a conjunction of a statement of the relevant legal rules and a statement of the case."⁵ Which is to say that law is law as made by the legislature. In its interpretation the only things to be considered are the facts of the case not a recourse to morality or moral principles. Bentham stated that " pleasure and the evidence of pains, are the ends which the legislator has in view: It behoves him therefore to understand their value"⁶

He and Austin, conceded that moral judgements could be rationally established by the application of the test of utility, which, according to Austin, was also an index of God's commands. The utilitarian principle is that what matters ultimately in the determination of moral right and wrong is the good and evil promoted. Bentham and John Stuart Mill see good as the same as happiness and pleasure. In essence an action is only good when it is able to promote pleasure and happiness. In the same way, if the impact of laws in a given society is to be evaluated it should be placed under the torch light of its capability to promote pleasure and happiness. Bentham believes that "pain is in itself an evil and indeed without exception the only evil"⁷

He and Austin see law as nothing but command of political superiors of the state sovereign. They see no connections between laws and nature. It is "not some set of propositions derivable by reasoning from the nature of things as the natural lawyers' would argue."⁸ Law is instead a command as given by a political sovereign of a given state. This theory was originated by Jeremy Bentham. From his early development he was anti-tradition. He blamed the theory of natural law for all the confusion, in law. He harped on the need to define law in terms of facts, the political facts of power, human behaviour, rewards and punishments. He believes that the fulfilment of this will enhance the evolvement of a scientific theory of legislation based on the principle of utility. Bentham believes

that all laws could be analytically - reduced to a logic of the will where every action of man could be seen either as commanded or prohibited or not command or not prohibited by law. In a situation where an act was command or prohibited, we see a matter of legal duty. Where there is no such thing, it is impossible to talk of legal duty. He sees duty as the lowest common denominator of all laws. Other legal concepts like right, power and property were to be translated into their relationship to duties. "Having decided, on the basis of utility what acts ought to be made the subject of duties, and what incentive to compliance (whether punishment or reward) was desirable, scientific codes could be worked out."⁹

Bentham emphasises that "The business of government is to promote the happiness of the society by punishing and rewarding".¹⁰ The legislator require to know only the special circumstances and habits and he can then control behaviour by allocating pains and penalties to produce the most desirable results".¹¹ Bentham recognised some limits on methods that could be placed on law. They are psychological and ethical, which fix on one hand what the law can do and on the other hand "what it can wisely try to do."¹² He does not see any kind of legal limits in the nature of the case. The massive limitations imposed by long, established custom or long accepted institutions were construed by Bentham as psychological for he sees custom and institutions as merely habits. Just like all habits they embrace many threats to an intelligent adjustment of means to ends; "they are the source of the technicalities and fictions which the greatest happiness principle was designed to obviate."¹³ The relegation of custom and its complete subordination to legislation constitute the principal characteristics of Bentham's Jurisprudence. He was convinced that all laws could be analytically reduced to a simple logic where every human act could be viewed either as commanded or prohibited. Beyond being commanded or prohibited law ceases to exist.

Bentham reasons that it is the importation of features alien to law that makes it complex for comprehension. He believed that "law could only be properly understood if it was treated as an autonomous field of study from all issues of morals, religion and the like."¹⁴ He fails to see the essence of Natural law. Besides its mythical nature, it fails to differentiate between law and morality. To him Natural law has all the semblances of morality. Since morality is not synonymous with law and has nothing to do with it, Bentham sees no useful role Natural law plays in legal matters. "Whether a rule was law within a given state was a purely juristic

question to be decided by these criteria which the particular legal system accepted. This was a completely different question from that which might be raised by those who were considering whether the law as established was good or bad.¹⁵

Bentham reasons that what the law is and what it ought to be are issues that belong to different disciplines. As a result the decision as to whether a legal rule is tenable or not, good or bad, just or unjust is immaterial.

Bentham posited that Blackstone's account of English law is at best expository - it describes the law as it is - or at worst it is an apology for the *status quo* disguised as an exposition. "The true function of jurisprudence is 'censorial' - the criticism of the legal system with a view to its improvement. For such criticism a standard of value is required and that can be supplied by the principle of utility."¹⁶ Bentham posited that the standard for the measurement of good is the greatest happiness of the greatest number.¹⁷ It is through this that we are able to evaluate right and wrong. He based the whole essence of government on human needs not on contract. The satisfaction of human needs is the sole justification of government.

Legal Power, stated Bentham "cannot be legally limited, and some where in every political society authority must head up in some person whom others are accustomed to obey".¹⁸ He argues that this holds true of free as well as despotic governments. The only effective ways to weigh the effect of the laws of a state is to see the amount of pains or pleasure caused to the citizenry of such a given state by the laws in question.

The sovereign in Bentham and Austin's reasoning is not created by divine or natural right. A sovereign position is rather identifiable by the fact that he was obeyed and his commands constitute those facts which are regarded by people as laws.

The legal positivists do not see the place of customary laws in the legal system. Customary law can only stand as law if it had been adopted as the content of a wish of some state organ. Austin uses positive morality to describe those laws that did not come from the sovereign. Also excluded as laws by Austin are rules which enjoy public opinion but do not fall under the command of anyone. In Austin's view "positive laws, or laws strictly so called are established directly or immediately by authors of three kinds, by Monarchs, or sovereign bodies, as supreme political superiors; by men in state of subjects, as subordinate political superiors; by subjects, as private

persons in pursuance of legal rights. But every positive law or every law strictly so-called, is a direct or circumscribed command of a monarch or sovereign member --- to a person or persons in a state of subjection to its author".¹⁹

Austin's basic argument is that only general command of the sovereign and his subordinates are enforceable in the courts and written about in law books. Austin does not see customary, constitutional law as well as international law as parts of jurisprudential inquiry. The reason for such rejection is that they are not command. Positive law according to Austin must have the following features: wish, sanction, expression of wish and generality. Bentham and Austin insisted that "laws even if morally outrageous were laws".²⁰ Another important factor about positive law is the need to identify it with political superiors who entertain and express the wish and purpose to inflict the punishment.

Commands are laws when two conditions are fulfilled. Firstly they must be commanded (as Austin and Bentham claimed) by what exists in every political society whatever its constitutional form, namely, a person or a group of persons, who are in receipt of habitual obedience to others. These persons are its sovereign. Thus law is the command of the uncommanded commanders of society - the creation of the legally untrammelled will of the sovereign who is by definition outside the law".²¹

According to Hart it might seem that the inadequacy of the above definition centres on the omission of some essential connection with morality. "The situation which the simple trilogy of command, sanction and sovereign avails to describe, if you take these notions at all precisely, is like that of a gun man saying to his victim, give me your money or your life".²² The only perceptible difference here is that in the case of the legal system the number of people involved are large and they are used to habitual obedience to the commander. Hart went further to say that "Law surely is not the gun man situation writ large, and legal order is surely not to be thus simply identified with compulsions".²³

The sovereign whose command becomes laws has no legal limitation and his power is indivisible. The sovereign is he "who received habitual obedience within a political society - a society whose number are not extremely small - and who renders habitual obedience to no one else".²⁴ The laws as promulgated by a proceeding sovereign become valid only if a present sovereign gives his sanction to them. The conception of laws by Austin and

Bentham is like that of Hobbes who also sees laws as the command of the sovereign.

Austin rejects the view of Blackstone that any law that conflicts with morality should be thrown away. Austin's stance is that the validity of laws has nothing to do with morality.

Evaluation

From the on going arguments we can see the desperate arguments by Austin, Bentham, Hart and in fact the legal positivists to separate laws from morality. But to what extent they have succeeded is still in doubt. It is doubtful if their arguments can stop the human mind from asking what laws ought to be.

If we are to accept law as a command it then becomes difficult to separate the command of a sovereign from that of a gun man who also gives command to his victim. The only difference is that in the case of the sovereign he commands a large number of people who habitually obey him.

The command theory also imposes legal duty on people only when laws are backed by sanctions. What leads to their insistence on sanction as what make people subservient to laws is the fact that they tried to separate law from the people that are supposed to obey. If laws are meant for the interest of the people that are supposed to obey them, there is no reason why they should only be obeyed when they are backed by sanctions. In fact to accept laws as the wish of the sovereign reduces the status of laws to a ridiculous level. It shows that law itself has no foundation other than the wishes of a sovereign which are at times arbitrary.

Holmes also agrees with the view that it is only sanction that makes law what it is. It is for this reason that he sees prediction as one of the features of laws. He sees nothing else that gives validity to laws other than sanction. The much one can say here is that his conception of law in this light makes law to have features of irrationality. It shows law as baseless, and as such it ceases to be valid once one item (sanction) is removed from it. If sanction is the only factor that makes people to obey laws then laws must be doing something else other than serving the people that are meant to obey them.

Kelsen and other legal positivists reason that statements of laws are different from those of moral or political value. He as a result posits that laws should not be defined in terms of morals, politics or

sociology. Kelsen does not see the reason why value judgements should be smuggled into the laws.

Kelsen argues that law has two universal features - that it is coercive and at the same time a system of norms. However the validity of a legal norm lies on its being part of a legal system.

R.M. Dworkin was very critical of Hart's and Kelsen's view of law as a system of rules. There is more to law than a system of rule. It becomes difficult to make a distinction between what law is and what it ought to be. He reasons that once one accepts that there are other standard besides rules in laws it will be impossible to differentiate laws from morality. And this is exactly the case in law: "for the non-rule standards which judges employ in order to determine 'what the law is' in hard cases include principles embedded in the community's morality"²⁵ This cannot be discovered by the Judges without reference to any moral test. It is the duty of a judge to decide whether a principle is part of community's morality, and once this is done, he has already gone beyond simple legal rules.

Dworkin made a distinction between principles and policies. Principles describe rights, and policies goals. It will be wrong to equate right with goals. And judicial decisions in civil cases should be based on principles not policy. And to determine what the legal right of people is all about one has to make reference to the overall political theory which includes the issue of morality.

L.L. Fuller was critical of Hart for neglecting the moral inputs in legal system. He also sees Austin's definition of law as short-sighted and in fact a complete failure as far as what it intended to achieve was concerned. He argues that "Austin's definition of law --- violates the reality it purports to describe."²⁶ Fuller was critical of Hart's reasoning that evil aims may have as much coherence and inner logic as good ones. He believes that "when men are compelled to explain and justify their decisions, the effect will generally be to pull those decisions toward goodness by whatever standards of ultimate goodness there are"²⁷

Fuller sees law as the safest refuge for man, for there is no regime no matter how cruel that will not hesitate about writing intolerance, injustice and inhumanities into law.

Hart's talk of fundamental rules on which law is to be based is seen by Fuller as implying a close affinity of law and morality.

This is so because there are no other fundamental rules to talk about that are not those of morality. Law may be seen to represent

order simpliciter. "God's order is law that corresponds to the demands of justice, or morality, or men's notions of what ought to be".²⁸ It is impossible and in fact irrational to base law on law according to Fuller. Moral attitude should be the authority that supports the making of law.

Going by the Natural Law doctrine it is difficult for us to see how positive law (community laws) could be divorced from morality. The natural law which is universal and immutable is superior to positive law. It is the watchdog, the standard with which laws are judged. It is only the force of morality that will determine to what extent the people should be bound by laws. In the view of Cicero "True law is right reason in agreement with Nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its command, and averts from wrong doing by its prohibitions. And it does not lay its command or prohibitions upon good men in vain, though neither have any effect on the wicked"²⁹

The sophists on their part see Natural law as ideal law, state laws should not conflict with this. The concept of justice which law is meant to serve is based simply on the doctrine of ethics and Natural Law.

We can see that it is impossible to separate laws from morality. Even the legal positivists themselves could not do this. Kelsen's talks of grand norm from which the legal system should derive its validity is nothing other than allying law with morality. Even Holmes accepts that law derives some of its aspect from morality. It is in fact regrettable that Austin saw law as the command of the sovereign. This is a way of placing men above the law.

Law cannot be divorced from morality. Even judges in the interpretation of law cases will have to make reference to the community's morality. And how can law become the refuge of man if it is divorced from morality. If the essence of law is to serve a community of people, one cannot see how it will not have close affinity with that community's morals. It is only on the basis of morality that we can talk of good and bad laws. In essence law must have a basis, and that basis is nothing other than morality.

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PROLEGOMENA TO SPECULATIVE THEISM

By

OKEY I.C. IKECHUKWU

This essay seeks to show that the orientation of the metaphysical tradition of Western Europe needs to be revised before its theological speculations and claims can be taken seriously. The OBJECT of metaphysical inquiry has an ubiquitous ontological status and is to that extent dubious, if not epistemologically unintelligible. This OBJECT was smuggled into Christian theology by the church philosophers and the confusions and equivocations associated with it were inherited by popular theology. Thus, the idea of an Almighty Creator of all things, in so far as this is at all "speculatively" apprehendable, must be preceded by an elimination of the *unrecognized* obstacles which have obscured the route to this goal.

We therefore begin by looking at the nature of metaphysics and *what* it deals with. Next we examine the claim that "being" is simply the act-of-existing of things, before looking at the contribution of Aquinas and the scholastic tradition. We finally consider the "disconcerting" demand Heidegger makes of Western metaphysics and its implication for Christian theology. Let us proceed.

Metaphysics and its Object

The term or title "metaphysics" does not appear in those Aristotelian texts that have come down to us under the summary title of *Metaphysics*. It was Andronicus of Rhodes (first half of the first century B.C.), the grammarian or librarian who, when ordering, arranging, shelving or listing, the various Aristotelian writings, came upon a "collection" of tracts or treatises which he was unable to identify or name by a collective title, out of embarrassment, and lacking any lead, mechanically listed or shelved this collection after the *Physics* or the books on physics - hence the designation Meta, "after". At a later date this "accidental" title changed in meaning to that science which is "beyond" "or at the basis" of all sciences.¹

This so called science of science, to be distinguished in scope, method and subject-matter from such departmental sciences as

mathematics and the study of nature, Aristotle calls "first philosophy". But the claims of first philosophy seem to conflict rather sharply with his normal conception of science, especially in the *Organon*. Most surprising, the *Organon* rejects any 'universal science' professing to deal with reality as a whole - which claim is implied in First Philosophy. But in the *Metaphysics* he asserts that First Philosophy is concerned with the principle (*archai*) and explanation (*aitiai*) of everything, in so far as everything is a being.

In Book IV of the *Metaphysics* (which the Arabian philosopher, Avicenna, said he had read forty times without understanding)², Aristotle says that metaphysics (first philosophy) deals with "being itself in its essential attributes as being"; that it deals with what is in so far as it is. Metaphysics does not deal with this being or with that being but with "being *qua* being". Thus although the special sciences deal with being, it does not follow that they are part of metaphysics. This is because the special intelligible aspects of things studied by the special sciences are not parts of "being" in the sense in which Being is the subject of metaphysics. Metaphysics does not isolate any sphere of being in order to study it in all its particularities.

Clarifying the nature of metaphysics, Descartes, in the French translation of his *Principles of Philosophy* maintains that all of knowledge is like a tree; Metaphysics is the root, physics is the trunk and the branches are the special sciences.³ Thus the special sciences are sciences *per secundum quid* in relation to metaphysics and philosophy; because while the special sciences view reality only in terms of its relation to and significance for man (*sub specie humanitatis*), metaphysics looks at reality from the ultimate aspect or from the aspect of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*), concerning Being-It-Self.

But what, one may ask is this Being that metaphysics is talking about? What do we mean by the concept and how is it defined? It is a simple matter to define a material object in terms of its genus and specific difference (*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*); but what about Being?

Hegel, obviously aware of the perplexity this concept held for the ancients, says (in the introductory sections of the *Science of Logic*; in the first stages of the dialectic in the *Logic* and in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) that pure Being is the beginning of science. But he quickly admits that empty Being and Nothing are mutually reducible. Pure Being is "pure Nothing

(*Nichts*)" is "complete emptiness, absence of determination and content". "Therefore pure Being and pure Nothing are the same".⁴ The indeterminate may indifferently be called Being or Nothing. Hence the beginning of science for Hegel is - in an awkward but accurate sense - *Being/Nothing*, or, even *Being = Nothing*.

In an attempt to pin down *what* metaphysics is talking about, Vaske, after examining the West European philosophical heritage came to the conclusion that the word "being" can be understood in three distinct senses: the strict and proper sense (a stone, a Man, etc), the wider sense (whatever was in the past - the first car on earth - or may be in the future - a car with one tyre) and the widest sense (that the conception of whose existence is not a contradiction in terms). But Vaske, probably without intending it, showed a preference for "being" understood in the strict and proper sense and maintains that "we may describe being (ens) as that which is".⁵

Apparently supporting Vaske, Jaspers, in Vol. I of his *Philosophy* says:

*If we ask what being is, we have many answers to choose from: empirical reality in space and time; ideas that apply to reality, cogent constructions of ideal objects as in Mathematics - in a word objective - givenness*⁶

But, going beyond Vaske, Jaspers points out that this understanding of "being" leads us on the road to a serious error. For while we may talk of a being or beings, we can only talk of being *qua* being at the risk of being unintelligible. Jaspers therefore observes that to think of "being" without reference to beings (things, entities) is an attempt to make "a" being what is not a being. The conclusion therefore is that all the supposed insights into objective being are in error as soon they take anything in the world as Being itself.

We thus come face-to-face with the predicament of Western metaphysics: the fact that being is the most universal and yet the emptiest of concepts. Observing this, Heidegger says, "as soon as the word "Being" strikes our ear we assert that we cannot imagine what falls under the term".⁷

Of course it can be objected that there are abstract nouns and that Being could be one such noun, but this will only create for us the additional problem of finding out whether abstract nouns denoted abstract entities and in what sense, if any, abstract entities

existed. If we recall that Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* maintains "... Being is obviously not a real (substantial) predicate; that is, it is not the concept of something that is added to the concept of a thing"⁸, we cannot help suspecting that the question of Being has, as it were, been laid to rest.

If we ask (1) whether Being is any of the things given to us in empirical experience; (2) whether Being refers to our subjective characterization of all existents and (3) whether there is Being in itself irrespective of the objective and the subjective, metaphysics-in search of intrinsic Being-will insist that Being-in-itself is the basis of the objective and the subjective. Thus rather than concede that Kant had knocked the bottom off the metaphysical bucket containing Being, metaphysics conceives being over and above entities as the act of existing.

Being as Act-of-existing

Everything we come across in the world *is* a being. A bottle *is*. The same can be said of a table, a spoon, a man, etc. Each of these things *is* a being, yet each individual being is not the same as another and is not Being itself. A spoon is such that the word "Banana" will not apply to it. This is because they are *essentially* different. For the question of "what" a thing is, is not the same as the question of "whether" a thing is. The *what* refers to the essence or quiddity of the thing, while the question *whether* has to do with its existence or the fact that it is.

Thomist metaphysics⁹ - perpetuating the Aristotelian tradition - holds that the intellect necessarily attributes being to everything it apprehends. For this metaphysics, and indeed ancient western ontology, the word "being" (*ens*) derives from the very act of existing whereas the word "Thing" (*res*) derives from the essence or quiddity. It therefore becomes clear from the foregoing that the act or fact of existing is that by which substance is called a being. In fact a being for the West European philosophical tradition is the manifest (that which stands over against consciousness), the encounterable, the actual-which is a limited embodiment of the act of existing, or Being itself.

Thus by the word "Being" (as distinct from *a* being) Metaphysics does not intend anything you can pick up and insert into your pocket. It goes beyond the being (existence) of entities to point to *the act of existing* of things. But because this act of existing manifests differently in different existents, **no two things can be**

said to be in the same sense, and particularly in the same respect (*Sub Oedem respectum*). In his theory of the analogicity of being Thomas Aquinas explains that the word "being", when referring to two different things simultaneously is used analogically and not univocally or equivocally. By this thesis, it was easy for him to assert that nothing is predicated *quidditatively* of both Creator and Creature when both are said to be.

If the word "entity" stands for anything you can point to and say "this", then the word "Being" does not refer to an entity. "Being" is absolutely indeterminate, but Thomist metaphysics holds that it is exhaustively determined in things, and is, therefore, a determining agency. But since metaphysics concedes that no objectifiable existent can have the word "Being" applied to it (in the sense in which we have something to which the word "shoe" applies), it seems, after all, not to deal with absolute Being but with *the different realizations of the act of existing* - which are things.

"Being" as it has come down to us from Aristotle, through the scholastics to Descartes, has turned out on closer scrutiny to be only the act of existing of things. And as every entity has its own act of existing - and this is what metaphysics deals with - one cannot escape the conclusion that metaphysics is concerned with entities. For, besides *what* a thing is and *that* a thing is what else does metaphysics tell us about "being"? Nothing! The word is devoid of cognitive content, has no referent and is, therefore, epistemologically empty and unintelligible.

On discovering that metaphysics does not go beyond the essence and existence of entities to show us "Being" *as such*, and in its essential attributes as Being, Heidegger not only declared that being had fallen into oblivion but asked "what is it that remains as 'is' if we remove the what (what a thing is) and the that (the fact that a thing is)"¹⁰. And this question will continue to stare the Western metaphysical tradition in the face with the inexorability of an enigma for as long it cannot say in what sense Being in the primordial sense of the word is to be understood. By dealing with the *essentia* and *existentia* of entities metaphysics gives anything but knowledge or information about Being as such. It only reveals that what is to be understood by "Being" has never been properly articulated and it stands testimony to man's ignorance about being - the *oblivion* of being.

Aquinas and the Scholastic Tradition

Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle in defining metaphysics as "the science of being". By this he does not seem to mean that there is something called "being" apart from individual beings or things. He means instead, that metaphysics is concerned with the analysis of what exists, or can exist, considered as such. For when we consider that "being" can be understood in the verbal sense of "to be" or "to exist" (*esse*) it becomes clear that to say that metaphysics is concerned with being is to say that it is concerned with existence, and existence here means the concrete act of existing. Looked at under this aspect, metaphysics is concerned, above all, for Thomas, with accounting for or explaining the existence of things which change and which come into being and pass away. This is why Thomist metaphysics rests fundamentally on the idea of a supreme and omnipotent creator of all things.

It should not be understood from the foregoing that Thomas is speaking of a being who brought the world into being and left it to exist independently. Every finite thing, according to him, depends existentially upon the Creator at every moment of its existence, and if the divine conserving or sustaining activity were withdrawn the world would at once cease to exist. Thus notwithstanding the fact that Thomist metaphysics speaks of the nature of reality, etc, it is, in fact, primarily directed towards the knowledge of Him who is the source of all things. And since He lies outside our natural experience we can, according to Thomas, know Him in so far as we can understand the relation of the objects of experience to the ground of their existence. And by thus asserting that metaphysics centres around the analysis of the existential dependence of finite existents upon the ground of their being, Thomas goes beyond Aristotle.

Aristotle did not see that there was any problem here because he concentrated attention on what a thing is, on the ways in which something is or can be, and not on the act of existing itself. Thomas, on the other hand (while retaining the Aristotelian distinctions between substance and accident, form and matter, potency and act), placed the emphasis, in his metaphysics, not on essence, on *what* a thing is, but on existence-considered as the act of existing. Thus while Aristotle gave us an eternal and uncreated world of finite substances or things, Thomas introduced a world which (like Aristotle's) consisted of finite substances, but which (unlike Aristotle's) is totally dependent upon the creator

existentially. Aristotle's "God" is mover and not creator while Thomas' "God" is both the unmoved mover and creator. But let us take a close and sober look at the metaphysical tradition that gave birth to the "God" of theology; and why Heidegger thinks that it needs urgent attention.

Heidegger's Disconcerting Demand

The conceptions of Being as the totally of what is (reality) and what ultimately is (the Being of theological speculation) shows a lack of clarity concerning what is to be understood by Being. While agreeing with Descartes that philosophy is like a tree (metaphysics is the root, physics the trunk and the special sciences the branches), Heidegger created pandemonium by asking into what soil the root of philosophy (metaphysics) is buried. For him the supreme philosophical task is to find out from where metaphysics-being a root-draws the nourishment with which it feeds the trunk and the branches. This 'ground' which is presupposed by Western metaphysics without anybody being aware of it, or knowing anything about it, is *Being*.

Metaphysics is, therefore, not the ultimate science, but is resting on something which is yet to be clarified - something which western philosophy has hitherto taken for granted without understanding what it is. This is an intellectual subterfuge which must be stopped on its tracks, because man must first have a fundamental ontology. (*Fundamental ontologie*) before talking of metaphysics. Thus we must "overcome" (recognise the limits of) metaphysics and thereby "destroy" (reconstruct by ejecting the unclarified concepts and inquiry standpoint of) ancient Western ontology. History demands that this metaphysics which has actually become an impediment to serious inquiry be removed. For "due to the manner in which it speaks of being, metaphysics, almost seems to be, without knowing it, the barrier keeping man from the original involvement of being in human nature"¹¹.

The fact that metaphysics has so far busied itself with potency and act, essence and existence and act of existing - all of which inhere in entities - it has confine itself to "regional" rather than "fundamental" ontology. We find ourselves saddled with this problem because, according to Heidegger,

Occidental-European thought is guided by the question "what is the existent?.... The two fold questionf asks on the one hand what (in

*general) is the existent? The question asks on the other hand what (which one) is the (absolute) existent?*¹²

The search for Being therefore requires that we first overcome the pretensions of metaphysics. But we must note that "overcoming does not mean thrusting aside from the field of philosophical education". On the contrary, "... metaphysics overcome in this way returns transformed".¹³ Thus "overcoming metaphysics is worthy of thought only when we think of incorporation".¹⁴ Metaphysics, by not recognizing anything underlying it, makes a quest for being impossible in principle and must be given a new orientation. Just as one must remove the doors, windows, etc of a house which stands on precarious and rather dubious foundations (and thus "destroy" the house) in order to re-install these things after constructing a more reliable foundation, Heidegger recommends that we dismantle the categories, and the ambiguous and ubiquitous concepts of ancient ontology which have long since become rigid and stale. The "destruction" of ancient ontology will therefore mean the beginning of a genuine fundamental ontology because:

*this hardened tradition must be loosened up and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved... by taking the question of Being as our clue we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being ... we must... stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition and this means keeping it within its limits.*¹⁵

Implications For Theology

Knowing the extent to which Christian theology (as distinct from the teachings of Christ Himself) was influenced by Greek Philosophy and how the purely logical and mental categories of Greek Philosophy came to be baptized with divine significations in Christianity of the theologians, theology is implicated in a criticism of Western metaphysics. Heidegger not only linked the "spiritual decline" of the earth with man's neglect of "Being" but says that it was the twofold meaning of being (as the totality of what is and as what ultimately is, respectively) that "provided the possibility for Christian theology to take possession of Greek philosophy".

He **therefore** calls out to theologians to keep in mind **what** is written in St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:20) that God has let the wisdom of this world become foolishness. Continuing, Heidegger not only points out that the wisdom of this world is that which according to I Cor. 22 the Greeks seek, but asserts that "Aristotle even calls philosophy what is sought". The question therefore is "Will Christian theology make up its mind one day to take seriously the words of the apostle and thus the conception of philosophy as foolishness?".¹⁶

Heidegger's scanty mention of God can be traced to his criticism of ancient ontology, Heidegger is, in fact, "literally rendered speechless before the task of treating Him... as the superlative of those things that are".¹⁷ In his view (1) classical metaphysics leads inherently to nihilism; (2) to develop a "Christian philosophy" is impossible in principle; (3) attempts to enrich theology with elements taken from philosophy is an exercise in futility; and (4) attempts of the past, from St. Augustine to Barth, to integrate or merge metaphysical speculation with theology has led away from the genuine christianness of Christianity.¹⁸

Thus if the ancient ontology is "destroyed" much that has hitherto stood as philosophy - and part of theology - will **come to** the end of its reign. We must, however, pay careful attention to the fact that the "end" of philosophy does not mean the abolition of philosophical speculation or - as it affects theology - atheism.

"The end of philosophy" according to Stambaugh:

*does not mean for Heidegger that philosophy as such has become a thing of the past, a pursuit which has outlived its meaningfulness for human nature. Nor does Heidegger mean that philosophy in its essential nature has fulfilled its telos, ... Rather he means that philosophy as metaphysics has come to a completion which now offers the possibility of a more original way of thinking.*¹⁹

Conclusion

Just as metaphysics does not deal with Being in its primordial **sense**, and this metaphysics is the bedrock of Thomas' Metaphysics and the greater part of the medieval theological-philosophical speculation, it follows that whatever is erected on this foundation ought to be regarded with suspicion. Thomist Metaphysics, while

pretending to lead to a knowledge of the creator, ends up with an exegesis of certain attributes of the objects of experience and thus fails in its ownmost aim.

Noting the incomprehensible claims of metaphysics, Heidegger found himself obliged to say that "Being cannot *be*. Were it to be it would no longer remain being but would become an existent being".²⁰ In the same manner, but applied to theology, the creator cannot be said to be the object of theological speculation without being degraded conceptually or blurred completely. Thus, as a necessary preamble to a coherent conceptualization of the Creator of all things within the West European philosophical tradition, a massive revision of assumptions and a resolution of the manifold meanings of "being" needs to be carried out *first*.

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KANT'S UNIVERSAL LAW OF NATURE: A TELEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

By
F. A. ADEIGBO

A fundamental notion in Kant's philosophy is the belief that everything in nature work in accordance with rules. In the moral sphere, only rational beings have the power to act in accordance with principles or the idea of law. One such principle is the Categorical Imperative or the supreme principle of morality. Kant defines an imperative as the formula of a command. Kant offers no less than three formulations of the Categorical Imperative even though H.J. Paton thinks there are five formulations:

- (1) Formulation I or the Formula of the Universal Law - Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.
- (2) Formula Ia or the Formula of the Law of Nature - Act as if the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature.
- (3) Formula II or the Formula of the End-in-itself-So act as to use humanity both in your own person and in the person of every other always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means.¹
- (4) Formula III or the Formula of Autonomy - So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making a universal law through its maxim.
- (5) Formula III or the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends - So act as if you were through your maxim a law - making member in a Universal Kingdom of ends¹

In this paper, I wish to study the Categorical Imperative as Formula Ia or as the formula of the law of nature. My aim in the study will be to show that a Causal law interpretation of Formula Ia cannot yield the kind of Contradictions that Kant had in mind when he introduced the maxims of the suicide and the false promisor and to suggest an alternative teleological interpretation, which would yield the desired contradictions. Now, the maxims on

which the suicide and the false promisor seek to act may be stated respectively as follows.

- (i) From Self - love always to shorten my life when its continuance is likely to bring more evil than it promises satisfaction, and
- (ii) when I see myself in need of money always to borrow money with promises to repay it even though I know I never can do so.²

But first let us try to understand Kant's use of "Nature" or "the law of Nature" in his formulation of the Categorical Imperative.

(I)

There are presently different conceptions of the term "Nature". There is a conception of "Nature" as the palpable presence of God. This conception which abounds in the Bible uses various anthropomorphisms (e.g. 'The Lord is my Rock', 'The mountains are the hands of God') to underscore the unanimous character of nature. Here, a view of law as an expression of nature renders man powerless and impotent. Parallel to this conception is the view that man behaves in accordance with "natural norms", which simply exist in the same way that the hills and mountains happen "to be just there". However, for Kant, "nature" is the existence of things in so far as they are determined according to universal laws.³ The term "nature" assumes a dual meaning in his philosophy, namely, that of a determinate conformity to the law which explains the existence of things generally (e.g. 'Every event has a cause') and that of a movement to realise a system of purposes. "Nature", then, is much more than a universal application of the law of cause and effect; it touches the realm of order and harmony. Whereas the first meaning relates to mechanical causality, the second meaning relates to teleological (or purposive) causality. And although Kant uses the expression "law of nature" analogically, it is part of our understanding of a Causal law that it should not be applied exceptively. Therefore if the maxim of an action were to apply or function like a Causal law, it too must not be exceptively applied. Thus, if A is causally related to B as a cause to its effect such that B is explained in terms of A, then, we would expect that for every B there is an A. But this does not mean that A cannot be the cause of other things or cannot be conceived of as producing other effects apart from B. The notion of a causal law only implies that these effects should proceed from A since every effect is so related to its

cause. Thus causal principles can produce multiple effects and these effects, all things considered, may be very different from each other. And the fact that we describe these effects as different (or even contradictory) does not derive from the fact that the said effects are produced by the same cause. Rather there is here a difference in meaning. To say that B and C are contradictory effects which flow from A as cause is not to argue that A itself is inconsistent as a cause. A contradiction in terms of causality would require, not merely that there are different effects but more importantly that we have more than one cause. Now, how does all this apply to the maxims of the suicide and the false promisor?.

Recall the maxims of the suicide and the false promisor which I stated earlier. The operative word is "Self-Love". "Self-Love" appears to be the reason why (or the cause for which) one normally seeks to preserve one's life. But in respect of suicide, "Self-Love" appears to urge the destruction of one's life. Thus "Self-Love" produces two contradictory effects and, therefore, the maxim of the suicide involves a contradiction and cannot, *a fortiori*, be universalized. The maxim of the suicide, on Kant's account, cannot, it seems, (or so it is claimed) be turned into a universal law of nature without contradiction. And yet this is not the sort of contradiction that Kant had in mind when he introduced the four famous examples.⁴ To insist that the contradiction arises from the fact that "Self-love" on the one hand preserves life and on the other hand destroys it is to confuse a contradiction in terms of meaning (that is a logical contradiction) with a contradiction in terms of causality. For the maxim of the suicide "From Self-love always to shorten my life when its continuance is likely to bring more evil than it promises satisfaction" can be conceived of as a universal (causal) law of nature without contradiction. To us who are already familiar with a law which urges us to preserve life such a law would now urge us to destroy life. The cause (i.e. Self-love) remains unchanged; but the effects (i.e. preservation of life and destruction of life) are different and even conflicting. Similarly, the maxim of the false promisor "When I see myself in want of money always to borrow money with promises to repay it even though I know I can never do so" can be conceived of as, and can become, a causal law of nature. However, one must grant that this new law would now produce the reverse effect of the sort of promising we are used to. Why, quips H.J. Paton, should food which normally promotes health not also, in certain circumstances, produce ill-health? Food does produce ill-health. I have tried so far to show that an

interpretation of formula 1a as a causal law would not yield the kind of contradictions that Kant had in mind when he proposed the four famous examples in an attempt to apply the Categorical Imperative. There are, of course, other reasons for the inadequacy of a causal law interpretation of formula 1a.

(II)

Proponents of the causal law view of formula 1a have always tended to take the preservation of life as a product or effect of self-love. Sometimes they have gone so far as to regard life-preservation as its only effect, (which is false). But this really is not the point. The real point is that 'self-love' is a cause-word, and to it, like other cause-words, context and background information is essential. Let me illustrate my meaning. Suppose someone threw open the door and shouted "Fire" and added "Run for your life", a by-stander would immediately conclude to a burning and run.

Running would be the reaction (or effect) to "fire" (as cause) in the context. Now, if another man dressed in uniform and hovering over a gun crew, were to shout "Fire", the reaction of the crew (that is, *its effect* on them) would be spontaneous. But it is *very unlikely* the crew members would conclude to a *burning, much less run* away. There are other contexts in which the use of "fire" will conceivably produce different reactions or effects in the audience. "Fire" could be used to announce the termination of a worker's appointment or a phase in the making of pottery or how a politician moves his constituents. "Fire" in each situation has a propositional force whose meaning can be discovered *in contextu*.

"Self-love" behaves like "fire"; like "fire", "Self-love" is a shorthand for complex statements whose proper meaning and application can be discovered in context. Thus, "Self-love" can mean "love of life" or the "desire for happiness". And although they seem to mean the same thing, when uttered in different contexts and situations they assume totally unrelated meanings.

"Self-love" in a situation of great joy and pleasure will mean "love of life" or the "desire for happiness". "Self-love" in a situation of great distress and pain cannot mean "love of life", it could mean a "desire for happiness" which might conceivably entail "taking one's life". In this way, the same cause (i.e. "Self-love") can produce different and even contradictory effects [viz, (1) preservation of life, (2) destruction of life].

From the foregoing discussion, one can draw the following conclusions to support the claim that Kant could not have intended that Formula 1a should be interpreted as a causal law of nature:

- (i) From the context of the example the maxim of the suicide cannot take the form $(P \supset Q)$. There might be situations, such as I have shown above, where "p" (=Self-love) and "Q" (=preservation of life) are not really interchangeable.
- (ii) While it is true that causes are connected with their effects, the cause-effect connection of the causal law is not calculated statistically nor of the form $(P) (P \wedge Q)$.
- (iii) For "p" to be conceived as a cause of "Q" we must be able to treat "p" as an *a priori* concept of pure practical reason in such wise that "Q" follows "P" as necessarily and as universally as $((\sqrt{36}) + 7) = 13$.
- (iv) The universality which the maxims of suicide and false-promise should generate is not evident if, again, we interpret Formula 1a purely as a causal law. Although what I have said above in respect of suicide applies also to false promising, there is, however, a little difference, which bears noting.

A promise belongs to the family of propositions. And it is of the nature of a proposition that it should generate assent or brief. Accordingly, there are two essential ingredients of a promise, namely, its acceptance and the intention on the part of the promisor to fulfil an accepted promise. (Even though some promises are known to have been broken, there is no doubt that many more promises have been fulfilled). Now, the maxim of a false promise can be conceived as a universal causal law only that this "new" law about promising would generate the reverse effects of what had hitherto been the practice of promising; the "new" law would be of the form $(P \supset Q)$, where Q would be universally understood as "breaking-a-promise". Although this new law would sound stupid, its stupidity would not have arisen from the structure of a cause-effect relation. The cause-effect structure requires only that an effect (whether it is promise-keeping or promise-breaking) be referred to its cause. However, unlike the maxim of suicide, the maxim of false promising would be self-defeating if it became a universal law of nature as people would not be able to get help from others by "promises of re-payment" since repayment would now mean "non-repayment". But this, it seems to me, is a different question: It is a question of the consistent use of words. That is, it

amounts to the claim that hence-forth Promise-keeping = Promise-breaking. Again, the contradiction here is not a contradiction in terms of causality but a contradiction in terms of meaning.

There is no doubt that the propositions:

(1) "Self-love involves preserving one's life and not preserving one's life" and

(2) Promising involves intending to keep the promise and not intending to keep the promise" are contradictions. They are, however, not contradictions derivable from the notion of a causal-law interpretation of formula 1a but merely a complex violation of the axiom of non-contradiction, namely, that a thing cannot be and not not be at one and the same time, the same place and in the same respects. Therefore, a causal-law view of formula 1a would not deliver the contradictions Kant was after.⁵ Let us now consider the alternative teleological interpretation of Formula 1a.

(III)

The teleological interpretation of Kant's formula 1a is quite different. Here, the emphasis is on a harmony of purposes which moral maxims seek to universalise. But first, it might be useful to distinguish between a purpose of nature and a natural purpose. The former ascribes goals or purposes to a living being whose behaviour or conduct is being explained. (for example, the rat swam in order to get food. Or John played to win the match). It is usual to refer to a purpose of nature simply as purposive or final teleology. On the other hand, a natural purpose ascribes functions to parts of a living being. (for example, eyes are for seeing. Or the heart beats in order to circulate blood). This latter type is called functional teleology. A necessary condition of functional teleology is that the item or thing being explained should serve some purpose other than itself. Thus, natural purposiveness obtains where the causality to which a thing owes its origin is found not in the working of nature as such but in a set of aims to be attained by the thing in question.⁶ Let us apply this to the maxim of Self-love.

In the case of suicide, Kant assumes as factually true the claim that the promotion of life is a function of Self-love and not merely its effect. Now, in order to obtain the necessary contradiction in the maxim of suicide, we must show that one and the same principle performs functions which are contrary to a given natural purpose

or end, and in this case, the same principle must perform functions which are contrary to the preservation of life. If one commits suicide "from Self-love" one acts to destroy life on a maxim whose natural purpose or function is to preserve life. There is a contradiction here. Such a maxim conceived teleologically and as a law of nature leads to a contradiction. M.J. Gregor explains that this contradiction arises from an attempt to subvert that natural direction of self-love, which is not the happiness of the individual but rather the preservation of his life. To use self-love in any other way is to use it contrary to its natural end.⁷ In such a case, we cannot universalise the maxim of the suicide without contradiction or obvious inconsistency. But let us try to get quite close to the root of this contradiction through a consideration of Kant's classification of duties as perfect and imperfect duties to oneself and to others.

Traditionally, perfect duties are those which can be enforced by external legislation such as statutory laws, and imperfect duties are those which cannot be so enforced. Kant now broadly defines perfect duties as duties which admit of no exception in favour of inclination while imperfect duties are those which do admit of such exceptions.⁸ What Kant means by the phrase "admitting of exception in favour of inclination" is the ability to suspend or waive the urgency of one maxim when duties collide or conflict. For example, Peter may feel strongly drawn to going to relax at a movie in the evening (which would be an imperfect duty to himself). Yet he is aware that he needs to visit his sick and aged mother who has sent for him at the same time (which would be a perfect duty to someone else). A perfect duty, on the other hand, demands the performance of a specific action (such as paying one's rent as and when it falls due). Furthermore, Kant divides perfect duty to oneself into two classes, namely, duties to oneself as a moral being with an animal nature and perfect duties to oneself as a moral being. Our animal nature is characterised by the presence of two elements, namely, instincts and practical reason. While our instincts are necessarily determined to their effects, (e.g. Self-preservation, sex and nourishment), practical reason can set up arbitrary ends which can frustrate or pervert the otherwise harmonious functioning of our instincts. In theory, these instincts can function without the guidance of reason. However, because instincts do not act blindly but rather in accordance with maxims, moral man requires rules which can guide him. Furthermore, because reason

can act independently of inclination, its end or purpose is not the satisfaction of instinctual drives, pleasure or happiness.⁹

Now, if through the maxims of our action, we were to pervert the natural tendency of "self-love", as would be the case in the suicide example we would be acting in a way which is contrary to the natural end of self-love, (namely, self-preservation) by aiming arbitrarily to destroy life. Not only that. We would be acting in a way which is also contrary to the nature of reason. Reason is expected to be able to act independently of inclination. Now, the maxim of the suicide seeks to terminate life for the sake of an inclination and this would be an obvious violation of one of the defining properties of a perfect duty, namely, that we do not create an exception in favour of inclination. Where this is the case, one would be acting contrary to the nature of man as a whole, that is, contrary to that end which every agent, in so far as he acts rationally, would conceive as a universal law of nature. And the contradiction which results from such an attempt is a function of the relation between any maxim and the order or harmony which a fully rational being would necessarily will. Thus, the maxim "I will shorten my life when life promises more pain than pleasure" obviously destroys such a harmony or order.

Let me quickly consider two short objections which have been directed at this method of interpreting Formula 1a or the formula of a Universal law of Nature. There is, first, the objection that Kant's assumption that self-preservation is a function of self-love does not in itself foreclose the issue of the voluntary termination of one's life from a morally justified motive (e.g. soldiers who fill a ditch with their bodies to enable tanks cross to the enemy side). This objection is misdirected. Kant's argument was not concerned with maxims involving conflicts of duties nor with the prudential evaluation of maxims or consequences of action. The maxim which we are to consider and which Kant himself considers is "I will shorten my life if its continuance threatens more pain than it promises pleasure" and not simply "I will shorten my life".

The second objection maintains that the argument in favour of a teleological interpretation proves very little, if anything. To answer this objection one needs only recall how perfect duties to oneself as a moral being derive from both instincts and reason. Now, the effort to free oneself from pain and trouble by terminating one's life is not only seemingly a victory for instincts over reason but even goes counter to our instinctual drive for life. Such an effort subordinates reason to mere inclination. And inclination, according

to Kant, cannot form the basis of a morally good action.¹⁰ Therefore, the maxim of such an action certainly cannot be teleologically conceived as a universal law of nature without contradiction. I want to conclude this paper with a short discussion of the maxim of the false promisor.

(IV)

The maxim again is: When I see myself in need of money always to borrow money with promises to repay it even though I know I never can do so. Put in a question form: May I, when in distress, make a promise with the intention of breaking it? The test of this maxim is: Can I will that the making of false promises (FP) should become a universal law of nature? Obviously I cannot. For if promise-breaking became a universal law of nature such that everybody would make a promise and simultaneously not intend to keep it, the promises would not be accepted any more and the "purpose" or "end" of such a promise in the first instance, namely, relief in distress, would be defeated. This seems to be the general direction of Kant's argument. But two things seem to be wrong with the argument. The argument seems to be prudential: that is FP is wrong because of its consequences to the promisor and the promisee. And prudential considerations cannot be weighted in evaluation of the Categorical imperative. And secondly the argument fails to identify the crux of Kant's thesis for the inconceivability of FP as a universal law of nature, namely, that false promising is wrong because it is false promising. In other words, the maxim of FP when willed into a law of nature would frustrate the nature of a promise and so make promising impossible. Kant wishes to argue, not for a mere formal or logical inconsistency in the maxim of FP, but for a teleological inconsistency, that is, an inconsistency in the very nature of **FP** *vis-a-vis* the harmony of human wills.

Now, let us try to reconstruct Kant's teleological argument more carefully. In order to obtain the necessary contradiction in the maxim of FP conceived as a universal law of nature, Kant makes two assumptions: (1) that every organ is adapted to a specific purpose and function, and a necessary condition of functional teleology is that the item which is being explained would serve some purpose (or purpose) for a thing other than itself. Promise-keeping functions to create mutual confidence and, beyond itself, it functions to promote a harmony of human

purposes.¹¹ Thus, it is that promise-keeping has a teleological function. (2) The second assumption which Kant makes is that lying is intrinsically immoral and that FP is a species of lying. Kant's language in his characterisation of a lie is rather strong. In *The Doctrine of Virtue*, he says that the greatest disservice which a man can render to himself is a lie:

*The man who communicates his thoughts to someone in words which intentionally contain the contrary of what he thinks on the subject, has a purpose directly opposed to the natural purposiveness of the power of communicating of one's thoughts and therefore renounces his personality and make himself a mere deceptive appearance of man, not the man himself.*¹²

Thus, every deliberate untruth in the communication of one's thoughts is a lie and a perversion of the purpose of language.

However, Kant could attribute purposiveness to language because of his notion of teleology as a universal phenomenon. Language is an ability to use symbols to communicate thought. But if this symbol, S, were to become not-S, then there arises a contradiction in thinking S at anytime in such wise the whole nature and purpose of S is perverted. Therefore, the maxim of FP conceived as a universal law of nature (where FP is an instance of S) is also involved in a contradiction. The maxim of FP would contradict a law of nature on which everyone necessarily acts, namely, the harmony of human wills. It is such a maxim which cannot be conceived teleologically as a universal law of nature without contradiction.

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THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE NATURAL
ATTITUDE AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL
ATTITUDE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF
EDMUND HUSSERL

By

KOLAWOLE ADEREMI OWOLABI

The philosophy of Edmund Husserl the father of the phenomenological movement has been described as very obscure and impenetrable. One reason why his philosophy is said to be obscure is because of some implicit assumptions behind his philosophy that cannot be clearly understood. Peter Kostenbaum in an introductory essay to Edmund Husserl's book *The Paris Lectures* stated clearly that unless the suppressed premises of Husserl's philosophy are made explicit many will still continue to see it as impenetrable.¹

One very persistent assumption behind Husserl's phenomenology that needs to be made explicit and clear is the assumption that there are two standpoints confronting a philosopher: the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint. The natural standpoint should be jettisoned for the phenomenological standpoint. In all aspects of Husserl's philosophy the assumption is basic, that the true philosopher ought to abandon the natural attitude for the ideal attitude-which he refers to as the phenomenological attitude. Maurice Natanson one of the most profound scholars on Husserl's phenomenology once commented that the clue to Husserl's phenomenology is the appreciation of the natural attitude.² What Natanson is trying to say is that a reader can not begin to understand Husserl if he has not appreciated that there is a natural standpoint that should be transcended.

What does Edmund Husserl mean by the natural attitude? The natural attitude or the stage of *Lebenswelt*, to use the exact German word, is the pre-philosophic standpoint, the attitude of everyday life, the attitude of accepting things as they are presented. The belief that things are really what they appear to be. It is the

belief of the ordinary man, the standpoint of the man on the street, the assumption that all things are in order.

Edmund Husserl believes that this attitude is borne out of naive realism, it is according to him, an attitude of unclarified presuppositions which when thoroughly verified will turn out to be disappointing. Husserl's position is that this naive attitude should be transcended, it should be revealed. When this is done, Husserl felt, there will be a change in attitude, a change in standpoint for a new standpoint which he calls the "phenomenological standpoint".

The fact that the totality of Husserl's philosophy becomes intelligible only when this polarity is apprehended can never be overemphasized. The dichotomy of the two standpoints was persistent in Husserl's philosophical meditations. Throughout his career as a philosopher, Husserl always asserted that genuine philosophy can only be done after we have transcended the natural stage. Husserl in fact believes that all philosophical problems arise when philosophers fail to transcend the stage of the *Lebenswelt*. The problems that dominated the entire history of philosophy according to him arose out of our natural standpoint and its naive approach to issues. The problems Husserl feels can best be solved if we can throw off the garment of the natural standpoint. In the light of this presumption Husserl advocated for all philosophers to embrace the style of the phenomenological philosophy for it is totally independent of the problematic *Lebenswelt*.

Edmund Husserl's detailed analysis of this polarity was clearly presented in his book *Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology*. In the said book Husserl introduced us to the stage of the natural standpoint in this manner:

I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means first of all, I discover it immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch hearing etc., in the different ways of sensory perception, corporeal things, somehow spatially distributed are for me simply there, in verbal figurative sense "Present" whether or not I pay them special attention by busying myself with them, considering, thinking, feeling, willing. Animal beings also, perhaps men are immediately there for me; I look up, I see them, I hear them coming towards me; I look up,

*I see them by the hand speaking with them, I understand immediately what they are sensing and thinking, the feeling that stir them, what they wish or will. They too are present as realities in my field of intuition.*³

The above quoted passage is the description of what happens to man in the so-called stage of natural standpoint. Husserl as we can see from the above, tends to identify intuition as the epistemological method of man in the natural attitude. At this stage we can see man as passively accepting things as they are presented to him by nature. Man in this standpoint is absolutely accepting with blind faith all that is given to him by nature and his senses. This stage is both primitive and crude, nothing is refined, all things come to man as raw as they are made by nature. At the stage of the standpoint man observes without cross-checking. He perceives without questioning. The world at this stage is more dormant than the man. Man is rather a passive observer who neither thinks nor ponders but only accepts things as they come to him in their crude forms.

At the opposite end of this attitude is the phenomenological attitude or the transcendental stage. Husserl refers to the phenomenological world in the *Ideas* as the Arithmetical world.⁴ The Arithmetical world according to him is the stage where man becomes active and meditates on the ideas given to him by nature. At this stage man dissociates himself from the predilections of the natural attitude and tries to see things as they are. At this stage man operates with the index of zero on a clean slate, without the ideas forced on him by nature in the natural attitude. Man in the phenomenological standpoint is totally purged and purified of all the unverified ideas of the natural attitude. But the two attitudes despite their disparity according to Husserl "are present together but disconnected".⁵

Edmund Husserl on the basis of this polarity makes a distinction between sciences of the natural standpoint and the sciences of the phenomenological standpoint. He called the sciences of the natural standpoint dogmatic science while he refers to the sciences of the phenomenological standpoint as critical science. Husserl says:

On the one side, stand the sciences of the dogmatic standpoint, facing the facts and misconceived about all problems of an epistemological or skeptical kind. They take their

*start from the primordial givenness of the facts, they deal with (and in the testing of their ideas return always to these facts), and they ask what the nature of the immediately given facts may be, and what can be immediately inferred from that natural ground concerning these same facts and those of the domain as a whole. On the other side we have the rigorous inquiries of the epistemological, the specifically philosophical standpoint.*⁶

The polarity of the sciences of natural standpoint and the sciences of the phenomenological standpoint as we can see from the above quoted passage, relates to the issue of epistemology. Husserl was seriously concerned with the issue of knowledge. In the natural standpoint man's approach to knowledge is to him rather naive and uncritical. The proper task of a good theory of knowledge is to be critical and even skeptical of the ideas supplied by the natural attitude. In the natural attitude, Husserl posits, we accept as knowledge whatever appears to us in perception as true knowledge.⁷ We make judgement and generalize on the basis of universal assumptions. Natural cognition, according to him creates problems and brings difficulties which are settled without critical questioning.

Contrasting the natural attitude with the phenomenological attitude on the issue of knowledge, Husserl argues that the many assumptions of the natural attitude, the possibility of cognition which is taken for granted in the natural standpoint becomes a problem which needs serious clarification in the new standpoint, that is, the phenomenological standpoint. The skeptical and the critical approach to cognition in the phenomenological attitude in contradistinction to the naivety of the natural attitude is well captured in this language in his book, *The Idea of Phenomenology*⁸:

If we immerse ourselves in the sciences of the natural sort, we find everything clear and comprehensible, to the extent to which they have developed into exact sciences. We are certain that we are in possession of objective truth based upon reliable methods of reaching (objective) reality. But whenever we reflect, we fall into errors and confusions. We become entangled in patent difficulties and even self contradictions. We are in constant danger of becoming skeptics or still

worse, we are in danger of falling into anyone of a number of skepticisms all of which have, sad to say one and the same characteristic: absurdity.⁹

Husserl in the above quoted passage shows the conflicting situations that exist in the two polar standpoints, particularly for epistemology. Epistemology in the traditional sense according to him is still in the stage of *Lebenswelt*. It domiciles in the realm of naivety and over assumptions. It takes for granted all its cognitions. Traditional epistemology of the natural attitude assumes that everything is clear and unproblematic. But according to Husserl a radical change in standpoint will reveal the naive contentment of epistemology of the natural standpoint. Epistemology in the phenomenological standpoint will realise that there are many problems which have remained unperceived. Rather than the naive acceptance of cognitions the new epistemological method shall be radically different. It shall be the critical and skeptical evaluation of all cognitive data.

In *The Idea of Phenomenology* Husserl posits that immersing epistemology in the naive standpoint will make it abandon the genuine essence of epistemology which "is the critique of theoretical reason". The genuine theory of knowledge in the appropriate standpoint, that is, the phenomenological standpoint, Husserl posits further "must brand the well-nigh inevitable mistakes which ordinary reflection makes about the relation of cognition, its meaning and its object thereby refuting the concealed as well as the unconcealed sceptical theories concerning the essence of cognition by demonstrating their absurdity."¹⁰

The primary reason why Edmund Husserl advocated that the natural attitude should be transcended for the phenomenological attitude is because of his belief that any genuine philosophy should be an eidetic science that is the act of describing the essential aspect of the object of cognition rather than its existential aspect. Husserl feels that the eidetic science can only be carried out in the phenomenological standpoint. At the other standpoint we will not be able to apprehend essences because of its epistemological limitations. Throughout his career, he believed strongly that only a transition from the natural standpoint to the phenomenological standpoint could make us realise this objective. The continued domicile in the natural standpoint Husserl feels will produce "self contradictory and therefore fundamentally misleading interpretations of the being that is cognized in the science as of the

natural sort"¹¹ At best he feels we will only apprehend existential and particularising aspects of the object.

Having shown the obvious contrast between the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint in his philosophy, Edmund Husserl enjoins us to do away with the former for the latter. He begins the exercise by advocating for the alteration of the naive standpoint. He begins by saying: "instead of remaining at this standpoint we propose to alter it radically".¹² The need to alter the natural standpoint for the phenomenological one led to the introduction of the famous method of *epoche* or bracketing. The method is the means of transcending the natural standpoint for the better standpoint. The alteration of the dogmatic standpoint is described by him thus:

*Thus all sciences which relate to this natural world, though they stand never so firm to me, though they fill me with wondering admiration, though I am far from my thought of objecting to them in the least degree, I disconnect them all, I make absolutely no use of their stand.*¹³

The method of *epoche* is a cardinal aspect of Husserl's philosophy. The reason is explicit, it is the means by which the natural attitude can be overcome. And unless this is done, genuine philosophy cannot commence. The method of "*epoche*" otherwise known as bracketing or suspension is the act of putting off the naive prejudices given us by the natural standpoint to enable us see things as they are which is the objective of the phenomenological attitude. It is the act of going back to the real phenomenon having suspended biases. The act of going back to the "origins of which our all too hasty everyday thought has lost sight".¹⁴ Husserl conceives it as the perfect method through which the dubious and controversial cognition of the natural standpoint could be done away with.¹⁵ Husserl describes the activity of the method further:

The whole world as placed within the nature - setting and presented in experience as real, taken completely "free from all theory", just as it is in reality experienced, and made clearly manifest in and through the linkings of our experience has now no validity for us, it must be set in brackets, untested, indeed but also uncontested. Similarly all theories and sciences positivistic or otherwise

*which relate to this world however good they may be succumb to the same fate.*¹⁶

The phenomenological bracketing otherwise called "suspension" by Edmund Husserl is the method of keeping our natural attitude in abeyance. It enables us to start everything afresh. The method as Peter Kostenbaum puts it, is the act of "focusing on any part or all of my experience and then observing, analysing, abstracting and describing that experience by removing myself from the immediate and lived engagement in it."¹⁷ The epoche, Husserl argues, will not totally do away with the natural attitude. It is not going to be a total denial of the natural standpoint but the act of modifying it to understand it perfectly well. He says:

*.... the thesis undergoes a modification whilst remaining in itself what it is, we set it as it were "out of action". still remains like the bracketed in the bracket, like the disconnected outside the connexional system. The thesis is experience as lived ... but we make no use of it, and by that, of course we do not indicate privation as when we say of the ignorant that he makes no use of a certain thesis.*¹⁸

Husserl is trying to respond to a serious criticism, that is, the criticism to the effect that his denial of the natural attitude is unrealistic. Husserl is here asserting that the natural standpoint is not permanently denied but temporarily bracketed. He is aware that he can not sustain his position if he maintains that the natural standpoint should be totally denied. In actual fact his disciples especially Maurice Natanson tried to defend him from the erroneous assertion that he totally and permanently denied the natural standpoint.¹⁹ Natanson argues that Husserl did not deny the natural attitude. His method is not the act of doubting a-la Descartes but rather it is a device by which "the individual's experience of the world is made the object of systematic inspection by a strictly methodological device."²⁰ Things will not change according to Natanson by the phenomenological bracketing, it will only affect the observers doxic belief.²¹

But even the bracketing as it is can be questioned. An obvious objection can be raised and we shall raise it in this essay, that attempting to suspend the natural standpoint whether permanently or temporarily is a utopian ideal that can never be realised.

The dichotomy of the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint as we earlier mentioned is an assumption that permeates the entire career of Edmund Husserl. Husserl's philosophical career as we are well aware is made up of two stages, the realistic stage and the idealistic stage. At the earlier part of his career, Husserl was a realist while at the latter stage he became an idealist. At the earlier stage, Husserl discussed this polarity in a relatively realistic manner. He talked of the natural standpoint not so negatively but as a situation that should be overcome. In the latter stage Husserl discussed the dichotomy in more idealistic manner. In actual fact in his *Cartesian Meditations* he enjoined the natural standpoint not only to be transcended but also that the individual should take a leap from the natural world and become a transcendental ego. At this stage therefore another dichotomy was introduced, the polarity of the natural or empirical ego and the transcendental ego.

The transcendental ego Husserl posits in his later philosophy is the purified ego. The ego that is completely detached from the world. Such an ego is now prejudice - free and presuppositionless, it is an ego that is clearly different from the empirical ego that still domiciles in the natural standpoint and still moves about with the limitations of the standpoint. The theory of the transcendental ego and its correlate transcendental world was a dominant theme in Husserl's latter philosophy.²² In actual fact his latter philosophy was devoted to a defence of the idealistic and utopian turn that the earlier dichotomy took at this stage.

From the above explication we can see that the polarity of the naive natural standpoint and the critical phenomenological standpoint is a premise that motivated virtually all the theories that were discussed in Husserlian phenomenology. It is polarity that easily explains the two contrasting stage of Husserl's philosophy namely the realistic and the idealistic stages. The reason why Husserl abandoned his earlier stand that philosophy should go to the "things themselves" *Zu der Sachen*, and embraced an idealistic and mystical position of transcendental phenomenology is also explainable in the light of the dichotomy. Having exploited his earlier slogan to its limit Husserl might have realised that man cannot apprehend the "things themselves" unless he is prepared to transcend the natural world and such a transition will necessarily transport him from an ego in the world to a transcendental ego. He seems here to be agreeing with Immanuel Kant that human categories will never enable man to apprehend the "noumenon".

But he departed from Kant by his transcendental stand; the belief that a transcendental man in a perfect standpoint can apprehend the noumenon is a clear departure from Kantian metaphysics and an improvement though a very questionable one.

At this point in our discussion it is pertinent to begin to ask whether the dichotomy between the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint that is a cardinal premise of Husserl's philosophy is a legitimate position that should be given serious attention, especially the amount of attention that Husserl gave it. Before this is done the first thing that should be done is to try to place this dichotomy within its historical perspective. A clear and closer examination of the polarity will reveal that the idea behind it is not original to Edmund Husserl. In actual fact the polarity represents the metaphysical position of idealism taken earlier by three great philosophers in the history of Western thought, Plato Descartes and Kant. Husserl's contribution was in the form of a synthesis, he synthesised the ideas of the three philosophers and the result was his phenomenology with the premise of the two standpoints, the natural and the phenomenological.

Edmund Husserl's relationship with Plato was recognised by William Dilthey who once referred to him as a true Plato.²³ His indebtedness to Plato is in the latter's idealism. From Plato, Edmund Husserl got the belief in the polarity of the world of appearance and world of forms. This dichotomy was what manifested in Husserl's polarity of natural and phenomenological standpoint. The natural attitude was the direct counterpart of Plato's world of appearance; like the Husserl's, Plato's world of appearance was ephemeral and full of prejudices while the world of ideas the direct counterpart of Husserl's phenomenological attitude was presented as being perfect. The call for the transition from the natural standpoint to the phenomenological standpoint is comparable to Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic* where the exit from the cave to the outside world led to the epistemological salvation.

Edmund Husserl's link with Rene Descartes is not at all in doubt. Husserl himself acknowledged this in his *Cartesian Meditations* where he referred to his philosophy as neo-Cartesianism.²⁴ Husserl's indebtedness to Descartes is tremendous, but this is made clear in his theory of natural attitude - phenomenological attitude polarity. Husserl got from Descartes the need for epistemology to be radicalised and for all beliefs to be

questioned and denied if need be. In actual fact Descartes' methodic doubt has a close resemblance to Husserl's phenomenology although he tried to deny that his own method is less negative and not as destructive as that of Descartes.

The synthesis of Platonism, Cartesianisms and the Kantian belief in the critical essence of epistemology are all reflected in the Husserlian dichotomy. Kant's desire to be critical of all ideas and the Kantian belief that our knowledge is a product of our categories, all reflected in the development of the dichotomy by Husserl. In essence therefore the theory of the natural attitude and phenomenological attitude represents traditional idealist metaphysics. It is a manifestation of the belief that the world of appearance is ephemeral while the real world is an ideal that should be realised.

Commentators have rightly observed that virtually all fragments that constitute Husserl's phenomenological philosophy are borrowed from one philosopher or the other. The polarity of the natural standpoint and phenomenological standpoint, from the brief historical analysis, represents the climax of the metaphysical assumption behind all idealistic theories. But having placed Husserl within his correct historical perspective we shall begin to ask now whether this presumption is not a misconception. We should ask before we close our discussion in this essay whether the "genuine philosophy" that is the phenomenology of Husserl can sustain the polarity of the natural and the phenomenological standpoints.

Edmund Husserl's dichotomy is a common sight in history. As we have shown, it is reflected in virtually all the philosophies of the philosophers of the idealistic persuasion. Virtually all the great philosophers in history of Western thought realise the havoc that our prejudices do to our act of philosophising. Virtually all of them sought to transcend the naive attitude. It began with Plato's persuasion that we should take a leap to the world of ideas. It is reflected in Bacon's identification of the influences of "idols" on our perception, it made Descartes to embark on the famous methodic doubt. But all these attempts in the history of ideas have also confirmed that at the level of conceptualization it is possible to talk of transcending the world, but it can be very difficult if not impossible at the realm of actuality.

In reality, we can not totally purge ourselves of some presuppositions. In fact it is humanly impossible to do anything without presuppositions. Presuppositions are the means through

which we carry out most of our activities philosophical or otherwise. Those presuppositions are already entrenched in us. Though we might attempt to detach them but we will realise at a latter point that they are still with us. Prejudices are like shadows that can not be thrown away; they will always be hidden behind us.

The talk of totally transcending our natural attitude is too much of a demand from Edmund Husserl. In fact no step can ever be taken without some natural presuppositions motivating the step. It is only a philosopher deceiving himself that can talk of completely detaching himself from the natural standpoint.

Only angels can ever transcend the natural standpoint for the phenomenological standpoint of Husserl. As Miguel de Unamuno rightly said;

*... each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself. And let him to what he will, he philosophizes with the feelings, with the bones, with the whole and the whole body. It is the man who philosophizes.*²⁵

What this philosopher is pointing out is that the ideas of the natural standpoint can never be suspended in the act of philosophy. In fact we need them so much in the process of thought. Quentin Laner captures the criticism we are trying to raise more aptly when he asked Edmund Husserl the following questions:

*...how phenomenological is phenomenology or better still how phenomenological can it be? How visible is phenomenology without extra-phenomenological appeals? Not even Husserl imagined that phenomenological could be thoroughly presuppositionless in the sense that leaves behind all one's human equipment when one begins to philosophize.*²⁶

Can Husserl legitimately claim that he has totally put in suspension all the ideas he received from his pre-philosophic life? Can he deny that the ideas from the natural standpoint do not filter into his thought? Can he claim that he is totally free from the influence of his society, his teachers and his colleagues? Edmund Husserl's philosophy is not a good example of his injunction that philosophy should transcend the natural attitude. Rather it totally contradicts it. One sees in his philosophy extra-philosophical ideas prominent among which are mathematical axioms and

psychological theories that might even make one begin to wonder whether he is a philosopher or a mathematician.

At this level in our argument we can ask whether philosophy can totally distance itself from the natural standpoint without defeating its primary essence. What in actual fact is the essence of philosophy? Why do we resort to philosophising? Is it not to satisfy the wonders and questions that we are faced with in our natural standpoint? Philosophies as we are well aware of are generated by ideas from our natural standpoint. Is it therefore wise for philosophies to completely distance itself from the original background of the problem they seek to solve? In actual fact some people have said that philosophy is a means of rationalising these belief we received from our natural standpoint.

Taking the example of Thales at the genesis of Western thought, particularly his belief in the primacy of water, we shall see that his philosophy is an attempt to rationalize an age long belief of his people. The same is true of medieval philosophical explanation for their Christian belief. There are many other examples in the history of philosophy to show that pre-philosophic problem and issues propel and instigate philosophers to think. The reason why the existentialists departed from Husserl is because of this belief that man should transcend the natural attitude and ascend to the phenomenological attitude. In fact the existentialists were able to conceive and analyse human problems. A lot of people from non-philosophical background - were inspired by existentialism because of its realistic tendency, while they distanced themselves from the utopian tendency of Husserl's phenomenology.

Husserl's dichotomy can also be seriously questioned today when all philosophers are advocating for philosophy to be natural and realistic. Contemporary philosophers have seen the havoc created for philosophy by the unrealistic assertion of the idealists. There have been calls in recent time for philosophy to be natural. A very prominent example is the injunction of W.V.O. Quine that epistemology should be naturalised.²⁷ We have also the contextualist theory of justification that tries to solve the problem of justification in a realistic and natural manner.²⁸ All these are pointers to the fact that philosophy should not distance itself from our natural attitude but infact should rather study it in its bid to understand fully the philosophical problems.

On a conclusive note, there is a comment we like to make about Edmund Husserl as a philosopher in general which has relevance

to his illicit polarity of the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint. Edmund Husserl has a unique and novel way of discussing obsolete issues and calling attention to them in the name of his so-called phenomenological philosophy. The dichotomy of the naturalist standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint that we examined in this essay is nothing but a new name for the old metaphysical dichotomy that permeates traditional philosophy, that is the polarity of appearance and reality. The polarity of Husserl should therefore be treated like its predecessors. We should say that though there can be a difference between common sense realism and the critical nature of philosophy, trying to discuss the two as if one should be fully suspended and the other totally embraced is product of the extremism that permeates philosophy in the traditional setting and such an extremism should not be tolerated.

The natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint should compliment each other rather than oppose each other. The natural standpoint should supply the raw materials while the latter standpoint should carry out the analysis. This activity should be carried out not independently but with the constant interaction of the two standpoints.

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THE NATURE OF AFRICAN METAPHYSICS

By

JIM. I. UNAH

A study in classical¹ metaphysics may well begin by locating it in the historical context of Aristotle's "first philosophy". In this direction, the Greek expression 'meta ta physica' which literally translates as "after the things of nature" would aptly describe Aristotle's "first philosophy" which deals with being qua being or a transcendence of beings to their being. It is thus that metaphysics has come to mean the study of that ultimate by reason of which things come to be or an inquiry about that fundamental element which permeates everything. By studying the fundamental stuff or principles of which things participate, the metaphysician is invariably keen on determining the 'really real', 'that-which-is' absolutely in contradistinction to shadows or mere illusions. In other words, what is ultimately real for a metaphysician is his first principle and other things are real or unreal in virtue of whether or not they partake of his fundamental principle. Hence the characteristic assertion of classical metaphysics is, 'being is and non-being is not'² and the fundamental metaphysical question is, 'why is there something instead of nothing?'³

Without more ado the following statement can be made about classical metaphysics: That metaphysics is the study of ultimate reality: that something is real insofar as it is amenable to the discipline of a metaphysician's unifying principle, and that the preoccupation of the classical metaphysician is to draw a clear-cut line of demarcation between something and nothing as if we could ever have an absolute nothing.

In the light of the above, we can see that the classical metaphysician makes a conscious effort to determine what is ultimately real. And does so because he is interested in determining an ultimate unifying principle with which to assimilate the totality of experiences. Whatever partakes of this ultimate unifying principle is 'really real', a true being. Whatever does not partake of it is unreal, a non-being, a nothing. It is thus that the classical metaphysician's search for ultimate reality amounts to a

preparation for battle. Hence Professor Heidegger could speak of the Western metaphysical tradition down to Nietzsche as one that bestows an attitude of dominance, vengeance and belligerence.⁴

African Metaphysics: Meaning

Now what about African metaphysics? What are its postulates? In what respects is it different from Western metaphysics? These questions shall crystallize into the guideline of this study.

We have characteristically defined classical metaphysics as the study of ultimate principles or reality. If metaphysics generally deals with the question of reality or what constitutes reality, we can then define African metaphysics as the thinking on reality which is predominant among Africans. We can say that African metaphysics is the study of (the) African man's thinking about what constitutes reality. This presupposes that the African, like his counterpart elsewhere, asks questions about ultimate reality and tries to provide answers to such questions.⁵ Thus, the African man's questions about reality and the answer which he gives to these questions constitute African metaphysics.

But what kind of question does the African ask about reality? What tone of voice does he use, and what does he say in consequence? To begin with, the African⁶ does not ask the classical fundamental question of metaphysics, "why is there something instead of nothing?" Rather, he asks a much more preliminary question, "what is that simple unifying element that permeates every nature?" Or "what is that ultimate universal principle which makes it possible for things to be and have meaning? Although this preliminary question is not posed explicitly in the available works on African metaphysics (with which we are familiar), we take it that it is implied in virtually all of them. This will become clear when we analyse what the African takes to be the ultimate unifying principle of all possible experiences.

Now let us probe deeper into the question about reality. The African does not ask "why is there something instead of nothing?" (as his Western counterpart) because he knows that given the multifarious nature of human experience, it does not make sense to speak of nothing the way his Western counterpart speaks of nothing. The typical Western philosopher poses the question, "why is there something instead of nothing?" because he wants to take a position with a mind to repudiate whatever is not amendable to the chains and fetters of the unifying principle of his basic position.

What agrees with his unifying principle really is, but what does not is nothing, is not, cannot be. And whoever subscribes to this "nothing" or sees in this "nothing" another veritable account of reality is clearly in error and is deemed to be a purveyor of shadows and illusions.

On the other hand, the African realizes that this "nothing" which horrifies the Western metaphysician and which he desperately seeks to repudiate could provide a background for another veritable account of reality. Hence he (the African) does not consciously enunciate a unifying principle with a mind to relegate whatever cannot be brought under the umbrella of his unifying principle. Instead, the African postulates an over-all process which penetrates every possible experience. He postulates a simple unifying element which permeates everything that there is. The question he asks is, "what is it that makes it possible for things to be at all?" He does not seek to know why there is something instead of nothing because he thinks that even nothing is something.⁷ He knows by experience that where our normal perceptual apparatus cannot grasp something there must be something of a sort.⁸ This is because whatever we are able to perceive of our world is a function of our interests and our orientation of being. Hence the African only wants to know that ultimate cosmic principle which renders experience of all sorts possible. He does not want to know that object "which is" absolutely in contrast to nothing. For whatever is (i.e. being) does not do battle with "nothing" but simply partakes of the universal principle which permeates every nature. Moreover, it is the nature of this universal principle to manifest itself as both something and nothing (i.e. being and non-being). And "nothing" in this manifestness of the universal principle would be something of a kind, not "absolute nothing" as the typical Western metaphysician normally suggests in his system. Hence the African asks in a humble tone of voice, "what is this ultimate cosmic principle by reason of which things come to be?" He does not assert dogmatically that "being is and non being is not". He simply seeks to know the ultimate principle which permeates every nature whatsoever. And he identifies this ultimate principle, this other-than-being, with a vital force or Spirit. Spirit or vital force⁹ is primordial in African conception of reality and it aptly describes the Being of every nature or that which inheres in all natures as some theories in African metaphysics agreeably illustrate.

Theories in African Metaphysics: Kagame on NTU

Scholars in the positive¹⁰ study of African philosophy are in agreement that the African metaphysical concept of being is force or Spirit. Alexis Kagame, a Bantu of Rwanda origin, presents a concept of being that is built on a theory of force. According to Kagame there are four ontological categories of Force which condition all reality. Whatever exists, whatever can be thought of is conditioned by one of these categories which he calls Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu. In other words, each of these categories describes certain aspect of reality such that all reality can be subsumed under them.

In J. Jahn's Muntu where we find an exposition of Kagame's theory of forces, category Muntu is the force which all forms of intelligence (be it God, gods, the living and the dead) partake. Category Kintu is the force which permeates all nonintelligent natures such as plants, minerals, tools, etc., which, as "frozen forces" await the bidding of intelligent forces (the Muntu) for their activation. Hantu is the category of force which makes events and motion of all sorts possible. Category Kuntu, the fourth, is the force which governs all modalities such as beauty, ugliness, laughter, etc, etc.¹¹ In each of the four categories there is the determinative stem, NTU.

Now to the question, "what is the ultimate universal principle which makes it possible for things to be? Kagame would say NTU. NTU is the ultimate cosmic principle or Force which permeates every nature. NTU is Force or being itself. NTU is the ultimate determinative Force of all forces, NTU permeates everything including particular forces. While beings are forces NTU is Being or Force itself. NTU is that Force in which beings or forces have their being. NTU expresses the relationship between Being and being on the one hand, and the possibility of being on the other. In other words, NTU expresses for Kagame, the interaction and interpenetration of forces on the one hand, and the dynamic character of reality on the other. NTU as the cosmic universal Force does not have a separate and independent existence from its occurrences. J. Jahn's rendition of Kagame speaks of NTU thus:

NTU is the universal force as such, which, however, never occurs apart from its manifestations: Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu. NTU is Being itself, the cosmic universal force, which only modern rationalizing thought can

*abstract from its manifestations. NTU is that Force in which Being and being coalesce.*¹²

NTU is not something that is over and above the things that are. Nor can it (NTU) stand apart from beings that are. NTU cannot be isolated and identified or revealed as a being. NTU permeates with equal primordially Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu. NTU is that Force which makes being be. NTU is not God, but that "point from which creation flows." To suggest that NTU is God is to reduce it (NTU) to the status of an entity or a being. NTU is not a being but the all-pervasive principle which makes beings be. The relationship between NTU and God shall be treated under the hierarchy of beings in Placid Tempels' adumbration of Bantu philosophy.

Tempels on Bantu Ontology

Placid Tempels says that the Bantu metaphysical notion of being is force. According to him, being for the Bantu is conceived within the category of forces. Forces is the reality which exists in everything and in every being in the universe. Force is that reality by reason of which "all beings have something in common, so that the definition of this reality may be applied to all existent forms of being".¹³ Tempels holds that in Western thinking in order to arrive at this reality (force) which is the common denominator of all beings or which is identical in all beings, one must of necessity eliminate the particularizing traits of the individual beings.¹⁴ Whether this Western thinking holds good or not will be clear later.

Tempels proceeds to show that within the framework of Bantu ontology, the all-embracing element which permeates all elements and all forms of being is force. It is this force, this reality which conditions all experience that metaphysics studies. According to Tempels, such phenomena as the origin, the growth, the changes, the destruction, or the achievement of the beings, etc., etc., are some of the elements which become the object of metaphysical inquiry. Again, Tempels suggests here that metaphysics for the Bantu is "knowledge embracing all the physical or the real."¹⁵

After thus characterizing the physical or the real as the object of metaphysical inquiry, Tempels insists that "Metaphysics does not treat of the abstract or the unreal," and that these (the abstract and the unreal) are the tools of metaphysical inquiry, the same way that concepts are tools (not the objects) of science. He indicts Christian/Western civilization which, under the influence of Greek

philosophy, furnished a static definition of the "reality common to all beings" as that-which-is, or "anything that exists" or more commonly, "what is". This definition of the common denominator of all beings as "what is" has occasioned a static conception of reality in Western metaphysics.

At this juncture, Tempels makes an important distinction between Western metaphysics and Bantu conception of reality. He says that while the western man conceives the transcendental notion of being by divorcing it from its attribute, "Force", the Bantu makes no such distinction. This is because "Force", for the Bantu, is a necessary, inseparable ingredient of being. Being for the Bantu, cannot be defined without the concept "Force". Both are inextricably bound together. As Tempels writes, "There is no idea among Bantu of 'being' divorced from the idea of 'force'. Without the element 'force', 'being' cannot be conceived".¹⁶ On account of this, Tempels maintains that while the West entertains a static conception of being, the Bantu maintains a dynamic view of reality.

Thus, Tempels thinks that "Force" should be accepted as the basis of Bantu ontology. Concerning this he says, "... the concept 'force' is bound to the concept 'being' even in the most abstract thinking upon the notion of being".¹⁷ Tempels further holds that on account of the affinity which obtains between being and force, it would be inappropriate to describe being as that which has force. That would imply that force is something over and above being which is added onto being. He thinks it should be more authentically and faithfully rendered if one said that the Bantu lives in a vague average understanding that being is force.

I believe that we should more faithfully render the Bantu thought in European language by saying that Bantu speak, act, live as if, for them, beings were forces. Force is not for them an adventitious accidental reality. Force is even more than a necessary attribute of being: Force is the nature of being, being is force.

When we think in terms of the concept "being", they use the concept "force". Where we see concrete beings, they see concrete forces. When we say that "beings" are differentiated by their essence or nature, Bantu say that "forces" differ in their essence or nature. They hold that there is the divine force, celestial or terrestrial forces, human

*forces, animal forces, vegetable and even material or mineral forces.*¹⁸

Apart from holding that being is force or that force permeates every being, the Bantu, according to Tempels account, maintain that forces exist in a hierarchy. In virtue of the fact that reality for the Bantu is force they regard being, all beings including God, human beings, the ancestors, animals plants, minerals, etc. as forces. Forces are great or small depending on what category they belong to, and strengthened or weakened depending on the nature of their interaction with other forces.

Hierarchy of Forces

Although Bantu ontology insists on the polyvalence (inevitable presence) of forces in everything, it also insists that such forces are in a hierarchy and are constantly interacting with one another. In Kagame's analysis of the four categories of Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu we see that forces are of different classes and essence. Category Muntu, for instance, represents forces endowed with intelligence. Forces in the Muntu category are apparently higher in virtue of their being vested with intelligence. It is in this category that you find God, human beings, ancestors and the like. "Muntu" is not primarily man, but what the English, according to Tempels, would call "person", with the connotation of vital force endowed with intelligence and will.¹⁹ Hence God is regarded by the Bantu as the "great Muntu". This meant, according to Tempels, that "God is the Great person". The great, powerful and reasonable living force. "In relation to other forces, says Tempels, God is one who increases force. He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. And for the first founder of the different clans in the world God is the one supreme force who communicates vital force.

*After him come the first fathers of men, founders of the different clans. These archipatriarchs were the first to whom God communicated his vital force, with the power of exercising their influences on all posterity. They constitute the most important chain binding men to God. They are spiritualized beings, beings belonging to a hierarchy, participating to a certain degree in the divine Force.*²⁰

Next in the hierarchy are the dead members of the community in order of their ancestry. These, according to Tempels, form a chain

in the hierarchy of forces through which the 'elders exercise their vitalizing influence on the living generation'. The living human beings follow in rank to the dead. After the human forces which operates on the scene come other forces such as animals, plants and minerals. Within a class in the hierarchy (be it ancestral, human or animal or plant) there is also a sort of sub-hierarchy as some human or animals or plants are superior to or stronger than others. A stronger force normally influences the weaker and the latter is more or less at the service of the former". In fact, even inferior beings, such as inanimate beings and minerals, are forces which by reason of their nature have been put at the disposal of men, of living human forces, or of men's vital forces".²¹

Added to this view that reality or forces are in a hierarchy and that stronger forces affect weaker ones is the prevalent notion among the Bantu that forces interact with and interpenetrate one another. In Bantu conception of being one force interacts with another or others. "Bantu holds that created beings preserve a bond with another, an intimate ontological relationship."²² Similarly, in Anyanwu's theory of African world-view the position is held that interactions between man and his fellowman, man and other things in nature, as well as man and God, are those of vital forces interacting with one another. "Everything the African thinks about and feels," says Anyanwu, "has to be in the image of a living force interacting with other living forces."²³ The African, according to him, takes it that "everything is vital force or shares in this force". He insists that in virtue of the ontological relationships obtaining among life forces, the African does not see things in isolation. Instead, the African takes all things to be similar, or share the same qualities and nature.

Thus, what Kagame, Tempels and Anyanwu have said about the primordality or primacy of Force in African metaphysics are largely similar: That the African metaphysical concept of being is Force; that force permeates everything "that is"; that forces are in a hierarchy, and are constantly interacting with one another. A variant of this theory that Force is primary in African conception of reality is Dr. Idoniboye's "the Concept of 'Spirit' in African metaphysics". Dr. Idoniboye asserts that "The ontology of any distinctively African world-view is replete with 'spirits'. Spirits are the one entity that remain constant in all African belief systems."²⁴ And further down in the same paragraph, Dr. Idoniboye alludes to the distinction between spirits as the ultimate which permeates everything "that-is" and spirit as an entity which partakes of the

primordial Spirit. It is this distinction between Spirit and spirits, Force and forces or Being and beings that is of interest to us in this paper. However, before we dwell on this ontological distinction between Spirit and spirits let us explore Dr. Idoniboye's concept of 'spirit' further.

Spirit, according to Idoniboye, are invisible and intangible forces which, however, "can be seen at will by diviners who have undergone the proper rites..."²⁵ They (spirits) can at times materialize, but they are, according to him, entities that principally operate from behind the scene. And they are known by their effects on the living or by their activities within the scene. In this sense, "spirit" is not the all-pervasive principle that permeates everything. Spirit here is an entity which also partakes of the universal Spirit. This distinction is quite clear in Idoniboye's paper. According to him, "Spirit is real... In its pure state it is unembodied. Spirit is the animating, sustaining, creative life-force of the universe. It is what gives anything its individuality".²⁶ Idoniboye further intimate that in the human body, Spirit becomes mind or soul whereupon the individual mind or soul shares in the collective mind or soul stuff of the universe.

Thus, on account of this view that Spirit permeates everything or confers individuality on anything irrespective of its composition and nature, Dr. Idoniboye concludes "...that pluralism, insisting at it does, on a reality composed of innumerable constituents, is more in the temper of African metaphysics".²⁷ This conclusion will be helpful after we have made the ontological distinction between Spirit and spirits clear.

Spirit and Spirits: The Ontological Difference

In Kagame's four categories (i.e. Muntu, Kintu, Ha ntu and Kuntu) with NTU as the determinative stem, in Tempels' Bantu ontology where he talks of Force as the Being of beings; in Anyanwu's theory of African world-view where he speaks of vital force or force as existing in an inseparable continuum of a hierarchical order, and in Idoniboye's concept of Spirits where he talks of Spirits as unembodied, there are sufficient indications that there is an ontological difference between Spirit and Spirits, Force and forces, Being and beings. These thinkers and, indeed, the average African already operate with a consciousness of the reality of the ontological difference. It is this ontological difference that Heidegger claimed had been woefully omitted in the classical

ontology of the West. The ontological difference for Heidegger is the difference between Being and beings. The ontological difference for us is the difference between Spirit and spirits or Force and forces. It is around this question of the ontological difference that the main problem of metaphysics revolves. The nature of metaphysical thinking predominant among a people depends on whether or not they treat Spirit as a spirit (i.e. confuse a process with an entity).

Beginning with Kagame's theory of NTU as the determinative stem of the four categories of Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu under which all reality in whatever form or essence are subsumed, we can distinguish a universal process at work in every nature or in every aspect of reality. NTU is not an entity but that which permeates everything. NTU is a nonentity, a non-thing which makes entities or things to be what they are". NTU is not something independent on these four categories under which every form of reality are brought. NTU is a process that exhibits itself in aspects such that if what we did not know yesterday were to be manifested today as something, it would still be a participation of NTU. NTU is not this thing or that thing but what makes things be. Such that whatever can be thought, encountered, imagined, dreamed, hallucinated or wished is a manifestation of NTU. NTU is that non-thing or nothing (because it is not an entity) from which things spring. So NTU is Force itself, Being itself or Spirit itself.

Placid Tempels has spoken of Force as Being itself in Bantu ontology. Force is the supreme principle of individuality, plurality and unity. Force finds expression in practically everything that is. Force permeates everything every thinking, every idea, every utterance, every event and every preoccupation. Force is the enduring, sustaining process that makes things possible. In Anyanwu's theory of African world-view, everything - animals, spirits, plants, minerals, the living and the living-deads, stones, etc., etc., have vital forces. Vital force is what makes anything be. Every aspect of reality or every perspective has a vital force. For Idoniboye, Spirit is unembodied or disembodied in its pure state. As unembodied, Spirit is not a thing or an entity or an aspect in the same way that a Spirit can be an entity, thing or aspect of reality. A spirit partakes of Spirit in its pure state. Spirit as unembodied (in its pure state) is the cosmic process that makes things be.

We speak of Force itself as distinct from a force or forces, Spirit as distinct from a spirit or spirits. A Spirit is an entity the same was a Force is an entity. But Spirit itself or Force itself is not an entity

but a process or possibility of being. There is a difference between a possibility of being, between what makes a thing be, and a thing. From the way force itself or Spirit itself is treated by thinkers in African metaphysics it is clear that they think of reality as a process, as dynamic rather than as a fixed entity that is static. Thus, where the ontological difference is made clear, reality is treated as a process. But where the difference is omitted, reality is frozen into a static entity.

Consequences of a Static Metaphysics

We label as "Static metaphysics" that conception of reality which takes actualities to be higher than possibilities. Static metaphysics treats reality as an entity and a fixed entity at that. By this is meant that only an aspect of reality is mistaken for the whole of reality. Static metaphysics confuses a process with an aspect and thereby conceptually freezes experience. This is because whenever a static metaphysician takes an aspect to be "really real", he reduces the whole of reality to that static aspect. We should bear in mind that God, Brahman, Allah, Mind, Matter, Subjectivity, will to Power, the worker, etc., etc., are taken as aspects of reality in this context (and they are at any rate). As entities, they are all aspects or profiles of reality. A static metaphysician who takes any of these aspects to be the ultimately real, say God, would want to show that whatever is not explainable in terms of God's injunctions or commands is not truly and hence should be committed to the limbo of religious curiosities. But when another static metaphysician assumes a different entity (which is also an aspect of reality) to be the ultimately real, say Allah, then, he too would want to reduce all religious experiences to Allah's biddings and would want to do battle with anyone who says anything to the contrary. On this count, a static metaphysician is a nihilist and a violent thinker nurtured by an attitude of vengeance. As a dogmatist, the static metaphysician is a purveyor of intolerance, fanaticism and war. Static metaphysics, therefore, leads to conflicts of interests and clashes of temperaments. We identify static metaphysics as the predominant feature of Western thought.

Consequences of a Dynamic Metaphysics

A dynamic metaphysics is one that recognizes that higher than actualities are possibilities.²⁸ A dynamic metaphysics takes reality to be an on-going process, a manifestation of aspects or profiles.

Dynamic metaphysics understands an entity as an aspect of reality. In this regard, every single experience of any kind is but an aspect or profile of reality. Every entity is a perspective of reality, and as such every entity has its place in the scheme of things. Reality as an on-going process is creative and keeps exhibiting itself in aspects. An aspect of reality is a perspective of reality. Dynamic metaphysics makes every single aspect of reality an ingredient of reality. Dynamic metaphysics does not repudiate any aspect of reality. A dynamic metaphysician may hold a position or may be used to an aspect of reality. But he does not claim that other positions or aspects with which he is not familiar are excrements of reality or non-reality. He does not contrive fixed doctrines. He simply let things be according to their respective natures.

Spirit or Force, for the African, is that reality that exhibits itself in aspects or profiles. All things that there are are aspects of the Spirit. Spirit permeates everything. A dynamic metaphysician recognizes this and is not disposed to repudiating or discrediting an aspect of reality (say a view) with which he is not familiar. He is ready to give it some attention, to give it a trial, a listening ear. The dynamic metaphysician sees in every event, every view, every position, everything, an element of the Spirit whose fascination he cannot resist. He sees everything as the self-manifestation of the Spirit. And "spirit", in the words of Professor Heidegger, is a fundamental, knowing resolve toward the essence of being... spirit is the mobilization of the powers of the essent as such and as a whole".²⁹ Spirit is that which confers individuality and at the same time constitutes the unity in diversity of phenomena. The dynamic metaphysician sees in phenomena attributes of the Spirit.

The upshot of a dynamic metaphysics is that it cultivates in its adherents an attitude of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It makes man more accommodating of his fellowman and engenders a respectful approach to things and people. The purveyor of a dynamic metaphysics has no absolute truth for which he is prepared to die, not merely out of faithlessness to a committed goal as some aggressive, belligerent mortals might think, but because he lives in the knowledge that every truth, every event and every human setting implies a presenc-ing of the Spirit. It is this dynamic conception of reality that essentially characterizes African metaphysics.

African philosophy as a respectable discipline. And this excludes those who direct their energies to proving that African philosophy does not exist.

11. For details, see J. Jahn, *Muntu: The New African Culture*, Dusseldorf: Germany, 1961, pp. 79 - 103.
12. *Ibid.* p. 101
13. Placid Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959, p. 49
14. *Ibid.* p. 49
15. *Ibid.* p. 50
16. *Ibid.* pp. 50 - 51
17. *Ibid.* p. 51
18. *Ibid.* pp. 51 - 52
19. *Ibid.* p. 55
20. *Ibid.* pp. 61 - 62
21. *Ibid.* p. 66
22. *Ibid.* p. 58
23. K. C. Anyanwu, "The African World - view and Theory of Knowledge" *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981, p. 90.
24. D. E. Idoniboye, "The Idea of an African Philosophy: The Concept of 'Spirit' in African Metaphysics" *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. II, No. 1 (January, 1973) p. 83.
25. *Ibid.* pp. 83 - 84
26. *Ibid.* p. 85
27. *Ibid.* p. 85
28. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962, p. 63.
29. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 49.



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Notes and References

1. By classical metaphysics we mean metaphysics as it is treated in Western philosophy exemplified in the tradition from Plato to Bradley.
2. cf. Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, vol. 1., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959 p. 158.
3. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim, London : Yale University Press, 1959, p. 1.
4. We shall elaborate on how Western metaphysics gives rise to conflicts and clash of temperaments under the subtitle "Static and Dynamic Metaphysics.
5. This point is well argued in Dr. C.S. Momoh, "Modern Theories in African Philosophy" *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, Lagos, 1981, Vol. 1, No. 2. p. 9.
6. I hereby succumb to the temptation to generalize in respect of what the African says about ultimate reality. I fall into this temptation because of the unanimity of opinion on the matter in available literature. I have, for instance, argued in my "ontologico-Epistemological Background to Authentic African Socio-Economic and Political Institutions" *Philosophy and Social Action* (forthcoming) that Placid Tempels' work on Bantu Philosophy, Marcel Griaule's *Conversations with Ogotomeli*, Maya Doven's. *The Living Gods of Haiti*, Alexis Kagame's *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de L'Etre* among others are scholarly testimonials that, by and large, there is consensus on what the African takes to be nature of reality.
7. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 23.
8. Dr. C. S. Momoh has argued in an unpublished paper entitled "Spiritual Empiricism" that some "eyes are trained to see what we cannot ordinarily see.
9. C. S. Momoh, "African Philosophy.. Does it Exist?" *Diogenes*, 130 (1985), p. 104
10. By "Scholars in the positive study of African philosophy" we mean those authors whose works seek to established



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CONTENTS

<i>E. Kola Ogundowale</i> , On the question of ideology, literary development and societal progress.	1
<i>Friday Ndubuisi</i> , Can Law be divorced from morality.	14
<i>Okey I.C. Ikechukwu</i> , Prolegomena to speculative theism.	25
<i>F.A. Adeigbo</i> , Kant's universal law of nature: A teleological perspective	39
<i>Kolawole A. Owolabi</i> , The dichotomy between the natural attitude and phenomenological attitude in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl	50
<i>Jim I. Unah</i> , The nature of African metaphysics	65

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