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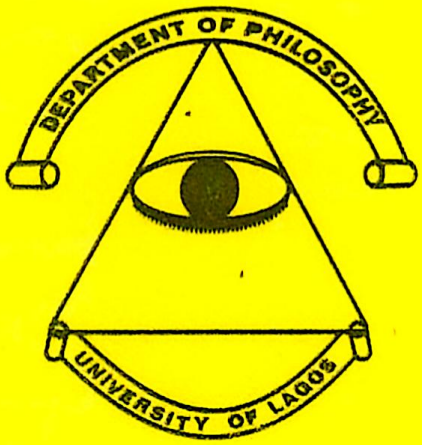

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EPISTEMIC RELATIVISM, FALLIBILISM, OPEN-MINDEDNESS AND TOLERANCE: A DISCUSSION

by

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ABSTRACT

Epistemic relativism has gained a significant popularity with the rise of post-modernist views among the Academic Left since late 1970s. Although it lost some of its defenders after harsh criticisms such as the Sokal hoax and the book *Higher Superstition. The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* by Gross and Levitt (1994) that was followed by many other similar works, the view still enjoys some popularity, especially among non-philosophers. Epistemic relativism seems to owe its popularity to its employing the discourses of open-mindedness and tolerance, rather than its power as an epistemic doctrine.

This paper explores the epistemic doctrine that could provide a more sound basis for open-mindedness and tolerance. Arguing that epistemic relativism does not necessarily entail open-mindedness or tolerance, this paper discusses whether fallibilism can be a better path to follow in order to promote these values. Firstly I shall present universalism, how it was used in the colonialist discourse, and whether the doctrine has any normative aspect. Secondly, I shall focus on epistemic relativism, the problems with the doctrine, and whether it has any normative aspect. Thirdly, I will focus on fallibilism, and whether it has any normative aspect. Fourthly, I shall present idiolectic insight as a practice. Finally, I shall discuss whether we can combine fallibilism with idiolectic insight in order to attain open-mindedness and tolerance, with a focus on the advantages and limitations of this approach.

Universalism and Colonialism

Matthews defines universalism as a doctrine that regards

> *science as an intellectual activity whose truth-finding core is not in principle affected by national, class, racial or other differences: science transcends human differences. This universalist view recognizes that while aspects of culture do influence science, nevertheless cultural considerations do not determine the truth claims of science. The core universalist idea is that the material world ultimately judges the adequacy of our accounts of it*

Consequently, universalism is based on a minimal ontological realism which asserts that "there is a reality, a world out there which exists independently of minds, cultures, languages, theories or worldviews."[2] However, universalists may as well accept a less minimal realism, which would claim that we are largely right about our existence claims about everyday and scientific objects.[3] The doctrine also accepts epistemic realism, the view that reality can be known, and focuses on the scientific means as the way to attain knowledge.

Post-modern critiques of science have often argued that universalism has played an important role in the history of colonization. Their claim is that the universalist doctrine which argues for the existence of a reality which exists independently of minds, cultures, languages, theories or worldviews, can be known, and this reality has served the legitimization of colonial practices. Even if we accept that universalism may have been used for the legitimization of colonial practices, the issue is quite complicated. First of all, when the universalist doctrine was employed in the colonialist discourse, the colonialists claimed that their claims of knowledge about the reality

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1 Michael Matthews, *Science Teaching: The Role of History and Philosophy of Science* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 184.

2 Gurol Irzik and Robert Nola, *Philosophy, Science, Education and Culture* (Springer, 2005), p. 428

3 ibid.

were true.[4] This claim of knowledge – combined with the accusation of the colonized for lacking knowledge defined as 'natural law' - was neither entailed nor implied by universalism. It was simply a discursive tactic to support this claim of knowledge by universalism. This was a result of the political objectives of the time, rather than a logical result of the epistemic doctrine.[5] Otherwise, as far as the history of colonization is concerned, there is nothing inherent to universalism which would entail that the colonialist – and not the colonized – had knowledge about the reality. Therefore, it does not seem plausible to condemn the epistemic doctrine for the way it was used in the colonialist discourse.

While trying to understand what universalism may have entailed, it seems crucial to make the distinction between descriptive and normative theories. In Book III, Part I, Section I of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume presents what is called the 'is-ought problem':

> *In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is*

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[4] The claims were made on the basis of the concept of 'natural law' which was known to the colonialists and not to the colonized. For example, the Spanish legitimized the enslavement of the Indians with the claim that they were unable to recognize 'natural law' and colonization was the only way of teaching them civilization and introducing them to Christianity (Kohn , 2006).

[5] Kohn (2006) argues that it was because "[under] the influence of Thomism, Pope Innocent IV concluded that force was legitimate only in cases where infidels violate natural law. Thus nonbelievers had legitimate dominion over themselves and their property, but this dominion was abrogated if they proved incapable of governing themselves according to principles that every reasonable being would recognize" that the Spanish had to argue that habits of the native Americans was sufficient proof that – unlike the Spanish - they did not know the natural law.

> *nor, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, that expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given; for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.*[6]

Universalism is a descriptive theory. Therefore, it does not – and it cannot – entail any normative propositions. Arguing that universalism required or encouraged people to do one thing or another would be a failure to distinguish between is and ought. Historically speaking, we would make this mistake if we argue that universalism caused people who accept this theory to become colonialists – and, therefore, all the ethical and political problems related to colonization were direct results of universalism. As an epistemic view, universalism does not entail anything general or specific about people's behaviour. Therefore, we cannot argue that universalism caused colonialism or any of the atrocities involved. Past exploitations of universalism in the colonialist or imperialist discourse was caused by the people rather than anything inherent to the epistemic theory. Hence, it is absurd to blame the epistemic theory rather than its exploiter.[7].

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: J.M. Dent, 1949).

Irzik and Nola (2005, p. 445) present a similar argument without referring to the is-ought problem: "[Having] universal truth in no way entitles anyone to silence, repress or dominate anyone else in the name of truth. In the past certain Western countries may have *exploited* the discourse of universal truth, reason and progress in order to colonize other people and degrade them, but this implicates the rulers, not the notions of truth, reason and progress. Scientific knowledge, like any other kind of knowledge, can be used for all sorts of purposes, some good, some bad, so it is absurd to blame the universality of knowledge rather than its exploiter.

One may argue that although there is difference between descriptive propositions and normative propositions, historically speaking, there is often a correlance between holding a certain epistemic theory and people's behaviour. This seems like a quite plausible argument, as proven not only by the history of colonialism, but also by the history of epistemic relativism and its popularity among the Academic Left in the last three decades. However, I argue that the connection between defending a certain epistemic theory and behaving in a certain way is more complicated than a relationship of simple entailment between descriptive and normative propositions. The issue at stake seems quite complicated, and related to the politics of discourse. What happened since late 1970s is that people who held certain normative positions - leftists, feminists - started to argue for epistemic relativism.

The problems inherent to epistemic relativism - especially epistemic multiculturalism - suggest that the appeal of the doctrine was caused by the fabricated links with concepts like 'open-mindedness' and 'tolerance' formed on the discursive level, rather than the doctrine's entailment of any normative propositions related to these concepts. Consequently, such a strong relationship between the Academic Left and epistemic relativism was established that Norman Levitt had to declare that he is a leftist when he co-wrote *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and its Quarrels with Science*[8] (1994) to criticize the post-modernist critique of science.

Epistemic Relativism

Post-modernist reactions to universalism, such as epistemic relativism and constructivism, started to gain popularity in the academia, particularly in the newly developing field of science studies, in the late 1970s. Often with the impetus from Feyerabend[9] and a particular

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[8] This preference is based on the fact that the discourse of open-mindedness and tolerance plays a more significant role in epistemic relativism

[9] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975)

reading of Kuhn. [10] epistemic multiculturalists and constructivists - few of whom were philosophers or scientists - started to argue that the talk of universal science and reason, objective truth and knowledge is repressive and reactionary because it is Eurocentrist, imperialistic, homogenizing and unifying. [11] They often referred to the role played by the discourse of 'natural law' as the universal truth - combined with the colonizer's claim of truth - during the colonization period as well as in post-colonial contexts to argue that the modernist discourses of universal or objective truth, knowledge and rationality are expressions of Eurocentrism and imperialism.

Two strong approaches in the post-modern critique of science were constructivism and epistemic relativism. For the purpose of this essay, I would like to focus on the latter. There are various versions of epistemic relativism.[12] The most common version in science studies is also known as epistemic multiculturalism. Epistemic multiculturalism is the view that "there is no truth or rationality that is not culturally embedded... Talk of universal or objective truth, knowledge and rationality masks ideological hegemony."[13] According to epistemic relativists, the problem with universalism is that it makes it possible for certain groups - educated upper-class, white, Western men - to acquire epistemic authority and use it against other groups. What epistemic multiculturalists argue is that there is no universal or objective

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[10] Thomas, Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[11] See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives." In *Feminist Studies*, 1988. pp 575-599; Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialism, Feminism & Epistemologies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998); Gloria Snively and John, Corsiglia. "Discovering Indigenous Science: Implications for Science Education, *Science Education*, 2001, p.85, pp. 6-34.

[12] This preference is based on the fact that the discourse of open-mindedness and tolerance plays a more significant role in epistemic relations.

[13] Irzik & Nola, op cit., p. 444

knowledge, truth or rationality. Truth values of all claims of knowledge are relative to culture

Therefore, one proposition may be true for one group and false for another. This is because they define all belief systems as knowledge, regardless of conditions such as justification, truth, coherence or reliability. belief systems of indigenous groups are defined as 'indigenous knowledge'[14] produced by 'local, contextual and historically contingent' systems of science[15] that are by no means different from the dominant Western-originated science in those respects. Moreover, there are no objective, universal or transcultural criteria to judge competing claims to knowledge. The contradictions that arise are nothing but sites for expressing 'difference'.[16] This leads to contradictory beliefs being defined as knowledge for different groups.

The various reasons for the defense of epistemic relativism (in the name of emancipatory science and politics) are highly problematic. To begin with, the criticism of universalism seems ill-grounded. While the post-modern critiques of science criticize its use in the colonialist discourse, there is difference between the universalist doctrine and the way it was used for pragmatic purposes a few years ago.

First of all, earlier universalism does not entail that the colonialists knew the truth and the colonized did not. Universalism does not entail anything specific about who has knowledge and who does not. This claim of truth was a discursive strategy to legitimize imperial practices.

Secondly, universalism, even when it is combined with a claim of knowledge, does not necessitate certain behaviour - i.e. imposing anything on anyone. It is a descriptive theory that does not entail anything normative. What seems to be a causal relationship between the descriptive and normative propositions is actually a result of the discursive politics injected into it by critics.

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14 ibid, p. 411

15 ibid., p. 405

16 Nanda, op cit., p. 156

Thirdly, the post-modern critique of science developed after the 1970s, centuries after the period of colonization. The colonialist discourse may have adopted an infallible claim of truth for pragmatic political ground rather than for epistemic or theoretical concerns. However, most modern universalists allow for fallibility, at least with respect to some claims of knowledge.[17] It is therefore not really plausible to treat modern universalist doctrines as equivalents of the form of universalism as employed in the colonialist discourse.

Fourthly, epistemic relativism seems to be based on a universal proposition about knowledge: "All knowledge is relative to culture." If we accept this proposition to be universal, we accept that not all claims of knowledge are relative to culture. In that sense, epistemic relativism is self-refuting. If we accept this proposition to be relative to culture, it has virtually no pragmatic value. It is just a proposition that may be true for some cultures, and false for others.

Fifthly, defining truth merely as an issue of politics makes it impossible for the subaltern groups to make any claims on the basis of scientific truth. In other words, women cannot argue that they are not inferior to men. and blacks cannot argue that they are not inferior to whites on the basis of biology or psychiatry. As truth is relative to culture, such claims would not be dismissed as 'false.' However, they will simply be true for some cultures. This would in fact reproduce the existing hegemonies and play into the hand of the powerful instead of the subaltern groups by taking the power of science from them

Sixthly, although it has come to be associated with open-mindedness and tolerance, epistemic relativism does not entail these. Hare defines open-mindedness as

> *an intellectual virtue that involves a willingness to take relevant evidence and argument into account in forming or revising our beliefs and values, especially when there is some reason why we might resist such evidence and argument, with a view to arriving at true and defensible*

Irzik & Nola , op cit, p. 428

> *conclusions. It means being critically receptive to alternative possibilities, being willing to think again despite having formed an opinion, and sincerely trying to avoid those conditions and offset those factors which constrain and distort our reflections. The attitude of open-mindedness is embedded in the Socratic idea of following the argument where it leads and is a fundamental virtue of inquiry.*[18]

According to this definition – that is quite similar to other definitions in contemporary debates about open-mindedness - epistemic relativism does not entail open-mindedness. What is sometimes mistaken for open-mindedness in epistemic relativism is nothing but refraining from distinguishing between truth values of propositions on the basis of a concept of truth that is not relative to culture. In fact, it seems plausible to argue that epistemic relativism eliminates the possibility of taking "relevant evidence and argument into account in forming or revising our beliefs and values," as contradictory propositions are equally valid anyway. It is difficult to argue that epistemic relativism leads to tolerance either. As a descriptive theory, epistemic relativism does not imply any normative propositions. Therefore, it does not require people to be tolerant to alternative views. In fact, epistemic relativism's radical politicization of conceptions of science, knowledge and reason, combined with the lack of any normative propositions about open-mindedness or tolerance, makes it a quite dangerous view.

As claims of knowledge become mere claims of power and there is no necessary implication of open-mindedness or tolerance, epistemic relativism may easily become a means of oppression in the hands of the people who already have the social

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[18] William Hare, "Open-Minded Inquiry: A Glossary of Key Concepts." Available at: http://www.criticalthinking.org/articles/open-minded-inquiry.cfm Last visit: 04 June, 2008.

Despite some technical problems like concessive knowledge attributions that are beyond the scope of this paper, fallibilism is a quite promising epistemic doctrine, as it allows for claims of knowledge while acknowledging that our claims of knowledge are not infallible. Therefore, it also seems quite compatible with open-mindedness and tolerance. Unlike the version of universalism that the post-structuralist critiques of science claim to oppose, fallibilism does not give a dogmatic account of knowledge. Instead, it reminds us that our claims of knowledge are not infallible, and their truth value can change, especially depending on evidence. Yet, unlike epistemic relativism, fallibilism still makes it possible to talk about non-relative truths, and therefore makes claims of truth open to revision.

Fallibilism seems to save us from being dogmatic, yet present an epistemic doctrine that is compatible with open-mindedness and tolerance without bringing any of the problems inherent to epistemic relativism. Now, I will present a tool that may facilitate open-mindedness and tolerance as well as our potential to reconsider and revise our beliefs under fallibilism.

Defining Idiolect and Idiolectic Insight

While it has different meanings, 'idiolect' is a term normally used to refer to a variety of language unique to an individual (at a given time).[20] It is based on the idea that every individual has a unique use of words and phrases that is reflected in patterns of word selection and grammar, and the differences in words, phrases, and idioms used by that individual. However, I use 'idiolect' to refer to an epistemic, semantic and pragmatic structure that consists of all the words and concepts, their semantic and pragmatic connotations, all the beliefs, all the knowledge, all the mental tools, and all the principles that a person has, and their relationships.

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[20] Alex Barber, "Idiolects." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/idiolects. Last visit: 15th Nov. 2006

or economic or cultural power, and help them secure the existing power relations – and even eliminating any resistance – rather than creating emancipatory politics.

Fallibilism

Fallibilism is an epistemic doctrine adopted by most contemporary epistemologists in various versions in which it may have occured. However, there are different formulations of the doctrine developed to solve various problems.[19] For the purpose of this paper, I will not go into these discussions. Only the outlines of the doctrine will be presented here.

Fallibilism maintains that all or most claims of knowledge could, in principle, be mistaken. While some fallibilistic theories assert that all claims of knowledge could be mistaken, others make exemptions such as mathematical and/or logical axioms. Yet, even though mathematical and/or logical axioms may seem infallible, our claims of knowledge about mathematics or logic is still fallible, as errors could emanate in making the inferences. Fallibilism admits that since empirical knowledge could be revised by further evidence, anything that we claim to know may in fact turn out to be false. However, unlike scepticism, it does not imply that knowledge is impossible to attain, and therefore we should refrain from making any claims of knowledge. Instead of establishing extremely high standards for knowledge such as 'infallible' or maximally strong evidence, fallibilism generally defines knowing a proposition in terms of having good/strong reasons/evidence for it. Thus, fallibilism allows us to make claims of knowledge without having – or claiming to have – infallible evidence. Hence it becomes possible to argue that one may know something while his/her evidence does not guarantee the truth of the proposition.

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[19] For a discussion on the definition of Fallibilism, see Baron Reed. "How to Think about Fallibilism." In *Philosophical Studies*, 2002, pp, 107: 143-157.

Despite some technical problems like concessive knowledge attributions that are beyond the scope of this paper, fallibilism is a quite promising epistemic doctrine, as it allows for claims of knowledge while acknowledging that our claims of knowledge are not infallible. Therefore, it also seems quite compatible with open-mindedness and tolerance. Unlike the version of universalism that the post-structuralist critiques of science claim to oppose, fallibilism does not give a dogmatic account of knowledge. Instead, it reminds us that our claims of knowledge are not infallible, and their truth value can change, especially depending on evidence. Yet, unlike epistemic relativism, fallibilism still makes it possible to talk about non-relative truths, and therefore makes claims of truth open to revision.

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[20] Alex Barber, "Idiolects." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/idiolects. Last visit: 15th Nov. 2006.

The content of this structure is different for each and every person, yet this difference does not entail that it is not possible to communicate. Despite the differences in idiolect, people can still communicate in general. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we also have problems in communication that stem from the differences in the idiolects of parties.

It seems plausible to claim that communication would tend to be easier and better between people whose idiolects are similar, yet this would depend on the subject. Two people may have very similar idiolects, yet very different beliefs about one particular issue. While one may be tempted to think that idiolects of people coming from the same culture would be similar, this would be a rather problematic argument, as 'culture' is a rather vague term. One may argue that the idiolect of a Hindu would be more similar with the idiolect of a fellow Hindu rather than the idiolect of a Christian. However, it is a fact that lifestyles and tastes of upper-class Indians would be more similar to those of upper-class Americans rather than lower-class Indians. In that sense, it would be more plausible to argue that people who have had similar experiences would tend to have similar idiolects.

I would like to argue that one person's idiolect is accessible to another person through various ways of communication. One may make inferences from the other person's actions and utterances with or without directly engaging in any kind of conversation. What I would like to suggest as the idiolectic tool is, suspending or bracketing one's own idiolect as much as possible to try to adopt another person's idiolect temporarily. Then, you will get a better understanding of the other party's argument. This way, you can compare and contrast the two idiolects afterwards, and more easily understand what the differences and their causes are.

I would like to underline that I do not defend that what I propose is an easy task, nor that it is possible to pursue it uncomprimisingly. Our idiolects include various beliefs, and some

of them - such as basic mathematical axioms – are just too difficult to assume differently. No matter how hard I may try to bracket my belief that two plus two equals four in order to adopt the idiolect of a person who believes that two plus two equals five, I may not succeed. This may also depend on the person or even the same person's psychological and cognitive condition at a given time. It may be easier to do when you are willing and you are not tired. There are other problems about idiolectic insight as well. As a person would not have full access to another person's idiolect, in practice it would be impossible to fully adopt his/her idiolect. Still, idiolectic insight seems to be a promising practice, as it facilitates avoiding our biases when trying to understand other people's beliefs and principles, and comparing them with ours.

Nevertheless, although idiolectic insight seems like a rather difficult practice, its application in daily life may not be that hard. First of all, in daily life, we would feel the need to use the idiolectic insight in cases of conflict – and these conflicts would rarely be about logical or mathematical axioms. Therefore, we would try to understand the other person's concepts and beliefs that are immediately related to the conflict. If we have conflicting beliefs about the existence of God, it would not be really relevant to question my interlocutor's beliefs about which cheese goes best with dark rye bread. In other words, I do not need to gain an insight into her whole idiolect, only the relevant parts, which is not that difficult, especially when both parties are willing to collaborate. This insight may present us different beliefs, another interpretation of the situation. This may help us see the problems in our idiolect, ranging from logical contradictions to problems about correspondence with the universe – that is, if we accept a correspondence theory of truth. Similarly, we may also see the problems in another person's idiolect. This may facilitate our benefiting from each other.

Fallibilism and Idiolectic Insight

Idiolectic insight defined as such seems quite compatible with fallibilism. As an epistemic doctrine, fallibilism defines knowledge as open to errors. As a practice, idiolectic insight would be a valuable tool that would help us realize our problematic beliefs. Combining idiolectic insight with fallibilism also seems to respond to the concerns of the multiculturalists – at least to a certain extent. Idiolectic insight does not privilege any culture over the others. In fact, every culture is of - at least potential - value, not because their adequacy in describing the universe or avoiding logical contradictions is equal, but because every culture can learn from the others through this process. Therefore, every person and every culture is of value as an epistemic source.

However, I would like to underline that neither fallibilism or idiolectic insight nor a combination of the two would necessarily entail anything normative. In other words, although fallibilism defines knowledge as fallible, and argues that our claims of knowledge may, in principle, be mistaken, and idiolectic insight is a practice that may help us to see which claims of knowledge are mistaken, their combination does not entail anything about how we ought to act when our claims of knowledge seem to be mistaken. Are we supposed to leave these claims aside? Are we supposed to revise our beliefs? Are we supposed to act in the world in one way or another? Fallibilism and idiolectic insight defined as such fail to answer these questions, and making any inferences would be falling into the is-ought mistake. This is also the reason why fallibilism – although it is a more promising epistemic doctrine than epistemic relativism – is not enough to attain open-mindedness. As an epistemic doctrine, fallibilism entails not being dogmatic, and accepts that claims of knowledge could be mistaken. When it is combined with idiolectic insight, it seems even more compatible with open-mindedness, as it values other people's beliefs. Still, it does not require us to revise our beliefs or even

tolerate alternative views. We may as well accept the value or even the validity of alternative claims of knowledge, yet try to suppress them. This attitude would neither conflict with fallibilism nor idiolectic insight. Like universalism and epistemic relativism, fallibilism is a descriptive epistemic theory. Therefore, it is not plausible to argue that it entails open-mindedness or tolerance – even though it is compatible with both.

Conclusion

Post-modernist critique of universalism seems to focus on two main issues: Strength of the universalist claim of knowledge and truth, and the political implications. Combining fallibilism with idiolectic insight seems to address these issues without bringing in the problems of epistemic relativism and the dogmatic version of universalism it claims to oppose. On the one hand, fallibilism argues that claims of knowledge could, in principle, be mistaken. On the other hand, idiolectic insight is a tool that may facilitate the assessment of our claims of knowledge – as well as those of other people – by comparing idiolects. Thus, idiolectic insight deems all idiolects, and therefore all cultures, at least of potential value.

Still, neither by itself nor when combined with idiolectic insight does fallibilism entails any normative propositions. Therefore, in order to derive any propositions about how we ought to act - including those related to open-mindedness and tolerance - we need to combine fallibilism with normative arguments. These normative arguments should inform us about issues like what we ought to do when we encounter idiolects that are not compatible with ours, whether/when/how we ought to revise our beliefs/claims of knowledge, whether/when/how we ought to change our actions depending on the conflicting beliefs/claims of knowledge that we encounter. Without such normative arguments, just like epistemic relativism, fallibilism is a merely descriptive doctrine that falls short of providing us with a guideline as to how we should act.

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY*

By
Moses Òkè

The Genealogy of Linguistic Diversity

The linguistic diversity of the contemporary world might appear to most people as what had always been. There are, however, some others who are interested in understanding the reality behind this apparent linguistic reality. Those who are impressed by the existence of so many languages must have wondered about how it came about that we have so many tongues in a common world and with a common nature.

The response to the language situation of the world has led to the magnificent discipline of linguistics that seeks to study and understand the features of languages in their universalities and particularities, similarities and differences. However, although scientific linguistics claims to be analytic, historical speculations about the world's languages and language situation ought not to be repugnant to linguists. This is because just as analysis lightens the tension of curiosity, so does history mitigate the illusion of mystery. As we speculate, or theorize about how the world came to have so many languages, the situation begins to be illuminated so much that we start to have reasons for the necessity of the situation.

Critical attention to the current reality leads to the question of whether there could have been only one language in the world. To this, the only answer is that it is not logically impossible for the whole world to have only one language. Therefore,we may ask an empirical question of whether there was ever a time in the history of the world

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when everyone spoke the same language. That is, was the world ever universally monolingual? The Christian Bible answers in the affirmative.

A question that arises from the biblical answer above, which is relevant to the present discussion is whether universal monolingualism produced or had a corresponding monoculturalism. The Biblical account seems to answer this further question in the negative. Albeit there was a clear advantage in universal monolingualism – the different peoples perfectly understood what every person said. There was a common medium of debate and communication. From this, it can however not be logically inferred that there was only one system of beliefs in the whole world. It is not inconceivable that groups of people in a monolingual world have different histories, different problems of existence, different places in the world, different experiences, different cultures, different social arrangements, different religions, etc.

The event at Babel is of extreme significance for the development and understanding of the relationship between philosophy and language. That event led to the world's situation of today and we can inquire into the functional consequences of linguistic as a path to the treatment of the problem of language in African philosophy. The situation would be the same if the Babel hypothesis is false, and it happens to be the case that linguistic diversity came about by some other means.

Functional Consequences of Linguistic Diversity

In the view of Somaiya,[2] "Babel was the point at which language became an issue in the history of the human race, and it must be recognized as marking the beginning of the age-old enterprise of foreign language-learning." Over and above the need to learn foreign languages bringing about the need for translators, interpreters and linguists, the

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1 (Genesis 11:1–9).

2 C. O. Somaiya, *Language Matters: Exploring The Dimensions of Multilingualism*, O. A. U. Inaugural Lecture Series, 1999, Ile-Ife: O. A. U. Press, 27 Feb 2007: pp. 1-2.

diversity of language must have created in people a passionate attachment to their languages, as well as the tendency to impose one's language on others whenever the opportunity availed itself.

Sonaiya noted that the diversity of languages created a new function for language. In addition to being an innocuous means of communication, language now began to "serve as a major marker of identity." People now differentiated themselves from others on the basis of which language they spoke or claimed as theirs. The consequence of this is that "the *language question* became a major component not only of interpersonal relationships, but a reality that is played out, at times in rather violent dimensions, along ethnic groups and even entire nations." [3]

This correct view does not imply that before the "confounding of human language" there were no markers of identity. There are many other parochial and peculiar platforms of identity and difference that may not have to do with language.

Related to the foregoing is that language diversity is a conflict inducing phenomenon. It is a fact of common sense that when two persons speak different languages, and there is no other overriding bond of oneness between them a barrier to intimacy and cooperation arises almost naturally between them. The misunderstanding that could arise from such a situation when fundamental issues are involved could lead to war and global catastrophe.

Language has been described as a mirror, a weapon, and a shield. [4] In this perspective, the position of Sapir and Whorf on the relation of language to thought and behaviour is that language is a "symbolic guide to culture"[5] such that " a change of language can

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[3] Ibid, p. 2.

[4] Y. K.P. Yusuf, *Language: Mirror, Weapon and Shield*, O. A. U. Inaugural Lecture Series, Ile-Ife: O. A. U. Press: 14 Feb. 2006, p. 187.

[5] E. Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," in *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*, D. C. Mandelbaum,ed., (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1949), pp. 162–166.

transform our perception of the cosmos."[6] This view that language directly influences or limits thought and thus determines reality is what Wittgenstein had systematized into the famous 'Picture Theory of Language' with the catch phrases "The limit of my language is the limit of my world,"[7] and "what we cannot say, we cannot think either."[8]

In linguistics, as well as in philosophy, the mirror-image conception of language, thought and reality has been rigorously challenged. Wittgenstein himself, for instance, had to correct himself in his later philosophy after doing more study of language,[9] to propose the language-game theory.[10]

The class of language known as 'dysphemism' has been identified as the commonest aspect of language that is used as a weapon. Whatever the target of the weapon, dysphemism always involves "the use of an offensive or disparaging expression instead of a neutral or pleasant one,[11] and they have as targets 'those things and people that frustrate and annoy us, and whom we disapprove of, despise, dislike, or just plain hate.[12]

In philosophy, the emotive use of language is well-noted as a veritable obstacle to clear thinking and rational action.[13] Such a use of language leads, quite often, to positive and negative prejudices and biases. In the view of Hormell, [14] prejudice, which arise from

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[6] B. L. Whorf, "Language, Mind and Reality." In *Language, Thought and Reality*, J. B. Carroll, ed. (Cambridge, Mass; The M. I. T. Press, 1956). p. 263 (246-270).

[7] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*,

[8] ibid.

[9] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.*

[10] D. Crystal, *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 212.

[11] K. Allan & K. Burridge, *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language as Shield and Weapon* (New York: O. U. P., 1991), p. 234.

[12] M. Òkè & A. Amodu, *Argument and Evidence: Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006).

[13] S. J. Hormell, "Speaking of People: Teaching about Sexism in Language." In *Teaching about Doublespeak*, D. Dieterich, ed. (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1976), p. 166.

[14] Y. K. Yusuf, op. cit., p. 31.

dysphemisms that have broad appeal.[15] involves stereotyping – "fitting people or things into oversimplified categories. If they share one trait. it is assumed they share more. This is the 'if you've seen one. you've seen all' way of thinking.

As a weapon, language could have both physical and mental targets. The suppression, prohibition, exclusion, denigration of people and things by law, force, policy and practice are physical attacks for which language could be used as a weapon. The denigration of cultural practices, values and ideas, such as religion, status, affiliation, and race, are examples of mental attack through language.

Philosophy, Culture and the Problem of Language

The problem of language in this context is not that of a grammarian's preoccupation or that of a linguist's curiosity. The problem of language for a philosopher is essentially that of how thought could be expressed adequately in language; it extends to the concern of how reality is related to the expressions of thought about it.

Considered as a critique of cultures, philosophy seeks to do at least two things; cognition and prescription. Philosophy seeks to understand the foundations of cultures by way of seeking to uncover the presuppositions of human ways of life. This cognitive feature of the philosophic enterprise has taken many forms in the history of philosophy. Philosophers have developed many techniques of inquiring into cultures. It is quite interesting to note, however, that almost all the techniques have in one sense or the other claimed to be analytic, as can be seen in the contrasting traditions of continental existentialism and logical positivism or 20th century English philosophy.

The apparent confusion that might arise from the multiple conceptions of analysis looses its luster when it is granted that truth can be approached from a multiplicity of routes, without the need for a ranking of routes on a scale of superiority or priority. As there have

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[15] J. O. Sodipo, *Philosophy and Culture*, University of Ife Inaugural Lecture Series 6, Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press: 25 April 1972.

always been controversies between traditions of analytic philosophy so have there been controversies within each tradition as to the worth of the method and its results in the context of the human condition.

When applied to cultures, analysis is always done selectively. Aspects of ways of life are scrutinized to uncover the rationale or justification underlying them, with a view to seeing whether they conform to certain canons or paradigm of rationality, and thus to see whether such presuppositions should be rejected, retained or revised. This enterprise seeks to free us from the tyranny of our concepts such that we can consciously and systematically change them when necessary. [16]

The prescriptive dimension, either by way of setting standards of knowledge, truth, or rationality, seeks to lay down rules, procedures, aims, goals, etc that a culture or an aspect of a culture should adopt from the rational point of view. In this respect, philosophy becomes criteriological. The criteria so set could, even if not universally assented to, become tools with which cultures are evaluated. In this aspect of philosophy, as in the analytic aspect, philosophy in its bid to lead humankind to the ideal life turns on the issue of rationality.

Now that the world is multicultural, it is a salient question to ask whether the standards of one culture can be universalized, especially in the context of criteriological diversities within cultures and between cultures. The problem that arises from the intra-cultural and trans-cultural controversies over the outcome of analysis and the criteria set by prescription is that of clash of cultures.

Owing to a number of circumstances such as dependence, war and conquest, colonialism and imperialism, some cultures have been submerged and superimposed upon by others. Although it is logically possible that a dependent or over-run culture is not required to imbibe the language of the benefactor-culture or the invading stronger culture, the case had been factually different for Africa.

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[16] J. Obi Oguejiofor, *Philosophy and The African Predicament* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2001).

The case of Africa had been that colonialism forced the alien cultures and languages on the continent so perniciously that the opposite appears unthinkable. This situation is what in the views of many had led to what is referred to as 'the African predicament'.[17] The predicament involves the bruising of the people's spirit, the denigration of their humanity, the denial of their rationality, the dissolution of their identities, the inferiorization of their creativity and the devaluation of their languages by the cultures that vanquished and colonized them. Although each of the aspects of this predicament had been the subject of intense analysis and critiques according to varying interests, the language aspect of it has excited the critical responses of literary scholars and philosophers. [18]

The Problem of Language in African Philosophy

Contemporary African philosophy could be tersely characterized as the critical inquiry into African cultures on the one hand, and as the critical inquiry into other cultures from African perspectives. This characterization permits the possibility of non-Africans doing serious credible African philosophy, [19] and which also ably accommodates issues of African cultures, but are of human general interest as well as having bearing on African cultures. In other words, African philosophy is an integral part of world philosophy, dealing with fundamental issues pertaining to African life and fundamental global human questions as informed by the African conception, perception and experience of life. This holistic conception of African philosophy implies that African is neither equivalent to nor synonymous with philosophy by Africans, or philosophy in Africa, or philosophy for Africa, and not limited to philosophy about Africa. [20]

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[17] See; Lekan Oyegoke, "Language, Identity and the African Literary Traditions: A Theoretical Appraisal." In *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Literatures*, vol.1, 1993. pp. 57–65.

[18] Notable examples are Barry Hallen and Wim van Bimsbergen.

[19] M. Òkè, "Wiredu's Theory and Practice of African Philosophy." In *Second Order: An African Journal of African Philosophy* (n.s) Vol.1, no. 1, 1988., and "Modeling the Contemporary African Philosopher: Kwasi Wiredu in Focus." In O. Oladipo, ed., *The Third Way in African Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Wiredu* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2002).

[20] ibid

Although this conception of African philosophy tend to pre-empt the force of the language problem, the issues that have been thrown up will be examined. Two issues stand out as bases for the problem. These are; *the rationality debate*.[21] and the *search for identity*. [22] They are closely related to the question of African philosophising. The rationality debate on the part of Western scholars degenerated into a ridiculous racial and intellectual denigration of Africans. [23] Western scholars, for quite a long while, vehemently denied rationality to Africans (much alike to Robinson Crusoe's perception of Man Friday). Africans in almost all intellectual disciplines had to fight tooth and nail to gain presumptive rationality or to partial accreditation for their claim of rationality. Eventually, the issue became a meta-question as to the nature of rationality and the question of the possibility of cross-cultural understanding in a world of many languages.

Concerning the rationality debate, the general trend of thought is that no one paradigm of rationality can be used to define human rationality, or to be the measure of rationality for all of humankind. Although that there are certain culturally universals features of human thought, it is also the case that there are culturally relative features of rationality. And although the rationality debate could be seen as a source of the language problem in African philosophy, what deserves to be challenged is the use of this or that non-African language. As posited by Barry Hallen, [24] what ought to be the target of philosophical concern is the attempt of "sections of Western culture to hegemonizes its customs and mores (elements of

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21 B. Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 104.

22 D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

23 J. Obi Oguejiofor, "The Enlightenment Perception of Africans and the *Self-Image of Western Philosophy.*" In *Philosophy and Praxis: Journal of Nigerian Philosophical Association*, Vol. 1, 2005, pp. 84–100.

24 B. Hallen, "Contemporary Anglophone African Philosophy: A Survey." In Kwasi Wiredu, ed., *A Companion to African Philosophy* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), p. 109 (99–148).

its 'folk' philosophy) as things that should be adopted by all cultures of the world on pain of eternal damnation." In other words, what should be resisted is (Western) cultural ethnocentrism", with a view to "Africa's liberation from pejorative cultural stereotypes."

In the context of the language problem, the pertinent question is one of methodology. How should the resistance to cultural ethnocentrism be carried out? Is it in the medium of indigenous African languages, or in the languages of the hegemonizing Westerners? Perhaps, it will be correct to say that the medium of the resistance should be in the African languages, if and only if the purpose is to achieve outlets for local pedagogy and cultural awareness. But, definitely, local languages cannot be used as media of cross-cultural resistance, since members of the 'alien' cultures cannot be engaged in the local languages of Africa. In other words, of what strategic value will it be to put our resistance arguments in languages that one's adversaries cannot understand?

The question of identity has been one that has generated much passion among African scholars generally.[25] The tendency of Western scholarship for upwards of two centuries now to deny the qualitative presence of Africa in the intellectual and creative world has led many soberly reflective African scholars and ideological Africanists to ask the question of who the African is. If all around and at every turn, you are told that you are nothing of a person, that you are a worthless thing, in spite of what you think about yourself, the tendency is to start feeling that they might be right, except you can prove your worth, your qualitative presence to them.

The question of African philosophy has two dimensions: the cultural dimension and the professional dimension. However, the conception of philosophy as the critique of cultures establishes a necessary connection between these two dimensions of identity in African philosophy.

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[25] Lekan Oyegoke, op.cit; and C. O. Sonaiya, op.cit., p. 17.

The cultural question of identity revolves around the question "What is African culture?" "Is there an 'African culture' outside the cultures of the conquering Westerners?" This issue hacks back to the rationality debate. It is like saying that all the cultural righteousness of Africans is like a filthy rag before Westerners. There is thus the felt need to identify and present our culture so as to silence our denigrators and re-assure ourselves of our threatened dignity as full members, rather than spectators, of the human family.

In African philosophy, the question of identity has two dimensions: cultural and professional. The definition of philosophy as the critique of cultures establishes a necessary connection between the two dimensions of identity in African philosophy. The question that arises from the cultural dimension is "What is African culture?" Connected to this, in the context of the challenge to the worth of Africans is: Is there an African culture outside of the cultures of the conquering Westerners?" So, there arose in the minds of concerned African philosophers, the felt need to identify and present our culture so as to silence our denigrators and re-assure ourselves of the health of our threatened dignity as full members of the human family.

For the African philosopher, the question of identity revolves around the question of authenticity. Many Western philosophers, and some Africans too, for upwards of two centuries now, had argued that there was no tradition of African philosophy, no specific African method of philosophy, no specific distinctive body of problems or solutions outside of Western problems and solutions of philosophy that could be referred to as 'African'. The term 'African Philosophy' was thus considered to be either vacuous or to be an appendage, an African caricaturized extension, of Western philosophy. This arises from the view of some Western scholars, such as Robin Horton that African languages were too primitive to be capable of being used for abstract thinking of the type that characterizes philosophy, mathematics and science. Either way, the claim is extremely discomforting , both

culturally and professionally. If we join Karp and Masolo to define African philosophy as a cultural inquiry, then we must be able to identify the culture(s) into which philosophers are inquiring. *Eo ipso*, by the content of their inquiries we should be able to identify those who qualify to be called 'African' – is it the pre-colonial, the colonial, or the post-colonial ways of life of Africans? – then, we cannot refer to anyone as an African philosopher and to any area of study as 'African philosophy'

In responding to the foregoing cultural and professional irritants, some philosophers, and scholars in other areas of the humanities, have zeroed in on language as an inalienable and distinctively validating element of every culture. The supposition that every culture is mirrored, preserved and transmitted by its language has informed the thinking that a culture can be best studied and understood in its own language.

In Makinde's view,[26] it is a misnomer to talk of doing African philosophy in a non-African language. Thus, he concludes that until African philosophy is being done – written and taught - in an African language, we cannot say that there is an African philosophy or that anyone can be called an African philosopher. In which case, "African philosophy may turn out in the future to be nothing but Western philosophy in an African guise. As to who may be called an African philosopher, there may be none.'[27]

While for Makinde the problem is more or less logico-analytic (conceptual), for Bongasu Kishani, it is a deeply ideological problem.[28] The contention of Kishani, which is not different from Makinde's, is that there should be an African language of African philosophy because it is anomalous to be doing African philosophy in a European language,

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[26] I. Karp and D. A. Masolo, eds. *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association with the International African Institute, London, 2000).

[27] M. Akin. Makinde, *African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional Medicine* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1988), pp. 54–58.

[28] Ibid.

as is now the case. The supporting arguments of his position, which are vastly different and more far-reaching, can be summarized under eight headings as follows.

- Cultural self-reliance
- Consequences of rejecting African languages
- Need to have and use a language that is rooted in an African cultural heritage
- The necessity for a culturally relevant language in every discipline
- The need to reverse the tendency to look down on our own languages as if they were not languages in the proper sense of that word [29]
- The need to vitiate the tendency to sideline African languages, on the notion that they were not suitable for the study of certain disciplines, including philosophy
- The need for Africans to gain a new decolonized perspective on ourselves
- The need to escape from the practical linguistic dilemma of using a foreign language and loosing sight of one's African identity, or adopting the cultural values of the foreign language or becoming a crusader for things foreign.

Concluding Remarks

The remarks to be made here do not constitute a solution to the language in African philosophy. Rather, they raise a number of questions that may be useful, as answers are being attempted for them, to arrive at the best response to the problem.

On a meta-theoretical level, there is the need to re-examine the extant views on the relationship between language and thought. There is also the need to attend to the mutual relationship of language, culture

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[29] B. T. Kishani, "On the Interface of Philosophy and Language in Africa: Some Practical and Theoretical Considerations." In *African Studies Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3. Dec. 2001. pp. 27–45.

(transmission and acquisition of). The thoughts that might be generated on these issues will constitute part of that aspect of African philosophy that has been characterized as "distinctive African contributions to global philosophising" [30].

The meta-theoretical issues notwithstanding, the language problem in African scholarship is a palpable problem that deserves critical attention on practical grounds and pragmatic considerations. This line of approach will have a bearing on non-academic aspects of African life that respond to the language issue.

The questions asked by Oyegoke [31] will be the platform for rounding this discussion up.

> *The English language, the French language, the Portuguese language, were languages of colonialism in Africa; today, at independence, these foreign languages have continued in their position of dominance and centrality in the political and cultural lives of Africans. Why is this so? Are the European languages of colonialism so crucial to survival in Africa that an alternative may not be considered? Has this cultural problem any wider political and economic implications for Africa's future?*

The choice and development of an African language for African philosophising is not. and cannot be, a task for philosophers. Given the facts of the situation on the continent, any attempt in that direction can only bring about strife, confusion and chaos that will go far beyond the confines of philosophy. Should each and every African philosopher start to write and teach in his or her African language, what practical or theoretical advantages will accrue therefrom? The supposition that people think better in their native languages, plausible though it might be, is not very plausible in the case of African academics who in body and soul belong to Western traditions of education and living.

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30 C. O. Sonaiya, op. cit.

31 Lekan Oyegoke, op.cit, p. 60.

Philosophers, irrespective of their locations or descent, belong to a global community of critical thinkers; as academics, they are unlimited and unrestricted by territorial, linguistic and cultural barriers. Doing African philosophy is thus not a reason to cut themselves off from the conversation of their epistemic community. African philosophers, and indeed, philosophers of any culture, if they are to be globally relevant must converse with their colleagues in languages that are commonly understood. Even assuming that it becomes practicable for Africans to philosophise in their native languages, given the prevailing climate of knowledge production, validation and accreditation, they must still publish their philosophical ideas and research findings to the philosophical world in one or the other of the global languages. By virtue of the historical antecedents of our African-European multilingualism, that has not yet been re-enacted in our favour, the need to use a European language for official, academic and public purposes is almost a natural need; it is not just a want (or an acquired need). It is through it that we can be a part of the world, especially in realization of the grim fact that there is absolutely neither reason nor necessity for Europeans, or other non-Africans, to want to learn or speak African languages.

It is also pertinent to ask how the teaching of philosophy will be conducted in an African language in a class comprising students from three or more disparate African languages. The example of Nigeria's hundreds of languages that are largely incomprehensible to one another presents the continental problem very succinctly. The use of European languages to write and teach philosophy does not entail adopting European models as the ideals and the norms for every African connected to Western systems of education. The assumption that is being contested here is that language necessarily acculturates. Perhaps, a more plausible relationship between language and culture is that of vehicle and passenger. Where the passenger is not the owner of the vehicle, traveling does not make him possess the vehicle. Besides, a

vehicle can convey an infinite number of passengers during its life: a language could thus convey many cultures without anyone of them claiming the language to be exclusively its. The idea of a one language one culture relationship appears to be intuitively implausible.

In African philosophy, which is still being largely done and taught in European languages, a significant level of decolonization has already been achieved. African cultures are being rigorously interrogated. African concepts and conceptual schemes are being analysed without necessary reference to similar European concepts, authentic African narratives are being articulated and studied independently of any European models – in philosophy as in literature.

The essentially oral nature of African cultures is being taken into the most serious consideration in contemporary African philosophy. The current research methods of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ordinary language analysis [32] have almost adequately taken good care of the cultural inquiry by which African philosophy is defined.

There is therefore absolutely no point in regretting the 'colonial inheritance' of having to learn, write and teach philosophy in European languages. Rather, it should be seen as a stroke of good fortune for Africans – they become at once bilingual and bicultural. Africans, therefore, need not bemoan their having to learn and use European languages; they should rather count it as an advantage over the Europeans who can neither speak nor understand African languages, and who are not required by any compelling circumstances to have to learn any African language. What Africans need do to make maximum use of this linguistic/cultural advantage is to continually improve on their competences in their native African languages and in as many European languages as they can find the time and energy to acquire. If they are able to philosophize competently in their native languages as well as they can in their acquired European languages, then they

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[32] M. Òkè, "Wiredu's Theory and Practice of African Philosophy." In *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 1 no. 1, 1988, pp. 91-107.

would clearly have become better than their European counterparts, at least with respect to African philosophy. The regrettable thing is that the large majority of us cannot utilize our native languages for any academic purpose. The situation is worsened by the fact that most of our students are grossly deficient in both their native languages and the European language in which they are being taught.

The application of Ockam's Razor (the principle of parsimony) instructs us that for efficient global communication and transactions in philosophy, as well as in the sciences, the wisest option is to have a small set of world languages for the use of all. There is such a small set on ground at the moment. The languages in that select set, mostly European, have come to be so as a result of many centuries of historical accidents and deliberate designs. Incidentally, there is no African language in that set. This could not have been otherwise, all circumstances considered. Even on the continent of Africa, there has never been any set of African languages for continental, or for regional or national, communication across ethnic borders. This is so because of the non-primacy of any one language among the multitude of languages in most of the countries of the continent.

In the absence of force, the declaration of any local language as the language of African philosophy in a multilingual and multicultural society cannot but be socially disruptive,[33] even in the localized community of that society's philosophers. No matter how the choice is arrived at, there would still be some philosophers in that country who would not have been empowered to develop and express their thoughts in their native languages. Hence, the situation will not be different, at least for those whose languages were not chosen, from the present situation about which Kishani complained. In such a

[33] The example of Madagascar is instructive. In 1959 it adopted Malagasy as the sole official language. But, that did not last because of the unmanageable rivalry between the different dialects of Malagasy and the impossibility of standardizing the language. The country had to go back to French as the sole official language since then (reported in C. O. Sonaiya, op cit. 18).

situation, further more, native speakers of the African languages that were not chosen for African philosophy would have been victims of linguistic oppression, and by extension of the argument of the linkage between language and culture, would have been subjected to cultural terrorism.

The project of adopting or inventing an African language of African philosophy could be likened to attempting to re-invent the wheel. On either theoretical or practical grounds, it will be colossally counter-productive for the discipline of African philosophy. Such a project will also be unprofessionally excluding non-Africans and Africans who cannot speak the chosen African language.

ANALYSING MAN AS A SOCIAL AND CONSCIENCE ENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This discourse presents the intellectual, social and conscience nature of man. It further argued on the pre-conceived notion of man as a being with conscience, which directs him to good and enables him to avoid and solve the problems that surround and confront him. Moreover, the discours locates the human family as the foundation of human conscience by its nature and position as the starting point of human life, social experience, and solution seeking in the society.

Introduction

'Man' is a generic word signifying the human person in male and female form.[1] It is pertinent to note that the context to which man is used in this work is not in the gender discriminative, rather it is gender universal. The human person here is distinct from other creatures in the sense that he possesses some features like reason, will, self-consciousness and freedom. These features are not totally lacking in other creatures. However, in man, they transcend the instincts and reactions of animals. Considering the complexity that is involved in the definition of man, man's definition is dealt with in the context of the nature of his conscience and his response to the society in which nature has confided him.

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[1] Stravinskas M. J. Peter, *Catholic Encyclopedia,* Our Sunday Visitor, 1991, p. 617.

The etymology of the word society comes from the Latin word *societas*, meaning friendly association with others.[2] Society refers to a group of people living together in an ordered community.[3] The emphasis here is on group living. Furthermore; society can also be defined as the totality of interaction among individuals.[4] There is a stress here not just on particular interaction or badges of interactions but on the totality of social relationships among humans. Another pertinent definition of society is that it is an aggregate of interacting individuals whose relations are governed by role-conferring rules and practices, which give their actions their characteristic significance.[5] Two things are important in this definition; 'role' as an obligation of the individual group or government and 'rule' that governs the individual. To speak of rule implies the idea of legislating and executing. This also suggests governing. Thus as a way of résumé from the above definitions, society possesses the following characteristics: group living, totality of social interaction (relation), distinctiveness in the sense of obligation, laws and government.

The term *social* is derived from the Latin word *socius*, which as a noun means *an associate, ally, business partner or comrade* and the adjectival form *socialis* refers to *a bond between people or to their collective or connected existence.*[6] The word social has a lot to do with society as the preceding idea of society already suggests . It is pertinent to note that 'social' is related to human society and its modes of organization: *social classes; social problem; a social issue...living* together in an organized group or similar close aggregates. Ants are social insects.[7]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau described conscience as an innate principle of justice and virtue by which we judge our own or other men's actions to be good or evil.[8] Commenting on this, Joseph

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2 Answers.com: Society

3 Answers.com: Society

4 Stravinskas M. J. Peter: *Catholic Encyclopedia,* p. 895

5 Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

6 Aswers.com: Social

7 Aswers.com: Social

8 Joseph Omoregbe, *Ethics A Systematic and Historical Study* (Lagos Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 1993), p. 89.

Omoregbe opines that "conscience....is an innate feeling, a strong natural impulse which urges man towards good action and sways him away from evil action.[9] In the history of moralists and philosophers, there has been the following understanding of conscience:

> *The will of a divine power expressing itself in man's judgment, an innate sense of right and wrong resulting from man's unity with the universe, an inherited intuitive sense evolved in the long history of the human race, and a set of values derived from the experience of the individual.*[10]

However, the Stoic, consider *conscientia* (conscience) to be the ultimate and autonomous judge of human actions.[11] Be that as it may, to have conscience involves being conscious of the moral quality of what one has done, or intends to do.[12] Psychologists also differ in their analysis of the nature of conscience. For them, conscience is the part of the superego that judges the ethical nature of one's action and thoughts and then transmits such determinations to the ego for consideration.[13] In all however, to talk about conscience is to raise the question of good and evil and a preferable choice of good over evil.

It is therefore logical to understand social conscience as the conscious knowledge of the good and evil that prevail in a society. The knowledge of these good and evil does not on its own essentially fulfills the requirement of social conscience. The development of this knowledge and the need for active participation in the promotion of good and the discouragement of evil or its eradication in the society fulfill the requirement of social conscience.

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9 Ibid, p. 89.

10 Answers.com: conscience

11 Stravinskas M. J. Peter: *Catholic Encyclopedia*. p. 250.

12 *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London, Routledge 2000).

13 Aswers.com: *conscience.*

The Philosophical Nature of Man

Man is a highly dynamic being... man is gifted with a superlative dynamism, a dynamism which is enormously superior to that of every other being of this world.[14] The dynamic nature of man has made man complicated and unpredictable such that Mondin will refer to man as an "impossible possibility". Cosmologies have shown that man does not emanate out of nothingness. Being a part of the universe. man owes his origin to a necessary, infinitely perfect person, who, as first cause of the universe, produced all contingent beings by a unique kind of efficient causality, creation.[15] Essentially the nature of man is both physical and metaphysical, body and soul, matter and form. Man is not just what is empirically verifiable. His being extends beyond this physical universe. Little wonders that Pantaleon in buttressing this fact states that- nobody can doubt the complexities of the human reality. It has different aspects: physio-psychic, emotive-mental, material and natural supernatural dimness.[16]

In truth, however, man is an animal; a portion of the natural flux; and the consequence is that his nature has a moving center, his functions an external reference and his ideal a true ideality. What he strives to preserve to himself, is something, which he never has been at any particular moment. He maintains his equilibrium by motion. His goal is in a sense beyond him, since it is not his experience, but a form which all experience, ought to receive. The inmost texture of his being is propulsive, and there is nothing more intimately bound up with his success than mobility and devotion to transcended aims.[17] In the

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[14] Mondin Battista, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Theological University Press, Bangalore India. Urbania University Press, Rome. 1985), p. 25.

[15] Higgins J., Thomas, *Man as Man: The Science and Art of Ethics* (The Bruce Publishing Company Milwaukee, 1949), p. 20.

[16] Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Methaphysics: the Kpim of Philosophy* (Owerri: International University Press Ltd, 1995), p. 20.

[17] George Santayana , *Reason in Society*, Vol. 2: *The Life of Reason* (New York: Diver Publication, INC; 1980), p. 3.

history of philosophy, some prominent philosophers have described man in the following terms.

> *A rational animal* (Aristotle) *chained Prometheus* (Sophocles) *a fallen soul* (Plato), *an image of the logos* (Philo), *an image of God* (Origen), *or rational subsistent* (Thomas), *a thinking reed* (Pascal) *a mode of substance* (Spinoza) *will of power* (Nietzsche), *symbolic being* (Heidegger), *alienated essence* (Cassirer) *incarnate spirit* (Mournier), *utopic being* (Scheler). [18]

From the above description of man, more emphasis is placed on man's faculty of thought and his rationality. This quality is what makes man distinct among other beings. It is the bedrock upon which man explore his other qualities. Man is able to reflect on his experience and proffer answers to some fundamental questions that emanates from him because he possesses this quality. Even though man is not able to provide absolute answers to question of which he is both the questioner and the questioned, to some extent man has exploited himself, his environment more than any contingent being. He undoubtedly stands distinct in comparison to other contingent beings.

However, considering the sometimes, inhuman, animalistic actions of man, the questions that must be asked: can man really justify himself worthy of all these qualities that are ascribed to him even though most of his actions cannot be differentiated from those of other contingent beings? Why would one man keep to himself more than enough resources that are supposed to be shared with others? Why should man brutally put an end to the life of another man? Naturally, man's environment is blessed with rich human and natural resources. If man is truly a rational being, social or conscience being, why is he not able to utilize these resources in such a way that it benefits the entire society in which he finds himself? Is there no harmony between rationality and goodness? Do thinking and reflecting

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18 Mondin Battista, op. cit., p. 1.

which man is associated with negates good? How consistent is the rational activity of man? This man, is he the same if put in the perspective of time and space? Is man really man? Or is it that man of a particular space is more man than man found in another space?

Mondin, thus asserts that man is really an 'impossible possibility'. Man is the supreme question for man. To pin down who man really is would not only just be difficult, but also impossible for the question 'Who is man?' This is the interrogative of all interrogatives – the most pressing and piercing interrogative of all. Yet it is always new; it is concrete, not abstract, personal, and not generic. It is the interrogative that everyone must affront and resolve.[19] This impossibility not withstanding, man has a focus, a wish and a desire. This desire is to discover and live a good life, which is the healthy, the happy, the socially useful, and the rich or fully developed life.[20] Considering the difficulties that are at stake in defining man, to hit the nail on the head, we shall dwell on two distinctly important aspects about man. These are his conscience and his social nature respectively.

Man as a Conscience Being

One of man's greatest abilities is self-direction. This is solely gingered by the intellect. The intellect complements the conscience in its judgment between right and wrong actions. Eli Sagan considers conscience as the primary mechanism in the psyche whereby conflicts between basic love and aggression are resolved in a moral (that is, loving) manner.[21] In the most radical sense, as Eric Mount puts it, man does not have a conscience; he is conscience.[22] It is pertinent to

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[19] Pantaleon Iroegbu , op. cit., p. 82.

[20] Joseph A. Ilori, *Moral philosophy in African Context* (Zaria: A.B.U. Press Limited, 1995), p. 1.

[21] Eli Sagan, *The Psychology of Good and Evil* (New York: Basic Book, Inc, 1964), p. 164.

[22] E. Conn Walter, *Conscience Development and Self-Transcendence* (Birmingham Alabama Religious Education Press, 1981), p. .9

note here that this does not contradict the idea of many psychologists who understand the conscience simply as the product of social conditioning, indistinguishable from the moral.[23] Is man naturally a conscience being? In Rousseau's state of nature, the fundamental ethical principle is that man is naturally good and that there is no original perversity or sin in human nature.[24]

Omoregbe asserts that for Rousseau, man lived peacefully in his innocence. He was happy and had very few needs. The only good he recognizes in the universe are food, a female and sleep; the only evil he fears are pain and hunger.[25] Since conscience promotes good and discourages evil. Rousseau postulates that man is good by nature. Man is naturally a conscience being. Man does not acquire conscience as it is an innate quality that man naturally possesses from conception. Love is not the result but the foundation of conscience. Conscience becomes important in situations of conflict, when love is challenged by instinctual forces in opposition to it.[26] It is as a result of this that conscience can be weakened. It is fragile. It can be greatly affected such that it will not be felt anymore, when conscience is weakened and not felt. When man lost his greatest gift of self-direction, when man lost himself since man is conscience, the repercussion is evil. Evil has many consequences: poverty, war, strife, etc. Evil in Rousseau's theory originated with organized society, which itself originated with the possession of private property. The first man who claimed a piece of land as his private property was the founder of civil society with it concomitant evils.[27] However for Thomas Hobbes, in man's primitive states, the notions of right and wrong, justice and

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23 Walter E. Conn, *Conscience Development and Self Transcendence,* p. 9

24 Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: The Enlightenment-Voltaire to Kant.* (London Continuum, 1960), p. 67.

25 Joseph Omoregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy,* Vol. 2: *Modern Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd), p. 5

26 Eli Sagan, op. cit. p. 163.

27 Joseph Omoregbe , op. cit. p. 52.

injustice, have no place.[28] To deny right and wrong, justice and injustice is to deny conscience. Therefore, for Hobbes, in his natural state man has no conscience; conscience only came to play through the organization of society. It is through the establishment of the common wealth that peace and civilization can be attained.

If man is a conscience being, it implies that there was never a time in the past or in the future when man will cease to be a conscience being. The postulations of Rousseau and Hobbes respectively may be exaggerated; however, it is fair enough to note that societal organization and disorganization have their positive and negative impact on man's conscience. As far as the history of man is concerned, it is a fundamental fact that, the human person is characterized by a drive towards a demand for the realization of value.[29] The human person is a conscience being.

Man as a Social Being

Man, the union of spirit and matter placed in this world but with a hold upon eternity, has certain needs (to be born, reared, taught, fed, protected), which can only be met by the co-operation of his fellow men.[30] The long childhood of man has made it possible and needful to transmit acquired experience: possible because the child's brain, being immature, allows instincts and habits to be formed after birth, under the influence of that very environment in which they are to operate, since children are incapable of providing for themselves and compel their parents, if the race is not to die out, to continue their care, and diversify it.[31] Man has potentialities as a human being. These potentialities cannot be develop unless man co-operate with his fellow

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[28] Copleson Frederick, A History of Philosophy: *British Philosophy Hobbes to Hume*. p. 33

[29] Walter E. Conn; op. cit., p. 12

[30] F. J Sheed, *Communism and Man*. London: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1938. p. 104

[31] George Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 3

man: Man depends on others to serve his needs, to provide the means and circumstances which enable him to develop himself and attain the goal of life, namely, happiness. This is evident in the helpless situation of a newborn baby.

> *A newborn human baby is helpless. Not only is it physically dependent on other members of the species but it also lacks the behaviour patterns necessary for living in human society. It relies primarily on certain biological drive such as hunger and the charity of its elders to satisfy these drives...it must learn the skills, knowledge and accepted ways of behaving in the society in which it is born.*[32]

As Aristotle would say, he who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself must either be a beast or a god.[33] The common immediate contact that man experiences is the family, and its function is to rear... to foster and perfect a life after it has been awakened, to co-operate with a will already launched into the world.[34] But the family itself is limited to satisfying the needs of its members. Thus, the families therefore are united in the society. This is explicitly stated in Omoregbe's analysis of Aristotle's social and political philosophy.

> *The family is the fundamental society established according to the law of nature to provide man's daily needs. But man's needs are not limited to these daily needs, which the family provides. Hence the next stage, says Aristotle, is the village, the first association of a number of houses for the satisfaction of something more than daily needs. But the village is not self-sufficient and some of man's needs cannot be adequately satisfied by the village. Hence a higher*

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32 Michael Haralambos, *Sociology: Theme and Perspectives (* Great Britain University Tutorial Press, 1980), p. 3.

33 Joseph Omoregbe, *History of Western Philosophy.* Vol. 1, p. 65.

34 George Santayana, op. cit., p. 38

society, the final association, formed of several villages naturally springs up and this is the state[35]

Man is of course a social animal. Therefore, he needs society so that he may come safely into being, and then that he may have something interesting to do... It would be gross and pedantic superstition to venerate any form of society in itself, apart from the safety, breadth, or sweetness, which it lent to individual happiness.[36] Man's social being is not a choice but a necessity. He could not have escaped it. Man's social being is not just materialistic or physical. Man's social being is even metaphysical. In Plato's description of the world of form, he stated that the form of good is dominant. Every other form participates in the form of good, which is the unifying principle of all the forms.[37] The good is the paramount principle of intelligibility, will, unity and order.[38] Not only contemporary life but also all of human history emphatically testifies that men do not live isolated lives but have ever acted as members of some group.[39] This negates Thomas Hobbes description of the original man as a lone marauder whose hand was against every other man.[40] Society, as important as it is to man, is not simply a necessary evil...rather, society is a positive good. Only in it can man be fully himself.[41]

Man's Freedom and Obligation in the Society

Freedom is one of the distinguishing marks of man's nature. To be a person is to be able to choose what one will be and do, and not merely to follow the bidding of instinctive or mechanical necessity.[42]

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35 Joseph Omoregbe, op. cit., p. 65.
36 George Santayana, op. cit., p. 53.
37 Joseph Omoregbe, op. cit., p. 41.
38 Pantaleon Iroegbu, op. cit., p. 137.
39 Peter Higgins S.J ., op. cit., p. 359.
40 ibid
41 F. J. Sheed, *Society and Sanity* (London: Sheed and Ward 1953), p. 136
42 Joseph Ilori, A: *Moral Philosophy in African Context*, p. 95.

Many regard freedom as a birth right such that a person is somehow less human without it. Man, beyond being intelligent, is also highly free. Nevertheless, freedom cannot identify itself with human nature, although it makes up part of his essence.[43] Unlike conscience or social nature of man, freedom is a goal to be attained rather than a possession guaranteed by nature.[44] To accept freedom as human nature is to assert that there are individuals who are less than fully human since they still struggle to become free which imply the striving for complete humanity. Freedom is a controversial concept that has no universally accepted definition. As Mondin states:

> *Freedom is the faculty which man has of being master and author of his own actions. It is a sublime but also very dangerous power in the hands of man. It is a weapon of dual stature; it can be adopted either for good or for evil. It can serve man for the cultivation, the promotion, the evaluation, and the full realization of his own being - but, it can also serve to obtain the opposite effect to degrade, humiliate and annihilate his own being.*[45]

This is why in some cases, freedom is not always completely realized. It is suppressed and denied in unfavourable social circumstance such as in freedom to live in a comfortable environment, good shelter, to chose a leader, acquire primary resources for survival like food, clean water and a score of others; are hard to come by.

The rights of man in society are generally divided into three classes: moral rights, civil rights and political rights. The natural rights of man are of three fundamental kinds: the right to life, liberty, and property.[46] These imply being, doing and having. They are the most important rights without which man becomes nothing in the society. The civil and political rights are secondary. They concern those claims which

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43 Battista Mondin, op. cit., p. 106.

44 Joseph Ilori, op. cit., p. 95.

45 Battista Mondin, op. cit., p. 117.

46 Joseph Ilori, op. cit., p. 99.

an individual is held to have by virtue of his membership in a civil society. The political rights include the claims an individual may make by virtue of his membership in a State or political order.

As much as man is free and has some rights in society, he also has some obligations in society. The fundamental duties of man are respect for the right of others, which includes life, freedom, property and character of other persons. Also very important in this category is respect for the moral order and the law in which the moral order is embodied. Another obligation is responsible leadership. Indeed, the excellence of society is measured by what they provide for their members. A cumbrous and sanctified social order manifest dullness, cannot subsist without it. It immerses man in instrumentalities, weighs him down with atrophied organs, and by subjecting him eternally to fruitless sacrifices, it renders him stupid and superstitious and ready to be tyrannical when the opportunity occurs.[47] In seeking position of leadership man should aim at good service for the community not for his gains. All things being equal another duty of man is the respect for constituted authorities. It is however easy to respect honest and just leadership good values. But what about leaders who lie, who make laws for personal gain, and who hold opposite political view from the led in all ramifications?

> *Leaders deserve our respect. In other words, every citizen must give due respect and be obedient to the governing authority. However, honouring leaders and being subject to them does not mean that a citizen must blindly obey everything. There are limits to obedient. But we cannot show this respect simply because we are not shown the respect we deserve.*[48]

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[47] George Santayana, op. cit., p. 38.

[48] Joseph Ilori, op. cit., p. 101.

Conclusion

This discourse has presented the conscience nature of man which every normal member of human society possesses. Our understanding is that man in the exercise of freedom, intellectual reasoning and living in the society confides self to cooperate with others. His conscience, which directs him to good, enables him to avoid and solve the problems that surround and confront him. The inability of man as member of human society to avoid these problems or to solve them has been noted as a function of weak social conscience. However, no matter how weak the social conscience of man is in the society it can be awakened, although man must develop a moral underpining that can aid him achieve this. When the social conscience of man is strong and resilient, the society will survive and thrive, but when the social conscience is weak and fragile, the society's capacity for social progress will continue to become impaired. In order to develop good social conscience in the society, we have to start from the root. The family is the root and the starting point of social experience of every human being. It is the foundation and beginning of every human life, which is also the starting point of solution seeking in the society.

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[49] Paul G. Elbrecht, *Politics and Government* (London Concordia Limited, . 1965), p. 84.

NATIONALISM, IDENTITY AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN LIBERAL STATES

By
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In the simulacrum of the nation's simultaneity, in the artifice of the people's unison arises, uncannily, the sepulchral otherness of national identity. Homi K. Bhabha [1]

ABSTRACT

This paper shows, *inter alia*, how liberal States are based on an exclusionary *civic nationalism* despite their pretension to universalism. It attempts to demonstrate why the liberal 'democratic' culture is ill-suited as a basis for a democratic politics that can adequately articulate and redress the grievances of marginal identities. It tries to debunk the assumption of completeness that lies behind the conventional conception of the modern liberal State.

Introduction

The central concern of the leadership of most plural States is to establish and maintain a modicum of national identity. This concern is supposedly unrealisable in the undemocratic atmosphere created by political conflicts of various kinds. Thus, this demands that the leadership of plural States should see to democratization of the structures of governance. The prevalence of the democratic slogan in contemporary socio-political situations, and the insistence of almost all States that they are 'democratic,' however, turns reality on its head. Most of these States' democratic sloganeering serves as a façade for authoritarian political policies and actions.

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[1] Homi K. Bhabha, "A Question of Survival: Nations and Psychic States." In James Donald, ed. *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: Thresholds* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 90.

This situation gives rise to a paradox that must be resolved within democratic theory. One of the cornerstones of democratic theory is that political conflicts, especially of the identity/ethno-national types, are best managed in a democratic system; yet this same system is seemingly complicit in aggravating these conflicts. The leadership in most plural States easily manipulate democratic structures and procedures to perpetrate certain power manoeuvres that eventually lead to the emergence of identity politics and other political crises. Alan Ryan remarks that:

> *It is as well to begin by observing that on most understanding of democracy, it makes perfectly good sense to be opposed to it for a variety of reasons, ranging from the tendency of democratic governments to accommodate themselves to the short-term wishes of their electorate and in the process to wreck the environment in which their (non-voting) descendants will live to the tendency of democracy to elevate smooth-talking sales men to positions of authority that they do not deserve.*[2]

Democracy and democratic governance is also the question of justice since democracy is a system of government most likely to secure a measure of justice for the citizens. If this is granted, then the fact that most modern democratic States are also examples of political and economic centralization raises the problem of the political incorporation of the citizens. The hope raised by democratic governance as a standard of justice is quickly dimmed by the practice of *differential* political incorporation in most plural States. This invokes the spectre of injustice. The pertinent questions are: what moral imperative compels a people to support a system that is less likely to secure for them a good and just society? How does a democratic system deal with a 'crisis of justice', a persistent cry which, most of the time, to quote Stanley Cavell, is one "that expresses a sense not of having lost out in an unequal yet fair struggle, but of having from the start being left out"?[3]

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[2] Alan Ryan, "Political Philosophy." In A. C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 392.

[3] Stanley Cavell, cited in Chantal Mouffe, "Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy." In Mouffe, ed., *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 10.

The answers become clear when we note that the prevalence of democracy in the contemporary political situation is ironically premised on the received orthodoxy of the Nation-State. This is the principle of 'one State, one culture' within the political context of cultural pluralism. What we can call the *centripetal condition* of the modern democratic State and the discriminatory incorporation of the citizens force a kind of majoritarian necessity on members of the State. This situation provides an illegitimising circumstance on government because it makes it possible for a permanent majority (or minority, as the case may be) to consistently exploit and dominate a permanent minority (or majority).

By way of justification, we must ask the question: why the liberal and not some other illiberal/nonliberal State or culture?[4] The following reasons can be suggested. One, liberal democracy has been touted as the most, if not the only, 'reasonable' modern expression and elaboration of the ancient, Athenian direct democracy. Two, this elaboration of democracy has been, via the global technological interconnectedness, transported to almost every part of the globe. Three, the concept of social identity and identity politics as a problem is meaningful within the liberal socio-political order. And four, this liberal social order lay claims to being the best of all possible worlds worth pursuing. For the liberals, all other alternatives are only *il*liberal (and hence negative and unreasonable) rather than *non*liberal (and hence positive and worthy of conversation).

The Liberal State as Paradigm

Donald Livingston warns that:

> *If not managed properly, philosophical ideas are easily transmuted, by a kind of alchemy, from speculative insights into aspects or modes of experience, into claims about the ultimate nature of something. Over time, Hobbes' fluid*

[4] A typical liberal will reject the characterization of liberalism as a 'culture' because it presupposes a particularity that negates its presumption to universalism.

speculative insight into the merits of a certain mode of political association has hardened into a philosophical fundamentalism which bears more than a superficial resemblance to religious fundamentalism. But the Hobbesian unitary State is only one idiom of many that can be taken in the adventure of modern politics.[5]

This theoretical *faux pas* illustrates not only the complacence of liberalism in contradistinction to other nonliberal social orders, but also reveals the fatal basis on which the liberal democratic State is erected. It is noteworthy that the idea of the Hobbesian unitary State dominated at a period when America was explicitly, through a brutal civil war, transforming itself from its initial federated and decentralized character into a homogeneous central State, "aggressively nationalist and in the service of a universalist liberal ideology."[6] Indeed, Lord Acton reduces the American Civil War to the conflict of two basic ideas: "the defence of the rights of self-government [upheld by the Confederal Unionists] against the theory that there is a supreme, irresistible, and irresponsible power [upheld by Lincoln]."[7]

The problem of the State, Resnick remarks, is the current expression of the much older problem of the nature of power.[8] Modern sovereignty points out crucially to the consolidation of the statist perspective in politics that sees the State as bearing a dominant rule over society through its pervasive institutions—the cabinet, civil service, legislature, armed forces, police, and even the political party—and independent from social groups or foreign organizations. The central State therefore operates triumphantly throughout the world in an overbearing manner.

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5 Donald W. Livingston, "The Very Idea of Secession," *Society*, vol. 35 No. 5, July/August, 1998, p. 45.

6 Ibid., p. 40.

7 Lord Acton, cited in Livingston, p. 43.

8 Philip Resnick, "The functions of the modern state: in search of a theory." In Ali Kazancigil, ed., *The State in Global Perspective* (Paris: UNESCO, 1986), p. 155.

There are two essential points that the above analysis reveals about the centralized State. One is the already obvious presumption that the State represents some absolute power against its own citizens. This presumption is serviced by what Onesimo calls the 'monistic power philosophy', the strategy of rule that takes power as an indivisible totality. Consequently, political power becomes a nonfragmentable whole to which the people must be subjected in order to realize the State's aspiration to nationhood and national identity.[9]

The second presumption of the centralized State is simply that, given its arrogation of absolute power to itself, it putatively becomes a *complete* entity that stands alone in the facilitation of the project of constructing the good life for its members. In other words, the completeness of the State automatically precludes any project of rethinking or reconstitution. This perception of States as the "fully present, complete political actors" on the world stage is crucial to the understanding of traditional thinking in international relations. It emerged from the neo-realist's assumption that the State is ontologically prior to the State system; the international structure is therefore to be understood as the "external joining of given, already completed, fully formed States-as-actors." On the contrary, however, Devetak contends that one cannot point in fact to a completed State, only to statecraft, which indicates a State struggling against failure. He further argues that:

> *Statecraft names the activity by which States are maintained and given form; it is the ongoing political*

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[9] Silveira Onesimo, *Africa South of the Sahara: Party Systems and Ideologies of Socialism* (Uppsala: Publication of the Political Science Association, 1976), pp. 78-79. He uses the term "monistic power philosophy" to characterize the African political systems, but it should not be difficult to see that Africa is only reacting to the consequences of nation-statism imported from Europe. While the consequence may be acute here, the manifestations remain the same in all centralized States.

> *struggle to prevent the founding of the State from becoming a foundering. So statecraft, as the constant maintenance of the State, does not so much bring about the completion of the State as constantly attempt to cancel inconveniences and threats to its maintenance.... In sum, statecraft is a paradoxical notion, for it is a sign of the ceaseless activity of (re)constituting the State, and the impossibility of ever completing the State, once and for all, by closing it off (bounding it) in a unified totality.*[10]

The State is *incomplete* in the sense that it cannot hope to wholly, on its own terms and given its assumptions, fashion and maintain the *national project*. This project is the attempt by the State to rally its citizens around one homogeneous national identity. If the Nation-State exists for the sake of the people, then it takes only a little reflection to see that these same people must be an active part of the project that the State is arrogating exclusively to itself. This consideration is further strengthened by the Aristotelian dictum that man is a political animal whose potentials could only be fulfilled within the context of the State.

The State's presumption to absoluteness and completeness critically undermines the crucial point that constitutional governments, in order to be operative and attain their goals, need to complement their constitutional powers with a *large* degree of political consensus. Legitimacy defines the limits of the modern State. In the State's presumptions we have the seed of illegitimacy, the interrogation of the popular support given the State by its members. This is made possible by the State's predilection, given its hierarchical structures, to privilege some elements while subordinating others.

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[10] Richard Devetak, "Incomplete states: theories and practices of statecraft." In John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater, eds., *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1995), pp. 20-21

Liberalism and the Liberal Culture

Liberalism is most commonly characterized as a theory of neutral pluralism. This reflects the liberals preference for defining liberalism as a theory that designates not a pervasive social order, but seeks "the delimitation of the moral authority of the State in order to shield individuals from having what are for them indigestible moral beliefs and practices coercively thrust upon them."[11] Proponents of the liberal tradition are critical of the supposed need of forcing a particular conception of the *common good* on individuals that inhabit the political community instead of being mindful of their *preferences*. Thus, "my essential interest in leading a good life is not advanced when society polarizes, or discriminates against, the project that I, on reflection, believe are most valuable for me."[12]

For Beiner, liberalism possesses two distinctive meanings. These are: (1) liberalism as a political doctrine, referring to the liberal urge to circumscribe the authority of the State as a legislator of morality. Following Rawls, *political liberalism*, (2) "liberalism as a social order, elsewhere labelled 'the regime of the modern bourgeoisie'..."[13] There is a tenuous line between (1) and (2). This line is easily transgressed despite the liberals' protestation to the contrary.

It is unproblematic to arrive at what has been called the 'fundamental liberal principle.' At the most minimal level, for Cranston, "a liberal is a man who believes in liberty" or accords it a

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[11] For an insight into this controversy, and why such a view of liberalism as an interrogation of the State's moral authority is prejudiced, see Ronald Beiner, "What Liberalism Means." In Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr. and Jeffrey Paul ,eds., *The Communitarianism Challenge to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 190-206. The quotation is from p. 192

[12] John Rawls, paraphrased by Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 77

[13] Ronald Beiner, "What Liberalism Means," pp. 192-193

primary place as a political value.[14] A consummate liberal, without doubt, is J.S Mill. The essence of his argument in *On Liberty* is that the burden of proof is always on those who would want to place any kind of prohibition on human freedom: "The *a priori* assumption is in favour of freedom..."[15]

From this perspective, we can begin to see how the concept of State neutrality or negative freedom becomes central to the understanding of liberalism. Kymlicka offers an explanation:

> *According to liberalism, since our most essential interest is in getting these beliefs right and acting on them, government treat people as equal, with equal concern and respect, by providing for each individual the liberties and resources needed to examine and act on these beliefs.... [The concept of a "neutral political concern" is the idea] that people are entitled to "neutral concern" from the government—that is, equal concern regardless of their conception of the good (so long as it does not violate the rights of others), whether it is approved or disapproved by the majority in society, or by State officials.*[16]

A short way with this argument is to counter with the Foucaultian analysis of micro power. The essence of this analysis is that an emphasis on the coercive power of the State, which, for liberals, must be limited, unwittingly leaves a free ground for the virulent operation of the micro powers present in almost all facets of life. Beiner raises the same argument. The belief of liberals that the only threat worth combating is that of the coercive tendency of the State in fact leaves the presumed 'freedom' of the individual at the mercy of social forces. This raises

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[14] Maurice Cranston, cited in Gerald Gaus and Shane, D., Courtland,"Liberalism." *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2003 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed. Available at <http://www.plato.stanford.edu>

[15] J.S Mill, *On Liberty*, cited in Gaus, ibid.

[16] Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, pp. 13, 76

the question of how we can know that an individual is actually free without a prior inquiry into the whole fabric of life within a given society, "whether individuals are self-governing or brainwashed, manipulated in subtle and incalculable ways, and locked into forms of false consciousness by social forces (aside from the coercive powers of the State)."[17] The neutralism of the State (if there is indeed anything like that) is counteracted by the unneutral workings of the larger society. However, there are deeper implications.

Liberal political institutions are required to help cope with the consequent moral diversity and conflict that will be generated from each individual's conceived preferences. Ironically, though, this becomes negative since neutrality goes beyond the positive 'equal respect' to the problem of moral stalemate that such equal respect will provoke. This is not so damaging for liberals because any attempt by the State to violate the 'exclusion of ideals' principle[18] will unjustifiably violate the overwhelming 'fact of pluralism.' This fact—that individuals are committed to seemingly incommensurably different moral ideals and life projects—characterises contemporary societies. The advantage that liberalism has over other political theories, they claim, is to be found in its veneration of pluralism, a neutral political construct for the blooming of a thousand, opposing ways of life and conceptions of the good.

This neutral construct provides the conceptual backing for the liberal's view of an autonomous, choice-making individual who is not *constituted* by his life projects contrary to communitarian arguments. Rather, the liberal individual is conveniently *distanced* from such myriad and opposing ends and projects out of which he is at liberty to choose any which might further his essential interests.

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[17] Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 27

[18] This principle, formulated by J. Raz, is simply that governments cannot base their unneutral political actions on the claim that a person's or group's way of life is more or less worthy than another's.

This implies that the individual can exercise his autonomy by choosing *X* no less than by choosing *Y*—whatever *X* and *Y* are, is really insignificant. This is the case given the liberals' aversion to a political community furthering a *particular* vision or conception of a collective good: "For [the individual], the over-riding fact is that he finds himself among a large number of individuals, each one of whom affirms his own good."[19] Liberal thought is therefore firmly grounded in the idea of the equal moral worth of all individuals without any consideration for any substantive roles or attributes they may actually possess. Thus, each individual's moral judgement about what is essentially of interest to him is as good as every other's. The individual is abstracted out of the judgement of substance!

Liberalism, for Michael Walzer, is best characterized as "a world of walls, and each creates a new liberty." Shapiro offers a comment on Walzer's description:

> *Characterizing liberalism as "the art of separation," Walzer describes the shift from the medieval, "pre-liberal maps" as a shift from a conception of society as an organic whole, wherein political civil society, church, and commerce are all interdependent, to a conception of society as a house with a modern floor plan. There are walls separating church, State, university, and other domains of practice, and this creates a politics in which people are free from unwarranted intrusions.*[20]

However appealing this discursive structure of liberalism might be, it is appropriated at a costly price. This means that the liberal would have to trade the political, moral, and spiritual substance of a particular way of life for the allure of universalistic, formal freedoms

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[19] Bruce Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State*, p. 227, cited in Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* p. 101

[20] Michael J. Shapiro, *Reading the Postmodern Polity* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1992), p. 93. The quotation from Michael Walzer is from the same page.

for the individual. This is one of the positive critiques levelled by the communitarians against liberal thought. For Beiner,

> *...a liberal world is a world without furniture. We purge our dwelling-place of furniture because its presence would derogate from the moral imperative resting upon individuals to create every bit of spiritual furniture out of themselves.*[21]

The ethical question is, given the dismal picture of liberalism sketched, is liberal neutralism desirable? A negative answer to this question will take its starting point from the disjuncture between liberal theory and practice. The liberal theory of neutrality is corroborated by 'a reality of dreary conformism.' The rhetoric of pluralism paradoxically contains the seed of homogenization. This, Beiner remarks, is liberalism essentially, "with its shopping mall culture—where one has hundred of shops to choose from, all of which sell the same junk."[22] One way to explain this paradox is to argue that despite liberalism's deep respect for a society defined by pluralism, such a society cannot lay claim to social cohesion unless it manifests some necessary condition that justifies such cohesion. This crucial glue that every political community needs to hold itself together is *ethos*. The liberal society, for Beiner, also possesses (a negative) ethos. In this case, "the ethos is—lack of ethos; individuals in this society are habituated to being insufficiently habituated."[23]

Contrary to the liberal's rejection of the characterization of liberalism as a social order, it represents a particular way of life to which others within its ambit must be oriented. This is the sense in which the line between definitions (1) and (2) earlier mentioned is tenuous. Kymlicka actually concedes that in contradistinction to the communitarian 'common good,' one can also talk of the liberal common good which is the realization of a society governed by a

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21 Ronald Beiner, "What Liberalism Means," p. 202.

22 Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* p. 22.

23 Ibid.

politics of neutral concern. It is a good because "it secures for individuals the capacity for free choice in conceptions of the good life, and this requirement constrains the pursuit of shared ends..."[24] For Beiner therefore,

> *The starting point for an understanding of liberalism is the notion that there is a distinctive liberal way of life, characterized by the aspiration to increase and enhance the prerogatives of the individual; by maximal mobility in all directions, through every dimension of social life (in and out of particular communities, in and out of socio-economic classes, and so on); and by a tendency to turn all areas of human activity into matters of consumer preference; a way of life based on progress, growth, and technological dynamism.*[25]

We can now fully grasp the full implication of the so-called liberal paradox: while liberalism's respect for pluralism promises the non-liberal individual a respect for his particular subculture, it simultaneously promotes a collective way of life that smothers those subcultures in a universalistic dispensation.

If liberalism, given its universalistic framework, qualifies as a global dispensation - a social order that necessarily excludes and undermines other particular traditional communal attachments - then liberal neutralism and pluralism not only collapse, both become a 'pre-text'. Liberalism disguises a dominant and overbearing conception of the liberal good. Beneath all the rhetoric of pluralism and individual autonomy, the promise or threat of liberalism is to "make all the world like California."[26] As such, the liberal good gives unwarranted priority to liberal identities over those deriving from membership of non-Californian (nonliberal) communities. Liberalism,

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[24] Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism*, op. cit, pp. 76-78.

[25] Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* p. 22.

[26] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*, p. 278, cited in Beiner, op. cit., p. 200.

in spite of its universalistic form, is actually nationalistic. Chantal Mouffe and John Haldane detect this 'nationalism' in Rawls' writings. The latter's political conception of justice operating through the idea of overlapping consensus, according to Mouffe, allows him to exclude from the conversation on justice "all of those who do not agree with the liberal premises, while presenting this political decision as a moral requirement, the product of the 'free exercise of democratic *public* reason.'"[27] This approach in the long run naturalises the frontiers of difference and essentializes identities.

Identity Politics and the Liberal Democratic Polity

How does the essentialization of identities work out within the liberal dispensation? An important departure for this analysis is to consider the notorious public/private distinction central to liberal thought. Also, the exclusionary civic nationalism of liberal societies will be considered. The reference to a national consciousness is what is appropriately termed a 'new' rather than an 'old' nationalism. *Old nationalism* follows the traditional nation-to-State route whereby ethnic identities seek for any means of achieving Statehood. The virulence of this nationalism led to the implosion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the resurrection of the myriad Nation-States in its ruin. This nationalism operates at the level of other Nation-States, and it is exclusionary: it separates the 'we' from the 'them' on the march to the consolidation of nationhood.

The *new nationalism* is exclusionary as all nationalisms are in a subtle sense. It could be characterized by a more open policy towards the 'them.' This turns out to be a prudential strategy that the State must appropriate if it is to realise its State-to-Nation ambition. This involves the attempt to wield the different national/social identities

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[27] Chantal Mouffe, "Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy," p. 10. My emphasis. See also John Haldane, "The Individual, the State, and the Common Good." In Ellen Frankel Paul, et al, eds., *The Communitarian Challenge to Liberalism*, pp. 61-68, 75-76.

into one national identity mould. These identities, unlike those that characterized the old nationalism, are not fired by the desire for Statehood, but rather for a more *equivalent* political incorporation in the political community. In this sense, one thinks more of migrant identities, which continually press for a meaningful participation in the decision-making procedures of the host culture.[28] This nationalism appropriates the inclusionary strategy to answer the interrogation of the politics of difference.

Be that as it may, the new nationalism is still virulent enough to undermine the utility of the distinction into old and new. This is simply because every society must operate within a nationalistic framework that offers a community of experience to its members and non-members alike. This is the idea of *civic nationalism*, the attempt to move from the 'affective community' to a 'rational community'.

However, the civic nationalism of liberal societies is wrong-headed. It conceives national consciousness as being 'civic, secular, pluralist, rational and multicultural' in *absolute* contrast to the 'negative' nationalism of ethnicity that is 'irredentist, ethnic, primitive, reactionary.' This distinction derives from the modernists thesis of a cultural break that modernity effected with the past. For Gellner, for instance, nationalism can no longer appropriately be characterized as a genetic identification with a group. Rather, it is "about entry to, participation in, identification with, a literate culture which is coextensive with an entire political unit, and its total population."[29]

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[28] For the elaboration of this distinction between the old and the new nationalisms, see John Rex, "National Identity in the Democratic Multi-Cultural State,' *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 1, no. 2. Available at <http:// www.socresonline.org.uk/ socresonline/1/2/1.html>; Gerard Delanty, "Beyond the Nation-State: National Identity and Citizenship in a Multicultural Society - A Response to Rex," *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 1, no. 3. Available at <http:// www.socresonline.org.uk/ socresonline/1/3/1.html>

[29] Ernest Gellner, cited in M.M Nikolas, "False Opposites in Nationalism: An Examination of the Dichotomy of Civic Nationalism and Ethnic Nationalism in Modern Europe," 1999, Available at <http://www.nationalismproject.org>.

Like any plural society, the liberal society desires to integrate its diverse plural categories. This will involve, for Mazrui, a process of moving from the situation of bare coexistence to that of the *coalescence* of these categories. That is, such a society must employ a strategy that eventually brings about the partialization of group identities and leads to a depluralized society based on 'a new kind of total identity' characterized by functional, rather than ethnic, differentiation.[30] However, the means of arriving at this point in liberal society is reflected in the public/private distinction that is supposed to highlight what is essential to the 'free exercise of democratic *public* reason.' Held explains the distinction:

> *At the centre of the liberal democratic ethos lies the western notion of the autonomous individual, capable of free choice and motivated by self-interest. Individualistic 'private' concerns are viewed as clearly separable from 'public' issues of the community at large. Hence, the private sphere encompasses the realm of personal gain and subjective interest, as mediated by the competition of the market while the public comprises the arena of laws, legislatures, and other civic structures, whose ultimate logic is reducible to an apolitical ideal of the common good.*[31]

Chandran Kukathas explicitly appropriates this distinction as what defines a political community properly so-called.[32] For him, the critical point in the controversy surrounding the concept of community is that of identity. This is the issue of the relationship between the individual

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[30] Ali Mazrui, "Pluralism and National Integration." In Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 335.

[31] David Trend, "Democracy's Crisis of Meaning." In Trend, ed., *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p. 11.

[32] Chandran Kukathas, "Liberalism, Communitarianism, and Political Community." In Ellen Frankel Paul, et al, eds., *The Communitarian Challenge to Liberalism*, pp. 80-104.

and the (political) community. It is the issue of whether the community constitutes the individual or whether the individual is strictly a chooser distanced from his ends. This captures the meat of the polemic between communitarians and liberals.[33]

Since he is working within the liberal tradition, it is not surprising that Kukathas argues that all communities are in fact 'partial associations:'

> *A community is essentially an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within that association. This definition of community captures the idea insisted upon by writers like Tonnies and Maciver, that it is something about the relationship among people (rather than merely their propinquity) that makes their association a community rather than just a social grouping. As many have recognized, it is the understandings that people share that make them into a community. But this definition also specifies what it is precisely that people must share if they are to constitute a community. They must recognize which matters are indeed matters of public concern within that association. This requirement indicates why many forms of association whose members are geographically dispersed are nonetheless communities.*[34]

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[33] This is seemingly the point because recent critics have cast doubt on whether the issue of community can actually be a legitimate critique of liberalism. Indeed, most liberals have taken the strictly individualistic reading of liberalism as an inadequate perception of the history of liberal societies. Most liberals now celebrate the "political, not metaphysical." Rawls as an example of the inadequacy of the communitarian critique. *In A Theory of Justice*, pp. 571-572. Rawls writes: "To appreciate something as ours, we must have a certain allegiance to it. What binds a society's efforts into one social union is the mutual recognition and acceptance of the principles of justice; it is this general affirmation which extends the ties of identification over the whole community....Individual and group accomplishments are no longer seen as just so many separate personal goods."

[34] Chandran Kukathas, *"Liberalism, Communitarianism, and Political Community,"* p. 85.

While Kukathas captures the point, in that, what is crucial in a community is the people's shared understanding, the right question to ask is not the *what* of this understanding but the *how*. How did the members of a community arrive at that shared understanding? This must precede the debate on the specifics of that understanding. The proper question that should precede the constitution of a community is: *how* will a substantive meaning be given an understanding if we are to share it? Beiner remarks that a meaningful participation in a political community "...must be upheld by a source of enduring commitment."[35] Kukathas' definition does not and cannot provide the analysis of what should sustain this commitment. The liberal context from which it derives does not provide for such a *substantive* inquiry into alternative conceptions of the good. This lack of an enduring commitment gives a profound force to MacIntyre's characterization of a liberal society "as a collection of citizens of nowhere who have banded together for their common protection."[36] The members of such a society are supposed to lack a *particular* attachment to a something or a somewhere.

Kukathas' definition creates a problem. If, what matters is how a shared understanding is arrived at, then it must be certain that it cannot be through a demotion of what is relevant to other groups' lives. This essentially leaves the group adrift in the public sphere where they cannot participate because they lack an essential background mooring from which to enter into what has been called 'a community of discourse.' The understanding of a shared universe must flow from the universe of shared understanding within which members and non-members can call upon a source of enduring commitment, i.e. ethnicity, religion, culture, history, and the personal. These arguments suggest

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[35] Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* p. 123

[36] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 147, cited in Ronald Beiner, ibid., p. 69.

> *That shared political principles are not sufficient for social unity. The fact that two national groups share the same principle of liberal justice does not necessarily give them any strong reason to join (or remain) together, rather than remaining (or splitting into) two separate countries. If two national groups want to live together under a single State, then sharing political principles will obviously make it easier to do so. But sharing political principles is not, in and of itself, a reason why two national groups should want to live together.*[37]

For Kymlicka what matters for social unity are not shared values but rather a *shared identity*. Implicit in Kukathas' argument is the primacy of the idea of an individual who is defined only by a maximal mobility in and out of diverse *partial* communities without being constituted by any of them. The individuals make up the community, but the latter is only partially involved in the identities of the former.[38] This would be legitimate within the liberal way of life as a global dispensation that excludes other ways of life.

This is not an uncommon feature of all plural societies, which are commonly characterized by a *differential* political incorporation that blocks a shared identity. In this respect, M. G. Smith argues that in a plural society, "the mass of the people are not citizens but subjects"[39] within an institutional framework that entrenches and sustains their domination. What cannot be granted in Kukathas' argument is the assumption, aptly articulated by Haldane, that:

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[37] Will Kymlicka, "Social Unity in a Liberal State." In Ellen Frankel Paul, et al, eds., *The Communitarian Challenge to Liberalism*, p. 129

[38] Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship," 272 . Available at <http://spruce.flint.umich.edu/~simoncu>

[39] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Globalization and the Politics of identity," *UN Chronicle*, autumn 1992, p. 2.

> *One's political nature [is therefore, given the public/private separation] independent of that 'second nature' which results from being born and raised within particular social groups sharing aesthetic, moral, philosophical, and religious inclinations communicated to successive generations in part through the cultivation of a complex sensibility. Real-world political personae rest upon these cultural identities (which they rarely obscure). Accordingly, if the mask is to fit, it must be shaped to the contours of the face, which tells against the attempt to fashion it out of a universal fold. In consequence, the order of construction in practical political philosophy should be to define the characteristic values of given communities and reflect upon how these might be expressed in the political order of a State.*[40]

A successful separation between the public and the private realms will make it difficult for the *mask* of identity to fit the diverse people that constitute the liberal society. The liberal tradition certainly forbids the substantive inquiry into the characteristic values of these communities.

From this inability to accommodate non-members into the individualistic framework of the liberal society, it is only a short step to the politics of difference that has become the main feature of such societies. This is because those whose identities are not considered in the construction of the framework defining the identity of a society must necessarily react against such a discriminatory context.

National/Social Identity and the Politics of Difference

A polyethnic or multinational country, to be stable, less it should assimilate its unruly heterogeneity. That is, those who may be

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[40] John Haldane, "The Individual, the State, and the Common Good," p. 76.

considered to be at the margin of the main culture or society must be integrated one way or the other into the mainstream of the host nation. This is the necessity that explains the 'melting pot' assimilation policy of the United States, or the 'ethnic mosaic' and 'multicultural' counterparts in Canada and Australia respectively. While assimilation is the logical response to the question of the viability of an ethnically mixed country, it has never anywhere succeeded without remainder. This is simply because such a policy demands the erasure, or to use a Husserlian term, *bracketing* of the communal ethnic/social identities of the immigrant and other minority groups. The benefit of such a cultural immolation, is the sweet aroma of neutral national identity. The supposition is that at the end of this assimilation process, we would jubilantly proclaim the emergence of the *Homo Americanus!*

However, it became clear to the assimilationists, in the light of present reality, that cultural erasure is too much a price to pay for integration. This is in spite of the argument that immigrants, for instance, came voluntarily on the implicit understanding that they would have to relinquish their original cultural membership in favour of integration. The lures of the universalism that is implicit in the melting pot strategy is not enough to undermine the cultural particularism and the meaningfulness it held for the marginal groups (in this sense, we do not only talk of ethnic groups, but also other social identities that involve the sexual, the domestic and the personal—gay and lesbian, women, disabled, etc.). Thus, the fact of the *unmeltable ethnics* (and those other identities that refused to disappear into the melting pot) signifies the birth of the politics of difference, or identity politics.

What is identity politics? It is the politics played by *marginal* (national/social) identities caught between the *rock* (signified by the demands of assimilation) and the *hard place* (signified by the demands of cultural distinctiveness). This definition reveals in turn that to get at what identity politics is, one needs an insight into what marginal identities are. A marginal group, for Iris Marion Young, "involves an

affinity with other persons by which they identify with one another and by which other people identify them."[41] Such an identity becomes an identity constructed within the context of national/social relations; that is, a self that is only meaningful given a national/social matrix.

This is inappropriate since it tries to give the discourse of identity politics a neat boundary that it does not possess *yet*. Eriksen, for instance, charts the broad spectrum of what can legitimately be considered parts of the many flavoured identity politics:

> *Some are separatist nationalist movements; some represent historically oppressed minorities which demand equal rights; some are dominant groups trying to prevent minorities from gaining access to national resources; some are religious, some are ethnic, some are regional. Many writers see identity politics in general as an anti-modern counteraction to the individualism and freedom embodied by globalization, while others see it as the defence of the weak against foreign dominance, or even as a concealed strategy of modernization. Some emphasize the psychological dimension of identity politics, seeing it as nostalgic attempts, dignity and a sense of rootedness in an era of rapid change; others focus on competition for scarce resources between groups; some see identity politics as a strategy of exclusion and an expression of the collective strivings of the underdog.*[42]

In other words, the concept represents a blanket term that captures the totality of political activities and theorizing around the contested notions of justice, right and equality.

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41 M.G: Smith, "Institutional and Political Conditions of Pluralism." In Leo Kuper and M.G Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa*, p. 33

42 Wong Liu Shueng, "The Changing Face of Chinesenes." Available at <http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz/chinesevoice.html>.

However, identity politics originally started from the recognition and analyses of the shared experience of injustice by members of a marginal group claiming a unifying, homogeneous identity. This is usually in contradistinction to the dominant identity that threatens to efface the marginal identity's boundary in the name of integration, forced or voluntary. Thus, a marginal identity is fired by a desire to find a way of being true to its essential self within the context of oppression and marginalization. This is the idea that motivated the initial politics of difference heralded by the second wave of feminism in the sixties and seventies, followed quickly by the gay-lesbian-queer liberation movements, the Black Civil Rights in the US, the disable rights movements, and, the most pervasive of all, the race/ethnic minorities.

It is not too difficult to see how the civic nationalism of liberal societies and the private/public distinction instigate the politics of difference. The relationship between culture and nationalism serves as the juncture that illustrates the contradictory elements of national identity. One of the postulates of cultural pluralism is that each race has its own distinct and peculiar culture, which is capable of coexisting with others within the Nation-State. While Nation-States accept this tenet of pluralism, it does not guarantee that the State will not engage in assimilationist policies in pursuit of a common culture intrinsic to national identity. Giroux writes that:

> *Putting national identity against cultural difference not only appeals to an oppressive politics of common culture, but reinforces a political moralism that polices 'the boundaries of identity, encouraging uniformity and ensuring intellectual inertia'. National identity based on a unified cultural community suggests a dangerous relationship*

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[41] Henry Giroux, "National identity and the politics of multiculturalism," 1995, p. 53. Available at <http://www.sil.org/~radneyr/humanities politics NatIdent.htm>

between the idea of race, intolerance, and the cultural membership of nationhood.[43]

The public/private distinction in liberal thought represents the theoretical side of the universalist ideology of liberal society. In the bid to sustain the stability and cohesion of the multinational and polyethnic Nation-States, efforts must be made by governments to make sure that the uncharted subjectivity of the private sphere must be abandoned in favour of a universal public sphere of rational discourse. On the contrary, for the proponents of identity politics, the personal/sexual/domestic/ethnic/private is political. It is this that gives sense to identity politics as a "celebration of coming out...not from the closet, but from the closed *private* doors of our homes where cultural practices were hidden from view."[44] What we have therefore is a deep cultural contestation, within the Nation-State, around the concept of difference and equality. The marginal identities' rationale for liberation now shifts from being identical and equitable (which motivates the common culture policy of the State) to the agenda of being *different* and equitable.

Given the earlier argument that the institutional arrangement of the (liberal) State is itself ethnocentric against other ethnic minorities, identity in this sense hinders equity. The imposition of abstract, universal categories on difference makes it inevitable that some people must be marginalized. Kruks aptly sums up the issue:

What makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier, pre-identitarian forms of politics of recognition is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very ground on which recognition has previously been denied: it is qua women, qua blacks, qua lesbians that groups demand recognition. The demand is not for inclusion within the fold of universal humankind on the basis of shared human

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[43] Wong Liu Shueng, op cit.

> *attributes, nor is it for respect in spite of one's difference. Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself as different.*[45]

Identity politics reveals a search for authenticity, being true to one's identity. This in turn raises the spectre of a nostalgic longing for a pre-oppressive period. The main issue here is that the notion of identity in 'identity politics' concerns the oppressive experience of the subject, and the possibility of arriving at a more authentic alternative. As we have argued earlier, the oppressive framework of the liberal society derives from the combination of differential political incorporation and the theory of the neutral citizen (actually a disguise for the white, male, bourgeois, able-bodied, and heterosexual Western identity).

The democratic issue provides a fresh perspective into the constitution or construction of identity politics. If the argument of the previous sections holds, then in the politics of identity we confront a major failure of the civic nationalism of liberal States. For Delanty, this failure is hinged around the failure of the liberal democratic culture to address concrete issues in the society. That is, identity politics becomes an interrogative response to, and a product of, the failure of democratization and social fragmentation.

In other words, the inability of democracy to *penetrate* the society only aggravates the systematic oppression, which is implicit in the ethnocentric institutional framework of the (liberal) Nation-State and its various reforms. Within the core of this politics is 'a populist desire for democratization.' Delanty further writes:

> *I am suggesting, then, that the new nationalism [represented by the phenomenon of identity politics] is the result of a shift from State to society and expresses a sense*

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[45] Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*, p. 85, cited in Cressida Heyes, "Identity Politics," *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2003 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed. Available at <http://www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2000/emtries/identity-politics/>

> *of widespread alienation and frustration deriving from social exclusion and deep social divisions. This explains why it is immigrants and social groups within the nation-State rather than other Nation-States who are being signalled by xenophobic movements. There is, in short, a widespread fear that the national model of the welfare state is unable to provide for all groups, a sense of frustration that the state is unresponsive to social demands....It is crucial to grasp that the new politics of nationalism is a politics of cultural contestation articulated around social issues. For if we see the matter in this light we can recognise that the issues to which the new nationalism is a response can be claimed by democratic politics of citizenship.*[46]

Thus, within the oppressive framework of liberal society that putatively defines citizenship in a neutral light, Dahrendorf contends that "a smaller but significant set [consisting of the under represented social identities] seems to have fallen through the net of citizenship altogether."[47]

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[46] Gerard Delanty, "Beyond the Nation-State," para 3.5, para. 4.7.

[47] Dahrendorf, R., "Preserving Prosperity," p. 38, cited in Steven Vertovec, "Social and Tolerance," A discussion paper prepared for the Second International Metropolis Conference, Copenhagen, 25-27 September 1997, p. 18.

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HUMANISM: AN EXPOSITORY ANALYSIS

By
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to establish a case of theistic humanism against thread bare humanism; it is a critique of humanism in defence of African and Asian theistic humanistic cultures. In Indian and African philosophies we find that, in a particular sense, these philosophies are humanistic but their humanism is combined with theism. By 'humanism' we mean the scientific humanism which asserts that everything concerning man depends ultimately upon man himself. As such, there is no need of believing in any supernatural or spiritual powers. This kind of humanism is positivistic and worldly. It is not compatible with the humanism of the contemporary Indian and African thinkers who have deep rooted faith in the spiritual. Their humanism does not overlook the spiritual element in man and so obliterates the opposition between humanism and spiritualism.[1] This paper argues that humanism is necessarily compatible with Theism.

Intorduction

The word humanism is derived from a Latin word 'humanus', meaning *'human'*, i.e., of men or belonging to homo-sapiens. It is etymologically derived the from German word '*humaninus*' and Italian word '*umanisme;* To assert that whatever is human must necessarily be opposed to what is 'divine' or 'supernatural' is suspicious.[2] 'Humanism' is very current in philosophical field and various thinkers and writers use it in different shades of meanings. It is not only confined

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[1] Khanna Raj, *Philosophy and Some Contemporary Issues.* (Chandigorh, Inidia, Arun Publishing House, 2002), p. 43.

[2] Ibid, p. 44.

to the philosophy of modern thinkers who have written on humanism. It also extends back to the thoughts of many others in the past who had faith in 'humanism' without being conscious of the label 'Humanism' to designate their belief.[3]

Humanistic tendencies are not lacking in traditional and contemporary Indian thought. The whole of Indian philosophy can be called humanistic in the sense that it is basically concerned with the problem of human suffering. Man seems to be defied and eulogized in Purushasukta – the purusha is nothing but man, an eternal man spread out in all directions.[4] But self-conscious humanistic tendencies can be traced back to the earliest and the most infantile stage of African and Carvakas' philosophies. The philosophy of Carvaka is also known as 'Lokayatmala' i.e., the view of common man. The Buddha represents the humanist tradition of India. He never lost sight of human sufferings and consequently modelled his teachings on it. Man is the beginning and end of his thought. How to eliminate human sufferings is the motivation behind his thought. Buddha's humanism is successful in defending human values without any supernatural sanction. Law of Kharma which governs the moral life of man is the same as objectivity operating in the universe. Buddha's historic science about God as the metaphysical entity and supernatural authority in the affairs of men is humanistically motivated. The African attitude is that theism or conception of God is a necessary denomination in all human affairs. African cosmology and ontology is world affirming with man at the centre of the cosmos.

One of the earliest philosophers, and one of the most important to atheistic humanist thinking, is Protagoras who founded the school of professional travelling teachers known as the 'Sophists', on the principle that practical human knowledge is more useful than searching

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[3] Ibid, p. 44.

[4] Ibid, p. 45.

for the whole truth.[5] This humanism has man as its centre point. Its reference point is not God, the creator, but the material. Another ancient Greek philosopher whose thought influenced humanist thinking was Democritus who held that the universe is made up of matter (material things and their movements) – mind being a process of the material brain, and time and space being aspects of matter. He worked out an atomic theory (first suggested by Leucippus of Miletus) that came remarkably close to the science of our time – saying that the material universe comprises changeable combination of atoms that had always existed, the world being formed out of a primeval whirling motion.[6]

Also living at that time was Hippocrates, 'the father of medicine', who argued that religion only provides answers without evidence but many still consider illness to be part of the divine will. Hippocrates relied strictly on exact observations of symptoms – and his philosophy of medicare led to the modern method of diagnosing disease.[7] Scientific care was matched by the humanitarian care that Hippocrates and his followers gave to their patients, and it added up to a humanistic view of medicine that has remained the ideal for physicians to this day. It should be pointed that humanism as it is traditionally known is atheistic humanism. Yet, it was most likely that these philosophers did not proclaim atheism by themselves, instead it was imputed into their mouths. Besides, the concept of matter could be reduced to God's mind and most probably not to nothing. Hence its existence could even be used to prove the existence of God and then a proof for theistic humanism.

Socrates used a method of discussion which pursued the truth by question and answer, 'wherever the argument might lead' – thus fulfilling the humanist requirement of the free inquiry. But this does not

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5 Warner Rex, *The Greek Philosophers* (New York: New American Library 1958), p. 51.

6 Ibid, p. 47.

7 Hippocrates Ancient Greek philosophy

implicate him and his thought in the humanist tradition.[8] Humanists wrongly cite him as one of the fathers of humanism when indeed he was a theistic humanist because of the theistic overtones of his idealism and his allusions to the gods of Athens. Plato has a religious turn of mind, believing strongly, in an ultimate reality behind the world we experience. He is perhaps a more theistic humanist. He propounded the theory of 'forms' (or 'universals'), which he took over from Socrates and built into a whole system of theistic humanism. These forms are ideal prototypes – absolute, eternal and unchanging. They exist in some transcendental world, over and above the particular manifestations which we experience in the ordinary world, the manifestations being illusion, not reality.

According to Plato, the human values of beauty, truth and goodness come to us from the higher world.[9] Plato's theory comes much closer to the Christian concepts of heaven (Plato's higher world of forms), God (Plato's form of the good), and the immortal soul (Plato's form of a person) than to the humanist ideas. Plato is an opponent of the humanist tradition. Humanists follow Protagoras and Democritus, not Plato. Aristotle is also wrongly cited as a humanists because his uncaused cause is not interpreted as God in their thinking.

Epicurus, another ancient Greek philosopher, accepted the atomists' theory that matter is made of everlasting atoms, so he did not need any 'uncaused cause'; and he explained the formation of the world by supposing chance collisions that set off later events, so he did not need any 'prime mover'.[10] Epicurus held that there are millions of 'worlds' and that the gods lived in the empty spaces between them, taking no interest in human lives, so we need not bother about the gods. A person's soul (or form) was, he said, held together by the body, so the soul must die when the body dies. Death is simply the

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8 Warner Rex, Ibid, pp. 49-65.

9 Ibid, pp. 73-78.

10 Epicurus, Ibid

end of life, after which nothing can be experienced, and it is therefore unreasonable to be afraid of death.[11]

Africans believed in gods that probably live in empty spaces; some also live in grooves, forests, rivers, rocks, etc. Epicurus might have been African in mind in being panpsychic. But these African gods however have interests in man. Following Aristotle's principle that good conduct is that which promotes human happiness, Epicurus went on to define the good life as life of pleasure and friendship, absence of peace of mind and of pain . Although modern humanists are basically Epicurean, they approve of Stoic acceptance in a bad situation when nothing can be done to make it better. But there are doubts as to the foundations of Epicurus beliefs in man given his ontological commitment to the soul and gods. He who knows or believes that souls and gods exist is most likely to believe in God despite his avowed belief in material things. Perhaps his humanism may be one originating from the creator, one wonders if happy life is not one of God's purposes in creating man. One delightful Epicurean saying is '*Friendship goes dancing round the world proclaiming to us all to awake to the praises of a happy life*'.[12] That is humanism, in a nutshell. Humanism have such an amorphous character to include all sort of things to the exclusion of the real humanism or theistic humanism to the extent that development, material and non-material is claimed by them thus: 'history of development is history of humanism'.

In the six hundred years following the break up of the Roman Empire there was so little education in Christian Europe that this period is known as the Dark Ages. Then, from the end of the 10th century there was a gradual revival of learning, mainly through muslim Spain, for the muslims preserved some of the teachings of the ancient Greeks. The 13th century Christian 'scholastic' set out to reconcile theology with philosophy. They believed that Christian doctrines could not

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[11] Ibid

[12] Smoker Barbara, *Humanism* (Ibadan: Gadfly Publishers, 2006), p. 17.

possibly be against reason, and should be supported by reason. The revival of learning was very slow until the 14th century when it blossomed into what is called the 'Renaissance' (meaning re-birth). This was the transition period between the rigid formality of the Middle Ages and the enlightened freedom of modern times. The Renaissance 'humanists' (notably Erasmus and Moore) were not atheistic humanists, but were monotheistic, because they were Christians. The great artists of the Renaissance (like Leonardo and Michelangelo) used religious subjects for their paintings and sculptures – but religious subjects with a very human look, hence, they are at best theistic humanists.[13] The love of the arts was thus associated with the word 'humanism'; people who cared about art and literature to the exclusion of science began to call themselves humanists, though people in the true humanist tradition have always cared a great deal about science. Indeed, the scientific method that is, the method of observation, theory and experiment is claimed to be the humanist way of getting knowledge, as opposed to alleged religious revelation. Of course, induction was not really new, it had been the method of Democritus and Hippocrates two thousands years earlier, but after being lost for so long, it was excitingly 'new' again, and it enabled men like Francis Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, to lay the foundations of modern natural science.

Philosophers with scientific bent, beginning with John Locke (1632-1704), were called 'empiricists'. All knowledge of reality, they say, comes from observational experience. Empiricism was a very important step towards modern humanism, though most of the 17th-century empiricists were Christians. Similarly, a philosophical movement called the *Enlightenment* started in Paris with the great writer Voltiare and the encyclopedists Diderot and Baron Holbach. They and their followers are known by the French name *philosophes*. This movement spread throughout Europe and beyond. The churches tried to stem the tide of disbelief, but in vein.[14] In short, the history of

[13] Ibid, p. 20.
[14] Ibid, p. 23.

scientific development is claimed by the humanists as their achievement and history. The irony is that believers in God are not part of this history, why? Indeed, contrary to this claim, God is the ultimate scientist and no scientific discovery is possible without Him. The claim of the humanist is therefore false because the history of science is the history of man and man is created by God. Albert Einstein rightly asserted that man is a pencil in the hand of God.

In 1840 a self-educated freethinker, G. J. Holyake, coined the words 'secularism' and 'secularist' from a French word meaning 'world'. Secularists say that religion ought not to interfere with the law, education and other ordinary worldly matters. In 1860, the word 'humanist' was used in atheistic sense for the first time. Then, in 1869, the evolutionist, T.H. Huxley coined the word 'Agnostic', a word for 'not knowable'. Some humanists call themselves agnostics, in preference to atheists, a word for ' no god-beliefs' – though there is not much differences between saying that knowledge about any gods is impossible (agnosticism) and that none simply does not have any knowledge and will therefore not assume that gods exist (atheism).[15] Today, the more militant humanists tend to call themselves atheists, free-thinkers or secularists, while those who are more ready to cooperate with religious people, and to avoid the subject of God in case it upsets them, tend to call themselves agnostics or humanists – but there is no hard-and-fast rule about it.

Other names for humanists are 'rationalists' (reason, not revelation, being adopted as the basis of knowledge) and 'ethicists' (the ethical movement being concerned to establish natural grounds of morality), but these two meanings have rather gone out of use in Britain since World War II, where humanism is understood as a movement centered on the interest and welfare of man and not that of God. One of the most outstanding humanists in science and public life, in the 20th century, was a mathematician, a philosopher, a social reformer, and a political rebel, Bertrand Russell, he was an agnostic, a rationalists, a freethinker,

[15] Ibid, p. 24.

a secularist, a humanist. He had also a personal link with utilitarianism, for his godfather was John Stuart Mill.[16]

Humanists have consistently used scientific advances to justify their claims. This is because scientific discoveries explain the natural world, so, leaving for supernatural explanations to get away with. The concepts of mass, energy, space and time were unified by Albert Einstein (1870-1955) in his theory of special relativity. Yet Albert Einstein cannot be said to be an atheist and may therefore not be a humanist in that sense. He was quoted to have called the names of God in his oral and theoretical submissions several times. Again one of the most important biological discoveries of all time was made in England in 1953 by James Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins, building on painstaking research by Rosalind Franklin. What they discovered was the structure of the DNA molecule, which enables hereditary characteristics to be passed on from parents to offspring.[17] A French biologist, Jacques Monod, made an exciting contribution to humanist philosophy with his book, *Chance and Necessity*, published in France in 1970. (The English translation appeared in America in 1971 and in Britain in 1972). Monod pointed out that everything that has ever lived, including the human species, is the result of a long chain of accidents, caused by chance and perpetuated by the *necessity* of chemical reactions, so could not possibly have any design or purpose behind them.[18] Yet, if anything, event or episode happened by chance Mr. Chance must have an origin or an intelligent director behind him.

Another scientist who is claimed by the humanists is the English naturalists Charles Darwin, who devoted his life to careful fact-finding, collected a great deal of evidence pointing to biological evolution (that is, the theory that animals slowly emerged from one lower kind to another that is of higher form) through a process which he called 'natural selection' (meaning that variations which help animals to survive

[16] Ibid, p. 25.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, p. 26.

are inherited as permanent adaptations and so lead to new species) This theory of evolution, which Darwin expounded in his book *Origin of Species* (1859), was strongly denounced by the church as heresy, for Christian doctrine taught that the difference species of animals, culminating in man, had each come about by separate creation, as described in *Genesis*.[19] Four years later, another great scientist, Thomas Henry Huxley (grandfather of Julian Huxley and Aldous Huxley) applied the principle of evolution to mankind. Charles Darwin then developed this theory in *The Descent of Man*, published in 1871. This made the clergymen and the theologians angrier than ever; because the Judiac-Christian-Muslim religions traditionally taught that animals had been put on earth for human benefit, animals were generally treated inhumanely. Jeremy Bentham was the first philosopher to say that, in deciding how animals should be treated, the question we should ask is not whether animals can reason or speak, but whether they can suffer.[20] Humanist tradition of atheistic or agnostic orientation has innately claimed responsibility for all good things of human life including all scientific discoveries, leaving nothing to God, the creator. The following characteristics of the humanist tradition will show how it has systematically avoided associations with God.

The humanists consistently promote moral and social ideology that excludes God's equation. Unlike nihilists or extreme libertarians, humanists would acknowledge the need for a moral sense, a social conscience and the necessity to consider others. They say morality arises because humans are essentially social animals; the social nature of humans creates the need for morality, not from a God but from the nature of human self-responsibility and social inter-relations. For the humanists, the concepts of 'good' and 'evil' are conglomerate of accumulated behaviour and attitudes. Hence there is no supernatural

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19 Ibid.

20 Herrick Jim, *Humanism, In Introduction* (Ibadan: Gadfly Publishers, 2006), pp. 21-27.

'all-good' or 'all-bad'.[21] The humanists believe that artistic creation is an essential part of human activity. The arts are not a substitute for religion. Art, as an essential part of human existence, expands our consciousness, and awakens us to people and experiences other than our own, it can intensify our awareness.[22] Although we can learn from it, art is not utilitarian; it is not just a tool for purpose, or a slate from which we can be educated. Creating a sense of community is certainly a consequence of some art. Some arts are more social than others. Seeking the truth, telling the truth are aims of most artists. Through art, people enlarge their own boundaries. At its highest, this could contribute to a global ethic or a sense of 'universal sympathy'. This universal sympathy, coming from empathy with all creation can be an important part of art.[23]

Apart from literature, the visual and aural arts are equally important. The activity of playing or singing is itself often a communal one – the interplay with our voices, human or musical, is an integral part of the artistic experience. There is no simple equation pitting the humanism of Renaissance art against the religious iconography of medieval art. Art is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It must take on the bleak aspect of human existence, but it can at least enable us to work out our own sense of the meaning of life.[24] It is important to note that the inability of the humanist to deduce the existence of God from the subjects of conscience and morality is simply because of lack of capacity or interest in analysis, epistemology or metaphysics, all of which will definitely yield something beyond matter and the superficial.

Most humanists would argue for the need to attempt to preserve life on this planet without reference to God. This may stem from the evolutionary instinct for survival. It is partly their desire to see the generations that follow us prosper. The environmental issues which

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21 Ibid, p. 50.

22 Ibid, p. 51.

23 Ibid, p. 54.

24 Ibid, pp. 59-61.

confront man is that of climate change, growth of population and depletion of resources. These present dire threats. Hence the concept of sustainability is extremely important to humanists. This is to modifying the behaviour of human beings so as to maintain bio-diversity, endurable climate for humans, sufficient food and energy for survival, an environment free from toxicity, a level of population increase (or decrease) that is commensurate with resources available. Humanists have been in the forefront of moves to stabilize population growth.[25] While they consider the rights of humans to have families, people are beginning to consider the rights of non-human animals. Those who defend animal rights particularly criticize animal experiments and would learn to weigh the right of the animal or mouse or cat – against the benefit of the human race.

The ability to think of the earth as a whole rather than individual place in it is important to humanists. The threat of pollution and exploitation may not be treated in the same way as climate change, but there is clear damage to the environment and our existence within it. There are dangers of nuclear waste, of oil spillages and so on. Similarly, there is greater fear that genetically modified crops will contaminate human and wild life, that genetic change might affect human gut.[26] There are much more drastic possibilities of gene modification within animal species – pigs creating medical products, microbes that eat toxic waste. As with human genetic modification, they call for an ethical code of practice which allows for scientific research but maintains the 'precautionary principle', the principle of reciprocity, the need to prevent dangers for the community as a whole, the need to base principles and practice on evidence. This interest in human existence, social life and ethics, without the place of God, are predicated on human ego and the attempt to elevate man to the status of God.

[25] Ibid, pp. 62-63.

[26] Ibid, p. 1.

The claims of the humanists, or atheistic humanists are nothing special or unique to them except their atheistic beliefs. That they are rationalists, scientists, moralists, environmentalist are not peculiar attitudes, instead they are eccentric about these attributes. Theistic humanists are as well, if not more, rationalists, scientists and moralists than them. However, we can still outline those things which they profess, even though some are not unique to them. As we said earlier, it is only atheism that distinguishes them from theistic humanists.

Humanists claim that they are rationalists because they regard human reason as the best guide for life's problems; they want to free society from the stranglehold of religious beliefs. Humanists are freethinkers because they never hand over their minds irrevocably to any Church, but remain free to think for themselves. Sometimes, humanists are caricatured as dry rationalists worshipping pure reason. But it is unreasonable to extend the use of reason to all areas. The emotions and aesthetic sense are important for a full life. Humanism is a way of life, to give meaning to life and to find an understanding of our place in society and, in deed, the universe. Humanists say that every responsible human being should be free to make his or her own choices and live their own life-style, as long as they do not violate the freedom of others. It would be impossible for humanists to force humanism on other people or to persecute non-humanists, for if they do, they will no longer be humanists. Humanism they argue stands for the open mind in the open society. They use the scientific method, not only to explain nature, but in every aspect of life, and, as Bernard Shaw puts it, 'never accept anything reverently without asking it a great many very searching questions'. They are materialists – having no belief in spirits (mind without body). They are empiricists in their approach to knowledge; utilitarian in morality and Epicurean in the art of living.

Unlike Christians, humanists see no virtue in faith, blind obedience, meekness, unworldliness, chastity, or pointless self-denial. The humanists' virtues are: a regard for what is true, personal responsibility.

tolerance, consideration, breadth of sympathy, public spirit, cooperative endeavour and concern for the future. Humanists although not religious, will arguably live beside the religious, believing in freedom for religion and freedom from religion. Humanists do not believe in miracles, though they can ironically comprehend the sense of the miraculous. Humanists claim that humanism is a most human philosophy of life. Its emphasis is on the human, the here-and-now. It is not a religion and it has no formal creed, yet humanists have beliefs. Humanist are atheists or agnostics and do not expect an afterlife. It is essential to humanism that it brings values and meaning into life.[27] Atheism alone, they say, is not humanism because Stalin was an atheist. Humanism is atheism/agnosticism with value. Its morality is social in origin.

Sceptism, is one of the foundations of humanism but it is not sufficient in itself. Complete sceptism could lead to a nihilistic belief in nothing or a cynical belief that nothing is of value. Humanism goes beyond this to put forward positive aspects of being alive and living with others. Scepticism is an approach that is valuable in science and which can be applied to questions about the existence of God, the value of religion, the possibility of an afterlife, and the extent to which miracles can be accepted. Humanists' scepticism about the claims of religion leads them to become atheists or agnostics. In fact, since we are born with no belief, we cannot be a 'born again' humanists. It is not possible to prove or disapprove of the existence of a God or gods. To be an atheist is to be without a concept of God and to be an agnostic is to be without knowledge of a conceivable god, usually used to describe the position of 'I don't know' in relation to the God hypothesis. Here are arguments leading to atheism or agnosticism:

1. It is not possible to believe in all different gods which have been put forward by different religions. If they cannot all be true, then can none of them be true?

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[27] Ibid, pp. 13-15.

2. God is always described from the eye of the beholder. The kind of God we believe in is determined by where and in what society we live. A cockroach would believe in a cockroach type of God.

3. If God is omnipotent and all-good, disasters cannot exist in the world.

4. If God is all-good and created men and women in his own image people cannot behave so abominably

5. To describe God as the originator of the universe is not an answer to the question where did everything start, for we need to know the origin of the originator.

6. The evidence of the world does not indicate that it was created by a designer. There is no first cause. The evidence is that life can emerge from chemical-electrical conditions without a 'maker'. The planets have their origins as break-away parts of the sun. The solar system is a part of a much vaster universe. There is now some speculative evidence that this universe is not the only one. There are many other life forms on other planets. Therefore to argue for a designer is merely to give a word to a process partly known and partly unknown.

7. God's purpose is not visible in the universe. Certainly there is no evidence that the universe's purpose leads up to mankind.

8. God is not all-powerful, and human worship cannot be of any use. The puny prayers of humankind would not be of much value to a God?

9. All goodness does not stem from God. To say God is good is a tautology. There is goodness in the human species, a state of being entirely consistent with our evolution as species and as individuals.

10. All societies seem to have worshipped some forms of gods. But there are enormous differences in the kinds of gods and in the ways in which they are supposed to act on human lives. The fact that something has been believed for centuries does not make it true.

11. Implicit in the concept of an omniscient, benevolent deity is the existence of its counterpart –evil, or its personification – the devil. If

God is alleged to have created everything, he or she must have created the devil. It might be possible that God and devil are simultaneous, separate creations – in which case the universe is an arena in which God, or his incarnation, Jesus, fight it out eternally with Satan.

12. It is argued that God is derived from personal experience. It is a subjective experience, which is difficult to convey to those who have not experienced them. To the outsider, they might be regarded as hallucinations or imagination. Since, some people do not have such experiences, they cannot be used to prove the existence of anything any more than someone might try to prove the existence of their dreams.

13. Theists have always claimed that it is up to atheists to prove their atheism. On the contrary, it is up to theists to prove their theism. In the same way, in debating the existence of God, there should be a presumption of atheism, they argue.

14. Some 20th century theologians have put forward a conception of God different from the traditional one. They argue that God is the 'ultimate', the ground of our being, 'that which underlies the energy in the universe'. These concepts are vague, some who find it impossible to believe in a traditional God (for the kind of reason given above) find them helpful.[28]

Since atheism is the backbone or the foundation of atheistic humanism, then there is the intellectual and practical need to dismantle that foundation by establishing firmly on the platform of solid basis arguments against the argument of atheistic humanism, the reason being to establish that God is the creator of man and humanism. God is therefore the first humanist because He equipped man with the divine and providential gift of being elevated over and above all creatures on earth and empowered to conquer the rest creatures. The atheistic humanists would have to believe that God is a humanist whether they

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[28] Adapted from an article on 'humanism' by Robert Falconer in *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1922.

believe in His sustenance or not and God again is the creator and founder of humanism contrary to the belief that man founded himself and founded humanism. The Bible in (Gen. 2) for instance, showed some of attributes of God as a humanist.

> *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all this which he had made ... and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was not a man to fill the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul ...*[30]

These propositions among others in the Bible show God's humanism. The atheistic and philosophical arguments against the existence of God, are indirect arguments for the exaltation of God. Below we are going to respond to them, from No 1 to No 14 accordingly.

1) There are no gods of religions but God of religions which is the monotheistic God, the humanistic God and creator of man and humanism. The gods of religions which the atheistic humanists are using against the existence of God is the panpsychic and animistic gods of the ancient Africa, ancient Asia and ancient Europe, all of which have been conceptually and physically harmonized in the monotheistic God.

2) That a cockroach would believe in a cock-roach type of god is first of all culturally panpsychic and animistic and secondly it refers to small gods and deities which are culture bound. With regard to Almighty God, if it is approached cock-roachically, it is still theoretically reasonable to argue that conception of God is also culturally bound

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29 Genesis 2:1-7

30 Robert Falconer, op cit.

or perceived, hence a cock-roach will perceive the almighty God as an almighty cock-roach. It does not contradict man's conception of god.

3) In the face of disasters, the omnipotence and all goodness of God cannot be questioned. Disasters occur because man, like Voltaire, does not have the understanding first, that man has a freewill to have knowledge or not, to use it or not and the not of all this could lead to disasters which, in any case, according to St. Augustine in his plenitude, is a blessing in disguise

4) People behave abnormally because they are atheistic and secondly because they lack the knowledge of the good or they refused to be good according to Socrates.

5) In the Bible we are told, and there is ample evidence to that effect, that God is the originator of the universe and the dust from which man is created and every thing in the universe. He created matter from where the evolutionists traced everything. Logically, the universe must have a beginning and the beginning is not the beginning of itself.

6) The evidence of the world indicates that it was created by a designer who designed man with complete functional and purposeful organs and other organisms. Who designed the universe with complete purposes and orderliness. There is a designer, God. All evolutionary trajectories have philosophical intentions. There is a philosopher, a super philosopher God, who philosophised and created the universe and all that there is.

7) God's purpose is visible in the universe. What the atheistic humanists think of man is what God created man for, that is, man's domination of all things in the earth and continuing the creative process started by Him.

8) God answers prayers. Atheistic humanists, because of their unbelief, do not dream dreams, do not discern, do not contemplate,

lack intuition and hence do not experience and appreciate God's awesomeness and mercy.

9) The frequent use of small *g* for God without discrimination is a defensive tactics by the atheists. The God of universe begins with capital *G* while local panpsychic animistic god begins with small *g*. 'God is good' is a tautology because He is symbolic of goodness and mercy. The syntactic tautology involved is not epistemic neither does it falsify the existence of God and to goodness.

10) Asking question about the beginning or creation of the universe is nothing short of asking about the beginning of culture and belief. Cultural differences account for differences in the beliefs and conceptions of God. Also the differences in cultures accounts for the differences in the conceptions of gods and their attributes, not about God, the Lord of all nations.

11) The existence of devil is not implicit in the concept of God. The existence of devil is rather contrary to the existence of God because both cannot be true in any material and immaterial particular situation. They are not separate creators instead God created devil out of merciful omission. In this wise, the devil is the anti-humanist of the humanity of God.

12) God and the whole universe is a subjective concept whose objectivity is in the objectivity of the earth and other galaxies. Perfection in the orderly arrangements in the universe is a matter of subjective but artistic appreciation. Therefore God as a perfect being can only be experienced subjectively and communicated intersubjectively.

13) It is up to atheists to prove that there is no God, no dream, no intuition, no order in the universe, no perfection in creation, no spirit, no soul, no witchcraft, no devil, no creativity by man or God, no gods as evidence of God.

14) God is the cause of our being, the cause of the energy in the universe, the artesian and the engineer who built the galaxies and the father of all creations.

The universe is a reflection of the heavenly firmament under the authority of God, the eternal being who created Lucifer, Satan, devil out of mental omission. This Lucifer with his agents is contrary to the being and existence of God which logically means that both cannot be true either; God is the truth and Lucifer the falsehood. The truth flows from heaven to the earth and the rest of the universe. Perfection and excellence in virtue and work in heaven have their copyrights on earth and the universe as the minds of God. Yet the virtues and works of God are continually being falsified and caricatured by Lucifer and his agents who parade under different camouflage anointing and light, but whose ultimate motive is to destroy the 'good' created by God. Ammunitions of modern warfare; sea, land and air cruise missiles were the making of Lucifer and his agents, humanists and scientists with false anointing and whose mission on earth is for total destruction of the excellence and virtues of God.

In reality, these scientists or humanists are anti-humanists. They imitate heavenly virtues and powers as they ascend on to the boundary of darkness and light and swiftly turn their attention downwards to destroy the earth and the planets. Most celebrated literary and scientific geniuses and inventors parasitized and caricartured heavenly and God's excellence, branded themselves humanists but to deny and destroy God's humanism. Most of them are equally animists, yet they deny the existence of God. Animism and panpsychism presuppose the existence of gods which logically leads to the existence of almighty God, the creator of existence and humanism. Atheistic humanists should have the mental power of intuition and discernment to acknowledge that forces, gods and objects of the universe are copyrights from God's heavenly throne.

A philosophy is called humanistic when it centres round man and his problems. Scientific or atheistic humanism therefore consists in the aspirations, urges and capacities of man and they have to be given the fullest but limited expression. On the other hand, spiritual or theistic

humanism asserts that man is not fully satisfied with the attainment of this worldly goals. It aspires for and becomes conscious of the beyond, it goes beyond the physical and mechanical level and enters into a spiritual level. So in spiritual or comprehensive humanism, both types of aspirations, both physical and spiritual have to be taken into account. It is in this sense that the contemporary African philosophy is theistic humanism which goes beyond the precepts and postulate of atheistic humanism. Humanism implies all values of life like Truth Beauty and Goodness, etc. Hence it acknowledges all contributions towards truth, beauty, goodness, etc. In this sense, it is accommodative of science and literature. Theistic humanism implies and postulates that truth, beauty, goodness and standard of values were perfect creations of God, the perfect Being and author of perfection.

Humanism is selective of things according to a certain criterion and is critical of all standards of values. The philosophical wing of Renaissance humanism was represented by Reballais and Erasmus. They are the first of all self-conscious humanists in the west as they were emphatic and forceful in their humanistic stand. Erasmus is not so critical as Reballais who came to deny the very existence of God. In a way, the pioneers of modern science like Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton and Bacon advanced the cause of humanism by giving a new conception of nature opposed to the Christian interpretation of it and thereby generating a real conflict between religion and science which even today forms the background of humanism.

There are three different attitudes to the Renaissance humanism; Literary humanism which is more of a literary attitude to education and human culture rather than philosophical; Religious humanism of Erasmus and Rebellais was of a religious reformation with far reaching philosophical consequences of making a this-worldly philosophy significant; Scientific humanism was more of a new attitude towards nature rather than a new theory of nature which did pave the way for

a new philosophy. Relative and subjective humanism makes man the centre and the measure of all things both in this life and cosmos. To this brand belong Protagoras and F.C. Schiller.

Pragmatic humanism is the theory of pragmatism in America under the leadership of William James and John Dewey. Dewey builts an educational programme on these lines. But as already discussed pragmatic theory can at best be a good support for humanism but can itself not called Humanism.

Naturalistic humanism is the type of humanism widely accepted by the thinkers who are under the direct influence of science or scientist. It is a reaction against religion and absolution in philosophy. It rises from the inevitable conflict between religion and science and solves it by resorting to scientific method in knowledge and human values.[31] Humanistic movement is gaining ground pervading the philosophical domain and is fast changing the very mode and content of our thinking. The humanism which emerged or is emerging from the pragmatic traditions in America is finding for itself many literary heroes and staunch adherents to its philosophical creed in the recent times. Corliss Lamount mentions eight propositions central to the philosophy of humanism in its true form. They can be summarized as follows: humanism believes in a naturalistic cosmology or metaphysics that rules out all forms of supernaturalism and regards nature as the totality of being. Humanism draws upon science and believes man as having unity of personality without any immortality. Humanism believes human thinking to be naturally associated with brain functions. Humanism believes in reason and scientific method as man's powers of solving his problems. Humanism believes in true human freedom of creative action as opposed to determinism and fatalism of all kinds. Humanism believes in moral values on ground of this worldly experience. Humanism believes in the development of art and aesthetic appreciation. Humanism believes in a far reaching social programme

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31 Lamount Corliss, *Humanism as a Philosophy*, pp. 36-39.

of establishing peace, democracy and happiness for all with a spirit of cosmopolitanism and internationalism.[32]

But humanism without theism loses most of its value. |No genuine humanism is possible which does not go beyond mere humanism, i.e., to be really human, man must have his beginning and end in God – humanity and deity are inseparably related.[33] The question is whether all humanism is opposed to supernaturalism or divine natural cosmology is inclusive of the spiritual element in human nature which is the source and ground for all human values. In theistic humanism, the spiritual element is the source of human values. Rajkhanna argues that humanism must have faith in human values. According to her, Sellars regards the spiritual to be the ground of all values ; but he also goes wrong in his view of the spiritual, he naturalizes the spiritual. But the spiritual, the basis of values, must be different from values themselves and that must be either amenable to reason or sensory experience or it is not. If it is not, 'the spiritual' hangs loose in Sellars humanism which is essentially scientific. Yet, Sellars indirectly has to recognize the 'mysterious' in another form.

All humanism is wedded to the cause of human values and it cannot admit anything which is destructive of human values. Scientific method is concerned to explore the world of facts which is indifferent to the world of values.[34] Hence, the humanist's adherence to scientific method is unjustified on humanist grounds of values, which are the subjects of philosophy.

It is argued that effective thinking must be borne out of a genuine problem or situation; it must be dynamic, i.e., it must seek to solve the problem at hand; it must be consistent both with itself and reality. It must be capable of resulting in a real change in the environment.

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[32] Urban: *Humanity and Deity,* p. 304.

[33] Bertrand Russell, "On Scientific Method" *Mysticism and Logic* (1914).

[34] Radhakrishrian, *Religion and Society,* p. 70 . "Philosophy is not an end in itself but culminates in personal values and transformation. Philosophy is not celebral activity, but a way of life".

Philosophy is effective thinking.[35] However, philosophers of scientism and logical positivists do not believe that philosophy, by its own nature, is bound to be abstract. Therefore, in spirit of reformation, they attribute to philosophy the function of criticism and logical syntax while all sciences invest in themselves the sole responsibility of discovering the truth or reality. Hence they make philosophy subservient to science. These scientific philosophers, according to Rajkhanna, have transferred their interest from science to philosophy without the necessary re-orientation proper to the philosophical problem and temper. This misplaced interest has forced them to see philosophy empty of its genuine problems and devoid of its real content. They give a mere supervisory function to philosophy and make it subservient to the original task of discovering the truth in the sciences.[36]

Again, religious philosophers contend that a philosopher is all absorbed in thinking and reasoning, but does not see the reality face to face. According to them, philosophy is not mere interpretation or abstract movement of concepts in the mind, but it should do the real task of transformation of life and actual situation, and experience or vision of the reality must not only be a necessary condition but the very destination of all philosophical knowledge. Thinking and good life must all be ways to the ultimate basking in the blaze of reality in the forms of mystic spiritual experience. What these philosophers contend for is a more religious and practical view of philosophy, which belongs to the true Indian or African tradition that do not distinguish between religion and pure philosophy,[37] or distinguish between the sacred and the secular.

The view of religious thinkers is open to two objections. According to Khanne Raj 'religion' itself is a word having a vague connotation. Some smell dogmatism and fanaticism at its bottom, others impute

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[35] Khanne, *Philosophy: Some Contemporary Issue,* op. cit, p. 54

[36] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy,* vol. I (Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 26.

ritualism and institutionalism to it, still others define it to be a way of life based on moral and spiritual values. Philosophy, in attempting at any basic affiliations with religion, will certainly imbibe more of confusion than clarity. Mystic experience cannot justify itself and has to depend upon reason for its defence and intelligibility. Hence, self-conscious thought must hold the reins in philosophy whether Indian or African philosophy. But this self-conscious thinking will empty of its content unless it feeds upon some experiences without which it can never contact reality and remain a mere celebral activity. So all kinds of sensory experience - moral aesthetic, spiritual, religious and mystic, enter into philosophy insofar as they are capable of rational interpretation or fit into the framework of a worldview. Philosophy is the rational interpretation of all kinds of experiences. There is no denying the fact that a philosopher will be at home in his philosophy if he has the experience of all kinds and also feels the throb of the eternal in his being (theistic humanism), but he will have to come down to rational language to interpret or communicate it to others in order to be called a philosopher. To interpret experience of any kind in rational terms and enlighten mankind with what he finds to be true is the sacred task of a true philosopher[38]. Hence, philosophy identifies with and assimilates the truths of subjectivity and objectivity. The place of humanism on earth and for humanity is in the meanings of the creator and the created.

Subjectivity and objectivity enter collectively and severally into motive.[39] For Bertrand Russell, "man on his own account is not the subject-matter of philosophy. Man demand considerations solely as the instrument by means of which we acquire knowledge of the universe. We are not in a mood proper to philosophise so long we are interested in a world as it affects human beings; the philosophic

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[37] Khanne Raj, op. cit. p. 57.

[38] Ibid. p. 25.

[39] Bertrand Russell, op.cit.

spirit demand an interest in the world for its own sake".[40] Russell argued that man is the measure and the knower of the universe and it is through this apparatus that the whole structure of knowledge is built up. Yet knowledge has got to pass through the moulds of human nature and categories of human understanding. Man as the knower stands unique and paramount in all philosophical enquiry. Some scientific philosophers argue that "man is the subject-matter of philosophy and he is one of the objects of study, but he does not occupy the focus of philosophy."[41]

This assertion is erroneous because man is not only one of the objects of study. but also he is the only subject of all knowledge. Man is the knower and runs through the circuit of reality. It is this unique position of man in existence which determines the ultimate nature of knowledge. But anybody with a little knowledge of psychology can bolster up this assertion in the light of a well-established fact that the knowing process is always determined by human physiology (senses, nervous system, brain, etc) human psychology (attention, interests, memory, etc) and human history (past culture, social background, etc).

Hence, howsoever objectivity may be claimed in scientific knowledge, it is bound to be conditioned by the fact of human elements. Philosophy cannot afford to neglect these human elements, for the whole of value philosophy centres round this problem.[42]

Another view about the relationship of philosophy and man owes its origin to the writings of those who are favourably inclined towards ethics and religion. These thinkers assert that the motive behind all philosophic enquiry is to fulfill man's deepest demands and highest aspirations. Philosophic knowledge is not to be pursued for its own sake but for the spiritual and moral development and progress of

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40 Ibid

41 Khanne Raj, op. cit, p. 59.

42 Ibid, p. 59.

man. Philosophy, according to them, centres round religious, spiritual and moral values. Philosophy is not man's quest for a type of reality which may horrify and threaten man himself and stifle all his hopes and aspirations in demolishing the whole of the value-structure of reality. Values, according to this view, must guide the philosophical enquiry and condition its nature.[43]

However, religion, often enters into philosophy with odour of dogmatism and blind faith which strikes reason as dumb. The philosophical standpoint is based upon rational consciousness about all our attitudes towards life and the world. Again, it is doubted that religion can ever define the true cause of man and his values in philosophy so long as it is based upon a supernatural explanation of things, for another worldly or supernatural account of values and things will not generate a proper atmosphere of genuine morality and true faith of man in himself. It is therefore argued that man can become truly moral on his own account and never by any external agency beyond his own capacity and nature.[44] But we cannot trace the principles of the moral man only to his nature (free will) but also to the maker of human nature. Philosophy is no less interested in metaphysical and objective sciences than it is interested in mind (spirit) and body.

Conclusion

The spirit of knowledge's sake is good so far as it goes, but ultimately knowledge itself is a value indeed, a human value. Religions point out to certain values on which it is ultimately based and they are human values. Hence, philosophy must come round to value or humanism more properly speaking. The humanistic motivation of philosophical enquiry and the value-basis of knowledge and reality are the stand-points by which philosophy will have to speak the truth. In other

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[43] Ibid, p. 60.

[44] Ibid, p.61.

words, philosophy will have to enter into the moulds of humanism in order to be an effective force with the modern man. Hence the basis of humanism can be predicated on the following propositions: (a) Philosophy is a systematic and universal discipline of effective thinking about man and the universe.[45] (b) Philosophy will have to derive much from all kinds of experiences so far as they are amenable to rational interpretations. (c) The emphasis in philosophy should shift to existence, man and his values which constitute the ultimate motivation of philosophic enquiry. (d) Values are to be based upon universal and objective standards and positive self-validity. Human nature itself is a positive and objective ground of values, but there must be a superhuman element as the referent point or the ground rule of values.

The humanistic element in philosophy, which have its fingers pointing to Theistic Humanism, is the proposition that 'man is the centre of the philosophical gaze,' he is at the centre of the universe by the word of God's creations which empowered man to know and conquer the world and by his universal mind and continued creative capacity. As man is the subject matter of the sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology, physics, etc and these contribute their portions to philosophy, so is man, the subject matter of philosophy. The word of God imperatively stated that man is the only subject of philosophy, the impersonal, logical and scientific neutral and critical way - a disposition towards the world and its objects that is different from the method of the religion (supernatural), social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. What unites philosophy with all other disciplines is the motive of pursuit of the ideal and knowledge. Yet philosophy stands above all other approaches and disciplines by playing God. Philosophy acts as god of these other disciplines in the leadership role in the search for knowledge and to conquer of nature and other objects of knowledge. The middle

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[45] Ibid, p. 62.

man role of philosophy is manifest in the fact of the emotion which science dispense. philosophy integrates and the supernaturalism which religion upholds but philosophy dispenses. but which in a critical way without abandoning the creative assignment from God. For the avoidance of doubt there is no contradiction between the concept of God and the motive of philosophy. God is the first philosopher and the father of philosophers who are ever engaging in the creative process of searching, knowing and conquering the world. Knowledge or philosophy is not for knowledge or philosophy sake but for the sake of man who is at the centre of the whole gaze. Philosophy is a value, a human value. The value of philosophy is humanism within the perspective of God, the creator and philosopher. Therefore theistic humanism should be the vehicle of philosophy by man, of man and for man in his world, and the means of effective thinking and action with the modern world.

AN EXPOSITORY ANALYSIS OF RUSSELL'S THEORY OF NON-DEMONSTRATIVE INFERENCE

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The role of 'inference' in reasoning and judgement is important in any epistemology. There cannot be any logic devoid of the processes of inference. The mind, in judging and reasoning, operates inferentially. Francis Bacon's inductive reasoning, Rene Descartes' deductive reasoning and the various critiques of the mind by different philosophers (David Hume and Immanuel Kant especially) are connected with the problem of inferential reasoning. By inference we refer to a psychological process the mind (in reasoning) whereby operates from given acceptable propositions to other related or connected propositions in order to draw a judgement called conclusion. The truth of the conclusive proposition is held to be connected (i.e. related to, based upon) to the position of earlier proposition(s). Since the psychological process of inferring involves logic, it may be adjudged as either validly carried out or otherwise.

I

David Hume (1711–1776) did not reduce his to be that of 'inference.' He called it that of 'causation.' However, contemporary philosophers, especially in philosophy of science, rightly recognize that Hume's problem of causation is the same as that of inference. How did Hume locate the problem?

The notion of causation dates back from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.),[1] through to the medieval philosophers. However, in the Modern period, David Hume brought to fore its epistemological, and consequently, metaphysical implications. Hume argued that all situations of causality involve cases of no more that *two occurrences appearing together*. In which case, Hume was indeed saying that the 'cause' that is usually ascribed to natural phenomena is a *mirage* or an *illusion*. 'Cause' does not have any actual existence. Therefore, what we call 'cause' is no *cause* at all. It is merely an 'event', or 'occurrence.' The same holds for what we call the 'effect' of such a *cause*. This is also another 'event,' or 'fact,' or 'occurrence' that merely regularly appears with the so-called 'cause.' Consequently, if we are to believe David Hume, 'cause' and 'effect' are illicit categories lacking experiential and actual existence. We have erroneously stamped them on things. This position can be shown by linguistic analysis of thus:

(1) HIV *causes* AID

shows two occurrences of which one, HIV is said to be 'the cause,' while AIDS is called 'the effect.' Now, if one is the 'cause' and the other 'effect' where is the third occurrence to be called 'cause' again? This analysis removes 'cause' as a third occurrence. Otherwise, we may put our initial statement as (2) below:

(2) HIV (cause) *causes* AIDS (effect)

Hitherto, it has been thought that a natural *event A* (e.g. cancer) is *necessitated* by *another B* (e.g. smoking); for example, when we

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[1] In his theory of causation, Aristotle conceives it as a relation between events, processes, or entities such that without one the other could not occur, as in the relation between (a) the material out which a product is made and the finished product. This is called **material cause**, (b) structure and form and the individual embodying it, as in the University sturcture that is made up the faculties, senate, council body of students, academics, etc. This is called **formal cause**, (c) a goal or purpose - whether supposed to exist in the future as a special kind of entity, outside a time series, or merely as an idea of the purposer - and the work of fulfilling it. This is called **final cause**, (d) a moving force and the process or result of its action. This is called **efficient cause**.

say that 'HIV causes AIDS.' We mean to hold that HIV necessitates the presence of AIDS. In other words, there is an *intrinsic, sufficient* and *necessary* link – called 'cause' – between HIV and AIDS. What therefore is *'cause?'* Indeed, David Hume defines 'causes' thus: "A cause is an object, *followed by* another, such that all *others similar* to the first are *followed by* object similar to the second. Or in other words, *where the first object had not been,* the second had never existed."

We should note that the type of 'cause' Hume has in mind is the type that applies to *natural occurrences.* Such as 'Fire is the cause of smoke,' 'cigarette smoking causes cancer, 'cold causes flu', etc. Otherwise, when we say "Her request caused the death of John" we may loosely mean that "*Her request* was the reason for, motivating factor for, etc *John's death.*" It follows that *John's death* and *her request* are not *intrinsically connected.* That is, there is no *necessary connection* between them. John could have as well been killed by other factors. *Her request*, as in this case, is therefore a contingent *factor* that does not provide a *sufficient* ground for *John's death.* Against this background, Ralph B. Winn defines causation as follows:

> *A relation between events, processes or entitles in the same time series, such that (a) when one occurs, the other necessarily follows- sufficient condition, (b) when the latter occurs, the other necessarily follows – sufficient condition, (c) both conditions a and b prevails – necessary and sufficient condition, (d) when one occurs under certain conditions, the other necessarily follows – contributory, but not sufficient condition. 'Multiple causality' would be the cause of involving several causes that are severally contributory and jointly sufficient. The necessity in these causes is neither that of logical implication nor of coercion.*[2]

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[2] Dagobert D. Runes, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1971).

Now, the implications that could be drawn from David Hume's definition of causality provided the bases for today's metaphysical and epistemological articulations on the notion. Tim Crane puts it thus:

Hume defines causation in terms of:

> *Temporal succession – the cause preceding its effects in time, and constant conjunction – similar (or like) causes are always constantly accompanied by similar (or like) effect.*[3]

Crane states further that:

> Two aspects of Hume's theory have retained the interest of contemporary philosophers. The first is the idea that *causation does not consist in a necessary connection between cause and effect*, and *nor can relations be known a priori*. The second idea is that *regularity is involved in causation in some way:* so that *A* caused *B* commits us to the claim that things sufficiently like *A* will cause things sufficiently like *B*.[4]

Now, it is clear that causation, the way Hume articulated it, can only be possible if there is 'inference.' We know that 'fire burns' and 'will burn in future' because this has been 'inferred' from our past experiences.

Basically, there are two types of inferences called *deductive* and *inductive* inferences. Of these, the knowledge provided by induction is epistemologically more problematic, even though most of our daily life and intellectual postulates are governed by the 'process of induction'. The notion of the 'universals' is built on it. It is because we infer from our knowledge of the particulars (e.g. *Mr. x, y, z ...n's* deaths) that we may have enough grounds to make a universal statement (that 'All men are mortal'). From our feelings and volition

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[3] Tim Crane, 'Causation.' In A. C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy I: A Guide through the Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5.

[4] ibid, emphasis mine.

we make the leap of inference that we have a mind, ego that is the I that stands as the subject of knowledge. Also, because I have a mind, I can by way of *analogy*, infer that others have minds like mine. Otherwise, the bodies of other people could be empty cases like toys or robots. However, it is to avoid this that one now holds that others have mental states and minds within them like one's own.

Examples of such inductive leaps are quite many. Nevertheless, in his analysis of the principle of causality, David Hume brought to question, much more fundamentally, the principle of induction. The question is thereby raised: what type of knowledge do we acquire through induction? Before Hume it was taken for granted that induction was empirical knowledge. Today, it is accepted that even though science is built upon it, induction is not purely empirical. Let us see how Russell dealth with this in his epistemology.

II

Bertrand Russell noted the importance of this problem as raised by Hume in *The History of Philosophy*. He states, (Hume's) doctrine has two parts: (1) When we say '*A* causes *B*,' all that we have a *right* to say is that, in past experience, *A* and *B* have frequently appeared together or in rapid succession, and no instance has been observed of *A* not followed or accompanied by *B*. (2) However, man instances we may have observed of the conjunction of *A* and *B*, that gives no reason for expecting them to be conjoined on a future occasion, though it is a *cause* of this expectation, i.e. it has been frequently observed to be conjoined with such an expectation. These two parts of the doctrine may be stated as follows: (1) in causation there is no indefinable relation except conjunction or succession; (2) induction by simple enumeration is not a valid form of argument.[5]

Russell goes on to observe that:

Hume's scepticism rests entirely upon his rejection of the principle of induction, as applied to causation, says that,

[5] Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 641.

> *if A has been found very often accompanied or followed by B, and no instance of A not being accompanied or followed by B, then it is probable that on the next occasion on which A is observed it will be accompanied or followed by B. If the principle is to be adequate, a sufficient number of instances must make the probability not far short of certainty. If this principle or any other from which it can be deduced, is true, then the causal inferences which Hume rejects are valid, not indeed as giving certainty, but as giving a sufficient probability for pratical purposes. If this principle is not true, every attempt to arrive at general scientific laws from particular observations is fallacious, and Hume's scepticism is inescapable for an empiricist. The principle itself cannot, of course, without circularity, be inferred from observed uniformities, since it is required to justify any such inference. It must therefore be, or be deduced from, an independent principle not based on experience. To this extent, Hume has proved that pure empiricism is not a sufficient basis for science.*[6]

The problem of inference was tackled by Russell by first identifying it in the term he called 'Non-Demonstrative Inference.' He recognized it as one connected with the problem of knowledge, probability, science, logic and common sense. Hence he states that unless inductive arguments are confined within the limit of common sense, they may lead to more false conclusions than truer conclusions. And that "although scientific inference need indemonstrable extra-logical principles, induction is not one of them."[7] In other words, both the process of induction itself and the conclusion arrived at by induction are indemonstrable. "... Not only science, but a great deal that no one sincerely doubts to be knowledge is impossible if only we know what can be experienced and verified ... too much emphasis had

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[6] ibid, pp. 646-647.

[7] Omoregbe, 1991, p. 3.

been laid upon experience, and that, therefore empiricism as a philosophy must be subjected to important limitations."[8]

What exactly is the role of experience when we make inference? Russell rightly points out that most philosophers have been wrong in the role they assign experience concerning inferential knowledge. He says: "almost all philosophers had been mistaken as to what can and what cannot be inferred from experience alone"[9] This problem therefore brought Russell's programme into what he called the "problem of empirical knowledge". It is in the light in which he discussed this problem that we can interpret the non-empirical elements of his thought as acceptable, and as an essential point for any fruitful philosophy and conclusion to be reached. In what follows, we shall locate the notion of inference, the problem of empiricism and Russell's solution to the problem as it concerns what he proffered as its solution, i.e. the notion of *non-demonstrative inference*. As Russell points out, the problem of empirical knowledge (can be divided) into three stages: (1) knowledge about myself; (2) knowledge about other minds - which includes the acceptance of testimony; and (3) knowledge about the physical world.

III

Bertrand Russell's exposition of inference has been largely ignored in philosophy. Nevertheless, it remained a great concern for him as he always turned to the topic of inference in most of his works. In his *An Outline of Philosophy*, he says that

> *Inference is supposed to be a mark of intelligence and to show the superiority of men to machines. At the same time, the treatment of inference in traditional logic is so stupid as to throw doubt on this claim, and syllogistic inference is just*

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[8] Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1959), p. 141.

[9] ibid.

> *the sort of thing that a calculating machine could do better than professor.*[10]

Russell's says "induction is nothing but our old friend, the law of conditioned reflexes or of association" and it is the same as the psychological notion of 'rationalisation'. He therefore points out that inference is a product of 'habit' (of association of events) and a development of the 'principle of conditioning'. So, induction or inference is not just an issue of logic, especially syllogism. It goes beyond a mental process. Hence Russell's (1927) analysis to the effect that:

> *Traditionally, there was only inference where there was a 'mental process', which after dwelling upon the 'premises', was led to assert the conclusion by means of insight into their logical connection.*[11]

However, even though the above may be the case, Russell says that there really exists no remarkable difference in them. "Genetically and causally, there is no important difference between the most elaborate induction and the most elementary 'learned reaction.'[12] The one is merely a developed form of the other, not something radically different". We believe in induction because of "The potency of the principle of association", i.e. a sort of 'animal faith'. Therefore, to quote Russell again, "*the practice* of inference is much wider than the theories of any logician would justify, and that it is nothing other than the law of association or of 'learned reaction."[13] Consequent upon this conception of inference we shall turn to the question as to how inferences are related to what we may know in the process of Knowledge.

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[10] Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1927), pp. 63-64.

[11] ibid.

[12] ibid.

[13] ibid., p. 214.

IV

Russell held that inference is involved in situations where we assume or take something to be *a sign for* another. In such situations, what we get is not *certain* knowledge but *probable knowledge.* However, the question of certainty rather than probability has been given much more attention by epistemologists. "A very little consideration shows that, logically, the inference cannot be demonstrative, but must be at best probable."[14] Our knowledge of the external world is knowledge of percepts which are data. A datum is a form of words produced by a stimulus with no intervening "learned reaction beyond what is involved in knowing how to speak" about the percepts. Hence Russell's conclusion that "all our data for knowledge of the external world must be of the nature of percepts." This knowledge ultimately depends on either inference or analogy. "As a matter of fact, the whole structure of science, as well as the world of common sense, demands the use of induction and analogy if it is to be believed."[15] This being the case, how do we guarantee the validity of inference? Is it because of the fact that various 'instances' have demonstrated a given situation to be the case that we now come to believe in the validity of statements about such other instances? Russell answers this question thus:

> *Scientific theories of induction generally try to substitute well-chosen instances for numerous instances, and represent number of instances as belonging to crude popular induction. But in fact popular induction depends upon the emotional interest of the instances, not upon their number.*[16]

It follows, therefore, that just one instance of fire burning a child would make him infer that 'fire burns!' And the probability of this being the case is very strong (high). Indeed, (even stronger than that acquired through regular association between two events over a very long period

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14 ibid., p. 214-215.

15 ibid.

16 ibid., p. 220.

of time and with many instances). So the number of instances does not really give induction higher certitude in its degree of probability.

If the knowledge of induction is probable, what is the implication? Russell has this to say;

> *all inferred knowledge is at best probable. As to what is meant by probability, opinions differ. Mr. Keynes takes it as a fundamental logical category: certain premises may make a conclusion more or less probable, without making it certain. For him, probability is a relation between premises and a conclusion. A proposition does not have a definite probability on its own account; in itself it is merely true or false... A proposition in probability cannot be refuted by mere observation: improbable things may happen and probable things may fail to happen. For this reason, the inductive principle cannot be proved or disproved by experience.*[17]

Consequent upon this, Russell held the view that both probability and induction are not questions of experience, rather, strictly *a priori* and independent of experience'. This simply means that we have to look beyond the principles of empiricism in order to guarantee the knowledge given through, or by, induction.

V

On how induction can be captured and explained as an *a priori* notion, Russell offers 'five postulates'. The postulates essentially accommodate both the points Hume used to explain the operation of the principle of causality and the points Kant used to explicate his *a priori* category of the mind's operation. But first, how did Russell come to these postulates that he listed as the postulates of (i) quasi-permanence, (ii) of separate causal lines, (iii) of spatio temporal continuity, (iv) structural postulate, and (v) of analogy.

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[17] ibid.

Using the analysis of Keynes, Russell[18] is investigated the conditions under which the probability of the generalization reached by induction is continually increased. Although Russell seems to agree with Keynes' logic of probability, and conditions which must be fulfilled, he notes that we needed specific and several postulates which are more comprehensive than those of Keynes, that:

> *(i) before we know any instances of As that are Bs, the generalization 'all A is B' should have a finite probability on the basis of the remainder of our knowledge. (ii) the probability of our observing only favourable instances, if the generalization is false, should tend to zero as a limit when the number of inferences is sufficiently increased.*[19]

In other words, when the given instances have sufficiently for a long time favoured a generalization, the generalization can then be said to have a probability that tends to certainty as its limits. However, this is a function of the condition that "the generalization has some initial probability, antecedently to the observation of any of its instance, and provided if the generalization is false the probability that we should come across only favourable instances of it tends to zero as the number of those instances increase."[20] That is, before being observed, the thing already has the probability of conformism.

The grounds on which the above two positions are held are founded on what Russell calls (i) the 'causal line' and (ii) 'the structure' of events. For the first, Russell explains that every single thing consists of a "a series of sets of occurrences" which belongs to it, i.e. which are associated with it and not to other things. These may be called the features of the thing, and these characteristics differentiate it from other things. It confers its identity. Although such features are not permanent, they offer justifiable ground for us to make statements about things because they exhibit some forms of 'usual' but 'variable' permanence or persistence.

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18 ibid.

19 ibid.

20 ibid., p. 146.

> *The states of the 'thing' at difference times are, often though not always, connected by means of laws which can be stated without mentioning other 'things'. If this were not the case, scientific knowledge could never get a state Unless we can know something without knowing everything, it is obvious that we can never know something And this applies, not only to particular events, but also to the laws connecting events,*[21]

On the *structure of events*, Russell points out that throughout the series of causally connected events, space-time remains constant or approximately constant. This guarantees the conformity between objects and how they are perceived by perceivers. Using the transmission of sound for example, Russell argues that "it would be impossible for the spoken sounds and the heard sounds to resemble each other as closely as they do unless the intervening electro-magnetic waves *had had a space-time structure* very closely similar to that of the words, spoken and heard."[22] So the structure is antecedental to what we later take the sound (spoken or heard) to be.

Now, Russell has chosen to use the term "non-demonstrative inference" instead of 'induction' in order to make clear the fact that the problem is one which goes beyond traditional aspects covered by induction and empiricism.

> *For Russell, there are three main components of knowledge: sensory experience or perception, deductive inference ... and other forms of inference needed to bridge the gap between bare perceptual experience and the judgement, inferences, interpretations and generalisations based upon it.*[23]

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21 ibid.

22 ibid.

23 Elizabeth R. Eames, *Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: George Braziller, Inc.1969), p. 159.

With non-demonstrative inference Russell intended to solve not only the traditional problems of induction, but also that of empiricism. And in the words of Eames:

> *the problems which Russell's analysis of empiricism had shown to be involved when one tried to find in experience the justification for common sense and scientific knowledge. These problems could be described as those of perception, of language, of psychological analysis, of the limitations of empiricism and of the statement of empiricism.*[24]

Hence the need to look for a broader theory of knowledge than empiricism. This would enable us to (i) acknowledge the relations which hold between events. This takes care of the concept of causation. In Russell's conception, they hold between two *specious present*, (ii) exemplify universals in terms of sensible occurrences, (iii) to determine the truth or falsity of a word even if we are not furnished with the method of deciding the alternative, and (iv) guarantee physics the power to infer into future states of things even though this cannot be observed.[25]

It is in this direction Russell was moving when he calls for the construction of certain principles which go beyond 'momentary empiricism'. To achieve this, in *Human Knowledge*, he advanced the five postulates of non-demonstrative inference each of which,

> *asserts that something happens often but not necessarily always, each case, a rational expectation which falls short of certainty. Each has an objective and a subjective aspect: objectively, it asserts that something happens in most cases of a certain sort; subjectively, it asserts that, in certain circumstances, an expectation falling short of certainty in a greater or less degree has rational credibility. The*

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[24] ibid.

[25] ibid., pp. 1091-110.

postulates collectively are intended to provide the antecedent probabilities required to justify induction.[26]

VI

Russell's postulates of non-demonstrative inference provide rational grounds for the justification of induction. They also demonstrate the limit of empiricism if it (empiricism) is to be taken as 'an adequate' theory of knowledge. It is on the basis of the analysis of Keynes' conception of probability that Russell proffers the five postulates. He relied on the theorem of Keynes to guarantee the probability of generalization brought about by given instances (i.e. inferences). Once this is granted, and to quote A. J. Ayer on this score, Russell,

> *thinks it necessary to show that some generalisations at least have an initial degree of credibility and realising that it would be circular to attempt to derive this from their resemblance to other generalisations which are inductively established, he looks for some principles which will bestow an initial degree of credibility on certain types of generalisations, and thereby provide a justification for inductive reasoning.*[27]

The five principles follow thus with an explanation of the justifications they intend to provide for inductive reasoning.

(i) *The Postulate of Quasi-Permanence:* "Given any event *A*, it happens very frequently that at any neighbouring time, there is at some neighbouring place an event similar to *A*".

This postulate attempts to provide justification for the existence of the material continuity in things. It justifies the link of identity between the same child who has grown into an adult. Though there may be gaps between the two stages, as well as physiological changes, the

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[26] Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limit* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1948), p. 487.

[27] Ayer, *Russell* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 99.

same person is held to be one existent continuant. The postulates also justify why things can be reduced into events; or as in the early stage of Russell's atomism, why things can be reduced into sense-data. No wonder Ayer rightly calls this postulate a "reductive postulate"[28]

(ii) *The Postulate of Separable Causal Lines:* "It is frequently possible to form series of events such that from one or two members of the series something can be inferred as to all the other members".

This is the underlying principle that covers the law of motion. So whenever a thing changes its position as a moving car does, we have in principle a series of events that are related. The can in location *A* will remain the same even if found in location *B*.

(iii) *The Postulate of Spatio-Temporal Continuity:* "When there is a causal connection between two events that are not contiguous, there must be intermediate links in the causal chain".

This postulate tends to justify the Humean gap which empirically exists between cause and effect. So causality within a series of events can be justified to be a continuous 'chain-linked' line.

(iv) *The Postulate of Structure:* "When a number of structurally similar complete events are range about a centre in regions not widely separated, it is usually the case that all belong to casual lines having their origin in an events of the same structure at the centre".

This postulate simply justifies why in spite of differences in perception, etc. a thing may express, it is still taken to be the same object. Hence we talk of different photographs of the same person, or different receptions of the same wireless programmes.

(v) *The Postulate of Analogy:* "Given two classes of events *A* and *B*, and given that, whenever both *A* and *B* can be observed, there is reason to believe that *A* causes *B*, then if, in a given

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[28] ibid.

> case, *A* is observed, but there is no way of observing whether *B* occurs or not, it is probable that *B* occurs: and similarly, if *B* is observed but the presence or absence of *A* cannot be observed."

Russell argues that this principle guarantees why we hold that the minds of others exist. That objects that have certain effect on us still possess the same characteristics (*centeris paribus*), if they no longer act on us. So a hard object remains hard even though we are not touching it immediately. Also the minds of other people continue to function like mine even though I do not directly experience these minds.

What is essential to us at this stage is the thesis of our research? Russell did not take these postulates to be empirical.[29] They were rationally developed to justify (strengthen) empiricism, especially inductive inferences. It is in line with this position that Russell states that the postulates cannot be subject of proof. Also they are, analytically, not to be taken as true, as it will be circular to establish them inductively. All inductive reasoning presuppose them. Both Ayer and Quine may have been right in observing of the five postulates in the way which follows as put by Ayer himself: "if they can nevertheless be regarded as presuppositions of scientific method, it is because they may be taken as descriptions of what Quine has called the *background theory,* in terms of which we interpret our experiences."[30]

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[29] Elsewhere, one was has argued that Bertrand Russell is neither and empiricist nor a rationalist as a philosopher, and nowhere in his thought did he subscribe to any of these schools. He called his philosophy 'logical atomism.' This is treated in details in my doctoral work, "Bertrand Russell's Logical Atomism: A Synthesis of Rationalism and Empiricism," University of Lagos, August 2000.

[30] Ayer, op cit., p. 102.

EXPLICATING THE FORMAL NATURE LOGIC

By
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ABSTRACT

This paper explains that logic is fundamentally symbolic in nature. In this connection, it contends that the fundamental impetus in logic is the theory of inference. Logic as a science of reasoning is interested in the completed process of reasoning; in the most elementary form, the drawing up of rules of valid inference. It is notable, in this context, that the validity of an argument or inference is not dependent on any other consideration except the logical relationship between the premisses of an argument and its conclusion is one of form or structure. Accordingly, logic, basically, is the study of the conditions of validity, and this is largely a formal study. As a science of formal validity, logic cannot succeed without the introduction of symbols, the import being that symbolism is fundamental in logic. This conception of logic avoids the psychologism inherent in the view that led logicians to argue about how we in fact think and what can be thought rather than to deal with necessary relations between all symbols, whether they are actually thought or not. Logic is thus not concerned with the empirical but with the logical structure of thought; as such it deals not with how we in fact think, but with the logical relations between symbols.

The Nature of Logic

There is enormous difficulty in characterizing the nature and scope of logic. This difficulty is located in the diverse subject matters with which logic has been associated. Thus, Morris Cohen avers: "if by logic is meant a clear, accurate, and orderly intellectual procedure, then the subject of logic as presented in current textbooks, comes near being the most illogical in our chaotic curriculum."[1] The near embarrassment of the subject of logic highlighted by Cohen is perhaps not surprising because according to Peirce, "Logic is a science which has not yet completed the stage of disputes concerning its first principles."[2]

The first systematizer and captain of our world team of logicians, Aristotle[3] did not give a clear account of the scope of logic. Even though his *Organon* constitute the contents of what later philosophers studied as logic, his inability to give a clear and succinct account of logic's subject matter helped in creating this problem. In fact, depending on which part of the *Organon* that later logicians intended to emphasize, Aristotle's works in logic offered a leading thread. In the syllogistic doctrine of his *Prior Analytics*, he enunciates a number of general principles about relations between universals, which he calls belonging or being predicated. For him, these principles are important because they guarantee the validity of certain patterns of arguments for all possible subject matters to which they may be applied. Such patterns of arguments were of interest to him because, they are required for the elaboration of science as he explains in his

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Morris R. Cohen, *A Preface to Logic* (London: Routledge and George Sons Ltd, 1946), p. 1.

[2] C. S. Pierce, *Collected Papers* Vol. II, Charles Hartshorne, ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1960), p. 621.

[3] Aristotle is supposed to captain the world's team of logicians because he was the first philosopher to develop a general theory about argument. For details see I.M. Bochenski *Ancient Formal Logic* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co.1963), p. 31.

Posterior Analytics.[4] This understanding of logic led some of Aristotle's successors to connect logic with the epistemology and the psychology of reasoning.

In other parts of the *Organon*, Aristotle dealt with the ways in which terms can have meanings and the sort of entities to which they can be applied. Among the preliminaries of his syllogistic also there is a good deal about the analysis of discourse and classification of statements. This offered another strand of the conception of logic; some logicians therefore connect logic to grammar and rhetoric. Depending on which part of the *Organon* that a logician is interested in, he can find support for his view or conception. On the basis of the *Organon*, a synthesis of the subject matter of logic gives three concerns, *words, thought* and *things*.[5]

Apart from Aristotle, in *Cratylus* it is said that Prodikos of Keos was concerned with the right use of words. Protagoras of Abdera is also reputed to have distinguished different types of sentences – affirmations, denials, questions, answers and injunctions. He also had interest in the study of synonyms.[6] These developments indeed constitute germinal works in the theories of language, and opened the line of peripatetic logic.

Eristic, sophistry and dialectics had at different times been the main focus of studies in logic. In eristic and sophistry, logic is conceived as the art of thinking whereby from premisses that appear to be true led by steps that appear to be valid, conclusions that are false are reached. Arguments which are fallacious and yet bear misleading resemblance to valid arguments are called sophisms by Aristotle, and he implies that there were men called sophists who

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[4] See Aristotle. *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, W. D. Ross trans. (New York: Claredon Press, 1966).

[5] I. M. Bochenski, op cit. pp. 15–17.

[6] See William & Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

made their living by inventing such arguments and exhibiting them public. Earlier, Plato talked of these kinds of men in *Euthydemus*

For Bochenski logic arose out of dialectics.[7] Starting from Zeno, who Aristotle called the inventor of dialectics, through Plato's elegant espousal of the art in his *Dialogues*, we go to the Hegelian and Marxist conceptions of dialectics. This identification shows that dialectical logic is essentially a conceptual logic, for the main thing in it is the accurate reflection in thought of the specific real content of developing reality.

These characterizations of logic are brought into fuller perspective in Morris R. Cohen's chaotic nuances of logic's curriculum.[8] In this chaotic curriculum, Cohen presents nine conceptions interjected into the science of logic thus: (i) logic is concerned with the science of the laws of thought without really bothering to tersely distinguish it from psychology, (ii) has to do with linguistic information as to the meaning and use of words, (iii) the rhetorical considerations as to the persuasive force of various arguments, (iv) metaphysical considerations as to the reality or unreality of universals and particulars and their relations, (v) epistemological, that is, mixed psychological and metaphysical considerations as to the nature of knowledge and its relation to what is called the world of reality, (vi) catalogues of errors of reasoning generally referred to as material fallacies, (vii) pedagogic directions as to the conduct of the human understanding, (viii) miscellaneous general consideration of various other sciences and their histories which pretend to describe the essence of scientific method; and (ix) the rudiments of formal or symbolic logic.

The difficulties in characterizing the subject matter of logic resulting in the chaotic curriculum sketched above, perhaps arises from the variety of senses which the Greek word *logos*, from which the term 'logic' come is derived possesses. We have a harvest of

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7 Cohen, op cit, pp. 1-2

8 See "Logic" *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 9, Macropedia, p. 274.

partial translations of the term *logos*. These are *sentence, discourse, reason, rule, ratio, account, rational, principle* and *definition*. This embarrassment of translations precipitates into the subject matter of logic. Thus, generally, the subject matter of logic has been summed up to be the laws of thought, the rules of right reasoning, the principles of valid argumentation, the use of certain words labeled logical constants and truths (true propositions) based solely on the meaning of the terms they contain, etc.

But we discern that in whatever degree the translations differ, some of the characterizations are in fact closely related to each other. When logic is said, for instance, to be the study of the laws of thought, these laws of thought must be laws of correct reasoning. There is also a parallelism between correct thinking and valid argumentation: valid argumentation may be thought of as an expression of correct thinking, and the latter as an internalization of the former. In the sense of this parallelism, laws of correct thought will match those of correct argumentation. Peirce realized this close relationship between the translations. "It will, however, generally be conceded that its [logic] central problem is the classification of arguments, so that all those that are bad are thrown into one division and those which are good into another..."[9] This means that logic deals chiefly with the criteria for the evaluation of arguments. Bas C. Van Fraassen succinctly expressed this when he said "the aim of logic proper is to develop methods for the logical appraisal of reasoning."[10] Thus, the deluge of translations notwithstanding, appraisal of reasoning provides the immediate subject matter of logic.

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[9] Frederick Michael and Emily Michael, "Peirce on the nature of Logic." In *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, Vol XX, No. 1 (January 1979), p. 86.

[10] Bas C. Van Fraassen, *Formal Semantics and Logic* (New York: Macmillian Company Ltd, 1972), p. 2.

Logic as the science of the laws of thought

The identification of logic with the appraisal of reasoning has always engendered confusion as to the relationship between logic and thought In fact, nearly all books on logic define it in some manner as the science of thought.[11] This identification of logic with thought gained prominence in the 19th century, owing to the loss of receptivity to the inquiry into ontological issues. Prior to this, following Aristotle's connection of logic with metaphysics, logic continued to be associated with ontology.[12] Even with the Stoics and Megaricians this association was evident. The ontological status of symbols was seen in their elaboration of a refined semiotic theory and statement of logical theorems in such a way that they would always mean something belonging to the realm of meanings. But with the shift in the 19th century, logic was conceived as a study of how the mind works in the process of conception, judgement and inference.

This psychological trend had its supplementary modes of approach in nominalism, conceptualism and logical realism. Berkeley's and Hume's subjective individualism insisted on restricting meaning to the purely mental realm. And when mind is thus identified with the conscious experience of individuals, logic implicitly becomes a description of how such individual minds work when they make judgment. This psychological conception had its quintessence in Kant. For Kant logic is a science which investigates the descriptive laws of thought; it is to be understood as a science which provides an accurate factual description of human thought processes. Because this understanding makes thought the subject matter of logic. The implication is that logic does not apply to what cannot be thought, which issues in a confusion between logic and psychology in understanding reality. Psychology assumes that there is a world of nature in which there are individual things, and a world of mind in

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11 Cohen, op cit, p. 2-3.

12 U. O. Uduma, op cit, pp. x ii-xiii.

which are located all abstractions and relations between things. This means that things exist in one world, that of matter, and relations in quite another, that of mind.

Logic a relation between symbols; against psychologism

Does logic provide an accurate factual description of human thought processes? Is thought the subject matter of logic? According to Cohen[13] that the laws of logic are not universal laws according to which we do actually think can be conclusively shown by the most elementary observation or introspection, and by the existence of fallacies. He further stress that we do not free ourselves completely from the difficulty that connect logic with psychology by saying that logic deals with the laws according to which we think when we think correctly. Assuredly, correct thinking takes place only under favourable physiological, educational and moral conditions. But we do not expect any treatise on logic to deal with the physiological and moral conditions of mental health. For Cohen therefore, logic cannot be properly distinguished and hence described as dealing with the laws according to which we ought to think. According to him, the principles of every science are in a sense laws according to which we ought to think if we would think correctly on its distinctive subject matter.

Peirce, however, agrees with the Kantians that logic is a descriptive not a normative science, but objected to the view that the subject matter of logic is thought. Such a view, he held, leads to pit-falls. According to him, Kantians, taking logic to give us laws of thought, assume that they do not apply to what cannot be thought. Hence some make out that there is something of which it is not true that *A* is not *A*.

The consequence of this view (that is, that logic does not apply to what cannot be thought) introduces confusion between logic and psychology. To resolve this confusion, logicians distinguish the

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[13] Cohen, op.cit, p. 2-3.

psychological view of logic from the non-psychological. This distinction is to the effect that both thoughts and words are symbols; thoughts are internal symbols, utterances and inscriptions are external symbols. The subject matter of logic is symbols in general; whether spoken, written or thought. "Logic needs no distinction between the symbol and the thought; for every thought is a symbol and the laws of logic are true of all symbols."[14] This means that logic investigates the necessary laws of all symbols, whether these are internal symbols (thoughts) or external symbols (utterances and inscriptions). In other words, logic investigates thought but only insofar as thoughts are symbols.

This understanding, as already adumbrated, avoids the psychologism inherent in the view that led logicians to argue about how we in fact think and what can be thought rather than to deal with necessary relations between all symbols, whether they are actually thought or not. Logic is then said not to be concerned with the empirical but with the logical structure of thought; as such it deals not with how we in fact think but with the logical relations between symbols:

> *in the study of logic, we are not concerned with the actual thoughts of this or that person but only with the ways in which thought and ideas are interrelated and with the way in which propositions expressing these thoughts and ideas are interrelated and mutually determine one another* [15]

It follows that logic does not provide an accurate factual description of human thought processes, nor does it attempt to do so, for people often think confusedly, fallaciously and inconsistently; the very opposite of the logical. In fact, as W.H. Werkmeister had observed, man has not learned to employ reason to his best advantage on all occasions nor has he always lived up to his insights and understandings. The

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[14] Frederick Michael and Emily Michael, p. 85.

[15] C. S. Pierce, op cit., p. 723.

actual course of history and the great confusions of our own time are proof... that reason and unreason are still intermixed in our lives. At the level of thought, reason may go astray and may lead to confusions, which are not warranted by the facts or by the principles and laws, which serve as premisses in an argument. The principles of logic therefore do not describe the psychological processes involved in thinking. If we seek laws to describe such processes we should turn to psychology not logic, for we are going beyond the bounds of logic.[16]

In logic, we are not occupied with cognition or the mode of cognition, but only with the forms of representation. This position is easily proved if we consider an argument in a language that is no longer understood. We would not say that such an argument was valid when it was understood and thought, but now that no one can understand it, it is no longer valid. The argument, logicians would say, is valid by virtue of the relation between symbols, whether they are understood and thought or not. Thus, Peirce would argue[17] that the non-psychological view makes that systematically evident, which it would seem were otherwise sufficiently axiomatic, that these laws apply not merely to what can be thought but to whatever can be symbolized in any way. And hence extends their validity to all subjects of argumentation whatsoever. Even though George Boole called his most ambitious work on logic *The Laws of Thought* and sometimes wrote as though he supposed himself to be investigating the constitution of the human intellect, his algebra has nothing to do with thought processes. In each of the interpretations, which we call logical, it is concerned with relations between entities that are largely non-mental. In Frege's works there is even less possibility of confusion between logic and psychology; his work rather exemplifies a thoroughgoing attack on psychologism. It is true that he called his *concept-script* a symbolic language of pure thought; but his explanations show that he

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[16] W. H. Werkmeister, *An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (New York: Routledge and George Sons Ltd, 1972), p. xv.

[17] Frederick Michael and Emily Michael, op cit., p. 84–87.

does not mean by this phrase a language designed for talking about a special kind of thinking.

On the contrary, when he asserts that arithmetic is identical with logic, he makes clear that he thinks of arithmetical statements as concerned with mainly numbers, which are not constructed by human thinking or in any way dependent upon human minds. For him, the concept-script is a language of pure thought only in the sense that it is designed for expressing truths which we think when we abstract entirely from the special contents of our various experiences.

This description, William and Martha Kneale, however argue[18] is not precise enough to indicate that the *concept–script* is a language which provides only for the formulation of principles of logic. According to them, so far as the title goes, Frege's first book might be about a new symbolism for metaphysics. But they further argue, that he thinks of the book as an aid to the development of the science which Aristotle began in his *Prior Analytics.* Here, arithmetic, which Frege identifies with logic, is the most fundamental of all sciences. But it is not about what philosophers commonly call the external world, i.e. the world of things in space, nor, on the other hand, is it about minds. It is indeed about inferences which are made by minds but only because it is concerned with connexions between thinkables. In the *Fundamental Laws of Arithmetic,*[19] Frege wrote:

> *to be true is not the same as to be held true, were it by one, were it by many, were it by all, and can in no wise be reduced thereunto. It is no contradiction that something is true which everyone takes to be false. By laws of logic, I do not mean psychological laws for the being-held-to-be-true but laws for the being true. If it is true that I write this on the 13th of July 1893, in my study, while the wind is howling outside, it remains true even if all mankind would later consider it*

[18] William & Martha Kneale, op cit.

[19] Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic,* J. L. Austin trans (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p.xv – xvi.

> *false. If the being-true thus is independent of whether it be acknowledged by anyone, the laws for the being-true are not psychological laws but boundary stones, which are rooted in an eternal ground and which can be flooded by our thought, it is true, but can never be disclosed.*

From the distinction between to *being true* and *to be held true* remarked above, Frege went on to assert that, that the laws of logic shall be guides to our thoughts in its search for truth, is generally acknowledged but it is all too easily forgotten. The ambiguity of the word 'law' is fatal here. In one sense, a law states what is, in another sense it prescribes what ought to be. Only in the latter sense can the laws of logic be called laws of thought since they lay down how one ought to think. Any law, which states what is, can be considered as prescribing that one ought to think in accordance with is, and is hence, in that sense, a law of thought. This is true of the laws of geometry and of physics as much as of the laws of logic; both of which deserve the name 'laws of thought' with greater right only if the name is taken to imply that they are the most general laws which prescribe how it ought to be thought whenever thinking is done at all.

It is possible, Frege further argues, to falsify the meaning of the word 'true' in a worse way than when one wishes to include a relation to a judging subject. According to him, one objects that the sentence 'I am hungry' can be true for one person and false for another. The sentence, I grant, but not the thought because the word 'I' signifies another human being in the mouth of the other and, hence, also the sentence, when pronounced by the other, expresses another thought. All indications of place, time, etc. belong to the thought whose truth is being dealt with; the being-true itself is independent of place and date.[20]

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[20] Ibid.

The import of the spirited attack, by Frege, on psychologism is to the effect that the laws of logic are not laws of nature, but laws of the laws of nature. And this, for Peirce, Boole and Frege, like Leibniz before them, means that logic is a system of principles which allow for valid inference in all kinds of subject matter, i.e. as the theory of relations. Most logicians accordingly have taken as the central theme of logic the classification and articulation of the principles of formally valid inferences. This is what has been expressed by the thesis that logic is a theory of formal inference.

Logic as a theory of formal inference

Logic as the criteria for the evaluation of arguments is said to have as its fundamental task the provision of standards or criteria to judge whether an argument is logically correct. This means that the logician is interested in the validity of arguments. Since to say that an argument is valid is to say that if its premisses are true, then its conclusion must be true, an argument is valid by virtue of its form. Because validity has to do with formal structures of an argument, logic as a study of conditions of validity is said to be a formal discipline. Here validity as a principle demands of the conclusions of an argument that it cannot fail to be true if the premisses are true, hence logic is said to be deductive.

The parallelism between validity and deduction is brought into sharper focus by the fact that a deductive argument is one in which the claim is made that some propositions (the conclusion) follow with strict necessity from some other proposition(s) [the premisses] – that is, that it would be inconsistent or self-contradictory to assert the premisses but deny the conclusion.

In this respect, if a deductive argument is to succeed in establishing the truth of its conclusion, two conditions must be met. First, the conclusion must in fact follow from the premisses, that is, the deduction of the conclusion from the premisses must be logically sound. Secondly, the premisses themselves must be true. Of these

two conditions the logician as such is only concerned with the first; the second – the determination of the truth or falsity of the premisses is the task of some special discipline or of common observation, etc. appropriate to the subject matter of the argument. As Haack would put it, we are, of course, usually interested in more than the validity of arguments: we are interested also, in whether their premisses are in fact true. A valid argument with none but true statements as premisses is called a sound argument. The aim of the various empirical sciences is to determine the factual truth or probability of premisses. This is not the aim of the formal science of logic. Logic studies the conditions of validity – and no argument can be sound unless it is valid. [21]

Because the formal structures of an argument determines the validity of an argument, logic as a formal science has as its subject formal validity. It studies the form of arguments in order to classify argument forms into two mutually exclusive and exhaustive divisions: one division being reserved for argument forms, the other division for formally invalid forms. The object of formal logic is thus obtained when logical techniques and methods are available by means of which it is possible, in principle, to identify all arguments termed 'logical as a formally valid, and formally invalid.

The deductive inferences with which formal logic is concerned are therefore those for which validity depends not on any features as their subject matter, but on their form or structure. On this, Russell remarks that "it is not open to us, as logicians or pure mathematicians to mention anything at all, because if we do so, we introduce something irrelevant and not formal."[22] Using classical syllogism, Russell points out that in saying " All men are mortal, Socrates is a man; Therefore Socrates is mortal", what we mean to assert is only that the premisses imply the conclusion; not that premisses and conclusion are actually

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[21] Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logic* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978), p. 12.

[22] Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), pp. 196–197.

true. According to him, even traditional logic points out that the actual truth of the premisses is irrelevant to logic. This is why Russell argues that the first change to be made in the syllogistic is to state syllogistic arguments in propositional form where we, instead of the standard form, now have the same argument couched as follows: "If all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal." The reason being, according to him, that it is intended to convey that the argument is valid in virtue of its form, not in virtue of the particular terms occurring in it.

The point is that if we had omitted 'Socrates is a man' from our premisses, we should have had a non-formal argument, only admissible because Socrates is in fact a man. In that case, we could not have generalized the argument. But when, as above, the argument is formal, nothing depends upon the terms that occur in it. What this comes to is that we may as well substitute μ for men, $\hat{a}$ for mortals, and x for Socrates where μ and $\hat{a}$ are any classes whatever, and x is any individual. We then arrive at the statement: "No matter what possible values x and μ and $\hat{a}$ may have, if all μs and $\hat{a}$ s and x is an μ then x is a $\hat{a}$.

If formal reasoning is what we are aiming at, we shall always ultimately arrive at s statement like the above, in which no actual things or properties are mentioned. For Russell, this will happen through the mere desire not to waste our time proving in a particular case what can be proved generally. To quote him:

> *it would be ridiculous to go through a long argument about Socrates, and then go through precisely the same argument again about Plato. If our argument is one (say) which holds for all men, we shall prove concerning 'x' with hypothesis "if x is a man". With this hypothesis the argument would still be valid if, instead of supposing x to be a man, we were to suppose him to be a monkey, or a goose or a Prime Minister. We shall therefore not waste our time taking as our*

premisses "x is a man" but shall take "x is an U" where U is any class of individual.[23]

What Russell is saying is that the absence of all mention of particular things or properties in logic is a necessary result of the fact that logic is purely formal.

Our exposition shows that logic as a formal discipline is concerned with inference *forms* rather than with particular instances of them. One of its tasks is to discriminate between valid and invalid inference forms, to explore and systematize the relations that hold among valid ones. It is the notion of form, D. P. Henry points out,[24] which represents a reminder of the fact that things fall into distinguishable sorts, which can, in turn be subsumed under broader kinds. For him, since truistic explanations can be given in terms of sorts or kinds, the form or essence is said to be the principle of intelligibility or explanation–worthiness of things. General definitions such as 'man is a rational animal' stand at the basis of such explanations, and are said to hold true in respect of the formal aspect of things.

The insight that logic is interested in formal validity, Aristotle points out,[25] means that logical principles express the most general nature of things. According to him, since the general nature of things is the ground for the correctness or incorrectness of reasoning, general nature is also expressed in the principle of logic or inferences. For him logic studies the nature of anything; that is, "it investigates being as being." It is differentiated from other sciences because while the other disciplines examine the properties which distinguish one subject matter from another, logic studies those truths which hold for everything that is, and not for special subdivision of what is apart from the others.

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[23] Ibid, pp. 197–198.

[24] D. P. Henry, *Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* (London: Hutchinson Library, 1972), p. 13.

[25] See Morris Cohen & Ernest Nagel, *Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 185–187.

As a consequence, logical principles must be formal – they represent the common characters of any subject matter from another. This Cohen and Nagel remark[26], is a virtue in abstraction rather than a fault. For in abstracting to form, we require knowledge of only the most general characters of a subject matter, that is, that which it has in common with everything else, in order to reason upon it validly. We need not, as it were, encumber our thought with useless intellectual baggage if we reason intelligently.

Conclusion

From the foregoing logic as a formal discipline takes as its main subject matter propositions and deductive arguments, and abstract from their content the structures or logical forms that they embody. Since logic is interested in the forms and their connections, apart from any matter, which an argument exemplifies, (formal) logic is the science of pure forms. In this sense of formal, the logician customarily uses a symbolic notation to express the structures of arguments clearly and unambiguously and to enable manipulations and test of validity to be more easily applied. What this comes to is that because symbols in themselves embody logical forms, formal deductive systems can be presented in uninterpreted symbols, they can be stated as if they referred to no objects; and logical forms thus dissociated from a 'matter', becomes a subject of study in itself. Accordingly, Yu. A. Kharin writes:

> *Formal logic studies the structural side of thoughts, describing the simplest logical devices and demonstrating the rules by which certain judgements are deduced from others. What is more, it abstracts the various forms of thought (concepts, judgements and inferences) from their development in time, from definite, concrete content.*[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Yu. A. Kharin, *The Fundamentals of Dialectics* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 236.

By this, Yu. A. Kharin means that the laws of (formal) logic express the essential link between the ideas formed within one and the same judgement. The import of this is that logic as a formal system is an *a priori*, and not an empirical study. In this sense logic contrasts with the natural sciences and with all other disciplines that depend on observation for their data. Its nearest analogy is pure mathematics. It has in fact been asserted by some logicians that in point of fact there is strictly no logical difference between pure mathematics and deductive reasoning. What we usually call formal logic is simply the study of the most general portion of pure mathematics.

An exposition of systems of logic is wont to show that there are numerous sets of postulates for geometry – both Euclidean and non-Euclidean – for arithmetic and algebra, for serial order and for logic itself, which attain – or nearly attain – this ideal of abstract statement, and it is these systems which best illustrate pure deduction. An examination of them makes it obvious that formal deduction is concerned with nothing but forms and their relations. As Russell had also pointed out, in order that the deductive connections in logic and pure mathematics may stand forth clearly, they are separated from the subject matter and stated in terms of theorems which might equally well apply to other subject matters. Though these postulates, axioms and theorems can be interpreted in many different ways, their forms remain the same whatever objects they refer to – even if they refer to no objects. Their form is independent of all interpretations.

In agreement with Russell, Monroe Eaton posits[28] that systems of logic are hypothetical, in the sense that they are purely conceptual and not asserted. They conform to the principles of the construction of concepts, that is, of the use of symbols, and are therefore possibilities for thought; but the question of their truth or falsity does not figure. If complete interpretations for them can be found, they

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[28] See Ralph Monroe Eaton, *Symbolism and Truth: An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1964), Chapter VII.

will be 'materially' consistent and true for these interpretations: the hypothetical connection between the postulates, axioms, and theorems will become inferences. The theorems can be truly asserted as consequences of the postulate and axioms. But if they have no interpretations, or only incomplete interpretations, these systems will still be possibilities for thought – conceptually valid and formally consistent, and from the point of view of formal logic, this is all that they need be.

The foregoing explanation of what is meant by logic as a system of formal relations brings into sharp perspective the place of symbols in logic. The importance of symbols in logic is highlighted by Peirce. According to him:

> *the woof and wrap of all thought and research is symbols, and the life or thought and science is the life inherent in symbols; so that it is wrong to say that a good language is important to good thought, merely, for it is the essence of it*[29]

Echoing the above view, Irving M. Copi writes: "the special symbols of modern logic help us to exhibit with greater clarity the logical structures of propositions and arguments whose forms may tend to be obscured by the unwieldiness of ordinary language" [30]

Apart from the functions and value of symbols, it is obvious that whatever be the nature of the reasoning process, this process is facilitated by the use of artificial counters or symbols, which represent only the general properties under investigation and not any of the specific properties, which must be excluded. In any case, all languages, and not merely symbol logic, is symbolic:

> *all communication and inquiry must take place by means of word, sounds, graphic marks, gestures, and so on. Words refer to some thing, whether it be to the emotions, to ideas, or to that which ideas are about. When we say, "there is a*

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[29] C. S. Pierce, op cit., p. 129.

[30] I. M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 278.

fire next door", the sounds we utter are not what they signify. The sounds, for example do not burn, they are a definite number of felt distant, and so on. They do signify something to some one[11]

However, the employment of special symbols, instead of the more familiar symbols called words, is a practical convenience rather than a logical necessity. There is not a proposition in logic or mathematics that cannot be ultimately expressed in ordinary words – that is proved by the fact that these subjects can be taught to those who do not start with a knowledge of the special symbols. But, as Cohen remarks, it is practically impossible to make much progress in mathematics and logic without appropriate symbols, just as it is impossible to carry on modern trade without cheques or credit books or to build modern bridges without special tools.

Symbolic reasoning is essentially reasoning on a large scale with instruments appropriate to such wholesale undertakings. If we want a large number of fish, we must use net rather than single lines. According to him, the opposition to symbolic reasoning, like the old opposition to the introduction of machinery, arises from the natural disinclination to change, to incur trouble or expense for a future gain. The prejudice against careful analytical procedure is for him part of the human impatience with technique, which arises from the fact that men are interested in results and would like to attain them without the painful toil which is the essence of our mortal finitude.

From antiquity, it is little to wonder therefore that logic has been considered purely from a formal perspective, hence symbolic. From Aristotle through Leibniz, George Boole, Augustus De Morgan, to Guiseppe Peano, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ernst Zermelo, David Hilbert, Wilhelm Ackermann, John Von Neumann, Gerhard Gentzen, Jacques Herbrand, the symbolic character of logic has always been emphasized. Charles S. Peirce therefore stresses that logic needs no distinction between the symbol and the thought, for every thought

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[11] William P. Alston. *Philosophy of Language* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 23.

is a symbol and the laws of logic are true of all symbols. For him, and plausibly so, it is difficult to see how a logic could be formulated at all without the use of some symbols, since words and sentences, spoken or written, are themselves symbols. According to Karl Popper, the fundamental problem of logic is the theory of inference – in the most elementary form, the drawing up of rules of valid inference. In this task, it (logic) cannot succeed without introducing some artificial precision into the language in which these inferences are formulated.[12] The import of Karl Popper's remark being that logic, appropriately described, is the science of the conditions which enable symbols to refer to objects. Here, the symbols which refer to objects are propositions and arguments. Logic thereby enables symbols to refer to objects then treats of the formal conditions of the truth of symbols. This is why logic is characterized by the symbolic interest.

In concluding this paper, it is significant to remark and underscore here that our defense of the symbolic nature of logic does not commit us to the thesis that formal truth and symbolism are the only *de jure* concern of logic. The development of logic and its doctrines clearly show that the subject matter of logic has always been more extensive than formalism and symbolism. This, however, does not derogate on our position that logic is fundamentally symbolic in nature. In effect, notwithstanding the perceived difficulties in symbolic logic, there is the need to actually improve its study. The de-emphasis, as it were, of the formal or symbolic impetus in logic does not and should not operate as to betray our appreciation of the fundamental nature of logic. More importantly, unless it is made clear that logic deals primarily with the logical relation between symbols, the readiness to associate logic with psychology cannot be resisted.

[12] Karl Popper, "New Foundations for Logic," in *Mind*, vol. LVI, No. 223, July 1947, p. 213.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Review of
The Amalgam, Kakistocracy and Warfare Society: The Options
by E. Kolawole Ogundowole,

(406 + xxxiv pages, Lagos: Correct Limited, 2006)

By

Prof F. A. Adeigbo

The book addresses a critical issue in contemporary African socio-political experience. This experience is a fall-out of what has variously been referred to in African history as the *Great Scramble* or the *Balkanization of Africa* or the *African Great Divide*.

After the abolition of the Slave Trade in Africa (1805-1818), European interest in Africa, beyond humanitarian and missionary activities, seemed to be on the wane. But the Industrial Revolution forced new options on Europe. At this time, trade had been increasing along the coasts of Africa as ships berthed either to off-load surplus goods or cart away raw/crude materials to the industrialized countries. To protect their overseas/African markets, these European countries found it necessary to proclaim their occupation of territories in Africa. Thus by 1914, Africa had been parceled out among the big powers and renamed as Belgian Congo, Portuguese Guinea, Spanish Morocco, French Equatorial Africa, British West Africa, German East Africa, and so on. Politically, the essence of the scramble, like the overall objective of colonialism, was to keep colonial peoples in subjection and to make possible the maximum exploitation of their natural resources. This objective was to be pursued through the political structures imposed on their colonies by laws and decrees.

Ogundowole refers to these political structures or entities as "misconceptions of nation-states" by the colonizers. Thus, the central question which the book addresses is the question of how best to ensure harmonious co-existence among the various and diverse groups

(Nigeria, the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Cote d' Ivore, etc) masquerading as impendent nation-states, which the colonialists quickly and arbitrarily put together. The pertinence of the question derives from the fact that, neither the erstwhile colonial masters nor the post-independence leaders in most of these so-called new States have been able to guarantee political stability in the States. The frequent military interventions, ethnic conflicts and genocidal wars strongly influenced the choice of the book's title.

The New National Dictionary by William Collins Sons & Company defines "Kakistocracy" as "government by the worst people in the State." Hence, national development has remained elusive since what obtains is a state of persistent warfare. Thus, the primary problem which the book addresses revolves around the question of how to promote cooperation and stability among these nationalities which uneasily occupy common territorial boundaries in post independent Africa. In addressing this question, the author stresses on a fact, namely, that these countries are 'colonial amalgams' established to facilitate economic exploitation rather than promote national cohesion and development. It is therefore understandable that the divide-and-rule policy would be the principle of governance in colonial times. To further facilitate the political game-plan, the departing colonialists hand-picked successors who would protect their economic interest after their departure. In many cases, these hand-picked 'nationalist leasers' were not the best – educationally, or ideologically. Thus began the continent-wide 'kakistocratic' rule.

Post independence effort to correct this situation have been based primarily on the assumption that it would be possible to forge a melting pot out of the disparate groups that constituted the new States. Unfortunately, this has not worked. The primary reason for this failure, the author argues rather strongly, has had to do with the fact that diversity is a natural human phenomenon, which can only be managed, not eradicated. Hence the attribution of the preponderance of ethnic conflicts in Africa to manipulation by the elites is too

reductionist to serve as an adequate explanation for this problem. For him, feelings of identity are too ingrained in the human psyche to be wished away in this manner. Indeed, most attempts to create nation-States in Africa amount to nothing more than a process of 'denationalization,' which are bound to fail.

The author thinks that the best way to make Africa a viable continent, and its various societies thriving ones, is to protect cultural diversity. But how is this goal to be achieved? The best way of doing this, according to Ogundowole, is by recognizing the right to self-determination of each of the nationalities that have been forced to co-exist. This does not automatically imply the disintegration of various African countries as we know them presently. All it entails is that whatever association between these nationalities that would arise from this recognition would be voluntary, and consequently, tension-free and fruitful.

This position is based on two interrelated assumptions. The first one is that heterogenous societies are "inherently confliction and prone to instability" (p.385). The corollary of this, of course, is that homogeneity promotes mutual understanding among a group of people, thereby facilitating cooperation among them. Indeed, for Ogundowole, homogeneity is a prerequisite for democratic government and the best condition for "rapid economic and technological development".

These claims raise a number of questions (1) How homogeneous are those nationalities whose right to self-determination Ogundowole would wish to protect? (2) How do we re-configure African societies as they are now in a manner that would not create internecine conflicts and make warfare a permanent condition of existence for the restructured societies? (3) What is the assurance that reconfiguration along the lines suggested the Ogundowole would guarantee the viability of African States? (4) What are the implications of all this for the idea of pan-Africanism?

A book review is hardly the place for addressing these crucial questions. It suffices to note that giving them careful consideration is one of the ways of ensuring that the idea of self-determination is not regarded as a magic wand that can remove the various afflictions, which have made the achievement of the goal of nation-building a daunting task in Africa.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the arguments for Ogundowole's position are not as cut and dry as the summary given above would seem to suggest. Indeed, they are derived from his analysis of a concrete human situation, specifically the Nigerian situation. What is worrisome about this situation is the failure to respond adequately to the challenge of nation-building, such that it would be possible to harness the resources of the society for the promotion of the common good. What is worse, Nigeria today already has a rich harvest of conflicts that would seem to suggest that the Nigerian project has already failed. A question that arises here is that of whether the problem is simply one of ethnic heterogeneity or one of inability to manage it to promote national cohesion and generate economic prosperity.

One may not entirely agree with the author's answer to this question. One thing, however, is clear, namely in raising the issues as courageously and clearly as he has done, he has provided another opportunity for a frank debate about the problem of our society and the things we need to do in order to place ourselves in a position to solve these problems. This is not a surprise. After all, Ogundowole is a philosopher. By raising the question he has raised, discussing the pre-suppositions of the various answers that had been given hitherto, and then supporting his own position and proposals with rational arguments, he has underscored the role of critical thinking in national development.

An unexamined life is not worth living, Socrates has often been quoted to have said. Ogundowole's book, apart from being informed by the practical concern of making Nigerian, indeed African,

a viable community, also shows clearly the kind of dividend that can be derived from frank discussions of our problems. The best way we can acknowledge this is by seeing the book as a proposal, which requires critical examination. Let the debate begin in earnest among political philosophers, political scientists, African historians and historiographers for whom this book is essential. Only by reading this can meaningfully and constructively engage in the debate. One final point, the word 'KAKISTROCRACY' which is mispelt on the spine (The Printer's Devil) must be corrected on the re-print. What a masterpiece!

A Review of
A Literary Revolution: In The Spirit of the Harlem Renaissance
edited by Sandra M. Grayson
(2008, 172 pages. University Press of America)

By
Anthony Okeregbe, PhD

One of the results of the twin historical evils of the slave trade and colonization is an apparent namelessness and invisibility that has pervaded the intellectual space of Africans and people of African descent. This has been so pervasive that many inquiries into black history or culture have misrepresented Africa's intellectual history.

However, some scholars are beginning to challenge this inaccurate modernist narrative. The book, *A Literary Revolution: In The Spirit of the Harlem Renaissance* (2008), edited by Sandra M. Grayson, is an original work that focuses on the self-representation of people of African descent in Africa and the African Diaspora, through an analysis of the varied experiences of black people.

Creatively organized, *A Literary Revolution* includes essays, poems, short stories, an autobiographical narrative, and interviews. According to Sandra M. Grayson, the book has the following primary goals: "to examine significant issues that are overlooked or that have not yet been fully explored; to provide original analyses of the selected subjects; and to present innovative creative writing" (p.xiii).

To accomplish these goals, Grayson divides this anthology into four sections: South Africa ; Literature and Film; Short Stories and Poetry; and Philosophy. Through a combination of autobiography, essays, poetry, and an interview, the first part of the book explores the experiences of black people in South Africa . In the autobiographical narrative "From Azania and Back: Reflections on Exile" and "An Interview With Lavinia Africa" both Alosi J. M. Moloi and Lavinia Africa share their experiences as victims during the

atrocious apartheid regime in southern Africa, and then discuss their roles in the black resistance movement in South Africa. This black struggle finds personification in the life of Walter Sisulu to whom Chimalum Nwankwo pays tribute in the poem "Walking into the Sea." In this befitting tribute, Nwankwo poetically represents Sisuli's role in transforming the African National Congress (ANC) into a weapon of change in South Africa. "Engineering Patriotism: Americanization and Afrikanerization" examines similarities between South African and North American cultures. The works "Politics of Multilingualism in South Africa," "Reunion at the Jazz Castle," "Voice in the New South Africa," and "Economic Aspects of Historical African Art" trace black experiences in post-apartheid South Africa.

The second part of *A Literary Revolution* focuses on literature and film. In "*Screen Jelimuso*: Julie Dash and Political Films," Sandra M. Grayson analyzes *The Rosa Parks Story* and *Daughters of the Dust* as artistic and political narratives. Through these films, Grayson argues, the filmmaker can be seen as preserving and transforming the African American oral tradition. In "Recalling Sovereign Kentakes: Pauline Hopkins' *Of One Blood*," Grayson, analyzes Hopkins ' use of speculative fiction to represent the roles of some black women as agents of resistance and leaders of revolution in some ancient Africa nations. In this article, Grayson also examines Hopkins ' representation of a timeless connection between female leaders of ancient Kush and contemporary transformation. In "An Interview with Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo," Adimora-Ezeigbo discusses her life as a Nigerian writer and university professor. Joy Myree-Mainor, in her article "Pauline Hopkins and Social Justice," explores Hopkins ' novel *Contending Forces*. She argues that in the novel Hopkins challenges systematic racism. Samuel Ayedime Kafewo, in "Trans-Atlantic Dimensions: Exploring *Amistad* and *Sankofa*," analyzes Halie Gerima's *Sankofa* as a film that juxtaposes representations of historical realities and potential social and political transformation. However, he argues that

Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* is "an *assimilation story* that celebrates and glorifies white men, many of whom were slaveholders" (p 86)

The third part of *A Literary Revolution* focuses on innovative short stories and poetry. Grayson begins this section with magical surrealism. In Grayson's original short story "Transfiguration," Ase (the protagonist) establishes a metaphysical connection between herself and the nation she protects through her trans-historical presence. A tribute to womanhood is represented in Chimalum Nwankwo's poem "Silent Steps." Through powerful imagery, Nwankwo pays tribute to Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a major Nigerian activist, who fought against colonial oppression. Bose Ademilua-Afolayan's poem "Pain" represents the intense emotion of the narrator. John C. Gaston's poem "Can You Hook Up A Brother?" centres on two old friends as they discuss a fellow black brother who became successful. While Ronald Dorris' short stories "Dilla" and "Queen Etouffee" explore the spiritual and ontological imbalance meted on peaceful animal communities by the mindless invasion from strangers, his poems "Rip Tide" and "Will Mamadou Serve as Guide" comfort a desolate one and speak of hope rising from previous sacrifices.

The fourth part of the collection explores the area of philosophy. The essays justify the existence, the science, and the practice of African philosophy both as a rational inquiry and as a way of life. Muyiwa Falaiye in his essay "Who's Afraid of African Philosophy" revisits the problematic in defining African Philosophy; he explains the objective of a philosophy and the reason African Philosophy is a complex area of inquiry. Friday Nwankwo Ndubuisi in 'The Science of African Epistemology' examines the idea of an African theory of knowledge rationalized from traditional beliefs and narrative knowledge. In "African Traditional Medicine: The Metaphysical Foundation," Ndubuisi explores the role of spirituality in health and healing and how this creates the metaphysical foundation of African Traditional Medicine. In 'Yoruba Names and Meanings: A Metaphysical Interpretation,' Ayo Fadahunsi examines the Yoruba belief that draws

a connection between a person's name and his/her existential circumstance.

A Literary Revolution: In The Spirit of the Harlem is an African centred book that makes a significant contribution to scholarship. This substantial collection is original, genuine, and authentic. While some of the selections are testimonies which take the reader to the author's cultural past, every voice represents experiences that are in consonance with self; the consciousness that comprehends the subject of experience and the expression of that which it has experienced.

What is revolutionary about this book is the literary stance and re-establishment of the African metaphysics and the African mode of knowing as rooted in the Senghorian dictum: "I sense the other, I danced the other, therefore I am." By pursuing diversity in form and content, Grayson in this collection, recalls the Senghorian thesis that celebration of life and diversity and a collectivity of the spirit are the operative mode of emotion and logic that characterize an African theory of knowledge. Grayson's literary revolution is a demonstration of the interactive diversity and mutual interconnectedness of thought and spirit that permeate African experiences. Here, time places no restriction on the meaning reflected in narratives. Meaning is a lived experience that is passed on in a ritual of daily existence. Through *A Literary Revolution*, Sandra M. Grayson symbolically represents this timeless connection of meaning which narrative knowledge brings to the experiences of people of African descent. Her assertive creative revolution is worth commending for the following reasons. First, *A Literary Revolution* fulfils its objectives of examining significant issues that have been overlooked and unexplored in the studies of people of African descent, providing original analyses of the selected subjects, and presenting innovative creative writing. Second, *A Literary Revolution* makes a significant contribution to scholarship. Third, in this collection, "people of African descent speak for and represent themselves" and analyze numerous vistas of scholarship in both African and African American Studies.

AUTHOR'S GUIDELINE

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[1] J.I. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research & Publishers Ltd, 1999), p. 30.

[2] Benjamin B. Olshin, "The *I* Ching or 'Book of Changes': A Chinese Space-Time Model and a Philosophy of Divination", *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, vol. 2, No. 2, (July 2005), pp. 17-21.

[3] J.I. Omoregbe, op. cit., p. 50.

[4] William Hare, "Open-Minded Inquiry: A Glossary of Key Concepts", available at http://www.criticalthinking.org/articles/open-minded-inquiry.cf. Last visit: June 04, 2008.

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