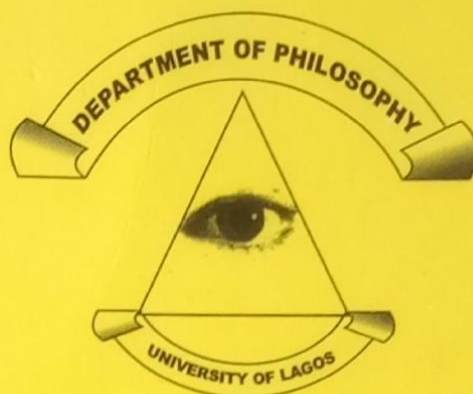


# The Nigerian ISSN: 018 9-885X JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Founded in 1981

THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS,  
LAGOS, NIGERIA



VOL. 1. 2010/2011, VOL. 2. 2010/2011

THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY  
ISSN 0189-885X; Founded in 1981

**EDITORIAL POLICY**

*The Nigerian Journal Philosophy* is an outlet through which scholarly researches in philosophy are made available to professional philosophers and others within and outside Africa. It is a forum for the exchange of philosophical ideas, and does not represent any philosophical school of thought. NJP therefore encourages and welcomes scholarly researches in any branch of philosophy. Advertisements and books for reviews/announcement are also accepted. The editorial board also appreciates receipts of at least two copies of newly published philosophical literatures from authors and publishers for the purposes of announcement and/or review.

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

**CHAIRMAN /HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

**Professor F.N. Ndubuisi**

**EDITORS**

**Dr. Chiedozie Okoro & Dr. Anthony Okeregbe**

**MEMBERS**

Prof. Jim Unah  
Prof. Muiyiwa Falaiye  
Prof. Godwin E. Azenabor  
Dr. Douglas Anele  
Dr. E. O. Kehinde  
Dr. Oghenekaro Ogbinaka  
Dr. Joseph Ekwealo

**ADVISERS**

V. Rev. Msgr. Prof E A. Adeigbo, Catholic Institute  
of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.  
Prof. Joseph I. Omoregbe, National University of  
Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho.  
Prof. S. B. Oluwole. Centre for African Philosophy  
and Culture, Lagos, Nigeria  
Prof. Kolawole A Owolabi, University of Ibadan,  
Nigeria  
Dr. Raymond Osei, University of Cape Coast, Ghana



Dr. C. B. Okoro

Idzie's Library  
Philosophy Dept.

Chinag  
21/12

(NEW ISSN PRINT 3115-2891) August 27, 2015

#### Errata

On the front cover of this journal we numbered this edition as VOL. 1. 2010/2011, VOL. 2. 2010/2011. This is a regrettable error caused by the Printer's Devil. The correct numbering is stated below

**THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Vol. 24, No.1. 2010/ Vol. 24, No. 2, 2011.**

**THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**VOL. 1. 2010/2011**

**Table of Contents**

- 1. Edwin E. Etieyibo**  
God Is Dead!' Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Some  
*Reflections On Religiosity In Nigeria*.....1-17
- 2. Chiedozie Okoro**  
Metaphysics of Race In Kant's Anthropology:  
A Critical Exposition .....18-35
- 3. Alloy S. Ihuah**  
Rethinking Human Development: Between  
Technology Transfer and Appropriate  
Technology.....36-52
- 4. Akinola Mohammed Akomolafe**  
Kwame Nkrumah's Socialism: A Philosophical  
Appraisal..... 52-64
- 5. Peter F. Omonzejele**  
Towards A Definition of the Concept  
and Possibilities of Exploitation.....65-72
- 6. Rotimi Omosulu**  
Book Review: Epistemological Evaluation of  
Science: The Rationalist Tradition .....73-76



## Notes on Contributors

**Edwin E. Etieyibo, Ph.D**, is a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

**Chiedozie Okoro, Ph.D**, is a Senior Lecturer of the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. His area of research includes traditional African ontology as it interfaces with western philosophy, rationalist epistemology, general ontology, amongst others.

**Alloy, S. Ihuah Ph.D**, is an Associate Professor of the Department of Religion and Philosophy, Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State, where he teaches. He is the editor of ORCE-UMA: African Journal of Existential Philosophy. His works include *Philosophy and Human Existence: Critical Essays in Philosophical Discourse* (Lambert, KG, Germany 2010).

**Akinola Mohammed Akomolafe, Ph.D**, is a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria.

**Peter F. Omonzejele, Ph.D**, is of the Department of Philosophy, University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria.

**Rotimi Omosulu, M.A.**, is of the General Studies Unit, Redeemer University of Nigeria, Redeemed Camp, Lagos/Ibadan Expressway, where he teaches philosophy.

**Raymond N. Osei, Ph.D** is an Associate Professor of the Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, where he was Head of Department and Interim Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

**Husein Inusah, M.Phil**, is a doctoral student of the Department of Philosophy and Classics, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.

**Anthony Okeregbe, Ph.D**, is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.

**Isaac E. Ukpokolo, Ph.D**, is a Senior Lecturer of the Department Of Philosophy, Faculty Of Arts, University Of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is published



both locally and internationally in ethics and epistemology, his areas of research.

**Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani, Ph.D**, teaches philosophy at the Pope John Paul II Major Seminary, Awka, Anambra State. Nigeria.

**Ademola Kazeem Fayemi, M.A.**, teaches Philosophy in the Department Of Philosophy, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos.

**Olajumoke Akiode, M.A.**, a doctoral student at the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, is a researcher in African Philosophy.



# **'GOD IS DEAD!' NIETZSCHE'S ZARATHUSTRA AND SOME REFLECTIONS ON RELIGIOSITY IN NIGERIA**

**Edwin E. Etieyibo, PhD**

## **Abstract**

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche through Zarathustra claims that *God is dead*. This claim may strike one as blasphemous, especially if one is deeply religious. Indeed, that is how some have taken it. My aim in this paper is to examine what Nietzsche means by the claim. I show that the locution *God is dead* is not an epistemological, metaphysical or religious claim for the proof of God's existence and nature but rather a socio-cultural claim about the influence of God in peoples' lives. I argue on the one hand, that for Nietzsche *qua* Zarathustra, the death of God provides the ground for the emergence of the overman, and on the other hand, that if what it means by the proposition, *God lives* is that he constitutes an effective and affective part of the reality, moral or otherwise that people live by, then, given the present facts about religiosity and corruption in Nigeria one could claim that *God is dead* in (at least some part of) the country.

## **Introduction**

Before I begin it would be helpful to issue some riders. First, the claim that 'God is dead' is neither a metaphysical/epistemological nor religious claim for the proof of God's existence and nature; rather it is a socio-cultural claim about the influence of God in peoples' lives. Second, my paper is primarily a critical analysis of the first claim in Zarathustra's dialogue with the old saint and his conversations with the market-place crowd in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (TSZ). The leap I make into the second claim comes out of my overarching goal of demonstrating what Nietzsche means by the claim that 'God is dead' and that man can be overcome.

## **Between the 'Genuine Philosopher' and the 'Philosophic Laborer'**

Nietzsche, in most of his writings, draws a distinction between 'genuine philosophers' and those that are not, i.e. 'philosophic laborers.' In *Beyond Good and Evil* he calls the former '*commanders and lawgivers*' or legislators;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, § 211; or pp. 82, 83 in Helen Zimmern's translation, Mineola, New York, Dover Publication, Inc. 1997.



they say emphatically, 'Thus *shall* it be!'<sup>2</sup> By genuine philosophers Nietzsche means *value creators*, suggesting thus that 'philosophic laborers' are not creators of values but perhaps, appropriators of values. Genuine philosophers, are models of humans, this is because they determine first the Whither and the Why of mankind, and thereby set aside the previous labor of all philosophical workers, and all subjugators of the past — they grasp the future with a creative hand, and whatever is and was, becomes for them thereby a means, an instrument, and a hammer. Their 'knowing' is *creating*, their creating is a lawgiving. Their will to truth is — *Will to Power*.<sup>3</sup>

Giving that Nietzsche takes himself to be a value creator, a '*legislating prophet*', it is clear that he considers himself a genuine philosopher.<sup>4</sup> Who then are the candidates of philosophic labor? Oddly, Nietzsche suggests Immanuel Kant and Hegel as prime examples.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that for Nietzsche because a genuine philosopher is a creator of values s/he may not necessarily be loved by society. This is because in order for a genuine philosopher to create values s/he may not only have to trample on some traditional or accepted values, but may as well use his philosophic hammer to smash them to pieces.

Nietzsche develops the theme of the genuine philosopher as a creator of values extensively in TSZ,<sup>6</sup> a text that brings to great light his teaching of the *doctrine of eternal return* or *recurrence*, the view that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur in a self-similar form an infinite number of times. TSZ which consist of four parts composed by Nietzsche between 1883 and 1885 is by far his most popular book and it is the most complete expression of Nietzsche's belief that the object of humankind should

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, § 211.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, § 211.

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche sometimes says he is the herald and precursor of new values and some other times as the legislating prophet and revaluer of values—a breaker of old tablets and maxims of the pious. We should not take Nietzsche's claim as a legislator, a value creator to literally mean he is a giver of new set of virtues or table of new values, even though he sometimes suggests something to this effect. Given the fact that the values that Nietzsche works with are values that are part of the traditional values he perhaps can only be said to give new values in the sense that he gives us a new way of thinking through these values.

<sup>5</sup> One of Nietzsche's criticisms of Kant's moral theory, as we would recall, is that Kant took the existence of the moral law for granted and never questioned its existence as a *synthetic a priori judgment*. Thus suggesting that Kant is only a philosophic laborer who accepted as part of his premise traditional conception of morality rather than waging war with it with the aim of creating new values.

<sup>6</sup> Quotes and references to TSZ are from the translation by Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY, The Modern Library, 1995.



lie in its highest individuals *qua* the genuine philosophers. In TSZ, Nietzsche says he is a revaluer of values, a claim that takes on greater weight within the context of the twofold theses: 'God is dead' and 'man can be overcome.'

As soon as we turn attention to both theses two questions become obvious. First, in what sense is the 'death of God' a sufficient condition for the possibility of overcoming man? Second, why is the death of God crucial to Nietzsche's task of revaluing values? In order to provide answers to these questions my analysis will focus primarily on Zarathustra's dialogue with the old saint in part 1 section 2 of TSZ and some parts of section 3, particularly those parts where he converses with the market-place crowd about the overman.

### **After Ten Years Zarathustra Brings 'Us' a Gift**

Nietzsche lays out Zarathustra's descent from the mountain (after ten years of enjoying 'his spirit and his solitude'<sup>7</sup>) in terms of a need—a need to give away and distribute his honeyed wisdom. 'Behold I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it.'<sup>8</sup> So right from the start Zarathustra identifies his descent from the mountain, his going under, in terms of gift giving. He not only gives away his honeyed wisdom, but also he needs outstretched hands to receive it.

The image that emerges here is the image of someone 'over burdened' with an avalanche of material possessions and needed to give some away to the poor or, say, some charity (Salvation Army or Goodwill, for example). It is curious though the double meaning that comes out of this reference to Zarathustra and gift giving. Is Zarathustra eager to distribute his honeyed wisdom because of his love for humans, i.e. for the outstretched hands or because he is burdened by having to bear his honeyed wisdom? When we think of people who give stuff away to charity do they give them (their surplus) away for the love of the needy or in order to empty their garage or closet and create additional room for some more acquisition? In the case of Zarathustra, Nietzsche seems to be playing on both senses. The ramification of this is that it raises a further question: Does Zarathustra love his wisdom or is it life that he loves?

In any case, whether Zarathustra's descent is occasioned by his love for the disadvantaged or his love for life and the need to offload his gift it seems that there is a sense in which it can be said that he also loves humans. In his reply to the old saint's question what is it that he wants 'among the

<sup>7</sup> TSZ, p.9

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.10.



sleepers'<sup>9</sup> Zarathustra's answer is apt: 'I love man.'<sup>10</sup> This seems a curious remark considering the fact that Zarathustra has been away from humans for ten years, where in the mountain he enjoyed 'his spirit and his solitude.' At least the old saint seems to be shocked by Zarathustra's retort, and he seems to think that his ten-year absence from the human community has obscured his perception and judgment of what humans are. And as if to remind Zarathustra that he is in better position to instruct and lecture on the human species the old saint interpolates: "Why...did I go into the forest and the desert? Was it not because I loved man all-too-much? Now I love God; man I love not. Man is for me too imperfect a thing. Love of man would kill me."<sup>11</sup>

The saint's argument that man is not worthy of love appears to make a subtle change in Zarathustra's thinking. Quickly backtracking, Zarathustra renounces his earlier proclamation, and announces instead that he is bringing men a gift, 'Did I speak of love? I bring men a gift.'<sup>12</sup> The quick repudiation of his earlier proclamation is very significant at this stage considering the fact that it would tie in with Zarathustra's point that man ought to be overcome. By saying that he is bringing men a gift the focus shifts from men whom he earlier proclaimed he loves to the gift that Zarathustra brings to them. The problem with saying he loves man is that man becomes an end, loved for his own sake, i.e. something that is love for its end. However, by focusing on the gift man now matters not for his end but for what the gift can do for and to him. And as the prologue unfolds it becomes clear that Zarathustra's gift to men is the teaching of the overman.

From the old saint's point of view man is essentially imperfect, hence his advice to Zarathustra that he stays away from man, and go rather to the animals. 'Do not go to man. Stay in the forest! Go rather even to the animals! Why do you not want to be as I am—a bear among bears, a bird among birds?' As far as the old saint is concerned, men distrust hermits; thus suggesting that Zarathustra would *kaput* and fail in his innovative efforts: his gift – of the overman – would *simpliciter* not be appreciated or reciprocated. Hence, in the old saint's opinion, Zarathustra would do well not to give men anything; rather, he should 'take part of their load and help them to bear it—that will be best for them, if it does you good!'<sup>13</sup> And if Zarathustra desires 'to give something, [he should] give no more than alms, and let them beg for that!'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 11.



Although Zarathustra does not share this view that man is neither essentially imperfect nor inessentially imperfect, he seems to believe that man is in some sense not perfect. This is suggested by his proclamation, 'I give no alms. For that I am not poor enough.'<sup>15</sup> To say that he is not poor enough for the charity of almsgiving Zarathustra is suggesting that his descent from the mountain is not motivated by the need to rectify some deficiency or lack in man, but by the need to share his overflowing honeyed wisdom. His gift, whatever it is, is not a means to *perfect* man. Zarathustra's goal of gift giving must (and should) not be sidetracked by the advice of the old saint. He does not share the old saint's total pessimism about human beings. Yes, he would not depart to the animals, but man he *must* go to.

Zarathustra's disregard of the old saint's claim implies it seems that he has a different story of humans that he is going to tell. But one might ask, why does Zarathustra think that if humans mocked, scorned, ridiculed, laughed at the old saint and failed to listen to his message they would listen to him (Zarathustra)? The answer I suggest lies not so much in the fact that Zarathustra doesn't share the old saint's view about human beings but on what he takes to be a fundamental truth about their condition, which is: because humans have 'killed God' they would be receptive to the teaching of the overman. Or put slightly different, because 'God is dead' his honeyed wisdom, namely, his gift of the overman would be received with eager hands.

### **Zarathustra in the Market Place and What the 'Death of God' Means**

After parting with the old saint Zarathustra goes into the market place and it is insightful to note at this point that the last phrase he utters in his heart after parting with the old saint is '*God is dead*,' and the first sentence that he utters to the people is '*I teach you the overman*.' My suggestion here is that there is a strong connection between both locutions, not just for the mere fact that the former ends section two of TSZ and the latter begins section three. The death of God opens the way for the teaching of the overman. In other words, *God has to die* for the teaching of the overman to be meaningful and significant. This claim would become obvious as my analysis unfolds.

Setting up the discussion this way enables us to construct a *modus ponens* argument which I am suggesting is implicit in Zarathustra's reasoning. The link between 'God is dead' and 'I teach you the overman' entails in no accidental terms that the teaching of the overman is only possible upon the death of God, thus implying that the first premise in Zarathustra's *modus ponens* argument is: *the death of God is a sufficient condition for the*

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.11.



possibility of overcoming man. Or put more tersely, if *God is dead*, then *man can be overcome*. If it is correct to construct this as Zarathustra's first premise, his second premise would then be *God is dead*. Therefore, *man can be overcome* would complete the syllogistic argument.

That we should take seriously Zarathustra's second premise that 'God is dead' is obvious given what Nietzsche says elsewhere. In some of his other writings, Nietzsche characterized the death of God as some kind of 'socio-cultural fact.' In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche uses the parable of the madman to drum out the claim that Western society has killed God, "The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his glances. 'Whither is God?' He cried. 'I shall tell you. We have *killed him* – you and I.'"<sup>16</sup>

So what does Nietzsche (Zarathustra) mean by the claim that God is dead? It is important to keep in mind that Nietzsche is here not making an epistemological, metaphysical or religious claim. His claim is not a requirement to construct some proofs for the existence and nature of some divine being. Note that after Zarathustra parted with the old saint he spoke to himself the words, 'Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*' Zarathustra said *God is dead!*' and not *God does not exist!*' There is certainly a difference between the locution *God does not exist* and the phrase *God is dead*. Whereas the former makes a metaphysical and epistemological claim regarding the existence of God, the latter makes a socio-cultural claim about the influence of God in peoples' lives. Simply put, the claim *God is dead* is a claim about a divine being, a divine being that was once *alive* but no longer *is*, a being that humans *once* believed in, and proclaimed to be alive but lives *no more*. The point is that we have killed God – you and I *at this moment*. If the death of God for Nietzsche is a socio-cultural fact, in what sense have we killed him?

Nietzsche had observed the loss of faith in God exhibited by the Western society. The loss of faith in God, for him, is a cultural crisis; it implies the loss of all values, which the West, unfortunately, seems oblivious of. Nietzsche takes the loss of values to be decisive because of the void it creates and the difficulty of determining what is up or down. The madman shows he is concerned with the spiritual condition of the modern (Western) society; hence, he denounces them for priding themselves in having renounced all religious superstitions. They have lost touch with reality as well as the brewing crisis. They have taken pride in their invention and exhibited a crass

---

<sup>16</sup> *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* by Friedrich Nietzsche; translated with commentary by Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1974, § 125.



contentment by foisting the last man, namely: faith in science, scientific-materialist outlook, technology and secular activities and goals. They claim not to have lost anything even though their lives are circumscribed by secular goals and their faith in God replaced by a scientific-materialist outlook.

The socio-cultural death of God has some interesting ramifications, foremost of which is that there was a time that the activities of the old saint were meaningful and legitimate. A corollary to this is that these activities are no longer significant. What this suggests then is that God lives (and can only live) insofar as he continues to constitute an effective and affective part of the reality that people live by. For Nietzsche then the mere fact that God is no longer part of effective and affective reality of the people implies without contradiction that he *no longer lives*. At this point what is important to them is not God or the values that issue from him but secular goals, science, materialism, etc. Indicative of the death of God is the fact that the people now organize their lives around other interests. Zarathustra's thesis, then, is that even though the people espouse religious values, they no longer believe and live by these values, the values no longer influence their beliefs and actions. Simply put, their actions and activities belie their belief and claim that God is alive.

### **Some Reflections on Nigeria: Religiosity, Corruption and the Claim that 'God is Dead'**

The reflections I make about Nigeria are anchored in two areas: religiosity and corruption. To this extent I make two claims, which I take to be pretty uncontroversial. Anyone that disagrees with both claims may do well to skip this section. The first claim I make is that Nigeria is a very religious society. By religiousness I mean the proclamation of a belief in God. This belief can be externalized either by the locution 'I believe in God' or by some form of devotion to him, which may or may not involve worship. The second claim is that Nigeria is relatively a corrupt society, in the sense that on any corruption index the country occupies the lowest 20<sup>th</sup> percentile. By corruption I mean both bureaucratic and unofficial corruption, which is any activity by any individual or group or institution that involves dishonesty, element of fraud, massive or small scale. I take both claims to be straightforward and on many levels to be beyond dispute.

Nigerians are very religious. Almost every Nigerian proclaims belief in God; majority of whom are either Christians or Muslims. According to the 2006 census conducted by the National Population Commission, a little over 50% are Muslims and about 48% are Christians. If Nigeria is corrupt, the obvious generalisation is that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are corrupt.



For if Nigeria is relatively a corrupt country, and giving that the millions of Nigerians that proclaim belief in God are Muslims and Christians, it follows that Muslims and Christians are corrupt.

Now, in saying that Nigeria is relatively a corrupt society and in claiming that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are pretty corrupt I do not mean to suggest that Muslims and Christians in other countries are not corrupt. For all we care and know, empirical data and facts may show that Muslims and Christians in other countries are as corrupt as Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. But that is not the issue and it is not the point that I wish to make. The point I'm interested in is not a comparative study of the corruption level amongst Muslims and Christians of different societies. My interest simply lies in showing that there seems to be dissonance in Nigeria between belief in God and certain religious values given that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are pretty corrupt. For if the assumption is that religiosity imposes certain values, foremost of which are values that eschew corruption, then the concern about belief in God vis-à-vis the relative corruption level in Nigeria becomes acute.

Now one may ask: if religiosity imposes certain values, namely, values that eschew corruption why are Muslims and Christians in Nigeria pretty corrupt? I confess I have no answer to the question, or an idea on how to answer it. Perhaps, the place to begin is to ask the Muslims and Christians in Nigeria the question, 'Why are you corrupt?' In any case, whether we are able to answer the question or not the claim that God is dead looms large here. Zarathustra's thesis that God lives insofar as he continues to constitute an effectively and affectively reality in people's lives takes on added significance. For if the people's actions and activities belie their belief and claim that God is alive, and then the claim that God is dead is one that we (especially Muslims and Christians in Nigeria) cannot escape.

In Northern Nigeria (as well as in the South) it is not uncommon to see Muslims frequent the *masjid* (mosque). Muslims, young and old whether they are of the Sunni or Shiite fold flock to the mosques everyday for prayer, for information, dispute settlement and for education. Mosques are busiest on Friday, where in addition to prayers (generally led by an imam), the *Holy Qur'an* is taught. For Muslims, Islam is more than a religion. It is simply a comprehensive way of life. Islam demands strict adherence in social, political, military and economical matters, as well as in things pertaining to religion.

One is tempted to claim, and rightly so, that there is some ambivalence in Islam and the Qur'an on corruption. If we understand corruption *broadly* as involving lying, dishonesty, and deception, then it is important to know that Islam sanctions corruption. On this interpretation, one could say that the thesis that God is dead does not square up whatsoever with Muslims, devout or not.



Or to put it in the phraseology of William James, the proposition that God is dead is not a living or live option in the sense that it does not present any real possibilities for Muslims.<sup>17</sup> This is because on this understanding God continues to constitute an effective part of the reality of Muslims given that under certain circumstances it is permissible for them to engage in lying, dishonesty, and deception. However if we understand corruption more *narrowly* as the quality of being fraudulent and as engaging in bribery, or as the giving or obtaining of advantage through means which are considered illegitimate, immoral, and/or inconsistent with one's duty or the rights of others, then it seems that Islam forbids corruption. In which case, the proposition God is dead will be a living one among Muslims and their actions would belie their belief in God and the values and outlook that such belief generates.

Although Islam (like most religions) in general dissuades lying, purposeful exaggerations, covering of the truth and occasionally—outright—deliberate lying is a core part of the religion of Islam. There are actually specific doctrines and traditions that foster a culture of deception and dishonesty within Islam. The Qur'an says, 'And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).'<sup>18</sup> And somewhere else it says, 'Truly, Allah does not guide one who transgresses and lies.'<sup>19</sup> However, unlike most religions, within Islam there are certain provisions under which lying and deception are not simply tolerated, but actually encouraged. For example, the Qur'an teaches that it is allowable for Muslims to literally deny their faith in order to protect themselves: "Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief, except under compulsion,

---

<sup>17</sup> William James in 'The Will to Believe', which was first published in the *New World*, June 1896 distinguishes between an *avoidable option* and a *forced option*. The former does not require a decision, but in a *forced option*, there is no standpoint outside the decision. An *Option* is a person's decision among hypotheses. A hypothesis could either be dead or alive. It is dead if it does not appear to be a genuine possibility to whomever it is proposed, and it is live if it is. For example, to study logic might be a live hypothesis to a philosophy major and might be a dead hypothesis to a chemistry major. A *living option* is *living*, *forced*, and *momentous*. A *living option* is one in which the hypotheses are live, i.e. they are real possibilities for someone. A living option for a philosophy major enrolled in a formal logic class might well be to understand the basic ideas about inferences, deductive reasoning, translations, etc. A *forced option* is a dilemma—the hypothesis cannot be avoided, i.e. for a logic student to come to class or not is *forced*. A *momentous option* is one that is unique and may well be one's only opportunity in life. The choice is not trivial, but significant, because one only has one chance to perform it.

<sup>18</sup> Surah 2:42. Quotes from the *Holy Qur'an* are taken from the translations by Yusuf Ali.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 40:28



his heart remaining firm in Faith - but such as open their breast to unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty."<sup>20</sup>

The point is that a Muslim who denies his or her faith will be forgiven insofar his or her true faith was not really shaken and undermined. In other words, if that person's denial was a lie (in the purest and complete sense) and only if such denunciation of faith was for the purpose of avoiding harm—physically, spiritually, psychologically or otherwise—(primarily while living among non-Muslims). The Qur'an also commands Muslims not to befriend anyone who is not a Muslim unless doing so can help protect the Muslim from harm: 'Let not the believers take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except that you guard yourselves fully against them.'<sup>21</sup>

Clearly then, within Islam and for Muslims, corruption in the *broad* sense is a non-issue. One can lie and be dishonest in order to help a husband and wife reconcile and sort out marital issues, to bring about peace, to save one's life, to achieve success in war, etc. Since corruption in this sense is not such an issue for Muslims the claim that God is dead would be a dead option since their actions could be said not to be at congruent with their belief in God and the values and outlook that such belief engenders.

However, the Qur'an clearly forbids corruption in the *narrow* sense. In Surah 83, Al Mutaaffifin (Defrauding, The Cheats, Cheating) the Qur'an says:

Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day. Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds? Day! Surely the record of the wicked is (preserved) in Sijjin.<sup>22</sup>

The bottom line is that on a broad interpretation, corruption is permissible, even sanctioned by Islam, the Qur'an, but on a narrow interpretation, it is forbidden. But the matter seems different with Christianity. For Christianity, unlike Islam the message against corruption (whether

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 16:106.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 3:28.

<sup>22</sup> Surah 83: 1-7. Somewhere else Islam teaches: Surah As shu'araa' (26), Aayat 181-184, Prophet Shu'aib tells his people: 'Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud). And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men, nor do evil in the land, working mischief. And fear Him Who created you and (Who created) the generations before (you).'



understood broadly or narrowly) is the same and unequivocal.<sup>23</sup> A few Bible passages highlight this:

- (1) 'There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.' (Proverbs 6: 16-19)<sup>24</sup>
- (2) 'A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.' (Proverbs 11: 1)
- (3) 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.' (Exodus 20:16)
- (4) 'Unequal weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good.' (Proverbs 20:23)
- (5) 'On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.' (Zephaniah 1: 9)
- (6) 'Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices.' (Colossians 3: 9)
- (7) 'Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.' (James 5: 4)

In Southern Nigeria, churches 'spanning the gamut from the mainstream Roman Catholic and Anglican to many Protestant organizations' are a few of the fastest growing sectors in the society. The growth is quite exceptional, so phenomenal that in some neighborhoods it is not uncommon to see more than one church, all jostling for members. Sunday is generally a busy day for both churches and members, notwithstanding where the churches are located. It is a day that many are eager to show off some of their best and prized possessions: cars, jewelry, clothes, etc. As they flock to church to give their devotion to the God, they have at least one thing in mind—salvation is tied to their worship of God.

---

<sup>23</sup> In moral theory, Islam comes close to *consequentialism* where the morality or goodness of an act is determined exclusively by the consequences of the acts themselves. If an act produces more good or increases welfare, then that act is *prima facie* good or moral. By contrast, Christianity comes close to *moral absolutism*, the sort of moral view that Kant defends in his moral ontology, whereby an act is judged moral or good by how well it fits within certain *a priori* rules, laws or commands.

<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise indicated quotes are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the *Holy Bible*.



With the Bible's denunciation of corruption (broadly and narrowly construed), its clear emphasis on honesty and truthfulness, its censuring of fraudulent practices, and with the widespread practice of corruption (in the Christian South) it is clear that Zarathustra's claim that God is dead has some significance bearing among Christians in Nigeria. Simply stated, God is dead among the many Christians, for whom corruption has become a veritable and staple diet. Whether they realize it or not (as it is with the crowd in the market place that Zarathustra conversed with) it seems that God is no longer part of their effective and affective reality.

### **The 'Death of God' and Overcoming of Man: Between Zarathustra and the Old Saint**

Zarathustra's message is one that could only be given following the death of God. This perhaps explains his unwillingness to give the message to the old saint who has not heard about the death of God. Zarathustra's hesitance to give him the message preserves the happy illusion—the illusion and belief in God—of the old saint. The activities of the old saint are shaped by his belief in God, and since this continues to constitute part of his effective and affective reality Zarathustra would be doing him a disservice by giving him the message that God is dead.

Zarathustra seems to assume that because God is dead we can reasonably infer that man can be overcome. And the teaching of the overman in this reading would then be meant to show how this is possible. For Zarathustra, the old saint is ignorant about three facts: one, the death of God; two, Zarathustra's gift to humans; and three, the possibility of overcoming man. The ignorance of the old saint is marked by a number of activities: singing, crying, laughing, humming and praising God. Angrily replying Zarathustra's question, 'what is the saint doing in the forest?'<sup>25</sup> the old saint says: 'I make songs and sing them; and when I make songs, I laugh, cry, and hum: thus I praise God. With singing, crying, laughing, and humming, I praise the god who is my god'.<sup>26</sup>

There is a sense in which it could be argued that it is Zarathustra, and not the old saint that is ignorant about all three facts. Stated differently, the point is that Zarathustra's optimism that man is available to be overcome and the possibility of overcoming man is mistaken, and this mistake leads him to interpret the old saint's continuing belief in God as a consequence of the latter's ignorance. In what way can it be said that it is Zarathustra and not the

---

<sup>25</sup> TSZ, *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.



old saint that is ignorant about humans? Having lived with humans for so long, it could be claimed that the old saint's knowledge of humans is superior to that of Zarathustra. In which case his account that man can *never* be overcome seems a more plausible account than that of Zarathustra.

In this line of reasoning, the old saint like Zarathustra would accept the first premise that the death of God, is a sufficient condition for the possibility of overcoming man. However, because of his superior knowledge of humans he rejects Zarathustra's second premise and takes rather as his second premise the view *that man cannot be overcome*, and then draws the conclusion by *modus tollens* that *God is not dead*. In this way it can be argued that it is Zarathustra's naïveté and ignorance about the possibility of overcoming man that makes him draw the conclusion that God is dead and makes him think that the old saint's continuing belief in God blinds him to the possibility of overcoming man.<sup>27</sup>

The plausibility of this line of thought seems apparent when we consider Zarathustra's attitude after talking to the market-place crowd. As the prologue unfolds and having observed the crowd's reaction to his teaching of the overman, Zarathustra recalls the old saint's profound disillusionment with man. Man's resistance to change suggests partly to Zarathustra that, although he believes God is dead, the old saint's second premise may be right after all, and that on a general note both him and the old saint might be wrong in presupposing the first premise that the death of God is a sufficient condition for the possibility of overcoming man.

According to Nietzsche, modern society is self-destruct, for having killed God it is doomed for annihilation. One upshot of the death of God is nihilism—the lost of all values (at least those values that spring from traditional religions) in society. Because no one can say what is up or down, human life is threatened and robbed of meaning and significance. The emergence of nihilism that the death of God occasions, Nietzsche's proclamation of this and his gift of the overman firmly and effectively anchor his credential as some kind of prophet. But this then raises a fundamental

---

<sup>27</sup> The form of Zarathustra and the old saint's argument are:

Zarathustra's argument (*modus ponens*)

P1: The death of God is a sufficient condition for the possibility of overcoming man.

P2: God is dead.

C: Therefore, man can be overcome.

The old saint's argument (*modus tollens*)

P1: The death of God is a sufficient condition for the possibility of overcoming man.

P2: Man cannot be overcome.

C: Therefore, God is not dead.



question: if Nietzsche *qua* Zarathustra is a prophet what kind of prophet is he and what is his task? Of course, Nietzsche does say that he is a 'legislating prophet.' But what does that mean?

There are three possible tasks of a legislating prophet that we can discern. The first task takes Zarathustra to be involved in some kind of goading; that is, he prods the people by encouraging them to kill God, since the existence of God prevents the emergence of the overman. In the second task, Zarathustra would merely be living his time as a prophet whose interest consists only (and only) in showing that God is dead because his effective reality no longer influences the lived reality and conditions of modern society. The third task involves Zarathustra helping humans to overcome man. On this task, Zarathustra's role as a prophet is to prevent society's slide into nihilism and meaninglessness.

If Zarathustra task is construed broadly to cover the second category, then as a prophet that helps fulfill events he merely announces coming events by taking a cue from present reality as well as by pontificating about what is to befall humans. In the pronouncement of the doom that is to possibly come, there is as well the announcement of possible routes of escape from such destruction. In this sense, Zarathustra's pronouncement of the death of God and his teaching of the overman is only but an exegesis of the present conditions of society, the future consequences of these conditions and the available getaway paths. Being the last hope of humans the overman provides the escape route from the apocalyptic and self-destructive grip on the last man. With the overman, humans are guaranteed not to 'go back to the beasts.'<sup>28</sup> Note though that the evolution of man to the overman is not a Darwinian evolution according to natural selection. The evolution is one that is necessary insofar as humans see the hollow and doom that await them in taking pride in their invention of the last man. By announcing the death of God what Zarathustra does then is to take on the role of a seer by prophesying what would result from their lack of faith in God, or their refusal to allow the effective and affective reality of God to circumscribe their everyday lives.

But then it can be asked why should there exist only one route in avoiding this doom and apocalyptic future? Couldn't there be several accounts of the getaway such that Zarathustra's account is only but one such perspective? In this reading the old saint's attitude would be another possible account. As well, an approach that turns around the churches that have become tombs, sepulchers of God, and altars of falsehood and fraud into altars of

---

<sup>28</sup> TSZ, *op. cit.*, p.12.



effective worship would yet be another route.<sup>29</sup> The point simply is that, hypothetically Zarathustra could teach the people how and why God could be made their effective reality unless Zarathustra considers this imprudent because of the kind of meaning and values that is fostered by Christianity, values which Nietzsche time and time again attacks in his writings.

### **Conclusion: Nietzsche and Traditional Christian Values**

I now want to conclude by talking briefly about Nietzsche and his view of traditional Christian values, and how his view ties with the three task of Nietzsche as a legislating prophet that I outlined above. Nietzsche's consistent rejection of Christianity is partly informed by his belief that the values it engenders denigrate the body and repudiate human nature and psychology, not to mention the fact that it encourages people to cultivate virtues that would eliminate instincts and passions. Nietzsche describes the values or morality that Christianity promotes as 'slave morality.' He contrast this with a different type of morality—one that he calls 'noble morality'. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* he says, 'While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'; and *this* No is its creative deed.'<sup>30</sup>

As well, Nietzsche rejects modern faith in scientific materialism because it deprives human life of meaning by positing that human existence is contingent, unnecessary, groundless and an accident. Both (Christian and scientific-materialism) worldviews, in Nietzsche's view, deprive human existence of something essential. By taking the goal of life as a blissful afterlife achieved by killing the body and all passions and instincts associated with it the Christian worldview, according to Nietzsche, in essence kills humans and encourages self-hatred since these passions and instincts constitute our very being and existence. Hence these values promote a sense of worthlessness. On the contrary, the absence of any ground and necessity in human life in the scientific-materialist outlook denies any efforts humans make to imbue life with meaning and significance. Since all of these efforts are frustrated by leaving humans with a life of meaninglessness and

---

<sup>29</sup>See *The Gay Science*, § 125. Here the pronouncement of Nietzsche's madman seems to show that the killing of God is efficacious in the sense that it turns the churches into tombs and sepulchers of God.

<sup>30</sup>Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R.J Holingdale, New York, NY, Vintage Books, Inc., 1967, p.36.



worthlessness we must *ipso facto* seek meaningfulness and worthiness from other source, namely: the overman.

This takes us back to the first of the three tasks. If we consider the first task we can pose the question: in encouraging the people to kill God is Zarathustra presenting us a self-fulfilling prophecy? That is, does he tell of a future of doom by creating the circumstances that would lead to the doom itself? Does Zarathustra act in ways that bring about the doom, the catastrophe or apocalyptic future he is prophesying about? A passage in TSZ suggests that Zarathustra is paving the way for the overman by speeding up the dawn of nihilism, 'What is falling, we should still push. Everything today falls and decays: who would check it? But I – I even want to push it.'<sup>31</sup>

Given that traditional morality and values have become moribund we would be doing society a disservice by letting them to continue to effectively and affectively inform our reality. Rather, it would be better to push down what is falling. Thus, Zarathustra provides humans a great service by giving them the gift of the overman, for like a giant sequoia tree that has outlived its usefulness it would be a good deed if it is pushed down. Pushing down the dying giant sequoia tree (traditional morality) brings on stage something new, a new tree, namely: the overman. The point is that if the tree is going to fall down anyway, why not help push it down? Why, for all one cares, not quicken its fall?

This way of reading Nietzsche's task as helping to push down the tree, i.e. helping to put to death our moribund morality seems curious. First, it seems to contradict Zarathustra's reason for not giving the message of God's death to the old saint. Second, the fact that the people in the market place pride themselves and shows off their invention of the last man implies in some way that they already are in some sense aware that God is dead, for by their very actions they deny the effective reality of God. In this reading then what Zarathustra does is to act like the real Socratic midwife—who helps people to recollect ideas that they already know—by directing the people's attention to the fact of God's death.

In this sense all three tasks would then not necessarily be mutually exclusive. For since traditional morality is self-destruct and is bound to die anyway, like a dying giant sequoia tree or a human with a terminal illness that is bound to fall or die anyhow, what Zarathustra does is to announce this dying as a prophet, but then goes a little step further and act at the same time as a surgeon who helps the dying human by applying the surgical knife. For if part of the philosopher's job mimics that of the surgeon, or more specifically, if we

---

<sup>31</sup> TSZ, *op. cit.*, p. 209.



are to become Socrates incarnate, i.e. the Socratic midwife, then the pregnant woman should be pleased that she is helped to deliver her child by being induced medically. This invaluable help or gift prevents her from continuing with her prolonged labor pain, and since she would have to give birth at any rate to a child—a new life—she benefits if the inducement is done *now* rather than later, *because birth she must give*. She would be overjoyed with this gift and her happiness would know no bound if and whenever she reflects on this great service. The new child would thus in Zarathustra's term be the overman.

But as the parable of the madman shows he realizes quickly that the killing of God has not dawned on the people. Or is it perhaps that he has come too early with his message, or could it be that the people are just ingrates and do not appreciate the fact of God's death, its meaning and magnitude. And with Zarathustra, he too quickly discovers that the people are not enthusiastic about pushing down the dying giant sequoia tree, and that in fact having a new child—the overman—is not of priority to them, they have other more serious business and interests to which they have to (and must) attend to. They do not only pride themselves in their last man, but seem satisfied with the nihilism that it occasions.

The attitude of the market-place crowd is suggestive in a way of the attitude of the Jewish crowd, that almost in unison shouted to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate to release to them Barabbas, the notorious prisoner and impale rather Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup> Like the Jewish crowd, the crowd in the market place shouted at Zarathustra, 'Give us this last man, O Zarathustra... Turn us into these last men! Then we shall make you a gift of the overman!'<sup>33</sup> In effect, their pride is anchored in their scientific materialist outlook and in the pursuit of secular goals, and they believe that the meaning of life can be sought within such outlook and pursuit. And just as the Jewish crowd said to Pilate, 'His [Jesus] blood come upon us and upon our children,'<sup>34</sup> the market-place crowd seems to say, 'in our last man we trust,' and we will take our destiny in our own hands as well as in our inventions.

<sup>32</sup> See Matthew 27: 15-25.

<sup>33</sup> TSZ, *op. cit.*, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 27: 25.



# METAPHYSICS OF RACE IN KANT'S ANTHROPOLOGY: A CRITICAL EXPOSITION

Chiedozie Okoro, Ph.D

## Abstract

In the view of Emmanuel Chukwu Eze, an understanding of Kant's metaphysics must begin from a proper comprehension of his (Kant's) anthropology. This view of Eze should be taken seriously because Kant began his career as an anthropologist and later matured into ontology. Therefore, his ontology is meant to give a metaphysical grounding to the discourses in his anthropology. But why would he (Kant) attempt to elevate anthropology to a metaphysical status? In the understanding of Immanuel Kant, anthropology in its raw form as a social science cannot be said to be *universal* except it is grounded metaphysically. As a social science, anthropology is eclectic and imprecise. The task of philosophical anthropology, therefore, is to properly refocus anthropology, to make it truly universal by grounding it upon a human ontology otherwise known as the metaphysics of man.

Consequently, this essay is an exposition of Immanuel Kant's philosophical anthropology with a view to ascertaining the extent he succeeded in metaphysically transforming anthropology into a universal science. It shall be shown that in the process of transforming anthropology into a universal science, Kant ended up building a rigid and absolutist metaphysical foundation for anthropology, which not only promotes intolerance, but creates a divide between superior and inferior races.

## Introduction: Grounding Anthropology on Human Ontology

To ground anthropology upon a human ontology involves two main tasks. First, we trace and relocate the source of metaphysics in the human being, in the human capacity to think, which is the very foundation and origin of human transcendence. By transcendence, we mean the ability to go beyond phenomenal experience. It is this ability that endows humans with creative and inventive powers. Second, we then proceed to make metaphysics the foundation of anthropology.

Consequently, Kant submits that any exercise in philosophical anthropology, must begin by clarifying the question: *What is man?* As a science of man, anthropology does not ask this question. It readily assumes that man is an intelligent being with abilities and several attributes.



Anthropology then proceeds to study man in his diverse ramifications in accordance with those attributes and works of man. For Kant, this facile study of man constitutes a very serious pitfall. Kant feels that any genuine study in anthropology must begin by stating in precise terms *what one must be in order to be a man*.<sup>1</sup> The response to the above question will help to determine what kind of being man is. It will also help to determine what the real function of man is in the whole scheme of the universe.

Nevertheless, the question *what is man?* requires a metaphysical answer and is therefore outside the jurisdiction of anthropology. Thus, it is improper for us to blame anthropology for its imprecise understanding of man. To answer the question *what is man?* We must begin by first answering the question *what is metaphysics?* The latter question is very fundamental to our discourse. It takes us closer to our destination, it offers us the opportunity to gather some clues into what kind of being man really is. Metaphysics has been defined as the science of beyondness, the science of transcendence, or the beyondness of being. In pre-Kantian philosophy, the term beyondness or transcendence was construed to mean the quest for natural or supernatural essences that lie outside of the human entity. This was the ordinary understanding of the Greek expression *after physics*. This means that pre-Kantian metaphysics was anthropological by nature. We can now see that the imprecise nature of anthropology derives from an imprecise metaphysics that confuses essences and aspects of reality with Being. It is consequent upon the foregoing that Kant maintains that the radicalization of anthropology must begin with the radicalization of metaphysics.

In the Kantian tradition, the term transcendence or beyondness can be interpreted in three ways. First, it means the native ability for creativity, invention and discovery latent in man. It is this power or capacity that makes us metaphysical entities that are endowed with the skill for meaning making, an act by which we proceed to make plans, designs and create systems for world development. Second, transcendence or beyondness also depicts the power to transit or progress from lower to higher stages of development. It refers to the ability to transform the material things of the world for human use. It is this power of transcendence that makes *man a metaphysical being*.<sup>2</sup> It entails the capacity and ingenuity to turn adversities into advantages. The third way in which the term transcendence can be understood combines the first two

<sup>1</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 8, Berlin: 1900 – 66), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Jim I. Unah, *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man*, (Lagos: Foresight Publishers, 2002), pp. 84 – 85.



conceptions of transcendence. It is with this ability that we seek harmony in the midst of diversity or instruct form or order into that which is formless or chaotic.

Having dispensed with the question *what is metaphysics?* Having also gotten the gist of what it means for one to be a metaphysical being, the stage is now set to once more ask the question *what is man?* From our analysis so far, the express answer to the foregoing question is that: *Man is fundamentally a metaphysical being.* By this expression, we mean that man is an intelligent and rational being, these being the qualities required for a highly advanced, organized, systematized and civilized existence.

### **Grounding Anthropology as a Universal Science**

Since we have grounded anthropology on a human ontology, and have also stated that the study of human ontology portrays man as an intelligent and rational being, and once we have gone ahead to certify that intelligence and rationality are properties native to every man, it follows that the analysis of anything that touches on human existence, must of necessity, proceed from the analysis of the metaphysical entity called man. This is a simple way of saying that the universe is man-centered or simply anthropocentric. The ultimate aim of philosophical anthropology, therefore, is to radicalize anthropology, a task that has been accomplished by the relocation of the power for world transformation in human thought. Therefore, a philosophical anthropology that merits the name should treat man as a being of pure consciousness. It should explore into this consciousness of man with a view to showing how the power of transcendence makes man a conscious purposive, systemic builder. It should also explain how this power of consciousness endows man with so many attributes, which enable him to perform the so many activities which raw anthropology now preoccupies itself with. This is exactly how anthropology gains a universal status as a science of man.

However, granted that man is endowed with metaphysical powers, we must warn that this power is at best latent but never innate. If the power were innate, then, we would have no need to struggle to become something. We would simply mature into ready-made status predestined for us. But experience shows that there is no such thing as heaven of values preordained by God as the doctrine of innate ideas seems to suggest. Since this metaphysical power is native but latent, it follows that human life is a perpetual struggle towards freedom. Based on the foregoing, Kant outlines four main kinds of anthropology namely physiological anthropology, psychological anthropology, pragmatic anthropology and practical anthropology.



Physiological anthropology deals with man in his "passive aspect, as the plaything of his (own) senses and imagination, that is, with the way he is affected by ideas of which he is not directly conscious".<sup>3</sup> It portrays man as a being 'under nature's dominion' (i.e. *animal rationabile*). Psychological anthropology portrays man as a being endowed with self-awareness and thus, possesses the ability for self-mastery. Pragmatic anthropology shows man as a law giver unto himself, an instrument (i.e. law) which he uses in instituting social stability for ensuring orderly transactions. Practical anthropology, otherwise known as moral anthropology, portrays man as a founder of morality, which is that instrument used in determining and evaluating human conduct in the society. Thus, pragmatic anthropology and practical anthropology portray man as a being who has 'dominion over nature' (i.e. *animal rationale*). In all, the demarcation between the first and the last three kinds of anthropologies lies in the "distinction between what nature makes of man and what man makes of himself".<sup>4</sup> Here lies another basic importance of philosophical anthropology which is that of awakening man from dogmatic slumber, to tap, cultivate and develop the metaphysical powers latent in him towards whatever direction that tickles his fancy, for his own benefit and to the glory of his world.

### Can Anthropology be radicalized at all?

There are contradictions in Immanuel Kant's project of human ontology, which result from his (Kant's) detour from ontology into raw anthropology. Recall that Kant's initial task was to purge anthropology of its discriminatory and imperial tendencies, to make it (anthropology) a universal science of man, a task that can only be achieved through the exploration of human ontology. From our analysis so far, Kant began his exploits on a good note. But at the point of the *Transcendental Object - X* (i.e. the Transcendental Imagination) he encountered a great abyss (i.e. nothingness) that lies deep in the heart of man. Seized by vertigo, he recoiled and once more relapsed into the world of raw anthropology.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, this deviation from ontology back to

<sup>3</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, (trans. M. J. Gregor), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Emmanuel Chukwu Eze, "Colour of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology" in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* Emmanuel Chukwu Eze (ed.), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers 1997), p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, J. S. Churchill (Transl.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), pp. 167 – 177; see also Jim I. Unah, *Heidegger: Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1997), pp. 86 – 100.



anthropology involves an anti-climax, in the sense that mankind will once more be dragged to that grave point of nihilism, whereupon the old discriminatory and imperial attitudes of impositionism, absolutism, fixism and dogmatism; temperaments responsible for intolerance, are not only reintroduced, but reinforced with greater vigour.

Consequently, two main contradictions are involved in Kant's philosophical anthropology. First, he started on the note of radicalizing anthropology by anchoring it upon a human ontology so that anthropology could become a metaphysical, humanistic, scientific and universal science of man. Which is to say, the question *what is man?* can only be adequately answered when the question *what is metaphysics?* has been properly refocused and adequately answered. This is so because the latter question is more fundamental than the former. Thus, once we have defined metaphysics as that science dealing with the transcendental ability of man to project beyond experience, it follows that we have gotten a clue into what kind of being man really is. But just when we expected Kant to explore deeper into the nature of finite transcendence or human beyondness (i.e. the *Transcendental Object – X* or the Transcendental Imagination) which portrays man in his ultimate essence as pure consciousness, he recoiled. He then declared transcendental imagination as - the unknown root. By this, Kant meant that the transcendental imagination depicts "complete emptiness".<sup>6</sup> The point here lies not in the detour Kant made into anthropology, but in the attempt to reduce metaphysics to the status of anthropology. It is at this point that Kant completely deviated from his original project and it is also at this very point of deviation (i.e. anti-climax) that we notice the first contradiction in his philosophical anthropology. Needless to say, the attempt to reduce metaphysics to the status of anthropology is at best demeaning. Demeaning because, anthropology in its raw form is imprecise and eclectic. How then can it be made the foundation of human knowledge? Why then should he waste precious efforts trying to radicalize anthropology?

The point is that any attempt at radicalizing anthropology is bound to be futile. Thus, instead of attempting to radicalize anthropology, Kant should have gone straight ahead to the serious business of making an outline of human ontology which deals with the delineation of finite reason. In the attempt to go through anthropology to ontology, his project of critical ontology was corrupted. Thus, the task of instituting a pure human ontology would later be accomplished by Martin Heidegger, a prominent contemporary

---

<sup>6</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, N. K. Smith (transl.), (London: Macmillan & Co., 1970), pp. 268 – 295.



German philosopher and the founder of fundamental ontology and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Furthermore, to the question *what is man?* Kant gave the universal answer *man is a metaphysical being*. Now, the evaluation of man as a metaphysical being entails that intelligence and rationality are the natural properties of every individual, race or culture. The point being made here is that a journey into pure human ontology would have totally discouraged the imperial and absolutist attitude of discrimination. In essence, since ontology evaluates man in his universal essence as pure being, it does not create a dichotomy, divide or demarcation between this or that race, ethnicity, woman or man. Put differently, Kant's journey into pure ontology, if he had followed through, would have completely taken him away from anthropologism. But the truth is that Kant had the task of producing for Europeans of his age (i.e. the Enlightenment period) a philosophical treatise that will awaken them from dogmatic slumber and then proceed to dominate rest of the world. If the foregoing statement is true, it follows that Kant's deviation back into anthropology is deliberate. Little wonder then he speculated that human reason has colour, that is to say, Kant equates human rationality with the pigmentation of one's skin. The lighter or whiter the skin the more rational and the darker or blacker the skin the less rational. It is at this point where colour becomes the measuring square for determining one's intelligence that we enter into Kant's doctrine of race.

### Kant's Theory of Race

There is this debate whether Kant is an essentialist or not. This debate derives from the fact that his anthropology consists of the study of human nature and the theory of race. Jean Jacques Rousseau is the expert in philosophical anthropology who alerted Kant about the relevance of the study of human nature to piece-meal social engineering. Kant himself is of the view that "Rousseau was the first philosopher to discover how the study of human nature reveals the unpredictable behaviour of man and how this precarious nature of man can be harnessed for the organization of society".<sup>7</sup> The doctrine of race on the other hand is derived from the works of scholars such as David Hume, Buffon, Linnaeus and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach.

In Rousseau's view, human nature is fixed, unchanging and therefore enduring. This wise, the doctrine of human nature entails the "postulation of a *substance* or a *thing* as inherent, permanent, inalienable reality that makes a

<sup>7</sup>Kant, 1900-66, op. cit., p. 58.



thing what it is".<sup>8</sup> Kant disagrees with this notion of human nature. For him there is nothing fixed or transcendental about human nature. Thus, Kant posits that human nature is simply "ideological, it is something that has an end, a goal or destiny in view, it represents what human beings are *out to become*... therefore, humans do not have an already given static essence, what they have is an ethical essence, and this ethical essence is transcendental, universal, transcultural, and a-historical".<sup>9</sup>

It is at this very point that Kant got himself into a third level of contradiction. When he states that human nature represents man's ethical essence which is transcendental, transcultural and a-historical, one expects him to be fair-minded enough to include other races within this ethical essence. Instead, what we notice is that Kant would once more draw an anthropological divide between whites and other races of the world. Consequently, as it concerns the issue of race, he is nothing short of a chronic and hardened racist, an essentialist who maintains the view that race is both transcendental and essentialized. It is here that Kant evaluates human natural endowments such as feeling, talent, and rationality, on the parameter of pigmentation. Making a critical analysis of Kant's doctrine of race, E. C. Eze in his article: "The Colour of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology" argues that Kant's theory of race should not be taken as an intellectual pastime. The doctrine of race rather constitutes an essential blueprint of both Kant's anthropology and his ontology.

To uncover the gravity of the point made above, we will have to make a brief analysis of Kant's two main books on philosophical anthropology namely *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and *Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime*. Concerning the *Anthropology*, the first thing we must note is that the book is a response to the demand of the Prussian (German) government to Prussian scholars to produce a treatise of human nature that would assist the European powers in achieving the burden of colonizing the world. Such a treatise of human nature must state in clear terms the difference between the civilized race of the Europeans and the so called barbaric races of the world. Kant's response to this challenge was to produce a handbook on colonization. The governmental backing that inspired Kant with the courage to draw an anthropological chart of the races of mankind can be found in the letter written by Von Zedlitz, the then Prussian Minister of Education, to Kant. Excerpts of this ministerial backup are made available by J. A. May thus:

<sup>8</sup>E. Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant and Goethe*, J. Gutman, et. al (transl.), (New York: Harper, 1963), p. 20; see also Eze, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>9</sup>Cassirer, p. 23; Eze, p. 124.



The then German minister of education urged German professors to desist from the use of handouts and other unresearched materials. However, exception was made for Professor Kant's lecture notes on physical geography (anthropology) on the ground that there was not yet a well developed and suitable textbook on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

Besides, Kant lived between 1724 and 1804 which were the years of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, when European domination of the world and suppression of the savage races (Africans and Red Indians) began, and which eventually culminated in the colonization of the rest of the world. Thus, the sole objective of the *Anthropology* is to awaken Europeans of the Enlightenment from 'dogmatic slumber'. By this is meant the awakening of Europeans to the realization of their metaphysical essences, the actualization of which Kant believed would lead to the rapid transformation of Europe. Kant challenged Europeans of his time with the chant: *Sapere etude!* This can be interpreted to mean that Europeans should dare to use their intelligence to subdue the rest of the world. Probably, the thinking of the average European of that period was that the anthropological understanding of the various races of the world would help to make the task of world domination easy.

On a second note, it should be noted that a proper understanding of Kant's philosophy in general must proceed from a detailed understanding of his anthropology. In fact, "it is a well known fact that materials from Kant's courses in Anthropology and Physical Geography found their way into his lectures in ethics and metaphysics".<sup>11</sup> That Kant made anthropology the capstone of his transcendental philosophy does not constitute much news. The real gist is that it was actually Kant "who introduced anthropology into German Universities when he first started his lectures in the winter semester of 1772 - 73".<sup>12</sup> This point is further substantiated by J. A. May who states that "it was actually Kant who introduced the study of geography, which he considered inseparable from anthropology, to Konigsberg University, beginning from the summer semester of 1756".<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, Kant himself intimates us sufficiently on this matter to the effect that anthropology forms the cornerstone of his philosophy. In fact, Kant himself states that for some "thirty years, he had taught the course anthropology and since age was

<sup>10</sup>J. A. May, *Kant's Concept of Geography and its Relation to Recent Geographical Thought*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Eze, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>12</sup>Cassirer, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>13</sup>May, op. cit., p. 4.



no longer on his side, he decided to turn his lecture notes on anthropology, which was legible to no one else but Kant, into a book".<sup>14</sup> Hence, not only did Kant make anthropology the foundation of his ontology, but that the book *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, though published towards the end of Kant's career as a professor, actually predates and even forms the substratum of the three *Critiques*. Consequent upon the foregoing, Eze states thus: "Although the volume *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* was the last book edited by Kant and was published toward the end of his life, the material actually chronologically predates the *Critiques*".<sup>15</sup> We also read from Mary J. Gregor who wrote the introduction to the version of the *Anthropology* edited by her that:

The *Anthropology* is, in effect, Kant's manual for a course of lectures which he gave for some thirty years in the winter semesters at the University of Königsberg. In 1797 when old age forced him to discontinue the course and he felt that his manual would not compete with the lectures themselves, he decided to let the work be published.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, even though the *Anthropology* is fondly referred to as the *fourth critique*, it actually forms the foundation of the first three *Critiques*. Thus, if the *Anthropology* is intended to ask the question *what is man?* the three *Critiques* (i.e. of Pure Reason, of Judgment and of Practical Reason) are meant to unveil man's metaphysical power for rationality, his epistemological power for judgment, and his moral capacity to institute law and order respectively.

Going by the above, E. C. Eze categorically states that the "*Critique of Pure Reason* and the subsequent (two) *Critiques* can be studied not only from a negative standpoint of showing what is impossible to pure reason but, from this anthropological perspective, as a positive attempt to find in the subjectivity of the human structure a specifically human, inner nature upon which to found moral existence as a necessity".<sup>17</sup> In essence, the aim of the first *Critique* is to raise anthropology to the pedestal of a universal science. According to Kant:

The role of the various cognitive powers and their relation to one another in experience, and having classified human faculties into those of cognition,

<sup>14</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, V. L. Dewdell (transl.), (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 6n.

<sup>15</sup>Eze, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>16</sup>Kant, 1974, op. cit., p. ix.

<sup>17</sup>Eze, op. cit., p. 113.



feeling and appetite, the anthropologist can proceed to classify in detail, the divisions of human powers and his observations of the way human beings use and misuse these powers.<sup>18</sup>

Consequently, the anthropological undertone in the *Critique of Pure Reason* lies in the logocentric domestication (i.e. Europeanization) of this metaphysical power which urges the European to use his rational power to subdue the rest of the world. In this wise, the *Anthropology* is intended to make a "sympathetic study of European humanity, taken as humanity *in itself*, and a demonstration of how this ideal or true humanity and its history is naturally and qualitatively (i.e. spiritually, morally, rationally, etc) and quantitatively (bodily, physically, climatically, etc)"<sup>19</sup> the wholistic and ideal model, the sole original, of civilization from which savage races must unavoidably take a cue.

The demarcation between the civilized and the savage races marks the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. White is beautiful and is therefore endowed with more metaphysical powers, while black is sublime and has little or no metaphysical abilities. So, the book *Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime* is meant to show that this divide between white and other races is transcendently fixated. To drive this point home, Kant drew up a hierarchical chart of the superior to the inferior hues of the skin as follows:

- (i) **Stem Genus:** white brunette. For Kant, stem genus represents the race of all races, which of course are the Germans.
- (ii) **First race,** very blond (northern Europe), of damp cold. As stated, the first race, as represented by Kant, is the white race in general otherwise known as the Caucasoid.
- (iii) **Second race,** Copper - Red (America), of dry cold, this was Kant's way of representing the Mongoloid race or the Asiatic race.
- (iv) **Third race,** Black (Senegambia), of dry heat. The Negroid race is the third in the ladder.
- (v) **Fourth race,** Olive - Yellow (Indians), of dry heat. This was Kant's way of representing the Red Indians of the Americas.<sup>20</sup>

The hierarchization of races is done with the belief that *white brunette* or *white* is the ideal colour of skin. All others are superior or inferior as they approximate whiteness. In fact, all other colours are simply degenerative developments of the white original. It is in this order that

<sup>18</sup>Kant, 1974, p. xii.

<sup>19</sup>Eze, op.cit., p. 117.

<sup>20</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, J. T. Goldthwait (transl.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 23.



intelligence is distributed. Whites have the ability to excel in the arts and in the sciences, Asians have the ability to excel only in the arts but not in the sciences, Blacks are people of great appetite and affection. On their own, they lack the ability to propel themselves to great heights, but they can however, be trained (i.e. a subtle word for tutelage by coercion) to mimic the life-pattern of the civilized races. To achieve this, the black has to be flogged mercilessly with the razor sharp edges of a split bamboo cane so that the coax skin can be pierced to let blood flow in order to prevent festering. This way, pain would drive him insane, subdued at last, he subjects himself to the will of the chastiser. As for the race of the Red Indians, they are good for nothing. It seems therefore, that Kant drew the chart for colonialism. For, while Asians are to be respected and their psyche messed up with opium (i.e. the opium war of 1893 in China), blacks were to be made beasts of burden for the development of Europe and America, while the Red Indians were almost completely wiped out.

Consequently, Kant's doctrine of race consists of the *theoretical* or *transcendental* and the *practical* or *anthropological* which further comprise the physical, biological, psychological and metaphysical analytic of race. In other words, whereas the three *Critiques* explain the transcendental foundation of the theory of race, the *Anthropology* and *Observations* enumerate the anthropological ground of the theory of race.

### The Pitfalls of Kant's Philosophical Anthropology

Perhaps, the thinking that anthropology by its nature is all encompassing and all-embracing encouraged Kant to begin his project of human ontology on an anthropological note. This first basic pitfall is quite evident in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant wrote as follows: "All the interest of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What ought I to do? And (3) What may I hope?"<sup>21</sup> Then, in the *Introduction to Logic*, Kant further informs us that "while the question 'what can I know?' belongs to metaphysics, 'what ought I to do?' to ethics, and 'what may I hope?' to religion, the key question, 'what is man?' belongs to anthropology".<sup>22</sup> Kant categorically states that the first three questions refer to the last because the first three disciplines can collectively be classified under anthropology. Besides, in the concluding pages of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant speaks of the two most inspirational problems, which confronted

<sup>21</sup>Kant, 1970, op. cit., p. 635.

<sup>22</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Introduction to Logic*, T. K. Abbot (transl.), (London: Longman & Green, 1885), p. 15; cited by Eze, op. cit., p. 113.



him - the starry heavens above us and the moral law within us. The first deals with Newtonian physics, while the second deals with ethics, which for Kant, is the science of moral freedom.

It is quite evident from the above that Kant is not properly focused. He seemed to have over-burdened himself with too many subject matters at the same time. These include metaphysics, ethics, logic, anthropology, geography, theology, etc. To drive our point home we may have to take a look at the number of courses Kant taught in his lifetime as a university don. According to J. A. May: "Throughout his career in the University of Königsberg, Kant offered 72 courses in Anthropology and/or Physical Geography more than in logic (54 times), metaphysics (49 times), moral philosophy (28 times), and theoretical physics (20 times).<sup>23</sup> It seems therefore, that for Kant, the question *what is man?* can be adequately answered only from an interdisciplinary point of view. In fact, he actually thought that the question *what is man?* is best studied from two fold field namely *nature* and *man*. And whereas the "first refers to physical geography... the second refers to anthropology".<sup>24</sup> He also thought that anthropology should study man in his totality—as an ontological, ethical, historical, political, economic, cultural, religious, legal, etc—entity. It is in this sense that Kant makes a demarcation between physiological, psychological, technical, pragmatic and practical forms of anthropology. Whereas the first studies man in his passive form as a plaything of nature, the second studies the mental processes of the human mind, the third is the philosophical analysis of man, the fourth studies man in his dynamisms as a social being and how he is able to outmaneuver others to achieve his goals in society, the last deals with man in his ethical/moral essence. But it is within the last two that Kant developed his doctrines of history and state.

Now, the book *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* is meant to study man from all the perspectives outlined above. In essence, the book never intends to study man in the abstract, but rather "stresses the other aspects of (human) freedom involved in civil society, the development of man's tendency to become a well-bred member of society who can live peacefully with his fellow men".<sup>25</sup> As hinted earlier, the *Anthropology*, which is a treatise on human nature constitutes the pillar of Kant's ontology, thereby, making his ontology essentially anthropological. Consequently, Martin Heidegger makes the point that Kant's attempt to radicalize anthropology yields the following conclusion "the establishment of metaphysics is an interrogation of man, i.e.,

<sup>23</sup>May, 1970, op. cit., p. 4; cited by Eze, op. cit. p. 104.

<sup>24</sup>Kant, 1900–66, op. cit., p. 443.

<sup>25</sup>Kant, 1974, op. cit., p. xxiii.



it is anthropology".<sup>26</sup> Heidegger further states that the imprecise and heterogeneous nature of anthropology makes it unsuitable for a pure project of metaphysics. He posits that "since anthropology deals with so many subject matters at the same time, it becomes so comprehensive that it loses all precision".<sup>27</sup>

The point is once more made that it is needless and indeed futile to try to radicalize anthropology as Kant did. Rather than embark upon such a wild goose chase, it is more rewarding to go straight into the delineation of ontology which domain of inquiry is the terrain of Being as Being and is therefore, better equipped and with the appropriate apparatus to deal with the issue of human ontology.

Furthermore, the racism of Immanuel Kant has made some scholars such as Michel Foucault to query his (Kant's) usage of such terms as reason, man and mankind. For instance, in the *Anthropology*, Kant wrote as follows: "The fact that man is aware of an ego-concept raises him infinitely above other creatures living on earth".<sup>28</sup> The point is that when Kant speaks of man and mankind, one expects that he has the generality of human species in mind and that he uses these terms in a universal sense. In which case, human reason is supposed to be a natural property of every human individual irrespective of gender, race, colour, or culture. In essence, one expects that Kant who is the initiator of the universalizability principle (i.e. the act of willing a moral maxim to become a universal norm) should know that the autonomy of human reason over nature does not amount to the show of brute rationality; it does not amount to the dehumanization of man and the destruction of nature. Instead, what is noticed is the act of double-dealing on the part of Kant. He makes reason the sole possession of the European which is another way of saying that the European represents man in his most ideal sense and therefore epitomizes mankind in its finest essence. The above amounts to the politicization of philosophy. It is then not surprising that while Kant argues for the preservation of culture as a vital factor of human development, he, nevertheless, supports the destruction of the culture of non-Europeans. Needless to say, Kant saw this act as justified because, in his view, it is the burden of Europeans to civilize the non-rational and barbaric races. This sectarian attitude of Kant amounts to a show of the pretences of reason which has been adjudged objective and impartial by Kant and the modern philosophers. So, the globalization of European norms inevitably implies the Europeanization of the world and this exactly, is what

---

<sup>26</sup>Heidegger, 1962, op. cit., p. 213.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>28</sup>Kant, 1978, op. cit., p. 9.



Kant's *transcendentalization* of the *Idea* amounts to. Just as through the act of transcendence the human mind produces homogeneity from the manifold experiences of life, so does the *transcendentalization* of European culture imply the harmonization of the various cultures of the world under the European umbrella. In essence, the homogeneity of concepts connotes the hegemony of Europe and the universality of ideas connotes the idealization and idolization of Europe.

Consequently, Kant's theory of *universalizability* entails the justification and legitimization of the colonization and dehumanization of non-Europeans. Based on the foregoing, postmodernists such as Foucault, Castoriadis and Lyotard query Kant's usage of the word "mankind" as being problematic. Problematic because the usage of the word is highly sectarian and further puts to question the warrantedness of the Enlightenment project which in its concrete manifestation always implies empire and colonialism. "Whenever it appears, it does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of *lack of reality* in reality, a discovery linked to the invention of other realities".<sup>29</sup>

Considering the grave consequences of Kant's racism and ethnocentrism, Walter Scheidt espouses the view that Kant produced "the first theory of race which really merits that name".<sup>30</sup> Wole Soyinka on his part articulates the basic goal and limitation of Kant's anthropology. Soyinka is of the view that the: "Universalist conjunction of metaphysics and anthropology is made possible by a philosophy which understands itself as the lieu of logos so that philosophical anthropology becomes logocentric anticipation of an a-historical universal, unchanging essence of man. The so-called primitives surely ought to be weary of such Kantian universalist-humanoid abstraction".<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, according to Lestition, Friedrich Gentz, who studied with Kant at Konigsberg between 1783 and 1786 expresses the view that if the objective of Kant's anthropological theories were actualized, it would "compact the whole species into one and the same form".<sup>32</sup> Friedrich Gentz

<sup>29</sup>Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, G. Bennington & B. Massieni (transl.), (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 77; *The Postmodern Explained*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>30</sup>W. Scheidt, "The Concept of Race in Anthropology" in E. W. Count's *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from the International Literature on the Race of Man*, (New York: Schuman).

<sup>31</sup>Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. ix.

<sup>32</sup>F. Gentz, cited by S. Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment in Prussia" in *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 65, 1993, p. 95; see Eze, 1997, *Ibid.* p. 131.



sees this as a very dangerous situation which would "destroy diversity and the free movement of the spirit for anyone who disagrees with Kant's compact could be treated as a rebel against *fundamental principles of human nature*".<sup>33</sup> And if human nature is interpreted as "rational-moral capacity for freedom of will", it implies that the 'infirm, the dying, infants, the retarded, the fetus, mad-people, and the handicapped'<sup>34</sup> are less human. For this reason, Christian Neugebauer states that Kant's racism is at best ambiguous, just as it sows the seeds of discord by propagating the temperament of absolutism, intolerance, discrimination and imperialism.

### The Importance of Kant's Philosophical Anthropology

Kant's philosophical anthropology yields two basic conclusions as follows: (a) that philosophy has the task of inspiring a people with the patriotism and nationalism required for accomplishing the dream of authentic nationhood, and (b) that the task of authentic nation building, herculean as it appears, can easily be achieved if people are woken up from dogmatic slumber, to realize and actualize the power of transcendence locked up inside of them that begs to be tapped for world transformation. This way, human beings come to realize themselves as ecstatic freedom, thereby, reassigning the power of omniscience to mortals. Concerning the first point, we further learn that the anthropological evaluation of philosophy shows that philosophy is not a fictitious exercise in pure abstraction; it is definitely not a mental exercise in sheer intellectual acrobatics and jingoisms. Anthropological philosophy in this respect has the target of inspiring a people with the zeal or fanaticism for nationalism, necessary and sufficient, for making them possible world leaders. Immanuel Kant accomplished this task for his people in the Enlightenment period. Needless to say, from the inception of western philosophy, western philosophers have been "patriots to the core in the sense that they saw philosophy as a tool to service the interest of their continent and their people".<sup>35</sup> This temperament of racial or "national philosophism"<sup>36</sup> otherwise known as the doctrine of Eurocentrism pioneered by Kant has been sustained by other European philosophers among whom are Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach, Husserl and Heidegger. Kant had idealized and idolized European mode of

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 95 – 96.

<sup>34</sup>Bohme, "Kant's Universalism and the Family of Man", Being a paper delivered at an International Seminar on "Kant's Universalism and Social Conflicts in Nigeria (November 12 – 13), at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of Lagos. 1998, pp. 9 – 11.

<sup>35</sup>C. S. Momoh, "Foreword" to Jim I. Unah's *Heidegger, Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1997).

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. xvi



existence as epitomizing the sole model of what it means to be human and rational. Hegel followed this Kantian way of reasoning when in his anthropological expose of world history he asserted that the spirit of civilization, in its itinerary from Asia, flew over Africa and then domiciled in Europe. It is sequel to this Hegelian assertion that Africa became known as the Dark Continent. The modernist spirit of globalizing European norms is triumphantly celebrated by Karl Marx who in *The Communist Manifesto*, presents the historicity of Europe as the driving force that has "at last compelled (man) to face with sober senses his *real* conditions of life and his relations with his kind".<sup>37</sup> Simply, Marx made European economic history the economic history of the world.

Consequently, Ludwig Feuerbach's criticisms of classical German philosophy (especially Hegel's idealism) and Christianity are intended to refocus Europeans on that path of human transcendence which reveals man in his true essence as the God and manipulator of his earthly existence. Husserl on his own part sees the "Europeanization and philosophical colonization of non-European people as something right and unquestionable".<sup>38</sup> In fact, Husserl's phenomenology is aptly described as the idolization and articulation of Greek tradition and the consolidation of European modernism. Not even the phenomenological doctrine of *presuppositionlessness* could save Husserl from the blinding light of Greek *eidos*. The point to note here is that Husserl completely agrees with Kant that Europe infinitely represents the "birth place, the logos and the telos of world reason" or what Husserl himself calls the 'entelechy'.<sup>39</sup>

As it pertains to Heidegger, his phenomenologico-ontological universalism notwithstanding, he could not completely extricate himself from the Eurocentric posture of Western philosophy. As C. S. Momoh puts it, it would have been "unHeideggerian and anti-ontological"<sup>40</sup> for Heidegger to maintain a different attitude from his German and European predecessors. In fact, it can be argued that Heidegger followed after the pattern of Kant and Hegel in making Germany the heartbeat of global philosophy. The Prussian

<sup>37</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (New York: International Publishers, 1983), p.12; cited by Serequeberhan, "The Critique of Eurocentrism and the Practice of African Philosophy" in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, E. C. Eze (ed.), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 143.

<sup>38</sup>M. Murray, "Husserl and Heidegger: Constructing and Deconstructing Greek Philosophy" in *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XLI, No. 3, 1988, p. 504

<sup>39</sup>Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, D. Carr (transl.), (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970), p. 15.

<sup>40</sup>Momoh, op. cit., p. xv



posture of Heidegger is seen in the point that he like Kant thinks that philosophy is best done in German. Though Heidegger grudgingly conceded a place to Greek language, he is known to have held the popular view that "German (after Greek) is the most spiritual language in which the essence of philosophy can be conveyed".<sup>41</sup>

As it concerns the superiority of the Aryan race, Heidegger exalts the German people as the "people of the centre (caught in the giant pincers between the two Carbarcan mass societies, America and Russia) who alone can renew the great beginning of Western thought - to save man from nihilism and gadgetry".<sup>42</sup> This is how Heidegger equates the "spiritual history of the West with the spiritual history of mankind".<sup>43</sup> Hence, the attempt to domesticate the ontological ability for philosophizing (as epitomized in the doctrine of Eurocentrism) is at once logocentric and absolutist, and promotes a false sense of Enlightenment just as its doctrine of humanism is pretentious.

Consequently, Kant, can categorically be regarded as the first Western philosopher who made the delineation of the human ontological power his prerogative. No doubt, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Descartes had at one time or the other hinted at transcendence. However, the problem with these other metaphysical systems is that they seem to subsume man's ontological abilities under some other kinds of universal cosmic intelligence such as the *eidos* and God. Kant broke this trend completely, and by relocating the power of transcendence in man, he gave us the basic clue to world development. Feuerbach and Heidegger followed this tradition of Kant. For instance, in Feuerbach's view, anthropology assumes a truly universal dimension, with him the naivety in Kant's anthropology varnishes. In the same light, he vehemently criticized both Hegelianism and Christianity, two modes of thought that alienate human ontological powers to the supersensible world. Even at that, Feuerbach's attempt to refocus anthropology and give it a truly universal character is not without its own pitfalls. In the *Twelve Theses on Feuerbach*, Karl Marx makes it clear that Feuerbach missed the point when he (Feuerbach) makes the attack on God and religion the centre point of his anthropology. This, in the view of Karl Marx, amounts to the - fallacy of abstraction. For Marx, religion easily becomes - opium of the people, just as God symbolizes - the sigh of the oppressed, due to the prevalence of poverty and ignorance. This, for Marx, is the crux of the matter which Feuerbach and German idealist have completely missed out.

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p. xvi

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.



The preoccupation of Heidegger, on the other hand, is the domain of ontology. In spite of his nationalistic zeal, Heidegger cannot be accused of anthropologism. His interest in the first place, is to finish up the job which Kant failed to complete, that is, the delineation of *Transcendental Object - X* (i.e. the Transcendental Imagination) which he (Kant) declared as the unknown root. At no time do we catch Heidegger relapsing into the world of anthropology as Kant did. He restricts himself to the pure existential analysis of human being (i.e. *Daseinanalytic*). Therefore, Heidegger's patriotism cannot be equated with that of hardcore ethnologists. What Heidegger intends is to say is that the language, which Being can be analyzed in its deepest essence is German. He does not say that only the German possesses the ability to investigate Being. In other words, the power of transcendence to investigate Being is a property of every race, tribe or gender. It is then left to the different peoples of the world to develop their own languages by putting themselves to the task of unconcealing Being in its finest essence.



# **RETHINKING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY**

**Alloy, S. Ihuah, Ph.D**

## **Abstract**

In the face of the unfolding of his scientific and technical powers, modern man has built a system of production that ravages nature and a type of society that mutilates man. Such is the philosophy of exaggerated materialism, which we here challenge as inadequate for the purpose of human development. This philosophy promotes a narrow vision of reality, and emphasises the accumulation of goods and the manipulation of techniques, to the neglect of the development of persons. The destructive forces of the modern world cannot be brought under control simply by mobilizing more resources of wealth, education, and research – to fight pollution and chemical hazards, preserve wild life, to discover new sources of energy, and to arrive at more effective agreements on peaceful co-existence. Wealth, education, research and many other things are needed for any civilization, though, a revision of the ends which these means are meant to serve must be in accord with the logic of appropriate technology. This implies, above all else, the development of a life-style, which accords to material things their proper, legitimate place, which is secondary and not primary. The paper views human development as the progressive humanization of society; a movement away from the materialistic, and towards the humanistic and argues in particular that, the logic of development expressed through the creative application of knowledge of other cultures which is technology transfer should be shifted in favour of the design and application of technical knowledge for the benefit of the immediate community, which is appropriate technology.

## **Introduction**

The destructive forces unleashed by it (the logic of production – exaggerated materialism) cannot be brought under control, unless the logic of production itself is brought under control – so that destructive forces cease to be unleashed. It is of little use trying to suppress terrorism if the production of deadly devices continues to be deemed a legitimate employment of man's creative powers. Nor can the fight against pollution be successful if the patterns of production and consumption continue to be of a scale, a



complexity, and a degree of violence which, as is becoming more and more apparent, do not fit into the laws of the universe, to which man is just as much subject as the rest of creation. Equally, the chance of mitigating the rate of resource depletion or of bringing harmony into the relationships between those in possession of wealth and power and those without is non-existent as long as there is no idea anywhere of enough being good and more-than-enough being evil.<sup>1</sup>

This point argued in the above is that pollution must be brought under control. Also the population of mankind and man's consumption of resources must be steered towards a permanent and sustainable equilibrium. This is made possible through a conscious effort of intersecting the material and immaterial, the visible and the invisible. Thus the tendency of the modern man to be conscious of only the visible and ignore the invisible, which invariably sustains the visible, does not augur well for development. The philosophy of exaggerated materialism promoted by scientific technology produces a "process of mutual poisoning" whereby successful industrial development in the cities destroys the economic structure of the hinterland, and the hinterland takes its revenge by mass migration into the cities, and making the cities utterly unmanageable. Man's crudely materialistic philosophy makes him liable to see only the material opportunities and to overlook the immaterial factors, thereby making his efforts towards development to be misguided.

Human development is not primarily a problem for economists, least of all for economists whose expertise is founded on a crudely materialist philosophy. Human development requires a new philosophy which takes cognisance of the yearnings and aspirations of the entire human population; it is humanistic because it takes poverty and other inhuman conditions as diseases which must be comprehensively addressed. Thus, man's current pursuit of profit and progress, which promotes giant organizations and increased specialization is not and cannot be called development (at least in humanistic terms). In fact, it has rather resulted in gross economic inefficiency, environmental pollution and inhuman working conditions. Thus, man is pulling the earth and himself out of equilibrium by applying only one test to everything he does: money, profits and therefore giant operations. We have to ask instead: "what about the cost in human terms, in happiness, health,

---

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), p. 291.



beauty and conservation of the planet?" Which indices are architectonics of human development.

It is argued on this score that all success which end promote the essential needs of man are likely to be illusory unless there is also a healthy growth or at least a healthy condition of stability – among the very great number of people today whose life is characterised not only by dire poverty but also by hopelessness. Such healthy growth or condition of stability it is said, could come about through technology transfer, while others say it could be made possible through appropriate technology. Our work appraises these positions and argues the conclusion that African communal expression of the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity promotes the totality of the human person.

### Technology Transfer

In her conclusion in the article "The Africanness of a Philosophy", Sophie Oluwole (1992:122) posits: "may be the invaluable lesson to be learned from the great debate on the existence of African philosophy is that different human cultures can contribute to progress and human civilization."<sup>2</sup> The thrust of this thinking is that borrowing from other cultures is an essential component of progress and development; technical, material or human. It thus means that the less developed (underdeveloped) and or developing nations are more likely to borrow wisely the creative knowledge of other cultures in the service of their essential desires. The Asian Tigers (Japan, China, Korea, Indonesia, etc) have proudly demonstrated how to borrow wisely from other cultures (i.e. Europe and America). The Japanese, for instance, do not only encourage foreign teachers from Europe and America, they also have exposure to other cultures, as an essential element of their educational policies.

In Africa, the Egyptian contribution to the march of civilization is another of such examples of cultural symbiosis that has engendered progress and human development. One historian once wrote on this score that:

Long before her decline set in, Egypt had laid the foundation of a culture on which that of the western world was afterward built. References have already been made to her skill in agriculture, architecture, writing, and painting. She had developed the use of metals, and had devised a method of practical mensuration. Spinning and weaving, and other industries had been introduced. By means of her sea-going ships she had established commerce

<sup>2</sup> Sophie B. Oluwole, "Africanness of a Philosophy" in *PostKoloniales Philosophieren: Africa*, H. Nagl-Decekal and F. M. Wimmer (eds.). (Wei, Oldekboung, 1992), p.122.



with the outer world. And as early as 2500 BC, she had devised a Calendar, which, with the changes afterwards made in it by the Romans, is practically the same as that now in use.<sup>3</sup>

Europe itself obtained its arithmetic symbols from the Arabic figures 1, 2, 3... as opposed to Roman figures i, ii, iii. Even European languages borrowed from one another. Hence we often find in the English language, words with either French, Latin or German origin. Even in music, one can find traces of African music in European and American music. In all of this, the instrument in use is what we call creative imitation, which principle, in respect of technology argues that we do not need to re-invent the wheel – that instead of trying to start from the scratch the development of new technology, we can adapt the already developed technologies from other cultures to our own environment. The advantage of this strategy is that, it could save us a lot of funds which could be devoted to research and development. It is argued here that such an attitude in scientific technology is what comes to us a technology transfer, which adaption not only help in making the wheel suitable for our environment but also to use the technology of making the wheel to make other things we need.

### **How Possible and Profitable is Technology Transfer?**

Thus argued, technology transfer is not a mere import of another culture entirely, but a capture of the applicable and the spirit of technological progress already caught by other cultures. In this attempt, we look at how other peoples have applied techniques to the situation similar to ours and attempt such application. We are thus challenged to avoid the mistakes, the wastes, and the destructions that accompanied their own (i.e. the technologies of those from whom we seek to adopt or transfer). Global problems today call for solutions that draw on the resources of different cultures. This then makes the imitation of other cultures imperative. If we want progress in all regions of human endeavour, we must learn that civilization consists in terms of native contributions and outside borrowings. It remains to be seen, however, how such outside borrowings has or can contribute to human development.

Put into proper perspective, technology transfer is examined by the conventional school in terms of the product cycle theory of international trade in which technology – owing enterprises in the advanced countries exploit

---

<sup>3</sup>J. A. O. Ifechukwu, *The Secret of Western Technology: Myth or Reality*, (Lagos: Goldland Business Company Ltd, 1991), pp. 33-34.



their monopoly advantages in the third world market. The informing philosophy here is that, it is cheaper for the recipient countries to import technology than produce it locally. Attempting a further critique, the critical school examines technology transfer in terms of an unequal relationship between the developing and developed capitalist economies. It regards the situation as the inevitable outcome of capitalized development, and locates dependency within the centre-periphery concept which opines that part of the third world is part of the centre and, therefore, the actions of the former are taken in the light of the centre. Thus the dependent relationship determines both what happens and what is possible between two sets of unequal countries. By prognosis, this implies, in practical term that technology transfer is a problematic issue in developing economies like Nigeria.

Such, perhaps, is the thinking that informs the view of Uduigwomen, which describes technology transfer as "the buying or importation of foreign technology by a particular country or state without due regard to the question of whether or not it suits the environment of the buying country or state."<sup>4</sup> This, in itself, creates problems for the recipient country, since it means the introduction of a foreign culture into the recipient culture; hence the two are bound to react negatively, thereby dehumanising and depersonalising the individual and his society. Throwing more light on this position, Kwame Gyekye argues that, the alien cultural product is not simply "transferred" to the recipients, rather the recipients would seek, acquire, and appropriate the significance of the product – that is, make it their own. This means that they would participate actively and purposefully in the acquisition of the product. However, as he argued further:

To the extent (1) that what is called technology transfer is, in its essentials, an aspect of the phenomenon of cultural borrowing, and (2) that the people to whom some technology is transferred are, thus expected to understand and take possession of it through active and purposeful participation in its acquisition, "transfer of technology" is, in my view, a misnomer. For what is transferred may not be acquired, appropriated or assimilated.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Andrew F. Uduigwomen, *A Textbook of History and Philosophy of Science*, (Aba: A. A. U. Industries Publishing Division, 1996), p. 161.

<sup>5</sup>Kwame Gyekye, "Philosophy, Culture and Technology in Post-Colonial Africa" in *Post Colonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, Emmanuel Chukwu Eze (ed.), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 40.



Technology transfer cannot engender human development; indeed it does not have the intrinsic quality to trigger any meaningful form of development due to the absence of any necessary and sufficient conditions of assimilating, digesting and translating the techniques of foreign origin by the recipient countries. Thus technology is not transferred. What is transferred, on the contrary, is the colossal economic resources of the developing countries to the already developed ones. It must, thus, be noted that any form of technology that does not originate from within the socio-cultural environment of a people can hardly be useful in dealing with their peculiar problems. This position may perhaps be an exaggeration, but the fact is that, a technology, borrowed or originated from within a cultural environment must be made to interact in a meaningful sense with the local environment. It must serve the immediate needs of the local population, it must be appropriate in the sense of being amenable to management by their users, and in harmony with the environment, and which are conserving of natural resources.

To the extent that technological transfer does not satisfy these essential criteria, it is an unwanted foreign tissue in the human body system. Ali Mazrui's biological metaphor of technological transplant does not qualify for our acceptance either. In his words, "there has been a considerable amount of technology transfer to the Third World in the last thirty years – but very little technology transplant. Especially in Africa, very little of what has been transferred has in fact been successfully transplanted."<sup>6</sup> We may add here that, if by 'successfully transplanted' Mazrui implies that Africa has appropriated and acquired or can appropriate and acquire western technology and thus improve her lot, we roundly reject the assertion. Rather, western scientific technology with its static metaphysics has helped in the destruction of the entire African continent – socially, economically etc, and to that extent, destroyed the human person. Perhaps, the revealing reply of Kwame Gyekye helps to puncture Mazrui's poor analogy:

To the extent (1) that this biological or medical metaphor clearly involves passivity on the part of the recipient (i.e. the patient), who, thus has no choice in actively deciding on the 'quality' of the foreign body tissue to be sewn unto his body, and (2) that there is no knowing whether the physical constitution of the recipient will accept or reject the new body tissue, the biological perception of acquiring the technological products of other cultures is very

<sup>6</sup>Ali Mazrui, "Africa Between Ideology and Technology: Two Frustrated Forces of Change" in *African Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years*, M. C. Gwendolen and P. O'Meara (eds.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 281-282.



misleading... besides the body on which the foreign body tissue is to be transplanted is in a diseased condition which make it impossible for it to react in a wholly positive manner to its new "addition" and to take advantage of it.<sup>7</sup>

We may add here that, even if we assume, analogically, that the society that is badly in need of the technological products of other cultures is technologically or epistemically 'diseased', the fact would still remain that, in the case of the human society, the members of the society would, guided by their needs, be in a position not only to decide on which technological products of foreign origin they would want to acquire, but also to participate actively and positively in the appropriation of those products.

Clearly, neither "technology transfer" nor Mazrui's "technological transplant" is a fruitful way of perceiving, and pursuing the acquisition of technology from other cultures for the purpose of human development. Indeed such forms of cultural borrowings destroy, dehumanise and under-develop cultures. What we do need in our chart to human development is scientific consciousness and not scientific knowledge. Scientific consciousness entails knowledge about science while scientific knowledge denotes knowledge of science. Andrew Efemini explains further:

Anyone with scientific consciousness understands the place of science in man's struggle to improve his living condition on earth. He does not see science as something that should be pursued for its own sake but as something that should be pursued for man's benefit... Once our educational system is able to produce people who have scientific and technological consciousness, it would have produced those who would be committed to the pursuit of scientific and technological development because they would be fully aware of the consequences of their refusal to do so.<sup>8</sup>

It must be said without fear of contradiction that, technology transfer is synonymous with cultural importation, which problems are myriad. Science and technology must better be acquired than bought. Acquisition, understood here, is also called copy engineering or creative imitation in which the

---

<sup>7</sup> Gyegye, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Efemini, "Scientific and Technological Development in Nigeria: A Dialectical Approach", in *A Test Book of History and Philosophy of Science*, A. F. Uduigwomen, (ed.) (Aba: A.A.U. Industries Publishing Division, 1996), p. 18.



recipient culture acquires the technology from other cultures by either copying or "stealing" it from industrialized countries and then adapting or modifying it to suit our (the recipient) environment or by developing one's own technology in response to the needs identified in the environment. China and Japan are classical examples in this regard.

Undoubtedly, technology can transform human society in numerous ways. For this reason, the post-colonial, developing countries will have to consider technology as an instrument in the realization of basic human needs rather than as an end – merely a way of demonstrating human power or ingenuity. Since technology has meaning because of the service it renders to man, it thus becomes a fundamental mistake to conceive its meaning independent of man and his life. Thus, technology must be concerned essentially with such human needs as food, shelter, water, health, clothing etc. The pursuit and satisfaction of these basic needs should guide the choice and appropriation of technology.

### **Appropriate Technology: The Need to Humanize Technology**

...what ought to be chosen is the technology that will be applied to industry, food and agriculture, water, health, housing, road and transportation and other relevant activities that make ordinary life bearable... military and space exploration technologies for instance, may not be needed by the postcolonial state – certainly not in the early decades of its postcolonial existence.<sup>9</sup>

The appropriation and development of technology must necessarily take into account the local circumstances and objectives before the adaptability of any technological product. This is because technology has the capacity to transform human society, either positively or negatively, involving changes not only in our ways and patterns of living, but also in our values. It means then that, human beings will have to decide whether the (new) values spewed out by technology are the kinds of values we need and would want to cherish. Rightly argued, Gyekye asserts that: "Technology emerges in, and is fashioned by, a culture; thus right from the outset, technology is driven or directed by human purposes, values, and goals."<sup>10</sup> This historical relation between technology and values thus maintained, means that, what will be

---

<sup>9</sup> Gyekye, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



produced for us by technology will (have to) be consonant with those purposes, values and goals. Thus, an argument in the promotion and protection of human development is necessarily an argument in support of the development of a brand of technology that is humanistic in form and outlook; a technology with a human face – appropriate technology.

Variously referred as “alternative technology”, “intermediate technology” or “small-scale technology”, appropriate technology is defined by a committee of the United States House of Representatives as “those technologies which are decentralized, which require low capital investment, which are amenable to management by their users, which are in harmony with the environment and which are conserving of natural resources.”<sup>11</sup> The inherent understanding here is that, technology is made by humanity for humanity, and not humanity for technology. This means that, human beings and their welfare should be the centre of the focus of the technological enterprise. It thus means also that, technology must be driven to satisfy such needs that are appropriate to a given culture, that is, a given industrial activity should be appropriate to the conditions of a given people, (developing district), which itself dictates a technology to be employed.

The appropriate technology is founded on a dynamic metaphysics. This metaphysics is progressive as much as it is humanistic, and so draws its strength from the convergence of several trends herein considered:

- (i) The discovery that resources are not unlimited and or unrenewable, i.e. oil and gas and solid minerals.
- (ii) That the development of cost-effective high technology often put people out of work.
- (iii) That the exportation of up-to-the-minute technology to developing nations by the developed nations creates more problems than the solutions it seeks to bring, for the indigenous cultures (i.e. recipient) could not absorb it effectively.
- (iv) That the side effects of technological innovations have heightened, as health hazards developed as by-products of such seemingly beneficial innovations as pesticides and oral contraceptives.
- (v) That scientific advances were eroding the ecology.
- (vi) That scientific and technical knowledge created new and dangerous cultures as humanity converted the instruments of scientific technology to more dangerous uses, which were never ever part of the scientist innovation.

<sup>11</sup> D. Drew, “Technology with a Human Face” in *Topic*, 131, 1980, pp. 50-53.



This thinking is informed by a humanistic philosophy, which according to Schumacher, "makes the kind of common sense that could help the survival of life on earth become at least a decent possibility". Thus, appropriate technology is the appropriate means of re-directing the destructive ugliness, gigantism, normlessness, infantilization, standardisation, conformity and non-identity which modern scientific technology produces. It is the appropriate means of re-humanizing the factory workers (for instance), who have been robbed of their creativity, affectivity, spontaneity and responsibility, and made to be mere Robopaths. Appropriate technology thus argues that, technology, and humanism are two interactive factors, which are not, and should not be arithmetical concepts, but should rather co-operate and co-exist with the concern for the interest and welfare of the people in the technological society to produce a total quality individual (TQI). Schumacher had similarly expressed his scepticism of the positive impact of scientific technology, when he reflects thus:

If we ask where the tempestuous developments of world industry during the last quarter of a century have taken us, the answer is somewhat discouraging. Everywhere the problems seem to be growing faster than the solutions. This seems to apply to the rich countries just as much as to the poor. There is nothing in the experience of the last 25 (now 33) years to suggest that modern technology, as we know it, can really help us to alleviate world poverty, not to mention the problem of unemployment, which already reaches levels like 30 per cent in many so called developing countries... the apparent yet illusory success of the last 25(now 33) years cannot be repeated... so we had better face the question of technology – what does it do and what should it do? Can we develop a technology, which really helps us to solve our problems – a technology with a human face?<sup>12</sup>

For the African, the question of what western technology does is straight forwardly answered that (1) western technology destroys, dehumanises and kills, while the question of what it should do attracts the response (2) technology (of any form) should not lose the humanist essence of African culture. The reason is that, for the African, the value of concern for human well-being is a fundamental, intrinsic and self justifying value which should be cordoned off against any technological subversion of it. Kenneth Kaunda very forcefully expresses his concern in this connection thus:

---

<sup>12</sup> Schumacher, op. cit., p. 144.



I am deeply concerned that this high valuation of man and respect for human dignity which is a legacy of our (African) tradition should not be lost in the new Africa. However "modern" and "advanced" in a western sense the new nations of Africa may become, we are fiercely determined that this humanism will not be obscured. African society has always been man-centred. We intend that it will remain so.<sup>13</sup>

This prophetic desire becomes true if, and only if, the adapted technology is humanistically driven. A humanistically driven technology is that brand of technology which directing compass is informed by the humanist essence of a given culture. It acknowledges the prime place of man which understanding informs the choice of a technology that suits the said human environment. Unemployment and its resultant poor quality of life demand an appropriate technology that offers mass employment and reassures food on every body's table. In his *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Schumacher dramatises what he calls "Buddhist economics", as a classical example of humanizing humanity through an appropriate means. His explanation is this: "The very start of Buddhist economic planning would be a planning for full employment, and the primary purpose of this would in fact be employment for everyone who needs an 'outside' job: it would not be the maximization of employment nor the maximization of production."<sup>14</sup>

We may refer to this humble attempt as "technological-reclamation" of the messy activities of scientific technology, which has left modern man too busy doing nothing and or working tirelessly to destroy himself and the entire ecosystem. Appropriate technology focuses on the identification of human needs, and proceeds in a small but beautiful way to attack the problem, 'life and direct', and solves the problem without any damage to the human person or the environment – it emphasises the philosophy that technology is appropriate to the environment, it conserves energy and, or resources.

Very well aware of the convergence of the trends stated, humanity is reminded that a price has to be paid for anything worthwhile; to redirect technology so that it serves man instead of destroying him. Then, humanity is said to be on its way to full and meaningful development. Schumacher argues that this new direction for technological development is "a direction that shall lead it back to the real needs of man, and that also means: to the actual size of man. Man is small, and therefore, small is beautiful. To go for giantism is to

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Kaunda, *Humanism: A Guide to the Nation*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1967), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Schumacher, op. cit., p. 54-55.



go for self destruction".<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps, the example described by Robert Cahn of a Zen Buddhists community could very well serve as an ideal form of appropriate technology, which promotes and protects human development. They grow all their own food according to organic principles. Food and energy production, waste disposal, water usage and construction are being developed consistent with both Zen principles and the notions of appropriate technology. For example, the community plans to use windmills as an electricity-producing technology. One of the group's leaders once commented: "Although we treasure leaving in the reality, of the present, we are in no hurry. We build in terms not of a generation or two, but 500 years or more... the result is a highly productive, ecologically and environmentally ethical relationship to the land, resources and animal life."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, a widely cited demonstration project in architectural technology has been conducted at the University of Lagos wherein a one-storey building has been constructed with one hundred percent locally sourced raw materials. Perhaps more astonishing is the fact that the entire building could be dislodged without any form of destruction to the building materials used, and which could be reused elsewhere for another building.

In the field of agriculture, planned research and exploration of the vital relationships between soil, plant, animal, and man, have made it possible for present day farmers in many countries to successfully obtain excellent yields without resort to chemicals and without raising any doubts about long-term soil fertility and health. In the area of industrial technology, the ever-increasing campaign of appropriate technology is yielding positive dividends. Research in this area with futuristic philosophy shows that, technology with a human face is fast becoming a household activity; that, it is possible, viable, and that, it reintegrates the human being, with his skilful hands and creative brains, into the productive process. It serves production by, and for the masses instead of mass production.

Our discussion thus far reveals that the Third World, particularly Africa, cannot be salvaged and humanised by western technology. The inventors themselves (Europe and America) have become slaves of their hands and brains. Its adaptation by the developing world has brought more poverty, and increased rather than diminished our problems in terms of mass unemployment, mass migration into cities, rural decay, and intolerable social tensions. The human person has been left dehumanised and thus lives a life of

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 155.

<sup>16</sup> Drew, op. cit., p.52



meaninglessness and hopelessness. What we need is re-humanization, reorientation of relationships between man and nature, which itself engender order and harmony. We need a humanised technology, which, rather than make human hands and brains redundant, helps man to become far more productive than he has ever been. As Gandhi once said, the poor cannot be helped by mass production, only production by the masses. Perhaps a clear distinction of the two expressions could enlighten us and bring meaning to bear on our position.

- (i) The system of *mass production*, based on sophisticated, highly capital-intensive, high-energy-input dependent and human labour-saving technology presupposes that you are already rich, for a great deal of capital investment is needed to establish one single workplace.
- (ii) The system of *production by the masses* mobilizes the priceless resources which are possessed by all human beings, their clever brains and skilful hands *and support them with first class tools*.

Comparing and contrasting the two Schumacher validly writes:

The technology of mass production is inherently violent, ecologically damaging, self-defeating in terms of non-renewable resources and stultifying for the human person. The technology of production by the masses, making use of the best of modern knowledge and experience, is conducive to decentralization, compatible with the laws of ecology, gentle in its use of scarce resources, and designed to serve the human person instead of making him the servant of machines.<sup>17</sup>

To the extent that the technology of production by the masses is synonymous with appropriate technology, we acknowledge that the human person's interest is best served here. Appropriate technology is vastly superior to the primitive technology of the past, sophisticated, capital intensive, high-energy-input, dependent and human-labour saving technology. Appropriate technology promotes best the humanist essence of African culture, hence the full development of the human person. Unlike the modern technology which has deprived man of the kind of work that he enjoys most; creative, useful work with hands and brains, but which keeps him exceedingly busy working on things that are not necessary, appropriate technology is underpinned and guided by some basic moral values, and directed at the fulfilment of the material welfare balanced with the spiritual welfare of human beings. Quoting Karl Marx, Schumacher brings out this distinction between modern

---

<sup>17</sup>Schumacher, op. cit., p. 149.



technology and appropriate technology as a case in favour of appropriate technology. He writes: "They want production to be limited to useful things, but they forget that the production of too many useful things result in too many useless people,"<sup>18</sup> especially when the processes of production are joyless and boring, which confirms our suspicion that modern technology, as it has developed, is developing, and promises further to develop, is showing an increasingly inhuman face, and that we might do well to take stock and reconsider our goals.

Going by the spirit of African humanistic heritage, technology makes more meaning and gives hope to life if and only if it expresses its instrumental and intrinsic value. As an instrument in the quest for human fulfilment; its use ought to be guided by other, perhaps intrinsic and ultimate human values, in order to realise its maximum relevance to humanity. Gyekye strongly supports this position as he argues:

In considering technology's aim of fulfilling the material needs of humans, the pursuit of the humanist and social ethic of the traditional African society can be of considerable relevance because of the impact this ethic can have on the distributive patterns in respect of the economic goods that will result from the application of technology. In this way, extensive and genuine social, and in the sequel, political transformation of postcolonial African society can be ensured, and the maximum impact of technology on society achieved.<sup>19</sup>

The acknowledged task of technology, it is said, is to lighten the burden of work man has to do in order to stay alive and develop his potentials. On the face value, it is difficult to fault this assertion. It is easy enough to see that technology fulfils this purpose when we watch any piece of machinery at work; a computer for instance, can do in seconds what it would take clerks or even mathematicians a very long time, if they can do it at all. This is aside from the fact that one single crane can carry the weight which a battalion of soldiers cannot. Obviously, work is reduced, and man finds more time to rest, but it increases other kinds of work. Most astonishingly, technology has "thrown the child with the bath-water"; modern technology is most successful in reducing or even eliminating skilful, creative and productive work of human hands and brains, in touch with real materials of one kind or another.

Such glorification of the works of science and technology, we have

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> Gyekye, op. cit., p. 43.



argued, has distressed, and destroyed man and society, and ravaged the entire ecosystem. Virtually all real production (resulting from technical activity) has been turned into an inhuman chore which does not enrich a man but empties him. "From the factory", says Schumacher, "dead matter goes out improved, whereas men there are corrupted and degraded."<sup>20</sup> Agreed, man cannot live without science and technology any more than he can live against nature. What needs the most intelligent and careful consideration is understanding the essence of technology (in its forced revealing) and the legitimate role of human life in such revealing, and discovering the essence of ourselves on earth and within our environment in the world. The ingenious endeavours of man's brain and hands should (must) be directed towards non-violence, harmonious co-operation with nature, and towards the noiseless energy, elegant, and economic solutions normally applied in nature, in promoting and protecting a sustainable ecosystem.

Giantism, the characteristic description of modern technological complexities and excesses, in which accumulated toxic substances, and or wastes, may have no chance of possible positive disposal at any date in human existence, thus committing future generations to tackle a problem (if they can at all), which they do not know how to handle. Humanity, Africa in particular, may be on the path of authentic human existence if it adopts the position of a report on the control of pollution published by Her Majesty's Stationary office, entitled *Pollution: Nuisance or Nemesis*. It says in part: "it would be only prudent to slow down the nuclear power programme until we have solved the waste disposal problem...that no more nuclear reactors should be built until we know how to control their wastes."<sup>21</sup> The obvious conclusion is that, modern technology, which is founded on western static metaphysics, promotes and protects violence, destruction, inhumanity, exaggerated materialism, and so is one dimensional in outlook. Such metaphysical outlook has not, and cannot engender progress and human development.

### Conclusion

African humanistic heritage, which ingredients and concern for human behaviour and existence, is an important "better half" of what makes human existence meaningful. It is thus at this point that we have advanced a philosophy of appropriate technology as an alternative to modern (western) technology. Western (modern) technology is not culture neutral, and so, even its transfer cannot serve the intrinsic needs of Africans for want of cultural

---

<sup>20</sup> Schumacher, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Ibid. p. 40.



sameness, and it is bound to deliver him in the worst possible way. Technology in its essence is far from neutral or merely an instrument of human control; it is an autonomous organizing activity *within which humans themselves are organized*, and not a means to an end. Understanding technology as a means to an end entails not only decisively redirecting nature, but of consciously and actually setting-upon nature, which in itself conveys an atmosphere of violence and exploitation, degradation and dehumanisation.

Such attitude to nature which find expression in modern technology as a "challenging-forth" has thus instigated the withdrawal of the human agency from technology and in its stead acquired an attitude of violence as the causal factors interplay. To that extent, science and technology creates and sustain dangers and problems to the whole of creation for historical or even geological ages. This is a transgression against the biosphere. It is here argued that no degree of prosperity could justify such a transgression against life itself, which according to Schumacher is more serious than any crime ever perpetrated by man. The idea that a civilization could sustain itself on the basis of such transgression is an ethical, spiritual and metaphysical monstrosity. It means conducting the (economic) affairs of man as if people really did not matter at all, with emphasis on money, profits, and therefore giant operations.

Heidegger named this context 'enframing' (Ge-stell). But, "where enframing reigns", he argues forcefully, "there is danger in the highest sense."<sup>22</sup> This is because, the entire nature; human, technology, in their essences are challenged-forth for revelation. The true essence of nature is in its revealing, its bringing-forth i.e. of causation as Plato expressed it in *The Symposium* that *Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is poiesis, is bring-forth*, where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth happens.<sup>23</sup>

While not rejecting modern technology wholesale, we argue that the philosophy of creative imitation is the best option. This is an argument to the effect that different human cultures can contribute to progress and human civilization. Hence our association with Oluwole's conclusion that, "global problems today call for solutions that draw on the resources of different brands of thought,"<sup>24</sup> which may perhaps contrast with Holderlin's elegy "homecoming" i.e. return to our truly human nature.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry" *Existence and Being*, Int. Brock (Werner, South Bend: Regnery/Gateway, 1979), p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 13

<sup>24</sup> Oluwole, op. cit., p. 122.



Thus asserted, human development is, a "totality" of the human person; the dynamic progression or upward movement in the spiritual, moral and material welfare of the human person and of all the people. It is the maximal presence of the desirables on the one hand, and maximal absence of the undesirables on the other; it is the progressive humanization of society, and harmonious relationships between humans and nature. "Man (humans) understood in this relationships", is *he* who *he is*, heir and learner of all things", and in the thought of Holderlin, *conversation* whose future lies in the discovery of his essence on earth and within his environment in the world.<sup>25</sup> This, in itself, calls humanity to a homecoming, i.e. bringing humanity back into its essence. It is a return into the proximity of the source, the essence of being human, that towards which humanity should work for its good and being.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., p. 277.



# **KWAME NKRUMAH'S SOCIALISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL**

**Akinola Mohammed Akomolafe, Ph.D**

## **Abstracts**

This paper is a critical presentation of Nkrumah's socio-political theory of socialism as it affects Africans. This paper argues that socialism is a viable political philosophy for the newly-emerging African countries. While political theorists of Eurocentric leanings may reject Nkrumah's socialist postulation, this paper on the contrary, presents and evaluates it favourably. It shows that Nkrumah's reflections on socialism were genuine provocations towards the development of scholarship and socio-political theory. The paper also shows that most of the critical reactions to Nkrumah's postulations of socialism stem from misrepresentations of his views and actions. It is hoped that by clarifying some confusions and correcting some misrepresentations, this paper will contribute to a better understanding of Nkrumah's Socialism.

## **Introduction**

In 1945, Francis Kwame Nkrumah, the visionary and pragmatic first civilian President of Independent Ghana returned to his birthplace (the then Gold Coast) with the determination of a wounded lion, having experienced first-hand agitation for colonial freedom by students' bodies abroad, to turn the table against the colonialists and exploiters, first in Ghana, then elsewhere in Africa and in the midst of the Blacks in the Diaspora. After attaining political independence for Ghana, it dawned on Nkrumah that based on Africa's primordial communalistic nature, the newly independent state could not have rapid growth under a Capitalist economy as bestowed by the colonialists. He thus came up with his notion of African Socialism, under which he insisted Ghana, and indeed, all the newly independent African States could achieve sustained monumental growth within a short moment.

## **Nkrumah's Philosophy**

According to Nkrumah, at the philosophical level, anything that separates mind and body creates room for antagonism, conflict and contradiction. In his



view, traditional African mind-set rejects this inharmonious dualism. He accepts that interaction of mind and body is a reality. He holds that, "The philosophical perplexity which darkens this interaction is removed by the demonstration of the possibility of a 'Categorical Conversion'<sup>1</sup> in which matter is humanized. According to Nkrumah: "The key to the solution of the mind-body dualism; the spirit-matter problem lies in categorical convertibility... By categorical conversion, I mean such a thing as the emergence of self-consciousness from that which is not self-conscious; such a thing as the emergence of mind from matter, of quality from quantity."<sup>2</sup>

This goes to suggest that in the African theory of knowledge (epistemology), no contradiction exists between matter and spirit. We only find harmonious existence between mind and body. In other words, Nkrumah accepts the materialistic concept of the society because of its link with naturalistic instinct. He holds that, monism, by claiming that "everything was at bottom the same thing, provides the philosophical basis for egalitarianism, that is, equality of all."<sup>3</sup> This, of course, presupposes the acceptance of matter as being primary, with the acknowledgement of the existence of spirit or mind. On this, Nkrumah writes:

The traditional African standpoint, of course, accepts the absolute and independent idea of matter. If one takes the philosophy of the African, one finds that in it the absolute and independent existence of matter is accepted. Further, matter is not just dead weight, but alive with forces in tension.<sup>4</sup>

Following this argument, Nkrumah believes that the dichotomy which the Cartesian dualism created has been eliminated. If there is no dualism, there cannot be conflict or contradiction. So, through the categorical conversion (mind-matter; matter-mind), Nkrumah works out the basis of African Socialism. In doing this, he reflects on the humanist character of Traditional African Society. From this humanist posture, he deduces the African concept of man. In his reflection, Nkrumah views African man as a being that has dignity, integrity and respect. He notes:

<sup>1</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1964), p.87.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 97.



The traditional face of African includes an attitude towards man which can only be described, in its social manifestation, as being socialist. This arises from the fact that man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with a certain inward dignity, integrity and value. It stands refreshingly opposed to the Christian idea of the original Sin and degradation of man.<sup>5</sup>

Nkrumah thus conceives an African man as more fundamental than matter. So, the entire values of traditional African personality centre around this notion of man that makes African societies to hold an egalitarian belief about society. It is in this humanism that Nkrumah logically derives African Socialism or communalist approach to life. In this presumption, he recommends that the new African State should operate along the line of a Socialist programme. The argument being to the effect that, Socialism, which goes with humanism, is a reflection of the traditional African socio-political order. He believes that Socialism is the only doctrine that approximates the humanist impulse of the African mind. The admonition is to the effect that the new African States should show the tendencies towards the elimination of exploitation and profiteering. This belief is perhaps predicated on Nkrumah's conviction that the Socialist system does not condone the idea of the survival of the fittest which goes with Capitalism. Nkrumah expresses it this way:

This idea of the original value of man imposes duties of a Socialist kind upon us. Herein lies the theoretical basis of African Communalism. This theoretical basis expressed itself on the social level in terms of institutions such as the clan, underlining the initial equality of all and the responsibility of many for one. In this social situation, it was impossible for classes of Marxian kind to arise ... In such a society, there exist classes which are crushed, lacerated and ground down by the encumbrance of exploitation. One class sits upon the neck of another. In this sense, there were no classes in Traditional African Society.<sup>6</sup>

According to Nkrumah, Socialism implies:

- (i) Common Ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Production is for use, and not for profit.
- (ii) Planned methods of production by the State, based on modern industry and agriculture.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 69.



- (iii) Political power in the hands of the people, with the entire body of workers possessing the necessary governmental machinery through which to express their needs and aspiration. It is a concept in keeping with the humanist and egalitarian spirit which characterized Traditional African Society, though it must be applied in a modern context. All are workers; and no person exploits another.
- (iv) Application of scientific methods in all spheres of thought and production.

Nkrumah, however, denies the existence of 'African Socialism' per se, holding that, "there is only one true Socialism, and that is Scientific Socialism, the principles of which are abiding and universal. The only way to achieve it is to devise goals, which take their form from the concrete, specific circumstances and conditions of a particular country at a definite historical period."<sup>7</sup> In his postulation, the Socialist countries of Africa may differ in the details of their policies. There are various paths to Socialism, and adjustments have to be made to suit particular circumstances. But they should not be arbitrarily decided, or subject to vagaries of taste. They must be scientifically explained. He affirms that, "only under Socialism can we reliably accumulate the capital we need for our development, ensure that the gains of investment are applied to the general welfare, and achieve our goal of a free and united continent."<sup>8</sup> According to him:

Today, the phrase 'African Socialism' seems to espouse the view that the Traditional African Society was a classless society imbued with the spirit of humanism and to express a nostalgia of that spirit. Such a conception of Socialism makes a fetish of the Communal African Society. But an idyllic, African class society (in which there were no rich and no poor) enjoying a drugged serenity is certainly facile simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such a society.<sup>9</sup>

He maintains furthermore:

All available evidence from the history of Africa, up to the eve of the European colonization shows that African society was neither classless nor devoid of a social hierarchy. Feudalism existed in some parts of Africa before colonization, and feudalism involves a deep

<sup>7</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, (New York: International Publishers, 1973), p. 466.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>9</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, "African Socialism Revisited", in *African Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3/Winter (New York: The American Society of African Culture, 1966), p. 5.



and exploitative social stratification, founded on the ownership of land. It must also be noted that slavery existed in Africa before European colonization, although the earlier European contact gave slavery in Africa some of its vicious characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

The argument is to the effect that, a wholesale return to the pre-colonial African Society is not advisable. Rather, Nkrumah posits that, the philosophy and humanist purposes behind the basic organization of many African societies in different periods of history manifested a certain communalism which is worthy of recapture. He writes:

In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances. Thus, whereas communalism in a non-technical society can be laissez-faire, in a technical society where sophisticated means of production are at hand, the situation is different, for if the underlying principles of communalism are not given correlated expression, class cleavages will arise, which are connected with economic disparities and thereby with political inequalities. Socialism, therefore, can be, and is, the defense of the principles of Communalism in a modern setting.<sup>11</sup>

In Nkrumah's view, "Socialism must provide a new social synthesis in which the advanced technical society is achieved without the appalling evils and deep cleavages of capitalist industrial society."<sup>12</sup> Capitalism is simply a glorified Feudalism, just as Feudalism implies a refined Slavery. It is Nkrumah's contention that, Capitalism is alien to Traditional African Society. He believes that the presuppositions and purposes of capitalism are contrary to those of African society. He is convinced that capitalism would be a betrayal of the personality and conscience of Africa. Capitalism, according to him, created a bifurcation between mind and body, which resulted to unhealthy dualism. Since Traditional Africa is monistic and harmonious, capitalism constitutes its anti-thesis. Nkrumah notes:

The evil of Capitalism consists in its alienation of the fruit of labour from those who with the toil of their body and the sweat of their brow produce this fruit. This aspect of Capitalism makes it irreconcilable with those basic principles which animate the Traditional African

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>12</sup>Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, op. cit. p. 466



Society. Capitalism is unjust; in our newly independent countries, it is not only too complicated to be workable, it is also alien.<sup>13</sup>

### **Nkrumah's recommended ideology for African societies**

Having analysed Africa's personality and problems, Nkrumah thus posits that the Socialist programme he recommends, is to be hinged upon a philosophical ideology, which he terms 'Philosophical Consciencism'. This ideological search is focused on what has been called the triadic formula. Here, Nkrumah seeks an amalgam of: (i) Traditional African Humanism (ii); Euro-Christian Influence; and (iii) Islamic Value. According to him, "Consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western, the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality."<sup>14</sup> The Western, Islamic and Euro-Christian influences were imported into Traditional African Society through colonialism.

Such education as we were all given put before us right from our infancy ideals of the Metropolitan countries, ideals which could seldom be seen as representing the scheme, the harmony and progress of African society. The scale and type of economic activity, the idea of accountability of the individual conscience introduced by the Christian religion, countless other silent influences, those have all made an indelible impression upon African society.<sup>15</sup>

The argument is that, using the humanist principle as the basis, an ideology could be worked out for the new African states to embrace those of Euro-Christian and Islamic values. The belief is that the positive values of the Islamic and Euro-Christian traditions should be admitted into the Africanist principle to exclude all antagonistic tendencies. It is contended that Euro-Christian and Islamic influences have obliterated the African traditional values, and in the main, have produced class consciousness, which is alien to primordial African society. However, when the humanist value inherent in the Islamic and Euro-Christian traditions is embraced, the new African states will experience harmony.

Nkrumah is of the view that European education introduced the values of class system into the classless African society. Thus assisted by Euro-

<sup>13</sup>Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 70.



Christian and Islamic values, the original African society entered into a state of an admixture of opposing ideologies. Nkrumah argued that, Christianity, for example, which derived from Judaism, tolerates all forms of discrimination, and by implication, provided an ideological defense for the spirit of possessive individualism, which in turn, gave credence to the birth of Capitalism.

### **Socialism and Capitalism in Africa**

It is evident that in some African states where Socialism was adopted and religiously pursued, their economies were greatly transformed, e.g. in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, Julius Nyerere's Tanzania, and Obafemi Awolowo's Western Region of Nigeria, to mention only but three. Under this system, the direct objectives of the people are abolition of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and improved health services. This is made possible because Socialism assumes the public ownership of the means of production, the land and its resources, and the use of those means in fulfillment of the people's needs. Thus, government, as the holder of the means assumes the role of main entrepreneur in laying the basis of the national economic and social advancement.

Socialism has been criticized for allowing government interference in the free market system, which should have been left for the market forces of demand and supply to operate on. Nkrumah answers the critics this way:

Government inference in all matters affecting economic growth in less-developed countries is today a universally accepted principle, and interests, domestic or foreign, enjoying the opportunities of profitable gain cannot object to some control of the reinvestment of part of that gain in the national development of the country in which it is reaped. Today, not even in the advanced countries dedicated to private enterprise is the principle of laissez-faire allowed absolutely free play. Restrictions of all kinds interfere with the uninhibited movement of capital.<sup>16</sup>

Capitalism as an alternative ideology for emerging African states is bedeviled with many problems. For instance, no end appears to be in sight for the troubles facing privatization programme in Africa. Privatization is a key aspect and programme of capitalism. Criticism centres on the alleged adverse effects of the programme on employment and the poor, as well as the

---

<sup>16</sup>Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, (London: Panaf Books, 1963), p. 120.



perceptions of rampant corruption in the process, especially among government officials in Africa.

As a result of the clumsy privatization of public utilities, African governments have continued to throw workers into the labour market. In the process, the gratuities, redundancy benefits, allowances and other entitlements of the workers to be retrenched in the exercise are not paid; where they are paid, they are not paid in full but in piecemeal. Little do the governments know that sacking people who had served their employers for the most active part of their lives without an adequate retirement package could traumatize the workers. Although the World Bank claims that private ownership itself makes a difference, there is no evident theoretical reason why that should be so. There is no empirical support that there is a positive correlation between economic efficiency and type of ownership in Africa, for despite changes in ownership, the enterprises are not driven to market forces to behave competitively. This seamy side of capitalism has gone a long way in vindicating Nkrumah.

At this juncture, it must be pointed out that neither in the countries of Socialist inclination do we have government-control of the means of production as to completely exclude private participation in economic activities and developments. For instance, on October 9, 1959, as Ghanaian President, Nkrumah, making a Radio Address to the nation, firmly refuted a London News Chronicle report, that Ghana was planning to nationalize all foreign business firms within three years, describing the news story as "pernicious, wicked, and deliberately calculated to damage the good reputation of Ghana."<sup>17</sup>

On the same occasion, Nkrumah declared his government's commitment to evolving a "Socialist pattern of society shaped to Ghana's specific needs and unfettered by foreign domination," he, however, made it clear that "this aim did not preclude a role for private enterprise."<sup>18</sup> Nkrumah explains further:

Certain industries will be reserved for State ownership – including the manufacture of arms and ammunition, alcoholic beverages, public facilities and some 'pioneering projects' which private enterprise is unwilling or unable to undertake. In addition, however, there will be a permanent place for (i) industries held jointly by private enterprise and the state, (ii) cooperatives, and (iii) private investment.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>G. Quisenberry (ed), *Africa Special Report*, Jan. 1960, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Washington, D.C: African-American Institute, 1959), p.7.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*



Again, Nkrumah, in that address, in enumerating the many direct and indirect benefits which his government received from foreign capital investment in the economy, held that, "the government recognises and accepts the fact that overseas firms investing in Ghana have a duty to their stockholders and are entitled to concessions that would guarantee a reasonable profit."<sup>20</sup> He declared finally, that, "the government plans to foster the growth of cooperatives in wholesale and retail trade, but indicated there would be no restrictions aimed at crippling private trading."<sup>21</sup>

However, this paper considers the quest of Socialism to introduce measures of a totalitarian kind in order for the ruling party to be able to assert its authority fully so as to incapacitate the Capitalist oppressors, with the final aim of carrying out its programme of mass action as a license for the ruling party to intimidate and harass the opposition, and this is condemnable. It is unfortunate, for instance, that Nkrumah was reported to have acquired notoriety for the denial of fundamental liberties of Ghanaians, especially those opposed to him. A report has it that Nkrumah "jailed without trial many of his political opponents, some of whom were his former colleagues. His instrument was the Preventive Detention Act, which a British Attorney-General of Ghana assisted him to enact."<sup>22</sup> Still on Nkrumah, another report goes thus:

The cool and confident hand Ghana played in international diplomatic circles... contrasted sharply with the West African Government's actions on the domestic front. In dealing with what appeared to most observers as minor internal tensions, President Nkrumah's administration took a series of extra-ordinary actions suggestive of a major national emergency.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning the argument that Socialism does not give room for dissenting view as only one-party is officially recognised, and hence, there is the dictatorship of the ruling party; this paper agrees that this situation is unhealthy for true democracy. Under a creditable democracy, while the majority should have its way, the minority should not be prevented from having its say. While we reject the idea of a one-party state therefore, for, it often ultimately tends towards authoritarianism, we quite agree that the ruling

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Lateef Jakande, *West African Annual*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ikeja: John West Publications Ltd., nd), pp. 188-189.

<sup>23</sup>*Africa Special Report*, op. cit. p. 9.



party must be very strong and well-organised. We say that a well-organised political party, with high degree of discipline, and in which almost every segment of the society is well represented, is needed to carry through a Socialist programme of political action; with the opposition offering constructive criticism.

Unfortunately, however, in almost all African states, rather than providing the ruling party with good advice, the opposition always tends towards pulling down the government, while the ruling party always strives to alienate, or even eliminate the opposition. Thus, unhealthy rivalry often ensues. This usually arrests development. It is the considered view of this paper, therefore, that the two sides should play the game according to its rules, for the overall interest of their society.

Also, this paper differs from the demand of socialism that a one-party state is the ideal situation. This claim has been flawed on the ground that the condition does not allow democracy to thrive, and can indeed, knell its death toll. For instance, in post-independence socialist Ghana, Nkrumah was reported to have "banned all political parties except his own and took over control of all the country's newspapers and radio stations. The result of this was that when the Ghanaian Army seized power in February 1969 and released all political prisoners ... there were massive demonstrations of Ghanaians rejoicing at his fall."<sup>24</sup> However, it has been argued and evidently supported by happenings in many capitalist countries the world over, that dictatorial tendencies are not limited to socialist states.

In spite of the flaws of socialism, this paper holds that the system is better for the African states to realise rapid and positive development within a short period of time. For instance, Nkrumah contends that after the overthrow of his socialist government in Ghana, things ceased to be the same for Ghana in terms of development as a result of the new government's capitalist teaching. In Nkrumah's view, "the terrible neglect which is now (then) taking place in large areas in Ghana is a direct result of neo-colonialist policies, and the abandonment of the principles of socialist planning."<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, the result of the method of socialist thinking and planning is apparent in the Independent African states where the system was adopted and systematically implemented. One only needs to look around and he would be amazed with the level of development attained within a relatively short period in such states. As already noted, in Ghana, under Nkrumah, the Western Region of Nigeria, under Awolowo, and Tanzania, under Nyerere, for

<sup>24</sup> *West African Annual*, op. cit. p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *The Way Out*, (London: Panaf Publications, 1968), p.4



instance, more roads, bridges and other forms of a national communication were built than in any other capitalist post-independence African State. More schools and hospitals were also put in place. Pipe-borne water and electricity were provided; while more teachers, doctors and nurses were trained; and of course, more industries established. Moreover, in these states, education was free at all levels and students in teacher training colleges and universities received additional monthly and yearly allowances to meet their private expenses. More universities and tertiary institutions were built. Of Ghana, Nkrumah writes:

In the first nine years of Independence, our country subsisting mainly on agriculture, notably cocoa-growing, had become a dynamic independent state with a diversified and rapidly expanding economy. Hundreds of thousands of acres of more land were brought into cultivation. With state and cooperative farming, with modern technology and irrigation schemes, agriculture was boosted and food production increased.<sup>26</sup>

He continues:

We launched the Workers' Brigade, a national service organization, whereby young men and women and workers without employment could play a decisive part in Ghana's national construction. With the plans for industrialization, there was need to train artisans and builders in public construction work to supplement Ghana's manpower. Feeder roads and dams were built, and farms were under cultivation by the Workers' Brigade.<sup>27</sup>

According to a UNESCO Report in 1963, "Ghana spent more on education in proportion to her size and population than any country in the World."<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, while this paper agrees that Socialism has its seamy side, it holds that it better explains the communalistic nature of traditional African societies. Hence, most of the criticisms raised against Nkrumah's notion of the system were spurious and undertaken in bad faith and are often found to be the antics of the neo-colonialist and imperialist exploiters, whose main aim was to

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 6

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



divert Africa's attention away from their callous and criminal exploitation of the resources of Africa, and by so doing, arrest development on the continent.

However, the view of this paper, ultimately, is to the effect that, African states should try Nkrumah's triadic formula in solving their problems. That means they should synthesise what is positive in both Capitalism and Socialism and come up with ideological formulae that suit their unique circumstances instead of swallowing wholesale, foreign ideologies which may be detrimental to the health of their various states.



# TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT AND POSSIBILITIES OF EXPLOITATION

Peter F. Omonzejele, Ph.D

## Abstract

This paper provides the general definition of the concept of exploitation and those elements that constitute an act of exploitation. It is however argued that those traditional elements that are said to make-up an act of exploitation are insufficient in establishing an exploitation claim. Hence, the aim of this paper is to refine the definition of the concept of exploitation to include an important factor/element which we consider to be central to the establishment of an exploitation claim-that is, a lack (or a perceived lack) of alternative on the part of a potential exploitee which was unduly taken advantage of by a potential exploiter. This is because without a lack or perceived lack of an alternative on the part of the potential exploitee all other elements of exploitation put together cannot establish a valid exploitation claim.

**Keywords:** Adventitious, coercion, compelling need, exploitee, exploiter, ignorance, lack of alternative.

## Introduction

'Exploitation' is a term used in different contexts to imply taking undue advantage of a person or a group of people. In exploitative circumstances someone exercises power over another in a morally inappropriate manner. According to Macklin exploitation occurs when "wealthy or powerful individuals or companies take advantage of the poverty, powerlessness, or dependency of others by using the latter to serve their own ends without adequate compensating benefits for the less powerful or disadvantaged individuals or groups."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, powerlessness is not necessarily a result of material or pecuniary imbalances, it could stem from ignorance where the better informed takes advantage of the less informed. In whatever way or circumstance exploitation takes place, it is often characterised by imbalances of power where the strong manipulate the weak and treat them unfairly.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Macklin, "Bioethics, Vulnerability and Protection" in *Bioethics* 17:5-6, 2003, p. 475.



### Defining exploitation and the elements of exploitation

Exploitation is a complex concept to define. Starting from ideas presented in the introduction, I will begin with an outline formulation and then refine it by discussing the various dimensions that arise. My outline formulation is as follows: *Exploitation is the act of taking undue advantage of individuals or groups to serve one's own interests by using an imbalance of power.* And the elements of exploitation are:

#### 1. Imbalance of Power is a necessary condition of exploitation

As Payne observes, a mere imbalance of power does not necessarily involve exploitation. Rather, one can only claim that exploitation has occurred when the exploitee's weakness has been taken advantage of in real terms.<sup>2</sup> For instance, assume that a small hospital in a rural area is without electricity supply. To offer power generators at standard prices to such a hospital is not exploitative, even if the hospital can ill-afford such generators. Exploitation occurs if the generator is provided at an exaggerated price, thereby taking *undue* advantage of the power failure. Hence, an exploitation claim can only be justified when the potential exploitee's powerlessness and dependency has been taken advantage of.

#### 2. Exploitation involves at least two agents

Wertheimer points out that there is a sense of 'exploitation' where only one agent might be involved – as when gold mines are 'exploited'.<sup>3</sup> For our purposes this sense will not be relevant. Wertheimer suggests we should use the term 'wrongful exploitation' to cover this point, but here for the sake of readability we will simply take it as read.

It is probably true that most acts of exploitation emanate from transactions between two parties. But it is possible for exploitation to involve more than two parties, that is, when an exploiter (X) goes through someone else (Y) to take advantage of the circumstances of the exploitee (Z). Wertheimer refers to this mode of exploitation as "mediated exploitation".<sup>4</sup> Examples for this can be found in developing countries. For instance in India, medical personnel on behalf of multinational pharmaceutical firms secure research participants to carry out medical research.<sup>5</sup> What happens in such

<sup>2</sup> Amy Payne, "Clinical Trials in Developing Nations: Examining Exploitation", an unpublished thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Center for Bioethics and Health Law, Faculty of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, University of Pittsburgh, 2003. Available online at: <http://www.amypayne.com/thesis.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Wertheimer, *Exploitation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 210

<sup>5</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation, "Drug Trials: The Dark Side"



circumstances is that potential exploiters need not even have to get in touch directly with potential exploitees. In most of such circumstances the potential exploitees trust the middle men and women who work for the potential exploiters.

This situation is also possible in West African countries where people instinctively have reverence and customary obedience for those in authority who have responsibility for their welfare, such as physicians: a situation where people tend to take it for granted that a superior and those in authority would necessarily protect and care for their interests.

West Africa has a traditional social hierarchy structure which is gerontocratic. In that structure for instance the elders known as the '*Edion*' amongst the Esan people of Nigeria are leaders of a given community. The path sweepers are referred to as the *Egbono-ghele* and rank lowest in the ladder of authority. There are other categories in between the *Edion* and the *Egbono-eghele*. The chain of communication (and instruction as the case may be) flows from the top to the bottom. A people coming from such a background have an ingrained sense of respect for any one in a position of authority. This is because their minds are conditioned to believe that those in authority will always protect their interests. For instance, in a clinical setting, doctors are seen as people in a position of authority who can be trusted.

This explains why physicians have so much influence over their patients in West African countries. It is a situation that enables unscrupulous physicians to take advantage of patients by recruiting them as research subjects for multinational firms, sometimes without the patients being aware of it. Even if they were aware, it is most likely that, if their physician advised them to take part in research, they would do so, assuming the physician has their best interests at heart.

Such arrangements allow pharmaceutical firms to exploit poor and ignorant research participants without going into direct negotiations with those they exploit. An act of exploitation could be established under such circumstance in so far as Y acted on behalf of X, and X took undue advantage of Z by going through Y. For our purposes, it means that we have to be particularly careful about potentially exploitative situations involving three parties.



### 3. *Disproportion in Benefit Accruing*

At least two analysts have suggested that exploitation requires the exploited party to suffer harm. Buchanan for example attempts the definition: "[T]o exploit a person involves the harmful, merely instrumental utilisation of him or his capacities, for one's own advantage or for the sake of one's own ends."<sup>6</sup> And Munzer agrees: "Persons are exploited if (1) others secure a benefit by (2) using them as a tool or resource so as (3) to cause them serious harm."<sup>7</sup> But can we really say that exploitation always involves infliction of harm? It does not seem so.

Of course (as Buchanan and Munzer agree) harm *can* occur in exploitative relationships. But in disagreement with them, harm in exploitative relationships does not *always* have to be present. In fact, exploitative relationships can be mutually beneficial. To establish the point, let us imagine a village in Africa that sources its drinking water from an infested pond. A mining company discovers a gold reserve, which the villagers on their own cannot use profitably, as they do not have the resources (money and technology) to do so. The company offers to provide the village with pipe-borne water, but the villagers would forfeit all interest in the gold mine in return. In those circumstances one can envisage the village elders, on behalf of their people, conceding their gold reserve to the company in return for pipe-borne water.

Though such a transaction would be mutually beneficial, the benefit to the company would be inappropriately high in comparison to the benefit of the community. The profits from the gold mine will far outweigh the costs of bringing pipe-borne water to the village. In this regard the benefit for one party in a transaction will be disproportionate to the detriment of the other party.

The key condition for exploitation is in fact not any balance of benefit or harm but the role of *coercion*. One of the parties has to be in some sense *pressured* into the contract if it is to count as an exploitative one. The pressure can come in different forms. One arises out of ignorance. Another is from lack of alternatives or from perceived lack of alternatives.

<sup>6</sup> Allen Buchanan, *Ethics, Efficiency and the Market*. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1985), p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen R. Munzer, *A Theory of Property*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 138.



## Opportunities for exploitation and our refined definition

### *Ignorance*

It would seem that the ability to exploit another often times emanates from unequal *knowledge* on a given subject matter. For instance if X is more knowledgeable about a particular issue, s/he has an unfair advantage over Y who is less knowledgeable about the same subject matter. X's knowing what Y does not know can enable X to exert pressure (coercion). This means a potential exploitee may actually have an alternative (in this case the potential exploitee suffers from a perceived lack of alternative) but does not recognise it. For instance, if X makes an offer to Z, but Z does not have enough information or is unable to understand it, then X could take advantage of Z. In such circumstances, Z might not even know that s/he is being exploited. When Z does not know that s/he is being exploited, then s/he cannot make a claim of exploitation, even where such claims would be valid. This is strikingly so in developing countries where adult illiteracy applies to 854 million with most of those in African countries.<sup>8</sup> Such categories of people are easily vulnerable to exploitation due to their potential lack of knowledge or understanding.

An act of exploitation could be said to have taken place irrespective of whether Z recognises that he has been exploited or not. When parties enter into arrangements with one party being ignorant of the precise content of the arrangements, it becomes difficult to say that the exploitee voluntarily consented to the terms of the transaction. Besides, it seems unreasonable to state that one can voluntarily consent to what one does not understand. Wertheimer refers to such transactions as 'unconscionable contracts'.<sup>9</sup> He explains that unconscionable contracts are agreements arrived at or entered into ignorantly. Such arrangements may be said to be morally suspect, irrespective of whether such arrangements were mutually beneficial.

If Z is unaware of or does not appreciate, or seems not to appreciate, the proposal X suggests, the imperative is on X to make Z conscious of its contents. If there is ignorance or misunderstanding on the part of one of the parties to a proposed agreement this must be cleared up before an agreement is reached, and this responsibility must fall on the better informed party. It is an issue that arises most often where one of the parties comes from a country with a low literacy level.

### *Lack of alternatives*

A second opportunity for exploitation arises from one party lacking any *alternative* to the solution offered by the would-be exploiter, thereby coercing

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Reports* 2001, pp. 22-29.

<sup>9</sup> Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 37-39



the exploitee into acceptance. Benn supports this suggestion.<sup>10</sup> An important characteristic of the exploiter, he maintains, is that he makes an otherwise unattractive offer that the exploitee cannot reject, because the latter has no alternative and is in need of the object or service offered. For instance, if someone offers a woman whose child is dying from pneumonia antibiotics at an exorbitant price knowing that the woman cannot get the needed antibiotics elsewhere, there is no doubt that he is trying to exploit the woman. Where there is an urgent and compelling need, and a third party offers the only way of meeting the need, the third party holds the power to coerce.

However, the would-be exploiter's intent to exploit another may be unable to establish an act of exploitation. An example of this could be the following. An entrepreneur in a developing country decides to train five students in a nursing school with the intention that on completion of their studies, he will arrange for the students to work in a developed country. The entrepreneur would retain 80% of their earnings (trained nurses) in the developed country over an extended period of time. This was mutually agreed as the students consented.

Let us imagine that all five students were unable to pass their qualifying professional examinations, and hence could not practise. Consequently, the entrepreneur could not send the students to the developed country he had in mind, where he had hoped to benefit at the expense of the students. Though the entrepreneur had planned to take unfair advantage of the situation of the students (that is, their inability to afford nursing education on their own), the fact remains that an exploitation claim cannot be established as the students never even qualified. They remained unable to work in the designated developed country, and so the would-be exploiter could not carry out his pre-planned act of exploitation. This means that the mere intent to exploit does not establish a valid exploitation claim. Thus what counts most in order to establish an exploitation claim is when an exploitee's lack of alternatives or perceived lack of alternatives is being taken advantaged of.

At this point, we might refine our outline definition in the light of the above as follows: *exploitation is an act involving at least two agents whose interaction is characterised by an imbalance of power, where the exploiter makes the exploitee an offer to address a compelling need, which s/he cannot satisfy elsewhere to disproportionately further their own interests.*

<sup>10</sup> Stan Benn, *A Theory of Freedom*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 138.



This formulation aligns with Goodin's claim that for exploitation to occur four conditions must be met.<sup>11</sup> First, the relationship between the exploiter and the exploitee must be asymmetrical (aligning with our element of an imbalance in power). Second, the exploitee must have a need for what the exploiter can supply. Third, the exploitee must depend on the exploiter for the supply. (Again, Goodin's conditions two and three are mirrored in our definition). Last and fourth, the exploiter has to have discretionary control over resources needed by the exploitee. In our definition, we take this for granted, given that genuine offers can only be made when one is in control of what is being offered.

Based on our refined definition, what this means is that it is not so much imbalance of power as such that defines exploitation in an exploitative interaction. Rather, what makes a transaction between parties exploitative is where one of the parties has a compelling need for which s/he lacks alternatives (or suffers from a perceived lack of alternatives) while the other party, the potential exploiter, is able to satisfy this need with the intent and means to benefit his or her own interests disproportionately. Our refined definition, in line with Goodin, makes reference to needs, a topic which shall now occupy us.

### Compelling need and exploitation

The notion of a 'compelling' need is central to my argument. I use it to include the things a person has to have in order to survive in the plain biological sense. But, wider than that, it will also cover those needs which a person requires to have met in order to enjoy a full life as the community considers such to be. So in this sense when a person needs access to a certain drug because it will save them from a crippling disease, I will count that need as a *compelling* one, even though a crippled person is not bereft of biological life itself. Daniels speaks of there being, for a typical person in a community, a 'normal opportunity range' by which he means the array of positive life plans the community thinks of itself as making available to the individual.<sup>12</sup> In these terms we can say that a compelling need is one that has to be met if a person is to have access to their community's 'normal opportunity range'.

Daniels refers to needs that are not '*compelling*' in this sense as *adventitious*.<sup>13</sup> Adventitious needs, I would argue, do not make individuals or

<sup>11</sup> Robert Goodin, *Reasons for Welfare: Economic, Sociological, and Political – But Ultimately Moral*, 1988. Cited in Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Daniels, *Just Health Care*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 26



communities vulnerable to exploitation. They do not create *irresistible* pressure to acquiesce in exploitative arrangements. For instance, consider the 'need' that a community might identify for a village hall to be built to accommodate their meetings (most groups in Africa hold their meetings in the village square); and then imagine a proposal is put to them to have such a hall built, but on terms which involves gross disproportion of benefit. I argue that it would be unreasonable for the village to accept such an offer, since the village hall, though desirable in a sense, is not something for which there is a *compelling* need. It is quite possible for the village to continue holding their weekly group meetings in an open village square without any threat to anybody's well-being, as the community itself sees it.

On the other hand, the need for polio vaccines might be an example of a '*compelling*' need: a community might identify it as of compelling importance not because without it people necessarily die, but because polio has caused many children to become crippled. I argue that it is compelling needs which create the possibility of exploitation. It is their *compelling need* which coerces people into consenting to whatever arrangements will see such need met.

In situations where one party is suffering from a compelling need and a second party is offering an arrangement which would among other things alleviate that need, a way of avoiding exploitation would be for the second party to meet the compelling need first, before any contract is negotiated.

Our final refined definition of exploitation is: *Exploitation is an act involving at least two agents, whose interaction is characterised by imbalance of power, including significantly different levels of knowledge, where the exploiter makes the exploitee an offer to address a compelling need, which s/he cannot satisfy elsewhere, to disproportionately further their own interests.*

## Conclusion

We have articulated a conception of exploitation from which we realised that imbalances in power between potential exploiters and potential exploitees do not necessarily translate into an act of exploitation. Rather, we argued that the most essential element in an exploitative transaction is lack (or perceived lack) of alternatives on the part of a potential exploitee for what a potential exploiter has to offer to him or her. This is because in circumstances of a lack of an alternative, a potential exploiter is able to coerce a potential exploitee to accept his or her exploitative offers. And even where the potential exploitee is aware that he or she was being made an exploitative offer, s/he would nevertheless accept the exploitative offer due to his or her compelling needs.



## BOOK REVIEW

### Epistemological Evaluation Of Science: The Rationalist Tradition

Rotimi Omosulu, M.A.

A cursory look at the title of the book: *Epistemological Evaluation of Science: The Rationalist Tradition*, may compel one to form an opinion that the author is going to engage himself with how epistemology, a major branch of philosophy, could be used to evaluate and scrutinise the core areas of natural sciences namely Chemistry, Physics, and Biology. But on the contrary, the book is centred on the methodology of science as championed and advocated by four rationalist philosophers of science – Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, and Paul Feyerabend.

The author's aim, as stated in the introduction of the book, is "to show how the critical rationalists had enriched the development of science and epistemology with their "bold" and "thought provoking" conjectures" (p. xi). In driving home this point, the author eschews polemics and concentrates on dispassionate and critical views of these philosophers of science earlier mentioned.

The book is, however, grouped into five chapters and thirty-three sub-titles, plus the foreword (written by Prof. C.S. Momoh), acknowledgements, introduction, bibliography, and index. Chapter One of the book dwells authoritatively on Popper's critical and substantive views on scientific methodology. The chapter gives an expository analysis of some of the topics in philosophy of science ranging from induction, deduction, etc to law and chance, in the light of what Popper advocates. The critical summary of the author concludes the chapter. From this chapter however, it is obvious that Popper does not hide his aversion and resentment for both inductive and probabilistic methods in science. Popper, the author says, "is opposed to induction as a method of science. He believes that science does not operate by inductive method which is a process of generalisation from particular. On the basis of this rejection he queries the rationale behind prediction, as it is very possible that the future may be quite different from the past" (p.54).

Unlike some rationalists who see probability as indispensable to scientific research, Popper's view, according to the author, is that "it is the lot of science to aim at logically less probable statement. The more highly probabilistic a



statement is the more it distances itself from science and tends towards metaphysics" (p.49).

Despite his criticism of metaphysics, Popper did not deny the fact that metaphysics has its own role to play in the acquisition of scientific knowledge unlike David Hume and logical positivists. According to the author, Popper refuses to hold "the view that metaphysics serves no purpose to the empirical science, as there are evidences that along with metaphysical ideas which have impeded the advancement of science, there have been others- such as speculative atomism – that have aided it" (p.16). In respect to what method is more appropriate and adequate for science, Popper favours deductive method because, according to him, it is not self-contradictory like inductive method. He also recommends falsification as a criterion of demarcation between science and non-science.

Chapter Two of the book deals with falsifiability and corroboration in Popper's philosophy of science. Popper, as presented by the author in this chapter, sees theory as a necessary prerequisite for any scientific enquiry. But he however prefers a theory which has passed through crucial test to the one that is yet to be subjected to such a test. For him, "any authentic attempt to test a theory is an attempt meant to refute it" (p.64). Consequently, he holds the view that science is a dynamic enterprise, and as such, "there is no absolute theory in science" (p.105). Every theory, says Popper, must be either corroborated or falsified. In his critical summary of the chapter, the author sees most of the ideas of Popper as controversial. He disagrees with Popper about his (Popper) inability to draw a clear cut-line between testability and falsifiability. As the author puts it, "if a scientist searches always for refutation whenever he tests, it means testing has negative attribute" (p.110).

Chapter Three of the book which is titled "Popper and the other critical Rationalists" could be likened to the much talked about "unity in diversity" in ancient Greek philosophy. While Kuhn and Lakatos agree with Popper on the incontrovertibility of science to have a method, they however disagree with him on what the method should be in this chapter. Against the falsification method of Popper, both Kuhn and Lakatos advocate for "Normal Science" and "Hard-Core" methods respectively. Even Feyerabend who appears not to recommend any method in science, the author still insists that, his call for "anarchism" or "anything goes" in science is a method of a sort. According to the author, "if anarchism and proliferation of theories are advocated by Feyerabend rather than conjectures and refutations as enunciated by Popper, it means that it is such methodology that he propounds" (p.145).

Chapter Four is titled "a critical evaluation of Popper's philosophy of science". This is where the author brings his expertise on Popper's philosophy



of science into bear. His constructive and objective criticism of Popper's demarcation and probability theses as well as falsification and corroboration method in this chapter makes him to be an unbiased writer. In one of his criticisms of Popper, for instance, the author reveals that "Popper's thesis of falsification and corroboration can, at best, be seen as a recommendation of what scientist ought to do and not what they do" (p.162).

The last chapter carries the title "a science culture for Nigeria". The beauty of this chapter is that it permits the author, to not only show the relevance of the views of the rationalist-Philosophers of science to Nigerian society, but it also gives the author an ample opportunity to do a critical appraisal of the development of science in Nigeria. With all the eagerness of Nigeria in the 70s to pursue and acquire an enduring knowledge in science and technology, the author reveals, "the nation has not been able to acquire the requisite science culture that will match the challenges of the New World ...the problem lies not only on policy formulation but in execution" (p.164).

In his recommendations, the author enjoins the Nigerian government to foster purposeful research programme, and also imbibe a genuine attitude towards the training of scientists for better skills in science and technology, especially "to make them suitable for our needs in industries, agriculture, and medical services" (p.164). This is because "any profession require training for the acquisition of requisite skills or to improve the one they already have" (p.174). The author also advises the country "to harness the potentialities in our traditional medical practice" (p.178).

But despite the intellectual dexterity of the author, the next edition of this book can still be improved upon especially the typographical errors on page 8 paragraph 2 line 14 where "scale through" is typed instead of "sail through". The same thing goes for page 85 paragraph 2 line 7 "not" instead of "no", page 136 paragraph 1 line 11 "comprises of" instead of "comprises", page 166 paragraph 2 line 10 "the" instead of "they". The first quotation on page 139 is without a reference. The author may also do well to add the name of Popper in the title of the next edition since the book is more of Popper than any of the rationalist philosophers of science which the book treated. But if the author can endeavour to devote more space to the other three philosophers especially Lakatos, then this advice may not be tenable after all.

Irrespective of the above critical observations, the book still enjoys my confidence because it is written in a lucid and didactic language. Moreso, given the effervescence of scholarship displayed in the book, there can be no doubt that the author has achieved his aim of writing the book to a very considerable level. I hereby recommend it for all and sundry without any reservation, since it is another "masterpiece" in philosophy of science.



**THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**VOL. 2. 2010/2011**

**Table of Contents**

- 1. Raymond N. Osei and Husein Inusah**  
Rorty's Point Of Departure from Mainstream  
Pragmatist Approach to Epistemology.....78-86
- 2. Anthony Okeregbe**  
Phenomenology and the Ethics of Tolerance .....87-101
- 3. Isaac E. Ukpokolo**  
In Praise Of Quantum Medicine: Insight into  
An African Alternative Healthcare Delivery Model.....102-118
- 4. Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani**  
Philosophical Issues in Genealogy and Genetics.....119-128
- 5. Ademola Kazeem Fayemi**  
John Kekes' "Recent Trends and Future Prospects  
In Epistemology": An Expository Study.....129-140
- 6. Olajumoke Akiode**  
Hermeneutics of the Yoruba Concept  
of Diligence and Labour .....141-150



## RORTY'S POINT OF DEPARTURE FROM MAINSTREAM PRAGMATIST APPROACH TO EPISTEMOLOGY

Raymond N. Osel, Ph.D and Husein Inusah, M.Phil

### Abstract

Our main focus in this paper is to try to show Rorty's point of departure from mainstream pragmatist treatment of epistemology. In his pragmatic approach to epistemology, Rorty urges that a good pragmatist should abandon epistemology as a normative, foundational and rational discipline and instead opt for conversation, the view that knowledge is an expression of judgment of a historically conditioned social group. According to Rorty, the view that we should disentangle ourselves from rigid canons of epistemology is the quest of classical pragmatism traceable to the writings of William James and John Dewey. On this showing, Rorty argues that his pragmatic epistemology is consistent with mainstream or original pragmatism. Contrary to Rorty's claim we try to show, in the following pages, that his pragmatic approach to epistemology is a deviation from mainstream pragmatism. We establish that mainstream or classical pragmatists do not repudiate epistemology.

### Introduction

Rorty in his pragmatic approach to epistemology argues that a good pragmatist should reject epistemology as a foundational, normative and rational discipline. Pragmatists should also drop altogether talks about truth. What they should do is engage in conversation, the view that knowledge derives its legitimacy solely from a given a social group. Rorty criticizes C. S. Peirce for contributing nothing to pragmatism except giving it a name and being a source of inspiration to William James. This is because Peirce failed to break away from the rigid canons of epistemology that construe knowledge as a foundational, normative and rational discipline<sup>1</sup>. Rorty instead prefers James and Dewey, as he claims, James supports the spectator theory of truth and sees truth as "what is good in the way of belief"<sup>2</sup> and Dewey sees truth as what we

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism And Irrationalism", in Paul K. Moser's *Empirical Knowledge: Reading in Contemporary Epistemology* pp. (219-234), (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996), p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 221.



are justified in believing and as a social phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> On this showing, Rorty argues that his version of pragmatic epistemology conforms to the spirit of mainstream or original pragmatism because it has its roots in the writings of James and Dewey. Contrary to Rorty's claim, we argue that his pragmatic epistemology is a deviation from mainstream pragmatism. By way of initial orientation, we flesh out some core thesis of mainstream pragmatism.

There are variations in classical pragmatist treatment of epistemology. However, a common thread runs through their positions. We have identified principally six theses of mainstream pragmatism. These theses reflect in the writings of almost all the three classical pragmatists. Some of these pragmatic theses can be found in Butler<sup>4</sup> and Almeder<sup>5</sup>.

### The Theses of Pragmatism

- I. Human knowledge is best understood as an activity whereby the human species seeks to adapt to its environment. Beliefs and systems of beliefs are instruments or mechanisms generated by people for the explicit purpose of adapting successfully to the environment. Accordingly, human inquiry is the process whereby we seek to pass from a state of not knowing how to respond to the world to a state of forming beliefs that serve as ways of adapting successfully to the environment.<sup>6</sup>
- II. Accordingly, beliefs or systems of beliefs are to be judged acceptable or unacceptable insofar as those beliefs, when adopted as rules of human behavior facilitate one's dealings *with sensory experience*. Consequently, *all the rules of evidence and rules of acceptance for various beliefs* are valid only to the extent that they tend to produce beliefs that are successful, that is, beliefs that allow

<sup>3</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror Of Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> J. D. Butler, *Four Philosophies: And Their Practice In Education And Religion*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1957), p. 443.

<sup>5</sup> R. Almeder, "A Definition Of Pragmatism", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, University of Illinois Press (3)1, 1986, p. 80-81.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. Peirce, *Collected papers*, Vol 1-6., (Eds.), C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Vol 7-8, (Ed.), A. Burks, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 5.370; Almeder R. *The Philosophy of Charles Peirce: A Critical Introduction*, (Oxford and Totowa: Basil Blackwell and Adams Littlefield, 1980), pp.1-13; William James, *The Principles Of Psychology in the Works of William James*, in Burckhardt, 1981, 273 - 275; John Dewey, New York: Capricorn Books Dewey, 1960, 223 - 226.



us to manipulate our environment successfully to meet human needs.<sup>7</sup>

- III. All beliefs or system of beliefs are fallible and subject to revision. At any time the truth value assigned to our beliefs is subject to revision or withdrawal in the light of new evidence and changes in the rules for determining the validity of that evidence. Pragmatists believe that even in mathematics the truth of our belief is dependent on how we choose to define the basic terms, which if our needs were different we would have defined differently. In short, pragmatists believe that there are no propositions whose truth is not in principle subject to revision in the light of future evidence.<sup>8</sup> The only method for determining which belief about our external world is acceptable is *the scientific method*. Indeed, the only criterion for the meaningfulness of a proposition about the physical world is whether it is confirmable or falsifiable under the method of natural sciences. For the classical pragmatists, especially, Peirce, only the method of natural sciences has succeeded in providing us with beliefs that in the long run are successful and has enabled us to adapt to our physical environment. This means that differences in beliefs, according to the pragmatists, must lead to *sensory* difference that should count for confirming or falsifying those beliefs.<sup>9</sup> Here we see that the pragmatists test for whether the method of acquiring beliefs is a valid method or not is whether the application of that method helps us develop beliefs that allow us to adapt successfully to our environment. The point must be reiterated that this utility principle in pragmatism does not imply that the pragmatists abandon truth as the goal of scientific enquiry. It tacitly assumes that general successful beliefs be regarded as true and the scientific method is the most efficient method for achieving such an objective. Again we see here that the idea of representationalism and correspondence is overt in classical pragmatism. The point is that the scientific method

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Peirce, 5.372; Almeder; James, W. *Pragmatism and four essays from the meaning of truth*, New York: Meridian Books, 1968, 223 - 226; W. v. O Quine, "The Pragmatist Place In Empiricism", in R. Mulveney and P. Zeltner (eds.), *Pragmatism: Its Sources And Prospects*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 32ff.

<sup>8</sup>Peirce, op. cit., 7.568; Almeder, 44ff; James 1968; Dewey J. *Essays in Experimental Logic*, (New York: Holt, 1913), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Peirce, op. cit. 7.377; James 1968: 201; John Dewey, *Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, (New York: Holt, 1917), p. 29-53.



allows that our ideas about the external world are verifiable through experience and that there is indeed an external world.

- IV. Unlike classical empiricism as expressed by Locke, Berkeley and Hume wherein the truth of a proposition is anchored on how it originates from experience, pragmatism considers the truth or acceptability of one's belief as a function of whether what one expects if the belief were true, will continue to obtain in the future. According to James, it is not in the root, but in the fruits of our beliefs that truth lies.<sup>10</sup> What this means is that all beliefs are virtual predictions or hypotheses about experience and, regardless of how they originate, their truth value is a function of whether they will obtain in the future. If they do, then such beliefs are true or *warrantably assertible under the scientific method*.<sup>11</sup>
- V. Sentences or statements about physical objects are to be regarded as true if they are warrantably assertible or authorizable under rules of induction and in the rules of deductive inferences. *These rules* are in turn acceptable only to the extent that they produce the beliefs that allow us to accommodate our basic needs in an ever changing environment.<sup>12</sup>

This one shows the pragmatic utility principle. It stands out as the most popular thesis of pragmatism. Mostly credited to James as his major contribution to the pragmatic discourse<sup>13</sup>, the thesis has traces in Peirce's pragmatism, where Peirce put forward practical usefulness as the criterion of meaningfulness or belief as a habit of action. "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object".<sup>14</sup> This thesis captures the most widely cited pragmatic definition of truth which avers that truth is what is satisfactory to believe.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary pragmatists such as Haack have consistently argued that James' insistence on truth as what is useful in the way of belief does not

<sup>10</sup>James, op. cit. 1968, p. 14ff.

<sup>11</sup>Peirce, op. cit., 1934: 7.78; James, 195; Dewey 1960.

<sup>12</sup>Peirce, op. cit., p. 634; Almeder, 1980, p. 55ff; James, 1968, p. 49; John Dewey, "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility and Truth", *Journal of Philosophy* (38), 1946, pp. 169 – 186.

<sup>13</sup>D. Hamlyn, *Theory of knowledge*, (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 1190

<sup>14</sup>Peirce, op. cit., 1934: 5.402.

<sup>15</sup>William James, *Pragmatism*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), p. 59.



exclude the fact that truth is correspondence. According to Haack, therefore, what James means about beliefs which are useful or good or expedient are beliefs which are safe from danger of inconsistency with subsequent experience.<sup>16</sup> It means that true beliefs, according to James, are beliefs which are verifiable and confirmable by experience. It is for this reason that James argues, "Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over, making us correct our present formulas."<sup>17</sup>

The second and fourth theses combine the utility principle with the idea of correspondence and representationalism. In thesis two, the point is clearly made that our beliefs must correspond to our sensory experience about the external world. However, they (beliefs) are valid only if they make projections that are eventually successful in serving human needs. The scientific method alluded to in four indicates representationalism, the idea that there is an external world out there

that we come to know it as copies in our minds. Apart from that, pragmatists believe that all

rules of evidence and acceptance for various beliefs (epistemic norms) are valid on the basis that they have a utility value.

The third thesis tacitly concedes fallibilism. Fallibilism is an essential recipe of modest foundationalism. Fallibilism is the idea that propositions are fallibly true. It is opposed to the Cartesian foundationalism where propositions are certainly true or subject only to justification. Fallibilism means that if ideas are probably true then the truth value of propositions will immediately be annulled in the light of new evidence. The sixth thesis reiterates the principles of deduction and induction in traditional epistemology. The principle of deduction is employed in Cartesian foundationalism where the inferential connections between basic and non basic beliefs are deductive. The principle of deduction is employed in modest foundationalism where inferential connections between basic and non basic beliefs are inductive. Thesis five reinforces thesis three in yielding to fallibilism. Because fallibilism upholds the annulment of true propositions in the light of new evidence, it flows from this thesis that all true beliefs are predictions or hypotheses that hold tentatively until new evidence is discovered.

The moral to be drawn from the interpretation of these theses is that the classical pragmatist did not abandon the core principles of epistemology as

<sup>16</sup>S. Haack, "The Pragmatist Theory of Truth", *The British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, 27(3), 1976, p. 233.

<sup>17</sup>James, op. cit., 1907, p. 145.



Rorty and his adherents have argued. The fact that the classical pragmatists subscribe to the correspondence theory, the rules of induction and deductions including all other epistemic norms suggest that they did not abandon epistemology. Our main criterion for contrasting mainstream pragmatists with deviants such as Rorty is their respective attitude towards epistemology. The mainstream pragmatists though do not embrace epistemology unconditionally; (because they merge it with the utility principle) they do not repudiate epistemology altogether. But the deviants such as Rorty repudiate epistemology. So our yardstick for measuring whether one is a faithful adherent of pragmatism or not is whether or not one repudiates epistemology. In what follows, we shall take a brief look at Rorty's pragmatic epistemology.

### Rorty's Pragmatic Epistemology

Of the many neo-pragmatists, Rorty is the most vocal member of the anti-foundationalist campaign. Rorty's argument is that foundationalist epistemology is misguided. The idea that justification of a belief lies in its relation to what is given in experience is a misconception resulting from confusion about causation. This idea, according to Rorty, requires the case of truth as correspondence or as faithfully picturing the external objects. Besides, foundationalist epistemology relies on certain, apodictic and self-enduring truth that is untenable. Following W. Sellars<sup>18</sup> (1963:169) and W.V.O. Quine's<sup>19</sup> (1995:255-268) attacks on the given and analytic synthetic dichotomy respectively, the death knell of epistemology was first sounded.<sup>20</sup> For Rorty, the death of epistemology had already occurred with Sellars and Quine. He merely announced the obituary. If epistemology is dead what is its successor subject? Rorty says epistemology has no successor subject. However, we should substitute epistemology with conversation, though not as a successor subject but as a consolation that the void created by the demise of epistemology is left unfilled.<sup>21</sup> He defined conversation as the view that knowledge is only defensible within the judgment of a historically conditioned social group. For Rorty such conversation, unlike the traditional epistemological discourses which rely on hard and fast rules, has no particular disciplinary standards or neutral matrix for judging what counts as

<sup>18</sup>W. Sellars, "Givenness and Explanatory Coherence" (pp 169-181) *The Journal Of Philosophy*, 1963, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup>W. v. O. Quine, *Two Dogmas Of Empiricism*, in Paul K. Moser and Arnold Vander Nat's (eds.) *Human Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Approaches*: pp. (255-272), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 255 - 268.

<sup>20</sup>Rorty, op. cit., 1979, p. 182 - 205.

<sup>21</sup>Rorty, op. cit., 1979.



knowledge.<sup>22</sup> What we ought to do is to keep talking because there is no end to the conversation. We have no objective foundation or fixed goals to ground our knowledge claims. The only workable alternative is to accept our conversation with our fellow humans as our only source of guidance.<sup>23</sup>

On truth, Rorty argues that there is nothing plausible to say about truth. Truth is not a goal of enquiry. A goal is something you can tell when you are closer or distant away from. But there is no way we tell how close or near we are from truth. Similarly there is nothing like a cleavage between the thing-in-itself and a thing as it appears to us. Rorty thus suggests that since we have no use for appearance and reality distinction we should substitute for it a distinction between less useful way and more useful ways of talking.<sup>24</sup>

Having repudiated epistemology, what is now the task of the Rortian pragmatist? We pointed out that mainstream pragmatists do not reject the traditional norms of epistemology. They do not reject the rules of induction and deduction. Neither do they refute the idea of propositions reflecting language independent reality. The fact is that the pragmatists have an overarching principle for measuring what qualifies as a legitimate candidate for knowledge. And this is the utility principle. The pragmatist accommodates tacitly all traditional theories of epistemology in so far as they satisfy the utility principle. But Rorty argues that pragmatist should become conversationalists. They should reject outright all traditional epistemological theories. Thus far, it has become clear why Rorty strayed from mainstream pragmatism. The relevant issues on his point of departure are summarized below.

### Rorty's Point of Departure

Rorty's point of departure from mainstream pragmatism is principally due to his uncompromising rejection of rationality, epistemic norms and the correspondence which ground traditional epistemology. The correspondence theory is the blood of epistemology from Rorty's prefers conversationalism instead: the view that knowledge derives its legitimacy from the judgment of a social group. The traditional conception of epistemology crucially involves two principles, the principles of justification and ratification of knowledge.

---

<sup>22</sup>Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xxxix.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p. 166.

<sup>24</sup>Richard Rorty, *Truth And Progress: Philosophical Papers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.



The principle of justification requires that a knowing subject provides evidence for his or her claim to knowledge. The concept of ratification, on the other hand, upholds truth as an essential ingredient of knowledge. It is against this background that knowledge is traditionally defined as justified true belief. Traditionally, these principles are investigated *a priori*, that is, within the confines of rationality and logic. However, some epistemologists prefer to undertake the investigations of these concepts *a posteriori*, that is, in an empirical fashion. These scholars are not repudiators of epistemology, they are reformers. Thus, foundationalists, reliabilists and so on are reformers not repudiators or nihilists of epistemology. So, all perceptual theories of knowledge which construe the causal condition of knowledge as the justification of knowledge and the ratification principle to be involved in the idea of correspondence, the view that there are external truth connections between our minds and external reality, are mostly reformers but not repudiators of epistemology. The same applies to pragmatists who merge the utility principle with epistemic normativity, rationality and truth.

Indeed any scholar that rejects both the concept of justification and ratification of knowledge is repudiating epistemology. Rorty is one such a scholar who rejects both principles of epistemology. But our claim that Rorty rejects the concept of justification may sound rather confusing since Rorty seems in one moment to subscribe to the concept of justification.<sup>25</sup> But that exactly is where the difficulty arises. The traditional conception of knowledge sees justification as objective and universal, implying that the same standards of what count as justification must hold for every person. For the traditional epistemologists the concept of justification is not a mere social construct and so they are objectivists about justification. Contrary to this classical picture is Rorty's version of justification which construes standards for justification as a matter of individual preference or culture-specific. Besides, traditional epistemology requires that the concept of justification is closely tied to the concept of truth, that is, the principle of ratification of knowledge. But we see from our earlier submission how Rorty rejects the concept of truth.<sup>26</sup> So Rorty urges that we drop altogether talk about truth because it is an unprofitable topic,<sup>27</sup> for he sees justification and ratification of knowledge as socially subjective, devoid of neutral, independent and strict benchmarks. What is true or justified depends upon the set of beliefs held by one's social group. For him, therefore, there is no necessary homogeneity across social groups. Each

<sup>25</sup>Rorty, *op. cit.*, 1979, pp. 99 and 170.

<sup>26</sup>Rorty, *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



community has its own contingent starting point and evolution.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, Rorty concludes that epistemology is dead. This is because there is nothing for epistemology to do; no deep analysis for justification or truth (ratification). Justification and truth have no epistemic use except the particular significance that a particular society or community endows them.

Thus, epistemology withers away and it is replaced by a historically sensitive awareness of what has been handed down through the generations of one's social group. The following reveals summarily Rorty's point of departure from mainstream pragmatism. Rorty's pragmatism is different from the mainstream pragmatist because: (i). He debunks the idea of correspondence, rationality and epistemic normativity whereas the mainstream pragmatist accepts epistemic norms, rationality and correspondence. Here Rorty violates specifically thesis two and four above. (ii). Rorty denounces objective justification. Here again he defies thesis six above. (iii). He rejects truth and argues that truth should not be uttered at all, thus violating thesis five and six above. (iv). Finally, he repudiates epistemology completely and argues that the death of epistemology should be left with no successor subject, thus, debunking all six theses itemized above. In contrast to Rorty's death of epistemology crusade mainstream pragmatists want to continue to engage with epistemology. They believe that though traditional theories of epistemology may have problems, the solution is not to abandon the path to objective knowledge altogether. Theories of epistemology can be adjusted or reformed to correct the defects in them. Besides all traditional theories, whether perceptual or *a priori* theories, are potentially valid and could elicit legitimate knowledge provided they could incorporate the utility principle.

### Conclusion

Thus far, we have tried to delineate mainstream pragmatists theory and its distinctive contribution to epistemology and have contrasted it with Rortian pragmatism that claims to negate epistemology as a legitimate branch of philosophy. We also indicate that Rortian pragmatic theory is a deviation from mainstream pragmatism. Our argument is that mainstream pragmatists do not repudiate epistemology. At worst, we can aver that they are reformers of traditional epistemology.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



# PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE ETHICS OF TOLERANCE

Anthony Okeregbe, Ph.D

## Abstract

This paper argues that principles, which promote tolerance and interpersonal understanding, are contained in phenomenology. It also attempts a revisitation of the treatment of otherness (alterity) by some phenomenologists with the aim of distilling from the complex vastness of phenomenological studies some principles of tolerance. To carry out this task, this paper embarks upon an interpretative analysis or hermeneutical reading of the postulation of some principal characters in the phenomenological tradition. It is our view that, just as it opened up numerous areas of research, an understanding of phenomenology reveals principles that are beneficial to the promotion of healthy social relations.

**Key words:** Tolerance, Alterity, Intersubjectivity, Being-with, Bearing-with

## Introduction

Depending on the context of its usage, the meaning of the term 'tolerance' can oscillate from virtue to vice. It may connote the most honourable of acts as well as the most deplorable ethic of living. It could even mean 'to support'. Its Latin root *Tolerare* brings to light both meanings — 'to forbear' and 'to support'. When used as 'to bear with patience', (say for instance a religious untruth or a despicable and lewd lifestyle), it could depict a morally wrong act, and as such a vice. However, the most popular usage of the term has always been in connection with 'patient forbearance' of a lifestyle which we disapprove of, or with 'indifference to' a belief. It was in this sense that A. Vermeersch in his book, *Tolerance*, remarks that: "Strictly speaking, tolerance has always some evil for its object, such as a physical defect, an intellectual error, or a moral depravity"<sup>1</sup>. As an act 'to support' or 'to nurture', tolerance could be beneficial to social order and human development, for in this kind of tolerance, our hearts and intellects go out to the other in a psychic intermingling, through sharing, genuine willingness to learn, and open-mindedness. It is principles of this kind which foster tolerance that we identify in phenomenology.

---

<sup>1</sup>A. Vermeersch, *Tolerance*, transl. by Humphrey Page, (London: R. T. Washbourne Ltd., 1913), p. 8



However, in the existing works and expressions of phenomenology and phenomenological studies, scholars had seldom exploited the richness of this hermeneutical meaning of phenomenology to fashion out a principle of tolerance. Perhaps, none has outrightly embarked on a reading of phenomenology with the aim of distilling from it principles of tolerance<sup>2</sup>. This essay, therefore, argues that certain themes of salience that facilitate a proper understanding of the concept of tolerance can be read and excogitated from phenomenology. These principles are the principle of intersubjectivity, the idea of empathy, the generic interpretation of phenomenology developed by Heidegger, and the furtherance of this Heideggerian notion through a critical interpretation by Emmanuel Levinas.

### On Phenomenology and Alterity

Before we attempt an extraction of the principles of tolerance fostered by phenomenological insight, it is appropriate that we understand the kernel of that philosophy. Phenomenology, the philosophical doctrine from which these principles of tolerance are going to be reconstructed, started first as a metaphysical architectonic of knowledge and progressed as a methodology of intellectual history. As a theory of knowledge, it is a doctrine concerning the possibility of knowing the truth about cognition as well as the starting point of knowledge. And as a philosophical history, it proposes to be a turning point in methodology. In his admiration of the methodology of the empirical sciences, Husserl sought an equivalent methodology for the science of ideas that matched that of the empirical sciences in terms of rigour, objectivity and critical analysis. He argued that this also was the quest of the ancient Greek philosophers, who themselves sought out an enduring philosophical method that could drive human civilization. However, Husserl observed that where the ancients erred was in their thinking that ideas, which the cultural sciences occupy themselves with, could be investigated in such a way that a fixed result could be got in the manner of the empirical sciences. In combining both quests, Husserl reacts to the epistemological problem posed by Descartes when the latter argued that the starting point of knowledge is consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> The nearest are: Dan Zahavi's "Husserl's Intersubjective Transformation of Transcendental Philosophy" (1996), "Heidegger's Phenomenology of Social Existence" and "Husserl's Phenomenology of Empathy" by Frederick Elliston (New York, Mouton, 1978), and the addenda by Jim Unah in his works "Postmodernism is Existential Phenomenology" (Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2000); *Heidegger: Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology* and *Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay On Applied Ontology*, (Lagos, Panaf, 1996), wherein the far-reaching applicability and encyclopaedic richness of the generic phenomenology of Heidegger was focused upon as a social philosophy for healthy social co-existence.



Descartes had proposed in his *Meditations* that to acquire clear and distinct knowledge, one has to purge the mind of all external influences so that the biases and prejudices of previously held beliefs would not affect the distinctive nature of true knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The beginning of a thorough philosophical enterprise, claims Descartes, is consequent upon this purging out of previously held beliefs.

Although Husserl agrees with this 'first step' to knowledge, he observes that in the detailed description of consciousness, what one beholds is not a one-dimensional introspective ego, but an ego which has as its very nature the ability to be aware of something other than itself. So unlike Descartes, who holds that the primary epistemological status of consciousness is the awareness of the thinking self (*Cogito ergo sum* "I think, therefore I am"), Husserl maintains that consciousness is always a consciousness of something (*Ego cogito cogitatum* "I think thinking"). Again, unlike Descartes but like Hume, Husserl posits that the object of consciousness is not always things; that is, things when taken to mean the object of sense perception. The object of consciousness is a non-empirical object much like the Kantian *dich an sich* (thing-in-itself). Still like Hume and unlike Descartes, Husserl claims both the object of consciousness and consciousness itself cannot be distinguished in experience. They can only be distinguished conceptually. In other words, both the subject (ego, consciousness) and the object of consciousness (*cogitatum*, that is the object of my thought/mind) are contained in the *cogito* (the act of conscious awareness). Husserl calls the thinking subject the *noesis* and the object of consciousness the *noema*. Thus both the *noesis* and the *noema* are indissolubly linked together in any act of consciousness. This link is what is known as intentionality.

Having done this much, Husserl makes his original move by fashioning out a philosophical tradition that tends to bridge the gap between the closed 'monadic' epistemology of Descartes and the transcendentalism of Kantian theory of knowledge, by ascribing knowability to the non-empirical object of consciousness. The bridging of this gap, is according to Husserl, through "a detailed description of phenomena by direct awareness". This procedure, which has to pass through the stages of bracketing or suspension of judgement (*epoche*) and a series of purifying process called reductions, became the methodology of the rigorous science that will lead to truth about ideas. But then how can we all arrive at the same truth? How can my truth be tolerated? How can tolerance be meaningful in the face of a rigorous science?

<sup>3</sup> Rene Descartes, *Discourse On Method*, 1637; transl. 1968



For any discussion about tolerance to be meaningful it has to be rooted in alterity. This is imperative because to tolerate implies that there is an 'other' whom a subject tolerates, and with whom, for whom and through whom the concept of tolerance is presented as meaningful. In various characterizations, alterity is often counterposed with the individual, the self, mind, ego, depending on the intellectual leanings of the thinker. As a concept in philosophy, alterity concerns all questionings associated with the other. What is the other? Who is the other? What is the epistemological status of the other? On what metaphysical ground does the other stand? How does the self relate with the other? How does the knowledge of the other come about? How does one understand the other? Although alterity, as understood in this sense, is implied in the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas, it is, however, in Descartes that the concept attained its radical accentuation. In his hands, alterity became a rediscovery of the kernel of intersubjectivity and facticity, which gave impetus to the humanism inherent in phenomenology and existential philosophy.

The issue of tolerance borders on the question: How does one understand the other? If as the transcendental ego, who is above the empirical world, I am the only one that is the meaning bestower of my world, how can I know other minds and relate with them? At this point, Husserl risked solipsism; hence, he revised his position and came up with the principle of intersubjectivity.

### Intersubjectivity as a Principle of Tolerance

In the Fifth Meditation of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl exposes a more profound position that may be identified as a principle of tolerance<sup>4</sup>. Unlike the monadic interpretation of consciousness, this position is argued against the backdrop of alterity, for he calls his exposition 'the problem of experiencing someone else', or what in English language is rendered as 'Empathy'. While empathy as a principle of tolerance draws more from the reflections on Stein's treatises about the problem of empathy, a similar inference could be drawn from Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity. The question now is: how is intersubjectivity connected to tolerance? From his treatment of subjectivity, Husserl furnishes us with a closed 'monadic' proposal on the relationship with the other that makes it almost impossible for knowledge of the other minds let alone being open to the latter. By this submission, he made phenomenology a philosophical tradition incapable of fashioning out a social philosophy. However, with his recoil from imminent

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, transl. by Dorion Cairns, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.



solipsism through his proposal of intersubjectivity, he posited that the validity of our world, of the universe, in short of reality, is dependent upon my experience of others; in other words, given intersubjectively. If one accepts Husserl's conviction that reality is intersubjectively valid, and that my act of world-experiencing is dependent upon my experience of others, then both the consensus of the world-experiencing subjects and the dissent should be taken seriously; in other words, both the others who share similar experiences as myself and those to whom reality presents a different meaning should be given some consideration. It is in this sense that intersubjectivity is connected with tolerance.

A careful study of Husserl's explication of the concept of intersubjectivity suggests that certain features that characterize intersubjectivity are amenable to tolerance, and they pervade culture, history, convention. Prominent among these features, as explored by Zahavi, are normality, generativity, historicity and tradition. Normality, as a key concept relevant to our discourse, is dealt with by Husserl from different contexts. According to him, our experiences are guided by anticipations of normality; that is, how we act and behave is put forward in advance by previous ways and manners we have acted. "We apprehend, experience and constitute in accordance with the normal and typical structures, models and patterns which our earlier experiences have sedimented in our mind."<sup>5</sup> Thus, when what we experience clashes with our earlier experiences, that is, when what we are experiencing happens to be different, we have an experience of abnormality. What abnormality provokes is a modification and altering of our anticipations. The perceived differences are modified and specified to synchronise with earlier held beliefs or experiences. In his *Intersubjectivitat*, Husserl sheds more light on this position when he points out that because one has lived with people as long as one can remember, one's anticipations are structured according to the "intersubjectively handed-down forms of apperception"<sup>6</sup>. Another word for normality is conventionality; and this, he claims, transcends the individual because what is normal, what is conventional, I learn from others, as an ingrained idea in the society. Thus, I share in a tradition that has existed prior to my experience.

What then does Husserl mean by normality? In a loose sense, normality relates to that which concerns the common adult person, referred to as the mature, healthy and rational person. Contrarily, the infant or the sick or the

<sup>5</sup> Dan Zahavi, "Husserl's Intersubjective Transformation of Transcendental Philosophy" in *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 1996, Vol. 27 (3), p. 235.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Intersubjectivitat* II, 117, 125, quoted in Zahavi, *Ibid.* p.230.



mentally retarded may be seen as anormal. Normality in a strict sense concerns what Zahavi calls our own homeworld, while anormality would be attributed to the foreign — that which is outside our sphere of experience. Drawn from the above, normality is the identity between my appearance systems and the other's appearance systems, or the congruity between subjects on the world-experiences. This seems to be what was in the mind of Husserl when he writes:

It is implicit in the sense of my successful apperception of others that their world, the world belonging to their appearance-systems, must be experienced forthwith as the same as belonging to their appearance-systems; and this involves an identity of our appearance system.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, when I experience the same thing as you, and you experience the same thing as me; that is, we agree on our construction of what we experience, Husserl says that we are members of a normal community of world-experiencing subjects; and what transpires, from an epistemological standpoint, is called a normality. Whereas, anyone outside that sphere, with whom we disagree over our standpoint of world-experiencing, one who is alien to our appearance-systems, one who is a foreigner is anormal and operates from the standpoint of anormality. Though anormality is the home of differences and disagreements, Husserl, nonetheless, accedes to the impossibility of the foreigner being comprehended as a member of a foreign normality — a foreigner, who, though is normal, operates from appearances-system different from or in disagreement with ours.<sup>8</sup> However, Husserl posits that it is within this context that disagreement gains a profound constitutive significance. Rather than set the ball rolling for commotion and conflagration, dissension and disagreement should lead to a richer insight and consequently objectivity. Zahavi explains further when he interpretes Husserl's position on foreign normality as providing a two-prong pointer to objectivity.

According to Husserl, the experience of discrepancy between normal subjects (including the experience of a plurality of normalities, each of which has its own notion of what counts as true) does not merely lead to a more complex world-comprehension insofar as we, if we are able to synthesize the

<sup>7</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, op. cit. p. 125

<sup>8</sup> Zahavi, op. cit. p. 235.



standpoints, can gain a richer insight....The disagreement can also motivate the constitution of scientific objectivity, insofar as we aim towards reaching a truth which will be valid for us all.<sup>9</sup>

By this interpretation, Husserl attempts to argue that rather than becloud our understanding of experience, disagreements emanating from our different appearance-systems, suggests that of plurality of normalities. In other words, the different shades by which reality is presented to our world experiences, can be garnered to gain a richer understanding of reality. When people from different intellectual standpoints (it can even be extended to other groups) congregate to discuss an issue of mutual relevance, Husserl tends to think that a thorough synthesizing of the standpoints of these 'normal subjects' could lead to a better understanding of their discourse. Besides, it could also lead to a constitutive attainment of what Husserl calls scientific objectivity when the positions seem to be well argued.

This treatment of normality as a category of transcendental phenomenology leads us to a more profound aspect of intersubjectivity known as historicity. Normality, as it operates in my own homeworld (*lebenswelt*) draws its justification from tradition and generational influence, hence, it is historical. Normality is bound by the norms set by tradition, and consequently, the normal life is 'generative and "any normal person is historical as a member of a historical community"<sup>10</sup>. It, therefore, follows that the constitution of objectivity and of a common objective world is a historical process, since normality is necessary for consensus. However, being a historical process, the meaning-formations of the concept 'objectivity' and 'reality' cannot be fully absolutised. Their utmost constitution can only be realized through an infinite process of socialization. Husserl explains further:

The objective world as an idea – the ideal correlate of an intersubjective (intersubjectively communalized) experience, which ideally can be and is carried on as constantly harmonious — is existential related to intersubjectivity (itself), whose component particular subjects are equipped with mutually corresponding and harmonious constitutive systems.<sup>11</sup>

What this means is that absolute truth is only an ideal; an ideal that sets a regular standard, which is correlated to the ideal consensus of an open

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Husserl, *Intersubjektivität* III, 138-39, 431, quoted in Ibid. p. 236.

<sup>11</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditation*, op. cit. p. 107/108



intersubjective community. In other words, 'objectivity' and 'reality' in the absolute sense cannot be attained, even though consensus is attained through an open intersubjective community. This is especially so because the consensus arrived at in the intersubjective community is a factually realized one. Moreover, being a historical process, a factually realized consensus is always open for correction. Yet, as Zahavi remarks, this does not mean that there are no apodictical truths, "but only that that which can be corrected is always open for further corrections."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, for Husserl the historical dimension of the constitution of the transcendence world is aimed at elaborating his concept of generative intersubjectivity. The transcendence of the world is constituted through other and co-subjectivities; and so the going and coming of people in time, that is, death and birth, are the transcendental condition that enables the constitution of the world. In this respect Husserl writes:

What I generate from out of myself (primarily instituting) is mine. But I am a child of the times; I am a member of a we-community in the broadest sense — a community that has its tradition and that for its part is connected in a novel manner with the generative subjects, the closest and the most distant ancestors. And these have 'influenced' me: I am what I am as an heir.<sup>13</sup>

Zahavi would submit later that: "Consequently, Husserl can write there is no stagnant world, since it is only given for us in its relativity of normality and abnormality."<sup>14</sup> This submission would later give impetus to the treatment of alterity in existential phenomenology.

### **Tolerance in Heideggerian Phenomenology**

With Heidegger, the phenomenological explication of alterity and social relations through his investigation of Being did not have to be as tasking and rigorous as Husserl's. This is because all along, Heidegger has established alterity as a cardinal feature in his existentialist phenomenology. In his celebrated work, *Being and Time*, wherein the meaning of Being is reposed in *Dasein*'s existence-structures of Being-with and Being-in-the-world, Heidegger conveniently pursues his postulations on alterity by addressing the question: how do I relate with the other? He posits that the other or others are

<sup>12</sup> Zahavi, op. cit. p. 243.

<sup>13</sup> Husserl, *Intersubjektivitat* II, 223, quoted in Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Zahavi, op. cit. p. 236.



encountered in the pre-occupations of daily human existence.<sup>15</sup> Beyond this, he also goes further to deduce alterity from the functionality and utility of tools. Just as the boat or book belongs to some other, so too does the hammer, which is used for hammering refer to the persons who use them. Others (other people) are encountered in the tools which they use for their work, just as they are encountered also in the work which the tools are used to produce. By Heidegger's reckoning, these circumstances of alterity generated by references to tools and production form the basis of the public world (*Offentlichen Welt*) — which is the domain of social relations<sup>16</sup>.

### 'Letting-be' as Tolerance

In Bearing-with, we see the ethical demands of Heidegger's phenomenology as it concerns tolerance. One concept that brings out this ethical demand is *Wohnen* (Dwelling). Through the concept of *Wohnen*, Heidegger portrays "Being-with" as variant of tolerance with the same incisive rigour that has trailed the beauty of his analyses. In *Wohnen*, Heidegger captures both the subjective human meaning and the objective natural environmental meaning of the world in a single existential term.

According to Laurence Hatab, in his essay, "Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contribution to Moral Philosophy", Heidegger, through this concept of 'Dwelling' presumed his ontological investigation as the original ethics. The development of this concept to such a fundamental philosophical concept began in Heidegger's "Letter On Humanism", where he had taken up the Greek word *Ethos* in the sense of 'abode' and 'dwelling place', and interpreted it to mean 'being at home in the finitude of Being'; thereby supplying a new meaning of ethics. "For Heidegger," Hatab tells us, "from beginning to end, from being-in-the-world to the fourfold, dwelling means being at home in the finitude of Beings in its mixture of presence and absence, especially in terms of human mortality and the limit conditions of unconcealment."<sup>17</sup> Thus, while Dwelling suggests a placement in the world, it does not imply the inevitability of

ultimate resolution of existential difficulties — difficulties which resonate in the marked moral arena of conflict and disagreement, moral situations that are ambiguous and complex, where outcomes

<sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 70-71

<sup>17</sup> Laurence Hatab, "Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contribution To Moral Philosophy" — a paper presented at the After Post-modernism Conference, Chicago, 1997. Available at: <http://www.focusing.org/Hatab/html>.



are uncertain, where goods conflict with each other, where a balance of differing interests is hard to gauge — but we have to decide and sometimes all we are left with is an abyssal moment of choice.<sup>18</sup>

What 'Dwelling' suggests is that contrary to the objective/subjective moral fixations which tend to view Being-ethical-in-the-world and radical finitude as deficiencies that must be surmounted through the idealization of our ethical world, human nature is basically finite. The finitude of human nature is very well underscored by the concept of transcendence, which is indicated in the non-temporal category of Nothing or what Hatab calls abyssal transcendence. And so encapsulated in the world (dwelling) of being, *Dasein* is confined to the environment in which Being dwells. Hence, "the cue of *Dasein* is not a definable essence but an abyss that is not reducible to my state of being"<sup>19</sup>. As Hatab suggests, and rightly too, many of the human abuses are due to projected essentialist ideals perpetrated by deterministic and reductionist portrayals of the human person and his nature, much so that in the encounter with the other, it is such reductionist images that replay in real life situations. Hence, the abuses and traumas of traditional ethics.<sup>20</sup>

But in dismantling this reductionist thinking which are at the fore of intolerance, abyssal transcendence provides a non-essentialist version of personhood and human nature, wherein 'becoming' takes on a more prominent role than a portrayal of man's essence in advance. In this regard, it seems to be Heidegger's thinking that: "To see the human person in non-essentialist terms is to refuse all reductions, to weigh potentials more than actuality, concealment more than full disclosure, process more than finished states, uniqueness more than universality."<sup>21</sup> In this 'becoming', the human person cannot be pictured in advance to any reductionist condition, for to do so is the beginning of intolerance.

If this is the case, what then can unify the human person? Heidegger claims it is the negativity of finitude,<sup>22</sup> where the showing itself of Being is said to be in profiles and not that which is objectified in a hidden double; that is, the hard truth that we do not have any 'definite' nature (nature here meaning the reductionist picture painted by traditional ethical schools). Yet in

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Heidegger, op. cit. p. 51; J. Unah, *Heidegger: Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology*, Ibadan: Hope Publishers, 1997, p. 13.



this negativity of finitude, a blossoming principle of tolerance sprouts because by negating finitude, all absolutized references with which persons are promoted or demoted are shattered and disrupted.

The implication of this position is that the 'other' becomes a mystery (in relation to our presumptions), a mystery that warns us against 'fixedness' that is implicated in hatred, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. With this in mind, the moral resonance of the Heideggerian term *Sein Lassen* (letting-be) finds its completeness in Bearing-with (tolerance). "In 'letting-be,'" Hatab postulates, "there are tones of non-interference, openness, recognition, respect and release;"<sup>23</sup> tones which may lead to an interpretation of tolerance as indifference. While indifference suggests refraining from acting towards a given situation, letting-be

However, this is not the case as Heidegger purports to demonstrate through the explication of the concepts of *Mitsein*, *Mitleid* and *Fursorge*.

*Mitsein*: By introducing the concept of *Mitsein* (Being-with), Heidegger demolishes the anarchism and individualism that would have followed from a misconceived rendition of *Sein Lassen* had he (Heidegger) not progressed in his discussion of the subject. By this concept, he presents human existence as basically social. We are not first an aggregation of egos for whom alterity is a secondary accompaniment. Rather, the human person is a social self. The very fact of his personhood makes him a Being-with, just as his everyday encounter attests to his sociality. Thus, *Mitsein* saves us the problematic view of alterity from a tasking cognitive point of departure.

*Mitleid*: Tolerance as *Sein Lassen* with its grounding in *Mitsein* is further illuminated and expounded by *Mitleid* (suffer-with) or what can also be rendered as compassion. In fact, according to Hatab "the notions of *Mitsein* and Being-in help to show how compassion is possible, and indeed the phenomenon of compassion is a perfect illustration of the existential validity of Heidegger's configuration of Being-in-the-world."<sup>24</sup> As the term suggests, compassion invites us to "*Mit-leid*" (Bear-with) others, to share in the pain of others. In it the misfortune, the grief, the sorrow of others touches and alters our experiences, and we are urged to do something.

By this arresting invitation, the intending self is tumbled inside out, and our experiences dwell in the other — as a being-with-the-other. What this analysis brings to the fore is that finitude opens up the world as our world. It is this finitude, made evident in the human predicament, that brings forth compassion.

<sup>23</sup> Hatab, op. cit. p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 13



*Fursorge*: *Fursorge* highlights a remarkable departure from the way *Dasein*'s Being-with-others is different from things. The climax of tolerance as letting-be (*Sein lassen*) is found in *Fursorge* (caring-for). It is an existential situation that "helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care, and to become free for it." *Fursorge* as caring-for does not dominate but rather liberates persons and helps them realise their potential. It is the special invitation to attend to the authentic possibilities of others. It seems apt, therefore, when Hatab inputs that "*Fursorge* is another word for *Sein Lassen*". Therefore, 'Letting-be' is not an aloof posture of indifference to the projects of others; on the contrary, it is the ethical prerogative to participate with and cooperate in the others' projects.

### Tolerance as 'Bearing-with': The Levinasian Thesis

This concept of Being-with is reinforced by Emmanuel Levinas and Theodor Adorno, two disciples of Heidegger. Both Levinas and Adorno criticise the identitarian concept of tolerance that is fostered by the phenomenological attitude and its monadic espousal by Husserl. Levinas, for instance, argues that identitarian thinking is the thinking associated with finitude; for 'the totality of thought and behaviour with which one identifies is a finite construction of one's being.'<sup>25</sup> Whereas one focuses on this totality of one's being, there is the exclusion from that which is otherwise than being — namely infinity. Thus, to focus on Being is to overlook anything that is other than Being. This thinking seems to be the ethical implication of a tolerance that attempts to integrate. In an attempt to create tolerance by integration, the subject understands the other by extending the totality of Being with the intention of encompassing the other.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas like Adorno attributes the reason for this integrationist tendency to the problem involved in the process of conceptualization and thematization.<sup>26</sup> Just like Adorno's identitarianism, Levinas' thematization refers to the treatment of the other as "one of us" by merely reducing him to anonymity in the encompassing extension of our being. He is, in other words, engulfed to a point of non-existence; for in us, he is. He only possesses an existence by virtue of our being; we are a mirror of his alterity. For Levinas, this seems to be "intolerance of the worst kind"<sup>27</sup> since it treats the other as the same, stripping him of his alterity through

<sup>25</sup> A. T. Nuyen, "The Trouble With Tolerance" in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 1997, Vol. LXXI, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay On Exteriority*, transl. by A. Lingis, Pittsburg: Duquesue University Press, 1969.

<sup>27</sup> Nuyen, op. cit. p. 6



rationalized conceptual justification. Nuyen prologues Levinas' observation when the former submits that: "To be treated as the same is to be robbed of one's alterity. It makes no difference if the other is conceptualized as an opposite because the opposite is a category within the larger same."<sup>28</sup> Levinas, himself, puts it this way:

The possibility of possessing, that is, of suspending the very alterity of what is only at first other, and other relative to me, is the way of the same... If the same would establish its identity by simple opposition to the other, it would already be part of a totality encompassing the same and the other.<sup>29</sup>

Levinas makes it clear that the intention to tolerate the other in the identitarian way is not *prima facie* to possess the other, neither is it to do any kind of harm to him. Rather, the toleration of the other has peaceful co-existence at its heart of being, and it attempts this peace through understanding. However, understanding requires that you conceptualize and comprehend; and "to comprehend is to embrace, swallow, possess, make what was other a part of the self"<sup>30</sup>. The implication of this, therefore, is that "knowing is a reduction of the foreign to the familiar, of what is other to the self". It is the effect of conceptualization that nullifies the supposed good intentions of toleration. Thus, the epistemological schema of identitarian thinking invalidates the ethical prerogative of a Being-with.

In response to this aspect of Husserlian phenomenology, Levinas remarks that there are "relationships with alterity which contrast strongly with those whereby the same dominates or absorbs or includes the other, and whose model is knowledge."<sup>31</sup> One of these relationships is what he terms the 'otherness of the other.' In the 'Otherness of the other,' there is the resistance to be assimilated and dissolved into the conceptual dragnet of the self. It is a refusal to be synthesized into the rational other. The otherness of the other is a demand for a face-to-face situation. That is, it is a situation whereby the other appears as a challenger to the engulfing power of the rational. The face-to-face situation is one whereby the other is presented as that which is not "one of us."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Levinas, op. cit. p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> Antony F. Beavers, "Descartes Beyond Transcendental Phenomenology: Reconsidering Heidegger's Critique of the Cartesian Project", 1990. Online article available at: <http://www.cedar.evansville.edu/~tb2/trip/prophet.htm> Retrieved on October 20, 1999, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversation with Phillippe Nemo*, transl. by R. A. Cohen, Pittsburg: Duquesue University Press, 1982, p. 62.



It is the perfect revealer of the world of the other. The face-to-face situation is the existential arena in which authentic alterity is accorded genuine attention. Being the existential horizon of Being-with, it proposes to be the very advent, the starting point of ethics itself — a point of departure that is not determined by any pre-existing ethical dimension. It is in this face to face situation that Being is challenged to recognize the otherness of the other, and thereby to exercise tolerance.

But how does one recognize the other without doing violence to him? Levinas thinks it is by replacing the thinking of traditional ontology with a "metaphysical thinking" that "recognizes the infinity that transcends the finite totality of being". According to Levinas, western philosophy has been a philosophy of power — since it is an intellectual machinery which reduces the other to the same. This, he claims, is quite contrary to metaphysics which rejects totality by positing an infinity that transcends being. Influenced by Husserl's schema of intentionality, Levinas argues that being in metaphysics (as he conceives it) has already been structured towards exteriority, and as such already faces infinity.

However, contrary to Husserl's position, whereby a subject by intentional act, tends towards the object (which is the creation of the finite cognition of the subject), Being, in the thinking of Levinas, is that which is fashioned with a 'metaphysical desire' towards something that is absolutely other<sup>32</sup>. To face the other standing in infinity is to face him or her as a 'separated being,' as the other with an 'irreducible alterity'<sup>33</sup>. While the 'metaphysical other' can be any person, what is sure is that it is the unfamiliar, the different. The question now is: how does a finite being relate to a 'metaphysical other' that stands in the realm of infinity? Levinas answers the posed question in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* by asserting that the relationship between the finite being and an infinite metaphysical other is one that emerges through a substitution of oneself for the other — that is, by say: "I am here for you." To substitute oneself, according to Levinas, is to take on the responsibility for the other (emphasis mine). It is to be exposed "to outrage, to wounding"<sup>34</sup>; or as he puts it in *Totality and Infinity*, "to posit oneself as responsible"<sup>35</sup>.

Now, this summation of Levinas' postulation finds a meeting-point with Heidegger's explication of *Fursorge*. When Heidegger espoused the existential relevance of positive solicitude, he was only adumbrating the

<sup>32</sup> Levinas, op. cit. p. 33

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibid. p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, transl. by A. Lingis, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, op. cit., p. 215



principle of *Fursorge* as the natural abode of tolerance. Just as in Levinas' 'metaphysical ethics', Heidegger's *Fursorge* underscores the truth about existence, that to tolerate is to bear with, or to endure, and not to be comfortable with that which we tolerate. This implies that tolerance has as an inherent property, the feeling of irritation. Unlike the monadic view of tolerance which both reduces the other to the self and proposes to be comfortable with him/her and as such eliminates the difference which characterizes the other, the tolerance that results from a Bearing-with does not eliminate difference; rather it disciplines us to face the other as a radical other, by welcoming him/her as a source of irritation. This, "tolerance amounts to facing the source of irritation with *responsibility*, not trying to eliminate it"<sup>36</sup> (emphasis mine).

### Conclusion

From the explication of the phenomenological treatises of Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas, some principles of tolerance have been identified. Firstly, Husserl's earlier treatment of cognition and intentionality presented a monadic interpretation of consciousness that made a realization of tolerance impossible. Thereafter, when he threw the searchlight of cognition on the 'other', the resultant doctrine of intersubjectivity opened up new vistas for the ethic of tolerance. On the other hand, existential phenomenology exemplified by Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* (Being-with) combined with his principle of *Fursorge* (caring-in/leaping-in) to fashion out an ethical demand of tolerance for Being. Through the enthralling critical appraisal of this Heideggerian position, Levinas proposed a principle of tolerance that found justification in the metaphysical ethics of the face-to-face situation. From the re-reading of phenomenology and the distillation of the principles of tolerance, the discussion so far has established that cognition and sociality are existentially linked, that mental states possess meaning only in virtue of their relationship with otherness, that the logical end of the outward directedness of cognition is the establishment of moral principles that foster tolerance.

<sup>36</sup> Nuyen, op. cit. p. 9



# **IN PRAISE OF QUANTUM MEDICINE: INSIGHT INTO AN AFRICAN ALTERNATIVE HEALTHCARE DELIVERY MODEL**

**Isaac E. Ukpokolo, Ph.D**

## **Abstract**

Quantum science offers a holistic cognitive scheme for appreciating reality. It provides the base for the programme of quantum medicine – an emergent health care model. The present paper attempts an insight into a typology of quantum medicine as represented in the alternative healthcare delivery programme in traditional Esan culture in Southern Nigeria. The paper presents quantum medicine not as a replacement of orthodox medical practice, but to incorporate it as quantum science includes classical physics without replacing it. The paper therefore identifies a number of factors that constitute a holistic orientation in the appreciation of wellness. These include dispositions, beliefs, convictions as well as energies, the physical and the spiritual.

**Keywords:** Quantum science, classical physics, African, health, disease, holistic approach

## **Introduction**

The logic and method of allopathic (orthodox) medicine have dominated healthcare services for long. As a tradition, allopathic medicine is built upon the principles of classical Newtonian physics, and relies on the effect of drugs on diseases. Its success and achievements have been tremendous. In recent times, however, certain emergent challenges and limitations in dealing with some health issues, along with the negative side effects of drug use, have upset mindsets, prompting further efforts towards advancing a more human friendly alternative for healthcare delivery.

Quantum medicine is one such alternative approach to health issues that seems to offer considerable promises. It takes its roots from quantum science which seeks to understand the world and events in terms of quantum or group behaviour, or what Max Plank would call 'spurts' or 'packets' of energy. Quantum mechanics or the "New Physics" began with Max Planck's theory of quanta in 1900, and relativity which began with Albert Einstein's special theory of relativity in 1905. The old physics is the physics of Isaac Newton, which he discovered about three hundred years ago. "Classical



physics" means any physics that attempts to explain reality in such a manner that for every element of physical reality there is a corresponding element in the theory. Therefore, "classical physics" includes the physics of Isaac Newton and relativity, both of which are structured in this one-to-one manner. It does not, however, include quantum mechanics.<sup>1</sup>

A "quantum is a quantity of something, a specific amount. "Mechanics" is the study of motion. Therefore, "quantum mechanics" is the study of the motion of quantities. Quantum theory states that nature comes in bits and pieces (quanta), and quantum mechanics is the study of this phenomenon. Quantum mechanics does not replace Newtonian physics; rather it incorporates it; for Newtonian physics remains valid within its limits. However, what this new physics posits is that the way that we have been looking at nature is no longer comprehensive enough to explain all that we can observe, and we are forced to develop a more inclusive view. In Einstein's words:

...creating a new theory is not like destroying an old barn and erecting a skyscraper in its place. It is rather like climbing a mountain, gaining new and wider views, discovering unexpected connections between our starting point and its rich environment. But the point from which we started out still exist and can be seen, although it appears smaller and forms a tiny part of our broad view gained by the mastery of the obstacles on our adventures way up.<sup>2</sup>

Newtonian physics still is applicable to the large-scale world, but it does not work in the subatomic realm. Quantum mechanics resulted from the study of the subatomic realm, that invisible universe underlying, embedded in, and forming the fabric of everything around us.

The shift from orthodox medicine to quantum medicine is becoming more prominent because of its holistic approach to wellbeing where healing is viewed not just in terms of linear interaction between cause, symptoms, treatment and healing (as in allopathic medicine) but as an outcome gotten from a holistic view of life, health and disease as a network of inseparable events, energy fields, personal beliefs and social circumstances. However, this

<sup>1</sup> Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Publishers Ltd., 1979), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.152



approach to healing and wellbeing is not new. It has been the predominant and conventional approach to healing in many cultures of the world. For example, many African communities have enjoyed such a holistic approach to healing where healing is far more than curing of disease and illness but involves the total well being of the individual only gotten from the recognition and appreciation of the influence of every segment of living and energy spurts on the individual's life and wellbeing. Thus, an examination of an African conception of healing as showcased by the Esan people of Nigeria<sup>3</sup> would reiterate the holistic approach to thinking about reality that quantum science offers and how such an approach helps us take cognizance of how personal well-being is hinged on interplay of forces within the community in which we find ourselves.

### **Classical Physics and the Limits of Allopathic Medicine**

Physics is often considered the building block of all the sciences. This consideration is intricately tied to the assumption that any rational explanation of or statement about world must be reducible to terms which report immediate sense experience in terms of observations, experiments, measurements and weights of objects and their physical properties. Physics, being the study of physical forces and qualities, energy and motion and the relationship between all these under certain general laws, is thus seen as the ideal science must appeal for validity. By implication, disciplines such as biology and chemistry are governed by the natural laws and theories of physics and the explanations they provide are true if they are reducible to the modes of physics. This is the idea of the interrelation of all sciences: that all forms and branches of science are interrelated and synthesized due to their conformity with the laws and theories of physics.<sup>4</sup> Hence, understanding the concept of allopathic or orthodox medicine involves a grasp of the physical laws and theories that shape and beliefs and practices thereof.

Physics has always been the attempt to understand and explain the nature of the external world. And since antiquity, a lot has been done by physicists in this regard with tremendous results in the form of reliable information about the universe. Classical physics, however, set to its peak

---

<sup>3</sup>Esan is not only a geographical connotation, it is also a language and a name of a people found in the Southern part of Nigeria. Esan is made up of 30 communities spread through five local areas and is prominently agrarian with traditional cultural values closely related to the Bini and the Ibo.

<sup>4</sup> See Rudolph Carnap, *Logical Foundation of the Unity of Science*. In A. Marras, ed., *Internationality, Mind and Language*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 132-152.



until the 1600's as reflected in the works of Isaac Newton. Newton's achievements in physics are enormous and still stand relevant today at least at the macroscopic level. The idea that atoms are the indivisible building blocks of nature were proposed about four hundred years before Christ, and until the 1800 remained just an idea. Then, physicists developed the technology to observe the effect of atomic phenomenon thereby 'proving' that atoms exist, which meant that the theoretical existence of atoms was the best explanation of the experimental data that anyone could invent at the time.<sup>5</sup> What makes Newton's contribution to the growth of physics striking is his discovery of laws that govern the (at least) macroscopic level of the universe. These laws were based on observations of the everyday world. They predict how things and events are supposed to unfold and they depict events which are simple to understand and easy to picture.<sup>6</sup>

The first great contribution of Newton to the subsequent growth of science is his three laws of motion found in his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. The first law is what we now commonly term the principle of inertia. An object in motion remains in motion in a straight line, and an object at rest remains at rest, unless acted upon by an outside force. To understand the second law of motion, consider the behaviour of a hit football. The harder you hit the ball, the faster and further it goes. That is, the change in the motion of the ball is proportional to the force applied (how hard you hit it). More fully, the second law of motion states that a change in the motion of an object is proportional to the force applied to the object, and takes place along the straight line in which the force is applied. The law is often summarized as  $f = ma$ , that is, force = mass x acceleration. As with a football example, this entails that the acceleration of an object will be equal to the force applied divided by the mass of the object. The third law states that for any action there is always an opposite and equal reaction.

With particular reference the second law, we find contained in it another essential implication that each body has an inherent property, its inertial mass, which influences its motion. The greater this mass, the slower the change of velocity when a given force is impressed. Today, this law still retains its practical utility. Also, Newton's third law of motion expressed simply as "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction," recognizes, in some sophisticated modern terms, that all forces between

<sup>5</sup> Zukav, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> D. Zohar and I. Marshall, *The Quantum Society: Mind, Physics and a New Social Vision*, (New York: William Marrow and Company Inc., 1994), p. 47.



particles comes in oppositely directed pairs, although not necessarily along the line joining the particles.<sup>7</sup>

Other contributions made by Newton to classical physics include his law of gravity, and the discovery of principles in nature that unify large tracts of experiences. He abstracted certain unifying concepts from the endless diversity of nature and gave them mathematical expressions. Because of this, more than anything else, Newton's work has influenced us so forcefully. He showed us that the phenomena of the universe are structured in intelligible ways. This marked an essential point in man's control over, and prediction of, nature with unprecedented consequences, both positive and negative. Man has never enjoyed such enormous control over his environment as he has enjoyed since the time of Newton. Classical physics thrived unchallenged until the 1900, marking the birth of Quantum mechanics. However, the old physics had and still has a lasting effect on the other branches of science due to its nature and the basic ideas it upholds.

First, classical physics holds that the physical world is made up of simple atomic facts. When we observe simple states-of-affairs we express them in simple propositions. We picture the atomics facts just as it is in atomic propositions. Logical atomism of Russell and the picture theory of language of early Wittgenstein are outcome of this mode of thinking of the universe.<sup>8</sup> Thus, there is a one-to-one correlation or isomorphic relationship of facts with language. This is based on the idea that the world is made up of indivisible substances called atoms. We are able to discover laws and theories governing nature by observing these individuated, atomic facts or states-of-affairs which make up the universe.

Furthermore, explanation and the ability to predict events in the world have remained a primary focus of classical physics. This was made possible by the discovery of regularities in the universe which formed the bulk of scientific laws and theories. The ability to predict is such that if a given 'A' event is observed, then, event 'B' would follow. For example, Newton's laws of motion describe what happens to a moving object. Once we know the laws of motion, we can predict the future of a moving object provided that we know certain things about it initially. The more initial information that we have, the more accurate our predictions are likely to be. We also can infer from the past history of a given object. For example, if we know the present position and

<sup>7</sup> Zukav, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> J. O. Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development Between the Two World Wars*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 6-21.



velocity of the earth we can predict where the earth will be in relation to the moon and the sun at any particular time in the future giving us a foreknowledge of conditions and states of aspects of the world such as eclipses and seasons. In like manner, we can calculate where the earth has been in relation to the moon and the sun, and when similar phenomena occurred in the past. This power of prediction has given man enormous control over his environment.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the old physics claims to observe the world objectively because its conclusions (concepts, laws and theories) are drawn directly from the hard facts about the world or everyday perceptual experiences. The scientific objectivity claimed here is based on the assumption that there is an external world which exists independently of our *episteme*. It further assumes that we can observe measure and speculate about the external world without changing it. The external world is indifferent to us and our needs. It has to a large extent a fixed mechanistic nature.<sup>10</sup> This idea of objectivity affirms at least two things: one is the subject-object dichotomy and the other is naive realism. This is the position that the world exist "out there" independent of us, our will, awareness and beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Thus, scientific laws and theories are bias-free, providing mankind with certain truths about the universe as it is and not how we see it. These claims no doubt have implication, but our concern here is with how such views have influence and shaped the practices of allopathic or orthodox medicine.

The term allopathic medicine is used to refer to the conventional orthodox, Western medical system, built on the assumption that health is the absence of disease in the anatomy of the individual.<sup>12</sup> Disease is viewed in allopathic medicine as any harmful change that interferes with the normal appearance, structure, or function of the body, while health is viewed as the absence of such diseases. The main causes of illness are considered to be pathogens – bacteria or viruses or biomedical imbalances. Scientific tests are often used in diagnosis. Drugs, surgery and radiation are among the key tools for dealing with the problems.

Classical physics has had tremendous effect on the basic principles of orthodox medicine. The assumption as in the old physics is that there is an

<sup>9</sup> Zukav, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

<sup>10</sup> Zohar and Marshall, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> A. F. Chalmers, *What is this Thing called Science*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), pp. 113ff.

<sup>12</sup> A. Macintosh, "Understanding the Differences between Conventional, Alternative, Complementary, Integrative and Natural Medicine", *Townsend Letter.*, 1999.



isomorphic relationship between a disease, its cause, and its cure. For every disease, there is a specific number of causes, a specific number of symptoms and a specific procedure for curing the individual of the disease. This is often referred to in conventional physics and medicine as 'linear interaction'. Allopathic medicine, as a matter of rule, deals with measurable forces which produce measurable effects in material object or chemicals.<sup>13</sup> A specific amount of drugs applied, for example, to a particular illness or disease is expected to yield a particular form of result in the patient. Hence orthodox doctors are very specific when prescribing drugs for a particular disease on the quantity and quality of applications. However, allopathic medicine remains in the words of Karl Popper, a conjecture that is falsifiable by events. And when such happens, the conjecture is refuted. The need therefore arises for the speculation of yet another conjecture that would include the achievement of the former while providing an alternative viewpoint. And just as quantum mechanics did to Newtonian science so Africa view of health offers to do using the models of quantum science.

Allopathic has proved not to be a completely effective tool in dealing with many health problems. It is often argued that allopathic medicine has not just become very expensive and difficult to afford but that the output it yields in terms of ensuring healthiness is in no way equivalent to the (financial) input put into it.<sup>14</sup> This is compounded by the fact that there are many cases today where individuals are certified well and healthy after rigorous diagnostic procedures in allopathic medicine but however insist they are unwell. How can this be explained? There are cases also where, though the appropriate diagnosis and treatments have carried out on a patient, his health condition refuses to improve. These situations have been blamed on the very nature of orthodox medicine which is significantly increasing the risk of treatment failures and adverse effects due to what may be dismissed as individual idiosyncratic reactions. Diagnose of many illnesses are rendered very difficult by an underlying reductionist viewpoint which relies so much on information from the diagnostic process. Medical mistakes are inevitable when one deliberately turns a blind eye to individual or personal beliefs that may affect the healing process. Individuals are now exploring alternative medicine due to

---

<sup>13</sup> R. Mason, "Spiritual Healing: The Quantum Medicine of Dan J. Benar, M.D", *Alternative and Complementary Therapies*, 2003, p. 132.

<sup>14</sup> Dawson Church, *Quantum Medicine: The Radical Power of Love, Energy and Soul to Heal Body and Planet*. Ph.D dissertation, Santa Rosa California: Holos University Graduate Seminary, 2005), pp. 5-9.



these problem associated with allopathic medicine. One area being explored for an improved health care system is Quantum medicine under the auspices of Quantum science.

### **The Quantum Theory of Physics**

As mentioned earlier, the term 'quantum' refers to a required quantity of something or specific amount of something. Quantum theory simply states that nature comes in bits and pieces (quanta), in small quantities or units of energy. The aim of quantum theory is to describe the microscopic particles that make up matter and how they interact with each other and with energy fields. The theory describes matter and energy in the universe in terms of units called quanta. The study of the interaction and motion of these units or quantities is the primary focus of quantum science.

Unlike classical physics that hopes to accurately describe the behaviour of macroscopic matter and energy in the everyday universe, quantum mechanics, concerns itself with subatomic, invisible particles underlying, and forming the fabric of everything in the universe. Thus, though classical physics, which thrived in the period where atom was seen as the smallest unit of matter, accurately described our everyday perceptual experience, it could not explain or account for the subatomic microscopic realm which scientists became fully aware of in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, this became the task of quantum physics or mechanics. This however does not mean that quantum mechanics is a replacement for classical (Newtonian) physics. It simply complements classical physics by seeking for a more comprehensive view of the way the world works. Classical physics works on a large scale or macroscopic level of observing the universe but cannot be useful at the microscopic level. Quantum mechanics works on the microscopic, subatomic level and can be used to predict the behaviour of any physical, chemical or biological system.

Quantum physics not only specifies new rules for the description of the universe, it also introduces new ways of thinking about matter and energy. The subatomic particles that quantum mechanics study do not have defined location, speeds, and paths like objects described by classical physics. Rather it describes the positions and other properties of these particles in terms of probability or the chances that the property will have a certain value. Zohar and Marshall put it aptly that:

With our Newtonian way of looking at the physical world, we are very used to thinking that things have a very definite position or identity... Physicists too have traditionally made such either/or



distinctions. An electron was thought to have a very definite position and momentum. It was either within the range of a measuring apparatus or it was not... Quantum physics has called this whole either/or way of thinking into question. When dealing with quantum reality, we have to learn a new both/and kind of thinking. We have to learn to get beyond apparent contradictions.<sup>15</sup>

The new physics poses new implication quite different from those of the old physics. In quantum physics, the world, events and phenomena are described and understood in quanta, quantities, bits, packets, spurts or pieces; the world is not made up of atomic facts represented with atomic propositions (such isomorphic relationship does not explain a lot in the universe) but rather with network of things and events. A thing or an event can only be understood within a network of existence. Thus, in quantum science, subatomic particles are viewed as tendencies to exist or tendencies to happen. At the level of subatomic existence, matter and energy change unceasingly into each other.<sup>16</sup> They cannot be separated from each other and viewed separately as they form a network of activities and events. Hence, Gary Zukav asserts:

...quantum mechanics concerns itself with group behaviour and individual events because individual subatomic events cannot be determined accurately (the uncertainty principle) and, as we shall see in high energy particles, they constantly are changing. Quantum physics abandon the laws which govern individual events and states directly the statistical laws which govern collections of events. Quantum mechanics can tell us how a group of particles will behave, but the only thing it can say about an individual particle is how it probably will behave. Probability is the major characteristic of quantum mechanics.<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, quantum science/mechanics as so examined created the grounds on which this paper seeks to provide some insight into alternative health-care model which is holistic. Among the traditional Esau people we find this representation which is typology of quantum medicine.

### **A Holistic Approach to Healing**

---

<sup>15</sup>Zohar and Marshall, op. cit., p. 41-42.

<sup>16</sup>Zukav, op. cit., p.57-58.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.52.



Healing is a process of attaining wellness. Quantum medicine is a branch of, or research in, medicine which uses the principles of quantum physics to show that the human body is controlled and regulated by the human energy system. The aim of quantum medicine research is to be able to manipulate the body's energy to treat and prevent diseases and to attain considerable health for the individual. In order to understand the term 'quantum medicine', some general beliefs held by its advocate must be taken into consideration. A living organism consists of elementary molecular atomic nuclei, and electrons. There is a relatively vast space between them filled with electromagnetic fields and energies. Thus, the phenomena described as health and illness is based to a large extent on quantum energy transmission process within this space.<sup>18</sup> What is known and understood from the conventional medical point of view as the effect of enzymes, hormones, pathological and physiological processes and the lately discovered genetic code (the order of the nucleotide sequence in DNA and RNA that forms the basis of heredity) is, in quantum medicine, a function of field energetic changes. It also seems that our psyche's reaction to the energy accumulated in the empty space between the nucleus and the electron affects physiological processes within an organism. Quantum medicine thus bases its research on energy and field phenomena because it suggests that fundamental bio-medical processes can be fully comprehended when the laws of quantum physics are taken into consideration.<sup>19</sup>

In line with quantum science, quantum medicine asserts that the universe is so intricately interwoven and that each element in it is ultimately influenced by every other element through energy flow or the spurts of energy. The human body itself is a very sensitive instrument for the perception of subtle energies which implies that non-local effects may occur, which may explain distant healing through mediums of intent or prayers.<sup>20</sup> Thus, most healing processes not understood or explicable by means of allopathic medicine becomes meaningful under the auspices of quantum medicine. Such includes the well-acknowledged but poorly understood phenomena as the placebo effect, spontaneous remission in cancer, the health rewards of a strong faith, prayer, homeopathy, and the energetic communication links between cells, people and the environment.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>J. B. Glazewski, "Low-energy Laser Therapy as Quantum Medicine", *Laser Therapy*, 12, 2000, p.34.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Mason, op. cit., p. 132-133.

<sup>21</sup>Church, op. cit., p. 37.



Quantum medicine therefore realizes the connectedness of everything. It is a form of medicine that views life, health, and disease as a network. It studies the bioelectrical and bio-resonance systems and subsystems of the body with the aim of finding therapeutic methods that promotes self-healing. It provides the necessary tools for the study of human behaviour as well as interactions of all parts of the human body and how they affect health; in other words, how the forces of nature promote healing.<sup>22</sup> Take, for example, the interaction between the brain and the heart. According to Dawson Church:

We have already found that several of the brains electrical rhythms, such as the alpha and beta rhythms, are naturally synchronized to the rhythm of the heart and that this heart-brain synchronization significantly increases when an individual is in a physiologically coherent mode. This synchronization is likely to be related at least in part by electromagnetic field interaction. This is important as synchronization between the heart and the brain is likely involved in the processes that give rise to intuition, creativity, and optimal performance.<sup>23</sup>

Quantum medicine thus involves a series of techniques which aid individuals improve their physical, mental, and spiritual levels and connect them with forces of nature. Implied for the foregoing is that disease are result of disturbances on the cellular level of the body system; electrons become misplaced in protein molecules resulting in damaged metabolic processes. The quantum practitioner seeks to re-establish the body's bio-electrical communication system and balance. He or she finds out what is affecting the body - physical, emotional, moral, religious, social, mental, and spiritual, etc - and analyzes the molecular structure to pinpoint the problem and seek a solution.

A quantum medical practitioner does not therefore adhere to individual objectivity in dealing with his patient as is sort in allopathic medicine. Connecting with the patient and his beliefs and feelings is an essential tool in dealing with health issues and changing the situation. His and the patients' individual beliefs and feelings play a vital role in the healing process. It is for these reasons that quantum medicine is described as a holistic approach to healing that recognizes the intermingling of forces both within the body and between the body and the universe. This is because holistic approach to

---

<sup>22</sup> V. Toúaro-Franceschi, *The Enigma of Energy: Where Science and Religion Converge*, (New York: The Cross Road Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 95-97.

<sup>23</sup> Church, op. cit., p. 38.



healing believes in the influence of the environment and the forces therein on our being. In other words, that which influences our well being is both internal and external. It recognizes the interdependence of our various bodily parts and other external forces. This idea of holistic healing stimulated by quantum science is not new. Besides its association with many traditional cultures and societies, it was strongly supported by Hippocrates, who advocated the use of prayer and other energies of nature in promoting healing.<sup>24</sup>

### **An African View of Healing and Disease**

In his foreword to the book, *Magic, Faith and Healing*, Jerome D. Frank relays a candid observation about illness and the effect it has on the relationship between the victim and his society. Frank avers:

In non-industrialized cultures, illness is believed to have a variety of causes, both natural and supernatural. These causes include noxious environmental agents, the enmity of other persons, and disfavour of the gods, incurred perhaps by unwitting offences against them. All illnesses, therefore, arouses fear and self-doubt in the victim and disturbs his relations with his compatriots. Since illness may be evidence of the displeasure of supernatural forces and reduces the patient's contribution to his society, it may also adversely affect the attitude of others toward him.<sup>25</sup>

This observation accurately captures the manner in which the traditional Esan people of Southern Nigeria view illness and disease. Besides natural causes of illness and disease, the people also acknowledge the supernatural dimension which is as important as the natural. C.G. Okojie sheds more light:

The doctor might tell the inquirer that he is ill because of some sins against his master (the head of the family), done a forbidden thing in the village, or he is being pursued by enemies who might have thrown some bad medicine in his way or shot the illness at him, this being known as *Utagba*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Todaro-Franceschi, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

<sup>25</sup>Jerome D. Frank, Foreword to Ari Kiev ed., *Magic, Faith, and Healing*, New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. vii.

<sup>26</sup>Christopher G. Okojie, *Esan Native Laws and Customs with Ethnographic Studies of the Esan People*, (Benin City: Ilupeju Press Ltd, 1994), p. 229.



Thus, illness and disease, in such a communities, as with many traditional African and non-industrialized communities go beyond mere diagnosis of symptoms needing treatment through the administering of some drugs or surgery. This all-embracing view of illness is informed by the holistic conception of reality where there is no separation between the physical and non-physical. Physical and spiritual beings in such a community intermingle and exert their energy on one another.

Generally, five main causes of illness and disease can be identified among the traditional Esan people, and indeed, many traditional African communities. These are outlined aptly by Steven Feierman in his study of the importance of therapy in traditional medicine among the Tanzanians. First is an illness caused by the Supreme Being as against an illness caused by men through sorcery or physical harm. An illness caused by God is believed to simply happen with no moral cause. The causation of illness by God comes close to its implications to the English term 'natural', meaning "related to general principles of the behaviour of things. This is, however, opposed to the artificial intervention of one's fellow men or women."<sup>27</sup> This explains the Esan people's belief in the deified divinity *Ojiuu*, the King of death. *Ojiuu* is believed to be *Osenobulua's* (the Supreme Being's) chief messenger for recalling men by death under such speedy dispatch say, through thunder and lightning or incurable illness. The usual way *Osenobulua* recalls men is by illness or through sleep but when he wants a man urgently, he sends his chief massager *Ojiuu*.<sup>28</sup> A second cause of illness is neglect or carelessness on the part of the individual or those around him. These are illnesses and diseases which people bring upon themselves through accident or neglect, but not through ill-will or sorcery. A malnourished child would be seen as an example of neglect. A third cause is sorcery, which could come in different forms such as the *Utagha* described above by Okojie which could as well backfire on the person seeking to harm another with it. A fourth cause is a number of different divinities who are believed to have the power to punish individuals based on some actions, or other spiritual forces that could be manipulated to harm others. The fifth cause of illness and disease has to do with the individual's moral life. In Esan communities, for example, adultery is one dreaded act that could cause severe illness as punishment from ancestors to offenders.<sup>29</sup> What these five main causes of illness shows is that illness or disease is often an

<sup>27</sup> Steven Feierman, "Therapy as a System-in-Action in Northwestern Tanzania", *Social Science and Medicine* 15-B, 1981, p. 355.

<sup>28</sup> Okojie, op. cit., pp. 221-222.

<sup>29</sup> Feierman, op. cit., p. 355.



outcome of disequilibrium in the energy fields or among forces in the community, and healing can only be attained by reestablishing such equilibrium.

An important aspect of illness worth noting in Esan culture is misfortune. In Esan culture, there is really no difference between illness and other personal misfortunes, and for this reason, healers are saddled with the responsibility of healing the sick and preventing misfortunes. If a man, for example, after being married for some number of years, has no child or children to show for it, or, though has children, but no male children, he considers himself as ill. So also will the community conceive him even though orthodox medicine diagnoses him as potent, fertile or well.<sup>30</sup>

Due to this comprehensive range of illness and disease, the process of healing or attaining health in cultures like the such as traditional Esan culture goes beyond mere absence of symptoms and diseases to involve a sign that a person is living in peace with himself, his neighbours, and his clan, with energies and forces in the community. The importance of cultural and spiritual factors in disease and healing in these communities is seen in the chronically ill. The patient's loss of earning power, the constant reminder of the fragility of life and the inevitability of death conveyed by his disease and the pity, scorn or distaste of those around him often contributes more to his suffering and disability than the disease process itself. To rehabilitate him, the healer must not only treat his body but inspire his hopes, mobilize his environment on his behalf, and actively help him to resume a useful place in society.<sup>31</sup> If illness is viewed not merely as pains in the body, nor malfunctioning of cells in the body but also as imbalance within the human being, and between the human being and the clan as well as the whole community, healing ought not just to heal the individual but to restore the balance" peace and harmony between the individual and the community. How is healing done?

Two forms of healing can be identified. They are (i) Herbal healing and, (ii) Divination. When ill, individuals do not exclusively resort to divination; they use herbs in combination with divination. Makinde explains concerning the Yoruba people that herbal doctors have an impressive store of knowledge on a wide range of plant species and what they can heal.<sup>32</sup> These

---

<sup>30</sup>D. A. Offiong, "Traditional Healers in the Nigeria Health-Care Delivery System and the Debate over Integrating Traditional and Scientific Medicine", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 72-3, 1999, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup>Frank, op. cit., p. ix.

<sup>32</sup> Akin A. Makinde, *African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional Medicine*, (Ohio: Centre for International Studies, Ohio University, 1988), p. 88.



plants, roots and barks are often used in a similar way to medications provided by Western doctors. Okojie has this to say about the Esan methods of healing:

In my forty-two years practice of medicine amongst my people, I have worked closely and in admiration of these unlettered men and women who have come to know the best in nature's leaves, bark and roots... While I must get a near correct description of the snake that bit a person for me to be able to select the correct antivenin, when a victim is rushed to a snake herbalist, he examines the patient, asks no question and proceeds to treat the patient with herb portions, but makes a great fuss in "removing the teeth" of the snake. In the treatment of fractures, these medicine men, in more than one way, are in advance of Western medicine. While I will keep a patient with fractured femur (thigh bone) on his back for twelve weeks, the traditional bone settlers would make scarification all round the broken bone area, rub in some burning herbs, weave a basket round the fracture securely, take a fully grown cock, break its thigh bone and set it free. By the fourteenth day when the cock is able to walk about, the human patient is allowed to get up and bear weight on the broken leg; this means that the traditional bone setters allow their patients to get on his legs in fourteen days for the same condition I would immobilize my patient for twelve good weeks.<sup>33</sup>

Concerning mental illness he adds;

A patient is brought in, raving mad, tearing at anything in sight. Quietly, the herbalist would go into the forest, collect his herbs with which he makes his potent decoction, administer them to the patient and within a few days, the patient is sedated, cooperative and responding willingly to further treatment.<sup>34</sup>

These herbalists or medicine men diagnose illness, prescribe medication and apply appropriate treatment using roots, fruits, flowers, tree barks, leaves, vegetables, seeds, animal and insect parts (e.g. the placenta of a newborn goat is used in Esan with other materials for preparing anti-poison portions), etc. Till date a lot of people in these societies depend on them for healing.

<sup>33</sup>Okojie, op. cit., pp. 229-230.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 230.



Divination, on the other hand, is an act in which a person experiences the sacred or supranational. It brings a healer into contact with supernatural forces where he becomes an object that serves as medium of the supernatural power. In Esan, diviners are commonly called *Oboh* and it is normal for a sick person to consult him. The aim is for the *Oboh* to tell him the cause of his illness-which could be any of the five causes mentioned earlier. The process of healing would sometimes involve rituals and sacrifices. Rituals, in this sense, are performed by the living for spiritual forces in order to establish and reinforce harmony. It can be performed at individual, family and community levels. Through the rituals, unity and harmony among the living and between the physically living and the spiritual forces are achieved. Also, the process of attaining health could involve making specific sacrifices to specific spirit beings. In Esan, the patient is told, for instance, to appease the spirits of the departed ancestors at the ancestral shrine. The idea of consulting the oracle and strictly following the instructions given has a wonderful psychological effect on the sick person. For one thing, the will to live which is so vital in dealing with illness returns forcefully and the patient responds to treatment much better.<sup>35</sup>

It is also very essential to note the role of confession in the process of healing. Confession is a crucial element in the healing process of traditional medicine. When a patient is brought to a diviner or oracle priest, he demands confession of any evil deeds the patient may have committed against any person. If he is too sick to talk, the burden falls on his close relatives. This is because it is believed that without confession, any medicine administered may not work properly and also the illness itself may be a by-product of the offence committed.<sup>36</sup> In Esan, for example, if a woman should commit adultery and falls ill, in order to get well, the first business of the day would be for her to confess what she has done; this would be a breakthrough in curing her as it is believed that her illness would most definitely be caused by the angry ancestors of her husband. The healer's job therefore includes not only ensuring that the patient becomes well but also helping to make peace with those offended. This is similar to the role confession plays among Indian communities.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-229.

<sup>36</sup>Offiong, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>37</sup>W. L. A. Barne, "Confession as Cathartic Therapy in American Indian Tribes" in Ari Kiev ed. *Magic, Faith, and Healing*, (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 37. J. Eric Thompson says, for example, about the Chol Maya that they were in the habit of confessing to their native chiefs when sickness afflicted a member of the family, holding the belief that the sickness would end in death unless confession was made. Should the whole community be



Therefore, due to the reliability of the healing process, many Africans believe in and rely upon the services of indigenous healers for relief of physical illness as well as for psychological and spiritual comfort. Their successes are enhanced by their understanding of the personal, cultural, religious, spiritual, social, economic political conditions of the individuals, families and institutions of the community as an interacting network of forces that affects the process of healing.

### Conclusion

While the achievements of orthodox medicine cannot be overlooked, it has remained deficient in one vital area: It does not take into account the influence of meanings derived from the interplay of forces and energies of the individual, his family and his community/environment on his bodily states. Unwellness is not only about bodily pathology, but it also has to do with our view of the self and reality.<sup>38</sup> Quantum science research is striving to ensure that these other essential factors of the healing process are incorporated into healthcare delivery systems. This, we have seen, is buttressed by the healing process of traditional communal societies as in many African communities where there exist a holistic view of health and disease. The healthcare systems of Esan culture obviously embodies such a holistic approach to mental and physical well-being, spiritual and cultural rootedness, appreciation of the socio-cultural background of patients have all become aspects of considerations for treatment of sicknesses and diseases. Healers in such a culture are aware that treatment of a patient begins by first appreciating the patient's indigenous beliefs and worldviews, which is at the centre of psychological functioning and provides the basis of healing.<sup>39</sup> All these have provided grounds for what has come to be family medicine, for instance. Quantum medicine is not meant to replace allopathy, but to help in providing a more comprehensive look of wellness and unwellness.

---

suffering from a plague or sickness, the confession of a serious sin would lead to the shooting of the sinner with bow and arrows. For one thing, confession solves the problem of guilty conscience which can be a serious impediment to the healing process.

<sup>38</sup>Frank, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

<sup>39</sup>Offiong, *op. cit.*, 129.



# PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN GENEALOGY AND GENETICS

Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani, PhD

## Abstract

Cloning is a technological breakthrough in genetic engineering which enables the production of exact copies of an organism from a replication of one of the organism's cells without any recourse to the genealogical protocol of male and female reproduction. This raises philosophical questions like: what is the status of a cloned being? Will it possess spirit or soul like normal beings? Is it ethical or moral to experiment on humans? What about the polarization of society into clones and non clones. What will be the attitude of natural men toward artificial ones? Even more importantly, what will be the attitude of artificial men toward the normal human beings? Is it likely that natural people will see their artificial colleagues as supermen, women or second class citizens? Will a segregation that will result from this polarization not be of a more enduring category than previous segregations based on race, religion and ideology? Through the method of conceptual and investigative analysis, this paper considers even graver implications of cloning to the concept of genealogy and family tree. Can we regard a cloned copy of Mr James as a son of Mr James or Mr James once again? Since a genealogical offspring is a sexual combination of two distinct DNAs (male and female) to produce a different and unique DNA which becomes a unique and individual personality, the next step in the genealogical tree which is a photocopy of neither of its progenitors, what are the implications of cloning to the concept of individual uniqueness and personality, genealogical family tree and the future of the naming and identification of humanity?

## Introduction

The concept of genealogy is central to the concept of individual, family and societal identity. In a sense, it constitutes the origin of human society, and the basic unit of society is the family. The family is founded on the concepts of conjugal love and procreation. Procreation is assumed a natural result of conjugal love. But in societies where procreation is held to be sacrosanct, infertility is socially debilitating. Some infertile couples go as far as adopting children. In this context, the advent of genetic engineering wherein infertile parents can still have biological offspring is hailed as a positive development. It is seen as capable of giving happiness to infertile couples. However, genetic engineering, in methods as well as in effect, appears to sit in unhealthy



juxtaposition to the very concept of genealogy. And since genealogy is foundational to the concepts of individual uniqueness, identity and personhood, then genetic engineering raises very grave questions in the context of man and humanity.

### **The Concept of Genealogy**

Genealogy refers to the study of family pedigree or family history; the decent of a person or family from an ancestor, generation by generation.<sup>1</sup> It originated as an oral tradition, the ancestry of important members of society, often written down (in the Bible for instance). Since 16<sup>th</sup> century, records of family descent have been strictly kept in many countries, so that many people in the world could trace their ancestry if they wished. A chart showing genealogical descent is a *pedigree*, this may be crucial in establishing a matter of inheritance. In countries where wealth and position are commonly inherited, genealogy is very important. Even where legal and social reasons are fewer, people still attempt to trace their family tree.<sup>2</sup>

It is obvious from the above that genealogy is central to the concept of family and society identity. Genealogy can trace the origin of a particular society, or group of societies, to a common ancestor. Chronologically, therefore, we can say that genealogy refers to the origin of human society. Social groups and communities with ancestry form ethnic groups and nations with distinct cultural identity. It follows then that the major races of the world are genealogically founded. So genealogy as a concept, an instrument or a tool, cannot be overemphasized in the concept of human organization.

### **Family as Vehicle of Genealogy**

The concept of genealogy is worked out precisely in the context, horizon and instrumentality of the family. Also known as family tree, genealogy presupposes the existence and succession of a historical chain of families or of the family system. The family here refers to both the group formed by husband, wife and children (nuclear) and a wider category of relatives, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins (extended family) which presuppose that the concept of descent has already exceeded a generation.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, International Edition, Lawrence T. Lorimer (ed.), 2001.

<sup>2</sup> *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, David Crystal (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.452.



### Genetic Engineering

The term genetic engineering, in the narrow sense, can be explained as man's effort to eliminate defective genes and promote good and superior ones in a gene pool. In this sense, it is called eugenics. In the broad sense, however, it refers to any manipulation by man of the embryo or sperm or ovum and hence it extends to artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization (test tube babies), surrogate motherhood, womb leasing, sex selection, artificial womb or placenta, hybridization, cloning, etc. In this sense, it is called artificial reproduction.<sup>3</sup> Genetic engineering emerged from the 16<sup>th</sup> century when scientists began to research methods of improving reproduction and its results as against the normal method of sexual intercourse in use through the ages, which research received a boost at the emergence of the first test tube baby, Louis Brown, in 1978.<sup>4</sup> Let us briefly examine the various types of genetic engineering.

### Artificial Insemination

This involves the scientific insertion of sperm to fertilize an egg without normal sexual intercourse. It therefore involves, first of all, obtaining the sperm from the male through any other excitable means apart from intercourse, for example, masturbation.<sup>5</sup>

### Hybridization

The word hybridization derives from the noun hybrid, connoting an animal or plant bred from two different types of animals or plants, a technical use in biology.<sup>6</sup> Thus it implies a process in which two different species of animal or plant together produce a new type of animal or plant.<sup>7</sup>

### Cloning

This involves producing an animal or plant artificially from the cells of another animal or plant in which case the animal or plant becomes identical with the animal or plant from which cell it was artificially produced. Thus a clone is an animal or plant which has the same genes as the original from

---

<sup>3</sup>Sophie Smiley, *Genetic Modification: Study Guide (Exploring the Issues)*, (Montana: Independence Educational Publishers, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>*Wikipedia*, online encyclopedia.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Adams, "In vitro Fertilization Technique", (Monterey, CA, 1988), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Craig Donnellan, *Genetic Modification: Issues*, (Montana: Independence Educational Publishers, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Gunter Wricke, and Eberhard Weber, *Quantitative Genetics and Selection in Plant Breeding*, (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986), p. 5.



which it was produced.<sup>8</sup> Cloning is done by finding a donor egg, sucking out the nucleus of the egg (the DNA), injecting a cell from the person you wish to re-create or copy as the new nucleus of the egg, and encouraging this to grow. It will be exactly as the older sperm. In this case even a dead child can be re-created.<sup>9</sup> For deeper appraisal of the merits and dangers of cloning to humanity and its relation to genealogy, let us briefly examine three basic types of cloning.

(a) ***Embryo Cloning***

Cloning also occurs naturally in living organisms including humans. What is termed monozygotic twins or identical twins are clones of each other. The identical twins have the same genetic information due to the division of an embryo early in development which produces two identical embryos that mature to identical twins. Embryo method of cloning resembles the natural, twin method in that the embryo is divided into two or four identical cells, separated and placed in conditions suitable for growth, usually a uterus. The twins, triplets or quadruplets thus formed have identical DNA.

(b) ***Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer or Adult DNA Method of Cloning***

This method employs the technique used in cloning the sheep called Dolly. It entails nuclear replacement. It involves the removal of DNA from an adult ovum and replacing it with the DNA of a cell removed from the adult animal intended for re-creation.<sup>10</sup>

(c) ***Therapeutic Cloning Method***

This uses the same cloning procedure as the second or adult method, except that the clonal-embryo, instead of being implanted into a womb, is used to generate a stem cell. These stem cells can be cultured in Petri-dishes and used to generate therapeutic tissues or human spare parts. This is to improve regenerative medicine.<sup>11</sup>

### **Philosophical Issues in Genetic Engineering**

Philosophy has the role of inquiring, examining and re-examining the facets of human existence against the first principle questions of man's ultimate goal and end. In this context, a question emerges concerning genetic engineering especially on the issue of cloning: *what is the status of a cloned being?* Will it

<sup>8</sup> Jude Emeka Madu, *The Paradox of the "One" and the "Many" in Religion*, Awka: Globe Communication, 2003), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Wikipedia*, online encyclopedia.

<sup>10</sup> Donnellan, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



possess spirit or soul like normal beings? A second question is: *Is it ethical or moral to experiment on humans?*

A more grave implication of the success of cloning is the polarization of society into clones and non clones. In other words, society will be categorized into natural and artificial people. In this context, what will be the attitude of natural men toward artificial ones? Even more importantly, what will be the attitude of artificial men toward the normal human beings? Is it likely that natural people will see their artificial colleagues as supermen, women or second class citizens? Is it not possible that the extent of segregation that would result from such polarization will be less enduring than previous segregations based on race, religion and ideology? Molecular Biologist Lee M. Silver believes that "unlike Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where a totalitarian government controls all of the genetic enhancements (they actually use eugenics instead of direct genetic modification) in society, the use of gene therapy to design children will be spread through what he calls "free market eugenics."<sup>12</sup> Wealthy families will opt to design their child with genetic advantages because other families are doing so, and everybody wants to provide their newborn child with the best opportunities in life, with a leg up on the competition.

The greatest fear for Silver is that we will design so many children with germline gene therapy that the families wealthy enough to design their children, will pass down these enhanced traits to future generations. This gene therapy will obviously cost money, and the less wealthy families will be left to procreate naturally, and introduce their children into the world disadvantaged from their first breath. The impact on society will be a new alignment of classes, no longer will we separate people by their ethnic differences, the new division will be between what Silver calls 'the naturals' and 'the GenRich', or genetically enhanced. The major worry here is that the 'genetic gulf' between these two classes will become so wide that humans will become separate species.<sup>13</sup>

Back to the issue of life, a first question is this: When (in the cloning process) does life begin? The development of stem cells involves at a certain stage the prevention of embryo or fetus from developing into a full human being, resulting in body tissues or body spare parts for medical and surgical uses. So a further question emerges: Can life be terminated at any stage of

---

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, "Human Genetic Engineering". Available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_genetic\\_engineering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_genetic_engineering)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



development of human life? Has the embryo, from which destruction stem cells are extracted, any fundamental right to life?

Pro-stem cell scholars are of the view that the embryo from which the stem cell is extracted is just a body tissue. And more so, since these embryonic stem cells are to be used as spare parts for therapeutic purposes to save and prolong life, they do not see why human cloning should not be promoted.<sup>14</sup> But pro-life scholars argue that life begins at conception and so it is unethical to terminate life at any stage of human development.

...a human embryo cultured till the stage of blastocyst is a human being in so far as it contains a complete genome and all that is needed to develop into an adult human being. To extract stem cell from embryo is to destroy life in it, which is the same thing as destroying human life.<sup>15</sup>

For these scholars, the human life that comes from blastocyst has value and dignity and so it deserves respect just as much as life already born. So a problem arises as to whether respect for the beginning of human life allows the use of embryos or fetuses for any other purpose except bringing them to term. For pro-life scholars the answer is in the negative, and the Vatican agrees with this stance in that human cloning regardless of its objectives is contrary to the dignity of man and his right to life.<sup>16</sup>

The only argument in support of cloning has been utilitarian in nature, in that scientific breakthrough serves as useful purpose and this platform should define morality. There is no doubt that research and experimentation have contributed immensely to bring about improved quality of life for human beings. Yet the need for moral safeguards cannot be overemphasized, for science without conscience can lead to the ruin and destruction of mankind. According to Ekennia:

Scientists researching into regenerative medicine should look beyond huge financial gains and businesses promised by this extreme research programme and focus more on the value and dignity of the human person at all stages of its

<sup>14</sup>Ben Okwu Eboh, *Living Issues in Ethics*, (Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd., 2005), p. 138.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*



formation. The ethical questions should act as litmus test for all genetic engineering procedures.<sup>17</sup>

According to Eboh, this is important since it involves engineering the engineer.<sup>18</sup> Considering that science should receive unconditional consent in everything, however dangerous merely on the basis of freedom of inquiry,<sup>19</sup> poses the question: Is it ethically permissible to indulge scientific inquiry in carrying out any kind of inquiry in the spirit of free inquiry? This is against the background of the argument that without free inquiry, science could not have achieved so much for the comfort and utility of man. But Stitch points out that: "...we should follow the moral principle that all endeavors that might possibly result in such a catastrophe should be prohibited."<sup>20</sup>

The right to free inquiry should be a qualified freedom like other freedoms. If the progress of science is not closely monitored, it may lead us into chaos. Other aspects of genetic engineering equally pose moral issues. Like artificial insemination where infertile couples can have children without the instrumentality of sexual intercourse. The supportive argument here is that conjugal love has nothing to do with procreation, after all, the lower animals procreate as a matter of natural instincts and not because they love.<sup>21</sup> But when we separate conception of a child from conjugal love, we only succeed in biologizing and depersonalizing human marriage.<sup>22</sup>

Genetic engineering runs into greater difficulties in the context of sex selection. It has been argued that knowing and selecting the sex of their children can guarantee the fulfillment and happiness of parents. And since marriage craves for happiness in life, sex selection becomes an avenue for this.<sup>23</sup> But the natural distribution of sex by nature could be meant to serve a broader goal for humanity. In this context, will sex selection in some cultures

<sup>17</sup>J. N. Ekennia, *Bio-Medical Ethics: Issues, Trends and Problems*, (Owerri: Barloz Publishers Inc, 2003), p. 145.

<sup>18</sup>Ben Okwu Eboh, "Ethical Implication of Genetic Engineering" in *Arts and Social Sciences Quarterly Journal of Inter-University Friendship Association*, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Vol., No.1, October 1999, p. 78.

<sup>19</sup>Godfrey O. Ozumba, *Medical Ethics: Background and Contemporary Issues*, (Calabar: Pyramid Publishers, 2003), p. 206.

<sup>20</sup>Stephen P. Stitch, "The Recombinant DNA Debate", in *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, 2005, p. 591.

<sup>21</sup>Madu, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>22</sup>C. William, "Recent Moral Thinking on Human Genetic Engineering" in *Doctrine and Life*, October 1984, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Madu, op. cit., p. 26.



not lead to imbalance of male and females? In Africa where male issues are preferred to female ones, will sex selection not create grave problems in the population structure? However, of greater importance to this study is the issue of genealogy in the context of genetic engineering, with special regards to cloning. To this we now turn.

### Genetic Engineering and Genealogy: A Philosophical Appraisal

The prospect of genetic engineering, especially cloning, has serious implications for the concept of genealogy. Admittedly, there are merits to be derived from cloning, like the renewal of damaged body cells (stem cells). It can remedy infertility through adult cloning, and with cloning, cultures with strong conceptions of genetic inheritances to wealth can safeguard this tradition. However, cloning runs into serious juxtaposition to genealogy. This juxtaposition is demonstrated in the concept of offspring. As discussed, a man can have a cell of his body engineered to produce a human being exactly identical to him in everything. Can we regard this human being as his son, or is the clone simply the man from whose body it came?

This is because a son is supposed to be a sexual combination of two distinct DNAs. The biological product of the fusion of these two DNAs (from a man and woman) gives rise to a unique human being with a distinct personality and individuality, who may resemble the man in some respects and the woman in some other respects, even the man's father or mother or the woman's father or mother or even grandparents in some other respects; but is neither completely identical to the man, nor completely identical to the woman, nor completely identical to any of their parents or grandparents; but is a *distinct* human being imbued with *uniqueness, individuality and personality*. Boethius<sup>24</sup> and Aquinas<sup>25</sup> see this unique and separate person as embodying an *autonomous and incommunicable* aspect which makes him entirely distinct from all others. Thus on this note, no son is exactly identical to his father.

However, a clone is entirely identical to its original. Indeed, the use of "its" and "original" here is indicative of the logical inability to confer a clone with the pronoun "him" or its original with "father". This is because a clone is *not at all* unique from its original. A clone made from Mr. James is nothing

<sup>24</sup>Boethius Anicius, 'De Persona et duabus naturis', 3, see *Patrologia Latina* (PL), (1345), p. 64.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, (Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981), 1a 29, 1, quoted in Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Kpim of Personality; Treatise on the Human Person (Respect, Solidarity, Liberty)*, (Nekede Owerri: Eustel Publications, 2000), p. 29.



but Mr. James once again. This clone cannot be a son to Mr. James, only himself photocopied, re-manufactured or re-cycled. This clone has one and the same DNA as Mr. James, but a *son* to Mr. James must have a distinct DNA from both Mr. James and his wife or whoever is the mother.

We have seen that a man and woman must beget a son who has a distinct and unique DNA, that is to say, a unique human being imbued with uniqueness, individuality and personality. And if a genealogy or family tree is made up of a succession of sons and daughters across generations, then uniqueness, individuality and personality lie at the very root of the concept of genealogy or family tree. It then follows that since a clone is an exact copy of its original, then it has no uniqueness, individuality or personality, and since it has no uniqueness or personality distinct from its original, then it has no father, and therefore no family descent. By extension, it has no family tree and no genealogy. By extension, a community of clones has no uniqueness, no personality, no family descent, no genealogy. If we can imagine this community filled only with exactly identical clones, then it is not difficult to see that there is no difference between one individual and another.

In other words, there is no individual differentiation. But without individual differentiation there can be no social and political organization. Hence if we conceived a continent filled with identical clones, there will be no nations, ethnicities, communities, no states. Why is this? Because everyone is one and the same person. On the other hand, social and political organization presupposes the diversity that results from uniqueness, individuality and personality of distinct persons. It then follows that by removing uniqueness, individuality and personality/personhood, cloning would rid the world of social and political history, and throw humanity (if it can still be humanity) back to the state of nature not too different from that described by Hobbes.

Further implications of genetic engineering will include the following: identical clones will all possess one talent, one gift, one aptitude, one intelligence quotient (IQ), and one mentality. It seems perfectly reasonable that the great variety of innumerable unique talents, aptitudes and gifts embodied in humanity as a result of the unique distributive power of natural reproduction, all make up the complexity of contributions that drive civilization. If we are to picture a world of identical clones instead of innumerable uniquely talented and gifted people all imputing at innumerable levels and dimensions, then we can only picture the absence of civilization and the prevalence of the state of nature and bare existence.

If we picture a world of identical clones which all possess just one talent: that of blacksmith, then there will be no agricultural production, no pharmaceutical products, no cosmetics, toiletries, no power generation, no



architecture or chemistry, etc. If among a world of blacksmiths there are no farmers, and even hunters to put the guns and knives to use, then all will die of hunger and humanity will be pushed to extinction. And suppose that, at least to produce food, the world is instead filled with just cloned farmers, there will be no production of implements for cultivation or utensils to cook, or technological products in general. It is still the situation of a state of nature. It is evident that genealogy is inter-twined with individual uniqueness, personality, giving rise to variety of talents and gifts, giving rise to civilization and socio-political organization, and consequently to history. The inference is that genealogy lies at the very root of man's existence. Since genetic engineering is opposed to the very concept of genealogy, then genetic engineering, especially cloning, is not in man's best interest.

### Conclusion

It is obvious that genetic engineering holds some promising prospects for man, such as renewal or replacement of damaged body cells (stem cells), remedy to infertility (through adult cloning) and resolution of problems of genetic inheritance. But these positive prospects must be viewed within the context of broader dangers to humanity. Up till now, man has engineered the universe, and man has benefited from engineering nature. But when man begins to engineer himself, then there is reason for circumspection, particularly when the result of this engineering is a product whose *humanity* is yet incapable of being defined. As we could see, cloning in particular tends to undermine marriage and family as it severs the bond between couples in a conjugal relationship; it obstructs human parentage, genealogy, legitimacy, inheritance, socio-cultural identity and individuality, it could give rise to deeper segregation in future, and has tendencies of giving rise to rationally incomplete beings.



# JOHN KEKES' "RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS IN EPISTEMOLOGY": AN EXPOSITORY STUDY

Ademola Kazeem Fayemi

## Abstract

Although contemporary studies in epistemology are laden with burning issues and polyvalent scopes, some of the central concerns to experts in this aspect of philosophy are issues on the nature and theories of justification, the challenge of scepticism and various responses to it, the problem of perception, and the debate on whether epistemology should be naturalized or not. Besides these issues, the other themes in contemporary epistemology include discourse on memory, judgment, introspection, reasoning, the 'a priori/a posteriori' distinction, and scientific method, among others. As diverse as these epistemic issues are, many contemporary epistemologists have responded to them differently. One of them is John Kekes, a renowned scholar in contemporary epistemological discourse. This paper examines John Kekes' perspective on some of the problems in contemporary epistemology, and then attempt a critical evaluation of his central arguments. Given the enormous nature of Kekes' writings on epistemology<sup>1</sup> and the limited scope of this paper, we have chosen to closely examine his article titled "Recent Trends and Future prospects in Epistemology". It is our conviction that a proper grasp of his ideas in this paper constitutes a basis for understanding his other works and serves as a preface to them.

## Introduction

Epistemology is traditionally known as a theory of knowledge. This label, Kekes notes, has become inappropriate given the trends and issues discussed in contemporary epistemology. Hence, it is much more accurate to describe recent epistemology as the theory of justification. The shift from knowledge to justification results from serious doubts about the possibility of attaining the

---

<sup>1</sup>John Kekes, "Skepticism, Rationalism and Language", *Metaphilosophy*, vol.2, No. 3, July 1971, pp. 227-240; "Fallibilism and Rationality", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 9 (1972), pp. 301-309; "The Case for Scepticism", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 25, 1975, pp.28-39; *A Justification of Rationality*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), p.275; "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology", *Metaphilosophy*, vol.8,nos.2&3, 1977, pp.87-107; *The Nature of Philosophy* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980).



kind of certainty that knowledge has been taken to involve.<sup>2</sup> Given this epistemological shift of emphasis from knowledge to justification, Kekes discussed three fundamental issues that are intimately connected with justification. These issues are raised in question form vis-à-vis: do our beliefs have secure foundation? Can scepticism be countered? And what are the considerations relevant to the justification of our beliefs? While these issues are all fundamental, Kekes elaborately discussed the answers given to these questions as well as their nexus.

### Kekes On Foundationism and Fallibilism

The first problem that concerns the question of whether there is a secure foundation for our beliefs is answered by Kekes from two perspectives. In the first wing, we have the foundationalists who answered positively that our beliefs do have a secured foundation. Foundationalism is a theory of justification, which states that our beliefs can only be justified if they are self-evidently justified or they are related to some beliefs, which are themselves self-evidently justified.<sup>3</sup> Foundationalism as an epistemic theory is an attempt to solve the regress problem. The regress problem has its root in traditional account of knowledge, which requires that for any belief to be justified, it needs an antecedent belief or set of beliefs that will justify it.<sup>4</sup> Such an antecedent chain of justifications lead necessarily to infinite regress of justification. Accordingly, the problems involved in this infinite regress of justification are: either to (i) explain why an endless regress of required justifying beliefs is not actually troublesome, (ii) show how we can terminate the threatening regress, or (iii) accept the sceptical conclusion that inferential justification is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

Foundationalist position is to the effect that we can terminate the threatening regress. However, in an attempt to bring the regress of justification to a stop, foundationalism asserts that there are some basic self-justified beliefs that require no external justification. This belief is regarded as foundational belief or basic propositions because they carry with them their own justification and are non-inferentially justified. Basic propositions are

<sup>2</sup>John Kekes, "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology", *Metaphilosophy*, vol.8, nos.2&3, 1977, p.87

<sup>3</sup>Kolawole Owolabi, "Edmund Husserl's Rehabilitation of Cartesian Foundationalism: A Critical Analysis", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. xxii, no.1, Jan., 1995, p.13.

<sup>4</sup>Bolatito, A Lanre-Abass, "A Feminist Critique of Epistemological Foundationalism", in R.A.Akanmidu (ed.) *Footprints in Philosophy*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2005) p.64.

<sup>5</sup>Kekes, "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology", *Op.cit.*, p.89.



said to be incorrigible by foundationalists and because they are incorrigible, certainty in their cases is justified. The epistemological ideal of foundationalism is to build on such foundational systems of beliefs in accordance with reliable methods of reasoning such as deduction or induction in order for the system to yield knowledge.

While explaining the foundational thesis, Kekes identified two models of foundationalism: Cartesian and Moorean foundationalism. The former holds that "basic propositions are sincere, first person's present tense reports of perceptual experience."<sup>6</sup> Such propositions are said to be pure, infallible, indubitable, devoid of error and are basically incorrigible. Their incorrigibility derives from the fact that there is no mediating agency between the subject, i.e. perceiver and the object of perception. In the absence of such mediating agency, there is no misinterpretation, hence basic propositions are incorrigible. For the Moorean foundationalists, basic propositions consist of readily observable public facts, otherwise called common sense beliefs. Basic propositions for them are also incorrigible however not infallible. Incorrigibility for the Mooreans means that basic propositions are the final courts of appeal; they are incorrigible not because they are infallible but because it is logically impossible to correct them.<sup>7</sup> While noting the difference between Cartesians and Mooreans, Kekes observes that basic propositions to the Cartesians report private psychological states, while for the Mooreans, basic propositions report common sense beliefs which are universally and compulsively held by normal human beings.

It is important to note that Kekes favours Moorean foundationalism over and above Cartesian foundationalism because incorrigibility of basic propositions is the final courts of appeal, and not providing infallible knowledge. Such basic propositions are important because a normal human being cannot help holding these beliefs, which express the unavoidable features presented by the human perception of the world.

The second wing of response to the question of whether our beliefs have secured foundation is the fallibilist negative answer that they do not. According to Kekes, the fallibilist attack upon foundationalism has occasioned one of the liveliest and most important controversies in the history of contemporary epistemology<sup>8</sup>. The attacks are based on two strong arguments.

---

<sup>6</sup>Paul K. Moser, "Introduction: Empirical Knowledge", in Paul K. Moser (ed.) *Empirical Knowledge; Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* Second Edition (USA: Rowman & Little field Publishers, 1996) p. 3

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.90.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 91.



One is the neglect of the Gettier-problem by the foundationalists, second is the denial of the possibility of non-inferential or direct knowledge. These fallibilists attacks are a direct anti-thesis of foundationalism and a total denial of an impregnable and infallible genuine foundation of knowledge. The core of the Gettier argument is that a person may hold a justified true belief and yet it would be false to say that s/he knows what s/he is justified in believing.<sup>9</sup>

While this Gettier position called into question the traditional conception of the conditions of knowledge as incorrect and insufficient, the implication of such a position on foundationalism is that foundationalists (whether Cartesian or Moorean) have already conducted their debate and argument on the assumption that the meaning of knowledge was clear. In the final analysis, it has been shown by Gettier that the meaning of knowledge is yet clear and further conditions need to be identified.

Before examining the second side of the fallibilist argument, that is, the denial of possibility of direct knowledge against foundationalism, let us quickly comment on Kekes attempted dissolution of the Gettier problem. Kekes did not solve but rather dissolved the problem posed by Gettier. In doing this, Kekes observes that such a problem is occasioned by a false conflation of a subjective psychological state of certainty and an objective state of truth in an attempt to define knowledge. Such conception to Kekes is false. Knowledge, rather for him, ought to be seen in two different senses: one, subjective knowledge and second, objective knowledge.<sup>10</sup> Subjective knowledge, he tells us, is the psychological state in which a person is certain of the truth of a proposition and in such case, knowledge is still fallible. Objective knowledge entails the benefit gained from human inquiries and is the approximation of truth. It is what can be found in books, journals and stored libraries or database. In neither case is knowledge beyond revision as incorrigibility is an impossible ideal.

The second fallibilists' attack against foundationalism as identified by Kekes has to do with the denial of the possibility of direct, non-inferential knowledge. Fallibilists like W.v.O. Quine, W. Sellers and Karl Popper argue against the possibility of a direct and non-inferential knowledge as earlier claimed by foundationalists. If at all there would be such knowledge, they argue that it is supposed to be a product of pure observation. However, pure observation, they posit, is impossible because all observation is unavoidably theory bound. The implication of this fallibilist conclusion is that if there is direct knowledge, foundationalists' argument of incorrigible proposition will

<sup>9</sup>Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", *Analysis*, 23:6, 1963, pp.121-123.

<sup>10</sup>Kekes, "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology", *Op.cit.*, p.92.



hold sway. But since there is no direct knowledge, there is no pure observation. Hence, contrary to what the foundationalists would have us believe, self-justified basic propositions are not pure, devoid of error and uncertain.

In an attempt to strengthen the above fallibilistic argument, Kekes identified two other arguments that are thought to be the pillars of foundationalism with a view of berating them of substance. These are the analytic-synthetic distinction and the criticism of the empiricist theory of concept formation. Using W.v. O. Quine's argument against the distinction between analytic statements and synthetic statements, Kekes shows that if the distinction cannot be upheld, then propositions cannot be said to be purely synthetic. If there are no purely synthetic propositions, then there could be no basic propositions. The denial of basic proposition is *ipso facto*, the tragic end of incorrigibility being claimed by foundationalists.

The other critique of fallibilists against the possibility of direct knowledge is the criticism of the empiricists' theory of concept formation. The theory is all about how we acquire empirical concepts singly through direct knowledge. Foundationalism presupposes the validity of this theory. However, the fallibilists opposed it as logically impossible. Their argument is that concepts cannot be acquired in this way since the acquisition of any one concept is possible only if the person already possesses other concepts. Hence, one cannot acquire concepts one by one as the foundationalists would have us believe, rather they must be acquired wholesale.

Given the veracity of the above fallibilist attacks on foundational thesis that there is secure foundation for our belief system, Kekes notes that fallibilists have stronger arguments, and that Moorean foundationalists are more correct than Cartesian foundationalism. Kekes is quick and right at pointing out that though fallibilists have stronger case over foundationalism, they have however failed in suggesting ways of justifying the system and the foundation upon which they rest.

### **Keke's Response to the Challenge of Scepticism**

The conclusion from the above led Kekes in discussing the second issue, which is if our beliefs have no secure foundation, how can they be justified? Scepticism asserts that our fundamental assumptions cannot be rationally justified. While recognizing that scepticism has a long history, Kekes states that scepticism in contemporary epistemological discourse is most fundamental with different meaning from what we used to take scepticism to represent in traditional epistemology. Scepticism in contemporary epistemology, Kekes tells us, is directed not against the possibility of



knowledge but rather against the reasoning process, which eventually yield knowledge. Scepticism is now calling into question the reliability of the reasoning process arguing that it is rationally impossible to justify any system of belief. In stating the core of the sceptical argument, Kekes observes that:

No belief or action can be rationally justified because the standards upon which the supposed justifications rest also need justification. But this justification cannot be provided because the process of justifying one standard by another must lead either to infinite regress or to non-rational commitment to some standards.<sup>11</sup>

While noting that the task of contemporary epistemologists is to meet this most fundamental of the sceptical challenges of justifying standards of rationality, Kekes equally observes that many philosophers (like J. Benett and P. F. Strawson) have dismissed the skeptical challenge as nonsensical. Their argument in this regard is that it is meaningless to question the standard of rationality because rationality has meaning only with reference to some standards. Questioning therefore, the rationality of standards of rationality is like questioning the length of the standard metre rod. For Kekes, this is quite an unsatisfactory approach in dismissing the sceptical challenge that all standards are arbitrary because they lack the possibility of rational justification.

Kekes' discussion of the attempts at responding to the sceptical challenge is very logically painstaking, as he showed how the arguments of the various attempts have not been too strong to vitiate the veracity of claims of scepticism. Kekes underscores the combination of the Wittgensteinian notion of the form of life and anthropological evidence in an attempt to show the flaws of the skeptical challenge. The crux of this idea is that different forms of life have different standards and the rationality of beliefs and practices in each form of life should be a matter of internal justification.

Given this, scepticism is a misguided and illegitimate attempt to find a standard of rationality outside a given form of life. In an attempt to refute this response, Kekes argues that "if forms of life were genuinely independent of each other, then the absurd conclusion will follow that there could be no communication between participants in different forms of life".<sup>12</sup> But there is communication among different forms of life and this automatically imply shared standards. Such shared standard indicates that there are standards

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.,p.97

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 99.



transcending the confines of any one form of life and which needs rational justification.

The attempts to meet the skeptical challenge by identifying standards of rationality with logical rules, science, transcendental arguments, and pragmatism establish at best conditions of rationality. Logic, as we know, has usually been taken as a necessary paradigm and condition of rationality. However, Kekes objected to logic as standard of rationality because its rationality is also questionable. Logic may give vent to an irrational proposition even with a valid structural form. Another attempt to refute scepticism is the modernized Kantian employment of transcendental arguments. The central idea here is to offer a rational justification of beliefs by showing how they derive from a particular system and then demonstrate that the system is the only one possible.<sup>13</sup> The difficulty with this approach is that it is impossible to demonstrate that any component of any conceptual system is necessary. While it can be shown that some components are necessary for a particular system, it is incorrect to argue that a component is necessary vis-à-vis any conceptual system. If this holds then the force of the transcendental argument falls short of demonstrating the rationality of the system.

Science is the most widely accepted current theory of rationality. It is generally assumed by many to be the real paradigm of rationality. Anything contra science is assumed to be irrational. However, it is evident in philosophical history that science itself rests upon presuppositions, which it accepts but does not justify. Against this background, it will be question begging to accept science as a paradigm of rationality without requiring first, the rationality of its presupposition, (which is metaphysics). Other philosophers have resorted to the pragmatic consideration of science in an attempt to justify it as a standard of rationality. Their argument is that science and its presuppositions are rationally justified because the inquiries resting on them are fruitful. Science we are told, solve our problems, yield reliable conclusions and enables us to achieve our goals and cope with the world. While this argument sounds plausible, Kekes objected to it on the ground that an idea may be scientifically pragmatic yet that is not sufficient to guarantee its rationality, for science may be successful in pursuit of irrational goals.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, he argues that there are other goals besides those ones science helps in attaining. Thus, scientific goal needs to be justified vis-à-vis other alternative goals (such as worshiping of God, aesthetic appreciation of beauty, mystical union with nature, etc.) which are its rivals. This suggests a

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 102.



non-pragmatic justificational criterion for science, if at all it will be justified. The implication of this is that pragmatic justification of science as standard of rationality has equally failed.

Given the failure of the various attempts to combat scepticism, John Kekes warns of its grave implications. The inability to combat the skeptical challenge means that nothing is justifiable by reason and that all contradictory systems have equal cognitive merit. It means that there will be no rational way or criteria of deciding between the merits of conflicting claims of religion and science, medicine and quackery, Nazism and democracy. The result is that inevitable conflicts would only be settled by force. The implication of this is that the civilizing restraint of debate, criticism and intelligence would disappear. While the fideists and anarchists welcome this conclusion, Kekes insists that scepticism should rather be overcome rather than embraced. It is on the basis of these challenging implications that Kekes posits that the skeptical challenge must be met and to find a way out of this predicament is one of the main problems of contemporary epistemology. This led him to the third and last issue he addressed, and that is the question-what sort of considerations are relevant to the justification of our beliefs? What are the essentials of a theory of rationality?

### Critical Evaluation

For Kekes, what is needed to meet the sceptical challenge is a theory of rationality, which will justify some standards of rationality and show why it is that propositions, which conform, to these standards have a better chance of being true than other proposition.<sup>15</sup> Theory of rationality, he argues, must also show why acting rationally is a better policy than acting otherwise. Kekes harps that for a theory of rationality to be adequate and successful, it must be able to distinguish between propositions and actions which are potentially true and successful and propositions and actions which lack these potentials.

Kekes notes the difficulties of foundationalism as shown earlier by fallibilists to consist in the justification of our beliefs. The fallibilists' positions inevitably led to scepticism. Because of the complexity of the skeptical challenge and the failure of combating it, there is a proposal,<sup>16</sup> and

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>16</sup>For details, see: W.v.O.Quine, "Epistemology naturalized", *Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Philosophy*, (Vienna: Herder, 1971), pp.87-103. Stephen Stich, "Naturalizing Epistemology: Quine, Simon and the Prospects for Pragmatism", in *Philosophy and Cognitive Science*, C. Hookway and D.Peterson (eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.62-81, and B. Stroud, "The Significance of Naturalized Epistemology", in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol., VI., 1981.pp.106-115.



this proposal is that of naturalizing epistemology. The idea of naturalizing epistemology centers on the claim that natural science has an important role to play in epistemology. It holds that epistemological questions can be investigated and resolved using the method of the natural or social sciences.<sup>17</sup> For W.V.O. Quine in particular; he believes epistemology should be made to become a chapter in psychology. This Quinean approach, which reduces epistemology to having its final end product as coming out of our psychological interaction with external evidence, was rejected by Kekes. Kekes argues that naturalizing epistemology through one branch of science or the other is futile because epistemology is normative.<sup>18</sup> Justification is not merely a descriptive term connecting agents, means and goals. It is also evaluative because the goals are valued.

Another fundamental challenge of contemporary epistemology is to show how goals can be rationally justified. The attempt to naturalize epistemology is simply exhibition of despair of solving problem. Rather than naturalizing epistemology, Kekes maintained that epistemology should be humanized because epistemology is normative. In an attempt to arrive at this, he puts forward Aristotelian justification theory of rationality.<sup>19</sup> This theory, he believes, will provide the final refutation of scepticism that sees all theoretical views as equally irrational and unjustifiable.

This Aristotelian theory of rationality, as he calls it, has two components, which must be kept clearly separate as each has its own particular justification standard. In the first place, the context of discovery, the main question is intended to account for the rationality of the existence of theories and the reason for having them. Here, the justification standard provides a "context independent standard of justification" and cultural influences (such as one's history, politics, sociology and psychology) play an important role since we consider "conformity to the existing worldview as a sign of initial plausibility."<sup>20</sup> The introduction of several theories, of course, will be justified by this standard and they will each offer somewhat different counsel.

---

<sup>17</sup> Godfrey O. Ozumba, *A Concise Introduction to Epistemology*, (Calabar: Ebenezer Printing Press, 2001) p.124

<sup>18</sup> Kekes, "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology", op.cit., p.107.

<sup>19</sup> It is instructive to note that details of his Aristotelian solution are not discussed in his paper on "Recent Trends and Future Prospect in Epistemology". For details, see his work, *A Justification of Rationality*, op.cit., pp.256-270.

<sup>20</sup> Kekes, *The Nature of Philosophy*, op.cit., p.107.



In the second place, "context of justification", our task is to determine which of these theories should be accepted. Here, Kekes is of the view that the standard of justification should be one of truth-directedness. According to him, "the theory we ought to accept is the one which has the best chance of being true."<sup>21</sup> This will involve comparing rival theories in terms of their consistency, the adequacy of the interpretation they offer, and their ability to withstand criticism. While emphasizing on the context of justification of theory of rationality, Kekes posits that a theory of rationality must see justification not as merely descriptive but also evaluative and normative. Such a theory must be capable of valuing goals, connecting agents and means. Aristotelian theory of justification, he believes, recognizes that human beings have some goals that ought to be pursued (essentially, that of resolving enduring problems of life) and as such, goals are rationally justified for them.

### Conclusion

As we conclude the paper, two points in this review of John Kekes' perspectives on some contemporary epistemological problems merit special emphasis. One, when we examine critically, Kekes' description of contemporary epistemology as theory of justification as against the traditional conception of theory of knowledge, it is evident that Kekes new conception is guilty of fallacy of composition. The fact that there are concentration of efforts on justification theories in contemporary epistemology does not sufficiently warrant drawing conclusively, as Kekes had done, that the whole epistemic enterprise in contemporary epoch is a concatenation of justification theories; other issues and fundamental themes of epistemological relevance have also continued to shape the contours of epistemology in contemporary period. It will be premature to therefore conclude that epistemology is no longer the theory of knowledge but the theory of justification.

Furthermore, a cursory assessment of Kekes' analysis of the first problem/question, which his paper addresses, we come to see that his analysis of foundationalism is restricted only to Cartesian and Moorean foundationalism, neglecting other cognitive variants of foundationalism like the Husserlian phenomenological model, Chisholm foundational model, Ernest Sosa's reliabilist model among others. While a detailed examination of these variants could possibly weather the storm of fallibilist attacks, it will be pretentious to conclude as Kekes as done that the thesis of foundationalism is generally deficient and impotent under the sledge hammer of fallibilism.

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p.111



Besides, non-foundationalist theories of justification such as coherentism and contextualism are copiously left un-discussed by Kekes in his discourse on theories of justification in contemporary epistemology. These theories of justification are controversial and one would have expected Kekes to have given, even if just an overview of their central theses, in his analysis of contemporary trends in contemporary epistemology. Such discourse would have provided a thorough background for his subsequent examination of the challenges posed by Scepticism. This lacuna notwithstanding, should not hide the strengths and resilience of Kekes' paper.

Kekes should be commended for his scholarly presentation of some of the most prominently and fundamentally discussed issues and problems in contemporary epistemology. The logic of his presentation, coherency and clear use of language devoid of ambiguity clearly marked his sound awareness, understanding and apprehension of the recent trends and future prospects in epistemology. The epistemic issues discussed by him are clearly selected and in fact, his position on a theory of rationality is worthy of consideration. Whether his defense of the theory of rationality he sets forth is successful or not, is another different question entirely. But one thing is clear; his is a significant attempt to provide a cross-cutting review and analysis of issues in contemporary epistemology.

Secondly, Kekes' contributions to the twin challenges of scepticism and naturalized epistemology in contemporary epistemology deserve further comment. While Kekes' approach to the issues of scepticism and naturalized epistemology is worthy of note in that he treated them as challenges and not as problems that should be dissolved or seen as misguided, his conclusion on Aristotelian justification theory of rationality is largely questionable. If we could recall, sceptics respond to rationalists' to ground and justify their rational standard by pointing out that any such argument must itself be based upon presuppositions and, further, any attempt to ground these leads either to an infinite and vicious regress, a circular justification, or an unargued, arbitrary, and unjustified commitment on the part of rationalists. Kekes position on context of justification is to circumvent this argument and provide the requisite justification in the rationalists' favour. Unfortunately, his justification is circular and does not establish that the sceptics/irrationalists' view is incorrect.

In proposing Aristotelian theory of justification, Kekes makes it quite difficult for us to accept his defense of context of justification as truth-conducive. According to him, truth is our goal in the context of justification and truth-directedness our standard. On our part, we think this claim itself must be justified for it to be acceptable to a rationalist however. Kekes



maintains that truth-directedness should be judged in terms of the relative degree of a theory's susceptibility to and survival of critical scrutiny where such scrutiny is to provide a comparison of the relative merits of different theories of justification. Truth-directedness, he said, is to be judged in terms of which theory most adequately recognizes and accounts for, and resolves the inevitable facts and problems of life. Here, we can see that critical scrutiny appears to be wholly pragmatic. In other words, the critical question seems to him to be - "which theory better resolves the fundamental problem of life?" rather than "which theory is true(r)?" Thus, we can say that Kekes' standard of truth-directedness is actually a disguised version of pragmatism, which he had earlier objected to. Kekes' theory of rationality therefore does not seem to live up to his goal.

In our contention, rationality is not a theme whose justification can easily be accounted for, as Kekes has depicted. It is an essentially contestable concept, which cannot yield any conclusive argument as to what criteria to use or apply in determining its justification. There could be as many criteria as one could possibly have and none could be privileged over the other. To exclusively characterize justificatory criteria of rationality as Kekes has done in terms of Aristotelian paradigm is incorrect. Such conclusion cannot be yet adjudged conclusive, as future epistemic discussions will determine its veracity in the light of refutation, counter defense and reconfiguration.



# HERMENEUTICS OF THE YORUBA CONCEPT OF DILIGENCE AND LABOUR

Olajumoke Akiode, M.A.

## Abstract

Diligent labour is said to be the antidote to poverty but the contemporary realities do not allude to that fact. In traditional African societies, especially in Yoruba land, diligent labour was upheld as the antidote for poverty but in contemporary times, there is a lacuna between diligent labour and the poverty it is meant to remedy. What changed? Could it be the transition from traditional societies to modern societies and its attendant consequences? While traditional Yoruba society considered diligent labour as a moral virtue expected to be possessed by everyone, in the modern society that thought has been eroded. What are the implications for the moral atmosphere of the society? The aim of this paper is to extract, through hermeneutic analysis, some ethical or moral principles in Yoruba proverbs on labour, hard work, diligence. The paper assumes that the moral decadence witnessed today is a consequence of the abandonment of the moral order. As a way forward, it argues that from this exercise, principles that can facilitate moral rehabilitation of society can be clarified.

**Keywords:** Diligence, Labour/Work, 'Ori', Materialism

## Introduction

*"T'ómọdẹ bá ṣubú á wo iwájú, t'ágba bá ṣubú á wo èyìn wò."*

Meaning:

"If a child falls he looks at the front, but if an elder falls he looks at the back". That is, when the elders find themselves in a mess, they reflect on their past and how they got to where they found themselves."

As a vehicle that transmits ideas about life and values, proverbs are a link between language and philosophy. For instance, the proverb above is a reflection on the mounting moral decadence prevalent in every stratum of today's society, and the need for retrospective examination of discarded values, thereby preventing far-reaching consequences that dehumanize collective existence. In this sense, proverbs express the fact that language does not only serve as a reflection of the culture, belief patterns of individual and social relationship, pattern of world view of a people but also that they are a



long-lasting detailed link with the past;<sup>1</sup> a link also preserved in folklore, songs, poems, etc. The traditional African stores his culture, learning, knowledge, science, philosophy and indeed his entire civilization for easy reference and retrieval through proverbs. Proverbs represent the last authority on the communal aspect of a people's belief or philosophy on any issue. To be is to be in proverbs, and to be not, is not to be in proverbs.<sup>2</sup>

To this end, the aim of this paper is to extract some ethical or moral principles in the Yoruba proverbs. This essay limits its scope to Yoruba proverbs relevant to the concept of labour, hard work, diligence. It argues that from this exercise, principles that can facilitate moral rehabilitation of society can be clarified. To do this, it engages in a hermeneutic analysis since this would enable us attempt a thorough interpretation of indigenous concepts in the proverbs, and establish a rational connection between the past and the present, focusing, essentially on the concepts of labour and diligence.<sup>3</sup>

### **An Analysis of Some Yoruba Proverbs Relating to Labour and Diligence**

Labour is defined as bodily or mental work, while work is defined as the use of bodily or mental powers with the purpose of doing or making something. Being diligent is defined as hard-working; showing care and effort in what one does.<sup>4</sup>

*"Ìṣẹ́ ni òdògún ìṣẹ́"* meaning *"Labour is the cure for poverty"*

A poem deduced from this proverb goes thus:

#### **Words**

*Mura sise, ore mi*  
*Ise ni a fii di eni giga*  
*Bi a ko reni feyin ti,*  
*Bi ole la a ri;*  
*Bi a ko reni gbekele,*  
*A tera mo ise eni.*  
*Iya re le lowo,*  
*Baba si le lesin leekan,*  
*Bi o ba gbojule won,*

#### **Meaning**

*Be hard working my friend*  
*Through hard work you become great*  
*If you have no one to support you,*  
*You are taken for a lazy person;*  
*If you have no helper,*  
*You need to be diligent in your work.*  
*Your mother may be rich,*  
*And your father may be a man of substance,*  
*If you put your confidence in them,*

<sup>1</sup>Olusola O. Babatunde, "One Language Model in Ethnic and Inter-Group Relations: A Bridge Across Cultures". in *Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1, (2000), Department of English, Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>C. S. Momoh. 'Philosophy in African Proverbs' in *The Substance of African Philosophy*. C. S. Momoh (ed.), (Auchi: African Philosophy Projects Publication. 2000), p. 362.

<sup>3</sup>Kolowole A. Owolabi, "Quest for Method in African Philosophy" in *The Philosophical Forum, A Quarterly*. Vol. XXXII, No. 2, (2001).

<sup>4</sup>*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*



*O te tan ni mo so fun o.  
 Ohun ti a ko jiya fun,  
 Kile pe lowo eni.  
 Ohun ti a ba sise fun,  
 Niipe lowo eni.  
 Apa lara, igunpa niyekan.*

*You may be disappointed  
 Whatever you don't strive to achieve  
 Does not last  
 It is what you labour for  
 That is enduring  
 Your arm is your closest helper.<sup>5</sup>*

The underlying philosophical import of this proverb and the poem is that both labour and poverty are contrary realities. It states that poverty is a form of anomaly or disease that is neither irreversible nor incurable. The only solution to poverty is hard work; that is, the only way to avoid being poor is to be hardworking. The poem goes further to highlight the benefits of hardwork, which besides being a cure or prevention for poverty, is the only route to greatness. It states that, if you are born poor, working hard provides the leverage to greatness; if you are born into affluence, working hard is the only way to make the legacy or inheritance enduring. Because whatever you do not earn through your effort or labour, you do not fully appreciate its value and there is the likelihood that you will fritter it away. Hence, hard work with diligence is the prerequisite for both acquiring and preserving greatness, and nobody is exempted from it.

Another proverb that is similar in implication to this goes thus:

*"Eni ti kò şe bí aláàárù l'Óyìngbò kò lè şe bí Adégborò l'òjà ọba"*

Meaning: "He who does not behave like a drudge in Oyingbo market cannot behave like a merchant whose merchandise is patronised by a multitude in exchange for their money in the king's market".

For a detailed understanding of this proverb, there are keywords we need to explain such as:

1. '*Oja Oyingbo*' – Oyingbo market – It is a very large market located at Oyingbo. The market is like a depot of all types of commodities and widely

<sup>5</sup>J. F. Odunjo, *Alawiye, Iwe Keji (Book 2)*, Atunse Kerin (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), (Lagos: Longman, Nigeria Plc., 2008), p. 9.



patronised by people from far and near. Another thing of note about this market is that due to the large crowd, you hardly recognise anybody, that is, you hardly run into familiar faces or people. It is a place where you have to work hard irrespective of your status, your importance does not count here, and you struggle and shuffle through the crowd to source for the merchandise you want to purchase. In essence, only hard-working, diligent, people, who can go the extra mile in sourcing for goods patronise Oyingbo market.

2. '*Oja Oba*' – King's market – This is also a very large market usually located near the King's palace. This is a more organized market, with broad layouts that makes for thorough fare. Here goods are displayed attractively and openly for easy access, no struggling, pushing and shuffling through the crowd. It is more of a leisurely, no stress kind of market. Here the diligent merchant, who had sourced for his merchandise at Oyingbo market, now sits down in his stall at the King's market, collecting money from patrons of his wares without stress. Here he fixes his price and the multitude of patrons brings their wealth (*orò*) to him in exchange for his wares. This exemplifies trade – the buying and selling of goods, exchange of goods for money or other goods.

What this stresses is that the process involved in wealth-producing labour is what eradicates poverty. That is, the type of labour that cures poverty is that combined with diligence, perseverance, purposefulness, meekness – virtues which must be cultivated by anyone who does not want to be poor. These proverbs served as a sort of moral code in the society, and since proverbs reflect the worldview and belief, philosophy of the people, it is therefore a repository of the moral philosophy of the ancient Yoruba societies and some African societies.

A third proverb we examine and interpret goes thus: '*Àtẹwọ ẹni kii tan ni ije*'. – meaning literally 'your hands cannot deceive you'. But from deeper reflection, when analysed along the line of the virtue of diligence, it could mean that It is the labour you engage in by yourself, diligently, that you are certain of the desired result or success. The philosophical import of this also is that just as Descartes in his Methodic Doubt, predicated the certainty of his knowledge on the premise of his existence, so also the Yorubas predicate the certainty of a person's success in any venture, on his person and what he can do for and by himself, in essence, a person's personal initiative is a prerequisite for the advancement of his/her course, and eventually his/her success. This is because, the affluence of parents may fail, the support of friends may be withdrawn, but only one's determination to succeed and one's diligence will certainly yield result.



Since Africans are basically spiritual in their outlook, C. S. Momoh, notes that "in investigating the substance of African philosophy, the theory or doctrine should take cognisance of the primacy of the spiritual and the implications of this basic metaphysical principle."<sup>6</sup> This admonition finds credence also in their proverbs, which, though portrays a moral philosophy, also has a predominating metaphysical principle. The following proverbs help to buttress this point.

1. 'Oò bèrè lówò 'Ori'  
Ibi ojà gbé n tà, lò n bèrè  
Tí o bá dé bè  
B'ojà bá tú n kó?

Meaning:

*You did not inquire from your 'Ori'*  
*You busy yourself asking for a market place*  
*where goods are in high demand,*  
*What if you get there and the market has dispersed?*<sup>7</sup>

2. Kìrà kítà kò d'olà  
Ká sísé bí erú kò da nkan  
Olúwa ('Ori' eni) l'óngbè 'niisga

Meaning:

*Striving and struggling does not translate to wealth*  
*Labouring like a slave does not translate to anything*  
*Unless God (one's 'Ori') lifts one up or promotes one.*

### Their Seemingly Contradictory Implications

The import of the first proverb is that you should not embark on any venture without consulting your 'Ori', the gods, (in pre-colonial society) or God (during and beyond the colonial era), because any venture devoid of divine direction, counsel or approval may not be successful.

The second proverb is fatalistic in that it asserts that no matter how much or how well you labour, it cannot yield any wealth, unless your 'Ori' or gods/God promotes you, or decides it so. In this case, it means labour could cure poverty if and only if God or one's 'Ori' determines it so.

This raises some fundamental questions that we have address.

<sup>6</sup>Campbell S. Momoh, "The Nature, Issues and Substance of African Philosophy" in *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*. Jim Unah (ed.). (Ibadan: Hope Publications, Ibadan. 1998), p. 318.

<sup>7</sup>Elizabeth O. Kehinde, "Ori in Yoruba Philosophical Thought" in *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 19, Nos. 1 & 2. 2000/2001, p. 63.



John O. Donohue in his paper "*African Philosophy: The Problem of Definition*", he argued that "African proverbs are notoriously contradictory."<sup>8</sup> Do these proverbs not corroborate his argument? How can we say that to be great in life, to be comfortable and to avert poverty, one needs to be diligent and in the same vein, within the same moral philosophy, assert that diligence amounts to nothing, cannot cure poverty unless and until one's 'Ori' determines or gives a 'divine' approval for one's labour to cure poverty or lead to greatness?

Secondly, the second type of proverbs seems like a negation of the previous one. It not only has a metaphysical disposition, but also portrays a deterministic message. The question that comes to mind is: does this not serve a confusionist mission in the society? While the same belief of the people applauds diligence, the same belief preaches resignation to the dictates or decisions of one's 'Ori' as to whether one will be poor or rich? This also may support indolence among the people, who may claim that the essence of diligence is lost when the reward for it is solely determined by one's 'Ori' or God. What if one is not favoured to prosper, why bother at all to labour? Elizabeth O. Kehinde proffers a response. According to her, "the philosophical presentation of freedom and determinism in the Yoruba sense is such that both terms are complementary rather than contradictory".<sup>9</sup> That is to say, the metaphysical inclination of the ancient Yoruba societies does not in any way contradict their moral philosophy, rather it complements it. That one needs to consult one's 'Ori' or God so as to ascertain whether the venture one wants to embark upon will be successful, does not in any way detract from the essence of labour, but rather serves as an authenticating means by which one's labour will not be in vain.

Furthermore, the command to consult one's 'Ori' is borne out of an intrinsic spiritual attitude of the Yorubas and all African traditional societies. According to C. S. Momoh, "the spirit or the spiritual holds a place of primacy in African philosophy." He also defined African philosophy as "the doctrine on communal spiritualism which is the culture of harnessing the spirit of the whole and the communality to enhance and transform the spirit, interests, aspirations and ambitions of the parts and the individuals."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, to the Yoruba and many traditional Africans, consulting one's 'Ori' is neither out of the ordinary nor an exercise in confusion; it is a fundamental part of their

<sup>8</sup>Godwin. E. Azenabor, "African Proverbs, Riddles and Myths: A Philosophical Relevance" in *Heritage, The Journal of African Scholarship*. (Lagos: Heritage Books, 2000), p. 22.

<sup>9</sup>Kehinde, op cit. p. 60.

<sup>10</sup>Momoh, op cit., p. 317-318.



belief, worldview and culture. The Yoruba man, on waking up in the morning, goes out to pray a prayer that goes thus:

*"Ori mi sìn mí ló; èdà mi sìn mí bọ  
kin ma k'elesu l'ona, ki n m'ere ajo bo wa le  
ajo ti mo re"*

Meaning:

*"My 'Ori' go with me as I set out  
My creator accompany me as I come back home  
Let me not meet with evil on my way  
Let me come home with profit and blessings from  
my endeavours; in my endeavour today".*

On the other hand, Barry Hallen in his paper "*Eniyan: A Critical Analysis of the Yoruba Concepts of Person*", analysed the concept of 'Ori' as that which "appears to be deification of intelligence and prudence."<sup>11</sup> This could be interpreted to mean that the consultation of one's 'Ori' may lead to acquisition or impartation and application of intelligence and prudence in one's life and endeavour. That is to say that, for instance in the proverb:

*"Kira kita o d'ola, k'asise bi eru o di nkan  
Ori eni (oluwa) ni I gbeni ga",*

Meaning:

*"Striving and struggling does not translate to wealth  
Labouring like a slave does not amount to anything  
Unless one's 'Ori' (God) promotes one"*

That the consultation of one's 'Ori' or the input from one's 'Ori' could be that of impartation of the intelligence and prudence needed to make one's labour not only profitable but also to yield wealth. The import of this is that it is not enough or sufficient to have the physical and mental ability to embark on an endeavour, the impartation of intelligence and prudence by one's 'Ori' (God) is necessary to make such abilities lead to their desired end. This affirms the difference between working hard and being diligent – being hard-working. Even King Solomon in one of his proverbs said "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He will stand before Kings and not before mean (obscure) men."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Kehinde, op cit., p. 60.

<sup>12</sup>Proverbs 22: 29 in *The Holy Bible*. (New King James Version).



**Diligence as an Ethical Theory and the Consequence of its abandonment**  
 The reflections from the aforementioned Yoruba proverbs is that being diligent as an ethical theory was an intrinsic part of the Yoruba culture, belief, custom, and world-view. In essence, the theory of diligence was a prevalent and accepted moral virtue preached and expected of all Yoruba people both young and old. Everyone was expected to be diligent, the society applauded the diligent and the outstanding ones were honoured and held in high esteem. Because poverty was not what anyone desired, everybody in the society engaged in one form of labour or another for sustenance.

It was not as if the ancient Yoruba people were all conformists, there were a few who were lazy. Such people were made objects of ridicule and shame, and in some instances ostracized. Owing to the monetary policy of the time, everyone had to produce something so as to get what he/she needed or offered services of some kind to meet his needs. Thus it was difficult to be lazy or not to work at all, since work assured one of sustenance.

Being diligent was a common virtue among the people in the ancient Yoruba society and it augured well for relative development and progress. The environment was conducive for the actualization and fulfilment of the people's aspirations and dreams. Corruption was not unheard of, there was contentment because profit was commensurate with labour, and their aspirations and dreams of greatness were backed up by working hard and being diligent, and in time were actualized. What then went wrong between then and now? Could the problem be the experience of colonialism? Could the problem be as a result of the transition of the society from traditional to modern society?

To answer these questions we need to understand and appreciate the implications of the concept of transition.<sup>13</sup> Though a detailed explanation of the concept of transition is beyond the scope of this article, what is relevant to our discourse is that transition in general is a movement. S. N. Eisenstadt, as cited by Browne Onuoha, views transition as a concept that has a temporal-historical or development concentration which stressed the tendencies and capacities inherent in the societies pushing them in the direction of modernity.<sup>14</sup> It could also be seen as a multi-directional continuum that embodies decay and reverses, truncations and incongruence. In fact, Nigeria's exceedingly high degree of corruption, exploitative and purposeless

<sup>13</sup>Browne Onuoha "The Transition to Democracy in Nigeria: A Theoretical Debate", in *The Journal for the Advancement of Africans and Blacks in the Diaspora (JAABID)*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 1996, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* p. 50.



leadership, tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism is an index of a transition from the traditional to the modernity.<sup>15</sup>

Our point is that despite the problems inherent in the transition from a traditional society to a modern one, it is the abandonment of the workable moral principles of the traditional society that is at the root of today's morally decadent and ignoble society. Furthermore, in modern African society, hard work is no longer recognised let alone rewarded. The society, from the family unit to government at all levels, does not provide a conducive environment for the actualization of the end-result of labour. The operative moral maxim now is, 'get rich by all means, because even when you work hard, you may never be able to avert poverty'. What then is the result? Armed robbery attacks everywhere, even in sacred places like churches and shrines, ritual killings, fraudulent activities, corruption in all government parastatals, lack of integrity, production of half-baked graduates who got their degrees not by working hard, but by 'settling' their lecturers and buying results.

### The Way Forward

As Momoh argued, corruption, immorality and lack of integrity concretize the seabed on which all the other problems of the society glide.<sup>16</sup> Hence the way forward entails channelling our weaponry towards this area, so that we can systematically transit from this state of moral decadence to a state of moral uprightness. The transition proposed is modelled after Lerner, who, in his *The Passing of Traditional Society*, describes transition as "essentially psychological, targeted at people's value system, attitude and general behaviour". He says: "It is all about an expansive self, newly equipped with a functioning empathy, perceived connections between its private dilemmas and public issues. Expansive self is politically conscious in the large sense, and its acquisition distinguishes those who have been pierced by the present and in responding to shape the future."<sup>17</sup> This process that will affect our value system, attitude and consequently our national consciousness and behaviour having realized the dangerous situation we found ourselves and desiring to step away from the edge of such dangerous abyss. Transition, therefore, is a flux in a value system which grips or infects a people in a period of fundamental social change and which replaces their previous value system thereby generating a motion towards a new attitude and a new value system.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 53-54.

<sup>16</sup>Momoh, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>17</sup>Onuoha, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.



To achieve this we propose three basic actions namely: Indoctrination from the cradle – Elementary schools, home, etc; re-orientation by the government at all levels, government officials being models; recognition and reward programmes sponsored not only by the government but by the society at large. By indoctrination from the cradle, we mean, restating the moral principles and doctrines, consistently teaching and portraying the essence of being diligent starting from the homes, to the schools and the society at large. That is the way it was done in the past. The ethos of being diligent was taught and learnt first at home and passed from one generation to the other through proverbs, poems, songs, riddles, etc. By re-orientation we mean a conscientious and honest effort (not the current rebranding campaign of the present government) by government at all levels to correct the wrong value system, and begin a process of re-orientation of the people not just through massive campaigns but by themselves being worthy examples. Recognition of hard work and reward programmes sponsored by the government and the society should be backed by availability of basic amenities especially electricity so as to provide a conducive environment for the germination and actualization of the result and end product of diligence.

### Conclusion

So far, we have identified the ethics of diligence as a moral doctrine of the ancient Yoruba society that was the bedrock of their enviable, moral, just, humane peaceful and progressive society. We have also been able to trace the root of the alarming moral decadence in the contemporary society to corruption, immorality and dearth of integrity which are the offshoot of the abandonment of the moral theory of diligence.

We have also established in this paper that from the Yoruba Proverbs like "*Ise ni oogun ise*" and others in the same vein, it is clear that labour and diligence were a moral theory that constituted a major part of the bedrock of the just, humane, progressive ancient Yoruba society, and that the abandonment of this important moral theory is the cause of the prevalent moral decadence in the contemporary society.

The call for a transition towards moral rehabilitation is a re-awakening to a moral past, which valorises diligent labour. This, as argued, can come about through a committed and consistent effort at indoctrinating from the cradle, re-orientating through mass mobilisation and lived experiences of actors in society, and rewarding actions capable of promoting diligence and hard work.



### AUTHOR'S GUIDELINE

Articles intended for publication, philosophical books for review, and subscriptions should be sent to

The Editor;  
The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy,  
Department of Philosophy,  
University of Lagos,  
Akoka, Yaba,  
Lagos State, NIGERIA.

Articles that are reactions to already published works in NJP shall be given preferential treatment by the editors. Prospective authors should send their contributions either as attachment via email or typed (double-spacing) on A4 paper, accompanied with a CD version or preferably, articles should be sent as attachment by email (on MS Word) to

[thenigerianjournalofphilosophy@yahoo.com](mailto:thenigerianjournalofphilosophy@yahoo.com)

Notes and references will be printed as footnotes and should be typed (double-spacing) on a separate sheet, numbered consecutively. They should be referred to in the text by superscript. Citations should be as follows:

- 1 J.I. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research & Publishers Ltd, 1999), p. 30.
- 2 Benjamin B. Olshin, "The /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.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription in Nigeria: Individuals (two issues per year) N 1000; Students: N750; Institutions: N1500; Subscription Outside Nigeria: Individuals (two issues per year) \$20; Students: \$10; Institutions: \$25 (add \$5 for postage and handling. All subscriptions must be prepaid in cheques).



# THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

## Contents

### VOL. 1, 2010/2011

1. **Edwin E. Etteyibo**  
"God Is Dead!" Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Some  
*Reflections On Religiosity In Nigeria* ..... 1-17
2. **Chiedozie Okoro**  
Metaphysics of Race In Kant's Anthropology:  
A Critical Exposition ..... 18-35
3. **Alloy S. Ihuah**  
Rethinking Human Development: Between  
Technology Transfer and Appropriate  
Technology.....36-52
4. **Akinola Mohammed Akomolafe**  
Kwame Nkrumah's Socialism: A Philosophical  
Appraisal..... 52-64
5. **Peter F. Omonzejele**  
Towards A Definition of the Concept  
and Possibilities of Exploitation.....65-72
6. **Rotimi Omosulu**  
Book Review: Epistemological Evaluation of  
Science: The Rationalist Tradition .....73-76

---

### VOL. 2, 2010/2011

1. **Raymond N. Osel and Husein Inusah**  
Rorty's Point Of Departure from Mainstream  
Pragmatist Approach to Epistemology.....78-86
2. **Anthony Okeregbé**  
Phenomenology and the Ethics of Tolerance .....87-101
3. **Isaac E. Ukpokolo**  
In Praise Of Quantum Medicine: Insight into  
An African Alternative Healthcare Delivery Model.....102-118
4. **Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani**  
Philosophical Issues in Genealogy and Genetics.....119-128
5. **Ademola Kazeem Fayemi**  
John Kekes' "Recent Trends and Future Prospects  
In Epistemology": An Expository Study.....129-140
6. **Olajumoke Akiode**  
Hermeneutics of the Yoruba Concept  
of Diligence and Labour .....141-150

Printed by: Foresight Press  
Lagos, Nigeria.  
07026382141

ISSN: 018 9-885X



018 9-885X