African Thought in Comparative Perspective
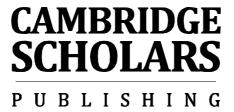
African Thought in Comparative Perspective

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is about the Golden Age of Ideology in modern Africa. The remarkable era began in the years between the two world wars.

The earliest modern ideology was nationalism in multiple different varieties, both positive and negative. In the African Diaspora, Marcus Garvey led a Back-to-Africa movement, otherwise known as "Black Zionism." Although Garvey was born in Jamaica in the British West Indies, his nationalist movement flowered among African Americans in the United States in the 1920s.

Also in the Diaspora was Black Ethiopianism, which had triggered off the Rastafari cultural nationalism. There was a time when the Rasta followers virtually worshipped Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia as a demi-god. But the Emperor began to sniff the smell of postcolonial independence within the African continent itself. With remarkable foresight he offered his own capital of Addis Ababa to become the Headquarters and Secretariat of the newly conceived Organization of African Unity. Addis Ababa has remained to all intents and purposes the *de facto* political capital of postcolonial Africa. It is a monument to Pan-Africanism.

Within Africa, the anticolonial struggle was the most highly reported version of modern nationalism during the twentieth century. This particular struggle produced a disproportionate number of heroes in a relatively short span of history. Such heroes included Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkruma of Ghana, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania, Milton Obote of Uganda, and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya. The greatest nationalist of them all spent 27 years of his life in South African prisons. That martyr was Nelson Mandela—widely admired across the world.

The least respected form of African nationalism in the twentieth century was sometimes referred to as sub-nationalism. This kind of nationalism sometimes triggered a secessionist movement either to return to precolonial boundaries (like Eritrea) or to experiment with a new sovereign state (like South Sudan).

The Igbo of Nigeria tried to create a new state called Biafra. This ambition ignited the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970. Katanga in the former Belgian Congo also ignited prolonged conflict, but was also unsuccessful in seceding.

It was after World War II that some African intellectuals and politicians began to experiment with different versions of socialism. Some proceeded directly to Marxism-Leninism. Former Portuguese Africa was especially fascinated by Marxism-Leninism in the last quarter of the twentieth century. These were indeed the Golden Years of Socialism in Africa.

Africa's most original form of socialism was Tanzania's experiment of *ujamaa*. This African concept of kinship solidarity was transformed into a basis for African socialism. President Julius Nyerere used this concept not only to narrow the gap between rich and poor but also to discipline Tanzania's leaders away from corruption and temptation. Nyerere also married the concept of socialism with the ambition of self-reliance in pursuit of development. His preferred system of governance was the one-party state.

French-speaking Africa led the way in cultural ideology. Particularly influential was Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal for nearly fifty years. He became famous for his adherence to a philosophy of negritude. This was a philosophy of nostalgia—idealizing the African past and using it as a guide to contemporary policy. With other Francophone thinkers Negritude was formulated as follows:

> *Hooray for those who never invented anything!*
> *Hooray for those who never discovered anything*
> *. . . My Negritude is no tower and no cathedral*
> *It delves into the deep red flesh of the soil.*

Although this book is overwhelmingly written by Ali A. Mazrui, it has had multiple editors over the years. Different segments have been tidied up by different people.

During Ali Mazrui's years as a professor of political science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, these essays were particularly indebted to the late Omari H. Kokole and to Molly Mazrui (now Molly Walker). They served as researchers, as well as editors—with Ali Mazrui's gratitude.

Since Mazrui moved to the State University of New York at Binghamton, the volume has been integrated, published, and updated by Patrick Dikirr, Ramzi Badran and Seifudein Adem. Mazrui is also grateful for the contributions of Thomas Uthup and A. Selase Adzima. They assisted in updating the articles and supplying references.

A different kind of contribution at Binghamton came from Jennifer Winans, whose professional skills have included index preparation and

finalizing this volume in readiness for publication. She has displayed great professionalism.

The role of Ravenna Narizzano-Bronson has been in organization and coordination. She has provided a critically-essential administrative infrastructure for most dealings with publishers.

Ali A. Mazrui accepts responsibility for any serious intellectual flaws in this book. He remains grateful for the professionalism of the editors and for their general support.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This volume is a collection of the writings of Ali A. Mazrui, one of the most prolific African writers of our time. These writings represent a broad spectrum of his most significant contributions to our understanding of the socio-philosophical foundations of African societies. The volume spans four decades of Mazrui's scholarship on Africa's political and social experience. The twenty six chapters in this volume offer a detailed analysis of the various paradigms of African ideology, old and new. They address the challenges to their propositions and assumptions, and examine the limitations and promises presented by these paradigms. The volume discusses thinkers who have systematized theories of African politics and society, such as Kwame Nkrumah and Léopold Sédar Senghor, as well as piecemeal thinkers and African politicians who approached politics pragmatically. It also deals with essential writings in African philosophy, such as the writings of John Mbiti and Valentine Mudimbe.

Mazrui employs a globalist vision to address the intricacies of Africa's political and social thought. This volume showcases how adept he was at using complex conceptual apparatuses to categorize and synthesize insights from different scholarly approaches, and offer an original interpretation of the knowledge accumulated over the years. Mazrui's conceptualization and interpretation are aspects of his work that retain a high degree of relevance and importance for research on Africa today. This volume focuses on such key issues in African thought as the legacy of the African liberation movements, the convergence and divergence of African, Islamic and Western thought, nationalist ideologies in Africa, the role of religion in African politics, and the impact of ancient Greek philosophy on contemporary Africa.

For Mazrui, African thought is socially and culturally grounded; it reflects transactional conditions, such as those between the colonizer and the colonized, the indigenous and the alien, the civilian and the military, or those in power and the opposition. He further places Africa's social and political dilemmas in their intellectual-historical context, as well as in relation to subsequent developments in social and political thought.

The chapters provide stimulating ideas, erudite insights, useful examples, and controversial views. Mazrui illuminates the complexities of social and political dilemmas in Africa's domestic and international

affairs, and reveals interpretations that often lead us to modify our thinking. He regularly applies an elegant art of analogy to a variety of African situations; Jefferson is contrasted with Lincoln, ancient Egypt is compared to ancient Greece, and the influence of India in Africa is stacked up against that of China. In addition, Mazrui repeatedly provokes his reader to leap beyond the well-worn path of judgment and to think critically of the paradoxes of African thought, such as the paradox of sociological diversity versus stability, and the paradoxical effect of Islam on repression and tolerance in Africa. Still, Mazrui leaves his reader with a prescription for change and options for the future.

This volume presents the reader with a solid foundation for understanding African thought. It makes important contributions to key debates in African studies and positions African thought at the forefront of global intellectual debates and trends. The chapters of this volume demonstrate that Africa has a rich intellectual repertoire that not only would help Africans control their own path into the future, but contribute effectively toward the effort to overcome global challenges facing the world today.

—Editors

SECTION I

COMPARATIVE AFRICANITY:
IDENTITY AND INTELLECT

CHAPTER ONE

THE IDEA OF AFRICA IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

The concept of "the Black" is much older, in the history of the written word, than the concept of "the African." In the Bible the African merged into the concept of the Ethiopian. In Jeremiah 13:23, the rhetorical question is asked: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots... "

We explore, in this chapter, transitions from Blackness to Africanity. We also identify stages in the invention and redefinitions of Africa. We are particularly interested in how Africa has featured in the history of social and political thought.

Aristotle and the Bible were particularly influential in theories about "natural-born slaves" and "natural-born masters." Racial theorists subsequently traced the ancestry of Black people ostensibly to Ham. And Aristotle was invoked to legitimize Black Africans' enslavement in the Americas. Also religious in origin were theories about "the Great Chain of Being," which placed Africa at the bottom end of the chain.

We also explore how Africa has featured in theories of cultural evolution and social Darwinism, and how these evolutionary theories subsequently influenced theories of modernization and development for "traditional societies" in Africa and elsewhere.

But social Darwinism, and modernization theories, often assumed that cultures were separate, distinct, and internally homogeneous. In partial repudiation of such mono-cultural theories, we also explore how Africa has featured in multicultural theories—which have included the perception of Africa as a convergence of three civilizations: Africanity, Islam, and the impact of Euro-Western values and culture.

Afrocentricity, as a cultural theory, begins by being almost as mono-cultural as theories of the Great Chain of Being. Negritude and Afrocentricity went into an alliance to stress the uniqueness of Africa. But these theories broke out of the parochialism of racial pride, and claimed primacy as a method of interpreting the history of humankind. Because Africa has been identified as the Eden of human ancestry, it is therefore

interpreted, *ipso facto*, as the genesis of the human family—as the ancestry of human languages and the birthplace of religion, including monotheism.

African thinkers have consistently been fighting back against not only the legacies of Biblical race theories, Aristotle and Social Darwinism, but also the more modern concepts of "the other." Edward Said, the late Palestinian thinker, identified these European concepts of "the other" under the now famous name of "Orientalism"—which is a worldview that marginalizes much of the non-Western world. Valentine Y. Mudimbe, a Congolese philosopher, is a comrade-in-arms against the demeaning and manipulative forces of Orientalism. Let us, together, explore these themes in greater detail.

From Aristotle to Theories of Evolution

The African presence in political theory is sometimes explicit, as when Friedrich Hegel or Hugh Trevor-Roper portrays Africans as a people without history. But even more often the African presence in political thought is implicit, as when Jean-Jacques Rousseau hypothesizes about the Noble Savage without mentioning Africa.

A third form of African presence in political thought is comparative, when a theory exclusively intended for one part of the world is re-interpreted and applied to Africa. For example, when Edmund Burke's reflections on the French revolution are used to interpret a failed state in post-colonial Africa.[1]

When Aristotle drew a distinction between natural slaves and natural masters he did not necessarily have different races in mind. Even the same family could include one sibling who is a natural slave, and another sibling who is born a natural master or leader.

Centuries later, Aristotle's distinction was more explicitly racialized. White Europeans were deemed to be natural masters. Black people were regarded by others as natural slaves. Even such a remarkable sixteenth-century humanitarian as Bartolomé Las Casas (1474–1566), who passionately defended the Indians of the Americas against enslavement, was nevertheless prepared to regard the enslavement of Black Africans as more legitimate on Aristotelian grounds.[2]

John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), the American statesman and political theorist, was also among those who combined Aristotelian and Biblical arguments to rationalize and justify both the general institution of slavery and Africans' eligibility for enslavement. The legacy of Aristotle was synthesized with the racialization of the Biblical Ham.[3] After all, in the Bible, Noah, Ham's father, cursed Ham and blessed his other son Shem:

Cursed be Canaan! [Ham's son]
The lowest of slaves
Shall he be to his brother. . . ,
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem!
Let Canaan be his slave.[3]

The idea that some people are born natural slaves withered away with the successes of the abolitionist movement. The parallel idea that some people are born natural masters was, however, much more resilient, and lasted much longer. The whole imperial ideology of "the White Man's Burden" was one version of the concept of a master race. Rudyard Kipling immortalized the doctrine in his poem "The White Man's Burden," first published in the *Times* of London on February 4, 1899.

Take up the White Man's burden —
Send forth the best ye breed —
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;

To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild —
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child. . .

Take up the White Man's burden —
The savage wars of peace —
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease . . .

The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Kipling's twin images of "half-devil and half-child" often formed the basis of Western concepts of Africa. The image of Africa as "half-devil" was a process of heathenizing African societies. It helped to mobilize Christian missionary response to Africa. The idea of Africa as "half-child," on the other hand, stimulated both Western paternalism and a humanitarian response.

Great humanitarians like Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) illustrated a form of racism which was, paradoxically, benevolent. After retraining himself as a medical doctor, Schweitzer gave up a comfortable alternative

career in Western Europe in order to serve rural Africans in colonial Gabon.

Schweitzer made so many sacrifices for Africa precisely because he did not regard Black Africans as equals. These "natives" aroused in Schweitzer the paternal protectiveness of an adult towards a child. When pressed, Schweitzer conceded that the African was his brother—"but younger brother." Schweitzer's form of racism resulted in benevolence and generosity, which was very different from the racism of hate and oppression (malevolent racism).

Nevertheless, the concept of a Master Race was alive and well in Albert Schweitzer's worldview. He viewed Black Africans neither as natural slaves, nor as half-devils. But, in relation to Europeans, he did view all Black Africans as children and fundamentally immature.

While the legacy of Aristotle was dichotomous, natural masters and natural subjects, the legacy of Charles Darwin was evolutionary. Theories about the "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" had profound consequences. Not just in biology, but also in social and political theories for generations after Darwin.

From Social Darwinism to Theories of Modernization

Charles Darwin's book, entitled *On Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,* was published in 1859. It was soon to have long-term repercussions for "the study of man," in almost all its dimensions. Racists could now proceed to demonstrate, utilizing the theory of natural selection, that major differences in human capacity and human organization were to be traced to biological distinctions between races. Black Africans were almost always ranked lowest. But, to some extent, this theory was much older than Darwin. What Darwin added to it was the dynamism of converting mere classification of beings into a process. The static version of the theory was religious. It went back to the ancient idea that God had so organized the world that the universe and creation were arranged in a "Great Chain of Being," that all creatures could be classified and fit into a hierarchy extending "from man down to the smallest reptile—whose existence can be discovered by the microscope."[5] "Tribal peoples" were deemed particularly close to the natural world.

In other words, it was not just the lower species that were so classified. Even within the highest species created in the Almighty's image, there were, in turn, other divisions. Theories of the Great Chain of Being assumed that the Almighty, in His wisdom, did not want a big gap between one type of creature and the next. And so there had to be

intermediate categories between orangutans and the White man. As early as 1713, naturalists began looking for the "missing link" between men and apes. They even, apparently, speculated on the possibility that the San peoples in southern Africa and orangutans might be, side by side, in the "scale of life," separated only by the fact that orangutans could not speak.[6]

What social Darwinism helped to refine into specific theoretical form was the element of motion in this process, the idea that the backward people might be on the move towards a higher phase, and those in front further still. Progress was activated at last.

The link between racism and ethnocentrism is not difficult to see. Even for the earliest racist theories, there had been no difficulty about deciding where to place the white man in the chain of being. As Phillip D. Curtin puts it, discussing these early biological theorists:

> Since there is no strictly scientific or biological justification for stating that one race is "higher" than another, the criteria of ranking had to come from non-scientific assumptions. All of the biologists . . . began by putting the European variety at the top of the scale. This was natural enough, if only as an unthinking reflection of cultural chauvinism. It could be held to follow from their assessment of European achievements in art and science . . . It was taken for granted that historical achievement was intimately connected with physical form—in short, that race and culture were closely related.[7]

The dynamic element in ethnocentric theories of evolution inevitably led to assumptions about white leadership in the whole process of historical change. Progress was social selection, if not natural selection. And within the white races themselves, specific leadership was assumed to come from the "tougher" of the European stock. For example, in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford in December 1841, Thomas Arnold gave a new lease on life to the ancient idea of a moving center of civilization. Arnold argued that the history of civilization was the history of a series of creative races, each of which made its impact and then sank into oblivion, leaving the heritage of civilization to a greater successor. What the Greeks passed on to the Romans, the Romans bequeathed in turn to the Germanic race, and of that race, the greatest civilizing nation was England.[8] In many cases, this was seen as part of God's Grand Design. Empire-builders, like Cecil Rhodes in southern Africa, were inspired by such visions.

Notions of leadership very often led to notions of the right to rule the less developed societies of Africa and much of Asia. Even John Stuart Mill, the prophet of liberalism, could still argue that despotism was "a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the

end be their improvement. . . ."[9] Mill included many Indians, and most Africans, among such "barbarians."

In Mill, also, there began to emerge the notion that Western democratic institutions constitute the ultimate destination of much of socio-political development. And the capacity to operate democratic institutions was already being regarded as an index of political maturity and institutional stability. Mill even seemed to share some of the reservations held by more recent modernization theorists about the possibility of operating liberal institutions in multi-ethnic situations. To use Mill's own formulation, "Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities."[10] Mill attributed such democratic disabilities to the India of the British Raj, as well as to Africa. Here then is the essential assumption of some of the later theories of political integration, a process towards the fusion of nationalities within a single territory into a new entity capable of sustaining the stresses of a more liberal polity. Since the rise of Afro-Asian nationalism, at least one major approach in theorizing about political modernization has rested on what Robert A. Packenham describes as "the idea that political development is primarily a function of a social system that facilitates popular participation in governmental and political processes at all levels, and the bridging of regional, religious, caste, linguistic, tribal, or other cleavages."[11]

Packenham goes on to argue that one form which this particular approach has taken today is to assess the social correlates of democracy. Are these criteria relevant for post-colonial Africa? These correlates are supposed to include relatively high "scores" on such sociological variables as an open class system, literacy and/or education, high participation in voluntary organizations and civil society, urbanization and expanded communication system.[12] Much of this side of analysis assumes that the highest of modern institutions must inevitably be those which have been devised in the West. The social Darwinian evolution toward modernity is evolution towards Western ways. Edward Shils seemed to be expressing as much his own view of the matter as of some members of the Afro-Asian elite when he said, "'Modern' means being Western without the onus of dependence on the West."[13] And much of the rest of Shils' theorizing on the process of development did bear the stamp of Eurocentric preference for "a regime of representative institutions" of the Western kind.[14] African studies since the 1950s have been replete with democratic assumptions which have been ultimately neo-Darwinian.

There have been models of theorizing about development which have gone as far as to classify political regimes in the world in terms of, first, the Anglo-American type; secondly, the continental European types;

thirdly, totalitarian types; and fourthly, the types found in Africa and Asia.[15] The ancient Judaic concept of the Chosen People, of the *Old Testament*, has found a Western secular guise.

Evidently, this is ethnocentrism, which has strong links with older theories of Anglo-Saxon leadership as a focus of a new wave of civilization. Again, theories of evolutionary change culminating in the pre-eminence of a single nation had major philosophers of the West among their disciples. Not least among these philosophers was Hegel, for whom the entire process of change in the universe had for its ultimate human culmination the emergence of the Prussian state and the Germanic genius. Hegel, too, was in a sense, a pre-Darwinian social Darwinist, both in his notion of a creative tension between thesis, antithesis and synthesis and in his notion of a powerful evolution towards the emergence of higher species. To Hegel, the Black people of Africa were pre-history.

More recently, there have been historians who have seen human evolution in terms of a progressive rise to the pre-eminence of their own nation or group of nations. William H. McNeill, though by no means lacking in humility, had interpreted world history in such a way that he might easily belong to this tradition.[16] McNeill challenges, in part, the Spenglerian pessimism of a Western decline and the whole conception of history as a collection of separate civilizations each pursuing an independent career. For McNeill, human cultures have had a basic interrelationship—and their history has been leading to a global pre-eminence of Western civilization. Again, Black Africa was placed far behind.

In the field of sociology, Talcott Parsons has talked about "evolutionary universals" in terms which do indicate a belief that ultimately development happens in the direction of greater comparability with the political systems of the Western world. Parsons argues that the existence of a definitive link between popular participation and ultimate control of decision-making is so crucial for building and maintaining support for the political-legal systems as a whole and for its binding rules and decisions that, insofar as large-scale societies are concerned, the "democratic association" is an "evolutionary universal." In defense of this proposition against anticipated criticism, Parsons prophetically declares:

> I realize that to take this position I must maintain that communist totalitarian organization will probably not fully match "democracy" in political and integrative capacity in the long run. I do indeed predict that it will prove to be unstable and will either make adjustments in a general direction of electoral democracy and a plural party system or "regress" into

generally less advanced and politically less effective forms of organization, failing to advance as rapidly or as far as otherwise may be expected.[17]

Talcott Parsons was more prophetic than he himself realized. A similar prophetic ethnocentrism is evident in the approach of J. Roland Pennock to the study of political development. Pennock enumerates principles like, "justice according to law," "the rule of law," and "due process" as among the political goods which are delivered when a society attains a certain degree of political development. Pennock declares in a long footnote:

> It might be objected that modern totalitarian dictatorships may not subscribe to the standards of justice according to law outlined above. Are we then to call them less "developed" than modern constitutional regimes? . . . I would be quite happy to say that to this extent they are in fact less developed, less fitted to fulfill the needs of men and society.[18]

Of course, European communism had its imitators in Asia and (later) Africa. Post-colonial Africa was often warned that "going socialist" was a retrograde step. In the same article, Pennock refers to other tendencies in the discussion of political development which bear the ethnocentric theme that the history of human evolution is towards the type of institutions and ideals cherished in the Western world. Tribal societies like those of Africa were way behind. This is a new type of ethnocentric universalism. Pennock does not describe them as Western ideals. There is a tendency to refer to such things as "world culture." But the inclination to discern an upward movement of human evolution towards Westernism is recurrent in social and political theory. In the words of the concluding sentence of Pennock's article:

> It is common today to compare or rank states by the degree of party competition, or their adoption and use of the major devices of representative government, or their social mobilization. It is my suggestion that, to see a more nearly complete picture and to make more highly discriminating judgments, anyone who is concerned with political development in any way involving measurement or comparison should take full account of some of the measurable elements of the political goods of security, justice, liberty, and welfare.[19]

After briefly flirting with theories about the one-party state, even African thinkers like Julius K. Nyerere began to tilt back to pluralistic democratic thought. The West was, once again, the ultimate role-model.

Of course, by the time of our more recent theories of modernization and Fukuyama's "end of history," the racist element in theories of human

development had considerably declined, at least within the ranks of scholarship. The racial component was what had given social Darwinism a continuing biological feature borrowed from the Darwin of the *Origin of Species*. In fact, in the heyday of racial theories, it was by no means all that clear where biological Darwinism ended and social Darwinism began. Africans were perceived as culturally and genetically retarded.

But in the modern theories of development and modernization, Darwinism has been substantially debiologized. It is no longer pure racial bigotry that is invoked to explain stages of political growth; what is now invoked is a kind of cultural Darwinism. Fukuyama is almost Hegelian. For Hegel, Prussia was the ultimate synthesis in the dialectic of history. For Fukuyama, the United States is the final stage of human history. Africa continues to be relegated to historical irrelevance.

The shift from biological explanations of human backwardness to cultural explanations of that factor had important implications. Biological differences imply a slower rate of mutation of character. The African, thus, could not help lagging behind for many generations simply because he could not help the genetic traits he had inherited from his own sub-species. There is a quality almost of immutability, of being retarded, when a lack of development is attributed to hereditary characteristics within the race. But as ideas on social evolution took a turn more toward cultural determinism, the notion of a backward people catching up with more advanced people was at last brought within the bounds of feasibility. When all is said and done, cultural Darwinism offers some hope to Africa if it responds to cultural modernization.

Concluding Overview

In the Bible, as we have indicated, the concept of "Africa," as well as "the Black race," is represented by the concept of "Ethiopia." In the history of Islam, the Black diaspora is represented by the Abyssinian, Bilal son of Rabah, a close disciple of the Prophet Muhammad.

But religious scripture has also been used to legitimize racism and Black degradation. Ham, the second son of Noah, has been used as the father of either the accursed or the less blessed race.[20] The derived term of Hamitic was used by anthropologists to refer to North Africans until relatively recent times.

In the history of the slave trade, Aristotle's distinction between natural slaves and natural masters became a major source of moral arguments to justify the enslavement of Black people. It was, also, sometimes invoked to spare American Indians from enslavement and substitute Blacks instead.

The experience of slavery in America even racialized the liberalism of such great thinkers as Thomas Jefferson. On the one hand, Jefferson believed that great pain and suffering were often the source of great poetry. But Jefferson claimed that there was one great exception to this link between the Muse and martyrdom: Black people. According to Jefferson, Blacks were incapable of great poetry in spite of their great pain.

John Stuart Mill, another great liberal thinker, claimed that "barbarians" did not have a right to self-determination. Under the term "barbarian," Mill included many societies of Asia and Africa.

Karl Marx had a whole phase of historical materialism called "the Oriental, or Asiatic, phase," a despotic and retarded phase. Friedrich Engels applauded French colonization of the "Bedouins," of Algeria, in the 1830s.

David Hume seemed convinced that among people of color were to be found "no ingenious manufactures . . . no arts, no sciences."[21]

From such dichotomous distinctions as "barbarian" and "civilized," "slave" and "master," this chapter has also traced evolutionary theories such as social and cultural Darwinism within which Africa and Black people were deemed lowly and retarded.

Repudiation of such theories by Africans and Black thinkers appearing later in this book have included ideas such as Afrocentricity, Negritude, and such Multicultural doctrines as Africa's Triple Heritage—of the indigenous, the Islamic, and the influence of the West.

Notes

[1] See Ali Mazrui, "Edmund Burke and Reflections on the Revolution in the Congo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (1963), pp. 121–133.

[2] See Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959) & Margery Perham, *The Colonial Reckoning*, (London, 1961) Reith Lectures.

[3] See Genesis, chapter 9, verses 25–26.

[4] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*, (New York: Knopf, 1948).

[5] See A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936). Consult also Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (1985), pp. 21–37.

[6] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* p. 233; A. O. Lovejoy, "Some Eighteenth Century Evolutionists," *Popular Science Monthly,* Vol. LXV, No. 4 (July 1904), pp. 238–251.

[7] See P. D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1965), pp. 38–39. I am indebted to Curtin's book for bibliographical guidance and for some insights.

[8] See T. Arnold, *Introductory Lectures on Modern History*, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1842), pp. 46–47, especially consult also Curtin, *The Image of Africa,* pp. 375–377. See also Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1845), esp. pp. 435–443. This notion of a moving center of civilization is also discussed in my Inaugural Lecture, *Ancient Greece in African Political Thought*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967).

[9] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, R. B. McCallum (ed.), (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). Consult also Joseph Ike Asike, "Culture, Development and Philosophy," *Africa and the World*, Vol. I, No. 3, (April 1988), pp. 20–25.

[10] *Ibid.* Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., for example, makes a similar point when he argues that "The dangers to stability presented by ethnic and other parochialism are magnified in most African states by a lack of that fundamental of common values and widely shared principles of political behavior generally termed 'consensus.' Typically, the terms of a consensus prescribe that the pursuit of group interests be conducted peaceably and within established institutions of the constitutional framework." See Rosberg, "Democracy and the New African States" in Kenneth Kirkwood (ed.), *St. Antony's Papers on African Affairs*, No. 2, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), p. 26. Comparable arguments abound in the literature on democracy in new states.

[11] See Packenham, "Approaches to the Study of Political Development," *World Politics,* Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Oct. 1964), pp. 108–120. For subsequent additional insights, I have benefited from conversations with Gwendolen Carter, the late William O. Brown and the late James S. Coleman.

[12] Packenham, "Approaches to the Study of Political Development."

[13] See esp. Shils, *Political Development in the New States*, (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965), pp. 10 ff. See also David Easton, "Political Science in the United States: Past and Present," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (1985), pp. 133–152.

[14] Shils, *Political Development in the New States*.

[15] Gabriel Almond has shared such a vision of political development, especially in his earlier work. A more cautious but related formulation is Eisenstadt's who says: "Historically, modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries to the South American, Asian and African continents." See Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 1. Consult also the series of books entitled "Studies in Political Development" sponsored by the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council of the United States. Of special interest as a study of value-systems in Lucian W. Pye and

Sidney Verba (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

[16] See McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1963). For a more ambivalent work, see J. M. Roberts, *The Triumph of the West*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985).

[17] Parsons, "Evolutionary Universals in Society," *American Sociological Review*, XXIX (June 1964), p. 356. See also in the same issue of the journal, S. N. Eisenstadt, "Social Change, Differentiation and Evolution."

[18] James Roland Pennock, "Political Development, Political Systems and Political Goods," *World Politics*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (April 1966), p. 424.

[19] Ibid. p. 434. Pennock cites an appendix in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, (Princeton, 1960) and Phillips Cutright, "National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 1963), pp. 253–264. Another discussion by Almond of some of these issues is in his article, "A Development Approach to Political Systems," *World Politics*, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (Jan. 1965), pp. 183–214.

[20] See Genesis, chapter 9 (especially verses 24–26) and chapter 10 (especially verses 6–20).

THREE SCHOOLS OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: CULTURAL, IDEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL

There are, at least, three identified distinct schools of philosophy in Africa: the cultural school, encompassing the oral tradition and its lessons; the ideological school, encompassing the ideas of political activists and leaders; and the critical school, encompassing academic philosophers—usually based at universities.

Cultural philosophy is the philosophy of sages, usually the accumulated wisdom of ancestry. Ideological philosophy is the philosophy of advocates, rallying intellectual skills to the service of particular political or moral causes. Critical philosophy is the philosophy of academic rationalists—trained in method, as well as content, and sometimes putting method before content.[1]

The Cultural School

The cultural school of African philosophy could be a part of philosophy without philosophers, a body of philosophical thought which has accumulated across generations. But in what sense is it philosophy without philosophers? Philosophy is, admittedly, a complex search for meaning in relations between ideas, values, and principles in relationships amongst and between human beings, and in relations between human beings and nature. Cultural philosophy is cumulative across generations, with no identifiable authors.

Secondly, cultural philosophical thought is basically collective, rather than individual in origin. African Platos, Aristotles, Kants, and Descartes are part of a collective flow of intellectual history.

Thirdly, African cultures had no concept of intellectual property or copyright. Brilliant ideas or brilliant poems, therefore, either became part of a shared heritage or receded into oblivion.

And since there was no private intellectual property, plagiarism would have been a strange concept in Africa. Indeed, according to African beliefs, individuals always plagiarize from society. Individuals plagiarize

language from society and the meaning of words. Individuals plagiarize values and the traffic indicators of morality from society. Individuals plagiarize concepts from society and seek to build normative models upon them.

The primary plagiarism is what individual philosophers have hijacked from society: values, words, and concepts. The secondary plagiarism is what society received back from gifted individuals without acknowledgement.

> The stream of experience meanders on
> In the vast expanse of the valley of time
> The new is come and the old is gone
> The oral tradition in a changing clime

The cultural school of philosophy is rooted primarily in indigenous traditions. It is what is sometimes called "ethnophilosophy." But we prefer the term "cultural" mainly because it is more accurate in this instance. The fact that much of indigenous philosophy is ethnic-specific (e.g., the philosophy of the Lugbara) is only one attribute of that body of thought. Cultural philosophy also tends, by and large, to be collectivist, and is transmitted mainly through the oral tradition.

But the collectivism should not be exaggerated. There were individual innovators as well. This corpus of African thought is sociological—encompassing the way of life of a people, the rules governing it, and the cumulative wisdom of the ancestors across generations—but sometimes guided by exceptional individuals.

If, in the West, philosophy begins with thought, and empirical science begins with touch, cultural philosophy in Africa makes no sharp distinction between thought and touch. The completed syllogism of one aspect of African cultural philosophy is as follows:

> We feel,
> Therefore we think,
> Therefore we are!

In time-scale, the cultural current of philosophy in Africa includes pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial phases. It is almost by definition the oldest and most durable of Africa's philosophical traditions.

But for our purposes, in this chapter, we distinguish between culture and ideology. Here, we use the narrow sense of ideology as a policy-oriented body of ideas, mainly designed to govern political action and define political goals. Of course, culture does include ideology, and the

cultural current of philosophy in our sense subsumes political goals and action. But culture is a whole way of life, and not merely the arena of political relations. The cultural school of African philosophy includes such concerns as relations between man and nature, between the living and the dead, between husband and wife, as well as between rulers and subjects in those African societies which did traditionally have distinct rulers.

The ideological current of African thought is even more narrowly political. It tends to be mainly colonial and post-colonial, and ranges from Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. There was very little of this kind of philosophizing in the pre-colonial period. Ideological thought is, therefore, in this particular sense, primarily a child of colonialism and its aftermath. It does include Kenya's Oginga Odinga as a thinker. Cultural philosophy is, in the first instance, conceived in indigenous languages. Ideological philosophy in Black Africa is disproportionately in European languages.

Cultural philosophy is, as we have indicated, mainly collectivist and cumulative. The tradition is not usually in terms of great individual thinkers. There are very few African Platos, African Lockes and Rousseaus, or African Hegels. The current of cultural philosophy is normally the flow of collective wisdom, cumulative across generations.

Ideological philosophy in colonial and post-colonial Africa raises the individual afresh as the fountain of ideas. African philosophy begins to be studied in terms of the ideas of individuals like Amilcar Cabral and Gamal Abdel Nasser, rather than the philosophies of cultural units like the Kakwa or the Berbers.

If cultural philosophy is ethnic-specific in the sense we mentioned, e.g., Yoruba philosophy, ideological philosophy tends to be Africa-specific, in the sense of generalizing about Africa as a whole or the Black experience worldwide. In other words, while the fountain of ideological philosophy is narrower than the fountain of cultural philosophy (the individual thinker instead of collective wisdom), the subject-matter of ideological philosophy is often wider (being concerned with Africa as a whole or Black people generally, rather than a particular ethnic group).

A particular thinker like Agostinho Neto of Angola was a narrower fountain of ideas than the Ovambo people as a source of collective cultural wisdom. But Neto was concerned about the Black genius in international capitalist conditions. He knew more about Africa and the world than the Ovambo ancestors perhaps did.

The ultimate value of cultural philosophy is probably identity. All the other elements reinforce the self-awareness and identity of, say, the Wolof as a people. On the other hand, the ultimate value of ideological

philosophy has tended to be liberation. Some thinkers have linked liberation to Pan-Africanism, others to Black genius. Of course, other values also come into play. But because of the nature of the colonial impact in this particular period of African history, the political focus of so much of Africa's ideological preoccupation has centered on liberation.

Although we must not confuse it with populism, cultural philosophy is to some scholars basically a philosophy of the masses. It consists of ideas which are essentially often intelligible to ordinary people. The philosophy is expressed in languages, indigenous African languages, which are meaningful to the average citizen. Although there are exceptions, like the thought of Ogotonmeli of the Dogon, cultural philosophy is basically about a familiar way of life, intellectually accessible to almost every man or woman in the village.

On the other hand, ideological philosophy in our sense is basically elitist, even when it seeks to identify with the masses. Amilcar Cabral identified with the most ordinary of Africans, and Fanon elevated even the lumpen-proletariat to a level of dignity and respectability unimagined by the more skeptical Karl Marx. And yet neither Marx nor Fanon, nor indeed Cabral, is intelligible to the ordinary villager in Burkina Faso or among the rural Karamojong of Uganda. The ideas of Marx and Fanon constitute a conversation among the urbanized and westernized African elite.

A central problem with Africa's ideological thought continues to be the language in which it is expressed. While empirical science elsewhere begins with the five senses—touch, sight, smell, hearing, and feeling—linguistic philosophy is often concerned with the five tenses: was, is, will be, ought and eternal.

More important than the philosophy of language in Africa is the language of philosophy. Colonial and post-colonial ideologies are disproportionately in European languages. The formal study of philosophy at African universities is done in foreign imperial languages: English, French, Portuguese, etc. Most of the towering modern African thinkers, from Edward W. Blyden to Paulin J. Houtondji, have conducted their primary discourse in European languages. The main exceptions are in Arabic-speaking Africa.

As for those African thinkers inspired by external ideologies, it is a socio-linguistic impossibility for an African to be a sophisticated Marxist without being substantially Westernized. This is because access to Marxist literature is still overwhelmingly in European languages. An African learns his or her first European language not simply as a skill but in a massive educational process of acculturation. By the time the African is

competent enough in a European language to understand Marxist literature, that African is substantially Westernized.

It is this bondage of language which had made so much of ideological philosophy in Africa hopelessly elitist, even when it is doctrinally opposed to elitism. Much of the philosophy of people like Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique was committed to liberation and morally concerned about ordinary African people. But most of such ideological philosophy had inadvertently erected for itself a linguistic barrier to keep the ordinary people out. It is not an iron curtain; it is a curtain of the impenetrable verb. The people cannot understand the language—not because it is a technical idiom, but because it is a foreign tongue. That is one of the most fundamental of the differences between the cultural current of African philosophy, transmitted orally in indigenous languages, and the ideological current, transmitted in writing using European languages.

Arab Africa has been less dependent on European languages. Arabic has filled the gap. Gamal Abdel Nasser's philosophy of the revolution was originally in Arabic. On the other hand, in Arab Africa, both cultural and ideological philosophies have often been inseparable from religion. Issues of mosque and magistrate, church and state, have come to the fore. The tension between secularism and religious thought was sometimes at its sharpest in Egypt. It was in 1928 that Hassan al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood, with considerable consequences for the entire subsequent period:

> In its sixty years, the Brotherhood has managed to politicize Islam as no other indigenous popular movement has ever done in Egypt, . . .   In its most violent phase (1945–1965) the Brotherhood was implicated in assassinations of its political opponents in both royal and revolutionary Egypt.[2]

Gamal Abdel Nasser broke the power of the Brotherhood in Egypt for a while. Later on, internal divisions weakened the power of the Brotherhood in the concluding years of the twentieth century. But the Muslim Brotherhood has remained one of the most active schools of Islamic ideology throughout much of Arab Africa. Other streams of Islamic thought in Egypt have included Sufism and the established authority of the *ulamaa* of Al-Azhar University.

Ideological philosophy in Morocco during this period included issues of whether or not there was a Muslim equivalent of the divine right of kings. Particularly dramatic was the famous *fatwa*, legal opinion, by Sheikh Al Islam Moulay Al Arbi Alaoui, given in December 1963. He ruled that the legitimacy of the monarch depended on whether he ascended