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CONTENTS

African Philosophers in Discussion

- H. Odera Oruka 3
*For The Sake Of Truth - Response to Wiredu's
Critique of "Truth and Belief".*
- Sichalwe M. Kasanda 23
The African Scholar Through the "UNZA Graduate".

Popperian Themes

- Lolle Nauta 31
*Dogmatists and their Critics - A Philosophical
Inquiry into the Roots of Rigidity.*
- Kambaji wa Kambaji 53
*Quelques Réflexions sur les fondements
épistémologique de la Connaissance Sociologique.*
- Godwin Sogolo 75
Popper's Hermeneutics and African Thought

Others

- Gerald J. Wanjohi 87
St. Thomas Aquinas's Philosophy of Education.
- Notes on Contributors 105

Résumé

Cet article est la réponse de l'auteur à une critique par le professeur Kwasi Wiredu d'un précédent article, "Truth and Belief", étant une critique de la conception de Wiredu concernant la vérité.

La présent texte traite l'affirmation de Wiredu que la vérité, ou les connaissances doivent être prises comme la confirmation d'un point de vue, rien de plus. Autrement dit: que la vérité n'est pas absolue mais qu'elle est seulement définie et soutenable dans le contexte du point de vue qu'elle confirme.

L'auteur s'impose de montrer que le défaut de cette position de Wiredu est qu'elle diminue, à juste titre, le prestige du concept de la vérité, mais qu'elle ne peut le faire qu'en exaltant le concept de l'opinion et d'élever celui-ci au statut de la connaissance.

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

H.Odera Oruka

My "Truth And Belief"¹ has provoked a long and, I would say, considerate reply from Professor Kwasi Wiredu.² I very much appreciate Professor Wiredu's rejoinder for it makes his view on the problem of Truth and Belief much clearer and thereby removes certain previous disagreements between our views on the subject.

A special praise ought in fact to be made of Professor Wiredu's philosophical dexterity and mastery of the English language. In the exposition of the argument on this subject Wiredu's mind displays a depth and logical acumen which must be admirable to many who value reason and philosophical inquiry. The tact and philosophical niceties which accompany his discussion, make the discussion intellectually sophisticated and attractive.

This sophistication in Prof. Wiredu, however, makes the task of pinpointing what may be the flaws in his thesis extremely difficult.

Before I come to what can still be considered our points of disagreement and a formulation of my own views, I wish first to state as briefly as I can Wiredu's own position as I now understand it.

I.

Prof. Wiredu distinguishes between the weak sense and the strong sense of an opinion (pp 197-8). The former has to do with belief, opinion or judgement in which the evidence is scanty and is therefore held only with a doubtful or uncertain conviction. In the latter sense opinion equates with a view or judgement maintained with full certainty or as an outcome of a systematic mental effort. In the strong sense, therefore, Wiredu considers opinion as a thought advanced with full assurance from a particular point of view. He refers to this sort of opinion as "a considered opinion".

In expounding that truth is nothing but an opinion, i.e. that every case of truth is a case of an opinion or a belief, Wiredu uses the term 'opinion' in the strong sense of the word. And in this sense, he argues,

opinion is held in accordance with the principle of rational inquiry. He writes:

"Incidentally the insistence on the need for belief to be in accordance with the canons of rational investigation is what distinguishes my view from relativism. Truth is not relative to the point of view. It is a point of view born out of rational inquiry, and canons of rational inquiry have a universal human application." (p 199)

Although Wiredu maintains that every case of truth is a case of opinion he emphasizes that he does not imply that the concept of truth is identical with the concept of (a considered) opinion. What he maintains can be formulated as follows:

"P is true = p is believed (or opined), if and only if the point of view involved in both sides of the equation is one and the same (p 206)."

Truth according to Professor Wiredu is "primarily a first person concept" (p 205). I take this to mean that, in his view, an assertion or statement cannot just be true, it must be true only as, or in the context of, the point of view from which it is advanced or declared. Taking the letter P to stand for any assertion or statement and T to represent a truth-claim, the formula "Tp" (if supposed to express the claim that P is true) is not, therefore, quite correct or complete. To make it complete, one must add the indicator of the point of view. Taking say, the letter "i" to stand for this indicator, the complete form of the assertion would be "T_ip". And if the letter "B" is to stand for belief or opinion in the strong sense, then a complete form of the assertion 'p is believed' becomes "B_ip". Thus, T_ip = B_ip is the correct equation in Wiredu's effort to connect truth with belief or opinion (p 207).³

I judge, therefore, that the general formula of Prof. Wiredu's view would be something like, T_vp = B_vp, where the letter "v" is the general indicator of the factor of point of view, and would have a substitute in every particular case. Thus if a belief is taken in the strong sense then Prof. Wiredu's thesis implies that truth and belief are equivalent provided,

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

of course, that the point of view remains one and the same.

Further, Wiredu's position implies that belief and knowledge, given identical points of view, also entail each other. Taking "K" as a sign for knowledge-claim, then the proposition 'p is known' = p is believed, the formula would be:

$K1p = B1p;$
and in general:
 $Kvp = Bvp.$

He writes:

The orthodox account of the relation between knowledge and belief is vitiated by a certain unmindfulness of the role of point of view in this matter. This weakness is manifest in the common objection to any suggestion of an equivalence between knowledge and belief. The objection is that since belief, never mind with whatever strength it is held, can be false but the same cannot be said of knowledge it follows that knowledge and belief cannot be equivalent in any sense. The answer is simply that this ignores the first person context. In this kind of perspective there is just nothing like a false belief, for it is nonsensical to say "I believe that p but p is false". Talk of false belief is sensible only when a disparity in point of view is envisaged. Thus one can only say "X believes that p but p is false" where the falsity claim obviously emanates from a point of view other than X's" (p 205).

This quotation is important and may help to clarify the misunderstanding on the question of whether or not Wiredu's position implies that every opinion is true. I wish, therefore, to digress shortly for a brief remark on this particular question.

Prof. Wiredu takes my argument in section IV of "Truth and Belief" that given his thesis one cannot maintain two mutually contradictory positions or a contradictory conjunctive belief to arise from the possibility that I understand his view to mean that every opinion is true. This is not quite correct. A contradictory conjunctive belief or assertion consists at least of two parts which are such that one affirms and the other

denies the affirmation. It takes the form of, say, "p and not p". By the logic of it, therefore, a contradictory conjunctive belief must always be false no matter from whatever point of view it is held. Now, for one and the same person to maintain simultaneously and firmly the belief such as "p and not p" means, given the concept of truth as opinion, that from the point of view of this person it is true that "p and not p". The truth-belief equation would, in this case, take the following form:

$B1(p. - p) = T1(p. - p)$: Some person believes firmly that "p and not p", so from the point of view of his belief it is true that "p and not p".

The equation above would, if it is possible, be in line with Wiredu's thesis. But it breaks, even in the first person context, the logic or rule of a contradictory conjunctive belief. It is, however, open to Wiredu to either uphold this logical rule and so deny that it is ever possible for anyone to maintain a contradictory conjunctive belief from one and the same point of view, or to disregard the rule and argue, like the mystics, that his view is above and beyond such rules. Wiredu chooses to do the former: he rules out the possibility of a false belief in the first person perspective (as the quotation above shows) and is inclined to treat an explicitly contradictory belief in general to signify a form of "mental illness"(p 201). It is, therefore, perfectly clear that Wiredu's thesis rules out the possibility of a contradictory belief given the same point of view. And the reason for this is that such belief would be false while it is impossible on his view that a belief (in the strong sense) be false in the first person perspective.

So, I argue, in section IV of my paper, that Prof. Wiredu's view implies the impossibility of anyone maintaining simultaneously two mutually contradictory propositions or beliefs, not because I understand his thesis "to imply that every opinion is true", as he presumes I do, but because I understand it to entail that an opinion (in the strong sense) held from one and the same point of view, cannot in that context be false. I may return to this point later in the discussion.

Wiredu emphasises what he refers to as "the human character of truth". Truth, according to him, "does not consist in any relation between our

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

statements and anything outside the general context of the statements" (p 198). He thus rejects the correspondence theory of truth. In his view he does not see how a statement can as a whole correspond or refer to a fact as the correspondence theory claims. What refers is not the statement but its "ideational content" or simply the idea; a statement such as "The tree is tall" is not what as a whole refers but the idea, 'tall tree', and the reference is not a fact but "a tall tree".⁴ The claim that truth does not exist in any relation between statements and facts outside the statements makes the distinction between propositions of natural science and analytical propositions of logic and mathematics of no special importance. Whether a proposition is a factual or a formally analytic statement, this would not, in Wiredu's view, exclude it from the realm of opinions.

In line with the emphasis on the "human character of truth" is his wish that we ought to be modest and undogmatic in all matters of truth since truth is not as infallible, eternal or unshakeable as it is often deemed to be in various intellectual, ideological and religious circles. On the other hand opinion, in his view, is not as mundane, shakable and uncertain as it is generally considered to be by many people. This is an attempt by Wiredu to downgrade the concept of truth and exalt that of opinion. This attempt to remove eternal glory from "truth" and to raise opinion to the status of knowledge and truth is something that is needed to help temper the arrogance of those who identify their beliefs and dogmas with absolute truth. On this account I am in sympathy with Wiredu, since I am of the opinion that the concept of absolute truth is still a mere conjecture. But I wonder whether Prof. Wiredu has not in his attempt paid too high a price, namely gaining the removal of eternal glory from truth by raising opinion to the position of knowledge.

II

Professor Wiredu maintains that every truth is but "the affirmation of a point of view" or "necessarily a truth of some point of view" (p 200 and 206). But I wonder whether this point is supposed to rule out the possibility that some truth may be a truth or an affirmation (or a disconfirmation) of all possible points of view. If this proposition is not ruled out then the following statement would be its enigmatic form:

Some truths are truths independently or regardless of any particular opinion or point of view.

Take some proposition p . Suppose from some point of view, "1" it is asserted or entertained that p is true, i.e. T_{1p} , there would be no reason to rule out that given other points of view, say 2, 3, 4.. and n , we may establish that T_{2p} , T_{3p} , T_{4p} ... T_{np} . It would then be that the truth of p is not an affirmation or instance of any particular point of view; and hence that it is not necessarily a truth of some point of view. In this case it would be irrelevant to ask from what perspective or point of view p is true. The statement such as T_{1p} or T_{2p} would then be an awkward or unnecessary claim. Sufficient to express the truth of p would simply be the formula " T_p ".

A relativist would not accept the bare statement " T_p ", nor its explanation $T_p = T_{1p}$, T_{2p} , T_{3p}and T_{np} , since this would mean that p is true from whichever angle or in all systems. But since Wiredu wishes to dissociate himself from relativism, it should be less difficult for him to see some sense in accepting " T_p " as a complete and sufficient statement in itself requiring no identification whatsoever with any particular point of view.

We can treat tautologies as instances of the statement that some truths are truths independently or regardless of any point of view. In his An Inquiry Into Meaning And Truth, Bertrand Russell writes:

"What I know must be true, but truth is wider than knowledge in two respects. First, there are true sentences (if we accept the law of the excluded middle) as to which we have no opinion whatever; second, there are true sentences which we believe and yet do not know, because we have arrived at them from faulty reasoning".⁵

Russell in my opinion is right in this claim. But the crucial issue here is the tenability of the law of the excluded middle. This law is not without its detractors in philosophy and there are controversies about its exact interpretation. Here in Africa our colleague Dr. A.A. Makinde of the University of Ife, in an article "Formal Logic and the Paradox of Exclu-

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

ded Middle", argues that the law of the excluded middle or a statement framed on its basis, such as "The object is either brown or not-brown", fails to tell us the "real truths" and is thus epistemologically uninteresting. According to Dr. Makinde this law, like the formal laws of thought, abounds with paradoxes and defects which should make it deserve no serious attention in the useful investigation of real truths. He terms it "the law of excluded evidence".

It is, however, this exclusion of evidence which gives the law of excluded middle its strength and why any of its statements would be true regardless of any opinion whatever. The law states generally that either a statement is true of one and the same thing or its negation is; and there is no middle course. (The "or" here is meant in the exclusive sense of the term). The exclusion of evidence means as well the exclusion of any particular opinion or view of being of relevance in establishing the truth of the claim of the law.

In "Truth As Logical Constant, With Application To The Principle Of Excluded Middle"⁶ Wiredu considers what he calls the usual interpretation of the law of the excluded middle, namely, that "every proposition is either true or false". This "two-valued" concept of the law, common with its classical interpreters, is found by himself to have a hypothetical assumption which rules out the possibility of a middle way in the truth determination of all instances of the law. He offers an interpretation of the law termed "the intuitionists' approach" which allows for the middle way. In this interpretation the law of the excluded middle does not in every case rule out a middle way, and he writes: "the inquiry may terminate in uncertainty or confusion". And so he explains that this middle way is "simply the absence of a definite determination or, in certain cases, a proof of the impossibility of a definite (mathematical) determination."⁷

Wiredu's argument does not, however, damage the law of excluded middle (and he says so himself) as Dr. Makinde's thesis claims to do. It is damaging, Wiredu claims, to its "classical misinterpretation".

However, the law of the excluded middle, whether interpreted in the "two-valued" form (as in classical logic) or the "three-valued" one (as in the intuitionists' approach) is still such that certain sentences can on its own authority be true, regardless of any opinion or view point. From a

classical interpretation of the law such sentences are true just because they are or can exclusively and necessarily only be true or false but not both and it is just this possibility which is expressed by the law. Hence, they are true in themselves, in their own nature, but not in any particular first person context, although they can be expressed from any given perspective. On the other hand, the intuitionists' approach to the law is such that we can either be in a position to assign a truth-value to a proposition or we may not. Where we can, the proposition is true or it is false (but not both) and it is true or false from any particular view point or opinion; and so the claim that there are true sentences of which we have no opinion whatever is upheld. Where we are not in a position to determine or assign a truth-value, the issue does not help to substantiate the claim of independent or necessary truths but neither does it help to damage or refute the claim. Nevertheless, the tautology can even in the second case be established. The statement that some propositions are such that 'we exclusively either can know (or determine) that they have truth-value or we can not' is itself the expression of the law of the excluded middle. The acceptance of this statement is conditioned on the acceptance of the law of the excluded middle in two-value sense.

III

Professor Wiredu's sympathy with Charles Sanders Pierce's definition of truth as "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate" warrants some consideration for it may help throw some light on the distinction between what I wish to refer to as truths of opinion and independent truths.

What really should we understand by the statement: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate"? The statement, it appears, can be interpreted either as a statement of fact or a statement of logic. If the former, then what we mean is that there is a certain truth-claim or state-of-affairs which will, as a matter of fact or on the basis of factual evidence, be ultimately affirmed or believed by all who investigate. When such an affirmation or belief comes it would be meaningless to ask from what point of view the claim is true for it is true from whatever point of view. Truth then becomes the locus of con-

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

sidered opinions, i.e. a point on which opinions, if well considered and not misguided, would focus and empty or sublimate themselves as truths.⁸

We can here distinguish between a claim or truth which is advanced as true from some particular point of view but which has not been or cannot be confirmed (or entertained) by other investigations and the claim which has become a focal point for every considered opinion. The former is a "truth of opinion" while the latter is an "independent truth". That what starts as a truth of opinion may end up as an independent truth, while what has become an independent truth may be rejected altogether by all the investigators should not be a matter of dispute. The claim, for example, that "the earth is round" is not a truth of opinion but an independent truth since it is now confirmed or agreed by all who investigate. But this claim may one day be completely rejected by all the investigators as they rejected the previous claim that "the earth is flat". It is however possible that there are still some people who believe that the earth is flat. If so then theirs is a truth of opinion.

If on the other hand Pierce's statement is interpreted as a matter-of-logic then it means there is an opinion or a truth-claim whose characteristic is that it defies identification with any one point of view. It may however be expressed from some one perspective, but its nature is such that it is necessarily or by definition the claim of no particular point of view but of all who correctly investigate. The statements such as "a considered opinion is an opinion" and "there is nothing like a round square" would be examples of this sort of claim.

I sense that Wiredu can still object that his thesis has not really been understood. He can explain that the fact that an opinion comes to be agreed to by all the investigators does not make it cease to be an opinion; it may at most only be a universally well considered opinion; but even this is still an opinion. Wiredu would however have to admit that there is a significant epistemological difference between a universally well considered opinion and an opinion (even if well considered) simply advanced and defended from some given view point. The former is an independent truth and its expression is a matter of confirmed discovery not a point of view. The latter has all the risks of a fable.

Professor Wiredu may, however, wonder why, in spite of his emphasis on the human character of truth and of the non-special status given to

the mathematical and logical propositions in his thesis, I do construe that necessary truths are incompatible with his position. He, however, has an uphill battle to fight if he is to show quite convincingly that necessary truths do not contradict his view. Let us take it that a necessary truth is a statement or a belief which is true in all possible worlds. Now substitute 'perspectives' (or 'points of view') for 'worlds', the proposition should then read:

"a necessary truth is a statement or belief which is true from all possible perspectives or points of view".

Now let us, in line with the view that truth is in a sense 'a point of view', identify a necessary truth as 'a point of view'. The definition of a necessary truth would then be equivalent to the expression that it is a point of view which is affirmed or accepted in all possible worlds. But we can still legitimately ask the question whose point of view is such a point of view? And two answers are likely and both are perfectly in order: 1) it is everybody's point of view and 2) it is nobody's point of view. Each one of the two alternatives seems to refute the thesis of Truth As Opinion. For the first alternative upholds the objectivist theory of truth as against the subjectivist thesis. The second alternative establishes that some truths can be independent of any particular view point.

IV

There are several explanations in Wiredu's rejoinder which seem to help dispose of several of my arguments against the thesis of truth as opinion. These concern the question of relativism, the fact of common experience about knowledge, the analogy of wife-husband to truth-opinion and the difference between the concept of truth (or knowledge) and the concept of belief. I will briefly comment on each one of these.

Wiredu explains that "insistence on the need for belief to be in accordance with the canons of rational investigation is what distinguishes my view from relativism" (p 199). This can be true only if all relativism excludes the canons of rational inquiry. But it is not the case that all relativism does this. Take, for example, what we may refer to as "contextual relativism". This is the position that things or statements are true

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

only in their own contexts; what is true in context c1 need not be true in context c2, and that nothing can be true in all contexts, i.e. universally. This form of relativism is akin to the Wireduian thesis that an assertion is true only from a given view point. But this form of relativism does not rule out canons of rational inquiry, since it is only after rational inquiry that one is able to establish truths according to their contexts. Thus Wiredu's thesis does not really escape the charge of relativism.

I had argued that the fact of common experience (fce) that we know some positions to be true does not, given Wiredu's thesis, mean more than that we believe, opine or are certain that such propositions are true. The thesis asserts or implies that every case of truth is a case of opinion and that the statement "I know that p" = "I believe that p". In this context, therefore, there can be no claim to knowledge which goes beyond a mere assertion of an opinion or belief. A person who upholds this view cannot rationally uphold the fce unless he restricts it only to the concept of belief, i.e. means by it that we sometimes believe some propositions to be true. To take it that there is something in the fce more than the belief-claim is, therefore, to exaggerate the issue.

Wiredu's example from the TWI language should help illustrate the point. The man waiting in front of a room for a friend he had actually seen enter the room, misleadingly knows that the friend is in the room. But the friend had in fact left by a back door. Significantly, the man's knowledge amounts, epistemologically, simply to a belief. Since Wiredu claims (p 208) that the difference between the concept of knowledge and that of belief is purely semantical and not epistemological or ontological, I am surprised that he wishes to take it that fce is a matter for knowledge and not belief. If we cannot distinguish knowledge from belief then the fce is no more a claim about knowledge than about belief.

Wiredu explains that the relation between truth and point of view is in this thesis logically analogous to that between wife and husband; Assuming this then we can infer that since there can be no wife without a husband, there can be no opinion (however stupid) without the corresponding truth. The position then that there are as many truths as there are opinions must mean that every opinion must in its own first person context be true. If therefore two opinions are contradictory there would be

no legitimate way of detecting which one of the two is mistaken; for the only course of action open here is either to take one or the other of the two inconsistent points of view or else to adopt a third view point. But to take a third point of view is logically to be out of context in deciding for or against the two opinions. There can, therefore, as Dr. Peter Bodunrin writes, be "no meaningful disagreement in Wiredu's world".⁹

Wiredu does not wish to imply that the concept of truth or knowledge is identical with that of belief. "Truth", he writes, "has a certain excess of significance over belief" (p 207). So does knowledge. This brings me to the point that there are two theses which Wiredu has to choose clearly between. One is a strong thesis, the other a weak and trivial thesis: the strong thesis would be that the position that every case of truth is a case of an opinion entails that the concept of truth is identical with that of opinion or belief. In this context there can be no false beliefs. And to be true or known would imply to be opined or apprehended, hence nothing would be true or known independently of belief. This would be a very significant thesis indeed and it would necessitate a second thought in our concept of truth.

But there is the weaker thesis. It is that truth is expressible in or as an assertion. But an assertion is an advancement or expression of a particular view point, of an opinion. This would not mean that truth is ontologically an, or a function of, opinion. This would mean that to be known or detected as true is to be opined; but it would not mean that to be true is to be opined. This is a thesis which most modern philosophers would not wish to reject. It does not identify the concept of truth with that of opinion and it implies there must be a significant difference between the two.

It is not absolutely clear which of the two theses Wiredu upholds. There is much evidence that he is for the weaker thesis but then what he says in "To be is to be known"¹⁰ tends to discount this. In this article Wiredu advances the thesis that to be or to exist is to be known. The implication is that nothing is true or knowable outside or independently of the mind. Thus if there were no minds, if there were no opinions, there would be no truths or knowledge. Hence to be is to be opined and "truth as opinion" is taken as a special case of this position.

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

In "Truth And Belief" I had stated that Wiredu uses the plausible principle that knowledge entails belief, to infer the implausible idea that for anything to be true is to be opined. Prof. Wiredu denies that he has ever held the view that to be true is to be opined (p 204). Given his article on "To be is to be known" and p 13 paragraph 2 of "Truth As Opinion", I am amazed at this blatant denial. He writes:

"Bishop Berkeley in 1710 propounded his remarkable paradox that for physical things, to exist is the same as to be perceived.....In consequence, refutations of Berkeley's contention that to be is to be perceived has never, to my knowledge, gone past ignoratio elenchi, the fallacy of assailing the irrelevant.... I am now of the opinion that not only that it is irrefutable, but also that it is in the best harmony with common experience. I am even ready to defend it in a somewhat more general form: I should say that for anything whatever, to be is to be apprehended. I shall, however, proceed here to argue only a special case of this principle namely that to be true is to be opined."¹¹
(emphasis in the original).

V

A NEUTRAL VIEW OF TRUTH

The view of truth that I had maintained in the previous chapter can rightly be referred to as the "neutral theory of truth". I did not in that chapter refer to it by that expression, but I will now do so and give a further formulation of my view. In the process I hope to answer some of the important objections raised by Prof. Wiredu on the issue.

To begin with, let us consider the question of "absolute truth". I take this to mean a truth on which all other truths depend, i.e. that which explains or would explain the whole of reality. Other truths may change, but the absolute truth is necessary, permanent and unlimited. It is not, therefore, strange that some have identified absolute truth with God, since God is conceived as the ultimate explanation of everything. It is not clear how exactly other truths relate to the absolute truth, but it is

believed simply that there is a relationship otherwise the smaller truths would not exist.

I do not wish to believe that the idea of absolute truth, the way I conceive it, is a myth. But I believe that at the current stage of human knowledge absolute truth is unknown. We have no generally acceptable objective criterion for its determination. Thus, we have to forgo talks of absolute truth and uphold the notion of limited and contextual truths: all truths, so far, are limited or confined to their contexts.

A statement such as "t is true" would, to be precise, have to mean any of the following propositions (which in fact say really the same thing):

T is true = a) In a certain context C, T is given.

b) In a certain context C T is a positive

claim.

c) Given C, T is a logical outcome.

d) Assuming C, T conforms or coheres.

e) In the context C, T is an expectation.

It is necessary to clarify whether or not the above position is similar to that of Wiredu which ties truth to a point of view.

Wiredu's position is that every truth is necessarily a view from some particular point, and there are as many truths as there are points of view. This position rules out objective truth and ends up as pure subjectivity. As Peter Bodunrin says in his paper, "Wiredu denies an objectivist epistemology"¹² and so there can be no meaningful, objective disagreement in his theory.

Our procedure of limiting truth to a context means, however, that every truth-claim can be true or meaningful only on a given criterion. There can be many and various points of view using one single criterion. There will, therefore, be many points of view seeking for a judgement which, if correct, will be true not just according to one view point, but to all of them. Objectivity is thus not ruled out. There must be objectivity within a context. Given a context C, any claim t must turn out to be exclusively either true or false or else neither (irrelevant). And this be so no matter what point of view is involved.

We do not imply that there are as many truths as there are contexts. Although every truth is true only in a given context, there are not as

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

many truths as there are contexts. A context or criterion of truth need not itself be true. And within any one context there can be as many truth-claims. The expectation, however, is that such claims, if correct or authentic to the context, would be compatible.

The explanation in the foregoing paragraphs should help explain why in the previous chapter I listed a number of possible criteria of truth such as a moral norm, a scientific law, a necessary truth or an opinion of some military dictator etc..

Take first the question of a moral norm as a criterion of truth. Let this norm be a religious one, namely 'Evildoers displease God and it is always wrong for anyone to displease God'. Using this as a criterion we can infer that the following sentences are "true" in its context:

1. It is right to refrain from displeasing God.
2. God wishes every one to avoid evil.

It can of course rightly be seen, as Prof. Wiredu has noted, that the above type of sentences, if true, can not be true in the scientific or non-moral sense. They are in fact moral truths and they are true in their moral contexts. The ethical theory which stipulates that moral judgement can not be true or false makes the mistake of assuming that a criterion of truth can only be a proposition which is empirical or analytic. In our view it can just as well be neither of these.

That a criterion of truth can be an observational or empirical sentence or a necessarily true proposition should cause no objection. But something should be said about a criterion being an opinion of a military dictator. Such an opinion may be something like General Amin's wish or belief in 1972, namely 'that all Asians in Uganda should quit the country because they are a danger to the economy'.

In the context of General Amin's wish or belief the following sentences would then be true:

1. Asians are unwanted in Uganda.
2. The presence of Asians poses an economic danger for Uganda.
3. The departure of the Asians would be good for Uganda.

Now any opinion contrary to the above claims would, in the context of General Amin's wish or opinion, be false. And given that in the Uganda

of that moment the General's opinion was the basic criterion of political judgement any such judgements, if contrary to his opinion, had to be rendered incorrect or false. Maybe such rejected judgements could still be true, but then only in different contexts and on different criteria.

It must of course be clear that truths which have as their criterion a necessarily true sentence or an empirically observable one, are more plausible claims than those based on the whims of opinions of military dictators.

Since we have, so far, ruled out the notion of absolute truth, and asserted the view of limited truth according to context, no truth-claim would be absolutely universal or permanent. Every truth-claim is only universal or permanent in degree. Some are more so than others. Obviously a necessary truth is definitely more permanent than the opinion of a military dictator, even though it may be more trivial than the latter.

Conflicts of truth within the same context need not be much of a problem to solve, since ultimately such conflicts are not really conflicts. But conflicts of truths from different contexts are possible and much more of a problem. It is possible that in some context, C1, it is claimed or asserted that "t is p", and in another context, C2, the assertion is that "t is n". And it can be the case that in both C1 and C2, "p is not n". The conflict here would arise from the fact that if "t is p" then "t is not n" and vice-versa, no matter which of the two contexts is assumed. When this is the case we would speculate on whether "t is p" or "t is n" by reflecting on the plausibility of the respective criteria on which each of the claims is based. That which is the more plausible criterion will be the one which is more universal or permanent than the other. "Universal" not from the point of view that it has more adherents, as Wiredu thinks, but from the point of view that given its nature, it is more likely to be upheld by more people and in more regions of the globe.

The example that both in C1 and C2 the assertion that "p is not n" can be a positive claim, implies that it is possible for propositions to be true in more than one context. This may seem, but it is not, a counter example to our theory. That things are true only in their own contexts does not rule out the possibility that certain things may be true or false in several contexts. The following is an analogy: a man is a husband only if he is attached to a woman classified as his wife. But still a man can be a

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

husband to more than one wife, at least in traditional African systems of marriage.

I explained in my paper "Truth and Belief" that when two propositions are in conflict on the ground that they are based on different criteria, the more universal or permanent is the one whose criterion is more scientific or self-evident than the other. Wiredu asks "what reason is there to suppose that a belief which has more adherents than another will have a criterion which is more "scientific and self-evident" than the other?" And he wonders also what becomes of my view when for a given proposition being scientific and being self-evident are in tension (p 310).

It is important to note that in connecting the term "scientific" to the term "self-evident" I use the connection "or". But Wiredu referring to this employs the conjunction "and". My view is that a criterion is either scientific or self-evident although it can be neither of the two. The disjunction here is taken in the exclusive sense.

When a criterion is scientific (as in the empirical theory of truth) it must exclude the possibility that it is self-evident (as in the rational theory of truth) and vice-versa. But when scientific or self-evident it can be so in degrees. So the possibility that a criterion is both scientific and self-evident is besides the point.

Our judgement then is that in a conflict where the criteria can be judged scientific or self-evident that one of them which has more degrees of this quality is the one more likely to be upheld by many and for a longer period of time. Universality and permanency of truth is thus a function of the nature of this criterion, but not the other way around.

We refer to our position as that of the "general theory of truth" because it distinguishes the general statements such as 't is true' from the personal commitment such as 'I am committed to the point or belief that t is true'. The former refers to a context or criterion which I (the speaker) may not personally approve of; the latter is a declaration that I am committed to and uphold particular criterion. Generally statements about truth per se are expressed as the former, those about belief as the latter. A confusion of the two may result in identifying truth with belief. But for the sake of truth this should not be done.

Notes

1. In the UNIVERSITAS Vol 5 no 1 , november 1975, Univ. of Ghana Press. p 177-184.

2. In the UNIVERSITAS, Vol 5 no 2, March 1976, pp 197-210. All the references in the text placed in brackets are to UNIVERSITAS. The paper has since been published (without any substantial modification) as Chapter 11 in Wiredu's Philosophy and an African Culture (PAC), Cambridge Univ. Press (1980).

3. Another form of the formula Tip is expressed by Prof. Wiredu as 1-----lp, where the sign 1----- is the assertion-sign. See his "Truth as a Logical Constant" Philosophical Quarterly, October 1975, p 311.

4. This explanation is in Wiredu's "What is Philosophy" UNIVERSITAS Vol 3 no 2 1974, pp 52-53 and PAC (op.cit), pp 156-157.

5. Bertrand Russell, An Inquiry Into Meaning And Truth, London, 1940. p 226-227.

6. Op.Cit. note 3.

7. Ibid p 315.

8. In the paper "Pierce's Final Opinion" R.L. Trammell argues and explains that Charles Pierces' writings indicate that the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is equivalent to "the final conclusion" or "catholic consent". To this final opinion every enquirer would bow "Amen". And he adds: "Truth for Pierce is public. The final consensus is an idealisation of the publicity of truth" (Proceedings of XVth World Congress of Philosophy Vol 3 p 396).

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH

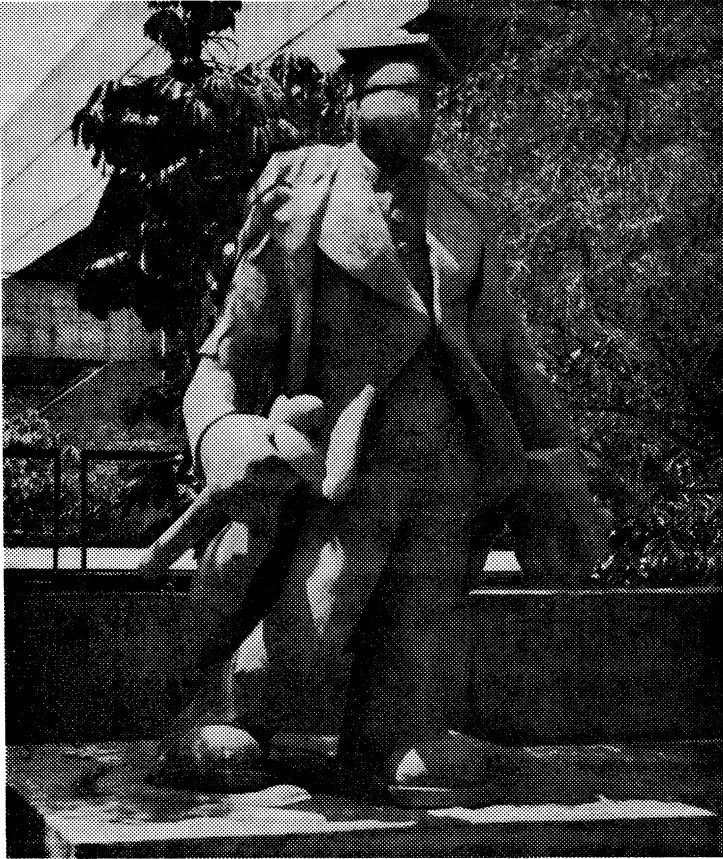
Writing on Pierce and Dewey, Richard Bernstein in Praxis and Action (UPP, Philadelphia,1971) explains that for Pierce "Reality itself is characterised as that which corresponds to the true judgements arrived at by the ideal community of inquirers, which is ultimately the basis for distinguishing the real from the unreal and the true from the false, functions as regulative ideal in Pierce's philosophical scheme." p 190, my emphasis.

9.P.Bodunrin, "Belief, Truth and Knowledge" in Second Order.

10.In the Legon Journal of the Humanities Vol 1, 1974. p 11-22 and PAC pp 124-138.

11."Truth As Opinion", UNIVERSITAS, Vol 1 no 3, March 1972, p 13 and PAC, p 113-114.

12.P.Bodunrin (Op.Cit.) p.13



Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur regarde l'intellectuel africain avec les yeux aveugles d'une statue et il exprime, avec la langue muette de celle-ci, ses doutes concernant la pertinence de l'intellectuel africain pour son peuple et ses conditions de vie, et concernant la pertinence de son éducation dont le contenu est créé loin de son continent et même de ses aspirations qui sont orientée en dehors de son continent.

L'auteur insiste, auprès de l'intellectuel africain, sur une remise en question de ses priorités et sur le renoncement à son aspiration d'être gréco-latinisé et sur sa contribution effective au développement de l'Afrique et des Africains.

THE AFRICAN SCHOLAR
THROUGH "THE UNZA GRADUATE"¹
Sichalwe M. Kasanda

May I take the liberty to introduce myself, please. But before I do so and before you can rise and condemn or praise the plight of the pen of my oral traditions, take a good look at both yourself and me. Have you noticed any difference?

Well, I am the University of Zambia Statue, popularly known among my peers as THE UNZA GRADUATE. I have, since 1964, date of my country's political independence, acquired special land rights to possess a plot between the Library and the Senate Chamber of the university as a representative of SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE - the twin motors of this institution's motto. The place I occupy is that of a World, African and Zambian scholar. It is dedicated to serving humanity as a whole but in a manner that is excellent.

If by now you have already examined, carefully and closely, my posture and apparel - especially my face - you are undoubtedly in a position to see why the present autobiography offers food-aid for serious thought for other than the hungry African stomachs. I have no reason to doubt that, because I have every reason to believe in the honour bestowed upon me as the custodian of World academic standards - though I can do no more than just stand here and let the world, Africa, and Zambia gaze upon, admire, despise or pity me. In my morbid helplessness, I am only able to do one thing: THINK. Hence, it is neither what I carry nor what I wear that constitutes my real possessions but, rather, this that I am so blessed to have - a brain.

At first, I refused to accept the would-have-been contours of my face

1. This article is an edited version of a paper given at the Inaugural Ceremony of the Zambia Society of Educational Development, in Lusaka, on 29 Jan. 1988.

because I did not want to be judged handsome, beautiful or ugly and representing a given race, colour or creed. I did not want to be shown as female or male for I represent all sexes, all ages, at all times and in all places.

As can be seen from what I have just said, I opted for anonymity, impartiality and academic universalism, other than for anything else, in order to be the first monument of world-knowledge to be shared amongst all the living peoples of the earth. What could be nobler than that? Is it not a pity that nobility is not edible!

The only major problem that I have, though, is that of my identity and with it the knowledge and know-how of what to do, and for whom. May I, at this point, unwrap the nature of my predicament, the severity of which I do not have to necessarily share with you.

Look at my face. You are lucky to have eyes to see and read. I do not have them.

In one hand, I carry a hoe but I cannot plan to see where I should dig. In the other I hold a book, but its contents render me illiterate.

See! You are fortunate to possess a nose with which you are able to smell knowledge. I do not have one.

A mouth! You must be delighted to have one; the lips which you can flap to make a point concerning what you need and what you believe in. I do not have one.

Oh, yes! You also have the ears with which you are able to discriminate the sounds of the developed World-Knowledge marketing-bells. I do not have them.

I have my skin, alright, but it is embalmed in the most modern of the academic attires and my face is bandaged in plaster of Paris such that it is impossible for me to feel the direction of the gentle breeze of know-

THE AFRICAN SCHOLAR

ledge and the savage gale of ignorance.

My taste-buds are glued to the jaw of international knowledge and so I cannot sample home-made knowledge and know-how with a view to swallowing that which is sweet, and spitting that which is bitter.

Despite all that, however, I am given a position to stand as the World and African champion of SERVICE and EXCELLENCE. Should I believe that? How I wish I could see, smell, hear, feel and taste my underdevelopment! Then my brain would be in a position to question both the SERVICE that is not for my own advancement and the EXCELLENCE that is for other peoples' excellence, with an aim of taming both the sweet and sweat of my own INNOVATION and DEVELOPMENT.

Wouldn't the brown eyes of the African desert suit me better and help me to map out the distant future of the continent, trace my spoor of history and survey the wealth of my present environment?

I do realise now that the estuary of a nose that could be identified with Africa would be the only one fit to sniff out the unpaid-for exodus of capital, diamonds, emeralds, elephant tusks and crude oil. And, in a coordinated effort, my hands and brain would have positively toiled to manage the culture of my resources, protect them and prevent them from doing so much for the rest of the World and so little for my own development.

Would it not have been nobler for me to be beautified with two thick lips which would have demonstrated that development charity "begins at home" with the taste of savannah grasslands, the equatorial forests and the sand dunes of a continent endowed with the brilliance of resources that have since been darkened by a foreign socio-cultural misconsumption?

If I had my ears, planted close to the brain, I was going to be in a position to segregate the melodies of mere SURVIVAL from those of true African DEVELOPMENT - a feat that I cannot yet convincingly operation-

alise.

Could someone design an academic gown for me which would be more suited to the sweat pores of my development climate? A gown that would be manufactured from local materials of the name ostrich feather, crocodile skin, ebony and raffia? How hard should I work and how much more of me should go up in flames in order that I may father nothing but other peoples' comfort and development?

Maybe I should not bother so much about my individual physical features. But how can I compromise with attempts to alienate me from the resources of my land, body, my very soul?

Maybe it is not that important for me that I hear the waves of Knowledge lapping against cerebral shores so that I desire to murmur their secret location, see them, touch them and give an African gulp! Yet, is it not true that you take, in broad day light, my wealth and place it in the hands of those who have every means to have everything (and more) that I do not have?

Even as I brood here, I am not expected to have a history that is worth the name. Indeed, the only history I am aware of is that which gave me the authority to stand and be judged behaviourally:

Can he use a knife and fork properly? Is she not tribalistic? Will he not misuse public transport and embezzle public funds? Does she understand cost-effectiveness? Has he been out to study abroad? They have yet to prove that they are worth developing!

Because I am extremely sensitive to other peoples' logistic queries, I spend most of my time burning myself up like a candle to try and behave as they expect me to. As a result, I am left with no time to THINK out alternative socio-economic, political, cultural, scientific, and technological strategies that would generate new modes of my being-in-the-world; ways that will be congruent with my DEVELOPMENT, not just my survival.

THE AFRICAN SCHOLAR

Please do not deny my face the features that are mine, for that would have the same dire consequences for my essence as the turning of my brown eyes to green, my heavy-duty lips into micro-chips, and my estuary nose into Mount Everest's peak. When I spend most of my time trying to discover who and how, why and what I am, I end up hating to THINK and simply BEHAVE.

I detest education for behaviour because it is one of the root causes of underdevelopment. It is the kind of education that guarantees my mere subsistence and dependence because it aims at blocking the only road to the kind of development that would be to my own advantage.

You who have eyes to see, can't you see that all education is and must be for development? For a while, at least, forget about the lack of capital, manpower and imported technologies; forget about tribalism and corruption - and remember to change the mind, body, the very soul of your youth to suit Mother Africa's development, i.e. perfect your own systems, rid your institutions of behavioural brains, and allow the continent to exploit its wealth, manage it, control it, and plough it back into her womb for tomorrow's best sons and daughters.

You who have a nose to smell, can't you smell that the present education is one which makes us know nothing about ourselves and our environment? You claim that you did not know that your nose could smell, yet I say to you that ignorance is no defence for it never allows one to be what one wants to be, know what one wants to know, and develop the know-how with which to act upon one's environment in order to manage it, nourish and protect it from international looting safaris.

You whose tongue is movable, speak out for that education which is tailored to the socio-economic needs, interests, expectations, problems and dreams of our environment, rather than that which appeals to the psychologised learner characteristics of intelligence, motivation, family background, and "good manners" that are not of your own making.

You who have educational systems and theories to invent, contribute to

the development of the total man of Africa by emphasising the philosophical, theoretical, and practical foundations of African education.

You who have the power of decision to exercise, insist on generating and grounding knowledge locally, respecting it, popularising it, disseminating and controlling it.

You who have ears to hear, can you perceive the discord in... the "latest trends" in knowledge-acquisition (savoir être) and know-how (savoir faire) that have already been parcelled and certificated elsewhere for purposes of modernising African consumption and anthropologising the continent's PRODUCTION.

You whose hands are free to caress knowledge, are you able to feel alienation in its texture, deception in its description of our physical, socio-cultural, economic, religious and political institutions, and bias for conformity to the "no man's land" values and norms?

When education is intended to check and 'modernise' another people's behaviour, it stands to be the surest means by which a highly sophisticated underdevelopment-machine is created; a machine that will be unwilling to cope with the rigours of the African environment because it envisions the rebirth of a continent whose ignorant could turn out to be the best educated. That would make it impossible for me to have my eyes, ears, nose and lips back. I need them, badly.

If you have to contribute to that kind of knowledge which will be a partner to development, subscribe to the local body of entrepreneurship first, before moving to the more general "universal" knowledge which is meant to help only those who have means already at hand to appropriate it for their own continued development.

If Africa has to create the independent person, the responsible citizen, the producer, it has first of all to de-educate the consuming dependent being, the admirer of the foreign worlds that unfold before you (and me, I suppose - before my eyelessness) every single day.

THE AFRICAN SCHOLAR

If Africa has to conduct research in: knowledge, know-how, manpower development, instructional materials, methods, methodologies, and the current evaluation systems, then that research should be such that it helps to change, develop and invent new institutions of thought and behaviour, rather than merely serving and servicing the futureless existing ones.

If only all of us, in unison, could say :

NO! to an already dressed education;
JUST A MINUTE! to projects geared merely
to the survival of Africa and the African;
YES! to the freedom of expression, and yet
another YES! to only that kind of self-sufficiency
that is self-serviced....

the continent's socio-economic advancement will, for the first time, have been taken seriously.

As I withdraw into the silence of my pedestal meditation, two hoofless wishes sweep across my mind. The first is that I be reunited with the norms and values of my physical and socio-cultural environment. The other is that I be given back the intellectual, emotional and physical features that distinguish me as well as liken me to my equals the world over. It is only then that I shall effectively face the new world of development; a world that is neither smooth nor undulating but tough, rough, rugged and unshaven - a world that will be my world for my having created it my true African image.

So : Let it be.

Résumé

La présente discussion attaque un phénomène que les philosophes ont nié et repoussé presque universellement, à savoir la phénomène du dogmatisme. L'auteur examine les arguments qui ont été avancés contre ce phénomène, surtout par les rationalistes critiques du genre de Popper, qui ont invoqué des arguments méthodologiques ainsi qu'éthico-politiques contre ce phénomène.

L'auteur prétend qu'il ne suffit pas de ne citer que des circonstances méthodologique (comme c'est le cas des rationalistes critiques) afin d'arriver à une compréhension adéquate du dogmatisme. Ces considérations devraient plutôt être complétées par une appréciation des circonstances socio-historiques dans lesquelles le dogmatisme émerge et fleurit.

En utilisant le fascisme comme exemple pour illustrer cette idée, l'auteur démontre que le problème du dogmatisme se manifeste lui-même, et qu'il doit être attaqué différemment et à des niveaux différents, à savoir aux niveaux de la science (ou au niveau théorique), et au niveau de la pratique sociale (ou à celui de l'action).

DOGMATISTS AND THEIR CRITICS:
- a philosophical inquiry into the roots of rigidity*

Lolle Nauta

Introduction

Ask a random sample of professional philosophers whether any of them is in favour of dogmatism. It is highly unlikely that you will find many, if any at all, who will choose to place themselves within the ranks of dogmatists. Philosophers like to think of themselves as being undogmatic. In inquiring into "the roots of dogmatism", they are, therefore inquiring into the roots of a phenomenon they consider themselves not to be part of. In their own professional eyes they are critical, rational, in favour of discussion and always ready to consider new points of view. Professional doubters they are; professional believers are to be found elsewhere.

It is always the others who are supposed to be dogmatic, a phenomenon modern philosophy itself can illustrate. Many contemporary philosophers think of their fellow philosophers as indeed being dogmatic. As long as there is no consensus in philosophy about fundamental assumptions, every philosophical school or trend will create its own mechanism of defense. In a way pluralism calls for dogmatism. Members of the other school or group are supposed to be unwilling or even not be able to doubt their own assumptions and to see that they are out of touch with reality. Was this not the way the early logical positivists discussed metaphysics? And what about much of the criticism of logical positivism itself by, let us say, phenomenologists or Marxists? Were the members of the Vienna Circle in their eyes not dogmatic especially concerning sense experience, science etc.?

So, what can we do apart from hoping and trying ourselves not to be too dogmatic? No longer calling other people dogmatic but just being modest about ourselves? I do not think this is sufficient. Modesty may be a virtue on a personal level; in philosophy as a discipline it is not. Here

arguments count; being more or less virtuous does not matter at all. Therefore I will in this article spell out the arguments against dogmatism. I will not only investigate whether they are correct, but also ask on which level they can be supposed to be tenable. In doing so I will deal, of course, with the assumptions of a well known anti-dogmatic philosophical school: the philosophy of Popper and his students, called critical rationalism.

Dogmatism is bound to certain social conditions and the same is true of its critical counterpart. One cannot hold that dogmatism as a phenomenon is liable to certain social and historical determinants and at the same time that an antidogmatic or critical attitude should be free from such "material" influences. In order for a critical mind to develop and to become less susceptible to dogmatic influences, certain social conditions have to be fulfilled. A certain level of education, for example, is at least a necessary condition. Man's mind can hardly be set free without the acquisition of a certain educational capital.

Now, if in both cases epistemological and social factors are involved and if it is true, as well, that we would like to discriminate between a "dogmatic" and a "critical" attitude, then, being philosophers, we are under the obligation to inquire into the relation between epistemological and social aspects. It is lazy thinking to deal with things like this on a social and historical level only, apart from the fact that it has hardly anything to do with philosophy. And it is also an easy escape to just remain on the level of epistemology, as some philosophers like to do. Neither dogmatism nor criticism are a matter of epistemology only, as Kant was well aware.

Without even trying to be complete, I will therefore in the last part of my article raise the problem of the so-called transformations between the socio-historical and the epistemological level. In order to avoid being too abstract, I will use fascism as an example. Fascism in its different forms is of course connected with a dogmatic attitude and, apart from that, hardly any philosopher worth the title seems to be in favour of it. Fascism and philosophy are almost mutually exclusive. Of course there are philosophers with fascist tendencies and sympathies but, as far as I know, serious philosophical thinking never flourished under a fascist regime. Fascism therefore may be an acceptable example of a transformation of

DOGMATISTS

socio-historical factors into epistemological or ideological ones, which all of us can be expected to reject.

II The Case against Dogmatism

The following sequence of arguments against dogmatism can be found among philosophers of the Popperian persuasion.

Dogmatists, they contend, are in the first place not able (or willing) to change their assumptions in the light of new evidence, let alone look for falsifying instances. Popper's falsification principle is the cornerstone of a philosophy which is critical of dogmatic attitudes in every respect, since the refusal to change an opinion in the light of contrary evidence is the core of dogmatism. When faced with falsifying evidence, dogmatists actually look for possibilities to change the evidence instead of their assumptions. Several examples can be cited here. A popular one concerns the Marxists of the Second International and their prediction of the speedy collapse of the capitalist mode of production. This prediction was, in some cases, made with great precision, extending even to year and date. When it did not come true, however, the belief of most of them was not shaken at all. The happy catastrophe could still be expected to enter world-history a bit later. Godot is coming tomorrow and "tomorrow" always happens to be later than today.

The second argument which is put forward against dogmatism has more to do with social philosophy than with methodology. Being unable to cope with new information dogmatists, it is contended, are blocking social progress. In a time of rapid social change new situations require creative ideas and fresh solutions. Criticism, pluriformity and social progress belong to the same family. Dogmatism is to be found in that part of society which is conservative and reactionary. With their closed minds, members of this group adhere to their old-fashioned ideas when new problems crop up. They are like medical doctors who stick to their old prescriptions even when the diseases have changed. Recovery or improvement can not be expected from them.

The third argument is connected with the second and goes like this: in being an enemy of social progress, a dogmatist will try to block new initiatives, be inclined to eliminate people with a critical mind, and in

this way become an enemy of true humanity.

Several things are at stake here, but it may be clear so far that the third and last part of our sequence of arguments concerns political morals. Here Popperians are specifically referring to those dogmatists who enjoy some form of political power. Only if this condition is fulfilled do the dogmatists have the opportunity to put their critics into prison and to establish or at least support an actual system of repression. The third argument turns out to be of a political nature.

These political implications of course become very clear in Popper's impressive later work, which was published after his discoveries in the field of philosophy of science. In these books a fourth argument can in fact be discerned, namely Popper's opinion that all forms of radical social change which try to revolutionize society as a whole in the last resort turn out to be dogmatic. Changing a society as a whole is as impossible as rebuilding completely an existing city; only piece-meal engineering will do. Marxist revolutionaries preaching radical social change and discovering that their blueprint cannot be implemented in the end show their true dogmatic colours. Adhering to their ideology and not willing to give up their political power, they become their own worst enemies, trying to wipe out all forms of criticism and creativity. Everyone who is not in agreement with them is blocking history and is therefore an enemy to be eliminated.

I do not want to deny that there are a lot of revolutionaries who behave like dogmatists in disguise. Stalinism is fact and not fancy. In a number of respects Popper's criticism of historicist Marxism is to the point. But I do not think his general argument, that all ideologies aiming at radical change are for that reason dogmatic, is correct. Moreover, it does not logically follow from the other three. Political radicals can very well cope with new information, promote social progress and take into account criticism of their assumptions. Marx himself is an example, changing his opinions in ten years more often than most philosophers do in their whole lives.

We can therefore leave it at our three arguments, without adding the fourth. The epistemological or, maybe better, methodological argument comes first. It provides the foundation for the second one, widening the

DOGMATISTS

discussion into the field of social philosophy. Both arguments in turn call for the third one, which brings in a moral and political point of view. Being knitted together in this way, a two-way traffic among the three can start. In Popper's eyes the methodological rule, i.e. to look for falsifying instances is, at the same time, apparently a kind of moral requirement. Provided certain conditions are fulfilled, there is a kind of moral obligation to be as critical about one's own assumptions as possible. Why? In not doing so, we will hamper social and scientific progress and run the risk of taking sides with hangmen and oppressors.

Is the case against dogmatism well established in this way? Are we justified in saying that there is a kind of moral requirement to be as critical about one's own assumptions as possible? And can dogmatists indeed be said not to be able to cope properly with new information?

Philosophers like very much to generalize about ideas which, in fact, are context-dependent. The falsification-principle is an example, because here everything depends on the context one is referring to. Refusing to take into account new information in general can hardly be called morally wrong. Who will blame old people for not being able to cope with new information and feeling unhappy with rapid social change? Is it justifiable to criticize religious people for not being ready to put their views to test?

One could object here by pointing to the fact that the falsification-principle was developed as a methodological principle only. It is with the context of science that it is concerned: the Logic of Scientific Discovery was written in the thirties as a criticism of the methodological principles of Logical Positivism and that is all.

There are two counter-arguments, however. The first is that even with regard to science the principle turned out to be too general. In the aftermath of Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions it was made clear by Lakatos that scientists cannot be expected to put to test every proposition to which they adhere. There is always a hard core of fundamental assumptions where falsification, at least in the short run, is to be ruled out. As a general principle Popper's theory does not even apply to scientific practice as a whole.

And the second point is, as was already made clear, that Popper's claim

in fact is more general. We are faced with a number of consequences of the falsification-principle in the field of social and political philosophy and the philosophy of critical rationalism indicating that it is more than just a set of methodological principles.

Shall we then just dismiss the principle for being too general? I do not think we should. Theories and expectations which evidently do conflict with reality are required at least to get reinterpreted or adjusted. There is no doubt about that. Only people who are mentally ill are able to uphold a system of propositions which fly in the face of the facts in every respect.

If however we are not willing just to dismiss the falsification-principle, we at least have, as one could call it, a level-problem because of the principle's very generality. It is not clear in which contexts or at which levels it is to be applied. And therefore the problem of dogmatism, to say the least, is not a problem of falsification only. Intricate problems concerning the relation between theory and practice come up for discussion here. Theory and practice are apparently differently related in various contexts. Whereas in the case of science we are dealing with an institution which has been established for the sake of theory-change, most of our other institutions rather seem to be designed for "theory-preservation". Now, how do these two kinds of institutions relate to each other? How are the rules of the rational enterprise, which science in the words of Toulmin is, related to the rules and norms of the other institutions?

Problems like this hardly appear on the agenda of the critical rationalist. He is not dealing with the problem of the relation of theory to practice. He does not seem to have a level-problem. His is the belief that the highway to progress can built by the extrapolation of the rules which are, at least partly, followed in scientific institutions. His point of view is primarily methodological or epistemological.

I want to draw attention to the relation of theory to practice and so it is to the level-problem that we turn now.

III Theory and Practice

The point I want to make in this section is that, from an epistemological point of view alone, the problem of dogmatism cannot be adequately

DOGMATISTS

analysed. There are important differences here between the level of theory and the level of practice that should be taken into account.

Originally, in Greek, theory ("theoria") meant looking at the stage, being in the theatre. Now, a theorist and any of the audience in the theatre do not have much in common apart from one thing: in both cases action has been suspended. For a while the normal course of the day has been interrupted. Human beings do not care continuously for the production and reproduction of their life. Now and then they take time off to consider the sense and nonsense of the affairs they are involved in.

There are a lot of things we can laugh about at the theatre which we would not be able to even grin at outside its walls. In the field of action our behaviour is dictated by rules other than those that hold at a theatre-evening or in a theoretical discussion. We cannot afford to spend every moment looking into the mirror and laughing about our neighbours and (who knows) maybe even ourselves. Theory means suspension of action, and action in many respects has as a consequence suspension of theory. Action implies movement and in order to move we must be able to discriminate between a good and a false direction. The faster we move, the clearer the idea of our route must actually be. At the moment we hesitate - is this really the right way to go? - and take out our map, our car has already come to a stand-still. It is dangerous to drive and to study the map at the same time.

These considerations hold true for science as well. Of course, doing research means being active. It is trivial to state that scientists are engaged in all kinds of activities. These activities, however, are of a specific kind. They are geared to the discovery of new facts and the development of theories. And, in order to be able to do so, scientists are for the time being suspended from other activities concerning the reproduction and production of life. And so it is not evident that rules which are to be followed in scientific institutions are - to say the least - under all circumstances valid outside their confines as well. When is it proper to apply such rules to other fields of action and why should we do so?

The same question confronts us again when we take a look at the other side, at the problem of dogmatism itself. In certain circumstances a certain amount of dogmatism may be inescapable and hardly be harmful, as an example from the history of Marxism can make clear.

Of course, historians of philosophy are most of the time aware of the differences between Marx and Marxism. Even Marx himself spoke quite ironically about the Marxists of his time. However, in the discussions on the relations of Marx to the different kinds of 20th century Marxism, it is often not sufficiently clear that Marx mainly worked at a theoretical level. He and Engels, of course, did publish the Communist Manifesto, but this pamphlet was an exception. The other major works are not pieces of political action at all. Even when Marx dealt with the relation of theory to practice, or with practice alone, he did so at the level of theory. Considered as a whole, his work is a highly sophisticated endeavour to repudiate capitalism and to justify socialism in the intellectual milieu of his time. Marx wrote for the sake of the proletariat; he did not write for the proletariat. Philosophers, writers, political economists, politicians and scientists are supposed to be his readers. If you are not sufficiently educated to read Hegel or Ricardo, Marx is bound to be as comprehensible as a Sanskrit recording played in reverse at high speed. Having been developed at a theoretical level, how then did Marxism become dogmatic? The answer is simple. Marx and Engels themselves were not dogmatic, or at least no more so than any other social scientists. Marxism became dogmatic during the time of the Second International, when the thoughts of Marx and Engels had to be explained to the masses. It was then that it became action-related in fact, because the socialist parties and trade-unions had to be provided with an ideological basis. For this reason Marxists like Plekhanov, Kautsky, and Lenin as well (who naturally was a man of action) had to put the sophisticated theories of their teachers in a simple and easy form, which is to say: now all kinds of provisos, precautions and boundary conditions, typical at the theoretical level, had to be done away with. You cannot act under all kinds of restrictions. Action is something irrevocable.

So, our problem grows more and more complicated. Of course, our conclusion cannot be that dogmatism is always justified when it is required by action or, better: when it is required by men of action who know so well what is good for.... the masses. And so, we have again to ask: for which reasons and under which circumstances is dogmatism to be rejected? Therefore I am turning to Popper again, who not only became famous because of his fallibilism but also because of his criticism of Marx

DOGMATISTS

and Marxism.

The first point to be noted is that the Marxism Popper got acquainted with was nothing less than the Marxism of the Second International. He himself informs us that his experiences with Marxism - he was a Marxist for some months - were crucial to him when he was a student in Vienna. He soon got fed up with the dogmatic way his fellow Marxists interpreted political reality, the way they regarded their theories as being irrefutable. When we look at Popper's work, the principle of falsification comes first and after that his social philosophy gets underway. Biographically, however, it is the other way round. He himself tells us that for the development of his epistemology his social experiences were crucial.

This political context of the development of the falsification-principle does not affect its validity, of course.

But it may be that Popper's well-known criticism of Marxism is too general. What he is saying - apart from the question of whether his criticism is justified - does apply to the historicist ideology of the Second International and to a large part of Marxism-Leninism. It does not apply to the theories of Marx and Engels as a whole and not at all to, say, Gramsci, Habermas, Thompson, Colletti and a lot of other Marxists in our century.

The second point to be noted is that Popper developed his social philosophy to combat Stalinism and fascism. So, his extrapolation of the rules of scientific practice did not occur because of an aversion against dogmatism in general. His philosophy of social engineering and his criticism of Marxist utopianism have to be understood in the context of his criticism of large-scale oppression and dictatorship. And therefore it is indeed appropriate to use fascism as an example. Popper's The Poverty of Historicism was written "in memory" of the countless men and women of all creeds or nations or races who fell victims to the fascist and communist belief in the "Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny".

This paragraph can be finished with two tentative conclusions. The first is that the relation of dogmatism and criticism is not the same at the different levels of social science and social practice. And our second conclusion is that methodological rules are not sufficient when we want to discuss the problem of dogmatism at the level of social practice. Methodological instruments, one may say, can only show us methodological phenomena. We see from afar the phenomenon of "frozen knowledge", but

we do not know why it actually arose there and what precisely may be at stake. Even to say, as I have done, that such phenomena have to do with action or social practice, does not give us much information. Saying this only amounts to saying that dogmatism is not in accordance with the rules of scientific practice, which is merely a negative qualification. Let us therefore turn to a concrete example, to see whether something more can be discovered about it.

IV Fascism as an example

Is it appropriate to use fascism as an example in the discussion of dogmatism? Are there not many forms of dogmatism which have nothing to do with fascism and cannot be compared with it? Are there not quite a lot of honest people to be found everywhere who may be dogmatic in one sense or another without ever being ready to support racism, torture and other forms of repression?

Without any doubt there are, also, a lot of decent and dogmatic people who do support torture and repression, sometimes without even being aware that they are doing so. The point, however, is that I do not see on what grounds dogmatism in general should be criticised apart from moral and political ones. A general methodological requirement that world-views must always be called into question simply does not make sense. And, precisely for this reason, fascism may be a good example of a species of dogmatism which raises particularly clearly the question how methodological and political or social aspects are intertwined.

Some other reasons as well may justify our choice. The first is that fascism is theoretically weak. Contrary to other political movements it never had excellent theoreticians. Of course, there have been plenty of fascist ideologues, swimming with the high tide of the mass movement and ready to process legitimations into the ever hungry propaganda machine. Their level of argument, however, can neither be compared with that of liberal nor with Marxist thinking. A fascist research tradition in fact never developed. In fascism we are faced with a phenomenon which hardly has to be refuted at a theoretical level and which must be studied at the level of behaviour. They say it themselves. "Action" is one of their catchwords, and intellectual endeavours they are not in favour of.

DOGMATISTS

The second reason is that fascism is a modern phenomenon, closely related to twentieth century developments of Western society. It does not make sense to call social movements before the 20th century fascist and the phenomenon itself is international and not limited to Italy or Germany. Everyone knows about McCarthyism and the Ku Klux Klan in the U.S.A., not to mention political regimes in El Salvador and Chile. However difficult it may be to determine the nature of its relation with 20th century capitalism - in many cases capitalism does not lead to fascism - there can hardly be any doubt that fascism is one of its offsprings. (I will not elaborate on Stalinism here, which also is a phenomenon of our century. I do not adhere to the "totalitarianism-thesis" which treats fascism and Stalinism as phenomena of the same kind. However, it cannot be denied that there are important structural analogies between the two).

In order to see in what respect fascism can indeed be called dogmatic, it may be useful to develop a fascist's profile, mainly based on work done by the Frankfurt School of Social Research.

I will list four important features only, the first concerning the level of ideology. A fascist typically holds a Manichean worldview, good and evil being neatly separated and himself of course living on the right side. His reference-group, which is the family, the nation or the race, symbolizes the positive values he adheres to; his ideology provides him with a legitimation for this. On the level of psychology he is in favour of those virtues which are sometimes called masculine. Glorifying militarist force and violence, a fascist has a strong dislike for things like tenderness and also for emotions in general, which he prefers to call weak. Women in his company can hardly be seen. They have to stay home and do the cooking and the bearing of children. A fascist's social relations are in accordance with features like these. Being motivated by a strong resentment against "deviant" behaviour and against strangers in general, other groups easily become a projection of his own repressed needs and wishes. A fascist hates homosexuals, artists, intellectuals and other people who disturb the 'normal' way of life. And his political behaviour

is in harmony with all of this of course. A fascist is obedient to the state and any other form of

higher authority. His example and favoured model of behaviour is "the leader".

A brief comment on this tentative profile. Features like this must not be dealt with in isolation; they belong together. A person can be quite anti-feministic without being a fascist and one can be in favour of a strong army without displaying the other features as well. In order for persons or groups to be called fascist, they must manifest all four features.

Some may wonder why I am defining fascism on an individual level and not on the level of society. In order to know, however, what precisely must be explained at the level of society (or the structural level), the phenomenon concerned first has to be described accurately and here the individual level cannot be dispensed with. In many cases a global analysis takes it too easy in this respect, not making it clear enough what it is that has to be explained.

In the case of fascism dogmatism acquires, on the existential level, a specific meaning. A person who is a fascist, exhibits an exceptional kind of inflexibility and rigidity. As studies of the authoritarian personality have shown, he is liable to different kinds of bias and in the extreme tending towards conformist behaviour.

This rigidity not only finds expression at the level of the mind and not only concerns the ideas of the fascist. The very bodily movements of a fascist are rigid. Though he may not belong to, say, the army the fascist belongs to groups in which he can act as if he was in the military. Even his general bearing will be military-like. Look at the way the Nazis greeted their Leader, a stiffened arm and hand held up, the body paralysed for the time being. As in the army, where individual differences are obliterated, this uniformity demonstrates the identification of the individual with the group. In his fascist role, an individual does not move smoothly like a human being is expected to do; he is like a marionet, his motions stiff and his gestures wooden.

This is not just a metaphor, because his marionet-like behaviour can be observed at an empirical level, where it acquires a symbolic meaning of

DOGMATISTS

its own. I venture the hypothesis that in this behaviour the force and violence find expression which fascists themselves have undergone. Human nature, having been oppressed, is eager to oppress as well. Human beings, having been victimized, are in need of victimizing other people. It was Sartre who once wrote that for hangmen and torturers there never is an end. They are caught in a circle of repetitive behaviour. Thinking about fascism, the terrible crimes committed by the Germans against the Jews come to our mind. Today we witness the repression of the Palestinians by the State of Israel, where history is repeating itself.

If indeed the fascist's rigid behaviour is a manifestation of the violence which he did undergo himself and which he is eager to inflict on other human beings, then from the perspective of social philosophy two points can be made.

The first concerns the problem of human freedom. We are here - provided the hypothesis can indeed be confirmed - faced with human beings whose lack of freedom can be observed. It can be shown empirically that the patterns of behaviour they are prisoners of were indeed forced upon them. I do not want to say that they can not be held responsible for what they have done.

The problem of moral responsibility is not to be dealt with here. I want to say that observable phenomena are at stake here.

The second point concerns the problem of social determination and is connected with the first. Philosophical discussions concerning social determination (or causation) are sometimes very abstract. In the case of fascism certain mechanisms are active which prevent human beings from developing freely and autonomously. The mechanisms concerned determine their behaviour almost entirely. They do not allow them to develop freely. They are forced to develop as rowdies, yes-sayers, patriots, soldiers, guards of concentration-camps and maybe in the end as torturers. It is this kind of social determination Marxists should be interested in. They are not supposed to develop a general theory of social causation. Too long the metaphysical shadows of Spinoza and Hegel have haunted their minds. It is specific, historically determined situations and the way these are transformed at the level of individual behaviour they are supposed to analyze and to be interested in. The question whether man's behaviour in general is determined, yes or no, is to my mind meaningless. De facto the

determinations of human behaviour are not distributed in an equal way. If we want to fight oppression, we have to fight the historical and social conditions behind it. In order to eliminate fascist interpretations of society, we are bound to change it.

V Mechanisms of Transformation (a Marxist approach)

Given the foregoing profile of the fascist at an individual level, are we now in a position to link it up with the historical and material circumstances of the subjects concerned?

Such questions are easier posed than answered. Most of the time dialectical materialists go exactly the other way. First a macro-picture is drawn up and then the micro-aspects, if any, are filled in. In this way the methodological principles of historical materialism are dismissed and replaced by a kind of metaphysical theory where all individuals, without any exception, become marionets, dancing at the whims of the laws of history. Popper's criticism of historicist Marxism is pertinent here. The economism of a lot of 20th century Marxism is metaphysics in disguise.

A lot of research has been done on the macro-aspects of fascism and it has become clear that fascism got a strong foothold in the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie, among small-scale producers, small-scale owners and non-productive employees. With respect to Germany, for example, two points can be made. The first is that their proportion in the general population was well below their proportion in the membership of the National-Socialist party, the first being 12% in the years between '30 and '34 and the second varying from 20.6 to 25.65%. Secondly, figures show that in the first quarter of the century "this section of the population suffered most economically" (20, p. 260). In this period "artisans and traders lost almost half of their income" (id.). Inflation hit worst at this social level and they got into additional problems because of the growth of monopolies in the field of banking and industry. The things they produced and sold were providing them with less and less income.

So far so good. But these circumstances, supposing they are correctly described, do not automatically yield a thing like fascism or national-socialism. We have a profile and we have a socio-economic picture (which is to be completed very much more of course), but how are they related?

DOGMATISTS

How do economic circumstances like this lead to the kind of rigidity and marionet-like behaviour which seem to be symptomatic of fascism? In order to illustrate this, I am presenting the imaginary case of a craftsman, let us say in Munchen (Germany) at the end of the twenties of our century.

Being a craftsman I have always worked very hard, as my father and grandfather did. By leading a decent life, my family already for long was able to earn a small income which provided us with our daily bread, sufficient means for the education of the children and there was left something for the Church as well. We never spent more than we could help and we were even able to put a little aside for times of hardship. But what is the matter now? Although I am working harder than my father did and even though my wife and eldest son assist me all day, I am earning less. A new machine even had to be bought, but I do not see how I can pay off the loan for it, which I got from the bank. The Jewish usurers are asking more and more. My costs are growing, while I am getting less for my products. Or better: I am getting as much money or even more than before, but I can hardly buy anything with it. Food and clothes are becoming more and more expensive. So, what is hard work for anyway? Look at the people who are doing nothing, sitting idly on their luxuries and just loitering about. Where do they get all their money from? Why is our social-democrat government doing nothing? And by the way, most of the time these loiterers and usurers are not even Germans! Why did they infiltrate into our society with their different way of life? Just to take the money from people who never strayed from the right path? Let them go back from wherever it is they came from - all the homosexuals and artists, perverts getting well to do without any effort, at our expense...

This man is neither a guard of a concentration-camp nor a torturer. It is a mistake to think that most members of fascist organisations are. It is only that their ideas and feelings about life and society can easily be integrated into a fascist or National-Socialist frame-work. The way the Catholic Church - which first creates and then expropriates the feelings of guilt of the members it is supposed to take care of - is the same way

fascist parties, according to Barrington Moore, manipulate their members. And the mechanism which is put into effect here is that of resentment and revenge. Fascist parties are organisations skilled in the exploitation of hate. The most startling thing about fascism is the scale and brutality of its repression. This is what we often do not understand or at least sometimes, psychologically, can not afford to understand.

Our imaginary craftsman does not want to kill or to destroy the people he does not like. In his opinion they should lead a proper life or go back to the place where they came from. Feelings of resentment are, however, clearly biting him and even they are not conditioned by economic circumstances in a monocausal way. They are his way of reacting to these circumstances; his pattern of behaviour is a product of specific historical and cultural circumstances. Although he is a Catholic living in Munchen he is, notwithstanding that, part and parcel of a puritan culture of hard work. Having only a primary school level of education, he is not acquainted with economic theories. His knowledge in this respect can be written on a finger's nail, dealing only with the relation between hard work and a modest income. Things which are not in accordance with this well-tested paradigm are explained in another way, by the method of 'personalizing'. Because they are not in accordance with the normal course of things, such phenomena are ascribed to evil spirits: communists, freemasons, intellectuals and other media of witch-craft.

So, several mechanisms of transformation are operating here: legitimations from an earlier stage of the capitalist mode of production which are, so to speak, refuted by the new circumstances. Feudal aspects may be important as well: the capitalist mode of production only dominated certain aspects of European life, even in the 20th century; a bourgeois culture with a more rational view of society never came to flourish in the southern and rural parts of Germany. But in my view the dominant transformation works through resentment, as may be clear from the last part of the portrait of the craftsman. It is by resentment that material circumstances in his case are transformed into certain patterns of behaviour. And it is here exactly that dogmatism and rigidity become extremely harmful.

I am coming back now to the hypothesis which has already been ventured concerning the fascist's marionet-like behaviour. Fascists are not

DOGMATISTS

able to get rid of certain painful experiences in the past. These experiences literally - in a Sartrean sense - stick to them. Fascist are not able to get through to them, to look at them, or to communicate about them. They carry them on their backs, unable to invent new patterns of behaviour. Rigidity and repetition belong together. Certain frustrating experiences can press so heavily on the mind of the subjects concerned, that they can no longer discriminate between 'cases' which are similar to the previous ones, and cases which are not. Every Jew is like the one who exploited me. Every Palestinian is like the Nazis who wanted to destroy my people. Fascist action is the vain and therefore endless repeated effort to get rid of painful experiences in the past. Therefore it is always surprisingly easy for a fascist to plead not guilty. Was he not the first to be harassed? Every fascist is a retaliator. Trying to pay back what has been done to him he is, however, with iron necessity, always mistaking his aim. His objects are innocent.

We are faced with a transformation of material circumstances into patterns of behaviour which actually constitute a burden of history. Here we find the true Mythe de Sisyphe. No cunning of reason can be observed. Repetition is on. I am calling the mechanism concerned the "mechanism of fixation".

It should not be overlooked that these considerations on fascism which are leaning heavily on work done by others, were required for methodological reasons. Two are especially relevant here.

The first has in fact already been presented. Dogmatism is not a problem of epistemology or methodology alone, as should now be clear from our discussion. In the case of fascism epistemological abilities are actually deranged. At certain levels a fascist is deprived of the possibility to widen his experience, to add to his knowledge or to have his assumptions falsified. Studying fascism from an epistemological angle only really amounts to philosophical idealism; one thereby deprives, oneself of the possibility of reaching into the material ramifications of socio-historical practice.

There is a second reason as well, which has hardly been touched upon until now. Considering the exclusively epistemological approach as an idealist one, no progress is made by just turning it upside down, replacing mental entities by material ones. To do so will lead to another ver-

sion of philosophical idealism, in materialist disguise this time. Due to the dialectical method, Marxists most of the time neglect the problem of transformations, as I want to call it. Because in dialectical structures ontological and epistemological aspects are interwoven, no room is left for the methodological and empirical study of transformations. Dialectical philosophers know already how socio-historical practice and human behaviour can be turned into each other; they are not required to look into that. Due to Hegelian assumptions, the turnover or transformation of one into the other becomes a kind of automatism.

This second methodological point can be formulated in another way by saying that overestimating dialectics in theory will result in underestimating emancipation in practice. There are other transformations besides the mechanism of fixation, and emancipation is one of them. Most of the time - and this is also due to Marx and Engels themselves, who were children of the 19th century - human emancipation is looked at as a transformation (transition) to a higher stage. Higher, however, can mean morally better, more in accordance with certain rules of social justice. But higher can also refer to situations where man has been in fact liberated from material bonds. Statements about emancipation can become really confusing when both 'layers of meaning' are put together, as is quite common. Then it looks as if a situation which will be more in accordance with social justice is, at the same time, going to be a situation where the laws of social gravity no longer hold: suddenly we have been transferred to heaven and lost our bodily weight. Normal rules concerning, say, the division of labour, no longer apply; selling and buying of commodities has become something of the past; conflicts, which always arise in a regime of scarcity, are no longer to be expected.

Emancipation, however, is not a transformation of socio-historical practice into something else, as dialectical laws which are inextricably linked with the 19th century belief in progress, may suggest. Emancipation is not a kind of elevation. Originally, emancipation means the release of child and wife from the power of the pater familias. In referring to certain restraints of socio-historical practice itself, emancipation consequently joins the original intuition of historical materialism which aims at the transformation of practice. It makes sense to use the concept of transformation here, because knowledge is required in order to have emancipatory

DOGMATISTS

ideals transformed into socio-historical practice itself. So, instead of going up, emancipation means in a way going down. Symbolic elements, provided with social gravity, are liberated from their almost inborn tendency to become free-floating. Marxist theory itself has to be connected with practice also; it has to materialize in new forms of social life.

Of course more requirements are to be fulfilled in order for emancipation to become real. The starting-point, as everybody knows, are the real conflicts in social practice itself which should have reached the level of social consciousness. No emancipation without class struggle, to express it in the traditional way. But I am not studying the mechanisms of emancipation here. My final point is that Marxists can no longer afford to leave the dynamics of transformation to dialectics. In a dialectical structure epistemological and ontological elements are impossible to disentangle. Socio-historical practice, however, can be studied only if, on a methodological level, ontology and epistemology are clearly separated. Only by separating them first can our eyes be opened for new amalgamations between the two, as the inquiry into the roots of rigidity may have shown.

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DOGMATISTS

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Summary

In the present discussion the author confronts what he perceives to be a "crisis" in the science of sociology, a crisis due to, in part, the invasion of sociological discourse by languages or symbolic systems other than those proper to it, e.g. economic, juridical, and especially politico-ideological ones. Another source of the malaise in the growth of sociological knowledge, he claims, is due its practitioners themselves - their lack of scientific collaboration or isolationism; their irresponsibility and lack of rigour in the analysis of posited phenomena and judgment of scientific works; and the importation into the realm of science of political-ideological disputes. This, he argues, has especial significance in the Third World where scholars have inherited conflicts in ideologies and orientations from their former colonisers and still cling to outmoded theoretical positions.

Most significant for the theoretical problems that beset sociology today are the epistemological problems inherent in it. The author argues that there is a permanent necessity to subject sociological knowledge to an internal and external epistemological "autopsy". Such an analysis and understanding of the epistemological difficulties underlying sociological knowledge would need to go beyond the traditional approaches of positivism on the one hand, and idealism on the other. The alternative that is proposed, of which it is claimed that it would surmount the epistemological and methodological problems responsible for sociology's crisis of growth, is a "praxeological" approach to sociology.

QUELQUES REFLEXIONS SUR LES FONDEMENTS
EPISTEMOLOGIQUES DE LA CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE;
PROBLEMES THEORIQUES ET PERSPECTIVES D'AVENIR

Kambaji wa Kambaji
(Mtoto wa Bwana)

"il ne suffit pas que le sociologue se mette à l'écoute des sujets (...) pour rendre raison de leur conduite et même des raisons qu'ils proposent: ce faisant, il risque de substituer purement et simplement à ses propres prénotions de ceux qu'il étudie."

P.BOURDIEU.

1. Pertinence du Sujet

Lorsque nous jetons un regard retrospectif sur les conditions historico-génétiques de la production de la sociologie, nous nous rendons vite compte que son état hypothétique actuel est le fruit d'une série d'embûches qu'elle a connues tout au long de son évolution: embûches qui trouvent leur justification, signification ou portée épistémologique dans cette définition que donnent de la "science", Bacon et (à sa suite) K.R.Popper, à savoir, un ensemble "d'anticipations, téméraires et prématurés", et de "préjugés".¹

Le savoir sociologique, comme toute production mentale, est une suite d'énoncés significatifs, un système des symboles référant à une réalité (matérielle, mentale, sociale) déterminée qu'il reflète et réfracte à la fois. Par conséquent, si crise implique celle de son langage. En effet, le discours sociologique se voit aujourd'hui envahi par d'autres types de langage (commun ou ordinaire, géographique, économique, juridique, surtout politico-idéologique entraînant sa banalisation, etc.) courant ainsi le risque de sa créolisation, de la rendondance ou de l'asphyxie lexicologique et

sémantique, de la crispation ou sclérosation académico-scientifique.

La croissance objective du savoir sociologique est encore de nos jours minée par des déchirements théoriques, le désengagement ou l'engagement naïf des savants, leur isolement et individualisme intellectuel (ou manque de collaboration scientifique), leur "amnésie" pour les travaux antérieurs (pour parler comme P.Sorokin), leur irresponsabilité et manque de rigueur dans l'analyse des données et le jugement des travaux scientifiques, la perte de confiance en eux-mêmes, leur stérilité de théorisation, par la prolifération ou la cristallisation des courants de pensée et langages y afférents, situation pathologique due à l'emprise de plus en plus grandissante de l'idéologique et du politique sur le scientifique. Dans les sociétés du Tiers Monde, évoluant sous le poids historique d'un double héritage, ancestral et occidental, non encore maîtrisé, cette situation de crise accuse une certaine acuité, étant donné que la conscience et la connaissance de la majorité des savants sont encore "extraverties" parce que "greffées" sur de vieilles théories répondant à des exigences historiques, des aspirations et problèmes sociaux qui leur sont allogènes. Que de cloisonnements, de querelles idéologiques d'"écoles" hérités de leur ex-colonisateur, que de dénigrements taxant les uns de "métaphysiciens", les autres de "dialecticiens"... au nom de tel ou tel principe philosophique considéré comme "premier"!

Il y a là un problème (danger) sérieux de manque de rigueur dans l'effort de décentration du chercheur qui sacrifie ainsi l'objectivité qui caractérise toute production scientifique.

D'où la nécessité permanente d'une autopsie épistémologique interne et externe comme garde-fou d'un fonctionnement et développement positifs (sinon positivistes) de la connaissance sociologique: autopsie qui est à envisager dans la perspective d'une "méta-sociologie" qui se veut praxéologique. Celle-ci garantit ainsi un assainissement conceptuel, sémantique et lexicologique continu.

Je n'ai pas la prétention de faire un bilan complet de l'évolution ou des problèmes théoriques de la connaissance sociologique, mais plutôt de répondre, en tant que sociologue, par ces quelques réflexions critiques, à l'interpellation de la "crise" de croissance que connaît aujourd'hui la science sociologique en général et celle du Zaïre en particulier.

Par cette étude d'épistémologie interne, je compte ainsi faire écho à

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

ces cris de détresse lancés depuis bien avant la deuxième guerre mondiale jusqu'à une époque récente par des sociologues ou autres spécialistes des sciences de l'homme de renom. Je citerai à titre illustratif: P. Sorokin, Symposium de Washington (1950), G. Bachelard, R. Boudon, R.W. Friedrichs, A. Gouldner, J. Bude, J.J. Fromont, P. Bourdieu, S.N. Eisenstadt, Mudimbe V.Y., Kabamba MB, etc..²

Une telle étude des possibilités et limites de la construction ou reconstruction sociologique de la réalité sociale puise donc tout son intérêt théorique et pratique dans un double souci: d'une part, celui de retour à la fondamentalité en sciences de l'homme en général, en sociologie en particulier, qui vise à restituer à celle-ci son unité théorique, une forme et un contenu heuristiques plus objectifs et, d'autre part, celui de répondre aux exigences épistémologiques d'une "sociologie praxéologique" indispensable dans nos sociétés africaines, sinon du Tiers Monde rongées par une crise structurelle endémique.

Je débattrai principalement des problèmes de l'objectivités en sciences sociales et des "ruptures" en épistémologie sociologique dont la non maîtrise par le savant entraîne inévitablement la crise de ces disciplines scientifiques, hypothèque leur avenir et menace le développement de la culture humaine.

2. Problematique de L'Objectivité en Sciences Sociales.

Je vais d'abord définir le concept même d'objectivité scientifique avant de circonscrire les problèmes de la reconstruction sociologique des réalités sociales.

2.1 Approche Conceptuelle.

L'un des problèmes épistémologiques fondamentaux soulevés par la production d'une connaissance "objective" en sciences de l'homme en général et en sociologie en particulier est celui de l'"inhérence métadiscursive du savant" ou la résolution de l'équation sujet - objet.

En effet, le sociologue, étant à fois sujet et objet, étant immanent ou immergé dans son objet, fait face à l'épineux problème de sa décentration à l'égard des déterminations sociales auxquelles il reste historiquement

soumis. Ce qui explique l'importance plus ou moins grande des limites épistémologiques de sa production scientifique par rapport à son collègue des sciences de la nature (physique et chimie) où, étant donné la dissociabilité stricte des variables en question, une expérimentation rigoureuse qui garantit l'objectivité scientifique est de mise. Mais qu'entend-on par "objectivité scientifique"? J'appréhende cette expression dans le sens critique que lui donne K.R.Popper à partir des limites qu'il a dégagée de la définition de Kant. En effet, celui-ci utilise le mot "objectif" pour indiquer que la connaissance scientifique devrait pouvoir être justifiée indépendamment du caprice de quiconque: une justification est "objective" si elle peut, en principe, être contrôlée et comprise par n'importe qui. "Si quelque chose est valide, pour quiconque en possession de sa raison, les fondements sont objectifs et suffisants". A sa suite, Popper soutient que "les théories scientifiques ne peuvent jamais être tout à fait justifiées ou vérifiées mais qu'elles peuvent néanmoins être soumises à des tests... Donc l'objectivité des énoncés scientifiques réside dans le fait qu'ils peuvent être intersubjectivement soumis à des tests".³ En outre, précise-t-il, "l'exigence d'objectivité scientifique rend inévitable que tout énoncé scientifique reste nécessairement et à jamais donné à titre d'essai."⁴

Pour concilier les deux points de vue, je pense que l'objectivité des énoncés scientifiques réside dans la possibilité qu'ils ont d'être perpétuellement soumis à un examen intersubjectif critique, d'être suffisamment compris, expliqués et contrôlés par quiconque en possession de ses facultés mentales, indépendamment de son coefficient individuel et des exigences chronémiques et proxémiques (déterminations socio-historiques).

Dans le domaine des sciences de l'homme, une telle indépendance est difficilement réalisable, étant donné l'immanence du sujet connaissant à son objet de connaissance. Ce qui, inévitablement, hypothèque, biaise ou réduit le degré d'objectivité dans la reconstruction théorique des données sociales. Popper reconnaît, à juste titre, cette difficulté pour l'ensemble des sciences lorsqu'il affirme: "qu'il s'agisse d'énoncés de logique ou d'énoncés des sciences empiriques, notre connaissance.. est susceptible d'être, dans l'un et l'autre cas, liée à des sentiments de croyance ou de conviction; dans l'un des cas, il s'agit peut-être du sentiment d'être contraint de penser d'une certaine manière, dans l'autre, de celui d'une "garantie perceptive".⁵

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

2.2 De la Preconstruction Sociologique.

La réalité sociale n'est pas entièrement donnée, mais elle est construite et reconstruite par la sociologie selon ses paradigmes. Cette opération intellectuelle rencontre bien d'obstacles qui limitent la production d'une connaissance sociologique objective et requièrent des sociologues des efforts soutenus pour résoudre cette équation du sujet - objet afin d'assurer le progrès de leur production scientifique.

2.2.1. Limites de la Production Sociologique.

Avec Kabamba MB.,⁶ dison que les limites sont d'ordre naturel, psychologique, socio-économique et socio-culturel.

1) Les limites naturelles. Ce sont celles qui procèdent des lois biologiques, principalement de l'instrument de perception et du langage, et qui définissent la capacité neuronique de réalisation de l'humain (cfr. théorie de l'apprentissage, perte des neurones avec J. Ruffie, expérimentation de Zamennhof...).

2) Les obstacles psychologiques, qui obstruent la structuration d'une connaissance claire et objective, sont, d'après S. Latouche:⁷

a. l'obstacle de l'expérience première (production des images qui impressionnent l'esprit);

b. l'obstacle verbal (pièges d'un langage métaphorique ou métonymique);

c. l'obstacle substantialiste (aliénation psycho-culturelle et socio-économique liée au fétichisme des choses); et,

d. l'obstacle quantitatif ou mathématique (effet inhibiteur des abstractions mathématiques dénoncé par W. Mills; voir également la quantophrénie de P. Sorokin).

3) Les limites socio-économiques et socio-culturelles.

Ce sont des contraintes:

a. historiques (problème "d'inhérence historique du chercheur" de Merleau-Ponty);

- b. politiques (problème d'engagement ou désengagement politique du chercheur);
- c. ethniques (problème du coefficient ethnique ou d'ethnocentrisme du chercheur);
- d. de situation de classe (problème du coefficient idéologique, du socio-centrisme du savant dénoncé entre autres par G. Fourez, G. Gurvitch, G. Lukacs.); et,
- e. fonctionnelles (problème de la déformation professionnelle ou de l'idiosyncratie du savant comme disait Nietzsche).

Que faire alors pour surmonter ces différentes barrières épistémologiques?

2.2.2. De la Résolution de l'équation.

La résolution de l'équation sujet-objet est celle du conflit entre la particularité du chercheur et l'universalité du discours scientifique qu'il tient sur un objet d'étude donné. Elle sous-tend ou se trouve au centre du problème du conflit théorique des méthodes en sciences de l'homme, sujet que je compte approfondir dans une étude ultérieure.

En cette matière à caractère essentiellement philosophique,⁸ la sociologie fait face à deux tendances théoriques extrêmes diamétralement opposées: la sociologie positiviste et empirique caractérisée par un objectivisme abstrait qui situe le critère de l'objectivité dans la distanciation nette du sujet et de l'objet, et la sociologie idéaliste marquée par un subjectivisme rationaliste qui le trouve dans une intégration mécaniste ou métaphysique allant de la simple primauté du sujet sur l'objet à leur fusion pure et simple.

De nos jours, entre les deux extrêmes se développe une tendance intermédiaire des recherches que je qualifie de "praxéologiques", qu'elles s'appellent diversement Sociologie dialectique, Sociologie engagée, Histoire immédiate, Anthropologie appliquée, Anthropologie praxéologique, Analyse institutionnelle, Socianalyse, Transanalyse, Sociologie pour l'action, Sociologie du discours... Ce sont des recherches qui, de manière explicite ou non, consciente ou inconsciente, exploitent principalement le concept sociologique de l'"intersubjectivité" et les concepts philosophiques de l'"intentionnalité" et de l'"interdétermination". Elles placent le critère épistémologique de la validation de la connaissance sociologique dans l'inté-

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

gration (sinon l'interaction) dialectique du sujet et de l'objet, procès pendant lequel se réalisent un échange d'informations et une action de formation réciproque entre les deux entités.

Le processus d'élaboration d'une connaissance sociologique "objective" exige du chercheur, tout au long de sa recherche, d'opérer une sorte de "réduction épistémologique" dialectique de la distance entre sujet et objet de connaissance (sans le dissoudre), distance-unité indispensable qui ressemblerait à celle qui existe nécessairement entre différentes lettres d'un mot, entre deux ou plusieurs mots dans une phrase, et requérant un effort de "ressaisissement épistémologique" permanent (le sociologue qui se ressaisit à chaque moment).

Pour garantir une telle objectivité, la théorie sociologique praxéologique prend en compte la dialectique de l'expérience sociale et historique, de la conscience et du langage du sujet connaissant (le sociologue), de l'objet d'étude (réalité sociale) et de la Société-Histoire (totalité significative). Ces productions sociales (expérience, conscience et langage) sont ainsi sans cesse soumises à un examen intersubjectif critique qui procède de la dialectique des "ruptures" heuristiques.

3. Théorie des "Ruptures" en Epistémologie Sociologique.

Soulever le problème des "ruptures" dans le procès de la découverte sociologique implique dialectiquement celui de l'adéquation et inadéquation entre les variables langage, sujet et objet dont l'articulation dialectique est la charpente de toute production scientifique.

3.1. Problème d'adéquation et inadéquation.

D'après L. Goldmann, le problème épistémologiquement fondamental (cher à la sociologie différentielle de la connaissance, fondement de toute sociologie qui se veut opératoire) est celui du degré de l'adéquation de tout fait de conscience à l'objet, donc à la réalité.⁹ Le langage et la connaissance sont dialectiquement liés dans leur développement, dans le processus gnoseologique. Ce qui fait que les théories scientifiques soient des réalités symboliques, des systèmes d'énoncés significatifs. Par conséquent, le langage et la connaissance sociologiques étant d'une part, des

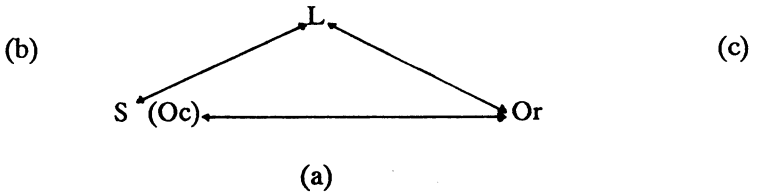
réalités symboliques, d'autre part, des faits de conscience dans certains de leurs aspects essentiels, il convient, pour contribuer à l'évaluation de leur portée épistémologique objective, de chercher leur degré d'adéquation ou d'inadéquation à l'objet qu'ils représentent. Il s'agit, en fait, de dégager la dialectique de ces trois variables structurelles: langage, connaissance et objet (ou expérience sociale).

3.1.1. De l'adéquation.

Le processus de l'évaluation du degré d'adéquation suppose trois niveaux:

- a. celui de la pensée sociologique (objet de connaissance) et de l'objet réel (objet brut). C'est ce que l'épistémologue A. Virieux-Reymond désigne par l'expression "adaequatio rei et intellectus";¹⁰
- b. celui de la pensée et du langage sociologiques; et,
- c. celui du langage sociologique et de l'objet réel.

Schématiquement, nous aurons cette forme:



qui est ce que j'ai dénommé par "triangle épistémologique" où S représente le sujet pensant chez qui se forme l'objet de connaissance (Oc), Or l'objet réel, L le langage, et a, b, c, les niveaux d'adéquation impliquant des relations dialectiques entre les trois termes désignées par les flèches à double sens.

A travers ce processus, le caractère instrumental et opérationnel (sinon opératoire) du langage se dégage clairement. Le langage est l'expression de la pensée; il n'est pas la pensée, donc il est l'image de la pensée (unité dialectique entre les deux et non pas identité); or, celle-ci, objet de connaissance (ou "objet au second degré" du langage) est l'image de l'objet réel. Par conséquent, le langage devient "l'image de l'image". D'où

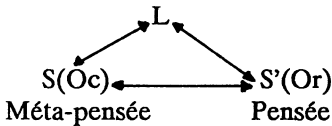
CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

l'adéquation du langage à son objet est transitaire et affectée par une double approximation (Or - Oc et Oc - L).

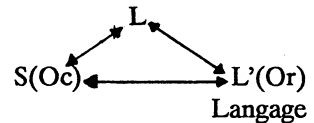
Le discours sociologique apparaît ainsi comme le lieu de "dialectisation" du ie (le sociologue) et du ieu (pratique sociale).

- N.B. 1. Lorsque la pensée est objet d'étude (Or), le langage devient "médiateur dialectisant" entre la pensée pensée et le sujet pensant (une pensée pensante: une "méta-pensée" pensant ou "parlant" de la pensée).
2. Et quand le langage devient objet d'étude (Or), il devient médiateur entre lui-même (langage pensé) et le sujet pensant. Celui-ci se sert ainsi du langage (devenu à ce titre "méta-langage", c'est-à-dire langage "parlant" du langage) pour véhiculer et penser le langage, et dans ce cas, le langage ("méta-langage") se détermine lui-même en même temps qu'il détermine le sujet pensant. Schématiquement, nous aurons:

1.



2.



Dans les deux cas, nous nous trouvons dans le domaine de la "Méta-sociologie" ou encore de l'épistémologie sociologique dont relève cette étude.

Le caractère transitaire (impliquant la double approximation évoquée ci-dessus) du processus d'"adéquation" laisse la porte ouverte aux possibilités d'"inadéquation" du langage à son objet ou à l'action.

3.1.2. De l'inadéquation.

En parlant du principe selon lequel "le langage est la pensée verbalisée" et suite à l'intervention de certains facteurs psychologiques et socio-historiques (ou ce que nous avons dénommé plus haut les contraintes limitatives de la reconstruction sociologique) dans le processus gnoséologique ou de verbalisation, nous pouvons dégager quatre types d'inadéquation:

- a. l'"amplification", distorsion "agrandissante" de la pensée départ. Sur le plan scientifique, cas de remplissage ou de traitement, par le sociologue, de plus d'aspects qu'annoncés au départ; contribution ou solutions théoriques et/ou pratiques inappropriées aux problèmes posés;
- b. "la réduction", distorsion "réduisante" de la pensée de départ. En sociologie, le sujet traité ou les objectifs de départ apparaissent plus globaux que le contenu ou les résultats sociologiques auxquels on aboutit. Les conséquences praxéologiques sont telles que l'étude n'apporte que partiellement des solutions théorique et/ou pratiques au problème traité;
- c. l'"inadéquation totale", cas extrême où, dans la communication courante, le locuteur (généralement les malades mentaux ou les aphasiques) dit autre chose que ce qu'il avait pensé au départ. Dans la production sociologique, c'est le cas des développements à côté, hors sujet liés à l'incompétence ou l'inaptitude scientifique du chercheur; cas où le contenu du travail ne répond absolument pas au titre, sujet annoncé, aux hypothèses de départ. Sa contribution à la science sociologique et à la société est nulle, sinon négative;
- d. "la nouménisation- ontologisation", distorsion de nature particulière, car procédant de la logique de domination sociale, de l'esprit doctrinaire du pouvoir. Celui-ci, par "essentialisation", parvient à déformer la réalité sociale en lui donnant un contenu abstrait.¹¹

Dans le domaine scientifique, le sociologue produit une connaissance nouménale qu'il met au service du pouvoir qui l'utilise pour la reproduction de l'ordre social établi. En effet, ce chercheur est appelé à orienter ou tronquer les résultats des recherches selon les intérêts de la classe supérieure. C'est, en fait, le processus de substitution de la connaissance politico-idéologique à la connaissance scientifique, qui consacre ou cristallise la crise que traversent les sciences sociales. L'un des moyens épistémologiques sûrs, à la disposition du chercheur en sciences de l'homme, pour juguler cette crise est l'opération des "ruptures heuristiques".

3.2. Types des ruptures et critères de validation de la connaissance sociologique.

La citation de Bourdieu en début de cet article soulève le problème des

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

ruptures opérées généralement dans ou lors de la production de la connaissance sociologique. Nous pouvons les ramener à trois catégories: la rupture épistémologique, la rupture gnoséologique et la rupture praxéologique.

3.2.1. La rupture épistémologique.

Il y a une rupture irréductible entre l'ordre signifiant commun et l'ordre signifiant scientifique, entre le savoir commun et le savoir scientifique.

Elle pose le problème de l'acceptabilité des connaissances sociologique. En effet, c'est une opération consistant à se dépouiller des "prénotions" (Bourdieu), des "assertions gratuites" (Gouldner), donc des préjugés de toutes sortes dans le but de formaliser la pensée sociologique, de la rendre cohérente et logiquement acceptable. C'est donc un processus de sélection ou d'assainissement conceptuel dont l'opération d'analyse est substitutive. Le chercheur choisit des concepts appropriés à combiner dans un raisonnement logique cohérence (cohérent entre concepts propositions ou théories sociologiques).

A un niveau plus élevé, elle peut s'opérer entre différents courants de pensée ou langages sociologiques (structuralisme, fonctionnalisme, actionnalisme, dialectique...) ou entre différents chercheurs à l'intérieur d'un même courant.

Telles sont les dimensions "paradigmatique" et "syntagmatique" des connaissances sociologiques.

3.2.2. La rupture gnoséologique.

Elle est relative à l'irréductibilité entre l'ordre des phénomènes empiriques, concrets, globaux et complexes, et l'ordre des phénomènes logiques, théoriques, abstraits, partiels et simples.

Alors que la première rupture soulève le problème de l'acceptabilité des paradigmes sociologique qui a trait à leur validation par rapport aux catégories logiques formelles et mathématiques, la rupture gnoséologique pose celui de leur intelligibilité ou "théorisabilité" ayant trait à leur degré

d'adéquation théorique au système concret (cohérence entre théorie sociologique et réalité sociale). Elle implique le phénomène philosophique du réductionnisme (empiriste ou rationaliste) qui est, en fait, une sorte de sélection que je qualifie d'"heuristique".

En effet, le chercheur, dans le processus de la découverte ou de la production sociologique, choisit et ordonne, de manière abstractive, des éléments significatifs de la réalité sociale soumise à son intelligence en vue d'élaborer des modèles sociologiques. Par ce processus d'abstraction ou de théorisation, il leur affecte une signification théorique en fonction de son cadre culturel, idéologique et de son expérience onto-phylogénétique (opération de symbolisation - sémantisation. Telle est la dimension "symbolique" des connaissances sociologiques.

L'une des limites épistémologiques de ces modèles est leur incomplétude, leur incapacité à représenter de manière exhaustive les différentes propriétés de la réalité concrète (cfr. l'impact des contraintes déterminant le processus de l'inadéquation soulevé plus haut). Conséquemment à cette imperfection, les connaissances sociologiques auxquelles ces paradigmes donnent lieu sont également incomplètes et imparfaites. Ainsi que le souligne G. Bachelard:

"Il y a lieu de se souvenir, au moment où l'on érige la théorie, que l'on a volontairement négligé certains facteurs, et que, par définition, la connaissance que l'on obtient n'est qu'une connaissance approchée et que les lois qu'on en tire ne seront que des lois approchées....".¹²

Cette inadéquation théorique se traduit par l'existence d'une diversité des modèles sociologiques sur un même objet d'étude: que des théories des classes sociales, des théories de l'action sociale, du langage, du développement.... Elle laisse ainsi grandement ouverte la porte à la pertinence ou la portée objective de la "falsifiabilité" comme critère de validation des connaissances scientifiques soutenu par l'épistémologue K.R. Popper¹³ et nous introduit au problème de la rupture praxéologique.

3.2.3. La rupture praxéologique.

C'est une dérivée de la rupture précédente, car il est question de l'ir-

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

réductibilité de la praxis à la théorie sociale.

Elle soulève le problème de l'applicabilité des schèmes sociologiques qui est relatif à leur validation par rapport au champ empirique (problème d'adéquation pratique au modèle théorique ou cohérence entre réalité sociale et théorie sociologique).

Pour Popper, "les théories sont des filets destinés à capturer ce que nous appelons "le monde", à le rendre rationnel, l'expliquer et le maîtriser. Nous nous efforçons de resserer de plus en plus les mailles.¹⁴ Cette rupture implique donc la soumission des modèles élaborés à l'expérimentation.

On assiste ainsi à un processus de sélection pragmatique, car, en fonction des tests empiriques, le sociologue choisit les théories applicables et aptes à maîtriser, à intégrer ou transformer la réalité sociale. Telle est la dimension "praxéologique" des connaissances sociologiques.

Dans cette sélection, quelle valeur doit-il alors accorder au critère de démarcation avancé par Popper?

La théorie de la falsifiabilité de cet auteur (dont la rigidité nous semble avoir été suffisamment influencée par sa double formation de mathématicien et de physicien), quoiqu'opérant une sorte de révolution copernicienne dans l'épistémologie des sciences dans la mesure où elle invite le savant à un perpétuel sens de remise en question expérimentale de ses hypothèses ou théories, pêche, cependant, par son manque de relativisme, contre les exigences d'une épistémologie dialectique ou praxéologique qui doit prendre en compte les hypothèses, modèles théoriques dans toutes leurs contradictions vérifiantes et falsifiantes.

En effet, un sociologue menant une recherche doit "expérimenter" ses hypothèses (à la lumière de telle ou telle théorie): expérimentation au terme de laquelle celles-ci peuvent être soit confirmées, soit infirmées, soit modifiées. Cette expérimentation reste soumise à la rigueur épistémologique de l'analyse et ne suppose pas un quelconque "apriorisme" de sa part dans le choix des éléments expérimentaux pour nécessairement confirmer ses hypothèses. Une attitude aprioriste dans le choix des éléments expérimentaux favorables ne peut que biaiser les résultats de la recherche et ainsi nuire au progrès scientifique. Le résultat de l'expérimentation (vérification, falsification ou modification des hypothèses ou théories) doit s'imposer de par la rigueur des tests empiriques auxquels on a soumis

celles-ci. C'est pourquoi, le critère de validation des énoncés scientifiques (ou sociologiques) ne réside pas exclusivement et à tout moment dans la falsifiabilité extrémiste popperienne, mais plutôt, d'une part, dans la possibilité apostérioristique qu'a une hypothèse ou une théorie d'être conjoncturellement soit vérifiée, soit falsifiée, soit modifiée par des tests empiriques éprouvés et, d'autre part, dans les possibilités d'action ou de transformation qu'elle engendre ou offre au chercheur et à la société.

Néanmoins, en toute fin de cause, l'infirmité ou la refutation d'un énoncé scientifique demeure le critère épistémologique le plus décisif pour le progrès scientifique.¹⁵

3.3. Schématisation des données.

Si j'ai séparé les trois types de ruptures, c'est par souci analytique, en réalité, elles s'impliquent mutuellement, dialectiquement. En outre, elles impliquent toutes, comme je viens de le démontrer, le phénomène de sélection et de simplification, le processus de filtrage ou de réduction. Cette sélection est lexématique, c'est-à-dire que c'est un processus lié dialectiquement au phénomène langage dans ses différentes dimensions et fonctions.

Pour une meilleure intelligence de ces différentes données et de leur implication dialectique, j'ai pris soin de les regrouper dans un tableau synthétique à double entrée et de les schématiser dans mon "triangle épistémologique".

3.3.1. Niveau et caractéristiques des ruptures heuristiques.

Caractéristiques Niveaux	Sélection/ démarche	Opération d'analyse	Dimension des connaissances sociologiques
1. Epistémologique	conceptuelle/ formalisante	substitution Combinaison Association	paradig- matique Syntagma- tique

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

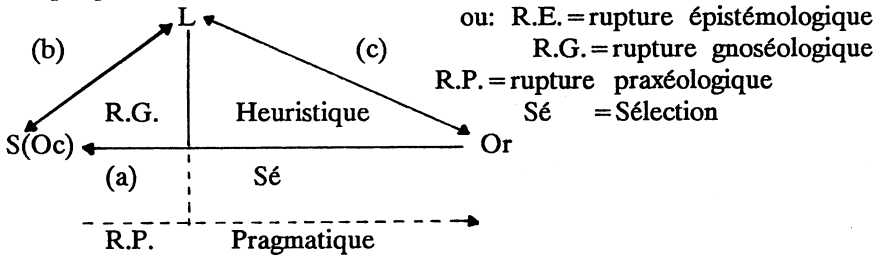
2. Gnoséologique	Heuristique/ théorisante	Symbolisation sémantisation	Symbolique
3. Praxéologique	Pragmatique/ expérimentale	Application	Praxéolo- gique

N.B.: 1. Chaque niveau de rupture ou d'irréductibilité s'opère grâce et à travers la dialectique de trois variables: le langage, la pensée et l'expérience sociale.

2. Chaque niveau implique dialectiquement celui qui lui est "inférieur". Ainsi le niveau 1 sous-tend et est épistémologiquement présent dans les niveaux 2 et 3 qui lui sont "supérieurs"....

3.3.2. Dans le triangle épistémologique.

Graphiquement, nous aurons:



N.B.: Si nous déplaçons le point d'intersection Sé sur l'axe symbolico-praxéologique (S(Oc) Or) en gardant fixe le point médiatiseur L (ce qui signifie que nous bougeons l'extrémité Sé de notre axe paradigmatico-syntagmatique L Sé), nous nous rendons compte que celui-ci couvre les trois niveaux d'adéquation (a), (b), (c), soit (OcOr), (LOc), et (LOr). Ceci

montre clairement l'importance de la rupture épistémologique (R.E.), ou mieux du "ressaisissement épistémologique" du sujet connaissant tout au long de la recherche lorsqu'il est appelé à opérer la rupture gnoséologique (R.G.), et au moment de l'expérimentation ou des applications lors de la réalisation de la rupture praxéologique (R.P.). Cela prouve bien l'implication dialectique de trois niveaux de ruptures évoqués ci-dessus.

4. REMARQUES FINALES

Au terme de cette étude, les observations suivantes s'imposent:

4.1. Pour juguler la crise qu'elle traverse, la pensée sociologique se doit, d'une part, de sauvegarder son unité théorique (la réalité sociale étant totale c'est-à-dire à la fois singulière et plurielle, partielle et globale, simple et complexe, empirique et rationnelle, "concret pratique" et "concret théorique" - expressions empruntées à Althusser, ordre et mouvement) et, d'autre part, d'assainir son langage pour éviter sa créolisation et de se voir réduite à un discours purement métaphorique empêchant d'accéder à une fécondité sociologique objective.

C'est pourquoi, le sociologue...doit maîtriser la problématique de l'équation sujet-objet, savoir la résoudre en observant une "distance-unité" à travers un "ressaisissement épistémologique" permanent qui est le garde-fou de "l'objectivité scientifique". Pour lutter contre les déchirements et cloisonnement théoriques, il doit militer en faveur d'un "mode de production scientifique communautaire" qui exige de lui un esprit scientifique communautariste, solidariste, donc de collaboration et échange loyaux d'informations scientifiques, un esprit marqué par la recherche de la complémentarité théorique.

4.2. A la fin de son travail, le chercheur en sociologie (ou en sciences de l'homme en général) doit se poser la question sur la portée objective de ses résultats en procédant à l'évaluation du degré d'adéquation (ou inadéquation) logique entre le titre et le contenu de son travail, entre le sujet traité et l'application effective de sa théorie, méthodes ou techniques, entre les citations et le texte proprement dit, entre son introduction et sa conclusion, entre sa problématique et ses résultats, entre ceux-

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

ci et la pratique sociale (mesure de sa contribution théorique ou pratique, minime soit-elle). Travail ardu auquel beaucoup de chercheurs se dérobent. Et pourtant c'est à ce prix qu'il peut se rassurer de la validité de son raisonnement.

La triple rupture (épistémologique, gnoséologique et praxéologique) qu'il doit opérer dialectiquement de manière permanente constitue déjà son "retroviseur" qui lui garantit la production d'une connaissance sociologique objective dont les fondements épistémologiques sont suffisants. Il doit donc connaître et maîtriser les contraintes limitatives de la reconstruction sociale ainsi que les critères de validation du discours sociologique (cohérences, acceptabilité, "théorisabilité", applicabilité, vérifiabilité, modifiabilité, falsifiabilité...). Il doit, en outre, savoir dégager et contrôler les différentes dimensions des connaissances sociologiques compte tenu des exigences de la logique et de son environnement (dimensions paradigmatique, syntagmatique, symbolique et praxéologique).

4.3. Dans nos sociétés africaines dominées et exploitées, nous avons besoin d'une "sociologie praxéologique". Celle-ci est une connaissance sociologique tridimensionnelle:

- a) "existentielle": celle qui va à la rencontre de l'homme dans son milieu d'existence avec ses problèmes et aspirations ou besoins réels ainsi que les différents obstacles qui empêchent leur résolution ou satisfaction;
- b) "contingente": une contingence relative qui implique l'insertion des faits particuliers, microsociologiques dans des ensembles sociaux plus vastes où il faut définir de manière significative conditions (économiques, géographiques, psychologiques, politiques...) et moyens (humains, matériels, financiers, techniques, symboliques...) à utiliser ou à combiner. C'est, en quelque sorte, une sociologie "déterministe" (déterminisme utilisé au sens gurvitchien du terme); et
- c) "interventionniste": l'identification des besoins, aspirations, et problèmes réels des populations ainsi que des différents obstacles à leur satisfaction ou résolution, la définition des conditions, le choix et la combinaison rationnels des moyens appropriés doivent déboucher sur une action de libération et/ou de développement; ils doivent permettre au Sociologue d'intervenir ensemble avec les acteurs sociaux concernés sur le milieu en question pour leur transformation dialectique réciproque, c'est-à-dire pour

la promotion de leurs conditions existentielles.

4.4. Je viens là d'offrir au public scientifique quelques idées critiques sur la problématique de la fondamentalité des sciences sociales en général, et sociologique en particulier. Mon objectif ne sera plus jamais atteint que si cette étude ouvre une "brèche" dans la maîtrise du "jeu sociologique" et donne ainsi lieu à un débat scientifique fécond, comme dirait, à juste titre, K.R. Popper, "...ceux parmi nous qui refusent d'exposer leurs idées au risque de la refutation ne prennent pas part au jeu scientifique".¹⁶

Notes

1. Popper, K.R. La Logique de la Découverte Scientifique, (Paris: Payot, 1973) pp. 284, 322.

2. Lire ouvrages ou articles suivants:

Sorokin, P. Les Théories Sociologiques Contemporaines (Paris: Payot, 1938)

Bachelard, G. La Philosophie du Non (Paris: P.U.F., 1962)

Boudon, R. La Crise de la Sociologie (Paris-Genève, 1971)

Friedrichs, R.W. A Sociology of Sociology (New York, 1970)

Gouldner, A. The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (New York: Equinox Books, 1971)

Bourdieu, P.& Al. Le Métier de Sociologue (Paris: Mouton, 1973)

Bude, J. L'obscurantisme libéral et l'investigation sociologique (Paris: Anthropos, 1973)

Fromont, J-J. "Le Schéma Sociologique" dans C.Z.E.P.S. no.1 (P.U.Z., 1973) pp. 67-93

Eisenstadt, S.N. "Quelques réflexions sur la "crise" de la sociologie" dans C.I.S., Vol. LVII (Paris: P.U.F., Juillet-Décembre 1974) pp. 223-246

Mudimbe, V.Y. "La Culture" dans Du Congo au Zaïre 1960-1980 (Bruxelles: Ed. C.R.I.S.P., 1981) pp. 309-398. (lire particulièrement le premier chapitre consacré à "la grammaire des sciences sociales").

Kabamba, Mb. "Sociologie en crise...et fin de la sociologie?" dans Point en

CONNAISSANCE SOCIOLOGIQUE

Science Sociale, Vol. I, no 2-3 (UNILU, IIe & IIIe Trim., 1981-1982) pp. 173-194.

3. Popper, K.R.: op. cit., p. 41.

4. Idem p. 286.

5. Ibidem , p.98.

6. Kabamba, MB. Syllabus du Cours d'Epistémologie Sociologique, IIe Licence en Sociologie, UNILU, 1984-1985. pp. 26-32

7. Latouche, S. a reprise, pour le compte des Sciences Sociales, des réflexions relatives à l'épistémologie de l'obstacle développée par G. Bachelard dans le cadre des Sciences Physiques. Le premier n'a pu retenir que quatre des sept obstacles dégagés par ce dernier et dont les trois autres (en fait non absents des Sciences Sociales) sont: la connaissance générale, la connaissance unitaire et pragmatique (dogme) et l'animisme.

8. Cette question fait l'objet des débats philosophiques depuis Descartes avec son "ego cogito", avec les auteurs comme H. Bergson avec son "intuitionisme", E. Husserl avec la relation "noèse-noème", Merleau-Ponty avec l'"inhérence historique du chercheur", etc.

9. Goldmann, L. Marxisme et Sciences Humaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) p. 123.

10. Par cette expression, il veut dire que "la connaissance se définit par l'adéquation de la pensée à l'objet qu'elle saisit..." dans Introduction à l'épistémologie, 2e éd. mise à jour (Paris:P.U.F., 1972) p. 64.

11. Ce processus est caractéristique du "discours du pouvoir" (expression empruntée à J. Franklin). Il a comme conséquences d'une part, d'entraîner chez le consommateur du discours (le dominé) la "misère de la conscience" la persécution (ou l'extorsion) non seulement mentale, mais aussi matérielle, et d'autre part d'orienter sa praxis dans le sens de la

reproduction de l'ordre inégalitaire matériel, social et culturel établi (Pour de plus amples renseignements sur cette stratégie de domination de l'imaginaire collectif d'un peuple, lire ma thèse de doctorat: La symbolique de la domination coloniale et néo-coloniale au Zaïre (1956-1962) , UNILU, Juillet 1985)

12. cité par Virieux-Reymond, A. op. cit. p. 53.

13. D'après Popper, la "falsifiabilité" ou l'infirmité (et non la confirmation ou la vérifiabilité soutenue par le Cercle de Vienne) est le critère exclusif de la validité d'une théorie scientifique et la base du progrès scientifique. Autrement dit, un énoncé ne peut être considéré comme scientifique que s'il est "falsifiable", c'est-à-dire si l'on peut déterminer avec précision de situations empiriques particulières grâce auxquelles on pourrait le réfuter c'est-à-dire le falsifier.

14. Popper, K.R. op. cit., p 58.

15. C'est dans cette perspective qu'il faut situer les assertions suivantes: le principe de réversibilité de F. Gonseth selon lequel "en science tout est révisable"; cette pensée de G. Bachelard (parlant de la science) "qu'il n'y a pas de vérités premières, il n'y a que des erreurs premières"; cette réserve d'André Mercier "...l'infirmité a toujours un caractère plus décisif que la confirmation qui n'est jamais que provisoire, car elle peut n'avoir lieu que dans certaines limites....".

16. Popper, K.R. op. cit., p 286.



QUEST

Philosophical Discussions

INVITES

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"AFRICAN SOCIALISM - A DYING DEBATE"

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Résumé

Cette discussion traite la question des problèmes méthodologiques qui surgissent quand on essaye d'analyser et d'interpréter les croyances, les activités sociales et les pratiques institutionnelles de cultures illettrées comme celles de l'Afrique traditionnelle.

Deux approches méthodologiques, qui s'excluent mutuellement, sont considérées. La première est le fonctionnalisme, dans lequel le chercheur adopte une attitude objective et prétend d'atteindre une compréhension objective de son sujet en reconstruisant le raisonnement de l'agent. L'autre est l'approche herméneutique dans laquelle le chercheur tente d'arriver à une compréhension du sujet par une interprétation subjective de l'agent basée sur une étude minutieuse de la situation de l'agent comme celui-ci la perçoit.

L'auteur prétend que l'approche herméneutique, surtout comme elle est réinterprétée par l'approche des "trois-mondes" de Karl Popper, est bien meilleure que l'approche fonctionnaliste en résolvant des problèmes d'analyse et d'interprétation, surtout en ce qui concerne des systèmes de raisonnement africains, des croyances et pratiques institutionnelles.

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS AND AFRICAN THOUGHT

Godwin Sogolo

There are not many areas of consensus among students of culture, whether sociologists or anthropologists. However, those with particular interest in the study of non-literate cultures seem to share some area of near agreement by way of methodology of empirical investigation, and possibly in interpretative analysis. They seem to agree that there exists a clear distinction between what people, most of the time, think or claim to do and what they actually do, between the reasons they avow for their actions and the real reasons for such actions. R.K. Merton uses the familiar terms "manifest" and "latent" in drawing attention to this distinction. "Manifest reasons", Merton says, are those ostensibly avowed by an actor or agent as reasons that prompt him into action, while "latent reasons" refer to those which the agent is unaware of, at least at the time of acting, but are discoverable through the agent's own process of introspective ratiocination or by a "detached" analysis of the agent's action.

This distinction is particularly important in the search for an adequate interpretation of social activities and institutions whose nature and point have been either "confused", incomplete or seemingly contradictory. The choice of an adequate analytical tool for such institutional beliefs and actions has been a central conflict between philosophers of the positivist bent and those in modern hermeneutics. In my view, the main problem of the textual interpretation of traditional African thought-systems provides a test for the suitability or otherwise of any espoused approach.

In this paper I discuss the crucial conflict that arises out of two methodological approaches that appear to be mutually exclusive. One adopts a detached posture based on what the analyst claims to understand from the nature of institutional practices, and out of which he reconstructs the agent's train of thought. The other seeks to understand the subject-matter through a subjective interpretation of the intentions of the agent, based on a careful study of his situation as the agent perceives it. This paper argues against the explanatory potency of the former in favour of the latter, whose initial formulation has been modified and thereby

strengthened by Popper's hermeneutical approach of "World-3" situation analysis. Such an approach, the paper concludes, solves the major problems of textual interpretation, particularly in African thought-systems and institutional beliefs that are characterised by evident disengagement of the participant's cognitive attention.

About midway in the 20th Century, the initial appeal of the rival approaches, intellectualism and symbolism, conceived as methods of interpreting non-literate social institutions had faded enough to give way for the rise of the functionalist school of thought. Functionalism, as a proposed alternative method of studying social institutions, was intended as a kind of problem-solving technique that sought to unearth certain institutional goals and functions concealed from the agent but discoverable through the analysts objective investigation. The need for this sort of seemingly conjectural approach was considered highest in cultures which had sustained themselves with apparent minimum cognitive awareness and where the relations between the people's avowed reasons and their actual activities appear to be cloudy. However, it did not take long before the obvious weaknesses of the functional approach compelled most sociologists and social anthropologists to brush aside I.C. Jarvie's straightforward slogan of "study the rituals and not the beliefs".¹

It could be said that hermeneutics has since been the nearest alternative to sociological functionalism. In a sense, hermeneutics stands between Hempel's strict nomological model of explanation on the one extreme and Weber's pure empathic method on the other. Within the hermeneutic traditions, thinkers like Charles Taylor and Paul Ricour and many others, have taken an almost Weberian approach, the core of which, of course, Popper rejects. Yet, Popper's "three-world" typology betrays his sympathies for hermeneutics; some could say, it is, indeed, a version of it. One thing, though, should be granted. Whether or not Popper's analysis falls within the mainstream of traditional hermeneutics², it does cast a great deal of light on the problems of textual interpretation of non-literate cultures.

Essentially, Poppers classification of the objects of human understanding falls into three categories:

We call the physical world "World 1", the world of our conscious ex-

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS

perience "World 2", and the world of logical contents of books, libraries, computer memories and suchlike "World 3".³

Clearly the objective understanding of a people's institutions, beliefs and thoughts is neither a World 1 nor World 2 matter. It is World 3, which has to do with objective knowledge and it is essentially the "product of the human mind". The problems involved are on a higher plane than those of World 1 and World 2. The object of understanding here is not the agent's problems but how the agent perceives and tries to solve his problems. This is what Popper's three-world situation analysis is intended to do, to render rational the actions and explanatory schemes of the agent in the way they are perceived by him. But note that Popper himself thinks that hermeneutics is mainly about World 2 objects, that which deals with subjective thoughts, experiences or feelings of other people. In that case, it is well-nigh indistinguishable from Weber's empathic method based on the analyst's intuitive imagination of putting himself in the agent's situation and re-enacting the agent's experience, thoughts and feelings. It means, therefore, that Popper's hermeneutics rises a step above the traditional hermeneutics but does not cross the border into positivism. His three-world analysis aims at combining intuitive understanding of reality with the objectivity of rational criticism.⁴

The point is now almost beyond dispute among behavioural scientists that what constitutes rational behaviour, belief, action etc. is basically determined by the logic of the situation. Part of that logic comprises the aims, intentions and problems which have been built into the cultural beliefs, norms and social institutions. However, such components of the situational logic need not manifest themselves in the self-conscious awareness of the agent, although when unfolded either through introspection or through an analyst's reminder, they are immediately grasped in no way different from the point and meaning that the agent ascribes to them. It is tempting for any Popperian to read the principle of "charity" of interpretation into all this. That need does not arise.

Granted, there are problems in ascribing rationality to actions or institutions on the basis of some assumed internal logic; such problems are not answered on the ground of some indeterminate criteria of rationality. To argue that the criteria of rationality are situation-determined would be

a weak defence of Popper's kind of three-world situation analysis. There is, however, a point upon which this kind of analysis finds solid support. We may say of an agent's action that it is irrational or that it is silly, unwise, etc., but this would sound gratuitous for anybody to judge an agent's action as unintentional. Unlike the assumption behind claims concerning rationality or irrationality, any claim to the effect that an agent's action is unintended falls flat with the agent's own counter-claim that, in fact, his action has an intention, whatever that intention is. And since agents are the individual vehicles of social institutions, we should concede, I suppose, that such institutions too have goals or that they are intended to achieve certain goals, whatever the goals are, individualistic or collective.

It is on the anchor of this almost irrefutable claim to intention by the agent, that Popper's hermeneutical three-world approach turns out to be a strong theoretical weapon in the understanding of certain forms of human institutions, particularly traditional African social institutions. There can be no adequate understanding of a people's mode of thought, beliefs, actions, and social institutions, if we do not give an important place to the goals and intentions that prompt the individuals into action or those factors that nourish the institutions in their on-going sustenance.

The major error of the functionalist approach to the explanations of human institutions is its failure to transcend World 1 and World 2 objects. Functionalism, at least in its classical form appeared dazzled enough by the advances of science to have assumed some causal connections between actual functions and the intended goals that precede them, that is, between the empirical facts and their antecedent psychological consciousness. For this, functionalists depend on the analogy between society and the biological organism, an analogy for which they are accused of committing the sin of teleology.⁵

Beyond such restricted concerns, Popper's hermeneutical approach is a metatheory that seeks to understand the intentions of the agent by first understanding his situation, the situation as it is perceived by the agent. In other words, the agent's avowed intentions should form the major input into our understanding of his situation, which comprises both the observables and any logical inferences that follow from them.

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS

It is a matter in which we must work with conjectures and refutations: that is, we must try to refute our conjectures until they fit fully into the context of the problem translations, lose arbitrary features, and achieve something like a maximum of explanatory power of what the author wanted to say.⁶

Popper thus believes that his three-world approach provides the objective structures through which the subjective intentions of the agent can be understood.

Now, let us examine briefly the characteristic features of the kinds of situation in which this hermeneutic analysis would find a place. Social anthropologists have been puzzled by some "peculiar" features of traditional African thought-systems. One such puzzle derives from the observed fact that the normal human process of theory construction appears minimal in such societies. Ask a traditional African the point of his action, the reason why he holds to certain beliefs or why he performs certain rituals, and he would come out wanting in providing the expected secondary elaborations. In fact, he might simply say that he has not thought about the matter that way.

Yet, what the traditional African does, on closer scrutiny, falls within the normal notion of action conceived as an event that entails prior elaboration and purposiveness. He is consciously seeking to bring out a state of affairs which otherwise would be different if he did not orientate his action towards it. To that extent, he cannot be ascribed with some unconscious intention. That he is acting in a particular way commits us to accept that he has chosen to act in that way and that he could have chosen otherwise. In other words, the actor could have chosen to act differently or not at all. The usual understanding is that such a conscious exercise of choice must precede the action itself and above all, that an action is always prompted by some consciously conceived goal. Yet, in the case of the traditional African there is an apparent absence of this conscious articulation on the part of the agent as to why he does what he does. It would be wrong to conclude from this that this common human experience can not be conducted when the situation arises. To do so is to commit the error of inferring that because people do not overtly express certain principles on which their actions are based, therefore

such principles are non-existent.

It is characteristic of human beings in general that, sometimes, they consistently act on certain principles without being consciously aware of what exactly such principles are. In fact, it is perfectly plausible to think of a people acting according to certain rules or principles without supposing that they are able to define such rules or principles, or that they consciously reflect on them. Every normal individual lives from day to day, deliberating and taking series of decisions. But what he is not conscious of is the fact that he is involved in this continuous decision-making process. In other words, man does not always pause to reflect upon the reasons why he does what he does or why he holds to particular beliefs or attitudes.

There are a variety of reasons why it does not even occur to most traditional Africans to engage in this kind of second-order reflection. Through habit and custom, most of their daily activities have been made into routine and unless they are pressed for justification, the need does not always arise to do so. This common trait of the human mind gives the impression that most human actions are not rationally grounded or that they are mysteriously guided by some unknown forces. Contrary to what the functionalist would say, for instance, that there are certain latent reasons which stand as the real motivating forces behind most of our actions, every human being acts from some reason which subsequently comes to his consciousness only when the need arises. It is therefore mistaken to think in holistic terms that in such situations society or culture 'thinks' for the people, or intend to postulate certain biological mechanisms, as sociobiologists are tempted to do, that direct people's behaviour, but of which they share no direct consciousness.

Now, it is the emphasis on the understanding of the peculiarities of such situations that gives Popper's hermeneutical three-world approach an edge over other approaches in the textual interpretation of pre-literate thought systems. When some functionalist anthropologists urge that we "study the rituals and not the beliefs", the presupposition is either that no good overt reasons are given by the traditional man for his activities, or that such avowed intentions do not have any direct relation with their observed activities. Or, when such connections appear obvious, the impression often given is of a people who perform only psychologically

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS

explanatory functions, not directly tied to the realities of the situation. It is not clear how much psychological functions can be postulated outside their peculiar context. In fact, it should strike us as odd for any student of culture to think that the agent's intentions are not tied to his situation because the beliefs of the agent are always instrumental to the attainment of his goals and therefore the survival of his society.

In his study of the Trobrianders, Malinowski reports that these people pray to the gods for the safety of their fishing nets and canoes and that such prayers have the function of relieving the people's anxiety (even though the Trobrianders are unaware of this). Malinowski claims that although such beliefs are false, they nevertheless produce the necessary functions.⁷ A similar point is made by the author in his discussion of the psychological function of magic among pre-literate peoples:

Magic supplies primitive man with a number of ready-made ritual acts and beliefs, with a definite mental and practical technique which serves to bridge over the dangerous gap in every important pursuit of critical situation. It enables man to carry out with confidence his important tasks, to maintain his poise and his mental integrity in the fit of anger, in the throes of hate, of unrequited love, or despair and anxiety.⁸

Like religious prayers, magic is thus explained by Malinowski in functional terms, simply as a means by which attitudes to group values are reinforced. According to him, such group rituals are performed in the atmosphere of mutuality, and they present occasions for love, friendship and display of cooperative efforts between members of the group. In the words of D. Emmet, these beliefs and practices provide the opportunity "for the recharging of the positive feelings of loyalty to the values which make possible the self-discipline without which no social life could go on".⁹ Emmet picks the specific example of a funeral ceremony, the agent's avowed reason of which could be "to show respect to the dead and the family". According to her it should be obvious from the analyst's observation of the ritual that it actually provides the occasion for the members of the community to come together as "a public way of coming to terms with the crisis".¹⁰

Here, we find typical examples of "study the rituals and not the beliefs", in which the text interpreter ignores the avowed reasons given by the agents for their actions in place of what he or she regards as the real reasons. Part of the reason for doing this is understandable: the apparent non-intelligibility of the reasons and the cloudy connections between the goals postulated and the means by which they are being sought. The implicit reason is that the mind-set of these men does not accurately mirror the actual workings of their social institutions, or indeed, the empirical world. What the analyst does therefore is to superimpose some more "appropriate reasons", that seem to him to provide a coherent meaning. F.A. Hayek objects to this in a typical hermeneutical fashion:

Whenever we have to explain human behaviour towards things, these things must then not be defined in terms of what we might find out about them by some "objective" methods of science, but in terms of what the the person acting thinks about them. A medicine or a cosmetic e.g., for the purpose of social study are not what cures an ailment or improves a person's look, but what people think will have that effect.¹¹

Hayek's point is simply that we can not claim to have explained a people's culture if what we find out about it is unconnected with what the participants believe about it. He thinks that "social institutions can be understood only in terms of what men (the agents, not the anaysts) think about them".¹²

Hayek, no doubt, gets the point but his radical switch to traditional hermeneutics lands him in Popper's World 2 and not World 3. The point at issue is not simply the insider's belief about his system. It is a meta-theoretical investigation of the working of the participants mind. That project, according to Popper's three-world analysis, should start with a full understanding of the participant's situation. This has to be done by a process of surgical operation of all the cultural components, modes of thought, ideas and the social history that bind them together, the situation as it is, the situation as determined by the mould of mind that perceives it. That way, we attain a full understanding of the correlation

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS

between the situation and the agent's perception of it.

It should be clear from a World 3 approach, for instance, that the essence of a funeral ritual in a traditional African culture neither falls exclusively within the participant's reason of "showing respect to the dead and his family", nor into the analyst's conjectured "way of coming to terms with the crisis". Each society has its own existential conception of death embedded in an elaborate body of theoretical construction. In a society where there is no clear ontological demarcation between the living and the dead and where death does not constitute a crisis, the out-of-context interpretation of a funeral ritual as an attempt to solve a crisis, no matter its intellectual soundness, should be seen, at best, as a piece of misadventure in psychological theorising.

The doctrine that a people's culture can be understood in its totality predates Popper. What Popper's hermeneutics tells us is simply that in understanding the working of a people's mind and its relation to their materials of experience, neither orthodox positivism, nor hermeneutics can provide a satisfactory solution. In the process of textual interpretation, the analyst may embrace science, but not full tilt. He could make certain conjectures based on his general understanding of the working of the human mind. But the outcome of such a scientific approach, is no more than a raw input into the set of materials provided by the participant's own perception of his situation. Together, they form a richer package of ingredients which should be fed into the analyst's intellectual mill for a process that will produce a comprehensive understanding of a given culture.

Notes

1.I.C.Jarvie,The Revolution in Anthropology (London, RKP,1954) p 44.

2.see for instance, Charles Taylor "Interpretation and the Science of Man" and Paul Ricoeur "The Model of the Text" in F.R.Dallmayr and T.A.McCarthy (eds.) Understanding and Social Enquiry (Notre Dame, 1977). Also Jurgen Habermas Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston,1972).

3.Objective Knowledge (Oxford:Clarendon, revised ed., 1979) p 74.

4.In truth, Popper makes explicit reference to traditional hermeneutics such as Dilthey and Collingwood. That must have been part of the reason for James Farr's paper "Popper's Hermeneutics" Philosophy of the Social Sciences Vol.13 no 2 June 1983, pp 157-176. Reactions on this paper have centered on whether Popper's contributions to the understanding of the human sciences should be credited to positivism or to hermeneutics. See John King Farlow and Wesley E. Cooper "Sir Karl Popper: Tributes and Adjustments"; Karl Otto Apel "Some Critical Remarks on Popper's Hermeneutics"; and Tom Settle "Is Popper's World 3 an ontological Extravagance?" all in the same volume as Farr. The points of dispute in these discussions are not directly relevant to my emphasis here.

5.The teleological implications of classical functionalism have been criticised by M.Levy Jr. and Kingsley Davis who think that the similarities between the biological organism and society have been overstressed. Society, they argue, can not be thought of as if it is capable of conceiving of goals. These neo-functionalists then claim to be proposing a solution by redefining "function" simply as "a beneficial consequence". See M.Levy "Functional Analysis" in D.L.Sills (ed.) Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences pp 21-29. and K.Davies "The Myth of Functional Analysis as a

POPPER'S HERMENEUTICS

Special Method in Sociology and Anthropology" in American Sociological Review XXIV, 1959, pp 752-772. Other ways of getting out of difficulty have been proposed. It has been argued, for instance, that the notion of goal-directedness, which is central to functional analysis, does not necessarily entail "intentions" or "purpose". See Vernon Pratt "A Biological Approach to Sociological Functionalism" in Inquiry, Vol.18, no 4, 1975, pp371-389.

6.K.R.Popper Objective Knowledge, op.cit. p 190.

7.B.Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays,(London:Free Press, Anchor Ed., 1954) p89-90.

8.Ibid.p 80.

9.Dorothy Emmet, Function, Purpose and Power (London: MacMillan, 1958) p 169.

10.Ibid. p 83

11.F.A.Hayek The Counter-Revolution of Science (Illinois:Free Press of Glencoe, 1952) p 30

12.Ibid p 33

Résumé

Dans cette discussion l'auteur tente de construire une philosophie Thomistique de l'éducation, basée sur la métaphysique d'Aquina et sur ses remarques concernant l'enseignement et l'apprentissage.

L'auteur prétend que la philosophie de l'éducation d'Aquina incorpore les avantages des deux théories qui ont dominé historiquement la pratique de l'éducation - à savoir l'autoritarisme et le progressisme - et en évite les inconvénients. La discussion conclut que la philosophie de l'éducation d'Aquina est pertinent, non seulement pour les temps modernes mais peut-être pour tous les temps.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Gerald J. Wanjohi

It is perhaps too ambitious, if not altogether presumptuous, to undertake to write about St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of education. For, although Aquinas was a very able and inspiring teacher, he did not leave behind him treatises on education as did such people as Quintilian, Comenius, Rousseau, or Dewey. Nevertheless, I think one can make a good case of the existence in Aquinas of a philosophy of education based 1) indirectly on his metaphysics, especially his theory of man, and 2) on his rather few, but explicit remarks on teaching and learning.¹ The first source of Aquinas's philosophy of education may at first seem dubious and even farfetched. However, it must be borne in mind that any educational enterprise is of necessity and in the final analysis built on some theory of man and of the universe. Given this, it would be interesting to explore the educational implications of Aquinas's metaphysical system.

It is the aim of this paper to study Aquinas's philosophy of education from the two stated standpoints, and try to explore its relevance for the modern world. Just one word of warning: some of the examples used by Aquinas belong to the antiquarian and outmoded science of his time. However, despite his use of them, his general meaning is, I think, quite clear.

I.

According to Aquinas, there is a hierarchy of being that descends from God, angels, men, brute animals, plants, to non-living things. He explains this hierarchy by means of the principles of act and potency. God, a pure spirit, is the highest and most perfect being. Eternal and uncreated, He is the creator of all other beings. God is pure act; in him there is no potency. In Him essence and existence coincide: He in the pure act of existing.

The angels, too, are pure spirits. However, they are creatures, and as such, they are not all-perfect. In them essence and existence are distinct,

which is another way of saying that they are characterised by some potency: they are not pure act of existing as God is.

As for man, he is not a pure spirit but a composite of spirit (soul) and matter (body). The human soul itself is the lowest of the spiritual substances. It is so low that it needs the assistance of sense powers in order to be able to perform its proper activities. This in turn makes it necessary for the soul to be joined to a body with sense organs.

To say that man is a composite of soul and body does not, for Aquinas, imply a dualism as it does for such philosophers as Plato and Descartes. Aquinas explains man's unity through Aristotle's doctrine of matter and form, technically referred to as the "hylomorphic" theory. According to this theory, all physical beings are constituted of two principles: matter and form. Matter exists as pure potency to receive this or that form, and for this reason it is referred to as the principle of individuation (of form). Form, for its part, limits matter to a particular thing and confers being or actuality to the composite.²

When applied to man, the hylomorphic theory means that the soul is the (substantial) form of man, whose matter is the body. These two principles, soul and body, concur to constitute, not two, but only one unitary being, man. That soul and body in man are not two separate, independent entities is attested to by the classical definition of man as a "rational animal". This definition, we notice, is given in terms of matter and form, with "animal" referring to the matter, and "rational" to the form. The psycho-physical unity of man is also confirmed by our everyday experience. When we say "I", we are not referring to our body alone, nor to our soul alone, but to ourselves as being composed essentially of soul and body, or, to use the modern expression, of mind and body.

Such is the Thomistic view of man. Let us now turn to the epistemological implications of that view, since they are the stepping-stone of Aquinas's philosophy of education.

As seen by Aquinas, God, the Supreme Being, is the source of all things and of all knowledge possessed by man. It is God who created man with a potentiality to acquire knowledge, and has illuminated his mind so that it can grasp the first principles and the knowledge of conclusions derivable from them.³ All this leads Aquinas to declare that God is man's inner and principal teacher.⁴ In this we find Aquinas corroborated by a theory of

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

knowledge of a traditional African people, the Twi of Ghana. H. Hedenus cites a proverb of the Twi to the effect that "nobody shows the son of a blacksmith how to forge iron; if he knows how to hammer, it is God who has taught it to him". The Twi people themselves interpret this proverb thus: "If you are working and let your son watch you, he will learn quickly. It is God who has given the child the aptitude to observe and to imitate. If your son learns by himself what he sees done, in reality it is God who teaches him."⁵

After showing that for Aquinas God is the source of all knowledge, let us proceed to show how, according to him, man, an incarnate spirit, comes to acquire knowledge.

The Thomistic theory of knowledge is a mean between two extreme epistemologies, that of Democritus and that of Plato. Believing that all reality is material in the form of atoms which are always interacting, Democritus taught that man knows through the action of the atoms impinging on the soul which he likewise thought to be made up of atoms, and therefore material. Here, we must credit Democritus with this one correct idea, i.e. the knower and the known must be alike. Democritus also implied, and quite correctly, that the origin of human knowledge lies in the senses. Unfortunately, Democritus's theory of knowledge did not rise above the sensory level. In him we see an extreme form of empiricism which we can only describe as sensism. Democritus's epistemology is marred by an exaggerated materialism which refuses or is unable to come to terms with the spiritual aspect of man.

If Democritus erred in being too materialistic in his conception of man, Plato went astray in being too spiritualistic. Having taken as his point of departure the notion of knowledge as that which is so as to be incapable of being otherwise, Plato arrived at the obvious conclusion that the object of knowledge, had to be something immobile, eternal and spiritual. Plato termed the objects of knowledge "Ideas", and these he described to be separate from matter. Like Democritus before him, Plato also believed that the like is known by the like. And since Plato believed as well in the spirituality and immortality of the soul,⁶ he envisaged knowledge as consisting in the union between an immortal and spiritual soul on the one hand, and immutable and spiritual Ideas on the other.

Did not the fact that man has a body create an obstacle to Plato's

formulation of his theory of knowledge? Not at all. For Plato considered the real man to be the soul and the body an instrument of the soul at best and, at worst, a burdensome adjunct. As seen by Plato, the relationship between the soul and the body is no more mysterious than that between a sailor and a ship.⁷ In other words, the soul and the body are two independent entities for Plato.

As for sense powers, these Plato accurately ascribed to the soul. However, he underplayed their importance. According to him the function of sensation is simply to arouse or awaken the soul and make it attentive to external stimuli. As viewed by Plato, the soul needs to be awakened from slumber by sensation because it is a prisoner of the body: "the body is the prison-house of the soul". In other words, Plato finds the body-soul union a liability on the part of the soul. Aquinas takes Plato's position to be untenable, since nature unites something to that which will facilitate, not impede, its operations⁹. Plato accounts for the body-soul union as a punishment for the soul, a point he does not explain any further, thus leaving it palpably unconvincing. It follows that Plato's body-soul dualism as well as the theory of knowledge based upon it stand on shaky ground.

Agreeing with Democritus (though the reason in either case may differ), Aquinas affirms that all knowledge originates in the senses. Given Aquinas's idea of the nature of the human soul and its consequent union with the body having all sense powers, this affirmation of Aquinas is not surprising. The reason Aquinas gives in support for the above statement is that a person lacking one sense is also observed to lack the knowledge of the attribute to that sense. For example, a person born blind from birth has no idea of colour.¹⁰ Not even the knowledge of principles is exempted from this rule, for in order for a person to understand that the whole is greater than any of its parts, he must have perceived the whole and the parts.¹¹ This, for Aquinas, is a good counter-argument against Plato who believes in the prior existence of the soul from which the soul is supposed to have obtained the knowledge of all things. Against the sensism of Democritus, Aquinas contends that though it has its origin in the senses, human cognition is more than just sensory: it is also intellectual or spiritual, and here he is at one with Plato.

Now it seems to be an appropriate moment to state what Aquinas means

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

by "knowledge". By this term he means the assimilation of the known (object) by the knower (subject). This assimilation is not material, physical or physiological, but psychological. By this is meant that it is not the thing in its physical being which is assimilated, but the form or the essence of the thing through what Aquinas technically refers to as the "species" of the thing. (By "thing" is understood whatever the mind apprehends, and this may be an event, an activity, a truth, and not necessarily a physical object. As for the term "species", it means the "likeness of the form of the thing".¹²) Knowledge then consists in the attainment of the essence of a thing through the likeness of that essence. This is true of both sense and intellectual knowledge.

The two faculties of sense and intellect are not always in act, i.e. not always knowing, but are sometimes in potency to knowledge. They are brought from potentiality to actuality by their proper objects, the senses by sensible things, and the intellect by intelligible species.¹³ In other words, just as he formulates his metaphysics in terms of the principles of act and potency, Aquinas does the same with regard to his theory of knowledge and, as we shall see later, that of learning and teaching.

Having affirmed that all knowledge stems from the senses, Aquinas must face up to the question how sense knowledge can be raised from its level to the intellectual level. The problem is precisely this: because material things, which are the objects of human intellect, are only potentially intelligible, they must somehow be made actually intelligible before the intellect can apprehend them. The nature of the process by which this takes place is what Aquinas must grapple with.

The forms of sensible things (sensible species) Aquinas calls "phantasms". They reside in the sense organs. Since they represent the form or essence in an individuated, determined condition, they cannot, as such, be the object of the intellect: "the lower does not act on the higher", and "the like is known by the like". Since intellectual knowledge exists inasmuch as man knows universally through the concepts, there must be in the soul a power that acts on the phantasms to bring about intellectual knowledge. Following Aristotle, Aquinas asserts that the human intellect, which is part of the soul, has a twofold power: one power which makes all things, and another power which becomes all things. The former is referred to as the agent or active intellect, and the latter as

the possible or passive intellect.

One of the fiercest battles Aquinas had to wage was in the field of epistemology, especially in connection with the natures of the agent and possible intellects. Against Plato, he had to demonstrate the necessity of the agent intellect¹⁴, and against Avicenna¹⁵ and Averroes¹⁶, respectively, that there is not only one cosmic agent intellect for all men, and only one possible intellect. If the views of the two Arabian philosophers were true, then both epistemology and ethics would be jeopardized, since man could not be said to know personally and independently, nor to act in a free and responsible manner.

As Aquinas sees the matter, intellectual knowledge is possible through the action of the agent intellect on the phantasm to educe from it an intelligible form. The process by which the agent intellect disengages an intelligible form from the phantasm is called abstraction. What this means is best illustrated by Aquinas himself:

Not only does the active intellect throw light on the phantasm, it does more: by its power, it abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm. It throws light on the phantasm because, just as the sensitive part acquires a greater power by its conjunction with the intellectual part, so by the power of the active intellect the phantasms are made more fit for abstraction therefrom of the intelligible intentions. Furthermore, the active intellect abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm, for as much as by the power of the active intellect we are able to discard the conditions of individuality, and to take into consideration the specific nature, the image of which informs the passive intellect.¹⁷

Informed by the intelligible species, the passive intellect is brought from potentiality to act, but only in a general and indistinct way. In order for the intellect to know the individual thing of which it has the intelligible species, it must turn to the phantasm. This is so, given the nature of the intellect and its object. On the part of the object, the need for intellect to turn to the phantasm is explained by Aquinas as follows:

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The proper object of the human intellect which is united to a body is a quiddity, or nature as existing in corporal matter... For instance, it belongs to the nature of the stone to be an individual stone, and the nature of a stone or of any other material thing cannot be completely and truly, except inasmuch as it is known as existing in the individual. Now we have apprehended the individual through the senses and the imagination. And, therefore, for intellect to understand actually its proper object, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms in order to perceive the universal nature existing in the individual.¹⁸

The composite nature of man, a result of the soul requiring to be joined to an organic body, makes the soul (intellect) constantly dependent on the senses, and hence on the phantasm for knowledge during the present life. Aquinas offers two examples in support of this observation. If the intellect did not have to return to the phantasm for understanding, then a disorder in such a sense power as the imagination or the memory would in no way affect the intellectual activity. But such is not the case, as Aquinas relates:

When the act of the imagination is hindered by the lesion in the corporeal organ, for instance, in the case of frenzy; or when the act of memory is hindered, as in the case of lethargy, we see that man is hindered from actually understanding things of which he had previous knowledge.¹⁹

The next example Aquinas offers is interesting not only because it supports his epistemological position gallantly, but because of its educational implications. He writes:

Anyone can experience this for himself, that when he tries to understand something, he forms certain phantasms to help him by way of example in which, as it were, he examines what he is desirous of understanding. For this reason it is that when we want someone to understand something, we lay examples before him, for which he forms phantasms for the purpose of understanding.²⁰

And one can add here what Aquinas has said elsewhere in the same article: "For the soul understands nothing without a phantasm".

The truth Aquinas is enunciating here is given support by the mode of teaching prevalent in the African traditional societies:

Generally speaking, traditional knowledge is not transmitted by means of a set of concepts carefully defined, or rules and norms precisely formulated. The child is instructed through images, narratives and symbolic actions whose content infinitely surpasses in meaning what presently he can grasp of it. But with this treasury of images knowledge is deposited in him.²¹

The above teaching of Aquinas is also backed by a modern educator who argues that teaching based on the concern for meaning or knowledge for its own sake (as opposed to that based on utilitarian ends) must appeal to the imagination to be successful.²²

For my part, I have noticed that teaching philosophy to first year university students in Africa presents a problem, at least initially. The reason for this is that the students are not able to imagine things and situations which would help them to think philosophically. This is particularly true during the tutorials when they just sit there unable to say anything. But as time goes on and students begin to gain experience in the subject, one starts to notice some promising signs.

What we have just seen is but a small aspect of Aquinas's philosophy of education as implied by his philosophy. Let us proceed to explore that philosophy in detail.

II.

Aquinas's philosophy of education (and in particular its teaching aspect) is firmly rooted in his metaphysics and epistemology, the outlines of which we have attempted to give in the preceding pages. That this is so will it appear as we continue with our exposition and analysis.

God, the first cause of all things, is taken by Aquinas, as we have already seen, as the principal teacher who works internally. It is God who

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

has created man with a capacity to acquire knowledge, and it is He who also illumines man's intellect so that it can grasp the first principles of knowledge: the principle of identity, of non-contradiction, etc..²³

After indicating the part played by God in man's learning or acquisition of knowledge, Aquinas next makes a virtually important distinction between two methods of coming to know. These are inventio and disciplina, respectively. As I see it, Aquinas accords equal importance to these two modes of learning. A man who can arrive at knowledge through discovery, i.e. through his own efforts shows that he is possessed of a superior intellect. However, any created intellect, no matter how well endowed, is still limited, and that is why there is need of a teacher. In trying to justify revelation, Aquinas says that it is needed, because even though man is able, by his own natural reason, to arrive at such important truths as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, etc., yet there are other truths which are inaccessible to human reason, for example, the Trinity and the Incarnation. Even for the truths which are discoverable by the unaided reason, this is a slow process and an undertaking possible and attractive only for a few people. From this it would seem to follow that a teacher, whether divine or human, is essential.²⁴

The distinction which Aquinas makes between the inventio and disciplina modes of learning is based, in the final analysis, on the principles of act and potency. To start with, Aquinas differentiates between active potency and passive potency:

In natural things something can pre-exist in potency in two ways: in one it is an active and complete potency, as when an intrinsic principle has sufficient power to flow into perfect act. Healing is an obvious example of this, for a sick person is restored to health by the natural power within him. The other appears in passive potency, as happens when the internal principle does not have sufficient power to bring it into act. This is clear when the air becomes fire, for this cannot result from any power existing in the air.

Therefore, when something exists in active complete potency, the external agent acts only by helping the internal agent and providing it with means by which it can enter into act. Thus, in healing the

doctor assists nature, which is the principal agent,...by prescribing medicines which nature uses as instruments for healing. On the other hand, when something pre-exists only in the passive potency, then it is the external agent which is the principal cause of the transition from potency to act. Thus, fire makes actual fire of air which is the potential fire.²⁵

Next, Aquinas goes on to apply the principles just enunciated to learning. He writes:

Knowledge pre-exists in the learner potentiality, not however, in the purely passive, but in the active sense. Otherwise, man could not be able to acquire knowledge independently. Therefore, just as there are two ways of being cured, that is, either through the activity of unaided nature or by nature with the aid of medicine, so too there are two ways of acquiring knowledge. In one way, natural reason by itself reaches knowledge of unknown things, and this way is called discovery; in the other way, when someone else aids the learner's natural reason, and this is called learning by instruction.²⁶

Now one would like to know the nature of these two modes of learning: by discovery (inventio) and by instruction (disciplina). The following is Aquinas's answer to that important question:

In discovery, the procedure of anyone who arrives at the knowledge of something unknown is to apply the general self-evident principles to certain matters, from these to proceed to particular conclusions, and from these to others. Consequently, one person is said to teach another inasmuch as by [words], he manifests to the other, the reasoning process which he himself goes through by his own natural reason. And thus, through the instrumentality, as it were, of what is told him, the natural reason of the pupil arrives at the knowledge of the things which he did not know. Therefore just as a doctor is said to heal a patient through the activity of nature, so a man is said to cause knowledge in another through the activity of the learner's natural reason, and this is teaching.²⁷

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

To illustrate in a few words how the principles of act and potency apply to teaching, Aquinas has this to say: "The teacher furnishes the pupil's intellect with a stimulus of things he teaches, as an indispensable mover who brings the intellect from potentiality to actuality"²⁸. By the underscored words, Aquinas means to say that through the instrumentality of the teacher, the pupil's habitual, rather dormant, and generally indistinct knowledge is awakened, sharpened, and made specific in terms of a particular object.

All Aquinas has said so far about teaching would seem to have very little bearing, if any, on the theory of knowledge that we have studied. This is far from being the case. Having defined knowledge as the representation of things in the soul, Aquinas raises an objection against this definition on the grounds that no man can imprint the likeness of things in the soul of another which, evidently, only God can do. From this, it would seem to follow that no man can teach another.

It is in answer to the above objection that we see Aquinas making a very clear and unambiguous link between his epistemology and his theory of teaching. He explains:

In the pupil, the intelligible forms of which knowledge received through the teaching is constituted are caused directly by the agent intellect and mediately by the one who teaches. For the teacher sets before the pupil sets of intelligible things, and from these the agent intellect derives intelligible likenesses and causes them to exist in the possible intellect. Hence, the words of the teacher, heard or in writing, have the same efficacy in causing knowledge as things which are outside the soul. From them the agent intellect receives intelligible likeness, although the words of the teacher are proximately disposed to cause knowledge than things outside the soul, in so far as they are signs of intelligible things.²⁹

The reason why the words of the teacher are more apt to cause knowledge than things outside the soul calls for two comments on my part. Firstly, the reason for the greater facility of the teacher's words to cause knowledge is that they are immaterial signs, and things are more

knowable (intelligible), at least in themselves, the more they are immaterial or removed from matter. Secondly, a live discourse or lecture by a teacher is likely to bring about more understanding than his handouts, no matter how detailed. The reason for this is that in a lecture a teacher uses a number of signs: gestures, emphases, pauses, etc., which cannot be reproduced on paper. This should serve as a warning to students to attend lectures rather than rely on the teacher's handouts or on their friends notes.

One would like to know how Aquinas's all important epistemological principle, viz. that a human being never learns without an image, is related to his theory of teaching. Aquinas supplies the answer to this question in an article entitled: "Can a Man be Taught by an Angel?". On the face of it this question sounds irrelevant, even farfetched. But here, as elsewhere, appearance can be deceptive. In this article, Aquinas wants to underline the fact that all effective learning and teaching takes place through evoking an image:

As regards principles, an angel can teach a man, not, it is true, by giving him knowledge of the first principles, as God does, nor by proposing to him under sensible signs the manner in which the conclusions are deduced from the principles, as man does, but by forming in his imagination certain species which can be formed by stimulating the corporeal organ.³⁰

This is clearly what happens with persons sleeping or with the insane. Farther on Aquinas writes:

An angel is not the cause of a man's knowledge insofar as man knows things through their essences, but as far as he knows them through their likenesses. This does not mean that an angel is closer to things than their likenesses are, but he makes the likenesses of things appear in the mind either by moving the imagination or by strengthening the light of understanding.³¹

The answer to the question whether one can be his own teacher seems to be an obvious 'yes', and that on the ground that one can learn by

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

discovery. There appears to be no reason why one cannot be called his own teacher with respect to those things that one can learn by oneself. As for Aquinas, his answer is a categorical 'no'. The reason which leads him to this conclusion is long but worth examining.

To begin with, Aquinas distinguishes between a perfect and an imperfect agent. A perfect agent is one which produces an effect specifically the same as itself, and an imperfect agent is one which contains only a part of the effect. (A different terminology employed by Aquinas is 'univocal cause' and 'equivocal cause', respectively). As an example of an imperfect agent or equivocal cause, Aquinas mentions "a movement which causes health, or some warm medicine in which warmth exists either actually or virtually. But warmth is not complete health, but a part of it"³². The conclusion Aquinas draws from this account is that the first type of agent contains the complete nature of the action, for a thing acts only insofar as it is in act; whereas the second type of agent does not.

Applying the above principles to learning by oneself and through a teacher, Aquinas observes:

Teaching implies the perfect activity of knowledge in the teacher or master. Hence the teacher or master must have the knowledge which he causes in another explicitly and perfectly...

When, however, knowledge is acquired by someone through an internal principle, that which is the active cause of knowledge has the knowledge to be acquired only partially, that is, in the seminal principles of knowledge, which are general principles. Therefore, properly speaking, we cannot call a man a teacher or master because of such causality.³³

For my part I should like to make two comments on the above text. First, it is on the basis of the belief that teachers must have knowledge, even perfect knowledge, as Aquinas says, that the community and the state have to ascertain that teachers are rigorously trained in both content and method, for no man can pass on what he does not have. Second, let it be stressed that actual knowledge connotes more than just a capacity to learn or possession of first principles of knowledge. Rather, actual

and active knowledge consists in the ability to infer conclusions on particular matter from the first principles, and also the ability to trace back conclusions to the latter. This is only possible through the mediation of a teacher.

So far we have been attempting to answer the question whether one can teach oneself, and we have been following the metaphysical line of argument. When we approach the question logically, we arrive at the same negative answer. Aquinas observes:

The office of the teacher implies a relation of superiority, just as domination does. But the relations of this sort cannot exist between a person and himself. For one is not his own father or master. Therefore, neither can he be called his own teacher.³⁴

And, to clinch the argument, Aquinas avails himself of the principle of non-contradiction: "It is not possible for one actually to have the knowledge and not to have it, in such a way that he could teach himself"³⁵.

In the light of what has just been said, it behooves us to try to distinguish more clearly, in the manner of linguistic philosophers, between "learning" and "teaching". "Learning" is a one-object verb, a direct verb. When it is said that a person learns something, it is meant that one achieves the knowledge (either propositional or dispositional) of something. In learning, the accent is on the end: knowledge, not on the means or method. One can either learn by oneself or through the teacher. "Teaching", on the other hand, requires a double object, an indirect and a direct object: one teaches someone something. In teaching it is implied that the teacher has knowledge of a particular matter or domain, whereas the pupil does not, or has it only imperfectly or implicitly. That is why it is self-contradictory to assert that one is his own teacher, which amounts to saying that one teaches oneself what one does not know. Therefore on the basis of Aquinas's philosophy of education it is a misnomer, if not a contradiction, to talk in terms of being "self-taught" or "autodidacte", which is frequently heard, especially in popular speech.

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

I feel it is now time to come to an assessment of the Thomistic philosophy of education vis-a-vis other philosophies or theories and thereby expose its relevance or lack of it, for the contemporary world.

Throughout history, two major theories have dominated educational practice, viz. authoritarianism and progressivism. The former emphasises the content of education: knowledge, discipline, order, etc., while the latter centres on the child, stressing its personality and freedom as a moral being. Progressivism advocates catering to the child's needs, especially those concerned with making him more free, more creative, and more ready to take initiative. All these are good and positive points which these theories advocate. However, they have their own built-in weaknesses.

Laying too much emphasis on the content of education, knowledge, by authoritarianist theory, can be prejudicial to the child's worth as a person. As for the progressivist theory, its exaggerated freedom of the child has to be deplored; it assumes that children are like adults, mature and experienced, capable of utilizing their freedom in a meaningful and responsible way. Letting children go and discover things for themselves is likely to result in discovering the wrong things or nothing at all.

The merit of Aquinas's philosophy of education consists in incorporating the good points of both authoritarianism and progressivism, and skirting their shortcomings. From the foregoing study, it would seem that Aquinas would agree with the authoritarianist theory for its emphasis on knowledge and the need for teachers; but he would disagree with it for its failure to recognize that the pupil is the first and primary agent in learning, which failure results in the pupil's personality and freedom being flouted. At the same time Aquinas would side with the progressivist theory for its recognition of the child as the primary agent in the acquisition of knowledge, with the consequence that the child's personality and freedom are given due regard. However, Aquinas would part company with progressivism inasmuch as it exaggerates the child's ability to learn by itself and to exercise freedom, both of them detrimental to knowledge and authority.

As revealed by the preceding study, it is undeniable that, though developed in the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of education is unquestionably relevant for the modern world, not to say for

all ages.

Notes:

1. See St. Thomas Aquinas, Truth Vol. II, pp X-XX, trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Comp., 1953.)

2. St. Thomas Aquinas, On Being and Essence, trans. with an introduction and notes by Armand Maurer (Toronto: The Pontifical Inst. of Med. St., 1949), pp30-31.

3. Aquinas, Truth, XI, 3, rep.

4. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contre Gentiles, Bk. II, trans. James F. Anderson (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1956), ch. 75, 15.

5. See Pierre Erny, L'enfant et son milieu en Afrique Noire; essays sur ^Education traditionnelle (Paris: Payot, 1972) pp 130-131; translation is ours.

6. Plato, Meno, 86b, in the Dialogues of Plato, trans. with analyses and introductions by B. Jowett (New York: MacMillan and co., 1892).

7. Adduced by Aristotle, De Anima, II,1 (413a8), in the Basic Works of Aristotle, edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

9. Aquinas, Summa contra gentiles, 83, 27.

10. Aquinas, S. C. G., 74, 5.

AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

11.Aquinas, S. C. G., 83, 5.

12.St. Thomas Aquinas, Philosophical Texts, selected and translated by Thomas Gilby (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1967) p. 219

13.Aquinas, S. C. G., 77, 5.

14.Ibid. 14

15.Aquinas, S. C. G., 73, 1

16.Aquinas, S. C. G., 74, 5

17.St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, 85, 1, ad 4, in The Basic Works of St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. A.C.Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945); our underlining.

18.Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 84, 7, c.

19.Ibid.

20.Ibid.

21.Erny, L'enfant en Afrique Noire, pp.132-133; our translation.

22.Philip H. Phenix, Realms of Meaning; a philosophy of curriculum for general education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

23.Aquinas, Truth, XI, 1 rep. 23.

24.Aquinas, S.T., I, 1, 1, c.

25.Aquinas, Truth, XI, 1, rep.

26.Ibid; emphasis in the original.

27. Ibid.
28. Aquinas, Truth, XI, 1, ad 12.
29. Ibid, ad 11; our emphasis.
30. Aquinas, Truth, XI, 3, rep.
31. Ibid.
32. Aquinas, Truth, XI, 2, rep.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid, s.c.
35. Ibid. rep.

Corrections

Please note the following corrections in the article by Prof. Lansana Keita, "Biology and Sociology - A False Synthesis", in Quest, Vol 2, no 1, 1988, pp. 71-72 :

Note 4: Michael Ruse, "Is Sociobiology a New Paradigm?", Philosophy of Science 54, 1987, p. 103.

Note 11: I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.), Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)

Note 20: C.J. Lumsden and E.O. Wilson, Genes, Mind, and Culture, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981)

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CONTENTS

African Philosophers in Discussion

- H. Odera Orika 3
*For The Sake Of Truth - Response to Wiredu's
Critique of "Truth and Belief".*
- Sichalwe M. Kasanda 23
The African Scholar Through the "UNZA Graduate".

Popperian Themes

- Lolle Nauta 31
*Dogmatists and their Critics - A Philosophical
Inquiry into the Roots of Rigidity.*
- Kambaji wa Kambaji 53
*Quelques Réflexions sur les fondements
épistémologique de la Connaissance Sociologique.*
- Godwin Sogolo 75
Popper's Hermeneutics and African Thought

Others

- Gerald J. Wanjohi 87
St. Thomas Aquinas's Philosophy of Education.

- Notes on Contributors 105

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