Topic:

African Philosophy and the African Renaissance: A Quest for a True Humanity

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I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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Abstract

Among the devastating consequences of slavery and colonialism inflicted by the Western world on the African world was the dehumanisation of the African people. In a manisfestation of a superiority complex, the Western world imposed on the rest of the world its values, and measured everything by its standards. Included in this was the meaning of being "human". In a relentless struggle to regain their independence, Africans involved in the liberation struggle recognised that their struggle was incomplete if it was going to be limited to flag and national anthem independence. For African freedom to be complete, Africans would have to regain their cultural freedom so that they would be able to measure their humanity on their own terms. This quest for cultural freedom is what came to be known as the "African Renaissance". But just as Africans were determined to regain their freedom, so was the determination of the colonialists to concede this independence on their own terms, resulting in setbacks and a protracted struggle on the part of the African people. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, some South African intellectuals, politicians and academics revisited the African Renaissance idea and hosted an international conference to examine strategies of achieving this elusive quest. Among the intellectual tools identified to accomplish this task were political philosophies. This study, therefore, was inspired by the 1998 African Renaissance conference. It is an examination of the role that African philosophy can play in realising the African Renaissance vision. More specifically, the study examined how indigenous African cultural notions such as "Ancestor-Reverence", "family" and "consensus" can bring this about. The study has established that the African Renaissance vision, in line with the ideology of Pan-Africanism, does not only seek to restore Africans' humanity damaged by slavery and colonialism, but also seeks to re-humanise the whole of humanity because in the process of dehumanising Africans, enslavers and colonialists were dehumanised, too.

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Introduction

A. Research Objective

On September 28 and 29, in 1998, Africans – those based on the continent, and those in the diaspora – converged in Johannesburg, South Africa, to discuss the idea of the "African Renaissance". One of the main objectives of the African Renaissance conference was to create a platform for Africans to define themselves, who they were and where they fitted in the global community (Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai, 1999:i). The African Renaissance conference sought "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses" (ibid).

The foregoing observations call our attention to two important issues. The first is that the African Renaissance project was not meant to be only abstract, and a meeting for endless debates without a clear objective, but about "practical strategies and solutions for future action". Secondly, these practical strategies for the future were, unambiguously, meant to "benefit the African masses". What this means is that this meeting of the African elites was not about the elites' narrow interests, but aimed at making the African masses the beneficiaries of the African Renaissance conference' deliberations. Among the many questions that the African Renaissance conference confronted, or was confronted with, were the following (Makgoba et al, 1999:ii):

- What is the place of African culture and social values in the renaissance and as a solution to the educational malady?
- What political philosophies or mechanisms are essential for the sustenance of the African Renaissance?

In seeking "political philosophies" drawn from traditional African culture, Makgoba et al, consciously or otherwise, were responding to Davidson's (1992:10) observation that post-colonial states were not the restoration of Africa to the continent's own history, but the onset of a new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe in that the post-colonial African countries were formed and governed on European models, chiefly the models of Britain and France. Thus, African liberation produced its own denial and alienation (ibid).

Taking into cognisance, as pointed out above, that among the expressed needs of the African Renaissance conference conveners were "political philosophies" that could give guidance to the African Renaissance project, this study, therefore seeks to inquire how African philosophy

could help Africans retrieve the best in African culture in order to bring about an African Renaissance that would help create a "true humanity", hence the title, "African Philosophy and the African Renaissance: A Quest For A True Humanity". Central to this exercise, is how such an inquiry will benefit not merely the elites of society, but, more importantly, the "African masses". While the first part of the title of this study, "African Philosophy and the African Renaissance", is drawn from a question that confronted the African Renaissance conference in 1998, the second part, "A Quest For A True Humanity", is inspired by Bantu Biko's essay title, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity", anthologised in Biko's book, *I Write What I Like* (Biko, 2004:96).

Three themes, namely, (i) the notion of "Ancestor-Reverence" in African culture, (ii) the notion of "family" in African Culture, and (iii) the notion of "consensus" in African culture, have been identified by different African scholars (cited below) as essential building blocks for an African Renaissance that would benefit the African masses. In line with with this identification, these themes have been selected as units of study in the context of their philosophical underpinnings and how they can aid the African Renaissance project. We briefly examine the themes below:

(i) *The notion of ancestor-reverence* – this is a significant aspect of African life deserving special attention for the African Renaissance for a number of reasons. In an effort to distort African spirituality, European missionaries renamed Africans' traditional act of "Ancestor-Reverence" as "Ancestor-Worship" (Ntuli, 1999:191 – 192). Identifying African spirituality on Africans' own terms, therefore, is important considering, as Williams (1987:90) observes, that historically, "Blacks were a very religious people", and as Mbiti (1990:1) similarly observes, "Africans are notoriously religious".The foregoing observations by both Williams and Mbiti mean, as Mbiti (1990:1) further points out, that for Africans "Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it". Because spirituality is an integral part of African life, Mbiti (1990:1) points out that a "study of these religious systems is, therefore, ultimately a study of the peoples themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life". But, more importantly, and significantly for this study, as Mbiti (1990:1) observes, "a study of traditional religions brings us into those areas of African life where, through word and action, we may be able to discern the philosophy behind". With specific reference to African spirituality in the context of the African Renaissance, Williams (1993:ii;15) points out that with the "foundation of the African

personality" being "its spirituality", a "truly higher civilization can develop only from such a spiritual-moral foundation".

(ii) *The notion of "family" in African culture* – An examination of the notion and meaning of the concept "family" in the African cultural context is important for a number of reasons. The first reason that family is important is that family is both the "space and the place" in which a human being experiences the ingredients of self-belief and identity, and since, generally, human beings love to belong, "there is no human crisis bigger than a loss of identity" (Rukuni, 2007:29). Secondly, Rukuni (2007:42) argues that if the African Renaissance project is to be realised, Africans have to "first recreate the family and the community". But in order to do this, Africans have first to understand their forebears' perspective of the notion of the family. In an effort to assist modern Africans with understanding their ancestors' perspective on this concept, Rukuni (2007:4) points out that ancient Africans developed a "notion of the extended family" with the intended objective of ensuring that "there would be love, peace and prosperity within the family, reaching out to the extended family, and so pervading the community". The decline of this African notion of family, as a consequence of the destruction of African culture by colonialism, resulted in the "devaluation of family as a form of identity" (Rukuni, 2007:128). The devaluation of family as a form of identity resulted in the diminishing of love for family (ibid). It is as a result of the devaluation of family, as a form of identity that Africans have many destitute orphans in modern times (Rukuni, 2007:129). In traditional African societies "love for one's family and one's blood ensured that some members of the extended family would have taken in each of these helpless children (Rukuni, 2007:129).

(iii) *The notion of "consensus" in African culture* – The notion of consensus as an indigenous traditional African democratic system worthy of being pursued in Africa has exercised the minds of "noteworthy political figures at the time of African independence in the 1960s" (Hallen, 2020:v). During that period, that is, the 60s, political philosophers, who also participated in African liberation struggles, made intellectual contributions to these debates. Writing before his death in 1961, Fanon (1967:37) observed that while self-criticism has been much talked about, few people realised that it was an African institution in that disputes and quarrels were settled through public debates. Senghor (1964:51) pointed out that "[a]fter all, democracy is the traditional form of Negro-African societies". The debate around consensus has

continued well beyond the sixties into the 20th century, with particular reference to political philosophical debates, which saw a publication, in 2020, of a book entitled *Deciding in Unison: Themes in Consual Democracy in Africa*, edited by Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani and Edwin Etieyibo. While the book focuses, as Ani and Etiebo (2020:vii) point out, on debates about the suitability or otherwise of consensus as an alternative system for Africa, such is not the focus of this study. Rather, this study seeks to examine the manifestations of consensus in traditional Africa, how and why the concept can be utilised to contribute to the realisation of the African Renaissance.

B. Research Question

The major research question for this inquiry is: What role can African Philosophy play in the African Renaissance's quest for a true humanity?

C. Thesis Statement

The premise of this study is that African philosophy must play a central and critical role in the quest for the African Renaissance and the struggle to create a humane world.

This study moves from the premise that different societies have ordered themselves in different ways informed by different ontologies. This is the case as well with Africans who had their systems disrupted by slavery and colonialism. This study holds the view that certain philosophical orientations stabilised African societies before colonialism and slavery usurped their independence. These values are: the meaning of ancestor reverence, the meaning of family and the meaning of consensus in the context of African culture. This study seeks to examine how African philosophical engagement can interrogate how, if these values, were to be revisited and reclaimed, through the African Renaissance, could help Africans fulfill the struggle for a humane society.

The rest of the study is outlined below.

D. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 – African Renaissance: A Quest for a True Humanity

Chapter 2 – African Renaissance: An African Intellectual, Revolutionary and Philosophical Tradition – this chapter traces the histories of the African Renaissance project, its definitions and emphases by its advocates

Chapter 3 – African Philosophy: Definitions, Origins, Contestations and Political Role – this chapter examines the histories of African philosophy, definitions and contestatios and perceived roles for the African Renaissance

Chapter 4 – Ancestor-Reverence, Not Ancestor-Worship – this chapter interrogates the meanings of the concept "Ancestor-Reverence" and its difference from "Ancestor-Worship", and the former's significance for the African Renaissance

Chapter 5 – The Notion of the Family in the Context of African Traditional Cultures – this chapter interrogates the meanings of the notion of family in the context of African traditional cultures and their implications for the African Renaissance

Chapter 6 – Consensus, Capitalism, African Socialism, Scientific Socialism: Implications for the African Renaissance – this chapter examines the meanings of consensus, capitalism, African socialism and scientific socialism in the context of the African Renaissance

Chapter 7 – Conclusion – this section gives a summary of this studigy and concluding remarks

Chapter 1

African Renaissance: A Quest for a True Humanity

1.1 Introduction

The quest for a "true humanity" suggests that a perception exists that the world order is based on a "false humanity". This can be appreciated when taking into cognisance the history of slavery and colonialism in Africa. Colonialism, in this exercise, is defined and understood as the domination of one nation's cultural environment by another with the objective of imposing the dominating nation's values, world outlook and images on the dominated (wa Thiong'o, 1997:8). When Africans were enslaved and colonised, an endeavour was made by their colonisers and enslavers to impose the idea that "Europeans are naturally and inherently superior to Africans" (Davidson, 1992:41). In their state of inferiority and backwardness, Africans – argued the colonialists – needed to be "civilised" by Europeans. The basis and the condition of European "civilisation" was that for Africans to become "civilised", they should "cease to be Africans, but in order to ensure that this should duly and completely happen, they should never be allowed to become Europeans" (Davidson, 1992:47). What this actually means is that the European project of "civilising" Africans entailed, firstly, an alienation of Africans from themselves, more specifically, a de-Africanisation process, an inculcation of a sense of self-contempt and self-hate. To reinforce this self-contempt and self-hate, European colonialists sought to plant into the minds of the Africans that even if they abandoned their Africanness, they could never be good enough to be Europeans. Effectively, Africans were to be Europeanised without them becoming Europeans, thus subjected to being wanderers "in some no-man's land of their own until the trumpet of destiny, at some unthinkable time in the future, should swing wide the doors of civilization and let them in" (Davidson, 1992:47). Taking into cognisance the deliberate and methodical European colonialists' approach in alienating Africans from themselves, Césaire's (2000:42) mathematical formula is appropriate and accurate: "colonization = 'thingification'". That is so because, as Césaire (2000:43) further points out, colonialism drains societies of their "essence", tramples their cultures underfoot, undermines institutions, confiscates lands, smashes religions, destroys magnificent artistic creation, and wipes out extraordinary possibilities. In the process of colonial destruction, "fear [was] cunningly instilled" into millions of people "who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys" (Césaire, 2000:43). Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Césaire (2000:59) is accurate, again, in concluding that

"colonization is based on psychology". Contrary to the coloniser's propagated view that European colonialists' enterprise was to bring progress to Africa, Césaire (2000:32), with conviction, points out that colonialism is "neither evangelization, nor philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law".

The encounter between the coloniser and the colonised, has, historically, been characterised by "force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, 'boys', artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business" (Césaire, 2000:42). As Fanon (1967:32) observes, colonialism "dehumanizes the native" by reducing the colonised "into an animal". The foregoing observations give a clear indication that in their project of de-Africanising Africans and Europeanising them, in their effort to dehumanise the people of Africa, in their acts of dehumanising black people, in their claim that they sought to civilise the uncivilised, the colonisers had their own notion of what constituted being "human" – it was to impose upon Africans their own values and fashion Africans according to such. This chapter examines how politically conscious and revolutionary Africans have rejected and resisted this false notion of humanity, and articulated a quest for a true humanity. We begin, firstly, with examining the effects of dehumanisation

1.2. Dehumanisation: An Exercise of Inferiorising

Prostration of the colonised was a desired objective, for the meaning of triumph to the coloniser was the accomplishment of the "death and burial of […] local cultural originality" (Fanon, 2017:9). In that state of spiritual and mental death, and burial, the "colonized man is an envious man" (Fanon, 1967:30). This envy of the colonised man "expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible" (ibid). But it is not just the black man as a slave that has a desire to sleep with his master's wife so as to quench his thirst for a full humanity, but black men in general, and educated black men in particular. For a black man to have a romantic relationship with a white woman would prove for the former that he is "worthy of white love" and that he is "loved like a white man" and, therefore, is "a white man" (Fanon, 2017:48). If this type of a black man marries a white woman, it means that he is married to "white culture, white beauty, white whiteness" (ibid). A black man assailed by inferiority complex thinks that "When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them

mine" (ibid). This type of black man reasons that "One is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful as one is intelligent" (Fanon, 2017:38). Yet, even as the envious black man considers marrying a white woman, he experiences agonising internal conflicts. Veneuse, a Negro, (in Fanon, 2017:54) who is presented with an opportunity to marry a French woman, in a letter to her, wonders whether by marrying a white European woman he may not be showing contempt for fellow black women, and, above all, drawn to the white woman by a desire for white flesh that has been forbidden to blacks for as long as whites have ruled the world and that, unconsciously, by marrying the European woman he is using her body as a battlefield to avenge himself for everything that her European ancestors have inflicted on his for centuries. In his interactions with his Antillean compatriots in France, Fanon (2017:56 – 57) "found that the dominant concern among those arriving in France was to go to bed with a white woman. As soon as their ships docked in Le Havre, they were off to the houses. Once this ritual of initiation into "authentic" manhood had been fulfilled, they took the train for Paris." In this state of inferiority complex, where being human is measured by whiteness, the "black man wants to be white. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white." (Fanon, 2017:196). Not only does the colonised develop awe for the coloniser, but also develops self-contempt (Fanon, 2017:9). This self-contempt is expressed by accepting to measure oneself by the white man's cultural standards and renouncing one's blackness (ibid).

So far, we have considered the black man's inferiority complex in relation to the white woman. What of the black woman's relation with reference to the white man? For the Negro woman, or the Negress as Fanon (2017:41) refers to her, assailed by an inferiority complex, there is no difference between her and the Negro man with a sense of inferiority complex because "the Negress […] has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white." In examining the Negroes' inferiority complex, Fanon (2017:15) notes that the "Negroes' inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly". Citing Westermann (in Fanon, 2017:15) Fanon identifies the expression of this inferiority complex as the

- wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date;
- using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse;
- adorning the Native language with European expressions;
- using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements.

The fascination of Western-educated Africans with European clothes, "whether rags or the most up-to-date", their "using European furniture and European forms of social discourse", their ostentatious, and yet-inferiority-complex-driven acts of "adorning the Native language with European expressions" and use of "bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European languages", thus contributing to a "feeling of equality with the European language and his achievements" is not an accident of history but a conscious design aimed at re-creating Africans in the image of Europeans as ably demonstrated by Davidson above. It was not by chance that, as Blyden (1967:49) points out, at the "European settlements established at various points along the coast from Senegal to Loanda […] some thousands of natives, having been brought under the immediate influence of Christian teaching […] have adopted European dress and habits". The "adoption" of European dress or clothes was not voluntary on the part of Africans but an imposition. As Blyden (1967:20) observes, "the African Christian […] has been forced into European customs". In their encounter with African culture, European missionaries, who treated African cultures "with contempt for being so unEuropean" waged a "crusade against the harmless customs […] of the [African] people". An effective weapon in this crusade was Eurocentric education. Eurocentrism refers to the centering of Europe in the universe making the European continent the "fountain head of universal values and civilization" (wa Thiong'o, 1997:117).

1.2.1 Eurocentric Education: An Instrument of Dehumanisation

In his paper, *The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans*, written in 1881, Wilmot Edward Blyden (1967:71 – 93) exposed the psychological damage inflicted on Africans by Eurocentric education. The exposure of African children to European education, Blyden (1967:74 – 75) observed, made them "aimless and purposeless for the race". Instead of being empowered by Eurocentric education, African recepients of Eurocentric education were "crammed with European formulas of thought and expressions so as to astonish their bewildered relatives" (Blyden, 1967:75). Blyden's foregoing observation of European-educated Africans of using "expressions so as to astonish their bewildered relatives" gives a clear indication that what was later identified by Westermann (in Fanon, 2017:15) as an expression of Africans' inferiority complex by adorning African languages with Europeans' expressions, and the use of bombasitic words, was an outcome of Eurocentric education. The fascination of Africans with European languages, just like their fascination with European languages was not a voluntary act but an imposition through Eurocentric education. Rodney (2018:304) gives a detailed account of how colonial European schools in Africa were used to,

on the one hand, elevate European languages while, on the other hand, undermining African languages. Rodney points out that "[s]chools of kindergarten and primary level for Africans in Portuguese colonies were nothing but agencies for the spread of the Portuguese language". In demonstrating how the Portuguese and the Spanish, "had always shown contempt for African language[s]", Rodney (ibid) further points out that in the "little-known Spanish colony of Guinea (Rio Muni), the small amount of education given to Africans was based on eliminating the use of local languages by the pupils and on instilling in the hearts "the holy fear of God (ibid)". In a further illustration of how the "planning of colonial education for the subjugation of Africa […] did not leave vital political matters to chance, but was consciously carrying out policies hostile to the regaining of freedom by African peoples", Rodney (2018:312 – 313) points out that the Europeans' educational policy reveals that there was a "conscious planning by a group of Europeans to control the destiny of millions of Africans over a considerable time of extending into the future". What this means is that European colonialists were conscious that they would not be able, forever, to exercise naked brutality of the Africans. So, the plan was to continue to control Africans by other means. That is where Eurocentric education, and European languages fitted. In the case of the French, an African who received French education qualified to become "an *assimilée* – one who could be assimilated or incorporated into the superior French culture" (Rodney, 2018:302). The Portuguese did the same, and used the word "assimilado", having the same meaning as the word assimilée. In the case of the Portuguese, the "assimilado" were also called the "civilisado" (the civilised) on the basis of "being able to read and write Portuguese" (ibid). The assimilée or assimilado "was rewarded with certain priviliges" (ibid). Gradually, "[a]t each further stage of education, they were battered by and succumbed to the values of the white capitalist system, and, after being given salaries, they could then sustain a style of life imported from outside. Access to knives and forks, three-piece suits, and pianos then further transformed their mentality" (ibid).

Rodney's illustration of the devastating effect of Eurocentric education through European languages, paints a clear picture of how educated Africans lost self-esteem and sought to affirm themselves by wearing European clothes and adorning African languages with European languages' expressions (Westermann in Fanon, 2017:15). While Eurocentric education produced "many men of book-learning" among Africans, very few emerged as having "any *capability*" (Blyden, 1967:75). Very few European-educated Africans exhibited any sense of self-respect, confidence in themselves and efficiency in work (ibid). The experience of living in European countries, reduced European-educated Africans into being "only passive

spectators of the deeds of a foreign race", and, as Blyden (ibid) further observes, inculcated a sense of self-doubt "as to their own capacity and their own destiny". Not only, though, was this the case for Africans educated in European lands, but was also the case for even those who studied in African lands. The Eurocentric education they received in Africa, exposed them to European literature which celebrated European cultures (Blyden, 1967:76). Hence, Africans are taught "to admire and revere, they attempt to copy and imitate them, and share the fate of all copyist[s] and imitators. Bound to move on a lower level, they acquire and retain a practical inferiority, transcribing, very often, the faults rather than the virtues of their models." (ibid) Exposed to literature and the media which denigrated the African image, European-educated Africans sought to escape from, and identify themselves, with the European world (ibid). Expanding on the link between Western education, on the one hand, and the de-Africanisation and Europeanisation of Africans on the other, Oyěwùmí (1997:128) argues that "[f]rom the point of view of missionaries, the process of Christianizing and educating the African heathens was to be a process of Europeanization. The goal of the missionaries was to transform African societies, not preserve them." (ibid) Not only was the "introduction of Christianity and Western education" responsible for de-Africanising Africans and Europeanising them, but it was also "critical to the stratification of colonial society along both class and gender lines" (ibid). This means that European colonialism was an intertwined process of racial and gender inferiorisation (Oyěwùmí, 1997:152).

1.2.2 The Role of Eurocentric Education in Stratifying Colonised African Societies along Class and Gender Lines

The first act of the Europeans' colonial process was denigrating Africans on the basis of colour – racial discrimination – and the second was the inferiorisation of African females (ibid). European colonialism, in this context, resulted into what Oyěwùmí (1997:122) refers to as the "hierarchy of four" – European men at the top, followed by European women, followed by African men, and, at the bottom of the pile, African women (ibid). More explicitly, Oyěwùmí, 1997:136), in reiterating her point, points out that the "introduction of Christianity, which is male-dominant, was another factor in the process of establishing male dominance in Yorùbá society". What this means is that the initial "disadvantage of females in the educational system is arguably the main determinant of women's inferiority and lack of access to resources in the colonial period" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:128). For European colonialism, Oyěwùmí (ibid) reminds us, "Christianity and Western education were inseparable" because "[t]he school was the church, and the church was the school". If a charge is made that European and Christian

education was instrumental in imposing patriarchal values in African societies, such must be substantiated. In doing so, Oyěwùmí (1997:129) points out that in the missionaries' quest to firmly plant Christianity in the African soil, they needed African agents to proselytise among their own. Similarly, for the colonial governments to effectively carry out their administration, they needed Africans to assist them in their project (ibid). For these projects to bear fruit, the colonialists needed to educate Africans so that they could become clerks, catechists and priests (ibid). While, on the one hand, African males were identified for these tasks, on the other hand, African women were marginalised, recognised only as wives and helpmates of their husbands (ibid). The preparation of women as housewives and men as leaders was achieved in two ways by colonial authorities. One of them was that "priority was given to male education, and provisions were made for some form of higher education for males in some places" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:131). The other was in the form of different gifts given to girls and boys. While girls were given handkerchiefs and pins, boys were given guns, pencils, and pieces of paper (Oyěwùmí, 1997:131 – 132). This arrangement of things enabled males to have "more than a head start, not only in numbers but in what Western education and values came to represent in African societies" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:135). While Western education privileged and advantaged men by giving them access to salaried jobs, important positions in the civil service, "women were dispossessed; their exclusion from education and employment was profound and proved devastating over time" (ibid). The "most damaging lasting effect" associated with the gaining of Western education by African men in comparison with African women "is its psychological effect on both men and women" in that the "notion that females are not as mentally capable as males is commonplace among some of the Western-educated in contemporary Nigerian society" (ibid). This superiority complex on the part of such African men is "part of the colonial legacy" (ibid). These type of African men, which became the "inheritors" of the colonial state (Oyěwùmí, 1997:135). Being the "products of Christian mission schools and Western higher education" African men "adopted the patriarchal ideology inherent in the Western educational systems because of the advantages they believed it conferred on them" (Nzegwu, 2006:16). Eurocentric education took so much root in the African soil such that it persisted and became entrenched in what is referred to as post-colonial Africa.

1.2.3 The Resilience of Eurocentric Scholarship

As a consequence of Eurocentrism and colonialism, "historically, and currently, the creation, constitution, and production of knowledge have remained the privilege of the West" (ibid). This "dominance of the West in the production of knowledge" is so widespread such that

"almost all scholarship, even by Africans, utilizes them unquestionably" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:x). The devastating effect is that "even when African scholarship seeks to validate the specificity of the African experience, it does so within the frameworks of European-derived categories of knowledge" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:xv). If Western theoretical frameworks are this pervasive in scholarship, this certainly has profound implications. What this means is that Westerners enjoy an unfair privilege and advantage of judging the rest of the world by Western cultural standards. This is so because, as Oyěwùmí (1997:xv) argues, "concepts and theoretical formulations are culture-bound and that scholars themselves are not merely recorders or observers in the research process; they are also participants".

As outlined above, the European domination of scholarship in the world is not an accident of history but a consequence of colonialism. It is as Oyěwùmí (1997:152 – 153) observes, that "[o]nce the colonized lost their sovereignty, many looked to the colonizer for direction, even in the interpretation of their own history and culture". What this means is that the colonised lost agency, and began to look at themselves not through their own lenses, but used those imposed by the European world, thus judging themselves not on their own terms but European terms. The tragic consequence of viewing the world, more particularly, Africa, by Africans on European terms, was that soon Africans began to project the European way of doing things as if it has always been the way of doing things, and began to present imposed and entrenched European values as African values. The European way of doing things was soon presented as "'our custom' rather than as a 'tradition' that developed in the colonial period" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:146). It is for this reason that any discussion regarding African cultural rebirth or the African Renaissance must confront and not avoid the pertinent question raised by Amadiume (2015:190): "To what extent are the customs of any particular African society indigenous or traditional?"

This invocation of "our culture and traditions" is illuminated by Nzegwu (2006:18), who, with particular reference to the Igbo community, notes that this invocation "mostly occurs when daughters, wives, and women in general assert their rights. It is clear that on such occasions, the term 'traditional' is being invoked to modify women's behaviour". It is as Nzegwu (ibid) further points out, that on closer inspection what is represented as traditional are patterns of behaviour which are, in fact, derived from Christian ethical schemes. Conflating these Christian values with the traditional Igbo values they had rejected, men invoke these "false traditions to justify autocratic powers in the home and their egregious abuses of wives. In this duplicitous manner, traditions are invented to rationalize and authorize patriarchal relations of power that

served to enhance the interests of men." (ibid) This being the case, Nzegwu (2006:14 – 15) cautions that the dialectics of modernity speak about "change and traditions in convoluted ways, and that references to tradition are sometimes projections of the present unto the past, projections designed to compel a particular type of action or mark a behavior as authentic". Recognising that what is often presented as "African tradition" is sometimes, if not often, in fact a conflation of what is African on the one hand, and Western/Christian, on the other hand, this study takes its cue from Brown (2004:158) who points out that by "traditional African thought" she means "the philosophical perspectives that were indigenous to sub-Saharan cultures prior to the infusion of Islamic, Judaic, and Christian ideologies". The slight alteration to her definition is that this study's reference to "traditional African thought" covers the entire African continent, including the north. In delineating traditional African thought from the rest "means we have to consider social institutions at different points in time, including the changes produced during and after the colonial period" (Nzegwu, 2006:14). This being the case then, "African philosophy of culture is concerned with the sum total of a people's ways of living, histories, conventions, and practices that have been passed on from generation to generation and that endow them with a distinctive character" (ibid).

Informed by such concerns, this study consciously seeks to utilise a theoretical framework that engages with African issues within the context of African history and Africans' own cultural perspectives. Recognising the importance of examining Africans' issues on the basis of their own history and culture, Afrocentricity is deemed to be the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

1.3 Afrocentric Scholarship and the Quest for an African Renaissance

Afrocentricity is defined as a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualising of African agency within the context of culture and history (Asante, 2003:3). Establishing a clear link between the study of African culture and history, on the one hand, and the African Renaissance on the other, Diop (1974:xiii – xiv) argues that "such a study is the point of departure for the cultural revolution properly understood […] if our people are to be reborn culturally and politically". Diop (1996:50) further argues that right from the start, colonialists recognised that national culture was the most solid fortress that a people could build for itself in the course of history, and that as long as this national culture stood firm, one could not be certain of the reactions of the dominated, or whether their assimilation was complete, or their subjugation total. The role of history in the life of a people is "vital" because,

Diop (1996:119) further argues, history can play the role of ensuring cohesion of diverse elements in a community, thus serving as a social cement. In general terms, the study of history is part of humanity's journey in gaining awareness of the self, the nature and place of the individual in the world (Saunders, 1992:38). It is important not only because individuals can find parallels to the present, but also because the study of history enables individuals to discover societies, events and ideas which are sharply different from those they encounter in their daily lives (ibid). The study of history, Saunders (ibid) further argues "allows us to examine other societies, other critical approaches to life, which we may compare and contrast with our own, and so understand and take the measure of our own more securely". A society that loses its grip on the past, Saunders (ibid) further notes, is in danger because it produces women and men who know nothing except the present, people who do not know that life has been and could be different from what it is (ibid). Such people bear oppressive conditions easily because they know nothing that they can compare it with. For the African people in particular, in whose minds it had been drummed by European colonialists that they had no history and no culture, without the study of history it would be difficult "to regain self-confidence and inner fulfilment – as different from self-complacency – attitudes without which no human effort can be effective" (Diop, 1996:50). This being the case, Nnaemeka (2005:62) notes that "We Africans must realize that our survival depends to a large extent on our ability to reclaim our history". In line with Diop's argument that the study of African history is not for self-complacency, Williams (1987:43) forcefully argues that the exercise is not merely for intellectual gratification or knowing African history just for its sake. Williams (ibid) advances the view that African history must enable Africans to "learn what our strengths were and, especially, in what particular aspect we are weak and vulnerable. Our history can then become at once the foundation and guiding light for united efforts in serious planning what we should be about now". The interest in, and the willingness to confront African history for what it is, the preparedness to learn about Africans' own weaknesses and strengths, reveals that this quest to rediscover African history is not an act driven by the quest for romanticisation of African history. Romanticisation of African history, Williams (1987:19) further points out, would be a continuing degradation of Africans if a system of racial lies entrenched in world literature is replaced with glorified fiction based on wishful thinking instead of on the labours of historical research. The views articulated by Williams are in line with Afrocentricity in that the call to invoke African culture and history does not imply a blind and uncritical embrace. Being a philosophical perspective, Afrocentricity is a critical perspective that does not champion

reactionary postures but seeks to modify even African traditions where necessary to meet the demands of modern society (Asante, 2003:52).

In identifying African culture as its target in order to subjugate Africans, European colonialists appreciated the point made by Rodney (2018:132) that "so long [a people] has the opportunity to define its own ideology and culture, then the people of that society have some control over their own destinies", and Cabral (2007:170), that "[f]or as long as […] people can have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation". Having recognised the Europeans' act of dehumanising de-Africanising them, Africans saw it fit that in order to re-humanise themselves, they needed to "re-Africanise" themselves (Cabral, 2007:175). Such a process would necessitate a cultural reclamation, an African Renaissance. This is because, as Cabral, (2007:173) notes, a people who free themselves from foreign domination will not be culturally free unless, "without underestimating the importance of positive contributions from the oppressor's culture and other cultures, they return to the upwards paths of their own culture".

The history of Africa's liberation struggle has demonstrated that its advocates held the view that the liberation of Africa would not only liberate the Africans from oppression, but the oppressors themselves from the evil of oppression inflicted upon not just others, but themselves as well. It is in this context that the quest for an African Renaissance is seen as synonymous with the quest for a true humanity – a struggle for the liberation of all humankind.

1.4 The African Renaissance: An Expression of a Liberation Struggle to Free Africans and all of Humanity

An examination of literature on Africa's liberation struggles reveals that these struggles were an expression of the African Renaissance. Nkrumah (1973b:149), an African Renaissance advocate, and a Pan-Africanist, noted that "[i]ndependence has created the right political atmosphere for a real effort of national regeneration". In a clearer statement linking "independence" to the "national regeneration" (African Renaissance), unlike many, Nkrumah did not see Africans' political freedom as the "gaining" of independence but rather as a determination to "regain their independence", the emphasis being on "regaining" instead of "gaining" (Nkrumah, 1973b:35). This emphasis is no mere game of semantics but a clear statement that in fighting for independence, Africans were reclaiming a right that they had before colonial invasion. In line with this observation, Nkrumah (1971:47) declared that the "African […] was perfectly capable of governing himself before the advent of the white man",

and, significantly, further declared that the African "should be allowed to do so again", the emphasis being on the word "again". In one of his most explicit terms of linking Africans' political struggle to the African Renassance project, Nkrumah (1971:68) observed that the regaining of political freedom by Ghana was the "spearhead of African regeneration and renaissance". Nkrumah did not only draw our attention to the fact of the Africans' liberation struggle being central to the African Renaissance but also pointed us to the fact of the African Renaissance being central to the liberation of all humanity. He (1973b:220) noted that the emphasis upon Africa was "neither chauvinism nor isolationism". Rather, having been witnessed to wars, rebellions and revolutions in many parts of the world, those who pioneered the vision of Pan-Africanism did so with a vision and determination that the African continent would not repeat such a dismal history (ibid).

This African Renaissance-driven approach, this determination, this commitment to the liberation, not only of Africa and Africans, but of all humankind, found expression in the concept Nkrumah called the "African Personality". We will discuss the African Personality in greater detail in Chapter 2. For now, we briefly highlight why those committed to the liberation struggle to reclaim African freedom emphasised the point that African freedom meant all of humanity's freedom. In recognition of the fact that colonialism "dehumanizes even the most civilized man", and that colonial activity, "based on contempt for the native, and justifieid by that contempt", the coloniser, Césaire (2000:41) observes, "in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal". In an echo, Dialo Diop (1999:9) observes that since oppression is just as "degrading for the oppressor as it is for the oppressed […] one may predict that the achievement of Africa's liberation shall necessarily imply the emancipation of all mankind, rather than the substitution of one type of domination with the other". The above observation is a clear indication that the African people's struggles against colonialism, inspired by a quest for self-reclamation, otherwise known as the African Renaissance, were not preoccupied only with Africans' own freedom, but also that of the whole of humankind. Informed by this view, the first president of the Pan Africanist Congress, one of South Africa's liberation movements, Mangaliso Sobukwe, articulating his Pan-Africanist movement's vision, declared that "[w]e are fighting for the noblest cause on earth, the liberation of mankind" (Pogrund, 2015:127). In the words of Burkina Faso's martyred revolutionary leader, Thomas Sankara, Africans' historical struggle for liberation is "not to build a world for blacks alone and against other men" but aimed at teaching other members of

the human race about "how to love each other" and that despite the maliciousness meted out to Africans historically, Africans "will know how to resist and then teach them the meaning of solidarity" (Kongo & Zeilig, 2017:90). The quest to invoke philosophy/ies in the struggle for African self-reclamation and/or rebirth has more significance if it is taken into cognisance that European philosophy was used as a weapon to justify the degradation of African people and the denigration of their image in the service of slavery, and, later colonialism. Below, we examine how European philosophy played a central role in the enslavement and the colonisation of African people, and why, as a response to racist European philosophy, the African Renaissance advocates identified the need for political philosophies in their quest for the re-building of the African continent and its people.

1.5 Political Philosophies – African Philosophy – in Particular, and the Quest for a True Humanity

The German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1956:96), has noted that while the enslavement and selling of Negroes by Europeans in America was bad, their lot in Africa was even worse, since in the African continent slavery was absolute. As if this was not enough, and to add salt to the wound, Hegel (1956:99) displayed his disdain for Africa by pointing that Africa was "no historical part of the World" with "no movement or development to exhibit", the historical movements associated with it belonging to the Asiatic or European World.

What this meant, in certain and explicit terms, was that Africa had no history of her own. But the records of history are not on Hegel's side. In Herodotus' book, *The Histories*, estimated to have been written between the years 450 to 430 BC (Cartledge, 2014:xviii), Herodotus, with reference to Ancient Egyptians, (2014:139) observes that they are "so concerned to preserve the common memories of mankind that they keep better records than anyone else I have come across or questioned". In plain speak, Herodotus, a Greek historian, was making the point that the Egyptian Africans were the best recorders of history than anyone else he had ever known. In a book first published in 1913, 43 years before Hegel's was first published, the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1973:7 – 8), with reference to Ancient Egypt, noted that the country was the "first school of mankind […] famous for its fertility under a brazen sky; the spot from which Sesostris once set out to conquer the world […] the mother of philosophy and the fine arts". In plain English, Rousseau acknowledged that Egypt was the first centre of learning in the whole world, and that Egypt gave birth to philosophy before the rest of humankind. As will be demonstrated later, Rousseau was not the first philosopher to

acknowledge Ancient Egypt as the pioneer in philosophy. Did Hegel know this and decided to turn a blind eye? The answer in both cases is in the affirmative. Hegel's mind was made up – as indicated above – that historical movements in the northern parts of Africa belonged to the "Asiatic or European World". Specifically, according to Hegel (1956:99) "Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit". But Hegel has no leg to stand on. As Rousseau indicates above, the invasion of ancient Egypt by the Asians and the Europeans was *after* they had been first students in ancient Egypt, and *after* ancient Egypt had already given birth to philosophy. Ancient Greeks, to which the French philosopher, Rousseau, paid attention to, and the German philosopher, Hegel, chose to disregard, as will be demonstrated later, said as much.

Long after Hegel's death, in her book, *Not Out Of Africa*, Mary Lefkowitz, a scholar on ancient Greece and Rome observes that her book "argues that the Egyptians were an African people and praises their achievements" (Lefkowitz, 1997:180). To be sure, Lefkowitz's (ibid) book "does not seek to deny the existence of the achievements of other Africans in antiquity or in modern times". In explicit terms, while she acknowledges ancient Egyptian achievements as African achievements, she further acknowledges that it was not only ancient Egypt that was accomplished, but other African societies as well, thus nullifying Hegel's prejudiced claims.

It should be noted now that the appreciation of philosophy as being central in a people's rebirth was recognised, first, in ancient Egypt. In the period between the 35th and the 25th centuries, ancient Egyptians experienced an "uninterrupted millennium of national experience, that is, of human development in a unified national form" (Breasted, 1933:143 – 144). An Egyptian king, Menes, had in the year 3 400 unified both the south and the north of ancient Egypt into one nation. This development was remarkable in that it was an "evolution in which a nation of some millions of souls for the first time on our globe rose to the creation of an imposing structure of organised human life capable of enduring for a thousand years" (Breasted, 1933:144). But this achievement was not instant, or, in the words of Breasted (1933:142), was not a "mushroom growth". It was a product of "grop[ing] for a term which would best express their idea of the human order" (ibid). This search eventually resulted in the conceptualisation of the word "'Maat'", one of the earliest terms preserved in human speech" which meant "righteousness", "truth" and "justice". Maat is a "moral philosophy" giving "advice on everything from correct table manners to marital relations" and good speech among other issues (Fletcher, 2015:93). It was on the basis of this Maat that the ancient Egyptian society was governed. But after a thousand years period, this ancient Egyptian "golden age" collapsed as corruption and

disorganisation set in (Breasted, 1933:20; 194). As this new state of affairs, which appeared "hopeless to the horrified eyes of some of the social sages who contemplated the wreck of the old order", the "earliest known known age of pessimism and disillusionment ensued" (Breasted, 1933:20). This new atmosphere provoked the sages, which Breasted (ibid) also refers to as "social prophets", to denounce the corruption in "unsparing terms – in one case even addressing these denunciations to the king himself" (ibid). Even though some sages or social prophets despaired as a result of this unpalatable state of affairs, "there were some among these Egyptian sages who had not lost hope, and they carried on the earliest crusade for social justice" (ibid). Among these philosophers who never gave hope, and who carried on the campaign for Maat – justice, truth, righteousness – was Ipuwer, "who looked forward to the advent of […] a righteous king" (1933:193 – 194). Not only did the philosopher, Ipuwer, "put into dramatic setting […] his passionate arraignment of the times, but also constructive admonitions looking towards the regeneration of society and a golden age which he dared to hope might follow" (Breasted, 1933:194). Breasted's preceding observation is significant for at least two reasons. The first is that regeneration in Africa – the African Renaissance – is located as early as 2 500 BC in ancient Egypt. The story of Ipuwer paints a picture of a philosopher who was "not content to leave his generation in this hopeless state and eventually he discerns reason for hope" (Breasted, 1933:198). The second significant point about Ipuwer's story is that it reveals ancient Egyptians' belief that the existence of justice was possible on condition that the head of state, the king in the case of ancient Egyptians, was a human being who was just. Thus, Carruthers (1984:89) points out, "a Pharaoh, having been entrusted with the office of divine Pharaohship, had to adhere to the inseparability of governance from Maat in the oversight of the citizens' affairs". A Pharoah, Currthers (ibid) continues pointing out, who ultimately had the double authority of right and might, had to "always govern in a way that might, when it was used, was guided by Maat" (ibid). Since the Pharaoh governed with the assistance of officials, there was also an expectation that "Maat [should be] the foundation for official conduct. The governing official is supposed to not only govern with fairness, impartiality and efficiency, but his very life is supposed to be a model of good behaviour" (Carruthers, 1984:97). Maat was regarded as the universal law, and as such, a king in ancient Egypt could rule "on condition that he governed with respect for the laws of the land, which were actually identical to the laws of the universe" (Grimal, 1994:58). Paying attention to philosophy in general, and to the philosophy of Maat, in particular, was not a matter of choice for the kings of ancient Egypt – it was a requirement, an obligation and a condition for being the head of the state. As Grimal (1994:47) observes, the reign of Maat was "a Golden Age

which each ruler undertook to recreate by confronting the traditional negative forces that each day attempted to obstruct the course of the sun across the sky – the time of Maat was the beginning of cyclical history". Maintaining Maat on the part of ancient Egyptian kings, had implications not only for the present, but also for future life beyond the material present. When a king died, ancient Egyptians believed, the ruler was able to assume a place alongside the Supreme Being, "providing that he had correctly accomplished his earthly mission, which was to ensure that the equilibrium [balance, order – Maat] of creation was maintained during his lifetime" (Grimal, 1994:150). Living Maat, the ancient Egyptians believed, was a pre-condition for a human being to attain "eternity" (Carruthers, 1984:66 – 67). Eternity or eternal life is to be understood in two inter-related senses: one concerns the immortality that a human being's name attains among the living after one's departure from the earth; the second refers to the accomplishment, after physical death, of being a member of the community of the Ancestor-Spirits, whose abode is the invisible, spiritual world (Carruthers, 1984:67). The preceding observations reveals two significant points, which we will return to later. The first is that the ancient Egyptians believed in life beyond the grave, and that entrance into that life was conditional on an individual, the pharaoh in this case, exercising justice in her/his interaction with fellow human beings. The second point is that ancient Egyptians associated justice with the Supreme Being. We will demonstrate, later, how kings were taught that pleasing the Supreme Being was central in executing their duties. While there was an appreciation on the part of ancient Egyptians that justice could not be administered unless the rulers were themselves just, of greater importance, is that ancient Egyptians understood, simultaneously, that consciousness of justice was not natural, but required nurturing. It is for this reason that there was a deliberate effort on the part of certain kings to leave written records for their sons, who would be the heirs of kingdoms, as a guidance on how to rule justly. Among such written documents, which we will discuss below, were *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare*, *The Instruction of King Amenemhet I For His Son Sesotris I*, and *The Instruction of Prince Hardjedef*. The existence of such written records reveals a conscious endeavour to ensure, as Grimal (1994:47) points out above, that the heirs would "recreate" the tradition of confronting injustice and maintaining justice. As Grimal (1994:146) observes, the inheritor of office, had an obligation to ensure the perpetuation of his father's legacy: "Only this method of passing on knowledge from generation to generation could guarantee the preservation of order

Grimal's reference to the "method of passing on knowledge from generation to generation", in order to "guarantee the preservation of order" gives a clear indication of the ancient Egyptians'

commitment to the act of regeneration or the renaissance. However, while there was a commitment of passing tradition from generation to generation, it must be noted that the act of transmitting knowledge was not done in a manner resembling parroting. With particular reference to *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare*, which we will discuss shortly, Grimal (1994:147) does not only note that the instruction was "characterized by a remarkable lucidity concerning the role of the king", but goes on to note, significantly, that Merikare's father, King Khety III, "does not hesitate to acknowledge his own errors", and further notes that in acknowledging them, he "encourages his son to learn from them". In *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare*, the king whose name is not recorded, whom Breasted (1933:153 – 154) describes as "one of the rulers […] a sage of sagacious and thoughtful mind", towards the end of his life, wrote a treatise, for his son, Merikare, who was set to succeed him as a king, advising him about good conduct of a king. While Grimal (1994:146) concedes to the historical fact, as noted by Breasted above, that Merikare's father's name does not exist in historical records, he notes, though, that the period in question, that is, of the rule of Merikare's father, corresponds with the rule of Khety III, and this, being the case, the likelihood is that Merikare's father was king Khety III. Later, this conjecture, he treats as a fact (Grimal, 1994:147). What did *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare* entail?

1.5.1 The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare

The concluding section of *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare* leaves no doubt about the document's objective:

> Do not neglect my speech,
>
> Which lays down all the laws of kingship,
>
> Which instructs you, that you may rule the land,
>
> And may you reach me with none to accuse you! (Lichtheim, 2006:107)

The king's father, anticipating his departure to the spiritual world, not only gives his son a speech containing rules on how to govern, but also cautions him not to ignore his teachings, so that when the son's time for death comes, he will not be accused by those remaining behind for having failed:

> Make worthy your house of the west,
>
> Make firm your station in the graveyard,

By being upright, by doing justice,

Upon which men's hearts rely (Lichtheim, 2006:106)

By making reference to the inevitable death of his son, the king was teaching his son to be conscious of his own mortality so that he may not be subject to the illusion that earthly life was permanent:

Life on earth passes, it is not long,

Happy is he who is remembered (Lichtheim, 2006:100)

Remembrance of the departed souls by the living could take place in at least two ways – with resentment or with fondness. The father advised his son that a king had an obligation to ensure that he treated the people well, so that when s/he died, those remaining behind would remember her/him fondly. Fond memories are not automatic – they are nurtured. Cognisant of this, the father advises the son thus:

Don't be evil, kindness is good,

Make your memorial last through love of you.

Increase the [people] (square brackets original), befriend the town,

God will be praised for (your) donations (Lichtheim, 2006:99).

Reference to God – the Supreme Being – as being the subject of praise if the king exercised generosity by giving donations to the needy around her/him, reveals ancient Egyptians' notion of the Supreme Being. The Creator, in ancient Egyptian society was regarded as a generous Being, and that those created by Her/Him in Her/His "image", had to be generous as well (Lictheim, 2006:106):

Well-tended is mankind – god's cattle,

He made sky and earth for their sake […]

He made the breath for their noses to live.

They are his images, who come from his body,

He shines in the sky for their sake;

He made for them plants and cattle,

Fowl and fish to feed them […]

He makes daylight for their sake,

He sails by to see them.

He has built his shrine around them,

When they weep he hears.

The above passage paints a picture of human beings who are not self-sufficient but taken care of, and provided for by the Supreme Being. As the "images" of the Provider, human beings had to be generous as the Supreme Being is generous to them. Being generous, providing for others, meant working for and representing, being the "images" of the Supreme Being:

God recognizes him who works for him (Lictheim, 2006:102);

Work for god, he will work for you also,

With offerings that make the altar flourish

With carvings that proclaim your name,

God thinks of him who works for him (Lictheim, 2006:106)

But leaders of society, the pharaoh, in particular, had to lead in this respect so that the citizens would praise the Supreme Being for her/his good deeds. That is because the Supreme Being created leaders for that purpose – to take care of fellow human beings, especially the vulnerable of society:

He made for them rulers in the egg,

Leaders to raise the back of the weak (Lichtheim, 2006:106).

What the above means, therefore, is that leaders were expected, in Ancient Egypt, not to stand by when the vulnerable of society, "the weak", were being violated. They were expected to rise and defend the weak and vulnerable. Kings were expected to be active, and not passive in the face of injustice:

He who is silent toward violence diminishes the offerings (Lichtheim,

2006:105).

What the above means is that even though Ancient Egyptians were encouraged to make offerings in the temples, perform libations (Lictheim, 2006:102), such diminished in significance if they did not pay attention to issues of justice, and allowed violence to invade and pervade society. On the basis of the need to be active against injustice, the king advises his son thus:

> Speak truth in your house,
>
> That the officials of the land may respect you;
>
> Uprightness befits the lord, (Lichtheim, 2006:100).

As if to ensure what the king meant by the vulnerable and weak in Ancient Egypt, Merikare's father spoke in specific terms in reference to them, and prescribed what was right, simultaneously proscribing what was wrong:

> Do justice, then you endure on earth;
>
> Calm the weeper, don't oppress the widow,
>
> Don't expel a man from his father's property (Lictheim, 2006:100).

There are two advices given to Merikare that distinguished Ancient Egyptian society as having been advanced in thought in a very early age. The first is with regards to the need for a ruler or leader not to surround her/himself with leaders that s/he can manipulate, but with great minds so as to enhance the leader her/himself:

> Great is the great man whose great men ae great
>
> Strong is the king who has councillors (Lichtheim, 2006:100)

The second advice relates to the king advising his son against nepotism in favour of merit:

> Do not prefer the wellborn to the commoner,
>
> Choose a man on account of his skills,
>
> Then all crafts are done (Lichtheim, 2006:101).

The ancient Egyptians linked the philosophy of Maat to both the Supreme Being and their ancestors. This disposition comes out clearly in *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare* (Lichtheim, 2006:99):

The wise is a [school] (square brackets original) to the nobles.

Those who know that he knows will not attack him,

No [crime] (brackets original) occurs when he is near;

Justice comes to him distilled,

Shaped in the sayings of the ancestors.

It is important to note here that the king teaches his son about the importance of wisdom for kings, adding that wise people are themselves an institution of learning, and that wisdom is a forte that shields one who has it in that once those around notice that a person is steeped in wisdom, they will not attack a knowledgeable person. Notably, the king tells his son that the source of wisdom is "the sayings of the ancestors" (ibid). This being the case, the king instructs his son to emulate his ancestors:

Copy your fathers, your ancestors […]

See, their words endure in books,

Open, read them, copy their knowledge,

He who is taught becomes skilled (ibid).

Not only does the above passage demonstrate that ancient Egyptians revered their ancestors because of the wisdom they held, but it sheds light on the ancient Egyptians' appreciation of the centrality of education in acquiring wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom do not come automatically. Such must be sought out. The seeker must read books. It is a person who is educated, one "who is taught [that] becomes skilled". Emphasis by the king on the need for a skilling education was informed by his recognition that for one to be able to face the future, one has to have the necessary skills to lead. Simply wishing and hoping for things to happen, the king taught his son, was no ingredient for success. For a leader to gain legitimacy and respectability, s/he must prepare for the future and be a visionary (Lichtheim, 2006:100):

It is good to work for the future,

One respects the life of the foresighted,

While he who trusts fails.

While ancient Egyptians appreciated "foresight" as an essential factor in building the future, they also recognised the inextricable link between "foresight" and "hindsight" and "insight" into challenging matters of the day. This comes out clearly in *The Instruction of King Amenemhet I For His Son Sesotris I*.

1.5.2 The Instruction of King Amenemhet I for his Son Sesotris I

The king emphasises to his son that knowledge of history, of the past, is essential for one in order to be able to deal with the present and the future (Lichtheim, 2006:137):

> If one fights in the arena forgetful of the past,
>
> Success will elude him who ignores what he should know.

Ignorance of the past deprives one of insight, and, therefore, foresight, and renders a person ill-prepared, and, thus, incapable. The king does not speak about history in a vacuum and outside of context. In teaching his son that human beings have a deceitful aspect in them, he draws from his own experience, noting that loving fellow human beings, being generous to them, gives no guarantee or, necessarily, protection against betrayal and harm:

> I gave to the beggar, I raised the orphan,
>
> I gave success to the poor as to the wealthy;
>
> But he who ate my food raised opposition,
>
> He whom I gave my trust used it to plot (Lichtheim, 2006:136).

Having been betrayed by those he provided for, but more importantly, those he trusted, the king urges his son to

> Beware of subjects who are nobodies,
>
> Of whose plotting one is not aware.
>
> Trust not a brother, know not a friend,
>
> Make no intimates, it is worthless.
>
> When you lie down, guard your heart yourself,
>
> For no man has adherents on the day of woe (ibid).

Yet, while the king urges his son not to trust anyone, he is also aware that no human being is an island, that a person, especially a king, needs alliances in order to confront foes. Human beings, including kings, are not aware when foes approach to harm or kill them in the darkness of the night when the intended victim is asleep:

> But no one is strong at night;
>
> No one can fight alone;
>
> No success is achieved without a helper (Lichtheim, 2006:137).

In an ancient Egyptian document known as *The Instruction of Prince Hardjedef*, we see Prince Hardjedef, giving wise counsel to his son, Au-ib-re, about human conduct (Lictheim, 2006:58).

1.5.3 The Instruction of Prince Hardjedef

In the very first sentence, Hardjedef (Lictheim, 2006:58) calls upon his son to "Cleanse yourself before your (own) eyes, Lest another cleanse you". This points to the importance of the need for self-criticism. The second advice, on the need to take a "hearty wife", points to the need to have a partner that can exercise self-control over herself. These two advices give a clear indication of Hardjedef's appreciation of two important factors about, firstly, ethical conduct of individuals, in their own individual capacity, and, secondly, partnership between a husband and a wife, as members of a family unity. This means that Hardjedef was cognisant of the essential need for a mother and father to be exemplary to their children because of an understanding that while the present belongs to the parents, the future belongs to the children, and this being the case, parents had an obligation to prepare a good future for the children. That Hardjedef held these views is borne out by the next advice to his son

> It is for the son you build a house,
>
> When you make a place for yourself (Lichtheim, 2006:58).

While, as indicated above, it is clear that certain kings wrote texts for their sons to prepare them for rulership, not all could and did so. The case of King Snefru demonstrates that in certain cases kings sought out philosophers to guide them (Lichtheim, 2006:139). In the case of King Snefru, he summoned the "sage Neferti", asking him "to speak of the future rather than the past" (ibid). In act that shows how seriously King Snefru regarded his request to Neferti, he took out a scroll and recorded Neferti's words which constitute what has come to be known as the *Prophecies of Neferti* (Lichtheim, 2006: 139 – 140).

1.5.4 The Prophecies of Neferti

While Neferti did what the king asked him to do – to speak about the future and not the past – he starts off by making an observation about the need to be active, and not passive, in the face of injustice, showing again the centrality of the philosophy of Maat, and the need to remind the rulers of their obligation to honour Maat (Lichtheim, 2006:140 – 141):

> When there is silence before evil,
>
> And when what should be chided is feared,
>
> Then the great man is overthrown in the land of your birth
>
> Tire not while this is before you,
>
> Rise against what is before you!

After having painted an ugly picture of an ancient Egypt in which there is disorder and suffering, Neferti, the philosopher, paints a picture where this gloom will be replaced by happiness and justice. Significantly, the rise of a just king is central in the regeneration of the coming bright order (Lichtheim, 2006:143):

> Then a king will come from the South,
>
> Ameny, the justified by name,
>
> Son of a woman of Ta-Seti, child of Upper Egypt […]
>
> Then Order will return to its seat,
>
> While Chaos is driven away.
>
> Rejoice he who may behold, he who may attend the king!

These historical facts reveal at least two important issues. The first is that already more than two thousand years BCE, there existed in ancient Egypt, philosopher-rulers. The existence of such philosopher-rulers was a product of a conscious effort, through the Maat philosophy, to mould philosophers who would be rulers, and rulers who would be philosophers. This model of governance would later be admired and emulated by Greek philosophers, particulary, Plato. In a conversation recorded in Plato's book, *The Republic*, focussing on an ideal state that would be characterised by justice, and examining the "conditions under which a state can most closely approximate to it", Socrates (in Plato, 2003:191 – 192) notes that the ideal society cannot come

about “till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands”. Recognising that anyone and everyone could claim to be a philosopher, and, therefore, claim entitlement to power, Socrates (in Plato, 2003:196) pointed out a need to “define these philosophers who we dare to claim should be rulers”. A person who deserved to be called a philosopher in Socrates’ (in Plato, 2003:197) book was one who was “ready to taste every branch of learning […] glad to learn and never satisfied”. By the same token, a person who “is fussy about what he studies, especially if he is young and has not yet the judgment to know what is good for him and what is not”, did not deserve to be called a philosopher. By privileging learning and studying as not only a basis but also a condition for becoming a philosopher, Socrates (in Plato, 2003:200) held a view that learning and studying would enable a philosopher to distinguish between “knowledge” and “opinion”, the former carrying more weight than the latter. What this means is that philosophers, as far as Socrates (in Plato, 2003:204) was concerned, were people who were “lovers of wisdom”. Lovers of wisdom were different, and had to be distinguished from “lovers of opinion” (ibid). Being knowledgeable, though, was not sufficient. In addition to being knowledgeable, “true philosophers” were “[t]hose who love to see the truth” (Socrates in Plato, 2003:198). In fact, the interlocutors (in Plato, 2003:204 – 208) in the dialogue concerning philosopher-rulers identify certain characters without which one cannot qualify for being a philosopher-ruler:

- Love of any branch of learning that reveals eternal reality – unaffected by the vicissitudes and decay (in Plato, 2003:205).
- Truthfulness – unwillingness to tolerate lies, love for the truth and hatred for lies (in Plato, 2003:205). The interlocutors (in Plato, 2003:206) were in agreement that there was nothing “more closely connected with wisdom than truth” and that “it’s hardly possible to combine in the same character a love of wisdom and a love of falsehood”.
- Self-control – in this regard the expectation was that if a man was “a genuine philosopher and not a sham” his “pleasure will be in things purely of the mind” and that “physical pleasures will pass him by” (ibid).
- Greatness of mind and the breadth of vision – the interlocutors held a view that a philosopher-king should be a person who does not have meanness and pettiness of mind, a person who approaches issues with a holistic mind (ibid)
- Courage – the interlocutors held a view that “mean and cowardly natures can’t really have any dealings with true philosophy”, and this being the case, therefore, philosopher-

kings should hold on to their convictions regardless of the consequences to them, including loss of life or death (in Plato, 2003:207)

- Good memory – the interlocutors argued that a philosopher-king would be conducting a fruitless exercise, if in acquiring learning he cannot retain what he has learnt in his mind, and this being the case, therefore, good memory was an essential condition and character for a philosopher king (in Plato, 2003:207 – 208).

In an effort to make politicians philosophers, and philosophers politicians, Plato founded an Academy where he himself taught (Lee, 2003:xix). More specifically, Plato's Academy was "primarily a school of philosophic statesmen" even though he did "not expect any very immediate results" (ibid). But even then, Plato (Lee, 2003:xix; xxi) did make a practical attempt of taking under his wing two rulers of Syracuse, Dionysius I and Dionysius II, in order to make them philosopher-rulers. In his quest to make philosophers, politicians, and politicians, philosophers, Plato did have success, however limited. Two of his Academy's students, Erastus and Coriscus, became advisers to Hermias, who was the ruler of Atarneus in north-west Asia Minor, about who it is said that he "turned his tyranny into a milder form of government on the advice of the philosophers, and to have handed over Assos to them to rule in gratitude for what they had done" (Lee, 2003:xxi). But before Plato, there was an Athenian Greek philosopher, Solon, who, in "philosophy, like most of the wise men of that age, […] was concerned above all with applying morals to politics" (Plutarch, 1960:45). More specifically, Solon was "involved in politics and was drawing up […] laws" for the Athenian society (Plutarch, 1960:47). In a society that was greatly divided by political parties, and, consequently, rivalries, and characterised by injustices against the poor, Solon was recognised by his community as a man of justice and was called upon by Athenian citizens to settle disputes among them (Plutarch, 1960:54 – 55). This "lover of knowledge", "the justest and wisest in the state" was chosen as an archon, an arbitrator and legislator (Plutarch, 1960:44;55). He was so effective as a legislator, and so respected, to an extent that "[a]ll his laws were to remain in force for a hundred years" (Plutarch, 1960:67). It is significant to note that after an illustrious service to his Athenian society, Solon sought a leave of absence for ten years and travelled, and that he "went first of all to Egypt and stayed for a while" (Plutarch, 1960:68). During Solon's stay in Ancient Egypt, he "spent some time studying and discussing philosophy with Psenophis of Heliopolis and Sonchis of Saïs, who were the most learned of the Egyptian priests" (Plutarch, 1960:69). Just as there is a historical connection between the philosopher, Solon, and ancient Egypt, there is also a historical connection between Plato and ancient Egypt. Plutarch (1960:45)

notes that “Plato paid for the expenses of his stay in Egypt by selling oil”. Not only did Plato stay in ancient Egypt, but he, like many other Greeks, “expresse[d] admiration in the Laws for the Egyptians” (Lee, 2003:li). This should not be surprising if we take into consideration, as Jacq (1998:19) points out that most Greek philosophers and savants travelled to Heliopolis to study some of that knowledge which had been gathered over the centuries, and that it was there, notably, that Plato heard the legend of Atlantis, which has caused so much ink to flow, and whose true meaning, still misunderstood as far as we know, can only be deduced from the Egyptian texts.

Any doubt that there is a relationship between Plato’s *Republic* and Ancient Egyptians’ political science should be removed if one were to take into cognisance Bernal’s (1991:106) observation that “the only reason for doubting that his *Republic* was based on Egypt is the fact that he does not say so in the text. This omission, however, has an ancient explanation.” Expanding on this “ancient explanation”, Bernal (ibid) observes, citing Krantor, observes that “Plato’s contemporaries mocked him, saying that he was not the inventor of his republic, but that he had copied Egyptian institutions”.

There is yet, another community, the Chinese community, which, from time to time, turned to its philosophical past in order to deal with current challenges, and preparation for the future. One of the most celebrated figures in Chinese history is the philosopher, Confucius, who lived between the years 550 to 479 BC (Palmer, 2014:xii). Confucius was a “teacher, bureaucrat and in a strange way a reformer who looked to the past for models of virtue” (Palmer, 2014:xii). Among the books that Confucius is believed to have edited, and was regarded as “essential reading” for anyone “aspiring to a role in the imperial bureaucracy of China” was the book called the *Shang Shu*, which means “the most venerable book” (Palmer, 2014:xi – xii). The *Shang Shu* is a “chronicle of great and terrible rulers in the ancient past, and the rise and fall of dynasties and emperors” (Palmer, 2014:ix). The *Shang Shu* was “treated as a handbook to government and law for thirteen hundred years, from the seventh century AD to the twentieth” (Palmer, 2014:xiv). In the *Shang Shu*, Confucius “highlighted figures, such as the Duke of Zhou, whom he felt behaved in ways leading to correct action and proper rule, and it was upon them that he based a whole philosophy of moral behaviour” (Palmer, 2014:xii). Confucius was not the kind of philosopher who spent all his time only contemplating about the issues in his surroundings and doing nothing about them. Living through a period which “was one of enormous turmoil in the Chinese world”, Confucius “travelled from state to state, preaching an ethical doctrine of benevolence, righteousness, and ritual, of civilized conventions of decency,

of the power of moral example, in the hope of saving Chinese society from chaos" (Minford, 2009:xx – xxi). In the history of Chinese philosophy, Confucius is celebrated as "one of the many wandering scholars of his time, whose propositions made this and the subsequent two centuries one of the golden ages of Chinese thought, a period of intense debate and exploration of fundamental philosophical issues" (Minford, 2009:xxi). In turning to the teachings of Confucius, "China has sought to rediscover its roots and to try and see what it means to have distinct, historical moral and philosophical culture" (Palmer, 2014:lix).

Another celebrated figure in the history of ancient Chinese philosophy is Sun-Tzu, the author of *The Art of War*. About *The Art of War* it has been noted that "it is an extraordinarily important book and one that should be read by anyone dealing with either China or Japan" (Minford, 2009:xi). The *The Art of War* "encapsulates a part of the irreducible essence of Chinese culture" because its "seminal ideas have permeated Chinese culture" (Minford, 2009:xi; xvii). In his lifetime, Sun-Tzu, the philosopher, is believed to have been an adviser to King He Lü, who reigned in the years 514 – 496 BC (Minford, 2009:xvii; xix). *The Art of War*, it has also been observed, is "one of the books that helped both Communist leader Mao Zedong and the Nationalist Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek (and the Japanese commanders in World War II) formulate their strategic thinking" (Minford, 2009:xxii).

By making reference to the history of philosophy in ancient Egypt, ancient Greece and ancient China, the objective is to make the point made by Wiredu (1980:51) that historically, "[a]ll the major philosphers of the world have tried in one way or another, successfully or unsuccessfully, to change the world for the better". If this be true then, simultaneously, it is false for Karl Marx to have claimed that philosophers have only "interpreted" the world in various ways, while the point is to "change" it (ibid). Such a claim by Marx suggests, as Wiredu (ibid) further points out, that "the changing of the world had escaped philosophers (before him) in their preoccupation with the quest for understanding". Such an understanding on the part of Marx is "simply wrong – one is tempted to say, inexcusably wrong" (ibid). In line with Wiredu's disputation of Marx's argument, Gyekye (1997:23) points out that an examination of the history of philosophy reveals that the "personal involvement of some philosophers in sociopolitical reform programs clearly contradicts Marx's view that 'Hitherto philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real point is to change it'". An examination of the history of philosophy in the 19th century Britain reveals that some philosophers in that country concerned themselves with "practical than with purely theoretical issues" and committed themselves to modernizing Britain's social and political institutions"

(Gyekye, 1997:22 – 23). With reference to the distinguished philosopher Jeremy Bentham, Gyekye (1997:23) further points out that Bentham's "philosophical arguments as well as his personal involvement played some significant role in the eventual passage of the Reform Bill of 1832". The Bill "radically reformed British politics by removing the control of Parliament from the aristocratic class and putting it in the hands of the urban middle class" (ibid). Gyekye (ibid) also cites the case of John Stuart Mill who also "devoted the whole of his life to programs of social reform and thus pursued the tradition of the Philosophical Radicals".

1.6 Conclusion

Taking into consideration that this study is about African philosophy and the African Renaissance in the context of a quest for a true humanity, this chapter examined how this quest came about and how African philosophy and the African Renaissance fit in this quest. It highlighted how, in the first place, European philosophy contributed to the dehumanisation of Africans, and why African philosophy should contribute to the re-humanisation of not only Africans but the entire human race. In the next chapter we examine the evolution of the African Renaissance and its manifestations as articulated by its advocates.

Chapter 2

African Renaissance: An African Intellectual, Revolutionary and Philosophical Tradition

2.1 Introduction

The concept, "African Renaissance", is constituted by two key words, "African" and "Renaissance". While the idea of reclamation and rebirth was welcomed by leading academics and intellectuals in the African continent, the continued use of "Africa" and "Renaissance", in the pursuit of rebirth and reclamation, have been found problematic. Mudimbe (1994:xi) argues that "the very name of the continent is itself a major problem". This is because it was a name given by the Romans to "a province in their empire known as Africa". At the African Renaissance conference held in South Africa in 1998, Mamdani (1999:128) echoed Mudimbe's point. In line with the foregoing observations, Ramose (2005:4) points out that "the memory that Africa is an invention as well as an imposition upon the indigenous inhabitants of the continent from time immemorial must lead to the acceptance of this naming with protest". Ramose (ibid) proceeds to note that he, therefore, uses the name "Africa" under protest. But not only does Ramose protest against the word "Africa" – he also objects to the usage of the word "Renaissance", arguing that "the marriage between African and 'renaissance' is an uneasy one […] full of historical and philosophical problems" (Ramose, 2003:608). Such a "marriage", Ramose (ibid), further argues, "must be dissolved because there is no philosophical and historical justification for it". The historical "problems" associated with the Renaissance concept, Ramose (2003:601) argues further, have to do with the fact that the "Renaissance is an historical concept signifying a specific period in the history of Europe", this, specifically, being a "European historical movement which originated in Italy and spread through the other parts of Europe". Having stated his objection, Ramose (ibid) rhetorically asks if there is something unnatural about the the natural environment such that the history of Africa cannot be described and defined by concepts originating from Africa?

As pointed out above, Ramose's question is a rhetorical one because he has an answer for his question, which we will engage with later. For now, let us further examine the "historical and the philosophical problems" that Ramose identifies with the use of the word "Renaissance". Ramose (2003:600) first notes that it is not insignificant that most dictionaries and other standard works distinguish between the "Renaissance" and the "renassence". While on the one hand "Renaissance" is spelt with a capital "R", on the other hand, "renassence" is spelt with a

small “r” (Ramose, 2003:600 – 601). While both words share a common meaning – rebirth, renewal, revival – the capital “R” is reserved for reference to the Italian or European Renaissance, a specific history, as Ramose (2003:601) points out. Having made this point, Ramose (2003:604) further notes that it is not insignificant that when Nkrumah advocated for the African Renaissance, he spoke about the “new African renaissance”, adding, with a retort, that Nkrumah made such a declaration “as if there were the ‘old’ in the past” in the first place. Having made this point, Ramose (ibid) observes that there are two significant inferences that can be made with reference to Nkrumah’s “new African renaissance”. The first is that by using the word “new”, Nkrumah sought to “distinguish the African renaissance from the European Renaissance” (ibid). The same logic applies to Nkrumah’s use of the small letter “r” instead of the capital letter “R”, “precisely to underline the distinction between the African renaissance and the European Renaissance” (ibid). Nkrumah’s approach, Ramose (ibid) points out, is a demonstration of consciousness about the “historical and philosophical problems pertaining to the use of the capital ‘R’ with reference to the history of Africa”, adding that by so doing, Nkrumah had, simultaneously, avoided the “philosophical problems connected to such usage”. Such an acknowledgment on Ramose’s part, and his submission that Nkrumah’s usage of the “new African renaissance” makes reference to the rebirth and renewal of Africa”, does not mean that Ramose (2003:604) embraces such an approach. Even if the small letter “r” were to be retained in the use of the renaissance, Ramose (2003:606) argues that the closeness with the capital letter is a source of discomfort because it is a temptation to fix Africans’ gaze to the North. Ramose (2003:608) further argues that the “attempt to implant the ‘renaissance’ into Africa is an implicit denial of Africa’s right to choose from her experience terms and concepts that can be used to understand and interpret African history and politics”, further pointing out that such an approach is problematic because “one of the results of the fixation of the African gaze to the North is that Africa thereby concedes prominence and leadership to the North”. Africa must look to herself because, Ramose (ibid) insists, “African history has yielded and continues to yield fertile experience from which to extract key analytical concepts”.

The concerns raised by Mudimbe, Mamdani and Ramose on the origins of the name “Africa”, and those raised by Ramose on the use of the concept “African Renaissance” merit a response. Below we do so in the order in which the concerns are given, beginning with “Africa”, followed by the “African Renaissance”. We then move on to trace the history of the African Renaissance which is far older than the African Renaissance conference held in South Africa in 1998. In fact, in a display of appropriate modesty, the organisers of the African Renaissance conference

held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1998, acknowledged that while the move was "historic because it was the first such conference in South Africa", they, simultaneously, "conceived the African Renaissance Conference as part of a small contribution towards a larger process of our history", expressing recognition that the South African conference "was the continuation of a long process in a long journey of conscientisation, re-evaluation and introspection" (Makgoba et al, 1999:i; vii). This open acknowledgment was an act of homage to the "ancestors [who] began that journey many years ago", and an appreciation that the African Renaissance concept was "articulated by many other great Africans throughout our history (Makgoba et al, 1998:vii). This acknowledgment is important because it helps to place the African Renaissance project in a correct historical context. By locating the historical roots of the African Renaissance, we, simultaneously, also interrogate what the African Renaissance concept meant to its advocates in the 19th century. Now, we engage with the claim that the name "Africa" is of European origin.

2.2 Africa – The Origin of the Name

In his book, *A Book of the Beginnings: Two Volumes Bound Into One,* Gerald Massey (2016:28) first points us to the meaning of two words, "Au" and "Af", to help us understand the etymology of the name "Africa". Massey (ibid) notes that both "Au and Af" from which the name Africa is derived, "signify born of", further adding that the "tongue of Egypt tells us that Af-rui-ka is the inner land, born of, literally the birthplace". What the foregoing tells us, then, is that the name "Africa" originates from the Ancient Egyptians, who regarded themselves as having come from the inner land of the African continent. If, then, the Romans identified the continent by the name "Africa", as Mudimbe, Mamdani and Ramose suggest, then the Romans gave nothing new to the continent, but simply gave recognition to what was there before them in Africa.

We now turn to the concept "African Renaissance"

2.3 The "African Renaissance" – A Northbound Gaze?

A deeper examination of history reveals that the use of the concept "rebirth", or "reborn" or "renewal" is older than the Italian or European Renaissance. In Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge's (2008:623) book entitled *The Egyptian Book of the Dead,* in chapter CLXXXII, there are the following words uttered by Thoth and addressed to Osiris: "Homage to thee, O Governor of those who are in Amenti, who makes mortals to be born again, who renewest thy

youth […] thou art renewed […]" The above passage is extracted from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* whose contents are estimated to have been in existence as far back as 3 500 BC. To better appreciate the meaning of the above passage, a historical context is indispensable. This historical context has to do with the Ancient Egyptians' creation myth. In the narrative of the Ancient Egyptians' myth of creation, there was a man, Osiris, who was killed by his brother, Seth, with the latter cutting the body of his brother into pieces (Budge, 2008:xcii). In response to the dismembering of Osiris' body, Osiris' sister, Isis, who was simultaneously his wife, re-membered or "reconstituted" Osiris' body, and, "by means of magical words", Osiris "came to life again", and "became immortal, and entered into the underworld, where he became both the judge and king of the underworld" (ibid). Drawing inspiration from this creation myth, Ancient Egyptians believed that Osiris had "conquered death, and had risen from the dead" (Budge, 2008:xciii). Hence the homage to Osiris as the one "who makes mortals to be born again, who renewest thy youth", himself being the one who "art renewed" (Budge, 2008:623). As far back as 3 500, Ancient Egyptian Africans, in their literature used the concepts "born again" and "renewed" far ahead of the Italian Renaissance.

In the series, *General History of Africa*, particularly the 6th Volume, entitled *Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*, edited by J.F Ade Ajayi, there is a chapter entitled *The renaissance of Egypt 1805 – 81*, authored by A. Abdel-Malek. If one were to go by the title of the chapter alone, one could be easily misled into believing that this "renaissance" with reference to Egypt pointed to the ancient Egyptian heritage. But this was not the case. The "renaissance of Egypt" in this case, referred to Muslim leaders' "campaigns geared to project Egypt not only as an African country, but also as an Islamic and Arab state" (Abdel Malek, 1998:131). It should be recalled at this point that the Arabs themselves were not indigenous in Egypt. They gained control of the country in the 7th century. So, the Egyptian renaissance referred to, here, was a struggle to get "Egypt to become an independent state while still remaining part of the Ottoman empire" (Abdel Malek, 1998:131). It was a quest for making Egypt to become "the heart and head of an Arab empire", the emphasis being on the "importance of the Pan-Arab factor" aimed at building up the power of Egypt, "namely, that Egypt was to become the centre of an Arab revival" (Abdel Malek, 1998:133).

The concern raised by Ramose on the issue of the use of the concept "African Renaissance" was not non-existent in the minds of those who advocated the African Renaissance. Right at the 1998 African Renaissance conference in South Africa, Mugo (1999:210) noted that even

though language and terminology have a way of defying monopolisation by particular events in history, "the term 'renaissance' surely has to remind us of the European Renaissance which took place between the fourteenth and sixteen centuries". While on the one hand the European Renaissance signified for the Europeans, "especially the privileged classes", the revival in the arts, Mugo (ibid) recalled that "for Africa and other colonised lands this event became a negation of their own achievements". That is because the European Renaissance ushered human and technological resources that were later utilised by imperialists to enslave and colonise Africans. As early as 1960, 38 years before Mugo made the foregoing observations, Senghor (1964:81) had already observed, as Mugo did, later, that the "latest colonization, that of Europe over the world, was the work of the Renaissance". If the advocates of the African Renaissance held such a view about the European Renaissance, how, then, did they distinguish the African Renaissance from the European Renaissance? In addressing this question, Mugo (ibid) observes that the challenge facing Africa is a task of designing a "renaissance that truly addresses the recovery and renewal of not just her people and their destroyed heritages, but space in which all human beings find themselves in celebration of fulfilled lives". Clearly, Mugo, above, locates the African Renaissance project in the context of a struggle or a quest for a true humanity. Mugo (ibid) goes on to remind the African Renaissance advocates that the 1998 African Renaissance conference was not the first attempt at designing Africans' own renaissance. She points to the African Americans' Harlem renaissance of the 1920s, which witnessed an impressive flowering of Africana cultural and artistic expression, "defying the disparaging effect of the first imperialist war". Mugo (ibid) goes on to point to the "rise of pan-Africanism which, as a movement, emphasised and continues to emphasise the importance of a global African renaissance in both its cultural as well as its educational agenda". The Pan-African struggle for freedom and independence was an expression of the African Renaissance because, as Mugo (ibid) points out, it was a "question of reviving and reconstructing a new image that would negate existing colonial models". In explicit terms, the point made by Mugo is that the African Renaissance is a project of Pan-Africanism. The point made by Mugo is appreciated by Mamdani (1996:76) who refers to Pan-Africanism as an "intellectual renaissance". Later, we will demonstrate with more detail and clarity the link between Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance.

Standing opposed to the usage of European concepts for the African Renaissance was not enough for Ramose – he also proposed. Ramose (2003:607 – 608) identified two names of birds, *Mokoko* and *Hungwe*, as two appropriate names that would serve the objective of the

African Renaissance advocates. *Mokoko* is a SeSotho name for a cock (Ramose, 2003:607). Traditionally, when Africans did not depend on the clock for time, they relied on the cock to indicate the arrival of dawn. For some people in the African rural areas, this is still the case. The *Mokoko* bird "proclaims the passage from darkness to light", a "message of the beginning of a new day, a new life", where "everyone is invited to rise up to the occasion and be an active part of the new life" (Ramose, 2003:607). To the African people, *Mokoko*, the cockerel, is "an important symbol of time" which, every night, between the middle of the night, and very early hours of the morning, "crows to awaken the people for the break of a new day" (Makgoba, 1997:xxi). Significantly, the Convention People's Party (CPP), the organisation that led Ghana to independence, under the leadership of the African Renaissance advocate and philosopher, Kwame Nkrumah, adopted a Red Cockerel as the symbol of the party (Nkrumah, 1971:209; 268). Just as *Mokoko* symbolises new life in an African cultural context, *Hungwe*, too, is a cultural symbol in the African cultural context, with particular reference to the Shona people of Zimbabwe (Ramose, 2003:608). Among the Shona-speaking, the *Hungwe* is "believed to have a sacred connection with the spirit world", in other words, the Ancestors (Mungwini, 2017:177). A belief exists among the Shona-speaking people that the Ancestors can send the *Hungwe* bird "to protect and warn people of imminent danger" (Mungwini, 2017:179). It is not an uncommon feature of Zimbabweans' lives to hear stories being told by hunters and former freedom fighters proclaiming that the *Hungwe* bird saved them from wild animals and ambushes by the Rhodesian military (ibid).

The need for indigenous African concepts that reflect reclamation, rebirth, regeneration, has not been lost to the advocates of the African Renaissance concept. Nehusi (2016:62), an African Renaissance champion, notes that in the ancient Egyptian language, Medew Netjer, reclamation is known as "*Wehemu Mesut* (the repeating of births)". In Twi, the language of the Akan people in Ghana, reclamation is linked to the *Sankofa* bird. Gyekye (1997:233) notes that "Sankofa, meaning to return for it, to go back for it (in the Akan language of Ghana), is thus a philosophy of cultural revivalism or cultural renaissance". Prah (2006:231), also an advocate of the African Renaissance, notes that "a recall (*sankofa*) of the buried memory is vital, memory which is the only realistic foundation of African development". In this context, Sankofa is a "reclamation of values, tenets, and institutions of our African heritage […] (Prah, 2016:103).

Having paid attention to the philosophical debates around the usage of the concept "African Renaissance", we now give various African scholars' definitions of the concept.

2.4 The African Renaissance: Definitions

The African Renaissance is "a vision and mission for transformative change and development that is premised on the understanding that the future of Africa and the Diaspora lies in the fundamental process of renewal, re-invention and rebirth" (Odora Hoppers, 2006:35). It is an act of "reconstruction of our understanding of ourselves as Africans and how our relationships with the rest of humanity have led us to where we are in the context of a global historical process" (Gutto, 2006:2). Gutto (2006:3) further defines the African Renaissance as "an act of culture, and a form of resistance [that] is historically grounded in the experiences of the African people". The African Renaissance project is a call to Africans for a continued resistance to Western domination and exploitation of Africans in the process of "Africa restating its original message and its own way that was at the same time universal" (Nabudere, 2006:13). In line with the call for continued resistance against Western domination, at the "core of the African renaissance vision is, or should be", Khoza (1999:279 – 280) argues, the acceptance that Africans, and their institutions, have a "capacity and the responsibility to create, foster and maintain economic, political, social and moral processes that define Africans as competent, proud citizens of the world, on a par with the rest of the world".

Having given the definitions of the African Renaissance concept we now trace its historical origins.

2.5 The African Renaissance: Historical Contexts

Historical contexts of the African Renaissance are important because Washington A.J. Okumu (2002:10), in his book, *The African Renaissance: History, Significance and Strategy*, notes that "[i]n Africa, the idea of the African Renaissance has been around since 1996, but many areas of the continent still do not have the slightest understanding of it!" Okumu (ibid) further notes that Africans' ignorance of the African Renaissance is not due to lethargy on their part, but attributes it to a lack of access to a "compact document that clearly and concisely articulates the intellectual basis of the movement". Apart from Mbeki's original speeches, "undoubtedly the continent's leading champion of this idea", Okumu (ibid) further points out that writings on the African Renaissance remain scattered in newspaper articles, journals, monographs and pamphlets, this state of affairs making a general thesis difficult to understand. While it is true, as Okumu argues, that Mbeki has been widely and rightfully acclaimed as a leading champion of the African Renaissance in the 1990s, as illustrated above, the African Renaissance notion is far older than the date identified by Okumu and, historically, has been articulated by many

ahead of Mbeki. To his credit, Mbeki (2001:137) openly acknowledges that the "idea is not new to the struggles of the peoples of our continent for genuine liberation." Mbeki (ibid) declares that the African Renaissance notion has "been propagated before by other activists for liberation, drawn from many countries". The difference between Mbeki's time and that of his predecessors is that "when this perspective was advanced in earlier periods, the conditions did not exist for its realisation" (ibid). The difference, in Mbeki's time, is that enabling conditions existed for the African Renaissance to be enhanced throughout the continent, "leading to the transformation of the idea from a dream dreamt by visionaries to a practical programme of action for revolutionaries" (ibid). Having noted Mbeki's acknowledgment that there are many who advocated the African Renaissance project before him, it is important to note that he places the African Renaissance project as part of the "struggles […] for genuine liberation", and "a practical programme of action for revolutionaries". This being the case, then, the African Renaissance needs to be understood as part of the African liberation movements' struggles and programmes, both before and after colonial rule in different African countries. By aligning the African Renaissance, as a Continental project, even though that is a limitation, itself, Mbeki correctly positions the project as an African, not merely a South African project. Such is an appreciation that the African Renaissance in a Pan-African project as its history, below, demonstrates.

2.6 The African Renaissance: A Project of Pan-Africanism

As early as 1858, an African-American Pan-Africanist, Martin Robinson Delany, spoke about the "moral, social and political elevation of ourselves and the regeneration of Africa" (Sherwood, 2003:36). In 1876, eighteen years after Delany spoke about the "regeneration of Africa", Edwin Blyden, in his paper, "Christian Missions in Africa" made reference to the "African regeneration" (Blyden, 1967:46 – 47). In an observation that clearly positions the African Renaissance in a context of Pan-Africanism, Fyfe (1967:xii) made reference to Blyden as a "forerunner of the Pan-African movement". Nnamdi Azikiwe, a Pan-Africanist from Nigeria, to whom we will make reference below, called Blyden "one of the leading Africanists of all times" (in Fyfe, 1967:xii). On April 5, 1906, Pixley kaIsaka Seme, then a 25-year-old South African student at Columbia University, wrote an essay that won the first prize of the Curtis Medal Orations at Columbia University entitled "The Regeneration of Africa" (Obeng, 1997:136; Kumalo, 2015:191). On the basis of this pioneering work, Kumalo (2015:192) regards, and refers to Seme as the "father of the African Renaissance". If, by this, Khumalo meant that in the South African context, Seme was the "father of the African Renaissance",

that could be right, but that statement would be inaccurate if it takes into cognisance Martin Robinson Delany and Wilmot Edward Blyden, as noted above, who were members of the African family in the diaspora. Seme's speech inspired two African political activists and Pan-Africanists, Kwame Nkrumah and Thabo Mbeki, who later became heads of states in Ghana and South Africa, respectively. Nkrumah, the first president of the first African country to regain independence from colonialism was so deeply moved and profoundly inspired by Seme's essay, such that in 1962, at the first International Congress of Africanists, he quoted Seme's oration in full (Obeng, 1997:137). Nkrumah's quotation of Seme's oration in full carries a historical significance. That is because it was not only a conscious exercise, but also remarkable because Nkrumah himself "confess[ed], with humility, that it is not my usual practice to quote others" (in Obeng, 1997:137). But on that occasion Nkrumah did the unusual because he reasoned that while 56 years had passed since Seme delivered his oration, the speech remained relevant to "our present situation in Africa" (in Obeng, 1997:137). For Nkrumah, the very occasion of the first International Congress of Africanists in 1962 was "a reflection of the African's recovery and re-awakening" (in Obeng, 1997:131). Just as Nkrumah found it relevant to quote Seme 56 years later, Mbeki did the same in 1996, 90 years after Seme had delivered his speech. A reading of Mbeki's "I am an African" speech reveals a striking resemblance and clear influence of Seme's "The Regeneration of Africa" speech. While Seme in 1906 wrote that "I am an African, and I set my pride in my race over against a public opinion" (in Obeng, 1997:137), Mbeki (1998:31) in 1996, wrote that "I am an African. I owe my being to the hills and the valleys…" In Seme's footsteps came the Nigerian Pan-Africanist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, with his book, *Renascent Africa*, published in 1937 (Maloka, 1999:30). Following Azikiwe, came the Pan-Africanist from South Africa, Muziwakhe Anton Lembede, who, in 1946, wrote, in a newpaper piece entitled "Policy of the Congress Youth League" that "[a]mong Africans also clear sings of national awakening, national renaissance or rebirth are noticeable on the far-off horizon" (Lembede, 2015:139). Following Lembede was the Senegalese Pan-Africanist, Cheikh Anta Diop, who utilised, in full, the term "African Renaissance" in 1948, when he wrote his article "When Can We Talk Of An African Renaissance?" (1996:33)**.** Nkrumah, a Pan-Africanist, advanced the notion of the "African Renaissance" in his book, *Consciencism: Philosophy And Ideology For De-Colonisation*, published in 1964 (Nkrumah, 1970:63).

Now that the African Renaissance has been located as a historical project of Pan-Africanism, below we examine what the advocates of this concept identified as key priorities in the

fulfilment of their quest for the African Renaissance. In the absence of material from Robinson, we begin with Blyden.

2.6.1 Blyden's African Renaissance: Key Issues

There are a number of issues that Blyden sought to address through his African Renaissance. Among those were the following, which overlapped: the return of the diasporic Africans to Africa; celebrating African originality, reclaiming Ancient Egypt and Ancient Egyptian philosophy as an African heritage; the reclamation of African languages for the African Renaissance project; We begin with Blyden's notion of the "African Regeneration".

(a) *African Regeneration*

Blyden's book, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro*, first published in 1867, is preoccupied with how the work of "African regeneration" could be carried out, following the devastating effects of slavery and colonialism. Conscious that in Africa there were three contending forces – African spirituality, Christianity and Islam – Blyden (1967:iv – v) held the conviction that the African regeneration project would have to be carried out by "African converts to Mohammedanism and the Negro colonists from Christian countries, who have, thus far, done most of the permanent advance of civilization in equatorial Africa". Reference to "Mohammedanism" meant Islam, and "African converts" to "Mohammedanism" meant African Muslims who had converted to, or embraced Islam. Reference to "Negro colonists from Christian countries" referred to African descendants who had been taken as slaves to the West, but had come back to settle in West Africa, particularly Liberia and Sierra Leone. It seemed, to Blyden (1967:iv – v), that it would be African Christians and Muslims who would be the only people "capable and efficient agencies for the work of African regeneration". Before much can be said about Blyden's approach to "African Regeneration", it needs to be pointed out that Blyden was a committed Christian, and his chief commitment was how Christianity could play a role in African Regeneration. This project, Blyden saw (1967:47; 48) as an exercise to "Christianize the African tribes", the "enormous work of African Christianization". Blyden (1967:v – vi) was driven by the hope that if Christianity could not conquer the entire African continent – a task which could not be realised through European agency alone – it might, through its African converts, at least share the continent, with Islam, and what he referred to as "paganism", whose "horrors and abominations" would have all been forever abolished.

Considering that Christianity was used by Europeans to colonise Africa, it would appear as a contradiction, on the part of Blyden, to advocate Christianity on the one hand, and the African Regeneration, on the other hand, as if Africa did not have her own spiritual values to regenerate. But such an argument would be exposing a superficial, and an out-of-context reading of Blyden's arguments. To begin with, Blyden (1967:89) was not oblivious to the damage inflicted on Africa in the name of Christianity. He was cognisant of treatment meted out by "Christian nations" on Africans, and remarked that such was inconsistent with the "original idea of Christianity" (ibid). What was wrong, in Blyden's (ibid) view, was not the spread of Christianity in Africa because, as he pointed out, the "teachings of Christianity are of universal application […] Christianity is not only not a local religion, but it has adapted itself to the people wherever it has gone." In regarding Christianity as a "universal" religion means, therefore, that Blyden did not regard the faith as belonging to any one particular nation, but as a spiritual heritage that belonged to all humankind. Hence, Blyden did not perceive it as a contradiction to advocate the African Renaissance, on the one hand, and Christianity for Africa, on the other hand. While on the one hand Blyden (1967:89 – 90) noted that the "sword of the conqueror and the cries of the conquered have attended or preceded the introduction of this faith wherever carried by Europeans, and some most enlightened minds have sanctioned the subjugation of weaker races", he argued, on the other hand, that such facts should not affect the essential principles of Christianity, and that the "sacred records", and not the examples of some of its adherents should be uppermost.

An examination of Blyden's (1967:1) paper, "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race", published in 1875, read in isolation from the rest of his writings, could lead the reader into concluding that Blyden perceived Africans as spiritually dry deserts in need of spiritual nourishment from Western and Eastern nations who brought Christianity and Islam to Africa. That is because, for instance, Blyden (1967:5) observes that "it was not until the ninth century of the Christian era that any knowledge of the true God began to penetrate into Negroland". Blyden (1967:6) also suggested that African culture (including spirituality) was not only different from, but also inferior to Islam. In one journey in West Africa, where Blyden passed through populous "Pagan" towns and "Mohammedan districts", having noted that the "transition […] was striking", Blyden (ibid) further observes the "Mohammedan community" reflected "a moral atmosphere widely separated from, and loftier than the "Pagan town". However, Blyden's

(1967:113) paper, "Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa's Service to the World", written five years later, in 1880, reveals Blyden's appreciaton that Africans knew God long before their encounter with both the Bible and the Qur'an. He demonstrates appreciation that Africans made a great contribution in the building of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In advancing this argument, Blyden (1967:117) cited the Bible which states that Abraham, the "great progenitor of the Hebrew race and the founder of their religion sought refuge in Africa from the ravages of famine": "We read in Gen, xii, 10, 'And there was famine in the land; and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the land'" (ibid). Abraham's sojourn to ancient Egypt was not an isolated event. Blyden (ibid) pointed out that Moses, "the greatest lawgiver" was born in Africa (Egypt), and that Jesus, "a greater than Moses and than all the prophets and philosophers, when in infancy, was preserved from death in Africa [Egypt]". In advancing this argument, Blyden (ibid) cited the Biblical story in which it is stated that Joseph was instructed to take Jesus, and his mother, Mary, "and flee into Egypt, and thou be there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him". Blyden (ibid) also pointed out that when, according to the Biblical narrative, Jesus was on his journey to crucifixion, "Africa furnished the man to relieve him of his burden", the man being Simon, a Cyrenian. On this basis, Blyden (1967:114) argued, "Africans were not unknown, therefore, to the writers of the Bible".

Not only did Blyden point out the contradiction between the teachings of Christianity, on the one hand, and the behaviour of European Christian missionaries, on the other hand, but he also pointed out that the behaviour of Africans reflected Godliness through their "hospitable and considerate treatment of foreigners and strangers than are to be seen in many a civilized and Christian community" (Blyden, 1967:115). Blyden (1967:47 – 48; 65 – 66) drew a clear distinction between "African Christianization", on the one hand, and the "attempt to Europeanize the Negro in Africa", on the other hand. Blyden noted (1967:22) that when the Europeanisation project came to an end, nothing would stop the spread of Christianity among Africans. An effort aimed at Europeanising Africans, Blyden (1967:65) argued, would be a "profitless task". Such an exercise would benefit neither the Africans nor the Europeans because "the African would then fail of the ability to perform his specific part in the world's work, as a distinct portion of the human race" (Blyden, 1967:65). Blyden (1967:66) argued strongly that to "make the African a parasite upon the European would be no gain to mankind". One of the

manifestations of the Europeanisation of Africans by Christian missionaries was that African Christian converts were "forced into European customs" (Blyden, 1967:20). Another manifestation of the Europeanisation of Africans, in the name of Christianity, as observed by Blyden (1967:49) was that "some thousands of natives, having been brought under the immediate influence of Christian teaching […] and, at European settlements, have adopted European dress and habits".

While Blyden recognised and condemned European missionaries' act of using Christianity as an instrument of Europeanising Africans, he not only, initially, failed to recognise Arabs' act of using Islam to Arabise Africans, but praised Arab Muslims' methods of spreading Islam in Africa. In West Africa, Blyden (1967:11) observed, African converts to Islam, "as a general thing", became "Muslims from choice". With reference to the encounter between Islam brought by the Arabs, on the one hand, and African culture, on the other hand, Blyden (1967:11 – 12) observed that in West and Central Africa, it could be seen that the Arab superstructure had been superimposed on a permanent indigenous substructure; so that what really took place, when the Arabs met the Negro in his own home was "a healthy amalgamation, and not an absorption or an undue repression". In other words, what Blyden was saying was that the encounter between the Islam brought by the Arabs, on the one hand, and African culture, on the other hand, in West Africa, was a manifestation of integration, not assimilation. Elaborating on this point, Blyden (1967:12) further pointed out that the Oriental aspect of Islam had become largely modified in Africa, not, as is too generally supposed, by a degrading compromise with "Pagan superstititions", but by shaping many of its traditional customs to suit the milder and more conciliatory disposition of the African. Consistent with the foregoing observation, Blyden (1967:19) observed that "it was not difficult for the Arabs to conform to a great extent to the social and domestic customs of the Africans". In comparing the status of African Christian converts and African Muslim converts, Blyden was scathing on the European Christian missionaries' attitude to Africans. He (Blyden, 1967:10) noted that "[w]herever the Negro is found in Christian lands, his leading trait is not docility, as has been alleged, but servility". While individuals could be found, here and there, of extra-ordinary intelligence, enterprise and energy, "there is no Christian community of Negroes anywhere which is self-reliant and independent" (ibid). While, according to Blyden (1967:13), on the one hand, the encounter between European Christianity was oppressive and degrading for African

Christian converts, on the other hand, the encounter between Africans and Islam, was emancipating and elevating for the Africans. In the encounter between Islam and the African convert, Blyden (ibid) argued, no sooner was the African converted, "than he was taught to read, and the importance of knowledge was impressed upon him". If, at any time, Blyden (ibid) continued, the African had been compelled to choose between accepting Islam, or die under the sword of a Muslim preselytiser, and the African chose Islam, the African was allowed to wield the Qur'an "as the equal of any other Muslim". To the contrary, Blyden (ibid) protested, in the Christian world, no amount of allegiance to the gospel relieved the Christian African from the degradation of wearing the chain which he received with it, or saved him from the political and, in a measure, ecclesiastical proscription which the African underwent in Christian lands. While on the one hand popular literature of the Christian world, "since the discovery of America, or, at least for the last two hundred years, has been anti-Negro", the literature of the Muslim world, Blyden (1967:15 – 16) argued, celebrated the Blackness of the African. It appears, though, that in Blyden's appreciation of Arab Muslims' attitude and approach to African Muslims and African culture, in his paper, *Mohammedanism and the Negro Race*, Blyden failed to critically engage an aspect of the Arabs' cultural imperialism in the name of Islam. While Blyden (1967:6), on the one hand, did recognise that the "love of noisy terpsichorean performance, so noticeable in Pagan communities, disappears as the people come under the influence of Mohammedanism", on the other hand, uncritically, Blyden (ibid) pointed out that it was "not a fact that 'when the sun goes down, all Africa dances,' but it might be a fact if it were not for the influence of Islam". Those who would have sought pleasure in the excitement of the tom-tom, Blyden (ibid) continued, now repaired five times to the mosque, where they spent a quarter of an hour on each occasion in devotional exercises. Blyden's failure in this regard was to appreciate that in the name of Islam, two of the most dear – to the Africans – cultural aspects, namely, music and dance, were, in African Muslim communities, done away with. Such is not cultural integration, as celebrated by Blyden, in the preceding paragraphs, but cultural imperialism, as condemned by Blyden. But, to Blyden's credit, it must be pointed out that he realised that Arab Muslims' interaction with African Muslims was not a rosy picture that he initially thought it was. In his paper, "Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa's Service to the World", cited above, Blyden (1967:122) points out that "a distinguished native scholar and warrior, Omaru Al-Hajj, suppressed the undue influence of the Arabs at Timbuctoo – attacked

the city in 1864, expelled the Arabs, and, with the same troops confined the French to the western side of the Niger". The expulsion of the Arab Muslims by the African Muslims was a clear indication by the latter that while Africans were eager to embrace Islam, they were not prepared to tolerate Arab superiority. As Blyden (ibid) notes, wherever and whenever it has been necessary, great African warriors rose from the ranks of Islam, and, inspired by Islamic teachings, which "merges all distinctions in one great brotherhood, have checked the arrogance of their foreign teachers, and have driven them, if at any time they affected superiority based upon race, from their artificial ascendency". Notwithstanding the spread of Islam and its influence among Africans, "yet the Arabs, who first introduced the religion, have never been allowed to obtain political ascendancy" (ibid). Africans stubbornly refused to abdicate "their race individuality or parted wth their idiosyncracies in embracing the faith of Islam" (ibid).

What accounts for Blyden's seemingly inconsistent and contradictory statements, as pointed out above? Reflecting on this issue, Fyfe (1967:xi) observes that Blyden, "[l]ike many original creative writers, was not always consistent in his views". But, signicantly, Fyfe (ibid) further notes that Blyden's views "changed over the years". What this means is that Blyden, as a searcher and researcher was willing to modify his views when he realised that earlier perceptions and conclusions were incorrect. He realised that historiography and the teaching of history had a crucial role in the shaping of the perception of self and that of others. Europeans, Blyden (1967:58) believed, were neither in a position to present themselves as role models of humanity, nor entitled to accuse Africans of being superstitious. This was because, Blyden (ibid) argued, there was "not a single practice indulged in by them [Africans] – to which we cannot find a parallel in the past history of Europe, and even after the people had been brought under the influence of a nominal Christianity". Just like Africans, Europeans practised polygamy, and just like Africans, Europeans had their own sacrifice rituals (Blyden, 1967:58 – 59). Reference to the African continent as "The Dark Continent", and her people as "The Despised Race" by the racist European world, Blyden (1967:138) reasoned, had the effect of begetting "arrogance" on the part of the racist Europeans, and "servility or resentment" on the part of the Africans. The contempt shown by colonialist and racist Europe made no sense to what Blyden (1967:139) referred to as the "intelligent Negro". This is because, Blyden (ibid) reasoned, in the eyes of the

"intelligent Negro" Europeans, for having stolen and sold Africans, were far more contemptible than the Africans they were despising.

What was contemptible among the Europeans was their "passion for taking away the countries of others and dignifying the robbery as conquests" and their "systematic cruelty" which has been "shown for ages, in chaining, buying, and selling another race" (ibid). Based on the foregoing, Blyden (1967:140) argued that history, as read by what he referred to as the "thinking Negro", would not "diminish the vehemence of his protest against the injustice of being regarded by the European as belonging to a 'despised race', nor lessen the grounds of his desire to reciprocate the disparaging sentiment".

Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Blyden advocated the return to Africa of Africans enslaved in the Western world.

(b) *The Return-to-Africa Idea: An expression of the African Renaissance*

In 1878, Blyden (1967:132) advanced the view that diasporic Africans would always be regarded as a lowly people, unequal, socially and politically with the white people, for as long as they remained in the lands of slavery. He concluded, therefore, that for the Negro, "pure and simple, there is no country but Africa" (ibid). The Negro, Blyden (ibid) continued, "will never be understood, nor will he ever understand his European guide and teacher, as long as he remains in the countries of his exile". Blyden's (1967:125) observations led him to conclude that Negroes were "beginning to feel that only in Africa will they find the sphere of their true activity". He held the view that as long as Africans remained in the land of captivity, they would be hampered both mentally and physically (ibid). Remaining in America, the land of slavery, meant for the Negro, that he had to "surrender his race integrity; for he sees no chance of its preservation" (Blyden, 1967:126). Blyden (1967:150) held a conviction that remaining, for the Negro, "in a strange country under a foreign race", was not only politically stifling, but also spiritually suffocating. Freedom from such constraints would enable the Negro, not only to "arise and walk" but to act as an enabler to determining his destiny (ibid). The return to Africa, where the Negro will be engaged "in the true work of the race", will be for "his own elevation and the advantage of the rest of mankind" (Blyden, 1967:150 – 151). The African continent, Blyden (1967:146) strongly argued, belonged to the "exiled Negro […] by creation and inheritance". This being the case,

Blyden (ibid) further pointed out, every Negro had to embrace their "glorious heritage" that Africa represented. Included in the the Africans' "glorious heritage" which should serve as an inspiration for the African Renaissance, Blyden (1967:117) cited the heritage of ancient Egypt, a "sort of key to the universe – a symbol of the profoundest truths of science, of religion, and of all the past and future history of man" a land to which "also resorted the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome, to gaze upon its wonders and gather inspiration from its arts and sciences (ibid).

It will be seen, as we deal with other African Renaissance advocates such as Marcus Garvey, Pixleye KaIsaka Seme, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Nnamdi Azikiwe that the need to reclaim the ancient Egyptian as an African heritage, was common and central. Invoking Africans' great achievements and heritage, Blyden (1967:93) cautioned, was not to be merely for romantic or sentimental purposes. Blyden (ibid) advanced the view that Africans had to appreciate the fact that "[t]he time is past when we can be content with putting forth elaborate arguments to prove our equality with foreign races". Those who doubted that Africans' abilities to do well as other human beings were more likely to be convinced of their error by the exhibition, on Africans' part, of those qualities of energy and enterprise which will enable Africans to occupy the extensive field before them for their own advantage and the advantage of humanity […] "than by any mere abstract argument about the equality of races" (ibid). Blyden's (1967:92) argument was that the African Regeneration project stood a chance of succeeding, "[n]ot by imitating others, but by doing well our own part as they did theirs". The success of the African Renaissance, lay, for Blyden (1967:91) in appreciating what was African, the genius of the unappreciated ordinary African masses. If the Negro nation were to succeed in building an independent and strong nation, they would have to listen to the songs of their "unsophisticated brethren" in Africa, as they sang of their history, telling of their traditions, of the "wonderful and mysterious events of their tribal or national life, of the achievements of what we call their superstitions" (ibid). Negroes would have to "read the compositions, rude as we may think them, of the Mandingoes and the Veys. We shall in this way get back the strength of the race" (ibid). The Return-to-Africa idea was taken up and popularized by Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Having observed that "Negroes in this Western Hemisphere are descendants of those Africans who were enslaved and transported" there, suffered, bled and died, Garvey (2017:44) raised a rhetorical question that not only advocated

Negroes' return to their homeland, but also to go to Africa not just to resettle, but to fight for Africa's emancipation: "Should we not, therefore turn our eyes towards Africa, our ancestral home and free it from the thralldom of alien oppression and exploitation?" (ibid) Freeing Africa, for Garvey (2017:62), was in pursuit of the UNIA's slogan, "Africa for the Africans", a call to the "Negro peoples of the world [to] concentrate upon the object of building up for themselves a great nation in Africa". Echoing the thoughts of Blyden, Garvey (2017:49) observed that the "future of the Negro therefore, outside of Africa, spells ruin and disaster". This being the case, therefore, the task of the Negroes, Garvey (2017:48) argued, was that of "redeeming our Motherland Africa from the hands of alien exploiters and found there a government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth".

This Pan-Africanist expression and commitment on the part of Garvey meant that the Return-to-Africa-idea, was not merely to seek refuge in Africa, but a commitment to rebuilding the African continent, not only for the benefit of Africans at home, but also for those who remained in the diaspora. Regaining African dignity for Africans at home meant regaining dignity for all Africans, in Garvey (ibid)'s own words, "scattered all over the world". Appreciating the need, as expressed by Garvey for an African government that would stand up and protect the dignity of Africans "scattered all over the world". In echoing this vision Nkrumah (1970b:88), noted that the total liberation and the unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government had to be the primary objective of all Black revolutionaries throughout the world, an objective which, when achieved, would bring about the "fulfilment of the aspirations of Africans and people of African descent everywhere" (ibid). Blyden's, Garvey's and Nkrumah's arguments underlined the link between Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. In advocating the Return-to-Africa-idea, Garvey was not oblivious to the fact that there were complexities associated with and involved in this idea. Garvey was aware, as he (Garvey, 2017:49) that for many years that racist "white propagandists" had been producing vast amounts of literature to advance the idea that "Africa is a despised place, inhabited by savages, and cannibals, where no civilized human being should go, especially black civilized human beings". Confronting this propaganda head-on, Garvey (2017:65) pointed out that there was "absolutely no difference between the native African and the American and West Indian Negroes, in that we are descendants

from one common stock". Be that as it may, Garvey (ibid) was aware that the white racists propaganda had been successful with some Negroes who, as a result of such propaganda, believed that they were superior over their fellow Africans who were residing in Africa. Addressing such Negroes, who had a "haughty superiority over the fellows of his own race", which was a "tremendous mistake", Garvey (ibid). made it clear to such people that they had better remain in the Western world and "not attempt to be in any way interested in the higher development of Africa". That was because, Garvey (ibid) argued further, the "Negro has had enough of the vaunted practice of race superiority as inflicted upon by others; therefore he is not prepared to tolerate a similar assumption on the part of his own people". Having made the point that Blyden pioneered the Return-to-Africa idea that was taken up and advanced by Garvey and Nkrumah, we also make the point that not only did Blyden pioneer and advance the return of Africans in the diaspora to their African home, but also pioneered and advanced the idea of reclaiming African languages for the African Regeneration project.

(c) *The reclamation of African languages for the African Renaissance project*

Blyden (1967:68) observed that it was unfortunate that when English and other European languages came into contact with Africans, they were associated with plunder and "devoid of any connection with spiritual things". What the above means is that just as Blyden regarded Europeans as unsuitable agents in spreading Christianity in Africa, he also saw European languages in this light. He shared the sentiments expressed by the Reverend James Johnson (ibid) that just "as the African Church failed once in North Africa in days gone by, so it will fail again, unless we read the Bible n our own native tongue". When fellow Christians appreciated the need to recognise African languages as an indispensable vehicle to take Christianity forward, Blyden (ibid) celebrated the "indigenous tongues will be far more effective instruments of conveying to the native mind the truths of the Gospel than any European language". It will be seen, later, that Blyden's view that African languages were central in the task of his African Regeneration, would later be echoed by prominent African scholars and African Renaissance advocates such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. For now we examine Seme's key issues in the African Renaissance project.

2.6.2 Seme's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just as it was the case with Blyden, there are a number of issues that Seme sought to address through his African Renaissance. Among those were the following, which, as was the case with Blyden, overlapped: Regeneration of Africa; Reclamation of Ancient Egyptian History, Moral Regeneration, Awakened Race-Consciousness. We first examine Seme's meaning of the "regeneration of Africa"

(a) *"Regeneration of Africa"*

By "regeneration" Seme meant "entrance into a new life, embracing the diverse phases of a higher, complex existence" (in Obeng, 1997:140). The "regeneration of Africa" meant that a new and unique civilisation was soon to be added to the world. He made this assertion with the conviction that the African was not a proletarian in the world of science and art. He argued that Africans had precious creations of their own of ivory, copper, gold and weapons of superior workmanship. While on one hand Seme argued that Africa should not be compared to Europe or any other continent for that matter – not, according to Seme from fear that such comparison might bring humiliation to Africa – simultaneously, Seme on the other hand, invoked Ancient Egypt's civilisation.

(b) *Seme on ancient Egypt: An ancient civilisation equal to none*

Ancient Egypt, Seme (in Obeng, 1997:137) pointed out, would "reduce to insignificance the boasted monuments of other nations". Ancient Egypt's pyramids were "structures to which the world presents nothing comparable" (ibid). In invoking ancient Egypt's civilisation, Seme was clearly stating that "[a]ll the glory of Egypt belongs to Africa and her people" (ibid). If Seme was moderate and implicit in implying that ancient Egypt's civilisation was superior comparable to others', Garvey was militant and explicit in doing the same. Celebrating "the day when Egypt, Ethiopia and Timbuktu towered in their civilizations, towered above Europe, towered over Asia", Garvey (2017:71) went on to point out that "[w]hen Europe was inhabited by a race of cannibals, a race of savages, naked men, heathens and pagans, Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men". These Africans, Garvey (ibid) further pointed out, "were masters in art, science and literature […] were cultured […] refined […] were like the gods". Not only did Garvey celebrate the greatness of Africa, but also turned the tables on Europe, by imposing labels – "cannibals", "savages", "heathens" and "pagans" – which had been associated, by colonialist Europens, exclusively with the colonised. Seme (in Obeng, 1997:140) argued that the "most essential

departure of this new civilization is that it shall be thoroughly spiritual and humanistic – indeed a regeneration moral and eternal".

(c) *Moral regeneration: An integral part of the African Renaissance*

In line with Seme's moral regeneration, Khoza (1999:279) argues that the African Renaissance would be meaningless if it were not "characterised by a surge of learning and value reorientation". What this means is that, as Khoza (287 – 288) points out, the "essence and consequence" of the African Renaissance should be

- an African who is a profoundly moral being
- an African who is renowned for integrity
- Africans who, when they look in the mirror, see the hand of God.

The significance of "value reorientation" in the African Renaissance project is informed by a quest to bring about an African, in her/his individual and institutional manifestations, "as not merely a product of his [or her] environment but as one who creates the environment and shapes events" (Khoza, 1999:280). For this to happen, for those who advocate the African Renaissance project, there must be

- a full, unconditional admission and acceptance that there is a problem
- a clear understanding of the problem and its causes
- a desire to be rid of the problem, and
- an unwavering will to do something about the problem (Khoza, 1999:280 – 281)

Unless the advocates of the African Renaissance not only take the above into serious consideration, and apply them, Khoza (1999:281) warns that they will "stand accused of indulging [themselves] in intellectual romantic idealism". An appreciation of the above factors, combined with the appreciation of "value reorientation", would lead to a further appreciation that the "African renaissance is a concept that insists that technical and economic efficiency and processes are not ends in themselves but are only important for the goals they seek to achieve", the goal in the case of the African Renaissance, among others, being the "development and prosperity of Africa as a geo-economic space" (Khoza, 1999:280).

For Seme, the basic factor which should assist the regeneration was "awakened race-consciousness" (in Obeng, 1997:140).

(d) *"Awakened race-consciousness"*

Amongst many issues, "awakened race-consciousness" meant that Africans would have to recognise that ethnic consciousness should not be elevated above African self-consciousness, a necessary basis for African unity, the latter a necessity for the struggle for the African liberation struggle. The sense of "awakened race-consciousness", it must be noted, cannot be divorced from Seme's identification with, and commitment to the ideology of Pan-Africanism (Ngqulunga, 2017:43; Kumalo, 2015:202). To achieve the aim of Black or African unity, Seme saw the need and to, and led the initiative to form a political movement. This movement was to be the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), established on January 8, 1912, and later renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923 (Ngqulunga, 2017:2; 43; 48). In recognition of this fact, Ngqulunga (2017:6) points out that the "important point is that African nationalism, and its pan-African variant, has been a golden thread throughout the ANC's century of existence. It is a crucial aspect of Seme's political legacy". Linked to Ngqulunga's observation above, it is critical to note that later, Mbeki did not only associate the African Renaissance with the liberation struggle and Pan-Africanism in general, but particularly associated both the African Renaissance project and Pan-Africanism with his liberation movement-turned-political party, the ANC. Growing up in the ANC, Mbeki (1998:136) notes that as members of the ANC, "we have been exposed to the inspiring perspective of African unity and solidarity and the renewal of our Continent". It can be safely assumed that Mbeki's observation was informed by his consciousness that the formation of the ANC was inspired by Pixley ka Isaka Seme, the advocate of the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism whose objective was that the ANC would be a vehicle towards the achievement of the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism. Now we turn to Azikiwe.

2.6.3 Azikiwe's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just like Blyden and Seme, there are a number of issues that Azikiwe sought to address through his African Renaissance, among which were the following, which also overlapped: Afrocentric Re-education Against Mis-education for Mental Emancipation; Political and Economic Liberation

In his book, *Renascent Africa*, the Pan-Africanist and African Renaissance advocate, Nnamdi Azikiwe (1968:135) argued that as a result of colonial education Africans had been "mis-educated". As a consequence of mis-education Africans had become mentally enslaves. Since

Africans were mentally enslaved, Africans "need mental emancipation so as to be re-educated to the real needs of Renascent Africa" (Azikiwe, 1968:135)

(a) *Afrocentric re-education against mis-education for mental emancipation*

Reminiscent of Blyden's observation before him, Azikiwe (1968:134) pointed out that historically, colonialists had educated Africans "for life in a social order which is stagnant and unprogressive". Such mis-education "made Africans to cultivate false values which are based on the veneer of a decadent civilization" (ibid). Africans' mis-education, Azikiwe (ibid) argued was anachronistic, forcing Africans to live in the past, reducing them to be mere imitators, and preventing them from cultivating moral courage, which is the basis of dynamic leadership (ibid). Azikiwe (ibid) further pointed out that colonialists' education made Africans to "cling to artificialities and superficialities", making them to "chase the rainbow of Occidentalism and allow its rays to strangulate them for want of constructive leadership". Notwithstanding the fact that Azikiwe, himself, had studied in the USA, he was against the sending of African students to Western countries' higher institutions of learning arguing that such institutions were mirrors which reflected their particular societal idiosyncrasies (Azikiwe, 1968:140). Azikiwe (ibid) went on to point out that an African graduate emerging from Western universities, "unless he has developed his individuality, is nothing short of a megaphone, yea, a carbon copy of these societies. Hence […] miseducated". Azikiwe (ibid) lamented the fact that "Black Africa has no university", that "Black Africa has no intellectual centre where the raw materials of African humanity may be re-shaped into leaders in all the fields of human endeavor". With Africans' "vaunted wealth in things material, Africans are bankrupts beside the other races, in things intellectual" (ibid). Azikiwe's observation that Black Africa had no university may give the false impression that he was not aware that there were universities in his time dedicated to Black people or Africans. But that would be a misreading of Azikiwe. Azikiwe was aware that such universities were existent in Africa. Azikiwe's (1968:144) concern was that "throughout the continent of Africa there is not an indigenous university sustained through African initiative". The issue for Azikiwe was that universities in Africa were foreigners' initiatives, not for the development, but for the underdevelopment of Africans. It was as a consequence of this state of affairs that Azikiwe came to the realisation that "most of the problems of Africa to-day are due to the intellectual poverty of Africans" (ibid). Azikiwe's observations in 1937 reveal his recognition that there was a difference between "a university in Africa" and an "African university", the former being one merely physically

located in Africa, but serving foreign interests as Azikiwe has eloquently observed above, and the latter, one that should identify itself with African interests. If Africans had their universities, maintained at their expense, "they could have had their curricula filled with the important divisions of knowledge which would have hastened their intellectual emancipation, and would have enabled them to make scientific researchers" The foregoing observation indicates that already, in 1937, Azikiwe appreciated the importance of the curriculum in education, that it can make or break a student. Also, at that time Azikiwe appreciated the importance of intellectual and mental emancipation. Mental emancipation meant, for Azikiwe (1968:9) teaching Africans that they were inferior to no one, and that they were equal to all other members of the human race. Azikiwe (ibid) saw education, especially the teaching of history, as an essential instrument in Africans' mental liberation. Renascent Africans had to be taught that Africans had "made definite contributions to history", and these contributions included the fact that "iron was discovered by Africans", and that Africans were the first, in the history of humankind to appreciate monotheism – the Oneness of the Supreme Being (Azikiwe, 1968:9 – 10). The recognition that the liberation struggle and the African Renaissance were two sides of the same coin was also articulated by Azikiwe (1968:7;9) who advocated that the "New Africa" would be meaningless without self-determination. Such self-determination had to be *both* political and economic.

(b) *Political independence and economic liberation: Essential ingredients of the African Renaissance*

Writing about the 1960s "independence explosion", Wallbank (1964:112) notes that inseparable from this political transformation has been the revolution in New Africa's ideology generally referred to as the African Renaissance. This re-awakening, Wallbank (ibid) further notes has two facets, namely the rediscovery of the African past and, secondly, the affirmation of what what is believed to be the Negroes' unique qualities and new proud identity. Just as Azikiwe (1968:312 – 313) appreciated the need for the Renascent African to be "politically resurgent", he also emphasised the need for the Renascent African to be "economically deterministic". Azikiwe argued that the Renascent African – the agent and advocate of the African Renaissance – could not create a new social order without an economic foundation. Without explicitly condemning capitalism, Azikiwe (1968:9) argued that "[n]o longer must wealth be concentrated in the hands of the few. No longer must the profit motive guide and control the aims in [the] life of the African". In

explicit terms, for Azikiwe there was no possibility of an African Renaissance without an economic liberation for Africans. Azikiwe (1968:131) held the view that "*African society is essentially Socialistic*". In a footnote Azikiwe (ibid) pointed out that Africa was, in fact, "communalistic". As will be seen later, these issues – the meaninglessness of political independence without economic independence, and African socialism – were causes for heated debates among African philosophers such as Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and Leopold Senghor. True to his commitment to Pan-Africanism, Azikiwe (1968:9) articulated the view that in order for Africans to be able to accomplish the task of the African Renaissance, there was a need to build Pan-African consciousness above ethnic consciousness.

(c) *Pan-African consciousness above ethnic consciousness: A pre-requisite for the African Renaissance*

Azikiwe (1968:9) argued that a Renascent African had to be imbued with a sense of African consciousness, not an ethnic one. He (ibid) argued that tribal "appellations cause tribal idiosyncrasies" which "lead ultimately to vanity and superciliousness and disharmony". He (ibid) argued that all Africans – regardless of their ethnicities – were one. The theme of African consciousness was a thread in the tradition of the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism. In South Africa, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, in his pursuit of the African Renaissance, emphasised the theme of African Consciousness. We now turn to Lembede and his approach to the African Renaissance.

2.6.4 Lembede's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just like Blyden, Seme, Azikiwe, before him, Lembede had a number of issues that he sought to address through his African Renaissance, among which were the following, which also overlapped: African Nationalism; African Leadership; African Socialism. Lembede's African Renaissance was linked to African Nationalism, a liberatory creed which promoted the unity of African ethnic groups into one African nation (Lembede, 2015:139).

(a) *African nationalism: A basis for the African Renaissance*

African Nationalism served as an ideological guide of the ANC, and its youth wing, the ANC Youth League, of which Lembede was the president (Lembede, 2015:139; 147). The African Renaissance entailed for Lembede (ibid), the consciousness that "Africa is a blackman's country" (Lembede, 2015:139). This emphasis was an echo of the Pan-

Africanist movement's call, "Africa for the Africans". Lembede (ibid) made it clear that "Africans are the natives of Africa and they have inhabited Africa, their Motherland, from times immemorial; Africa belongs to them." Linked to the reclamation of Africans' birthright was the call for African Unity. In arguing that Africans needed to have a consciousness that "Africans are one", Lembede (2015:139) argued that out of the heterogeneous ethnic groups, there had to emerge a homogeneous African nation based on African Nationalism. The exercise of building a homogeneous African nation from heterogeneous ethnic groups was called a "tribal synthesis" (Lembede, 2015:142). Such an exercise was an African Renaissance act because, as Lembede (ibid) argued, it was an exercise that preceded the advent of Europeans in South Africa. Lembede (ibid) cited the king of amaZulu, Shaka, as a "good example of an African who was inspired by the flaming passion to unify the whole of black Africa, through the instrumentality of the spear". Such nationalism, Lembede (2015:139) argued was meaningless outside being linked to a political objective, that is, without joining a liberation movement, in this case, the ANC. Recognition of the importance of African Unity meant, simultaneously, that the leadership of African people had to be indigenously African.

(b) *African leadership for the African Renaissance*

Lembede (2015:139) held a strong view that the "Leader of the Africans will come out of their own loins", pointing out that no foreigner could ever be a true and genuine leader of the African people because no foreigner could ever truly and genuinely interpret the African spirit which is unique and peculiar to Africans only (ibid). For the quality of leadership needed, Lembede (2015:140) urged Africans to draw inspiration from their own traditional leaders, namely Moshoeshoe, Makanda (spelt "Makana" in his book), Hintsa, Khama, and Mzilikazi. All these endeavours were geared towards the objective of National Freedom which Lembede (ibid) called a "divine destiny of the African people". Freedom, Lembede (2015:141) argued, was an "indispensable condition for all progress and development". It would only be with the regaining of African freedom that Africans would be able to fully exploit and bring to fruition their "divine talent", which would enable them to "contribute something new towards the general welfare and prosperity of Mankind" (ibid). What this points to is that as early as 1946, Lembede perceived the African liberation struggle, the African Renaissance and the prosperity of Humankind as inextricably intertwined. National Freedom was linked to "national progress or development" which, Lembede (ibid) emphasised, must not be "lop-sided or one-sided progress". National progress or

advancement should embrace all aspects of life, namely, the social, educational, cultural, moral, political and economical. What this meant was that after the regaining of Africans' national freedom, Africans had to bring about a "socialistic" order (ibid).

(c) *African socialism for the African Renaissance*

Socialism was part of the African Renaissance or rebirth project according to Lembede (2015:130) because "the fundamental structure of Bantu society is socialistic". On what basis, though, does Lembede make such a claim? In substantiating his argument, Lembede (ibid) pointed out that in traditional Africa there was no individual land ownership – land belonged to the entire community, and, "nominally to the King or Chief. Socialism is then our valuable legacy from our ancestors. Our task is to develop this socialism by the infusion of new and modern socialistic ideas." Clearly passionate about socialism, and convinced that it is Africans' "valuable legacy from our ancestors, later, Lembede (2015:141) reiterating this point, further noted that "Africans are naturally socialistic as illustrated in their social practices and customs. The achievement of national liberation will therefore herald or usher in a new era of African socialism."

We now turn to Diop.

2.6.5 Diop's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just like Blyden, Seme, Azikiwe, Lembede before him, Diop had a number of issues that he sought to address through his African Renaissance, among which were the following, which also overlapped: African Consciousnes; Reclamation of ancient Egypt; African Cultural Unity and Centralisation of African Languages

Linking the African Renaissance project to the struggle for national independence, for Diop (1996:47), the "primary objective is to create awareness among all Africans about Black Africa". In his essay, "Towards An African Political Ideology", Diop (1996:65 – 67) revisited the issue of the importance of "awareness in the struggle", noting that "serving a country demands more than mere goodwill", emphasising that "no one can build a country on judgements based on ignorance", arguing, therefore, that it was essential for Africans to "endeavour to know Africa in all respects in order to be able to serve her".

(a) *African Consciousness for the African Renaissance*

Recognising the alienation of Africans from themselves, the task of the African Renaissance project was to create a space making it possible for Africans to "rediscover the continuity of his history and the stability of his culture as well as the means of adapting this culture to modern demands", thus enabling Africans to "regain self-confidence and inner fulfilment – as different from self-complacency – attitudes without which no human effort can be effective" (Diop, 1996:50). The recovery of history is essential in the African Renaissance project because, as Diop (1996:119) noted, the "role of History in the life of a people is vital". This was so for Diop (1996:114) because by "rediscovering our past" Africans would be "contributing to the recreation of the historical consciousness without which no great nation can be built". In addressing the rediscovery of African history, Diop (1996:110) identified the reclamation of ancient Egyptian civilisation as a priority.

(b) *Reclaiming ancient Egypt for the African Renaissance*

There were a number of reasons for doing this. The first was that attempts had been made to whiten ancient Egyptian civilisation by attributing it to Europe – Diop's (1996:110) research had established that "ancient Egyptian Pharaonic civilisation was a black civilisation". The reclamation of ancient Egyptian civilisation served not only to restore ancient Egypt to Africa, but also acknowledges Africans as the initiators of science, architecture, philosophy, religion, literature, the social sciences and the arts (Diop, 1996:111). In the reclamation of ancient Egypt as part of Africa's heritage, (Diop, 1974:xiv) argued that the "history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt". Together with the rediscovery of African history, Diop (1989:1) advocated the discovery of Africans' "profound cultural unity still alive beneath the deceptive appearance of cultural heterogeneity".

(c) *Reclamation of African cultural unity for the African Renaissance*

In underlining the existence of African cultural unity, Diop's (1989:1) objective was to demonstrate the "cultural traits common to Africans, from family life as a nation, touching on the ideological superstructures, the successes and failures and technical regressions". Having compared both the African and Aryan families, Diop (1989:2) could establish that matriarchy was a "common denominator in African culture". His hope was that his research would "contribute to a strengthening of the feelings of goodwill which have always united

Africans from one end of the continent to the other and thus show our organic cultural unity" (Diop, 1989:2). While the above objectives were important in Africa's struggle for self-discovery, Diop (1996:35) in his essay, "When Can We Talk Of An African Renaissance?", points out that "the development of our indigenous languages is the prerequisite for a real African renaissance".

(d) *Development of African languages as a pre-requisite for a real African Renaissance*

Responding to an expressed view that "European languages are more widely spoken in Africa than indigenous languages", Diop (1996:37) dismissed such a claim as "false". The reality, Diop (ibid) argued, was that European languages were spoken in large towns "by a handful of intellectuals", such "giving the impression that they are largely spoken". The fact, Diop (ibid) argued was that the "entire masses" of the African people spoke their mother tongues. To the charge that the multiplicity of African languages stood as "a serious impediment to the establishment of an indigenous culture", Diop (ibid) pointed out that in fact, "among the well over six hundred languages being cited, there are just four which are major languages, the others being merely variants spoken by a small group". The four languages, Diop (ibid) argued, were capable of being developed to become instruments for the expression of the entire African thought, an exercise that would only require will-power, firmness and determination on the part of Africans to liberate themselves intellectually and morally. As Diop (ibid) saw it, the required will-power, firmness and determination was lacking on the part of Africans to liberate themselves intellectually and morally. The insistence on being content with European languages, Diop (ibid) argued was informed by convenience, laziness or "lack [of] will-power or decisiveness to change the situation". Contentment with European languages, Diop (ibid) further argued, "could also be out of a morbid taste for intellectual and moral servility and certainly not out of any practical calculation". The essentiality of African languages, Diop (1996:35) argued, was informed by the fact that a person learnt better in one's language because "there is incontrovertible agreement between the genius of a language and the mentality of its speakers". Diop's emphasis on the prerequisiteness of African languages for the African Renaissance was taken up by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, publishing a number of books dedicated to this argument. The African Renaissance being an exercise of reclamation, African languages are important not merely because like all languages, they are instruments of communication, but also because, as wa Thiong'o (1986:13; 15) points out, they are "a carrier of culture" and "the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history". Taking into cognisance that

languages are the memory banks of cultures, the imposition of European languages on Africans sought to destroy Africans' own memory, replacing it with the memory of Europe (wa Thiong'o, 2009:15). It was, as wa Thiong'o (2009:4) observes, that wherever they went, Europeans planted their own memories on whomever they got in touch with. wa Thiong'o (1986:5), having noted that there were African writers who "took it as axiomatic that the renaissance of African cultures lay in the languages of Europe", proceeded to raise a rhetorical question?: "What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?" (wa Thiong'o, 1986:26) The foregoing question arose out of wa Thiong'o's (1986:26 – 27) declared conviction that literature written by Africans in European languages "is not African literature" but "a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature, that is, the literature written by Africans in European languages". In wa Thiong'o's (1986:27) view, "African literature can only be written in African languages". Just as much as wa Thiong'o echoes Diop in his call for the centralisation of African languages in the African Renaissance project, he also echoes Diop in dismissing as non-African, literature written by Africans in European languages. Ahead of wa Thiong'o, Diop (1996:34) had raised a rhetorical question that finds an echo in wa Thiong'o' rhetorical question above: "Without in any way underestimating the contributions by those African writers who use foreign languages, does one have the right to consider their writings as forming the basis of an African culture? Even a superficial scrutiny leads us to answer in the negative." Just as wa Thiong'o rejected as non-African, literature written by Africans in European languages, Diop (ibid), ahead of wa Thiong'o, did the same: "We do, indeed, believe that every literary work necessarily belongs to the language in which it is written: works written by Africans in foreign languages thus belongs first and foremost to those foreign literatures and cannot justifiably be considered as monuments of an African literature." In wa Thiong'o's (1986:xii) favour, it must be said that his criticism, as he himself observes, does not carry "a holier-than-thou attitude or tone". He is writing about himself as he does about other African writers who write in European languages. The difference between himself and other African writers, as wa Thiong'o (1986:xiv) declares in his book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics Of Language In African Literature*, is that this text was his "farewell to English as a vehicle" for any of his writings. Henceforth, his vehicle would be Gikũyũ and Kiswahili "all the way" (ibid). Having pointed out that the centering of African languages is essential in the accomplishment of the African Renaissance, wa Thiong'o (2009:67) also points out that the "success of Africa's

renaissance depends on its commitment and ability to remember itself, guided by the great re-membering vision of Pan-Africanism".

We now turn to Nkrumah's approach to the African Renaissance.

2.6.6 Nkrumah's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just like Blyden, Seme, Azikiwe, Lembede, Diop before him, Nkrumah had a number of issues that he sought to address through his African Renaissance, among which were the following, which also overlapped: African-centered (Afrocentric) Education; Africa for the Africans; African Personality. On the basis of available evidence in literature, Nkrumah (1970a:63) was the second, after Diop, to use the words "African renaissance". Just as Diop had placed great emphasis on the importance of history, Nkrumah (ibid) shared Diop's vision in observing that "[i]n the new African renaissance, we place great emphasis on the presentation of history". An enabler in this vision was to be African-centred or Afrocentric education.

(a) *African-centred (Afrocentric) education for the African Renaissance*

Nkrumah (ibid) held the conviction that "African history can come to guide and direct African action. African history can thus become a pointer at the ideology which should guide and direct African reconstruction". But for this African reconstruction, in other words, for the African Renaissance to be accomplished, there was a need, in Nkrumah's view (ibid), to displace the Eurocentric version of African history, and to replace it with an African-centred (Afrocentric) version. Nkrumah argued that African history needed to be written as the history of African society, not as the story of European adventurers. Nkrumah appreciated and distinguished between, on the one hand, African Studies that were Eurocentric, or in his own words, "European centred", and, on the other hand, African Studies that were Afrocentric, or in his own words "African-centred" (Nkrumah in Obeng, 1997:133 – 136). In the case of the former, "experts in African Studies […] began to give accounts of African society which were used to justify colonialism as a duty of civilization" (Nkrumah in Obeng, 1997:133). Nkrumah (in Obeng, 1997:136) pointed out that if Africans had lost touch with what their "forefathers" discovered and knew, this was due to the system of education they were introduced to by Europeans, a system of education which prepared Africans role to Europe and things European, an education system directed at estranging Africans from their own cultures in order the more effectively to serve a new and alien interest. African-centred education should be aimed, in the service of the African Renaissance, at doing away with what European-centred education sought and continue

seeking to do, that is, relegating Africans (ibid). Nkrumah (ibid) African Studies should help African in rediscovering and revitalizing their cultural and spiritual heritage and values, and equip Africans with the resources of a personality and force strong enough to meet the intensities of the African presence and situation (ibid). That this rediscovery and revitalisation of the Africans' spiritual heritage, that this African Renaissance, through education, was not just meant for the Africans, but was meant to bring about a quest for a true humanity, comes out clearly in Nkrumah's (ibid) observation that education should be able to understand correctly the strains and stresses to which Africa is subjected, fully appreciate the changes taking place, and enable Africans to "contribute fully in a truly African spirit for the benefit of all, and for the peace and progress of the world" (ibid). African-centred education had to play a role, therefore, in Nkrumah's (1970a:77)'s view, in the African Renaissance for the "restitution of Africa's humanist and egalitarian principles of society [which] requires socialism". Just as much as Nkrumah emphasised the need for Afrocentric education, he also placed great emphasis on the need for centering African languages in African education and public discourse.

(b) *Centering African languages in African education and public discourse*

While Nkrumah (1973b:102) appreciated the fact that the existence of a multiplicity of African languages and dialects posed on of the "most obvious difficulties" facing Africans in communication, he was unsettled by the realization that Africans conducted discourses in languages not of their own. While Nkrumah (1973b:102 – 103) welcomed the English language as "not only providing a common medium for exchange between" Africans, but also for opening the door to Africans to "all the heritage of the world", Nkrumah, at the same time saw the need for Africans to "consider seriously the problem of the language in Africa". At the time such was the influence of Europe in African affairs that far more university students in Ghana studied Latin and Greek rather than African languages (Nkrumah, 1973b:103). Nkrumah (ibid) argued, therefore, that an "essential of independence is that emphasis must be laid on studying the living languages of Africa". Such an approach, Nkrumah (ibid) believed, will bring about simpler methods by which "those in one part of Africa may learn the languages of those in all other parts". Not only would the studying of Africans one another's language enable communication, but would also promote Pan-Africanism. If Africans spoke their own African languages when discussing issues of importance, such would be an act of self-respect, and would give

meaning to Pan-Africanism's call "Africa for the Africans" in the pursuit of the African Renaissance.

(c) *"Africa for the Africans" and the African Renaissance*

For contextual purposes, we recall at this point that Nkrumah (1971:45) had publicly declared that of all the literature that he had studied, "the book that did more than any other" to fire his enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* published in 1923. Nkrumah (ibid) went on to observe that "Garvey, with his philosophy of 'Africa for the Africans' and his 'Back to Africa' movement, did much to inspire the Negroes of America in the 1920's". In the same autobiography in which Nkrumah made the foregoing observation, Nkrumah (1971:184) sought to distinguish between his concept of "Africa for the Africans" from "the kind of philosophy that Marcus Garvey preached". What was the difference? An answer to this question can be found where Nkrumah (1971:53) distinguishes not only DuBois' first four Pan-African Congresses from DuBois' fifth Pan-African Congress, but also makes a comparison between, on the one hand, the first four Pan-African Congresses and, on the other hand, "Garveyism". Having noted that like "Garveyism, the first four conferences were not born of indigenous African consciousness", Nkrumah (1971:53 – 54) further notes that "Garvey's ideology was concerned with *black* nationalism as opposed to *African* nationalism".

In arguing that Garveyism was not born of (a) "indigenous African consciousness", and (b) that it was concerned with *black* nationalism as opposed to *African* nationalism", Nkrumah misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented Garvey. We begin with Garvey's elevation of "African consciousness". In Garvey's (2017:62) book, the phrase "Africa for the Africans" meant that "the Negro peoples of the world should concentrate upon the object of building themselves a great nation in Africa". Garvey's foregoing statement reveals that in his call for "Africa for the Africans", he referred to the "Negro peoples of the world" as part of "a great nation in Africa" (ibid). Garvey (2017:53) told the Negroes in the West that the "only wise thing for us as ambitious Negroes to do is to organize the world over, and build up for the race a mighty nation of our own in Africa". If the foregoing statements are not sufficient in pointing out that Garvey promoted African consciousness, the following observation by Garvey (2017:65) should make this explicit: "Everybody knows that there is absolutely no difference between the native African and the American and West Indian Negroes, in that we are descendants from one common family stock."

An examination of Garvey's writings reveals that Garvey, unlike Nkrumah (1971:54), did not distinguish between "Black" nationalism and "African" nationalism. As if to make sure that by "black", Garvey meant "African", and by "African" meant "black" and that Negroes in the UNIA Negroes identified themselves with Africa and regarded themselves as Africans, Garvey (2017:66) pointed out that the "masses of Negroes in America, the West Indies, South and Central America are in sympathetic accord with the aspirations of the native Africans. We desire to help them build up Africa as a Negro Empire, where every black man, whether he was born in Africa or in the Western world, will have the opportunity to develop on his own lines under the protection of the most favorable democratic institutions." Garvey's organisation, the UNIA was "making this great fight for the race's emancipation everywhere and the founding of a great African government" (Garvey, 2017:61). The commitment to a "great African government" was a commitment to, in Garvey's (2017:64) words, an "African nationality".

All the above statements made by Garvey point out to one issue, that being that to Garvey African consciousness, and Black Nationalism and African Nationalism were one and the same thing. Except for Nkrumah's declaration distancing himself from Garvey's concept of "Africa for the Africans", we cannot find a statement that supports this declaration. To the contrary, there is much that indicates sameness. To illustrate this point, we will examine two statements by Garvey and Nkrumah, which reflect sameness, as far as the slogan "Africa for the Africans" is concerned. Nkrumah (1973b:220) emphasised that the phrase "Africa for the Africans" should be interpreted in the light of his declaration that he did not believe in racialism and colonialism. The concept "Africa for Africans" did not mean that other races were excluded from it (ibid). Rather, "Africa for Africans" meant that "Africans, who naturally are in the majority in Africa, shall and must govern themselves in their own countries. The fight is for the future of humanity". There is no difference between what Nkrumah articulated and what was expressed by Garvey. Ahead of Nkrumah, Garvey (2017:67) observed that the "time has really come for the Asiatic to govern themselves in Asia, as the Europeans are in Europe and the Western world, so also is it wise for the Africans to govern themselves at home, and thereby bring peace and satisfaction to the entire human family" (2017:67). While both Garvey and Nkrumah called for "Africa for the Africans" both ensured that their call was not about advocating hatred for other people. Both of them – Garvey and Nkrumah – clarified that, as Nkrumah (1973b:220) noted, the "fight is for the future of humanity", and as Garvey (2017:67) explained, his struggle's

objective was to "bring peace and satisfaction to the entire human family". Both Garvey and Nkrumah, in calling for "Africa for the Africans" were dedicated to a quest for a true humanity. Aware of the charges against him that he promoted hatred for whites, Garvey (2017:11 – 12) went on record to set the record straight, that he was not anti-white, but pro-black and for the human race: "But the perpetuation of crime through revenge and retaliation will not save the human race […] I am not opposed to the white race as charged by my enemies. I have no time to hate anyone. All my time is devoted to the up-building and development of the Negro race." Another concept that gave meaning to Nkrumah's African Renaissance was the notion he referred to as the "African Personality".

(d) *The "African personality" in the context of the African Renaissance*

The "restitution of Africa's humanist […] principles" was at the centre of what Nkrumah called the "African personality" which, in turn, was central to the African Renaissance project, as articulated by Nkrumah (1973b:xi – xii; 128; 212 – 213). Nkrumah (1973b:xi) held a strong view that the "greatest contribution that Africa can make to the peace of the world is to avoid the dangers inherent in disunity, by creating a political union which will by its success, stand as an example to a divided world. A union of African states will project more effectively the African personality." Reference to Africa's contribution to world peace and the creation of a "union of African states", gives a clear indication of Nkrumah's vision about Africa's role in world affairs, and the essentiality of Pan-Africanism, expressed in the creation of "a union of African states" in that exercise. In an unambiguous statement, Nkrumah (1973b:98) made it clear that "[o]ur aim is to work with others to achieve an African personality in international affairs". Anticipating the regaining of independence by African countries, Nkrumah (1973b:107) saw the need for Africans to create their "own African personality and identity" as the "only way in which we can show the world that we are masters of our own destiny". In order to concretise the African personality idea, Nkrumah, in 1958, hosted a Conference of Independent African States in Accra, Ghana, aimed at discussing African problems and taking the first steps towards developing "an African contribution to international peace and goodwill" (Nkrumah, 1973b:125). A distinct African voice was necessary because, in Nkrumah's (ibid) view, for "too long" in Africa's history, "Africa has spoken through the voices of others". Through the African Personality, henceforth, Africa would, "through the voices of Africa's own sons" make an impact in international affairs (Nkrumah, 1973b:125; 128). The concept of African personality constituted part of the African Renaissance project because, as

Nkrumah (1973b:212) pointed, out "foreign domination in Africa effectively disintegrated the personality of the African people". This was because during colonial rule "colonialism imposed on the minds of Africans the idea that their own kith and kin in other parts of Africa were aliens and had little, if anything, in common with Africans elsewhere" (Nkrumah, 1973b:212). Nkrumah (1973b:212 – 213) further pointed out that it was in the in the interests of the colonial and settler rulers to perpetuate the subjection of Africans, by pursuing a policy not only of "divide and rule", but also of artificial territorial division of Africa. Colonialism played upon Africans "tribalistic instincts" and "sowed seeds of dissension in order to promote disunity among" Africans (Nkrumah, 1973b:213). The African Personality was an expression of the African Renaissance project because it promised, as Nkrumah (ibid) noted, not only the destruction of the colonialists' disintegration of the personality of the African people, but its re-integration into the lives of the African people. When independent African states gathered at the Conference of Independent African States, Nkrumah (ibid) saw the realisation of the African Personality project as an imminent reality, deserving to be celebrated. In an observation which clearly showed his conviction that the African Renaissance, the African Personality and Pan-Africanism were inseparable, noted with "great pride and happiness" how "resurgent Africa" was witnessing the process of re-"integration of the African personality", and forging "closer and stronger bonds of unity" which were bound to bring Africans to the ultimate goal of attaining "a union of African States and Republics" which, to his mind, was the only solution to the problems that faced Africans. A union of African states, or an African political union was key and central to the African Renaissance or "resurgent Africa", because in the absence of such a political union of African states, a "loose confederation of economic co-operation is deceptively time-delaying" (Nkrumah, 1973b:213;253). Nkrumah's (1973b:253) envisaged African political union entailed a common foreign and defence policy, and a rapid social, economic and industrial developments. As far as Nkrumah (ibid) was concerned, it was "only a political union that [could] ensure a uniformity in our foreign policy, projecting the African personality and presenting Africa as a force important enough to be reckoned with". Without an African political union, Nkrumah (ibid) feared that individual African states would be reduced to "tiny states" who have neither resources nor the personnel to provide for their own defence or ability to conduct their own foreign policy. Tiny independent African states without resources, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, could never be economically independent. But just as Nkrumah was a passionate and enthusiastic advocate of a united states of Africa,

there were forces who were enthusiastically, and passionately, opposed to the idea of African unity (Nkrumah, 1973b:xi). As Nkrumah (ibid) observed, the critics pointed to the "wide differences in culture, language and ideas in various parts of Africa". But, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, while this was true, the "essential fact" remained, that Africans were one, and had a common interest in the independence of Africa". Therefore, the difficulties presented by questions of language, culture and different political systems were not insuperable (ibid). What this meant was that in as much as colonialists promoted the idea of African cultural differences, so as to keep them apart and alienated from one another, this attitude remained even after some African countries regained their independence. Other active and ominous forces against the idea of an African union were former colonial forces who exercised what Nkrumah (1973b:252) referred to as "new colonialism". The "new colonialism" and imperialism, Nkrumah (1973b:200) warned, came to Africa in "different guises". In advancing "new colonialism", colonialists and imperialists were advancing a "subtle theory – and a disguised one, at that – to safeguard their position in Africa and to beguile and bamboozle the Africans" (ibid). While the colonialists were prepared to grant political independence, on the one hand, they were, on the other hand, also "planning to continue to dominate the African territories in the economic field by establishing control over the economic life of the newly independent African territories (ibid). Through such a subtle control method, Nkrumah (ibid) further warned, the enemies of Africa hoped for, and aimed to use the newly-independent African states as "puppets" so that that they would continue to "dominate Africa, while, at the same time, making the Africans believe that they are, in fact, free and independent" (ibid). Nkrumah (1973b:200 – 201) had already observed a scheme, by European colonialists, of creating "several weak independent states in Africa" which were designed to be so weak and unstable in the organisation of their national economies and administration, that they would be compelled by internal as well as external pressures to continue to depend upon the colonial powers who had ruled them for several years. The weaker and the less stable an African state was, Nkrumah (1973b:201) continued, the easier for the colonial power concerned to dominate the affairs and fortunes of the new state, even though it was supposed to have gained independence. By making the foregoing observations, Nkrumah (1973b:128) was highlighting the fact that imperialism did not only use "militaristic" means to accomplish domination. Other instruments which were as effective were "economic penetration, cultural assimilation, ideological domination, psychological infiltration", not excluding, of course, "subversive activities even to the point of inspiring and promoting assassination and civil strife" (ibid).

> Nkrumah (1973b:127 – 128) made it clear that the struggle was not only about the abolishment of old forms of colonialism but also about a determination to undermine the new forms of colonialism which the leaders of "resurgent Africa" had to be alert to and vigilant about. While the concept of African personality gave much attention to Ghana and the rest of Africa's international relations, it was also meant to have practical meaning and relevance for the ordinary African masses. In 1960 Nkrumah committed his government to help establish and develop the All-African Trade Union Federation "as an expression of the African personality and the solidarity of all the workers of emergent Africa" (Nkrumah, 1973b:243). This means that Nkrumah held the view that philosophy had to be accessible not just to the elites of society but the workers as well, who constituted a significant part of the African masses. Nkrumah (1973b:209) identified the Trade Union Congress, the United Ghana Farmers Council and the National Council of Co-operatives were the "true and practical schools of our philosophy".

An examination of African political literature reveals that Biko, in articulating his philosophy of Black Consciousness, and its quest for a true humanity, he was an echoing what Nkrumah (1973b:125), a philosopher for the African Renaissance, called "an African personality in international affairs", which, he envisaged, "will have a chance of making its proper impact and let the world know it through the voices of Africa's own sons". While Biko, on the one hand, had observed, that the Western world was preoccupied with mastering its technological know how, on the other hand, Nkrumah (1973:130) had observed, ahead of Biko, that "the great powers are spending astronomical sums of money on piling up stocks of the most destructive weapons that have ever been contrived" which had the potential to "wipe out mankind and leave this earth barren and desolate". Nkrumah (ibid) argued that the large amounts of money used for "destructive ends" could and should have been used to "contribute greatly to the general cause of humanity and the attainment of world peace".

We now turn to Mbeki's relationship with the African Renaissance.

2.6.7 Mbeki's African Renaissance: Key Issues

Just like Blyden, Seme, Azikiwe, Lembede, Diop and Nkrumah before him, Mbeki had a number of issues that he sought to address through his African Renaissance, among which were the following, which also overlapped: Mental Liberation; A Project of the Liberation Struggle and Pan-Africanism; Women's Liberation.

The devastating and lasting impact of psychological enslavement by Europeans on Africans had no small role in the latter's oppression. In appreciation of this fact, Mbeki (1998:299) observed that in order for the European colonisers to perpetuate their imperial domination over the peoples of Africa, the colonisers sought to oblige Africans to accept that as a people Africans had contributed nothing to human civilisation except as beasts of burden in much the same way as those who are opposed to the emancipation of women seek to convince them that they have a place in human society, but only as beasts of burden and bearers of children. Here, we see Mbeki identifying sexism as no lesser an evil as racism. As we will see later, he held the conviction that unless the African Renaissance addressed the oppression of women, the project would be meaningless. For now, we examine his engagement with mental liberation.

(a) *Mental liberation and the African Renaissance*

Continuing on the theme of mental enslavement, Mbeki (1998:299) saw this as no accident of history but a deliberate and systematic exercise whose ultimate objective was to get Africans to despise themselves, convinced that Africans not being equal to their colonial masters and mistresses, were equally incapable of original thought and creativity essential for architecture and fine arts. Cognisant of this historical reality, Mbeki (1999:xx), argued that no one "can estimate or measure with any certainty the impact that centuries of the denial of our humanity and contempt for the colour black by many around the world have had on ourselves as Africans". But for Africans to simply protest against, and lament the effects of mental colonialism, was an act of inadequacy and very unhelpful for Africans, especially those advocating the African Renaissance. Therefore, for Mbeki (1998:299), the African Renaissance should be about Africans' own rediscovery of their own souls "permanently available in the great works of creativity represented by the pyramids and sphinxes of Egypt, the stone buildings of Axum and the ruins of Carthage and Zimbabwe, the rock paintings of the San, the Benin bronzes and the African masks, the carving of the Makonde and the stone sculptures of the Shona". In the Africans' journey of "self-discovery and the restoration of our own self-esteem, without which we would never become combatants for the African renaissance", Mbeki (1998:300) reiterated the critical role of the arts, calling on the Africans "to retune our ears to the music of Zao and Franco of the Congos and the poetry of Mazisi Kunene of South Africa, and refocus our eyes to behold the paintings of the Malangatane of Mozambique and the sculptures of Dumile Feni of South Africa". In answering back to the claim that Africans produced nothing of worth, intellectually, Mbeki (1998:241) argued that Africans had to be armed with the knowledge

that when the "European Renaissance burst into history in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was a royal court in the African city of Timbuktu which, in the same centuries, was learned as its European counterparts". Mbeki (1998:243) argued that Africans needed to be informed that even in the face of Europeans' superior arms and ammunition, Africans not only courageously resisted European military aggression and invasion of Africa, but, on occasions, inflicted military defeat on the Europeans, citing the 1879 Battle of Isandlwana, led by the amaZulu king, Cetshwayo, as one of those victories. These facts are necessary building blocks of the African Renaissance for two reasons, the first being that even if Africans were defeated by European colonialism, the fact is that they did not simply roll over and die – they fought back s/heroically. Secondly, this consciousness should be the basis for the recognition that in the struggle for Africans' continued genuine liberation, Africans needed to be conscious at all times that they were their "own liberators" – a phrase that is an "epitaph on the gravestone of every African who dared to carry the vision in his or her heart of Africa reborn" (Mbeki, 1998:243). Recognition that Africans are their "own liberators" is an act of mental emancipation, a necessary appreciation of the need for self-reliance. This consciousness, this recognition is vital to the success of the African Renaissance project because the "African renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by the Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by ourselves and if we take responsibility for the success or failure of our policies" (Mbeki, 1998:248). Mbeki (1998:242) held a strong view that an appreciation of the African past by Africans would give them the necessary confidence to embark on the African Renaissance journey. In fact, Mbeki (1998:243) argued, the conviction that an appreciation of African history was essential in telling Africans that the time for the African Renaissance had come, was "fundamental to the very conceptualisation of this renaissance and the answer to the question: Whence this confidence?" […] Unless we are able to answer the question: Who were we? we will not be able to answer the question: What shall we be?" Just like other African Renaissance advocates before him, Mbeki (1998:243) was convinced that the reclamation of Ancient Egypt by Africans was necessary especially by the "intelligentsia [which] must immerse itself in the titanic and all-round struggle to end poverty, ignorance, disease and backwardness". This was the case because the intelligentsia needed to be "inspired by the fact that the Africans of Egypt were, in some instances, two thousand years ahead of the Europeans of Greece in the mastery of such subjects as geometry, trigonometry, algebra and chemistry" (Mbeki, 1998:299). As part of the necessary process of mental and

psychological liberation and the quest for an African Renaissance, Mbeki (1999:xxi) pointed out the need for Africans to "recall everything that is good in our past". The exercise of recalling everything that is good in the African past entailed and included "the recovery of African pride, the confidence in ourselves that we can succeed as well as any other in building a humane and prosperous society" (Mbeki, 1999:xx). Echoing Mbeki's articulation, Dialo Diop (1999:9) equally observes that "Africa's renaissance shall signal the dusk of prehistoric cycles and the dawn of a true humanity". Just like other African Renaissance advocates before him, Mbeki (1998:249) linked the African Renaissance project to the liberation struggle, pointing out that the "gift of freedom" was an "important contribution to Africa's renaissance".

(b) *The African Renaissance: A project of the liberation struggle and Pan-Africanism*

Just like these noted Pan-Africanists did, Mbeki (1998:249) linked his African Renaissance project to Pan-Africanism, arguing that the African Renaissance must be used to "advance the cause of the peoples of our continent". As if anticipating that the link between the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism might not be clear to everyone, Mbeki (2001:226) sought to make it explicit that talk of an African Renaissance referred to the "rebirth of an entire continent". Mbeki (2001:248) ensured that those who cared to listen should know that South Africans owed their emancipation from apartheid "in no small measure to the support and solidarity extended to us by all the peoples of Africa". In that sense, therefore, South Africans' victory over the system of white minority domination was an African victory (ibid). The recognition of fellow Africans' contribution to the liberation struggle waged by South Africans meant, Mbeki (2001:250) argued, that South Africans should appreciate that fellow Africans legitimately expected that the "new South Africa which they helped to bring into being" would not only be an expression of the African Renaissance by the manner in which it conducted its affairs, but that it would also be an active participant with other Africans in the struggle for the victory of that renaissance throughout the African continent. Just like other Pan-Africanist thinkers before him, Mbeki (1998:250) held the conviction that the African Renaissance victory would not only mean the addressing of the improvement of Africans' conditions of life, but would also mean the "extension of the frontiers of human dignity to all humanity". It is on this basis that is argued that the African Renaissance is a quest for a true humanity. Humanity refers to both women and men, and not just men.

(c) *Women's liberation as central to the African Renaissance*

This emphasis is important because at the African Renaissance conference in 1998, the organisers confessed that the conference "did not cover the role of women […] of Africa in the renaissance" (Makgoba et al, 1999:vii). They conceded that it was a mistake that future conferences should learn from, and improve upon (ibid). Be that as it may, some participants at the conference made sure that the issue of gender was not left out. Mbeki (1999:xv) identified the necessity to note that the engagement of women in processes by which the people determine their destiny must be "central" to Africans' determination as to whether they are succeeding or otherwise in the struggle to make the masses of the people their own liberators. Mugo (1999:217) also an emphasised a meaningful renaissance could not take place in the midst of silencing women who "constitute a clear numerical majority on the African continent". Emphasising the central role of women in "transforming action and discourse", Mugo (ibid) further pointed out that there must be a genuine, not a "token or politically correct recognition" of women. The silencing of women that Mugo refers to, is the denial of democratic participation in human affairs, an act that is inimical to the African Renaissance because, as Mbeki (1999:xiv – xv) pointed out, that taking the position that the African Renaissance wanted to "make foreign to Africa the disempowerment of the masses of our people", meant that the African Renaissance advocates wanted to see "an African continent in which the people participate in systems of governance in which they are truly able to determine their destiny and put behind [them] the notions of democracy and human rights as peculiarly 'Western' concepts". More explicitly, Mbeki was arguing that the notion of "democracy" and "human rights" should be owned as African, not dismissed as foreign concepts or imports to Africa. The embrace of democracy by Africans simultaneously meant that the participation of African masses would "ensure a stance of opposition to dictatorship, whatever form it may assume" (Mbeki, 1999:xv). Opposition to dictatorship in "whatever form it may assume" entails the domination of women by men, whether in public or private spaces. Mbeki and Mugo's emphasis that women's liberation is central to the African Renaissance is in line with Amadiume's (1997:90) caveat that while it is "only logical that anywhere something has been broken or destroyed, the need arises to rebuild or reconstruct", there is a problem when this "piecing together has, however, been almost a male monopoly". This objection is to the tendency by male African scholars and intellectuals, who object to European colonialism as far as it adversely affects them, but are comfortable in turning a blind eye to European patriarchy that benefits

African males. Amadiume (1997:104)) argues that while "[i]n the eyes of European colonialists [...] women were not sacred" and European colonialists "consequently shot and killed African women who protested against colonial rule", in traditional Africa "[w]omen were regarded as the very embodiment of African society and custodians of African culture". For the African Renaissance to be meaningful to both women and men, Amadiume (1997:93) argues that African scholarship must reclaim matriarchy, "the greatest achievement of African women and their singular contribution to human civilization". Matriarchy, notes Amadiume (1997:24) is "a fundamental African moral philosophy [...] a unifying African moral code and culture". While matriarchy and patriarchy are two political and social ideologies which "directly decide the role and status of women in society" and also "decide the degree of violence and abuse of human rights in that society", these are not two sides of the same coin (Amadiume, 1997:101). As Amadiume (ibid) further points out, patriarchy "seeks to control women – indeed everyone" and always "seeks to control and rule everyone under the rule of the male [...] celebrat[ing] violence, conquest and power in various degrees". On the other hand, matriarchy, "as was constructed by African women, had a very clear message about social and economic justice. It was couched in a very goddess-based religion, a strong ideology of motherhood, and a general moral principle of love" (Amadiume, 1997:101). We will engage with matriarchy more in Chapter 5 where we examine the notion of the family in the context of African culture/s. At this point, an important question needs to be raised about the appropriateness of associating the African Renaissance project with the "liberation" project considering that African countries, including South Africa, had African political parties and their leaders in political office by 1994, four years before the 1998 African Renaissance conference in South Africa. The answer to this question is to be found in the manner in which African leaders, including Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere and Thabo Mbeki perceived the "independence" gained by African states since Ghana's independence in 1957.

(d) *The African Renaissance as a continued liberation struggle project after "independence"*

On June 3, 1997, Julius Kambarage Nyerere (2000:37), Tanzania's former president, addressing the launch of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation in London, noted that since independence, the African continent had gone through three phases, namely, (a) the phase of Visionary Africa, (b) Neo-Colonialism, and (c) a New Africa. The first phase refers to

the period of independence, during which African leaders were fired by the imagination of a genuinely independent and united Africa. The second phase refers to the period when Africans' spirit of joy was soon put on the back foot when authentic African leaders "were destroyed and a bunch of African puppets were installed for the purposes of presiding over the looting of our Continent" (ibid). The third phase, and phrase, "New Africa", refers to a period in the 1990s when the African continent was making efforts to regain the spirit of democracy by giving African people a chance to rebuild themselves and put an end to dictatorship and corruption (Nyerere, 2000:38). Regarding the first phase – Visionary Africa – much has been said above about the visionary African philosopher leaders Africa had. And, as Nyerere has said, little was achieved of their visions, and the little that was achieved was, in many instances, reversed. This was a consequence of what Nyerere calls "neo-colonialism". Nyerere could speak with authority on the three phases. He was one of the political activists who brought about the independence of his country, Tanzania, of which he became the first head of state. As a head of state, Nyerere (1968:195) soon realised that "former colonial powers [were] still determined to keep Africa, including independent Africa, as a sphere of influence of the Western world". Emphatically, Nyerere (1968:194) noted that "both before and after independence, Western countries have interfered more effectively […] in Africa". He had a personal experies of this interference, because as he (Nyerere, 1968:202) observed, he had quarreled with the US Government, once when Tanzania believed it to be involved in a plot against the country, and when two of its officials misbehaved and were asked to leave Tanzania. These experiences led Nyerere (in Nkrumah, 2017:161) to conclude that neo-colonialism manifested itself in the acts of colonial powers "going out through the political door and coming back and controlling the country through the economic door". As early as 1961, delegates attending the All-African People's Conference in Cairo, Egypt "warned independent African states to beware of colonialism which was associated with the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Western Germany, Israel, Belgium, the Netherlands, and South Africa" (Nkrumah, 1963:139). The Conference identified neo-colonialism as the "greatest threat to African countries" because the powers who practised neo-colonialism exercised "economic and political intervention in order to prevent African states from directing their political, social and economic policies towards the exploitation of their natural wealth for the benefit of their peoples" (w'Obanda, 1996:35). Taking the preceding backgroung into consideration, neo-colonialism is defined as the surrendering of "direct political control" by colonialists, while "retaining economic control as the most effective means of enjoying the benefits of

the empire without being blamed for what happens in the former colony, which is merely reformed into a neo-colony" (w'Obanda, 1996:34). The implication of neo-colonialism for Africa meant that Africans' independence and freedom was "in name only" (Nkrumah, 1963:174).

Below, we examine what neo-colonialism is, and its implications for the African Renaissance. An examination of this concept enables us to understand how Africa's march towards the African Renaissance was undermined, and why, therefore, the African Renaissance continues to be a liberation project even beyond the gaining of "independence" by African countries. Subsequent to the discussion on neo-colonialism, we shall briefly touch on the third phase, the "New Africa", which contextualises the African Renaissance in the "independence" era as a continued liberation project.

2.7 Neo-colonialism: How it Maneouvres

The shaking off of economic strangulation of Africa by Europe was the "crux" of the liberation struggle because, as Nkrumah (1963:102) explains, "unless [Africans] attain economic freedom, our struggle for independence will have been in vain, and our plans for social and cultural advancement frustrated". In recognition of this reality, ahead of Nkrumah, the Algerian philosopher, Frantz Fanon (1964:186) observed that colonialism and its derivatives, do not, as a matter of fact, "constitute the present enemies of Africa". In saying this, Fanon was not oblivious to the threats posed by colonialism to Africa. Writing before his death in 1961, he was confident that in a short time, the African continent would be liberated (ibid). But signs of undesirable things to come were there during the phase of the liberation struggle. As Fanon (1967:137) observes, "in the thick of the fight more than a few militants asked the leaders to formulate a dogma, to set out their objectives and to draw a programme. But under the pretext of safeguarding national unity, the leaders categorically refused to attempt such a task." When challenged to be more lucid, leaders employed more rhetoric, speaking about the rights of people to self-determination, "borne on the wind of history which would inevitably sweep away colonialism" (ibid): "When the militants asked whether the wind of history couldn't be a little more clearly analysed, the leaders gave them instead hope and trust, the necessity of decolonialization and its inevitability, and more to that effect (ibid). Fanon's (1964:186) concern was that the "great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology". This observation was informed by his observations of the unchanged reality of the "mass of the people" despite the gaining of independence (Fanon, 1967:76). Fanon (1964:186) had observed

that the countries that had achieved independence had become "as unstable as their new middle classes or their renovated princes". The "new middle classes" or "renovated princes" were those, who, as a result of their educational qualifications and leadership in political parties were able to secure themselves crumbs from their former colonial powers. Fanon (ibid) notes that the national middle classes, after a few hesitant steps in the international arena, "no longer feeling the threat of the traditional colonial power, suddenly develop great appetites". In this development of great appetites, they accumulate material possessions and comfort, to the exclusion of the great masses of the people, the very people who, as Fanon (1967:74) observes, during the colonial period were called upon to fight against oppression. Confronted by the upward social and economic mobility of the elite in their societies, and the stagnancy, or worse, deterioration of their own lives the ordinary masses of the people, as Fanon (1967:36) observes, were often heard declaring: "It wasn't worthwhile, then, our becoming independent […]". Fanon (1964:187) captures the anguish of the masses of the people thus: "The people, the people who had given everything in the difficult moments of the struggle for national liberation wonder, with their empty hands and bellies, as to the reality of their victory."

The painful reality for the masses of the African people, they came to realise, as Fanon (1967:76 – 77) notes, that the "apotheosis of independence [was] transformed into the curse of independence". But this reality was not sudden with the arrival of independence. Signs were there in the course of the liberation struggle. During this phase there were at least two types of leaders – one type perceived by the colonialists as "moderates", and another labelled as "extremists" (Nkrumah, 1963:180). In the first instance, the "moderates" sought a share in the government but were afraid of taking immediate responsibility, lacking confidence because of their lack of experience in governance. In the second instance, the "extremists", not oblivious to their inexperience, preferred taking immediate responsibility, preferring to make their own mistakes "in freedom rather than to be denied the opportunity of responsibility, in the belief that even good government is no substitute for self-government" (Nkrumah, 1963:180). Nkrumah (1963:180) observes that the colonialists, having learnt from experience that the greater and more bitter their resistance to "extremist" demands for independence, the more extreme and more powerful they became, it dawned on them that "in the absence of a bitter struggle, there is a chance of treating with the moderate leaders, who may be tempted to show their followers that the masters are 'being reasonable' and are open to persuasion, that quiet and peaceful negotiation can produce and advance towards freedom". Having observed the schism among the oppressed, the colonisers drew closer to them the "moderates", in an effort

to undermine the "extremists" by ostentatiously polishing the silver platter on which they promised to hand over independence (ibid). But such a gesture, on the part of the coloniser was deceptive because only the outward form changed. Antagonising the colonised, dividing and turning them against one another in the manner described by Nkrumah above was possible because, as Fanon (1967:113) realised, and pointed out, that "[c]olonialism [had] greater and wealthier resources than the native". With these resources at their disposal, the colonisers made a conscious effort to make use of specialists in their midst such as psychologists, to carefully study and analyse the colonised and their liberation movements so as to identify the "ideological weaknesses" within the colonised liberation movements (Fanon,1967:109). Having carried out their psychological studies on the colonised, the colonisers found out that many among the colonised were "so starved for anything, anything at all that will turn [them] into […] human being[s], any bone of humanity flung to [them], […] and these poor scraps of charity may, here and there, overwhelm [them]" (Fanon, 1967:112). Recognising this vulnerability on the part of the colonised, this quest to be treated as human beings deserve to be treated, with respect, and confronted with the intensification of the struggle for freedom, the colonisers changed tact, and "instructions are issued to the settlers and to the police forces; their behaviour takes on a different complexion: it becomes more 'human'. They even go as far as to call a native 'Mister' when they have dealings with him. Attentions and acts of courtesy come to be the rule. The native is in fact made to feel that things are changing" (Fanon, 1967:111). The coloniser's tactics were effective to a very great extent. This was the case because the colonised being "so used to the settler's scorn and to his declared intention to maintain his oppression at whatever cost that the slightest suggestion of any gesture or of any goodwill is hailed with astonishment and delight, and the native bursts into a hymn of praise" (Fanon, 1967:113). The desired effect of the colonisers was to make the colonised feel grateful for the "favour" conferred, and the "kindness" extended. But the colonisers appreciated that desirable as the psychological warfare on individuals was, it was an inadequate measure. The resistance of the colonised was organisational. If this was the case, then, the act of undermining the colonised' resistance had to be organisational as well. To this effect the colonisers, during its clashes with the liberation movements, studied the liberation movements in order to identify, their strengths and weakness. Having made their assessments, they "made [their] choice from among the two or three nationalist parties which led the struggle for liberation" (Fanon, 1967:94). The next step, on the part of the coloniser was to start complicated maneouvers by delaying the negotiations as much as they could, forcing the liberation movement to some of its demands and to "put certain 'extremist' elements into the background" (Fanon, 1967:94 –

95). What emerges above is that the colonialists, in engaging the liberation movements, and in anticipating the inevitable victory of the liberation struggle, decided that in the event of liberation, the terms of such liberation would be determined by them. They would surrender without surrendering. They would determine which liberation movements to engage which in the event there are more than one. They would also determine which leaders in those liberation movements they would accept and not accept, by influencing the marginalisation of some. The "extremist" elements that were weeded out were the "intellectual elements" who carried out "a prolonged analysis of the true nature of colonialism and of the international situation" (Fanon, 1967:98). Having carried out their analysis, they began to "criticize their party's lack of ideology and the poverty of its strategy", thus "ceaselessly" questioning their leaders on "crucial points". They sought clear definitions of terms such as "nationalism", further seeking clarity about the meaning of "independence" and wanting to know how such was going to be achieved (Fanon, 1967:98 – 99). Without such an exercise anything could mean anything, allowing space for ambiguity. The revolutionary intellectuals would have none of that. Their actions provoked reactions from their party leaders. Critical revolutionaries' questions were dismissed as childish and they, themselves were branded as adventurers and anarchists and, subsequently, isolated (Fanon, 1967:99). Disowning revolutionary elements within the liberation movements was a result of insecure leaders who could not provide the necessary answers. In other cases, as indicated above, it was a result of instigations by colonial powers who made use of their agents within the liberation movements. In either case, the outcomes were as a result of colonialists' maneouverings. Having paid great attention to the maneouvres of colonialism, Fanon (1967:114) warned that leaders in the revolution had to learn, and in turn, teach the members of the liberation movements that "colonialism never gives anything away for nothing". Africans had to be made conscious of the fact that whatever they gained during the liberation struggle, whether the struggle took the form of armed struggle, or other forms, was "not the result of the kindness or good will of the settler" but simply a realisation by the colonialists that they could "not put off granting concessions any longer" (ibid). There was a need on the part of political leaders to explain to the colonised that

- The concessions made by the colonisers were as a result of struggle, force and pressure exerted by the colonised – in other words the colonised extorted the concessions (Fanon, 1967:114)
- The concessions made were, in fact, not for the benefit of the colonised, but for the benefit of the coloniser, this being informed by the coloniser's realisation that

sustaining colonialism through naked brutality was costly to the coloniser because it required utilising great resources – human and financial – to curb the resistance of the colonised (Fanon, 1967:113).

- History taught that certain concessions, instead of benefitting the colonised, could turn out, in fact, to be the "cloak for a tighter rein" (sic) (Fanon, 1967:114).
- Simply accepting concessions for the sake of accepting them, or the "mere acceptance of the principle of concessions at any price" could turn out to be the acceptance of a "servitude that is less blatant but much more complete" (Fanon, 1967:113).

Reflecting on the colonisers' "concessions", Fanon (1967:110) observes that it was at this point, when the colonialists adopted this posture, that "the political education of the masses is seen to be a historic necessity". This "historic necessity" was not paid attention to by many leaders in the liberation movement. They did not "send leaders […] to educate people politically, or to increase their awareness or put the struggle on to a higher level", in the false hope that the action of the masses will be carried by their own momentum (Fanon, 1967:92). Failure to intensify the political education of the masses did not only cost Africans and their governments during the liberation but also after the attainment of "independence". As Fanon (1967:93) notes, the colonial secret services, which were not disbanded after independence "keep up the discontentment and still manage to make serious difficulties for the young governments. All in all, the government is only being made to pay for its laziness during the period of liberation".

The foregoing background helps us to understand the concept "neo-colonialism". Neo-colonialism was able to flex its muscles on the African continent, due to, amongst many factors, the "unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle" (Fanon, 1967:119). The African leaders who inherited power from the colonial masters, to whom Fanon (1967:119 – 120) refers as the "national middle class", had "practically no economic power", or were in no way "commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country it hope[d] to replace". The economy historically developed outside, the national middle class, had "nothing more than an approximate, bookish acquaintance with the actual and potential resources of the country's soil and mineral deposits" (Fanon, 1967:121). Limited by this "bookish acquaintance", the national middle class was limited to speaking of these resources "only […] on a general and abstract plane" (ibid). This was not the only problem. In addition to its inability to address challenges in concrete terms, in its "wilful

narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country" (Fanon, 1967:120): "But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country (ibid)." Since the middle class had "neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources" – "intellectual resources" referring to engineering and technical skills – the middle class limited its claims to "taking over of business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers" (Fanon, 1967:122). The middle class considered "step[ing] into the shoes of the former European settlement" as reflecting the "dignity of the country and its own welfare", insisting that "all the big foreign companies should pass through its hands, whether these companies wish to keep their connexions with the country, or to open it up" (ibid). All these actions by the middle classes were carried out in the name of "nationalization" (ibid). To the middle class, "nationalization" did "not mean placing the whole economy at the service of the nation and deciding to satisfy the needs of the nation" (ibid). Nationalisation did not mean "governing the state with regard to the new social relations whose growth it has been decided to encourage" (ibid). Instead, "nationalization quite simply mean[t] the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (ibid). Through these activities, Fanon (ibid) points out, the middle class "discover[ed] its historic mission: that of intermediary" because its mission had nothing to do with transformation but saw itself as the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, "rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism". While Fanon, above, does not single out any

African country with reference to the attitude to run back to the former colonial master to seek help, he could have had Senegal's Leopold Sedar Sénghor in mind. While Senghor (1966:80) on the one hand, had made a call for "our return to our cultural roots", in other words, Negritude, he simultaneously opted to keep independent Senegal in a multinational confederation with France (Senghor, 1964:83;92). In justifying this position, Senghor (1964:92) cited the case of India which, after gaining its independence, chose to remain within the British Commonwealth. Following were the benefits, Sénghor (ibid) pointed out, that India would have by remaining in the Commonwealth:

- India would occupy "a more important place in the family of nations"
- India would secure technical and economic assistance as a member of the Commonwealth, and
- India would "more firmly assure her cooperative links with Europe".

Senghor hoped for the same relationship between Senegal and her former colonial master, France. One of Senegal's objectives, Senghor (1964:101) pointed out, was to prepare "more technicians who meet international standards; engineers, physicians, veterinarians, judges, and also – along with researchers – financiers and economists". In order to make these tasks possible, Senegal had to look up to France for assistance (ibid). Senghor (ibid) called upon the Senegalese to rid themselves of their complexes and ask France for all the technicians they needed. Not only did Senghor (1964:100) cite the case of India to justify his position of collaboration with a former colonial master, but pointed out that some other independent African countries who "most loudly proclaim their anticolonialism" have done no better because they have "escaped the contradiction only by appealing to the United Nations and to the foreigner, and by paying more dearly for the technicians on loan". The skills at the disposal of France were necessary for Senegal if the country were to be successful in its quest to "Africanize the cadres in the government service", a task that was "linked to the notion of independence" (Senghor, 1964:100). Experience had proven that while it was easier to place Africans in administrative positions in post-colonial governments, on the one hand, because of the lack of skills on the part of Africans, on the other hand, placing them in technical positions posed greater challenges (Senghor, 1964:100 – 101). These challenges forced Senghor (1964:100) to remark that to Africanise at a discount, by placing incompetent employees in posts requiring experienced workers was to retrogress to introduce anarchy, waste and inefficiency in the government service, and to deprive the Senegalese of the means of a modern state. His arguments, Senghor (ibid) further pointed out were not the same thing as renouncing Africanisation but an argument for determining which jobs to Africanise and how to Africanise. While Senghor treaded carefully, seeking to balance the quest for Africanisation on the one hand, and his inability to avoid dependence on France, on the other hand, in a quest for independence, he did not even pretend to embrace nationalisation, as some African leaders, as pointed out above by Fanon, did. For Senghor (1964:95), in "addition to legal difficulties, the nationalization of foreign capital would risk provoking international conflict, with which we have nothing to do". But that was not the only problem that was a cause of concern. Above everything else, Senghor (ibid) further argued, nationalisation "would entail the loss of our international credit and prevent other investments which are vital". The African states which claimed to be the most socialistic, Senghor (ibid) further pointed out, were careful to tread this path cautiously because they knew that unemployment and poverty would be the result (ibid). In outlining Senegal's relationship with France, which was clearly characterised by some dependence on France, it is fair to point out that there were some contradictions in what

Senghor claimed to stand for. Senghor (1964:68 – 69), having argued that the struggle against colonialism was "natural and legitimate", had pointed out that "colonialism is the political and economic dependence of one people on another", and therefore, this being the case, "there can be no independence in dependence". If there could be no independence in dependence, and Senegal found herself compelled, in independence, to depend on her former colonial master, France, then Senegal's independence was no independence.

Neo-colonialism, Nkrumah (1970a:102) observes, is "a greater danger to independent countries than colonialism". That is so because while colonialism is crude and overt, neo-colonialism is subtle and sophisticated in that the colonialist country can offer independence "not with the intention which such an act might be thought to imply, but in the hope that the positive and progressive forces thus appeased and quitened, the people might be exploited with greater serenity and comfort" (ibid). Like Fanon, Nkrumah criticises the leaders, who, as a result of their lack of direct involvement with the masses, and who, instead of providing badly needed true leadership and guidance "which is informed at every point by the ideal of the general welfare, leaders come to neglect the very people who put them in power and incautiously become instruments of suppression on behalf of the neo-colonialists" (ibid). The definition and the explanation of the workings of neo-colonialism find a shining example in the regaining of independence in the Congo and Nigeria in June and October 1960, respectively. There are many other examples in the African continent, but the Congo and Nigeria are chosen because their independence was undermined even before they could taste it. In other words, the Congo's and Nigeria's independence were aborted. We begin with the Congo, followed by Nigeria.

2.7.1 Neo-Colonialism and the Congo

The Congo gained its independence on 30 June 1960 with Patrice Lumumba as the country's first democratically elected prime minister (De Witte, 2001:xix). Within seven months of the Congo's independence, Lumumba was dethroned and assassinated on January 17, 1961 (ibid). His problems can be traced to the very day when Belgium formally handed over independence to the Congo. Lumumba was infuriated when Belgium's representative, King Baudouin used a patronising language to the Congolese. The king said that the "independence of the Congo is the result of the undertaking conceived by the genius of King Leopold II" (De Witte, 2001:1). As if that was not bad enough, the king went on to urge the Congolese not to "compromise the future with hasty reforms", and not to "replace the structures that Belgium hands over to you until you are sure you can do better" (De Witte, 2001:1). Not scheduled to speak, Lumumba

caught the Belgians by surprise, firstly, by taking to the stage, and, secondly, by the fiery content of his speech (De Witte, 2001:2). In a direct and explicit contradiction of the king's speech, Lumumba directly addressed the Congolese, telling them that their independence was not an act of generosity and a gift from anyone, but a result of struggle that was signed with the blood of the Congolese (ibid). Having made this point clear, Lumumba uttered words that were to expose him as the enemy of neo-colonialism, marking him out for elimination: "We will make sure that our country's land truly benefits its children. We will review all previous laws, and make new ones which will be just and noble." (De Witte, 2001:6) The implications of Lumumba's words were as clear to the Western powers as Lumumba had intended them to be. But they were not expected, and they were not welcome. Belgium's act of granting independence to the Congo was not a genuine act. It was in line with other Western powers' strategy of containing Africans' genuine liberation. As De Witte (2001:xv) observes, in order to "counter the obstacle that independence presented, the West had to change its policy of covert domination for one of indirect control, and new national leaders had to learn to respect the neo-colonial order". Clearly Lumumba was not prepared to play that game. Five days after independence, the commander-in-chief of the Congolese army, General Janssens, let it be known to the Congolese soldiers that the more things changed, the more they would remain the same, by writing the following on the board: "Before Independence = After Independence" (De Witte, 2001:6). What this actually and effectively meant was that there was to be no Africanisation of the army (ibid). The Congolese soldiers expressed their objection by going on strike, whereupon the Congolese government took their side, relieved Janssens, and replaced him with an African (ibid). But the story did not end there. Belgian soldiers, resentful to the Congolese government's policy of Africanisation and intervention, regrouped in Elisabethville, in the Katanga province (De Witte, 2001:7). Amid these developments, rumours of the rape of European women by a small group of soldiers resulted in a mass exodus to Belgium on July 8 (De Witte, 2001:7). This presented a perfect opportunity and gave the Belgians an excuse to militarily intervene in the Congo (De Witte, 2001:7). In the midst of this confusion, Moise Tshombe, the president of the Katanga province, declared independence from the rest of the Congo, thus seceding this province (De Witte, 2001:7). It must be said at this point that the Congo crisis presented a perfect opportunity to bring into fruition Tshombe's long-held quest. In January 1960, at the Round Table Conference in Brussels, which was discussing the imminent independence of Congo, Tshombe campaigned for "a loose federation for the Congo with a certain amount of provincial autonomy and close ties with Belgium" (Nkrumah, 1967:67). Tshombe's secession was a golden opportunity for Belgium to strike back against

Lumumba and to regain lost ground. Belgian soldiers stationed in Katanga provided active support to Tshombe and active resistance against Lumumba's effort to intervene in Katanga (De Witte, 2001:7). Belgium, however, was not alone in activities that sought to undermine Lumumba's democratically elected government. The United States of America's Central Intelligence of America (CIA) and Britain were involved in plots to murder Lumumba (De Witte, 2001:xiii – xiv; 16 – 17; 23). The CIA recruited in Europe, "a foreigner with a criminal past" who would arrive in the Congo to administer poison that would kill Lumumba (De Witte, 2001:47). The story of the Congo "is a staggering example of what the Western ruling classes are capable of when their vital interests are threatened" (De Witte, 2001:xxiii). Patrice Lumumba's (in Nkrumah, 1967:128) letter to his wife, Pauline, before he died, captures well the colonialists' insincerity and their unwillingness to grant genuine independence to Africans:

> But what wished for our country, its right to an honourable life, to unstained dignity, to independence without restrictions, was never desired by the Belgian imperialists and the Western allies, who found direct and indirect support, both deliberate and unintentional, amongst certain high officials of the United Nations, that organization in which we placed all our trust when we called on its assistance (ibid).

The implication of the state of affairs in the Congo meant, Lumumba (cited in Nkrumah, 1967:128) wrote on, that "independence has been transformed into a cage from whose confines the outside world looks on us, sometimes with kindly sympathy, but at other times with joy and pleasure". The imperialists accomplished their mission because, Lumumba (ibid) further pointed out, they had "corrupted some of our compatriots and bribed others". We now turn to the case of Nigeria.

2.7.2 Neo-Colonialism and Nigeria

One of Nigeria's best and gifted writers, Chinua Achebe, gives a graphic description of neo-colonialism's maneouvres in his book *There Was A Country: A Personal History Of Biafra*. Significantly, Achebe (2012:48) observes that the "British clearly had a well-thought-out strategy, with handover plans in place long before we noticed". When the British decided to hand over the reins to the Nigerians, they also changed the governor general, bringing in Sir James Robertson from the Sudan (Achebe, 2012:49). The Nigerians were puzzled as to why there was no provision made for Sir Robertson's Nigerian successor, as it became clear that Sir Robertson had every intention to be in Nigeria until Independence Day and beyond (Achebe,

2012:50). With hindsight, the scheme became clearer to the Nigerians. It emerged that Sir Robertson "played an important role in overseeing the elections (or lack thereof) at independence, throwing his weight behind Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who had been tipped to become Nigeria's first prime minister" (ibid). It later surfaced that Sir Robertson had recruited an English junior civil servant, Harold Smith, to oversee the rigging of Nigeria's first elections "so that its compliant friends in [Northern Nigeria] would win power, dominate the country and serve British interests after independence" (ibid). Remarkably, in the light of these developments in Nigeria, Achebe (2012:51) observes that "[i]n a sense, Nigerian independence came with a British governor general in command, and, one might say, popular faith in a genuine democracy was compromised from its birth". Poignantly, Achebe (ibid) observes that within six years of this "tragic colonial manipulation Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule. Public servants helped themselves freely to the nation's wealth. Elections were blatantly rigged. The subsequent national census was outrageously stage-managed; judges and magistrates were manipulated by the politicians in power. The politicians themselves were pawns of foreign business interests".

A number of events informed Nyerere's conclusion about the interference of Western countries in Africa after the regaining of independence. The first, of course, was the Congo case. The second was a personal experience when the US government tried to interefere in Tanzania's affairs (Nyerere, 1968:202) The third took place in Ghana in 1966. On February 24, 1966, Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup that is believed to have been carried out with the USA's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Remarking on this event, Nyerere (cited in Nkrumah, 2017:161) noted that Nkrumah "was not merely against ordinary colonialism, he was against neo-colonialism – against a colonial power going out through the political door and coming back and controlling the country through the economic door". The implication of neo-colonialism for Africa meant that Africans' independence and freedom was "in name only" (Nkrumah, 1963:174). We now turn to the implications of neo-colonialism for the African Renaissance.

2.7.3 Neo-colonialism: Its Implications for the African Renaissance

There are a number of mechanisms used by neo-colonialism. For Nkrumah (1963:173) neo-colonialism's "major instrument" is "balkanisation". This term refers to the breaking up of Africa into small and weak states (ibid). This balkanisation affected Africa before and after independence. The first round was the 1884 Berlin Conference that broke up Africa into small

parcels shared among the European powers (Nkrumah, 1963:7). The second was the European powers' act of breaking up African countries as they achieved independence (Nkrumah, 1963:173). The conversion of Africa into small states left some of them with neither the resources nor the personnel to provide for their own integrity and viability (Nkrumah, 1963:176). The state of unviability reduced these African states to continued dependence on "foreign contributions simply to maintain the machinery of their governments" (Nkrumah, 1963:184): "Their frontiers were not of their own choosing, and they were left with an economic, administrative and educational system which, each in its own way, was designed to perpetuate the colonial relationship" (ibid).

Neo-colonialism for Mbeki (2001:138) was a situation where Africa, even after gaining independence, continued to occupy a space in the "world economy as a subservient participant". More than that, "neo-colonialism" was an arrangement which perpetuated an economic system that not only continued the rape of Africa but also created the possibility for the emergence of "new national elites in independent states, themselves destined to join the dominant global forces in oppressing and exploiting the masses of the people" (Mbeki, 2001:138), The recognition and acknowledgment of neo-colonialism constituted "an honest admission" about the state of affairs in Africa that an important feature of African independence was that the development of these African states was determined by the reality that there was no fundamental structural change in the relationship between the independent states and the colonial powers (Mbeki, 1998:244). What this meant was that "colonial powers continued to hold in their hands the power to determine what would happen to the African people over whom, in terms of international and municipal law, they no longer had any jurisdiction" (ibid). The African Renaissance project, therefore, in the context of the post-colonial era, was a recognition that Africa's independence was not "genuine" and was a quest for, in Mbeki's (2001:137, 1998:245;247) own words, "genuine emancipation". For Mbeki (1998:300), the "call for Africa's renewal, for an African renaissance, is a call to rebellion". This rebellion was against tyrants and dictators, and those who sought to corrupt communities and steal the wealth that belonged to the people (ibid). This rebellion was not to be aimed only at corrupt politicians, but also those in immediate neighbourhoods, "the ordinary criminals who murder, rape and rob" (ibid). This observation by Mbeki underlines the fact that the African Renaissance was not only an abstract issue, to be a preoccupation of the elite, but a project of ordinary people, the African masses, engaging with their real, concrete, everyday challenges such as murder, rape and robbery in their communities. Just as Mbeki singled out corrupt

elements in the public sector as a target against which the African Renaissance advocates must rebel, he equally attacked the private sectors' corruption (Mbeki, 1999:xv-xvi). In fact, he identified a mutually beneficial relationship between people working in both the public and private sectors. Hence, among the corrupt elements, Mbeki (1999:vi) argued that "we must necessarily include those who come with bags full of money from countries beyond our shores, who also participate in the process of purchasing our souls so that they win tenders and contracts or gain special favours intended to improve their bottom lines". Mbeki (ibid) further identified self-enrichment by corrupt means as a "cancer" which constituted one of the factors accountable for the underdevelopment and violent conflicts in the African continent. More specifically, Mbeki (ibid) identified instances in which wars had dragged on, seemingly without end, because soldiers and their political accomplices found the situation of conflict profitable as it opened up business opportunities for them to earn commissions on arms purchases, to open possibilities for criminal syndicates to loot and rob and to set themselves up as private business people. Mbeki (1998:296) particularly singled out "children of Africa, whose limbs are too weak to run away from the age of adults" and the "disemboweled African mothers" as people who were particularly vulnerable to the wars ravaging Africa. It was for these "pitiful souls", Mbeki (1998:296 – 297) continued, that Africa needed a renaissance, so that Africans would act to banish "the shame" and "remake" themselves as the midwives of an African Renaissance. All this misery and pain was visited upon the Africans as a result of people whose "object in life is to acquire personal wealth by means both foul and fair", people whose "measure of success is the amount of wealth they can accumulate and the ostentation they can achieve which will convince all that they are a success because, in a visible way, they are people of means" (Mbeki, 1998:298). Mbeki (1998:298) described the corrupt elements in Africa as "parasites" which the "African renaissance demands that we purge ourselves of". That the African Renaissance conference declared that the African Renaissance project was meant to benefit the African masses in a practical way is very significant because of caveats issued that the African Renaissance faced the risk of being reduced to an "elitist project" (Harvey, 1999:30).

2.8 The Centrality of the Masses

An explicit identification of space for the "African masses" in the African Renaissance endeavour was essential because at the time (in the 1990s) when it was being articulated, associated with, and especially advocated by Thabo Mbeki, who was, between the years 1994 and1999, South Africa's deputy president, and between the years 1999 and 2008, South

Africa's president, concerns were raised that the African Renaissance was "a vision that ha[d] not yet found expression in a manner accessible and practical to the layperson", and, as a consequence, "the African renaissance has come to mean anything and signify nothing to those whose lives it is meant to transform", but rather understood by the African masses "as an intellectual preoccupation of the political, economic and academic élite" (Khoza, 1999:286). While appreciative of the role Mbeki was playing in championing the African Renaissance as a "pan-African vision, conceptualized, articulated and driven by a visionary leadership", and that this approach represented a strength of the African Renaissance, Khoza (1999:286) expressed concern that an overemphasis on such an approach posed a danger and could be the cause of the African Renaissance's failure. That was because over-emphasis on an "overarching pan-African vision" as opposed to a vision that is "micro-focused", posed the risk that ordinary people would understand the African Renaissance to be the "concern of continental leadership and governmental institutions, with little relevance to individual effort and application in our personal, occupational and civic responsibilities" (ibid). For the African Renaissance to have meaning to, and effectively serve the interests of the ordinary African masses better, such would be possible "if, by an African Renaissance, every individual understood that the vision is about individual and institutional excellence" (ibid). Cognisant of these concerns, Rukuni (2007:124) argues that the "cultural revival [African Renaissance], therefore, should not be for romantic purposes. It is, instead, about reorganising and recreating order in the day-to-day lives of people". Mbeki was not insensitive and dismissive to the concerns expressed about the relevance of the African Renaissance to the African masses. Expressing his appreciation of the need for the centrality of the "African masses", in the African Renaissance project, Mbeki (1999:xix – xx) acknowledged the critical importance, as part of the African Renaissance's endeavour, not to "allow the revolutionary energies built up in the struggle against apartheid to dissipate, with the masses of the people disempowered and demobilised to a situation where they become passive recipients of the good things of life from their rulers – objects rather than subjects of change". Reflecting on the "tasks of the African Renaissance", Mbeki (2001:139) expressed the view that "[t]hese goals can only be achieved through a genuinely popular and protracted struggle involving not only governments and political parties, but also the people themselves in all their formations". In other words, the African Renaissance project was not to be a monopoly of the government and political parties – the elite – but a project to be driven by the *masses* as well. Another criticism was that the African Renaissance, as advocated by Mbeki, was a "nebulous" concept that "lacked [a] clear definition or a road map of how to operationalise in practice" (Adebajo, 2016:14). As if to

make sure that he left no room for a misunderstanding of what he meant by the "masses of the people", Mbeki (1999:xix) singled out the masses of the people as the "workers and the peasants […] the women and the youth". In emphasising the centrality of the "African masses" to the African Renaissance project, Mbeki (1999:xiii) made explicit the call to the African Renaissance advocates to be "committed to addressing the needs of both the common man and common woman, with special emphasis on the latter" (emphasis added). The common African woman and man, in other words, the African masses are central in the African Renaissance project for many reasons. Among the many, a historical fact is that, as Nkrumah (1973b:28) observes, during African liberation struggles, "support has come from the masses, and in the masses we place our greatest belief and faith". Furthermore, as Nkrumah (1973b:165) had warned his party's leaders, it is essential for African leaders to "gain the respect and trust of the masses" simply because "without the masses there would be nothing for them to lead". African leaders must have the wisdom and the humility to realise, as Nkrumah (1973b:18) pointed out that "[l]eaders may come and go; they may rise and fall; but the people live on forever". Among revolutionary philosophers who, also, gave attention to the centrality of the masses in projects that seek to liberate them was Frantz Fanon. The masses' involvement could be possible through "political education", an exercise that was essential both during the pre-independence and post-independence periods (Fanon, 1967:146). Having discussed "African masses" in the African Renaissance endeavor, let me now turn to the issue of political education for the masses in the context of African Renaissance. Political education of the masses of the people was, and continues to be important, because, as Fanon (1967:156) points out, people have to be aware about where they are going and the reason thereof. Politicians have to be cognisant of the reality that the future remains a closed book for as long as the consciousness of the people is imperfect, elementary and cloudy (ibid). Fanon (1967:146) anticipated that there could be confusion about what entailed "political education" in the post-independence period. Political education could easily be reduced or limited to "mass meetings and spectacular gatherings […] akin to the old tactics that date from before independence", whereby political leaders "exhibited" their forces "in order to prove" to themselves and others that they had people behind them. Fanon (ibid) argued otherwise. He (ibid) argued that the inclusion of the masses in politics was not about mobilising three or four times a year thousands of men and women, but about making adults of them instead of treating them as children. Making adults of the masses entailed a recognition that "the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if it takes them twice or three times long" (Fanon, 1967:155 – 156). In motivating for the

preparedness to accommodate a longer process for the sake of accommodating the masses of the people, Fanon (ibid) reasoned that "the time taken up by explaining, the time 'lost' in treating the worker as a human being, will be caught up in the execution of the plan". Fanon's observation, emphasised above, is very significant for the African Renaissance and the quest for a true humanity because Fanon was highlighting the necessity for a paradigm shift in human relations. In a world that treated workers as means to an end, as mere tools, Fanon (1967:158 – 159) was arguing that in involving workers not only in the execution process, but in the thinking process, was an act of reclaiming and restoring their humanity, an act of re-humanisation which involved uplifting them, developing their brains by filling them with ideas, thus changing them and making them into human beings. For this reason, Fanon (1967:159), a philosopher of the revolution, argued that it was an absolute necessity that African politicians should have very clear ideas on the situation of the people and that this clarity of ideas must be profoundly dialectical.

The word "dialectical" could and should be read as "philosophical". Fanon expected African politicians to be philosophical in their approach, to engage issues in a reasoned and logical manner, so as to make sense to the people concerned. Political education conducted in this manner would be meaningful and effective because, as Fanon (1967:159) points out, political education for the masses did not mean making a political speech, but a relentless and passionate effort to teach the masses that everything depended on them, that if the work stagnates, it is their responsibility, but also that if they go forward, it is also due to them. In arguing against the notion of limiting and reducing political education to a "political speech" Fanon (1967:159) was sensitive to the reality that politicians tended to "often believe with criminal superficiality that to educate the masses politically is to deliver a long political harangue from time to time" in the false belief that "it is enough that the leader or one of the lieutenants should speak in a pompous tone about the principle (sic) events of the day for them to have fulfilled this bounden duty to educate the masses politically". Political education to Fanon (ibid) was about the "birth" of the masses' intelligence. Political education, in the context of the African Renaissance is, paraphrasing Fanon, about allowing the re-birth of Africans' intelligence, and, paraphrasing Césaire, about the re-invention of Africans' souls. In this political education, in this exercise of re-birth and re-invention, the masses of the people should not be reduced to passive recipients but active participants. As Fanon (1967:157) pointed out, the "masses should be able to meet together, discuss, propose and receive directions. The citizens should able to speak, to express themselves and to put forward new ideas." Fanon's foregoing observations are a clear

indication of his faith in the masses' ability to discern and to reason, not being simply good enough to take instructions and just act to implement what the elite of the societies think. He (Fanon, 1967:152) believed that everything could be explained to the people if a genuine commitment to getting them understand existed. Anticipating an excuse by those privileged by the educational qualifications they had acquired, that certain issues could not be broken down and simplified by those who lacked academic education, Fanon (1967:152) sharply argued that "if care is taken to use only a language that is understood by graduates in law and economics, you can easily prove that the masses have to be managed from above". But if, on the other hand, the educated privileged few "speak the language of every day", understood by the masses, and are "not obsessed by the perverse desire to spread confusion", and to "rid" themselves of the masses, then they will "realize that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning and to learn all the tricks of the trade" (ibid). A declaration of a wish by a government to "educate the people politically" is an expression of its "desire to govern with the people and for the people", in other words, a commitment to genuine democracy (Fanon, 1967:145). The foregoing observations could easily give the false impression that the masses are forever the recipients of wisdom from the fountains of the intellectual elite because of their privileged position gained through their education which gives them access to knowledge, an essential tool for progress. But this is not the case. The uneducated masses are not, to paraphrase Biko (2004:26), the perpetual students, and bad ones, at that, and the educated elite the perpetual teachers. The relationship should and can be reciprocal. Cabral (2007:191) demonstrates this well by pointing out that historically, the receiving of colonial education by the native elite came at a high cost – cultural alienation on the part of the Africans. In return for receiving colonial education, African recipients were compelled to give up their cultural values, thus becoming strangers to themselves, resulting in feelings of "bitterness or a *frustration complex*" (ibid). Reduced to being cultural shadows of the colonial masters, some African elite find a need for what Cabral (2007:188 – 189) refers to as a "return to the source" or a "cultural renaissance". It is at this point that the native elites turn to the masses for cultural education. This is because when, under the European colonial onslaught, African culture was "[r]repressed, persecuted, humiliated, betrayed by social groups who have compromised with the foreign power, culture took refuge in the villages, in the forests, and in the spirit of the victims of domination" (Cabral, 2007:190). Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Cabral (ibid) advanced the idea that "in Africa at least, for a true idea of the role which culture plays in the development of the liberation movement a distinction must be made between the situation of the masses, who preserve their culture, and that of the social groups who are assimilated or

partially so, who are cut off and culturally alienated". When this distinction is made, Cabral (ibid) further points out, it becomes clear that "the question of a 'return to the source' or of a 'cultural renaissance' does not arise for the masses of these people, for it is they who are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only social sector who can preserve and build it and *make history*". The point made by Cabral in the foregoing observations is that as repositories of culture, and makers of history, the masses are the necessary river, the source of water and life that the native elite need to go to, and drink the necessary wisdom for the advancement of culture which is central in the African Renaissance project. The concept of the "return to the source" is perceived by Rabaka (2020:303), which he refers to as "Cabralism", as one of Cabral's "major dialectical dimensions", further noting that it hinges on Cabral's argument that one of the strengths of a revolutionary nationalist movement is that it preserves pre-colonial traditional cultures for revolutionary decolonisation and re-Africanisaton. In other words, this concept – return to the source – is "a conscious anti-colonial and revolutionary step" (Rabaka, 2020:304). An often-over-looked aspect ot the "return to the source", Rabaka (ibid), further points out, is its emphasis on "*revolutionary cultural restoration* and *revolutioarny cultural transformation*". Not recognising Cabral's emphasis on this aspect is failure to appreciate that Cabral distinguished between "reactionary" and "revolutionary" aspects of culture (ibid). Cabral did not articulate the concept of "return to the source" as a "return to tradition in its stasis or freeze-framed form" (Rabaka, 2020:305). Rabaka (2020:306) argues that it is "extremely important to emphasize" that Cabral advocated a "critical analysis of African cultures". This is the case because "too often Africa historically has been, and currently continues to be, engaged as though its histories, cultures, and peoples are either completely homogeneous or completely heterogeneous; as if it were impossible for the diverse and dynamic cultures of Africa to simultaneously possess commonalities *and* distinct differences". However the case this may have been, "Cabral also did not believe that endless hours should be spent searching for minute details in efforts to distinguish one African cultural or ethnic group from another (Rabaka, 2020:308). What was important for Cabral was that Africans should not only critically analyse their own histories, cultures, and struggles among themselves as Africans, but also in relation with other cultural national groups, the point being to examine how cultures could contribute to anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles (Rabaka, 2020:308 – 309).

Envisaging, after colonialism, a free South Africa, Biko (2004:51) observed that "in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in [the] field of human relationship".

Biko (ibid) believed that while the West may have given the world an industrial and military look, the great gift still had to come to Africa – giving the world a more human face. While on the one hand Biko (2004:26) opposed Western values, on the other hand he proposed African culture, arguing that "one cannot escape the fact that the culture shared by the majority group in any given society must ultimately determine the broad direction taken by the joint culture of that society". While Biko (ibid) conceded that his proposal "need not cramp the style of those who feel differently […] on the whole, a country in Africa, in which the majority of the people are African must inevitably exhibit African values and be truly African in style". Biko's observation highlights the consciousness, on the part of the African Renaissance advocates, of the centrality of African culture in the African Renaissance, a point we turn our attention to, next.

2.9 The Centrality of African Culture in the African Renaissance

At the time he made these observations – before his martyrdom in 1977 – Biko (2004:102) was painfully aware that African culture, African history, and all aspects of African people's life had been "battered nearly out of shape in the great collision between the indigenous values and the Anglo-Boer culture". In this collision, African spirituality was called "superstition", and Africans were called upon to "cast away their indigenous clothing, their customs" which were dismissed as "pagan and barbaric" (Biko, 2004:60). As if this was not enough, African children, through the colonial school system were taught to "despise their mode of upbringing at home and to question the values and customs of their society" (Biko, 2004:104). Even though "African culture has had to sustain severe blows and may have been battered nearly out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with", Biko (2004:45) notes that "in essence even today one can easily find the fundamental aspects of the pure African culture in the present day African". It is the remnants of African culture that Biko sought to reclaim for a post-colonial South Africa. Biko (2004:32) held a strong view that "one can extract from our indigenous cultures a lot of positive values which should teach the Westerner a lesson or two", one of them being that the "oneness of community for instance is at the heart of our culture". The above observations point to the fact that Biko held the conviction that African cultural reclamation, in other words, the African Renaissance, was a necessary act and contribution towards building not only a just Africa, but a just world, and that this exercise would contribute towards building a humane world. Ahead of Biko, Senghor (1964:79) argued that contrary to the notion held by many African politicians, culture was the "precondition and the goal of any policy worthy of the name". Culture, Senghor (ibid) stressed, was "not an appendage that can be lopped off

without damage". Senghor (ibid) saw little or no use for raising material standards of the masses without raising the standard of their culture. For Senghor (1964:80) all activities being social, and, therefore, cultural, culture "is inside and outside, above and beneath all human activities […] the spirit that animates them, that gives a civilization its unique style". Senghor (1964:81) advanced these arguments in the conviction that "[a]ny revolution worthy of the name is, however, an upsurge of consciousness of oneself and of others". Along Senghor's lines, Diop (1987:ix) notes that African "ideologists" have not succeeded in moving "revolutionary theory" forward in "Black Africa" because for "a long time many of our compatriots have thought they could get by without any deep knowledge of African society and Africa in all aspects: history, languages, ethnicities […] and the like. The conclusions reached have often been abysmally banal, when not plain and simply wrong." This is the case because, as Diop (ibid) further points out, African ideologists have "thought they could make up for the lack of ideas, breath, and revolutionary perspectives by the use of offensive, excessive, and murky vocabulary; they forgot that the truly revolutionary quality of language is its demonstrative clarity based on the objective use of facts and their dialectical relationships, which results in irresistibly convincing the intelligent reader." The point made by Diop is that the lack of appreciation of the centrality of African history and culture led African leaders into being unable to engage with African realities and challenges. Echoing Diop's observation, Cabral (2007:172), having firstly pointed out that [c]ulture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history", proceeds to point out that "[i]gnorance of this fact might explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination as well as the failure of some national liberation movements". The expectation was that the leadership of the liberation movement should have had a "clear notion of the value of culture in the framework of struggle and a profound knowledge of the culture of their people" (Cabral, 2007:174). But an examination of the liberation struggle revealed that this was not the case. Instead, political leaders – "even the most famous" – turned out to be "culturally alienated" (Cabral, 2007:175). This was because in the leadership of the liberation movement, there were those who climbed the ladder, because of their educational qualifications, but still remained trapped in the Western values carried by Western education, having not embraced African cultural values. Having noted that a "[s]tudy of the history of liberation struggles shows that they have generally been proceeded by an upsurge of cultural manifestations which progressively harden into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the dominated people by an act of denial of the culture of the oppressor", Cabral (2007:173 – 174) proceeds to conclude that "national liberation is necessarily an *act of culture*". Demonstrating the centrality of culture in the

African Renaissance beyond the direct colonial era, Cabral (2007:173) argues that "[a] people who free themselves from foreign domination will not be culturally free unless, without underestimating the importance of positive contributions from the oppressor's culture and other cultures, they return to the upwards paths of their own culture". Such a stance implies that a free people "rejects harmful influences as much as any kind of subjection to foreign culture" (ibid). Cabral's articulation of culture is informed by a conviction that for as long as a people "can have cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation" (Cabral, 2007:170). So, for Cabral, an articulation of an African Renaissance, "cultural renaissance" or "returning to the source", were meaningless and "of no historical importance (and would in fact be political opportunism) unless it involves not only a contest against the foreign culture but also complete participation in the mass struggle against foreign political and economic domination" (African Information Service cited in Cabral, 2007:187).

In this study, it must be noted, as Wiredu (1980:10) points out, that "culture means more than art, song and dance". Reference to culture is understood as a people's "total way of life […] seen as well in their work and recreation as in their worship and courtship" (ibid). It is a manner in which a people investigate nature and utilise its possibilities in their ways of viewing themselves and interpreting their place in an environment (ibid). Further, culture is "the manner in which they house and clothe themselves; their method of conducting war and arranging peace; their systems of statecraft, of education, of rewards and punishment and the way they regulate personal relations generally" (ibid). Culture is more than entertainment because it "gives people self-identity" enhancing their "ability to guide themselves, mak[ing] their own decisions, and protect[ing] their interests" (Maathai, 2009:160). Emphasising a clear connection of culture to both a people's history and their future, Maathai (ibid) points out that culture is a "reference point to the past and their antennae to the future". Considering the centrality of culture in the stability of a people, Maathai (ibid) further notes that "[c]onversely, without culture, a community loses self-awareness and guidance, and grows weak and vulnerable" (ibid). In the absence of an ability for a people to exercise its culture, it "disintegrates from within as it suffers a lack of identity, dignity, self-respect and a sense of destiny" (ibid). Reference to culture, then, demonstrates a clear appreciation of a "close, dependent and reciprocal connexion existing between the *cultural factor* and the *economic* (and political) *factor* in the behaviour of human societies" (Cabral, 2007:171). It must be noted, though, that calls for the African cultural renaissance are not the same thing as an advocacy for anything and everything that is perceived as African. Calls for a cultural renaissance in the

struggle for an African Renaissance in pursuit of a quest for a true humanity are informed by a need for a "selective analysis of the values of the culture within the framework of the struggle", this call for selectiveness being informed by an appreciation that the "negative values of the culture are generally an obstacle to the development of the struggle and to the building of that progress" (Cabral, 2007:180). There is a recognition that all cultures, including African culture, have their "strengths and weaknesses, virtues, defects, positive and negative aspects, factors for progress and stagnation or for regression" (Cabral, 2007:179). There is an acknowledgment that while culture can be, on the one hand, an "inexhaustible source of courage, of material and moral support", it can also be, on the other hand, "a source of obstacles and difficulties, of erroneous conceptions of reality" (Cabral, 2007:181). In the quest for an African Renaissance, its advocates are warned by Cabral (2007:180) against, amongst other things,

- Unselective praise
- Systematic exaltation of virtues without condemning defects
- Blind acceptance of the values of culture without considering what is actually or potentially negative, reactionary or regressive

As Maathai (2009:164) points out, culture can be "a double-edged sword that can be used to strike a blow for empowerment or to threaten those who would assert their own self-expression or self-identity. In many communities in Africa and other regions, women are discriminated against, exploited, and controlled through prevailing cultures, which demand that they act in a certain way". In fact, as Mama (2006:55) observes, "[c]ulture left unconsidered and unattended to, works to subvert economic development projects, policies and plans". Clarifying her argument, Mama (ibid) points out that the "everyday manifestation of this can be seen everytime a move towards some level of redistribution – of gender justice – is greeted with shouts about culture and traditions being interfered with". The point made by Mama that whenever the issue of "gender justice" is raised, it is greeted with shouts about culture and traditions being interfered with, will be attended to, later, below.

We cannot leave the discussion on culture in general without addressing an issue often raised in discussions on culture, that being that culture is not static but dynamic, the point being that discussions on culture must not pretend that culture/s is/are frozen in time. This study acknowledges this caveat, but, simultaneously is persuaded by Nhlapo (2000:141), who, in addressing the dynamism of culture, argues that a distinction has to be recognised between the "more superficial and the deeper levels of culture", in other words, the "readily changeable

parts and the durable ones". Illustrating this point, Nhlapo (ibid) further points out that while, on the one hand it may be "easy to give up modes of dress and greeting", on the other hand, "it may not be so easy to adopt a whole new view of what it means to be a person (personhood)". Illustrating this point further, Nhlapo (ibid) points out that while on the one hand "aesthetic values and musical or artistic practices may change over time", on the other hand, this may not be the case with "methods of dealing with life's crises, such as birth or death". In an approach similar to Nhlapo, Myers (2003:122) identifies the "surface structures" and the "deep structure [s]" of culture. The former refers to the outward and physical manifestations which are amenable to change, while the latter refers to the "philosophical assumptions" which are enduring (ibid). Nhlapo's argument is best summed up by Karenga's (2004:24) observation that changes/s in culture does/do not "preclude continuity". Mphahlele's (2002:238) reference to culture "as a concept that defines what we humans do and make to cope with the realities of life" takes care of the concern that deals with the definition of culture. The same applies to Biko's (2004:106) definition of culture as "essentially the society's composite answer to the varied problems of life". Both definitions recognise culture as a phenomenon that addresses humanity's ongoing challenges. As if intending to leave no room for doubt, Biko adds: "We are experiencing new problems every day and whatever we do adds to the richness of our cultural heritage as long as it has man [humanity] as its centre."

Having defined culture in general, we now move to defining African culture, in particular. In this study African culture is understood as the "sum total of African philosophy, behaviour, ideas, and artifacts" (Asante, 1990:4). The philosophical aspect of culture, alluded to in Asante's definition, is underlined in Ntuli's (2004:177) locating of culture as "being central to everything we do and think […] how we live and in what manner we approach death", being "what we do and the reason why we do it, what we wish and why we imagine it". Culture "is the way we see [the] world and the motives that urge us to change it" (ibid). This description of culture by Ntuli demonstrates that culture is seen here as a *conscious* act, driven by *thinking* and *logic* – a philosophical exercise. Secondly, it shows a consciousness that culture is not static but dynamic, responding to immediate challenges that require innovation and different approaches. But even with change, some cultural features endure tenaciously.

Speaking of "African culture" in the singular, instead of in the "plural" – "African cultures" – implies that there is an assumption that there exists one African culture instead of many African cultures. A number of scholars have urged caution against conflating and generalising what is, on the one hand, "ethnically" African, and what is, on the other hand, universally African.

While Williams is an ardent advocate of African cultural unity, he points out that this "distinction is important here, for too often things are characterised as 'African' which apply only to certain societies" (Williams, 1987:162). This distinction is important for another reason, that being that there are those who completely reject the existence of African cultural unity. Morell and Ougzane (2005:1), for instance, observe that beyond the "accepted geographical fact of the African continent – the largest but poorest continent in the world – there continue to be debates about what the term 'Africa' might refer to and whether it has any political utility". Morell and Ougzane (ibid) further note that Africa is an "exceedingly diverse continent in terms of religion, language, climate, topography, economy, governance, and culture". Reference to Africa as merely a "geographical expression", means that colonialists regarded Africa as a mere name or sound applied to a land mass inhabited by a conglomerate of peoples "so fundamentally different from one another that their cultures bore no relation one to the other" (Gyekye, 1995:xxiv). This "exaggerated diversity of African cultures", Gykye (1995:xxiv) further notes, resulted in the "European invention of Africa". These claims of "African diversity", Hilliard emphasises, did not originate from Africans themselves, but from "[f]oreign explorers". The foreign usurpation of Africans' right to self-identification is a perennial struggle that forced Africans into a corner where they had to "suffer both cultural and intellectual humiliation at the hands of a Western imperialism whose scholars presumed to understand more about Africans and their culture than Africans themselves" (Hallen, 2009:12). While it may be true that the exaggerated diversities of African culture originated with foreign explorers, there are African scholars who are advancing this argument with passion. Appiah (1992:24), for instance, points out that "nothing should be more striking for someone without preconceptions than the extraordinary diversity of Africa's peoples and its cultures". Appiah (ibid) recalls the "overwhelming sense of difference" he experienced when he first travelled out of western to southern Africa. Driving through Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, Appiah (ibid) recalls how the "material culture of the Batswana […] struck me as quite radically different from that of Asante". In Gaborone, Appiah (ibid) further recalls, "unlike the Asante, all men dressed in shirts and trousers, most women in skirts and blouses, and most of these clothes were unpatterned, so that the streets lacked the color of the flowing Asante 'cloth'". It struck Appiah (ibid) that the idioms of carving, of weaving, of pottery, and of dance were all unfamiliar. These experiences made Appiah (ibid) wonder "what, in Botswana, was supposed to follow from my being African". What, wondered Appiah (1992:24 – 25), "given all the diversity of the precolonial histories of the peoples of Africa and all the complexity of colonial experiences", did it mean to say that someone is African? The observations and questions raised

by Appiah are aimed at driving his point that "the peoples of Africa have a good deal less culturally in common than is usually assumed" (Appiah, 1992:17). With conviction, Appiah (1992:80) argues that the "reason that Africa cannot take an African cultural or political or intellectual life for granted is that there is no such thing: there are only so many traditions with their complex relationships – and, as often, their lack of any relationship – to each other". Appiah's arguments are flawed in many respects. Firstly, Myers' and Nhlapo's (cited above) nuanced appreciation and explanation of the surface and deep structures of culture seem to have eluded him. This is betrayed by his focus on the dresses of the BaTswana and Asante. While ethnic diversity in clothing among Africans is a creativity to be appreciated and celebrated, it seems to escape Appiah that he is comparing Ghanaian clothes of the Asante with trousers worn by BaTswana imposed by the British – not a comparison of African items with other African items. Again, with reference to the educated BaTswana, Zimbabweans and Nigerians, he is not discussing products of indigenous African education, but those of colonialism. This being his basis, how does Appiah expect to find an answer to his question (cited above): But what, given all the diversity of the precolonial histories of the peoples of Africa and all the complexity of colonial experiences, does it mean to say that someone is African? So convinced and emphatic is Appiah (1992:79) about Africa's cultural diversity such that he goes to the extent of calling upon the Nigerian writer, Wole Soyinka, "not to take an African world for granted but to take for granted his own culture – to speak freely not as an African but as a Yoruba and a Nigerian", as if even within Yoruba culture there are no variations. In more than one way, this caveat has not left African philosophers indifferent. Firstly, for instance, Gbadegesin (2003:175), in pointing out in his essay addressing the Yoruba concept of a person, notes that that he will "limit" himself to the Yoruba traditional thought because "the problem created by generalization for all traditional African societies has been demonstrated by several studies, and should be avoided". Yet, even as Gbadegesin tries to focus on the Yoruba, he cannot fail to notice the cultural commonalities between the Yoruba and the rest of other Africans, thus finding himself compelled to observe that "the average Yoruba, like most Africans **[…]"** (Gbadegesin, 2003:189). In another study on the Yorùbá society, like Gbadegesin, Oyěwùmí (1997:xiv) demonstrates this sensitivity. She (ibid) notes that although findings in her study are applicable to some other African societies, she is hesitant to apply them broadly, primarily because she does not want to "fall into the common trap of erasing a multitude of African cultures by making facile generalizations, a process that results in unwarranted homogenization". Recognition of some variations within African culture/s does not blind Oyěwùmí (1997:142) to the fact of African cultural unity. She (ibid) observes that in

19th century Yorùbáland, "as in most parts of Africa", land was not a commodity to be individually owned, bought, and sold. Along the same lines you find Wiredu (2003:295) observing that "[a] characteristic Akan, and, as it seems, African way of pursuing this ideal […]". The foregoing observation by Wiredu is not a casual remark but a statement informed by a careful observation of various ethnic African groupings. It is for that reason that, from an informed perspective, Wiredu (2003:313) can observe that "viewed against distant cultures of the East and West, Akan culture can be seen to have such fundamental commonalities with other African cultures as to be subsumable under 'African culture' as a general cultural type". Writing about this phenomenon, Wiredu (1980:6) notes that writing about Ghanaian culture is not the same thing as denying the "variety of ethnic groups with traditional cultures that differ in some respects". Rather, it is a recognition that "there are deep underlying affinities running through these cultures which justify speaking of a Ghanaian traditional culture", further noting, significantly, that "[i]ndeed, for the same reason one might speak of the traditional culture of Africa, though with a more considerable attenuation of content" (Wiredu, 1980:6 – 7). The foregoing examples, cited to dispute Appiah's claims, have been deliberately drawn from West Africa: Ghana in the case of Gyekye and Wiredu, and Nigeria in the case of Gbadegesin and Oyěwùmí, in the context of Appiah's challenge to Soyinka (a Nigerian). But commonality or sameness of practices in African culture/s is not limited to West Africa. Long before Appiah penned his book in 1992, in 1969, a good 23 years ahead Appiah, Mbiti wrote a book entitled *African Religions and Philosophy*. In this book, Mbiti (1989:29 – 30), a philosopher from East Africa, observes that "African concepts of God are strongly coloured and influenced by the historical, geographical, social and cultural background or environment of each people". Significantly, Mbiti (1989:30) further points out that this "explains the similarities and differences which we find when we consider the beliefs about God from all over the continent". There are two points that need to be taken note of in the latter observation by Mbiti. The first is that Mbiti recognises not only the differences which Appiah and others emphasise, but also the similarities, which Appiah and others turn a blind eye to. The second point is that Mbiti has taken the trouble to study the traditions of the African people from "all over the continent". As if to emphasise this point, Mbiti (1989:30) goes on to observe that it is "remarkable" that in spite of great distances separating the peoples of one region from those of another, there are sufficient elements of belief which make it possible to discuss African concepts of God "as a unity and on a continental scale". In the Southern African context, writing about amaNdebele Africans, in particular, Nyathi (2001:9) observes that "[a]mong the traditional Ndebele, as with other African peoples […]". Nyathi does not make this comparison among African ethnic

groups only once. Elsewhere, Nyathi (2001:133) makes reference to a case of a "Ndebele man and probably other African people too […]". Appiah's challenge to Soyinka has had an unintended consequence, and an opposite effect to what he sought to achieve. This is so for at least two reasons. Firstly, as I have demonstrated above, and will continue to do so, in the rest of this study, writings that have sought to focus on individual ethnic groups, when brought together, for comparative purposes, have proven that there is a lot common, culturally, among Africans, a reality which some have failed to take into cognisance. Others have been confronted by this reality but chose to ignore and deny it. Secondly, linked to the first reason, studies focusing on one African ethnic group, have the potential to be useful for the rest of the African family. For instance, in her concluding chapter in her book, *What Gender is Motherhood*, Oyěwùmí (2016:211) notes that her goal is to explore ways in which the the understanding of the institution of motherhood and its "unique position in Yorùbá society" can aid in the struggle to transform the lives of "all Africans", but especially the lives of African women and children.

Reflecting on his book, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*, consciously or otherwise addressing Appiah's concerns, Gyekye (1996:xiii) notes that while the ideas presented and discussed in his book are not necessarily understood or practised in a uniform way in all African cultures and societies, it can be argued that there are "sufficient commonalities in many areas of the cultures of the African people to make interminable disputes of the use of the term 'African' unnecessary and unrewarding". The debate about the existence or non-existence of Africanness beyond ethnicity or geography has also posed challenges to attempts to define "African" philosophy. If the designation "African philosophy" is meant to highlight the ethnic or cultural origin of the philosophy in question, Eze (1997a:2) wonders, should one, then, not speak of African philosophies ("Akan philosophy," "Igbo philosophy," "Yoruba philosophy," "Luo philosophy," and so forth), instead of philosophy in the singular, since Africa is made up of significantly diverse national and ethnocultural sources and traditions that constitute the philosophic originations?

This study subscribes to Dove's (2003:167) articulation that makes the point that while from an "Afrocentric perspective there is a recognition of the diversity among African ethnicities", there is, however, also a recognition that "diversity does not preclude sameness". The same way that African ethnic groups have split in the course of migrations, they integrated with or were assimilated by others, thus resulting in cultural integration or assimilation. Addressing this point, Cabral (2007:92) notes that in Guinea-Bissau "the culture of our people is the product of many cultures: each ethnic group has its own culture, but they all share a common

base, in their world view and their relations in society". Further demonstrating appreciation of both diversity and unity in African culture, Cabral (2007:179) further points out that the "fact of recognising the existence of common and special traits in the cultures of the African peoples […] does not necessarily imply that one and only one culture exists on the continent". Rather, in the "same way that from the economic and political point of view one can note the existence of various Africas, so there are also various African cultures (ibid). In his contribution to the debate on African cultural unity versus African cultural diversity, Ntuli (2004:180) notes that "while it is true that Africa is a vast continent with thousands of nationalities and cultures, African cultures display an amazing degree of similarities", further pointing out that an "argument can be made that there are more variations than differences in African cultures". Along these lines, Ramose (2003:230) points out that "a persuasive philosophical argument can be made that there is a 'family atmosphere', that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa". Pointing this out is not the same thing as not acknowledging that there are "variations within this broad philosophical 'family atmosphere'" (ibid). Diop (1989:1; 129), in advancing the notion of African cultural unity, is not content with simply making a declaration on this issue, but points out specifics, namely, the "organisation of the family, the state, in the concept of royalty, in the philosophical and moral systems" (Diop, 1996:129). In line with Diop's approach, Karenga (2004:27) identifies the centrality of community; ancestor veneration/ancestor reverence among what he refers to as "shared orientations" of "African philosophy […] born of similar cultural experiences". This study embraces Diop's and Karenga's views on shared orientations of African philosophy and African culture. In fact, as will be shown later, this study has identified the concept of (a) ancestor reverence/veneration (identified by Karenga), (b) family (identified by Diop) and (c) consensus (identified by both Diop and Karenga) as concrete expressions of African cultural and philosophical unity. These concepts – ancestor reverence, family, and consensus – constitute the key themes that are examined in this study as philosophical concepts that can form the basis of the African Renaissance. Each is examined separately as an independent chapter. In an illuminating observation with reference to African cultural unity, Williams (1987:21) points out that a "continent-wide study of the traditional customary laws of the Blacks, for example, enabled us to learn, for the first time, that a single constitutional system prevailed throughout all Black Africa, just as though the whole race, regardless of the countless patterns, lived under a single government".

Referring to this phenomenon as a "pan-African political culture", Kopytoff (1987:1;10) advances the view that it is "not surprising that Sub-Saharan Africa should exhibit to such a striking degree of a fundamental cultural unity". To be able to understand this "pan-African political culture", one has to appreciate its "feature", that being Africans' "lack of rigid 'rootedness' in physical space" (Kopytoff, 1987:41). This refers to the movements or migrations of African communities from place to place. As one African community moved and settled into another "they shared the basic elements of the general pan-African political culture and, most likely, the local regional variant of it" (Kopytoff, 1987:27). Thus, Kopytoff (ibid) further points out, "the immigrant group was on the one hand free of moral and social constraints in the pursuit of its interests and, on the other, capable of dealing with the surrounding population in terms of common cultural understandings" (ibid). As a feature of this "pan-African culture", Williams (1987:175) observes that African "constitutional principles and practices were held on to and carried by the migrating Blacks to every part of the African continent".

Among African philosophers who articulated a quest for a re-humanised humanity was Frantz Fanon (1967:253). For Fanon (1967:251), in order to bring about the new humanity, the new world which he envisaged, its agents would have to "Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe". Leaving this Europe, though, was not in the sense of the physical, but the psychological. Fanon (1967:251 – 252) urged fellow revolutionaries to "decide not to imitate Europe" but to "combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction". Fanon (1967:251 – 252) appealed to his comrades to "do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe". Fanon (1967:254) urged his fellow companions in the revolution to "not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw their inspiration from her. Humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature." Fanon (1967:254) argued that if there was a desire to advance humanity a step farther and higher, the task was to make new inventions and discoveries, but not to seek to ape Europe because, in Fanon's view, if the quest is to "turn Africa into a new Europe" then Africa's destiny should be left to Europeans because Europeans "will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us". Fanon (1967:252) was well aware, though, that while it was commendable to oppose what was undesirable, it was more important to propose an alternative.Cognisant of the necessity not only to oppose, but also to propose, Fanon

(1967:255) pointed out that for "Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man". The task facing the world brutalised by European colonialism was to "reconsider the question of cerebral reality and of the cerebral mass of all humanity, whose connexions must be increased, whose channels must be diversified and whose messages must be re-humanized" (Fanon, 1967:253). Fanon's re-humanisation of humankind was to endeavour "to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth" (Fanon, 1967:252). While it is quite clear that Fanon sought the emergence of a new humanity, was cognisant of the need for a new model, alternative schemas and examples, and was emphatic that "[i]f we wish to live up to our people's expectations, we must seek the response elsewhere than in Europe" (Fanon, 2001:254), the question must be raised: Where do we look for this model? An examination of Fanon's writings would reveal that while there is a shared rejection of Eurocentrism between Fanon and Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric philosophers, there is a sharp disagreement between them as far as the latter's suggestion that African history and culture should serve as a source of guidance for the future. In no uncertain terms, Fanon (2017:193) argues that the "discovery of the existence of a Negro civilization in the fifteenth century confers no patent of humanity on me. Like it or not, the past can in no way guide me in the present moment". Fanon (2017:194) explicitly states that he does not derive his basic purpose from "the past of the peoples of color", nor seeks to dedicate himself to the "revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization". Not prepared to make himself "the man of any past", Fanon (ibid) does not want to "exalt the past" at the expense of his present and future. But Fanon must not be misunderstood. In rejecting the past as the basis of his future, is not the same as rejecting the relevance of history, in recognizing its good and the bad, and its impact in enabling and constraining humanity's endeavours. Fanon (1967:169) had a full appreciation that "colonialism is not content merely to impose its rule on the colonised country's present and future of a dominated country". Fanon (ibid) is fully conscious that "[c]olonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content". Fanon (ibid) recognises that by "a kind of perverted logic, [colonialism] turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it". Fully conscious of these facts as he was, Fanon refused to be confined and limited to celebrating, reclaiming and identifying only with African or Black history. Instead of only focusing on the reclamation of African history, his mission was to "recapture […] the whole past of the world" (Fanon, 2017:194). Taking an internationalist position, as opposed to a national one with reference to history, Fanon (2017:195) points out that if the question practical solidarity with a given past

ever arose for him, it did so only to the extent to which he is committed to himself and to his neighbor to fight for all his life and with all his strength so that never again would a people on the earth be subjugated. But, Fanon (ibid) further points out, it was "not the black world that laid down" his course of conduct. His "black skin is not the wrapping of specific values" (ibid). The celebration of an African past or history outside the context of the liberation struggle was meaningless for Fanon (1967:187). Fanon (ibid) argued that the "colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening up the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope". To to ensure that hope and to give it form, "he must take part in action and throw himself body and soul into the national struggle" (ibid).

As pointed out earlier, Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist advocates of the African Renaissance would not quarrel with Fanon's position of perceiving the struggle for liberation as one that would not only seek for the liberation of Africans, but the liberation of all humankind. But they would, as they do, insist that Africans have a responsibility of reclaiming their history and their culture, not for the purposes of romanticisation but for the restoration of their own sense of dignity. They would argue, as they do, that as African members of the human race, they, too, must bring their own contribution to the table of human cultures, thus being producers and not consumers, fellow drivers, not passengers. Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist advocates of the African Renaissance who insist on drawing inspiration from their own past need not go very far in defending their stance than quoting Fanon (1967:199) himself who points out that the "consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee." As is the case with Fanon, for Afrocentrists and Pan-Africanists, history is not seen as an issue isolated and apart from the struggle for the liberation of humankind. Even though Afrocentrists would, as they do, disagree with Fanon on his denial of a pan-African culture, they would, as they do, share his perception on the importance of culture in the struggle for the liberation of humankind. Fanon's approach to pan-African culture is consistent with his engagement with African history. Placed out of context, and not closely and rigorously examined, Fanon's position can easily invite hostility from Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist advocates of the African Renaissance for what they may see as a negative attitude on Fanon's part towards a pan-African culture. In a combative tone, Fanon (1967:188) argues that "Men of African cultures who are still fighting in the name of Negro-African culture and who have called many congresses in the name of unity of that culture should today realize that all their efforts amount to is to make comparisons between coins and sarcophagi." Fanon (ibid) further boldly declares that there is "no common destiny between the

national cultures of Senegal and Guinea; but there *is* a common destiny between the Senegalese and Guinean nations which are both dominated by the same French colonialism". Emphatically dismissive, Fanon (ibid) further points out that "[t]here can be no two cultures which are completely identical". Further arguing that "[t]here will never be such a thing as black culture because there is not a single politician who feels he has a vocation to bring black republics into being", Fanon (2001:188 – 189) points out that that the "problem is to get to know the place that these men give to their people, the kind of social relations that they decide to set up and the conception that they have of the future of humanity". As far as Fanon (2001:189) is concerned, it is "this [the conception of the future of humanity] that counts; everything else is mystification, signifying nothing". But what does Fanon mean when he says that there is no common destiny between the "national cultures" of Guinea and Senegal, but concedes that there is a "common destiny between the Senegalese and Guinean nations which are both dominated by the same French colonialism"? Let us first address the second question because it is easier and quicker to do so, and then proceed to answer the first question. Historically, both Guinea and Senegal were French colonies. In seeking independence from France, which dominated both, their destiny towards freedom was the same. This, Fanon understood and accepted. But Fanon did not recognise a common destiny between the two countries' national cultures. But before we proceed to examine Fanon's argument and seek to attempt to address our first question above, let us first ascertain what Fanon's understanding of "culture" was. For Fanon (1967:196), "culture is first the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns". Having thus established Fanon's understanding of what culture is, let us try to locate his stance within a historical context. Fanon (1967:170) was aware that historically "[c]olonialism, which has not bothered to put too fine a point on its efforts, has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is a savage; and for the colonist, the Negro was neither an Angolan nor a Nigerian, for he simply spoke of 'the Negro'." The implication of the colonialist's attitude in this regard, Fanon understood very well. It meant that the colonialists' condemnation of Africans, culturally, was not regional or ethnic, but, as Fanon, (1967:170) understood it very well, the "contention by colonialism that the darkest nigh of humanity lay over pre-colonial history concerns the whole of the African continent". Consequently, Fanon (ibid), further observes, as a result of the colonialists lumping all Africans and the entire continent as being inferior to the Europeans, in response to this denigration, the "native intellectual […] who has got it into his head to proclaim the existence of another culture never does so in the name of Angola or Dahomey" but rather, the "culture which is affirmed is African culture" in an effort to "demonstrate that a Negro culture exists" (ibid). This African

intellectuals' approach of not only defying ethnic or regional limitations but extending African cultural solidarities beyond the continent by reconnecting African cultural solidarities to Africans in the diaspora, led, in Fanon's (1967:172) view, to a "blind alley". In advancing this logic, Fanon (1967:172) cites the formation of what he refers to as the "African Cultural Society" which was established by African intellectuals whose objective was to establish relations with the aim of acquainting one another so as to compare their experiences and research to as to "affirm the existence of an African culture". Elsewhere Fanon (1967:189) refers to the organisation, correctly, as the "Society of African Culture". Fanon (1967:173) further notes that in addition to the above-stated mission, the "African Cultural Society" wanted to take its place within the ranks of the "European Society for Culture" which, *significantly*, threatened to turn into the "Universal Society for Culture", in the true tradition of Eurocentrism. This pan-African cultural response, Fanon (1967:170) refers to as "Negro-ism", an approach which he describes as an "unconditional affirmation of African culture [which] has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture". At the root of the decision to form the "African Cultural Society", there was, on the part of those who formed this Society, the "anxiety to be present at the universal trysting place fully armed, with a culture springing from the very heart of the African continent" (Fanon, 1967:173). While such an "attitude is normal and draws its legitimacy from the lies propagated by men of Western culture", this attitude was limiting for its very advocates for a number of reasons according to Fanon (ibid). The first reason advanced by Fanon (ibid) was that the approach of the advocates of "Negro-ism" was reduced to "exhibitionist demonstrations", where the "habitual behaviour" of the "African Cultural Society"'s members was to be "confined to showing Europeans that such a thing as African culture exists, and opposing their ideas to those of ostentatious and narcissistic Europeans" (ibid). The second reason was that the "American Negroes", having realised "little by little" that the "essential problems confronting them were not the same as those that confronted African Negroes", that the "Negroes of Chicago only resemble the Nigerians and the Tanganyikans in so far as they were all defined in relation to whites", and having concluded the problems between the "American Negroes" and "African Negroes" were "fundamentally heterogeneous", during the second congress of the African Cultural Society the American Negroes decided to create an American society for people of black cultures (Fanon, 1967:173 – 174). For Fanon, the act of African intellectuals proving to the European world that African culture existed, was meaningless and made no significant contribution to the African people's liberation struggle. After all, Fanon (1967:179 – 180) argues, further "No colonial system draws its justification from the fact that the territories it dominates are culturally non-existent.

You will never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes." As far as Fanon (1967:187) was concerned, to fight for national culture meant, in the first place, to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible. Fanon (1967:189) held a strong view, and a passionate conviction that no one could truly wish for the spread of African culture if he did not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture, "in other words, to the liberation of the whole continent" (emphasis added). In giving lucidity to the preceding argument, Fanon (1967:191) points out that a "national culture under colonial domination is a contested culture whose destruction is sought in a systematic fashion. It very quickly becomes a culture condemned to secrecy." This practice of African culture in secrecy was a consequence of the colonialists' view that those who continued in that trajectory in the face of European physical and cultural onslaught, were manifesting loyalty to the colonised, and waging resistance against the colonialists, that is, refusing to submit to the colonialists' domination (ibid). What emerges, though, is that even if Fanon did not subscribe to the existence of African cultural unity, he was willing to work, as he did, with those who espoused the concept. But what he certainly could not stomach was the elevation of African culture on the one hand, and the relegation of the liberation struggle, on the other hand, by some of its advocates. In Fanon's experience, some advocates of African cultural unity failed to appreciate this crucial aspect. Two cases illustrate this point. The first is that of Jacques Rabemananjara, who was a minister in the government of Madagascar. At the second Congress of Black Writers and Writers held in Rome in 1959, Fanon (1967:189) notes that Rabemananjara was one of the "loudest in the praise of [African] cultural unity", and yet he was part of a government that opposed the Algerian people's struggle against French colonialism at the General Assembly of the United Nations. If Rabemananjara had been true to his declared commitment to African cultural unity, Fanon (ibid) argued, he should have denounced his government and resigned from it. Commitment to African cultural unity, one the one hand, and supporting French colonialism, on the other hand, Fanon, reasoned, were neither reconcilable nor compatible (ibid). The second case that Fanon identified was that of the Senegalese president, Léopold Senghor, who was a member of the Society of African Culture (Fanon, 2001:189). Senghor, "who has worked with us on the question of African culture, is not afraid for his part either to give the order to his delegation to support French proposals on Algeria". This, Fanon, could not accept, and his rejection of such a stance informed his critique of the advocates of the rebirth of African culture and the unity thereof. Fanon is not specific on how Senghor supported African culture on the one hand, and at the

same time supported French demands on Algeria. But for the record it must be noted that the African Society of Culture of which Senghor was a member stood opposed to the idea that the European world had the right to arrogate to itself the responsibility to "civilise" Africans (Senghor, 1964:68).

At this point it is necessary to identify and examine the philosophical premise for Senghor's conviction in culture as an instrument for African liberation. Such an exercise leads us to the concept called Négritude.

2.10 Négritude

The Négritude movement was launched by Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léon Gontran Damas from Guiana, and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal (Kelley, 2000:11) The term was first used by Césaire in a short piece of writing against assimilation in a journal called L'Etudiant noir (Kelley, 2000:12). In discussing Négritude, I will do so first by providing a historical background of Négritude and then discuss its manifestations.

(a) Négritude: A definition and historical background

Senghor (1964:133) defines Négritude as the "common denominator of all Negro Africans, whatever their race, religion, or country". Reference to the "common denominator of all Negro Africans" meant common Africans' *cultural* values. The concept, "Négritude", derives from the word "*nègre*" (Depestre, 2000:89). In an environment where Antilleans, in Martinique, "were ashamed of being Negroes", had a sense of "shame about the word *nègre*", and, consequently, "searched for all sorts of euphemisms for Negro", Aimé Césaire, an Antillean himself, and the first person ever to use the word, Négritude, notes that the choice of the word as a philosophical outlook was an act of "defiance", a "violent affirmation in the words *nègre* and négritude" (Depestre, 2000:88 – 89). Even though Césaire takes the responsibility for using the term Négritude, first, he attributes the birth of the concept to a "collective creation", the possibility being that it emerged in a group discussion (Depestre, 2000:88). In an environment in Martinique where descendants of Africa knew nothing or little about the African continent, and the little they knew was negative, Europeans despising everything African, in France regarding Africa as barbaric, and Europe, civilised, Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:88) notes that Négritude emerged as a "resistance of the politics of assimilation". In the context of the Antilles, "assimilation" referred to a situation where the French, feeling superior to the descendants of Africa, thought that the "best thing one could do with an African was to assimilate him: the deal

[being] to turn him into a Frenchman with black skin" (Depestre, 2000:88). In an "atmosphere of rejection", resulting in an inferiority complex and a quest for an identity, Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:91 – 92) came to the realisation and the conclusion that Negroes had to have a concrete consciousness of who they were – the fact of their blackness, their black history which "contains certain cultural elements of great value", their black civilisations, pride in being Negro heritage worthy of respect which should not be relegated to the past but worthy of making an important contribution to the world. What the above meant, then, as Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:89) notes, was that the Negroes' struggle in the Antilles "was a struggle against alienation" and that this "struggle gave birth to Negritude". Therefore, Négritude, as Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:91) observes, was a "concrete rather than abstract coming to consciousness".

(b) Négritude: A coming to concrete consciousness

The need for a "concrete consciousness", as outlined by Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:91), in the struggle against assimilation, for the freedom and independence of African people the world over, was also articulated by Senghor (1964:158 – 159) as a quest, on the part of Négritude to awaken dormant engergies, combat prejudices, inferiority complexes and the fatalist spirit – these tasks were a "a *sine qua non* of the revolution". Just as is the case with Césaire, whose emphasis on consciousness in the context of Négritude is linked to the freedom struggle of the Negroes, Senghor's emphasis on consciousness in the context of Négritude was linked to the revolution, as stated above. As if to ensure that no one is left in doubt about his identification of consciousness and Négritude with the revolution, Senghor (1964:81) points out that "[a]ny revolution worthy of the name is, however, an upsurge of consciousness, consciousness of oneself and of others". The task of Senghor's revolution, in the context of Négritude, was "a question of building a great Negro-African […] nation" (Senghor, 1984:84). For the Negro-African nation to be great, it had to regain its independence from European colonialism, but for that independence to be realised, Senghor (1964:69) was convinced that "cultural independence, is the necessary prerequisite of other independences: political, economic, and social". The path to a total independence for the Negro-African, in Senghor's (1964:132) view meant or implied "a return to our roots, to the values of *Négritude*".

(c) Négritude's "return to our roots": An expression of the African Renaissance

A return to the roots, "[m]ore explicitly, […] is a question of remaining deeply rooted in our *Négritude*, of integrating it with the most modern, fruitful, and effective discoveries and inventions" (Senghor, 1964:165). While there should be a willingness on the part of Negro Africans to interact with ideologies from other peoples, in the context of Négritude, such should not be done without a critical examination (ibid). If Senghor's (1964:132) statement about the "return to our roots, to the values of *Négritude*" was implicit, and left room for different interpretations, Senghor's (1964:80) emphasis that the "return" meant "return to our cultural roots" was explicit and left no room for different interpretations. While on the one hand, Senghor, in the name of Négritude, advocated a "return" to Negroes' cultural roots, on the other hand, Césaire (2000:44) disassociated himself from such a stance. To a charge that he was "a prophet of the return to the pre-European past", Césaire (2000:44 – 45) retorted that he had searched "in vain for the place" where he could have "expressed such views", where he "ever preached a *return* of any kind"; where he "ever claimed that there could be a *return*". The truth, (Césaire, 2000:45) pointed out, was that he had said "something very different". A question needs to be raised at this point: what was that "something very different" that Césaire had advocated? In this regard, Césaire (2000:51 – 52) pointed out that while he stood for a systematic defence of old Negro civilisations, which were courteous civilisations, the problem was "not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond". The issue was not a revival of "a dead society" but a creation of "a new society" (Césaire, 2000:52). Does this mean that though both Senghor and Césaire propounded Négritude, they had differences in their approaches? The answer is in the affirmative. This comes out clearly when Césaire (ibid) cites the Soviet Union as an example of what is possible. Césaire's pointing to the Soviet Union as a society to be emulated was not a whimsical gesture. His gesture was informed by an ideological conviction. While he advocated Négritude, he was, at the same time a Marxist (Kelley, 2000:25). In line with Marxism, Césaire (2000:78) advocated a "classless society". As we will see later, Senghor stood opposed to Marxism as a solution to Africans' problems, and, instead, advocated African socialism. This difference, notwithstanding, their commitment to Négritude overshadowed their differences. For even though Césaire expressed opposition to "a return to the pre-European past', he was not opposed to a reclamation of African cultural heritage – in fact he, in the name of Négritude, endorsed African cultural reclamation (Depestre, 2000:84). When Depestre (2000:84) in an interview

with Césaire, asked the latter if he was involved in an "effort to reclaim the African heritage", Césaire answered in the affirmative, his exact words being "Absolutely". His expression that the "black man was searching for his identity" of which he was forcibly separated from, and a struggle that Césaire was committed to, was a struggle to "return" to the self. The struggle waged by the Négritude movement, therefore, was in the service of the African Renaissance. Even though Césaire, tried to distance himself from being associated with the "return", he did not have the last word on the issue. Association with the "return" has doggedly followed him. Masolo (1994:1) notes that when Césaire published his book, *Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land*, in 1939, he introduced two new concepts, which, subsequently, would turn out to be central in the discourse on African identity, also determining new discourse among French-speaking black people, both in the African continent and in the diaspora. The two new concepts Masolo (ibid) refers to are Négritude and the word "return". The latter – "return" – Masolo (ibid) accurately points out, appears, in the title of Césaire's book, *Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land*. Even if it was not Césaire's intention to advocate a "return" to the past, the book took its own direction, independently of Césaire, and created an *impression*, on the part of its readers that was not necessarily Césaire's *expression*. The "return" in Césaire's title was read in at least two ways. In the first instance, the "return" was literal or physical, and, in the second instance, the "return" was metaphorical or conceptual (Masolo, 1994:2). In the first instance, the literal or physical "return" refers to Césaire's "historical repatriation to a geographical or perceptual space, Martinique" (Masolo, 1994:2). The second instance, the metaphorical or conceptual "return" is making reference to a "regaining of a conceptual space in which culture is both field and process – first of alienation and domination, but now, most importantly, of rebellion and self-refinding" (Masolo, 1994:2). Taking into cognisance Masolo's persuasive observations on Césaire's writings, does this mean that Masolo is missing the point or that Césaire was full of contradictions? A meticulous reading of Césaire would reveal that neither Masolo is missing the point, and nor is Césaire, on the issue of the "return" is contradictory. This assessment would make sense if and when one takes into consideration that when Césaire argued against being depicted as urging a "return" to the past, this point was made in his book, *Discourse On Colonialism*, which was published for the first time in 1950 (Kelley, 2000:7). Seventeen years after *Discourse On Colonialism* was first published, in an interview with René Depestre, when Depestre (2000:84) asked Césaire if in his work was an effort to "reclaim" his "authentic character", and an "effort to reclaim the African heritage", Césaire answered in the affirmative:

"Absolutely". Instead of being seen as contradictory, his stance could and should be seen as an evolution of thinking on Césaire's part, a refining of ideas. Césaire, himself, alludes to this point in his interview with Depestre (in Depestre, 2000:81) where notes that his book, *Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land*, which was written at around the age of 26, is a "young person's book" written after he had gone back to his country, Martinique, returning from France after an absence of ten years. In writing his autobiography, Césaire was going through a journey, an evolution in an intellectual exercise. But his journey was not an aimless one without a destination. As a poet, Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:82) "wanted to break wth French literary traditions". Césaire in his intellectual development was on a journey of self-discovery, a journey of a "return" to his African self or, what he refers to as his "African heritage". Césaire acknowledges, this, too. When Césaire, together with Senghor, and a few Africans, both from the continent and the diaspora, had a meeting in Paris, Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:88), about this meeting, makes a significant observation: "We were discovering ourselves. This was very important." (ibid) So, those, who, including Masolo, read and interpreted his works as an advocacy for a "return" to the African past were not wrong. What Césaire could and should have said in clarifying himself to those who associated him with calling for a "return" to the past was that such an exercise should be critical and selective, not a blanket approach. After all, his colleague in Négritude, Senghor (1964:132), declared unequivocally that Négritude was about "return to our roots". A Marxist that he was, Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:85) insisted to fellow Communists that the African or Negro question should never take second second fiddle to the class question. He (ibid) criticised fellow Communists who ignored "Negro characteristics" and acted like "abstract Communists". He (ibid) maintained that the political question could not do away with "our condition as Negroes". In taking this approach, Senghor played no small role in influencing Césaire (ibid). Césaire (ibid) "knew absolutely nothing about Africa" until he met Senghor who told him "a great deal about Africa" and "made an enormous impression" on him for which he was "indebted" to him for the revelation of Africa and African singularity (ibid). When he began to know something about Africa, Césaire (2001:32) made an effort to celebrate, through poetry, Africa and his "prodigious ancestry!":

> Those who invented neither powder nor compass
>
> those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
>
> those who explored neither the seas nor the sky

but who know in its minute corners the land of suffering

those who have known voyages only through uprootings

In a world that vilified and despised blackness, Césaire (2001:35), confrontationally, celebrates being black not only for what it is, but also for what it is not, what it represents, and what it does not represent:

My negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day

my negrititude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye

my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

it takes root in the red flesh of the soil

it takes root n the ardent flesh of the sky

it breaks through opaque prostration with it upright patience.

Eia for the royal Cailcedra!

Eia for those who never invented anything

Eia for those who never explored anything

Eia for those who never conquered anything

but yield, captivated, to the essence of things

ignorant of surfaces but captivated by the motion of all things

indifferent to conquering, but playing the game of the world

While Césaire's poem, above, sought to affirm blackness, in Diop's (1991:217) assessment, accepting that Africans were those "who explored neither the seas nor the sky", it made a concession to Europe's racist claims that Africans had, historically, created or invented nothing, and that all inventions were European. Diop (ibid) further points out that "the 'Negritude' movement accepted this so-called inferiority and boldly assumed it in full view of the world" because the "'Negritude' poets did not, at that time, have the scientific means to refute or to question these types of errors". To Césaire's credit, as pointed out above, there was a stage in his intellectual growth when he knew absolutely nothing about Africa. But he made an effort to learn about African history. And when he did, he celebrated it even

more. Not only did Césaire (2000:56) condemn the "historians of colonization" for the "mechanism by which they delude their readers", but went further by noting that their misleading falsification of history "has been taken apart by Sheikh (sic) Anta Diop in his book *Nations nègres et culture*, the most daring book yet written by a Negro and one which will without question play an important part in the awakening of Africa". Césaire's acknowledgment and celebration of Diop is an indication of his appreciation of Diop's critique of Césaire's pronouncement in his book, *Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land* in which Césaire (2001:35) had celebrated his African ancestors even though they had "never invented anything". Diop's influence shone in Césaire's later book, *Discourse On Colonialism*, in which Césaire (2000:69) disputed the false charge that the "West invented science" and that the "West alone knows how to think". Césaire (ibid) then states boldly that "there remain a few small facts that resist this doctrine", citing "the invention of arithmetic and geometry by the Egyptians". Attributing the *invention* of arithmetic and geometry to the ancient Egyptians was a clear shift from his earlier pronouncement that his African ancestors had *invented* nothing, an indication of Césaire's intellectual growth and evolution within the context of Négritude. Diop's criticism was not only reserved for Césaire. Diop (1991:218) also took Senghor on for declaring that "Emotion is Negro and reason is Greek". Senghor was aware of Diop's argument. He did not let it pass without a response. In explaining himself, Senghor (1964:73) pointed out that however "paradoxical it may seem, the vital force of the Negro African, his surrender to the object, is animated by reason". Notwithstanding this concession, Senghor (1964:73 – 74) argued that the Negro African is "not the *reasoning-eye* of Europe", but, rather, the "*reason of the touch*, better still, the *reasoning-embrace*, the sympathetic reason, more related to the Greek *logos* than to the Latin *ration*". Having pointed out that "European reasoning is analytical, discursive by utilization", and that "Negro-African reasoning is intuitive by participation", Senghor (1964:74), in an indirect reference to Diop, notes that "[y]oung people in Black Africa are wrong to develop a complex and to believe the latter inferior to the former". Taking the argument further, Senghor (1964:75) raises a rhetorical question. Senghor (ibid) categorically dismissed suggestions that he had ever said that the Negro African lacked discursive reason. Having pointed out that no civilisation could be built without using discursive reason and without techniques, Senghor (ibid) further added that the "Negro-African civilization is no exception to this rule". If that is the case then, a question needs to be asked at this point: what is the difference, exactly between an African's and a European's reasoning, as far as Senghor was concerned? In addressing this question, Senghor (1964:72)

points out that in contrast to the classic European, the Negro-African does not draw a line between himself and the object examined. Senghor (ibid) further points out that the Negro-African neither holds at a distance, nor merely looks and analyse the object examined. Thus, Senghor (1964:72 – 73) further points out the "Negro African *sympathizes*, abandons his personality to become identified with the Other, dies to be reborn in the Other. He does not assimilate, he is assimilated. He lives a common life with the Other; he lives in a symbiosis." A close and careful examination of Senghor's (1964:75) writings reveals that he was conscious of, and appreciated indigenous and pre-colonial political science, architecture and judicial systems. He (ibid) brought attention to the earliest European navigators' "astonishment" on seeing, in Africa, "well-organized states, with government, administrators, justice, and army, with techniques (remarkable for that date) for working in wood, ivory, bronze, iron, basketry, weaving and terra cotta, with medical and agricultural techniques worthy of Europe".

In another interesting critique with reference to what Andrews (2018:112) perceives as the limitations of Négritude, he argues that "the problem with negritude […] is not the idea of reclaiming African culture, which is clearly important given the extent of cultural genocide. The problem is that it represents reclaiming our culture as an endpoint to liberation itself." Such an approach of Négritude, as understood by Andrews (2018:113) is that the Négritude movement failed to appreciate that the "problems facing Black people worldwide are not in our minds", but rather "in our streets, the schools, and the political and economic system", and that "[t]here is no way to think, teach or drum our way to freedom". Andrews' critique clearly reveals that he does not appreciate the historical development of the Négritude movement. This lack of appreciation of the evolution of the Négritude movement leaves him ignorant to the fact that, as Senghor (1964:144) himself notes, he "demanded, as early as 1946, national *independence* and immediate internal autonomy for all overseas territories. As a matter of fact, this was the primary condition for all other disalienations: economic, social, cultural." Senghor's observation that national independence is the primary condition for all other disalienations reveals his consciousness of the indivisible link between a people's sovereignty, on the one hand, and economic, social, and cultural freedom on the other hand. More specifically, it is an appreciation that no people can express themselves fully, culturally, unless and until they are independent. It is in this context that Masolo (1994:25), appropriately, observes that "for Senghor and his friends politics was but one aspect of culture". This nuanced understanding of the Négritude

movement on Masolo's part enables him to tread cautiously, and to declare that the Négritude movement was "much more a cultural movement than a political one (at least at the beginning)" (ibid). His nuanced understanding, even though he, unlike Senghor, separates culture from politics, at least recognises that the Négritude movement did not begin and end with "culture", if we bow down to a narrow understanding of "culture" as being limited to the "arts". This nuanced understanding is further demonstrated by Lee's (2015:48) appreciation of the fact that "Négritude confronted the effects of racial discrimination and political inequality". Furthermore, as Lee (2015:48 – 49) further observes, the Négritude movement "adopted this mantle of political aspiration through cultural expression, primarily poetry". Citing Abiola Irele, the Nigerian literary critic, Lee (2015:49) concludes that the Négritude movement "was at once a literary and ideological movement that signalled a 'collective consciousness' that resisted the strictures of French colonialism". Interestingly, though, even as Lee acknowledges the Négritude movement's anti-racist and anti-inequality stance, Lee (2015:49 – 50) notes that it is important to stress that Négritude "as defined during the 1930s was not anticolonial", adding that though it though it condemned racial exclusion, it "desired accommodation within French cultural life, not the end of French imperial rule as such – a key contrast with Fanon's vehement anticolonialism during the late 1950s and early 1960s". Lee (2015:51) goes on to point out that Senghor and Césaire turned toward a sharper rhetoric after the Second World War as seen in Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and Senghor's ascension to Senegal's presidency. As pointed out earlier, Senghor called for independence in 1946, two years before 1948, the year in which Négritude supposedly "attained a peak", according to Lee. So passionate was Senghor about African independence from European domination that in 1946 he made explicit to "the whites" Africans' "unshakable determination to win our independence" and that "violence", if necessary, would be employed (Cook, 1964:vii). It is wrong to limit the Négritude movement's anti-colonial stance to even the late 1940s, the date Lee makes reference to, if one reads the Négritude movement's history through the eyes of Négritude's advocates, with particular reference to Césaire. In Césaire's book, *Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land*, Césaire (2001:15) points out to "Haiti where negritude rose for the first time". Reference to Haiti speaks to the slave revolt in Haiti that was led by Tousaint Louverture, which brought about the Haitian independence in 1804 (Eshleman & Smith, 2001:60). This declaration means that even though the term Négritude was first used by Césaire in 1935, Césaire held the view that the notion found its expression in Haiti in 1804 before its coinage in 1935. In Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:90) own words,

Haiti was "Negritude in action. Haiti is the country where Negro people stood up for the first time, affirming their determination to shape a new world, a free world." In an interview with Depestre in 1967, fifty-one years before Andrews made the above remarks, Césaire (Depestre, 2000:94) had addressed himself on the issue raised by Andrews by pointing "Negritude was, after all, part of the left", adding that he "never thought for a moment that our emancipation could come from the right", such being "impossible". Contrary to Lee's failure to recognise the Négritude movement's anti-colonial stance, Vergès (2020:xiii) celebrates Césaire as "a prominent figure of anticolonialism". Smith (2020:viii) sums up the Négritude movement accurately in noting that it was "a movement whose goals were twofold: to contest racism and colonialism by cultural means; and to create a collective identity based on a set of shared cultural values and experiences." This description or definition clearly positions the Négritude movement squarely into the movement of Pan-Africanism.

(d) Négritude: An integral part of Pan-Africanism

Situating Négritude as an integral part of Pan-Africanism is correct a analysis because advocates of Négritude perceived and regarded themselves as such. Négritude, to Césaire (in Depestre, 2000:92), meant "an affirmation of [Black/African] solidarity", a recognition of what happened to Africans in Algeria and the USA affected all Africans throughout the world. Césaire (in Vergès, 2020:39 – 40) advanced the view that Africans had to "work towards a united Africa", adding that "Africans should at the very least recognize themselves as belonging to the same continent, with a common ideal, and fight together against a common enemy, no longer seeking this enemy within the country but outside it". While the Négritude movement held high the banner of Pan-Africanism, had lofty ideals, the concern was about how this would serve the interests of the ordinary people, the African masses the world over.

(e) The Négritude Movement: Simplifying philosophy for the African masses

The concern for the African masses haunted Césaire (in Vergès, 2020:28) a great deal when he visited Haiti as a young man. There, he met many intellectuals "some […] very smart, but […] real bastards" (ibid). When he visited Haiti's countryside, he saw the peasants "working like chained animals […] authentic but pitiful". Haunting Césaire (ibid) was this question: "How do you bring the world of intellectuals together with this world of peasants, how do you achieve a real union between them?" (ibid) In Haiti, Césaire (in Vergès,

2020:31) noticed a “great deal of problems”, met “some good men” who were “powerless” though.

> Their efforts seemed trivial in the face of a terribly complex society and its frequent tragedies […] Intellectuals wrote poems, they took positions on the issue of the day, but they remained cut off from the people. It was tragic […] (Césaire in Vergès, 2020:31 – 32).

The Négritude movement had to do something practical for the masses, something beyond the abstraction of the intellectuals. Senghor and Césaire (Césaire in Vergès, 2020:37) wanted to reach and talk to the masses, but the challenge confronting them was how to do such. Recognising the limitation of reaching them through poetry, Césaire (ibid) explored the theatre as an instrument of communication, to stage African history “in a way that everyone could understand it”.

2.11 Conclusion

In the first chapter of this study we observed that in convening the first African Renaissance conference in South Africa in 1998, the conveners were clear in their minds that they sought, through the conference to “formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses” (Makgoba et al, 1999:i). In order to accomplish this mission, the conveners expressed appreciation that they would need “political philosophies” as a guidance for the African Renaissance vision (Makgoba et al, 1999:ii). What, in other words, the African Renaissance conveners sought was an intervention by philosophers to provide, not just abstraction, associated with philosophers, but ideas that would usher practical solutions. This chapter – by tracing the historical origins of the African Renaissance idea – has illustrated that the quest of the African Renaissance conference organisers for “practical solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses” was nothing new, but a common factor among the advocates of the African Renaissance. This historical fact came out as we examined the writings of Wilmot Edward Blyden, Pixle ka Isaka Seme, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah and Thabo Mbeki. The examination of their literature revealed two important interrelated issues, these being that the African Renaissance concept is, historically, a vehicle of Africa’s liberation struggle, and, more specifically, a project of the movement of Pan-Africanism. This, therefore, means that historically, the African Renaissance idea, historically, is aligned with the quest to “formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses”.

These masses have been identified as the workers, the marginalised women of Africa and the vulnerable children of the African continent. Cognisant of the historical role played by Eurocentric education is psychologically damaging African people by robbing them of their self-esteem and inculcating an inferiority complex, a number of African philosophers such as Blyden, Azikiwe, Cheikh Anta Diop and Kwame Nkrumah called for an Afrocentric education. Conscious of the fact that colonial education inflicted admiration for European languages and contempt for African languages since the former was a ticket to comfortable life controlled by Europeans, African philosophers such as Blyden, Diop and Nkrumah called for the centering of African languages for the realisation of the African Renaissance. The call was not merely for the reclamation of pride in, and appreciation of African languages but for practically enabling the African masses to participate in reclaiming their human dignity. This would be possible if their issues were discussed in the African languages that the African masses understood and spoke. What this means is that ahead of the African Renaissance conference in South Africa in 1998, African philosophers committed to the African Renaissance had already engaged with these issues and offered practical solutions for future action. In the next chapter we interrogate the meanings of "African philosophy" from African philosophers' different perspectives. An examination and appreciation of African philosophers' different perspectives on African philosophy can afford the African Renaissance advocates an opportunity to interrogate these perspectives, take what they perceive as useful, and discard what they regard as useless in fulfilment of their search for political philosophies that would aid the African Renaissance.

Chapter 3

African Philosophy: Definitions, Origins, Contestations and Politics

3.1 Introduction

The African Renaissance conference organisers' quest for political philosophies to guide human life has a precedence in the history of the African continent after the regaining of independence. Independent Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, and an African Renaissance advocate, saw philosophy as central in the task of rebuilding a post-colonial Africa (Nkrumah, 1970a:78). Having read every book on "modern philosophy" that he could lay his hands on, acquainting himself with the works of Kant, Hegel, Descartes, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud and others, Nkrumah (1971:32) "appreciated the truth in the saying that law, medicine and the arts are the arms and legs of learning but philosophy is the brain". In addition to the above-cited philosophers, Nkrumah (1971:45) read the works of European philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mazzini whose writings did much to "influence [his] revolutionary ideas and activities". Marx and Lenin "particularly impressed" Nkrumah as he "felt sure that their philosophy was capable of solving [political] problems" faced by Africans colonised by Europe. But, significantly, "of all the literature" that Nkrumah (ibid) studied, "the book that did more than any other to fire [his] enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* published in 1923". Garvey (2017:70) also saw philosophy – "the right philosophy" – as central in the struggle for Africans' emancipation. For Nkrumah (1970:78), a "social revolution" depended, for its success, on an "intellectual revolution" which would need to "stand […] firmly behind it". In this revolution, "thinking and philosophy are directed towards the redemption of our society". That Nkrumah saw philosophy as playing a role in the development of a political ideology for Africa was a stance unconcealed. He was very clear that "[p]hilosophy […] is one of the subtle instruments of ideology and social cohesion", and that, in fact, philosophy "affords a theoretical basis for the cohesion" (Nkrumah, 1970:66). In line with Nkrumah's foregoing observation, Momoh (2000:2) points out that philosophy "is the base and the apex, the foundation, the ceiling and the roof of any civilization, any religion and science, indeed any discipline". Momoh (ibid) further argues that "[a]ny culture, any way of life, corporate or individual, is anchored on a philosophy, floats on a philosophy and hangs on a philosophy", in that sense, philosophy being "the ultimate intellectual discipline […] the queen and king of all disciplines". Momoh (ibid) further points out that "[a] people with its own philosophy are liberated; a nation with its own philosophy is a free nation". Echoing this

view, Nyathi (2001:3) points out, that the "sort of political philosophy that a people holds determines the sort of political institutions it establishes, its political behaviour, and the manner in which it articulates its political needs". Nkrumah (1970:66) held the view that the centrality of philosophy in politics was not unique in Africa. Citing Plato's *The Republic*, he pointed that in this text "we are confronted with an example in which philosophy is made the theoretical basis of a proposed social order. In that proposal, philosophy would be an instrument of the ideology belonging to the social order proposed by Plato". Philosophy, Nkrumah (ibid) also pointed out, performs an ideological function "when it takes shape as political philosophy or as ethics". Through political philosophy, Nkrumah (ibid) continued, philosophy "lays down certain ideals for our pursuit and fortification, and it becomes an instrument of unity by laying down the same ideals for all the members of a given society. It is significant that Nkrumah, a Pan-Africanist, and an African Renaissance advocate, makes Greece, and not Ancient Egypt, his point of reference, as a philosophical model, whereas Africa's Ancient Egypt preceded Europe's Greece philosophically. But to criticise Nkrumah for doing this would be failing to situate Nkrumah's educational background in a proper historical context, a point we will return to later.

Historically, efforts aimed at defining African philosophy have had to confront "political, and cultural complexities – and contradictions" (Eze, 1997:2). An easy way of avoiding such complexities and contradictions could be to argue that references to African philosophy should be simply accepted as normal and ordinary, in the same way that others have named their philosophies according to their cultural, ethnic, national or geographical origins, shining examples in this case being "American philosophy", "French philosophy", "German philosophy" and "Jewish philosophy" (Eze, 1997:1 – 2). But, such an approach would be simplistic and would not do justice to African philosophy. Reference to "African philosophy", just like reference to "African culture", did not escape the scrutiny and the interrogation about what makes it "African". Questions have arisen about why instead of referring to philosophic practice in Africa, such practice should not be referred to as "Yoruba philosophy", "Luo philosophy" or any other ethnic African identity instead of "African philosophy" (Eze, 1997:2). This chapter, then, gives attention to definitions of philosophy, in general, and African philosophy, in particular. We examine the origins of African philosophy, and the contestations that inform its definitions. We begin with the definition of the word "philosophy", and an attempt at tracing its etymology. The overall objective in interrogating different perspecitves on African philosophy is to examine what they can offer in fulfilment of African Renaissance'

advocates quest for political philosophies in finding practical solutions to problems confronting the African masses.

3.2 Defining Philosophy

Finley (1975:117) defines philosophy as an "inquiry into the nature of the universe". Armstrong (1981:1) observes that philosophy, in the sense in which the world was generally understood, "in the ancient world may be defined as the search after the truth about the nature of the universe and of man". In carrying out this search, the "ancient philosophers" – with few exceptions – believed that such an exercise "could result in the attainment of sure knowledge of the truth sought" (ibid). Towa (1991:194) defines philosophy as the "thought of the essential, the methodical and critical examination of that which, in the theoretical or in the practical order, has or should have for humanity a supreme importance". Obenga (1992:17) defines philosophy "both loosely and exactly" as "speculations which concern human destiny and condition". However, referring to philosophy as "speculations" and or "reflections", is not the same as "common, vulgar opinions (the Greek *doxa*)" (Obenga, 1992:19). To qualify as philosophy, "speculations" and "reflections" must be "conscious of themselves, that is to say, at least self-explanatory" (ibid). Common in the definitions of Armstrong, Towa and Obenga, above, is the observation that philosophy is *purposeful* in that it seeks to find answers to the challenges and puzzles that have confronted *humanity* since time memorial. It is an exercise aimed at serving *humanity*. Saying this is not the same as saying that in their quest to answer complex challenges, philosophers have always given the right and acceptable answers. For instance, having observed that in ancient Greece "slavery […] was a universal institution among the Greeks, one that touched upon every aspect of their lives without exception", Finley (1975:148-149) further observes that "philosophers […] could not avoid the question, and their attempt to come to terms with it was perhaps the greatest of their failures". Having noted the above definitions of the word "philosophy", it is a useful exercise to examine the etymology of the word "philosophy". Inquiries into the etymology of the word "philosophy" led Obenga (1992:51) to the realisation that the "compound word 'philosophy' does not have an etymology, neither in Indo-European nor in Greek […] In other words, *philos* cannot be explained in Greek, and it is not a word of Greek origin." Having pronounced on the non-existence of the etymology of "philos", the first part of the word "philosophy", Obenga (1992:52) goes on to point out that the second part of the word "'sophós' does not have an etymology, either in Indo-European or in Greek. No specialist could demonstrate otherwise." This being the case, Obenga (ibid) raises a provocative and essential question: "How can philosophy be of Greek essence or origin if the

word *philosophy* itself is not a Greek word?" (ibid) In offering an explanation for this state of affairs, Obenga (ibid) points out that the Greek language has borrowed massively from other languages, notably from Semitic and ancient Egyptian languages. He argues that this is particularly the case with the second part of the word of philosophy – sophós. Obenga (1992:54) traces the origin of sophós to "seba", which means "to instruct, to educate, to learn". Obenga (1992:55) explains that sometimes the Egyptian /b/ is translated /ph/ in Greek. Taking the foregoing into consideration, the "Egyptian etymology of sophós (sophón, sophía, sophíe) is not so unbelievable, if we take into account the history of philosophy, which the Greeks received from the Egyptians" (Obenga, 1992:53). If the etymology of the Greek word "philosophy" is ancient Egyptian, such is a strong basis for arguing that philosophy, contrary to claims of Eurocentric scholarship, as will be shown below, is of ancient Egyptian (African), not Greek (European) origin. British historian, Basil Davidson (2001:xvii), is unequivocal in observing that prejudice-free European scholarship, knowing that the foundations of European civilisation derived from classical Greek civilisation, also accepted what the Greeks had laid down as patently obvious, that "classical Greek civilization derived, in its religion, its philosophy, its mathematics and much else, from the ancient civilizations of Africa, above all from Egypt of the Pharaohs". An examination of Ancient Greek philosophers' writings, as will be seen below, lends support to the argument that the historical origins of philosophy are ancient Egyptian, and, therefore, African.

3.3 A Brief History of Philosophy

Isocrates (Isocrates, Norlin, Van Hook, 1944:101; 115), a Greek philosopher, writes between the years 390 to 385 BC, that the ancient Egyptians "for the soul […] introduced philosophy's training, a pursuit which has the power, not only to establish laws, but also to investigate the nature of the universe". In explicit terms, Isocrates attributes the genesis of philosophy to the ancient Egyptians of Africa. Not only did the ancient Egyptians introduce philosophy to the world, but were, in ancient times, the leaders of humanity in many respects. Isocrates (Isocrates et al, 1944:113) in this regard notes that "in the arts the Egyptians surpass those who work at the same skilled occupations elsewhere more than artisans in general excel the laymen". But that is not all. Isocrates (ibid) informs us further that "also with respect to the system which enables them to preserve royalty and their political institutions in general, they have been so successful that philosophers who undertake to discuss such topics and have won the greatest reputation prefer above all others the Egyptian form of government". Not only does Isocrates tell us that leading and reputable philosophers subscribed to the ancient Egyptians' Political

Science, but specifically points out that the "Lacedaemonians […] govern their own city in admirable fashion because they imitate certain forms of the Egyptian customs" (ibid). While Isocrates, on the one hand, cites a number of practices that the Lacedaemonians had taken from the ancient Egyptians, on the other hand, Isocrates (ibid) criticises the Lacedaemonians for failing to adopt the ancient Egyptians' ethical way of doing things, pointing out that the Lacedaemonians have made "so much worse use" of these institutions that the Lacedaemonians, being professional soldiers, "claim he right to seize by force the property of everybody else, whereas the Egyptians live as people should who neither neglect their own possessions, nor plot how they may acquire the property of others" (ibid). In an unmistakable admiration for ancient Egyptian ethics, Isocrates (Isocrates et al, 1944:115) argues that if, on the one hand, the sloth and greed of the Lacedaemonians were to be imitated, people would straightaway perish through both the lack of daily life's necessities and civil war, while on the other hand pointing out that if the laws of the Egyptians, which prescribe that some must work and that the rest must protect the property of the workers were adopted, people would possess their own goods and live in happiness. Isocrates' foregoing observations make explicit two issues as far as the history of philosophy is concerned, these being that the ancient Egyptians gave humanity both the gifts of Political Philosophy and Ethics, a branch of philosophy. While the term "ethics" is generally used with reference to the distinction between right and wrong (Breasted, 1933:13), the term "'ethics' in Greek, means 'matters concerned with character'" (Watt, 1996:xiii). Interestingly, James H Breasted's seminal work, *The Dawn of Conscience: The sources of our moral heritage in the ancient world*, published in 1933, where he traces the emergence of preoccupation with ethics to ancient Egypt, refers to this period as the "age of character" (Breasted, 1933:16). While not turning a blind eye to the great civilisation developed by the Babylonians in practical, legal, and commercial matters, Breasted (1933:13) criticises the Babylonians' civilisation for being "dominated throughout by a spirit of calculating commercialism, of hard and mechanical requirements, which deprived the social evolution of the Babylonians of the very foundations of altruistic development". Pushing his criticism of the Babylonians further, Breasted (ibid) argues that the "basic moral requirement of equal justice to all was totally lacking, and the famous code of Hammurapi's laws dispenses justice according to the social station of the litigant or the offender". In a specific comparison of Babylonia to ancient Egypt, Breasted (ibid) observes that the "complete obliteration of social distinctions before the law, which is one of the achievements of Egyptian civilisation, was unknown in Babylonia, and as a result of this fact, Babylonian morals have contributed little if anything to the moral heritage of the Western world". And having noted that the "surviving

sources would indicate that the moral mandate was felt earlier in Egypt than anywhere else", Breasted (1933:19) further points out that the "earliest known discussion of right and wrong in the history of man is embedded in a Memphite drama celebrating the supremacy of Memphis and dating from the middle of the Fourth Millennium B.C." The Memphite drama, Breasted (1933:30) further informs us, is "the earliest known philosophical discussion". In acclaiming the Memphite drama, there is no pretence by Breasted (1933:19) that at its inception, this philosophical document was a reflection of "the life of the Egyptian people as a whole". No. This "semi-theological, semi-philosophical discussion of origins, [was] produced by a priestly body of temple thinkers" (ibid). However, at a later period, the greater ancient Egyptian community was to experience "the moral conviction impelling their own lives" (Breasted, 1933:20). Thus, in ancient Egypt, moral discernment "descended gradually from the aristocrats of the royal court and the temple priesthoods to the provincial nobles first and then to the masses" (ibid). Under the influence of this ethical philosophical consciousness, it was in ancient Egypt that "there arose the earliest conception of a moral order, designated by a significant word 'righteousness' 'justice' or 'truth (Egyptian *Maat*), which endured for a thousand years from the Thirty-fifth to the Twenty-fifth Century B.C. and made a profound impression on the human mind" (Breasted, 1933:20). For the ancient Egyptians, Maat was the "principle of balance in the universe whether that balance refers to weights and measurements in the market, law in the courts, judgment of the dead or the cosmological patterns" (Carruthers, 1984:58). That the Maat philosophy was a communal philosophy, as pointed out above, contradicts the argument advanced by Hountondji (1996:76), who strongly argues that there is no philosophy "that would be a system of implicit propositions or beliefs to which all individuals of a given society, past, present and future, would adhere. Such a philosophy does not exist, has never existed". In fairness to Hountondji, it must be acknowledged that he is not the only philosopher who insists that philosophy cannot be a system of beliefs. Such a view is one that is "widely held" in the community of philosophers (Gyekye, 1997:8). But widely held as it may be, Gyekye (1997:12) argues that it would be an "oversimplification to assert with confidence that philosophy is not at all a system of belief". In pointing out that such a dismissal would be an oversimplification, Gyekye does not fall into the same trap of being dismissive and oversimplifying issues, but carefully disassembles the argument piece by piece, part by part. Gyekye (1997:9) acknowledges that those who object to philosophy being regarded as a system are opposed to philosophy to being seen, equated or being likened to a religious doctrine or political ideology since adherence to these can reduce their adherents to being uncritical and rabid followers. Granted, this is a case in many instances, but such an examination is one-sided

and ignores the fact that some religious adherents and ideologues do question their own belief systems to an extent that they do abandon their faiths and political beliefs, thus adopting new faiths and different political ideologies (ibid). Such changes reflect questioning attitudes on the part of the adherents (ibid). The argument that critical thinking is not a monopoly of philosophers, but a tool available and utilised by political ideologues and spiritual people is one part of the argument made by Gyekye. Gyekye (1997:11) goes farther than that, and argues that in the light of the existence of philosophical adherents to an accepted body of truths that may be said to be embodied in the philosophies of some individual thinkers, "it would not be wrong to claim that philosophy is in some sense a *system of belief*, even though the nature of belief here will not be the same as that of a belief in a religious or ideological system". In advancing the foregoing argument, Gyekye (ibid) points out to the existence of thinkers who refer to themselves as Platonists, Aristotelians, Kantians or Marxists. By attaching to themselves such labels, in a clear reference to "philosophical doctrines of celebrated individual philosophers", demonstrates that an individual has "come under the spell of that philosopher, and has, consequently, become its adherent or disciple, even though he may not necessarily be taken in by all apsects of Platonism or Kantianism" (ibid). Summing up his argument, Gyekye (1997:15) points out that "to the extent that those truths may form the basis of a moral, social, political, and intellectual life, they may be regarded as constituting a system of beliefs", and, therefore, "it can be maintained that philosophy provides people with a fundamental system of beliefs to live by". Hountondji (1996:53) is adamant that "African philosophy, like any other philosophy, cannot possibly be a collective world-view", but that it can rather "exist only in the form of a confrontation between individual thoughts, a discussion, a debate". This study disagrees with Hountondji's approach to philosophy. Rather, we subscribe to Owomoyela's (1991:167) argument, with reference to Ayaode, that even though "ideas of necessity originate from individual minds, a basic fact that cannot be lost on any thinker", it is equally true that "even when one attributes ideas or beliefs to whole communities one says no more hereby than that the ideas or beliefs have undergone the necessary communal proofing to be judged consistent with the group's ethos". In line with Owomoyela's argument, Gyekye (1995:xxi) observes that even though there is "no such thing as ideational unanimism", it is equally true that a "stable and continuous functioning of a society requires a general or wide acceptance of some set of ideas and beliefs". Such a set of ideas, "constitutes itself into what may be called a public conception of things, or public philosophy" (ibid). Gyekye (ibid) defines a *public philosophy* as a "corpus of basic ideas and beliefs, an underlaying layer of values, perceptions, outlooks, feelings, fundamental convictions and truths shared by a large section of a society".

Noting that the production or emergence of a public philosophy "is not easy to decipher", Gyekye (1995:xxii) observes that it appears that "both the public and individual members play some role in its emergence". Thus, "a public philosophy is, in part, the production of the intellectual exertions of certain individuals that gain currency among the wider society and becomes influential in that society, animating its life and thought" (ibid). In a further emphasis of the public's or community's contribution to the making or production of philosophy, Gyekye (ibid) draws attention to his use of "in part" in the above definition of public philosophy as deliberate, informed by his conviction that "part of the makings of a public philosophy comprises the values [moral, social and political] of a society [which] can hardly be said to be the production of an individual" but seemingly "emerg[ing] to fulfil the goals and aspirations of a society in its search for harmonious and cooperative living" (ibid). In this way, these values that give birth to public philosophy "may be said to have been evolved by the society" (ibid). In appreciating "public philosophy", Gyekye (1995:xxi) does not dismiss the existence of what he refers as to as a "private philosophy", this referring to the "ideas or convictions of which will be confined to the individual".

As he did with attributing the genesis of Political Philosophy and Ethics to ancient Egypt, Isocrates does the same with the Philosophy of Religion. He does so by pointing out that "[i]f one were not determined to make haste, one might cite many admirable instances of the piety of the Egyptians, that piety which I am neither the first nor the only one to have observed" (Isocrates et al, 1944:119). Among the predecessors and contemporaries who had remarked on the ancient Egyptians' piety, Isocrates (ibid) cites Pythagoras who, on a visit to Ancient Egypt, "became a student of the religion of the people, and was the first to bring to the Greeks all philosophy". In an unconcealed admiration for ancient Egyptians' spirituality, Isocrates (Isocrates et al, 1944:117) notes that the "piety of the Egyptians and their worship of the gods are especially deserving of praise and admiration". Ancient Egyptian spirituality was not merely abstract but had practical, ethical implications for the Greeks who came into contact with it. As Isocrates (ibid) observes, "[f]or actually those who in the beginning inspired in us our fear of the gods, brought it about that we in our relations to one another are not altogether like wild beasts". In other words, ancient Egyptian spirituality raised consciousness about what it means to be human, as opposed to being, in Isocrates' own words, "like wild beasts". The Greek philosopher, Aristotle (2004:6), in his book, *The Metaphysics*, acknowledges that "it was in Egypt that the mathematical sciences were first developed". In *The Odyssey*, Homer (1991:47) notes that "in medical knowledge Egyptians are supreme among men". The same

observation is made by Isocrates (Isocrates et al, 1944:115) who notes that ancient Egypt's priests enjoyed conducive conditions "discovered […] drugs of such a nature that they are harmless as daily food, yet in their effects are so beneficial that all men agree that the Egyptians are the healthiest and most long of life among men" (ibid). But a counter-argument could be made that even if mathematical sciences first developed in ancient Egypt, that does not mean that philosophy began there. The historian of Greek society, M.I. Finley (1975:120), in his book, *The Ancient Greeks*, tells us that in Greek history, "[t]he philosopher and the scientist were identical in their interests and objectives". In this Finley is echoed by the historian of Western philosophy, Bertrand Russell (2004:15): "Philosophy and science – which were not originally separate – were therefore born together at the beginning of the sixth century."

Philosophy in Greece began with Thales, a traveller who was a mathematician and a philosopher at the same time (Russell, 2004:15; 34). So central was mathematics to Plato such that Finley (1975:122) observes that Plato was "fundamentally antagonistic to all science that was not reducible to mathematics, and particularly, geometry". While on the one hand, Plato (2004:265 – 267) was frustrated and impatient with the progress of the comprehension of mathematics in Greece, he was full of admiration for ancient Egyptians' progress with mathematics and wanted the Greeks to emulate the Egyptians. Appreciating the high level and high quality of teaching and learning of mathematics in anciet Egypt compared to the lesser quality prevalent in Greece, Plato (2004:267) urged Greek gentlemen to "study each of these subjects to at least the same level as very many children in Egypt, who acquire such knowledge at the same time as they learn to read and write". Here, it should be noted well, that Plato expresses a desire to see Greek adults (gentlemen) reaching, at least, the level of mathematical comprehension, displayed by Egyptian children. How did Plato come to have such a meticulous understanding of the ancient Egyptians and their teaching methods? Armstrong (1981:34; 64) gives us a good idea when he notes that Plato "travelled extensively in Egypt" and that "Egypt [was] a country in which intelligent Greeks took much interest". Lefkowitz (1997:89) points out that the Greeks harboured "respect for the antiquity of Egyptian religion and civilization, and a desire somehow to be connected with it". Lefkowitz (1997:190) goes on to point out that "Greeks tended to be so respectful of Egyptian learning that they were eager to use it whenever and wherever they could".

The rediscovery of ancient Egyptian philosophy as African philosophy is significant. This is the case because there was a stage in the history of academia when racist anthropology

advanced the view that Africans were incapable of abstract thought, thus denying the historical existence of African philosophy (Kamalu, 1990:21; Oruka, 1991:47).

3.4 The Denial of the Existence of African Philosophy

Having noted that the issue of African philosophy has gone through significant historical phases, Oruka (1991:47) points out that the "first went through the myth of pre-philosophy". By "pre-philosophy" reference was made to "a stage at which the black man's culture and even mind was claimed to be extremely alien to reason, logic, and various habits of scientific inquiry" (ibid). The proponents of the "pre-philosophy" idea were European anthropologists who advanced the idea that "primitive" Africans, who were "pre-logical, pre-scientific, pre-literature, etc" were, historically, incapable of producing philosophy (ibid). Such claims have been exposed for what they were – an attempt on the part of European colonialism to justify the brutalisation of Africans, the reduction of the latter to the level of sub-humans (Kamalu, 1990:1). The denial of the existence of African philosophy exposed the fact that, as Serequeberhan (1991:22) observes, "African philosophy – the very existence of such a discourse – threatens the stability of the philosophical prejudices that sanctioned and justified European expansion and the obliteration of African historical existence". This being the case, therefore, "African philosophy is a vital part of what Cabral has called the overall historical process of 're-Africanization'" (Onyewuenyi, 1991:24). The project of entrenching the notion of the Greek origin of philosophy, and the denial of the African origin of philosophy was consolidated through education by the Western academic institutions in the West.

3.4.1 The Western Academy and the Marginalisation of African Philosophy

Having observed that the ten years which he spent in the USA "represents a crucial period in the development of my philosophical conscience", Nkrumah (1970:2) goes on to point out that he was introduced to the "great philosophical systems of the past to which the Western universities have given their blessing, arranging and classifying them with the delicate care lavished on museum pieces". In the USA, Nkrumah was introduced to Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx and "other mortals, to whom I should like to refer as the university philosophers" (ibid). None of these philosophers was African – they were all Europeans. What Nkrumah experienced in the 1940s as a student was experienced by other African students at a later period. In a piece originally published in 1976/77, Onyewuenyi (1991:29) observes that scanning through the catalogs of "major universities in America and Europe", brought to the realisation that "no philosophy department offer[ed] any

course on African philosophy". While several universities – Columbia, Boston University, UCLA, Northwestern, and Duquesne, to mention a few – had, at the time, centres of African studies that offered courses on African history, sociology, literature, government, economics, etc., none, as far as Onyewuenyi observed, offered any course on African philosophy (ibid). While big departments of philosophy offered courses in Indian and Asian philosophy, there was a "noticeable absence of African philosophy from their list of courses" (ibid). The situation described by Onyewuenyi, above has, however, not remained unchallenged and intact. Within twenty years after the ugly picture of the state of African philosophy in the USA, Eze (1997:1) could confidently point out that the field of African philosophy had "blossomed in North American universities and colleges". While literature on African philosophy certainly proliferated, it has continued occupying marginal, if any space at all, not only in Western, but also in academic institutions in Africa. It is for this reason that African scholars have drawn a distinction between "universities in Africa" and "African universities" (Etieyibo, 2016:379). While on the one hand the phrase "universities in Africa" refers to universities geographically located in Africa, but having "a foreign or unAfrican ethos", the phrase "African universities" refer to "universities (whether located on the African continent or elsewhere) that have an 'African character' or 'ethos' (ibid). Reference to a university with an "African character" or "ethos", means a university whose orientation is steeped in an "African heritage or the cultural experiences and worldviews of Africans" (ibid). In a response to the marginalisation of African philosophy in the world, Edwin Etieyibo, an academic at a South African institution, Wits University, convened a day-long workshop convened "What Are You Teaching Me?: Africanising the Philosophy Curricula in Universities in Africa" on the 16th of September, 2015 (Etieyibo, 2016:377). A point needs to be made about the workshop focussing on the need to Africanise the curricula of philosophy in "universities in Africa" while appreciating that a university with an African character or ethos is not limited and confined to a geographical location. The answer to this legitimate question is, as Etieyibo (2016:278) observes that "'if charity begins at home', then universities in Africa will seem to be the logical and right place to start". In advancing his argument, Etieyibo (ibid) cites an Urhobo proverb: "A person cannot tell his neighbour to cut the grass in her compound or backyard when he has not cut the grass in his own compound or backyard". As Etieyibo (2018:1) notes, the "issues and debates about the philosophy curriculum and its decolonisation and Africanisation' but can also be considered as a "valuable addition and contribution to the fields of decolonisation, intercultural and postcolonial studies as well as an essential resource for the discipline of philosophy, not just in Africa but globally". What this means is that while Africa is a point of departure, the destination

is the whole world, to make the presence of African thought felt universally. As Etieyibo (2016:377) observes, the Africanisation of philosophy project was motivated, therefore, among other reasons, by the importance of developing and enriching world philosophies so as to contribute towards creating an inclusive world through curriculum transformation.

The 2015 workshop contributed to bringing out two outputs – a special issue edition of the *South African Journal of Philosophy* (SAJP) in 2016, Volume 35, Issue 4, and a book, *Decolonisation, Africanisation and the Philosophy Curriculum* – both edited by Etieyibo. The book drew from articles previously published in the SAJP, in 2012 Volume 31 (4), 2015 Volume 34(3), and two 2016 Volumes, namely 35 (2) and 35 (4). In convening the workshop and bringing out a special edition of a journal issue, Etieyibo (ibid) sought to bring to light the "difficult task or problematic" academics, students, researchers, educationists and other stakeholders "encounter as soon as we begin to talk about Africanising the philosophy curriculum in universities in Africa". There was a recognition that "in terms of philosophical traditions, the African philosophical tradition or traditions have been largely ignored in the history of philosophy", and that this "marginalisation starves the discipline of some important perspectives and tradition(s)" (ibid). The Africanisation of philosophy curricula has particular and significant value for the African Renaissance advocates, especially their appeal to philosophers to provide political philosophies to find practical solutions to the difficulties facing the African masses. Referring to his edited book, *Decolonisation, Africanisation and the Philosophy Curriculum*, Etieyibo (2018:1) notes that one way in which it "adds value to philosophy is that it substantially lends a strong voice to the growing call to make philosophy less exclusionary and more accessible". In other words, it recognises that while not everyone is expected to become a philosopher, philosophers must make an effort to make their ideas comprehensible to as many people (the masses) as possible. In a clear demonstration of humility, Etieyibo (2016:378) observes that "discussions about the content of the curriculum and the need to transform it did not begin today". In fact, in 2003, the University of South Africa (UNISA)'s academics, P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux brought out a second edition of *The African Philosophy Reader*. This edition was "a celebration of the success that the Department of Philosophy at the University of South Africa has had with its efforts to advance the cause of African philosophy in South Africa after the Apartheid Era" (Coetzee & Roux, 2003:vii). The move was "a sign" of UNISA's "determination to reform curricula" and, also, a "determination of the role the University plays in informing the philosophical community in South Africa and elsewhere of philosophical endeavour in Africa" (ibid). In addition to

addressing the issue of curricula reform, with specific reference to philosophy, among the themes addressed by the book is "decolonization" (ibid). The commitment by UNISA to "reform curriucula" and at "decolonization" notwithstanding, in 2015, twelve years after the publication of Coetzee and Roux's second edition of *The African Philosophy Reader*, there emerged the Rhodes Must Fall Movement, a nation-wide South African students' movement which demanded a decolonised and Afrocentric education. What this shows is that despite the commendable move by UNISA's commitment to reforming and decolonising the philosophy curricula, much more remained to be done. In fact, the students' demand for a deconised and Afrocentric education contributed to the September 2015 philosophy workshop convened by Etieyibo (2016:378).

The historic privileging of Western and Eastern philosophy in the Western Academy has had negative implications for African philosophy. It gave rise to the question that has preoccupied many cotemporary African philosophers about what should count as "African philosophy" in a way that kind of question has not arisen for Chinese, Japanese or Indian philosophers (Gyekye, 1995:x). This is the case for contemporary African philosophers because having received their philosophical training mostly in Western countries, "contemporary African philosophers are more likely than not – in fact predisposed – to be greatly influenced by that training in their conceptions of the nature of African philosophy" (ibid). Western education's influence in contemporary African philosophers is manifested in their thinking, for instance, that "in the absence of an indigenous written philosophical heritage, what they can – and must – do is simply to take over the entire corpus of a philosophical tradition developed in some other cultures and contribute to the appreciation of that tradition in the hope that some day it will become their own" (ibid). The "lack of an indigenous written philosophical tradition in Africa (with the exception of Ethiopian and ancient Egyptian philosophy) meant that there was no existing tradition of written philosophy not only to guide their perception of the nature of African philosophy, but also to constitute a coherent and viable conceptual and normative framework that they could explore and develop" (ibid). Gyekye's observations capture very well Wiredu's approach to Western philosophy and its relationship with Africa. Wiredu (1984:156) observes that the "African philosopher has no choice but to conduct his philosophical inquiries in relation to the philosophical writings of other peoples, for his own ancestors left him no heritage of philosophical writings". So convinced is Wiredu about the non-existence of written African philosophical heritage that he does not say this once in a single chapter, but thrice (Wiredu, 1984:156; 157; 158). Elsewhere, Wiredu (1984:157) argues that

"in Africa, where we do not have even a written traditional philosophy, anthropologists have fastened on our folk world-views and elevated them to the status of a continental philosophy". Lastly, in comparative terms, Wiredu (1984:156) argues that the African philosopher writing today has "no tradition of written philosophy in his continent to draw upon. In this respect, his plight is very much unlike that of say, the contemporary Indian philosopher. The latter can advert his mind to any age of written philosophical meditations; he has what he might legitimately call *classical* Indian philosophers to investigate and profit by." Does this mean that in 1984 Wiredu was not aware that there was a written African philosophical heritage in Africa that goes back as far as the year 3 500 BCE? An examination of Wiredu's writings reveals that he was not oblivious to the written Ancient Egyptian philosophical heritage. Regarding this existence, Wiredu (1980:xi), in a footnote, observes that "[t]here is a school of thought in contemporary Africa which sees ancient Egyptian philosophy as the *classical* phase of African philosophy". According to this school of thought, Wiredu (ibid) continues, "ancient Egyptian thought was the head and spring of ancient Greek philosophy and, through it, of Western philosophy as a whole […] On this reasoning an African pursuing philosophy as it has been developed in the West today can see himself as merely resuming a tradition which was started by his own peoples in ancient times." Where does Wiredu stand in relation to this school of thought? An observation by Wiredu (1980:xi) seems to indicate scepticism towards this school of thought. In saying that if claiming the ancient Egyptian as African philosophy "soothes his African his conscience in his modern philosophical pursuits, well and good", Wiredu (ibid" sounds sceptical and dismissive. This seems to be more the case considering Wiredu's (ibid) further observation that "in view of the possible historical and even conceptual problems in this way of looking at the history of thought, it is good to note that the justification of the cultivation of modern philosophy in Africa need not involve this exercise in genealogy, however intriguing it may be in itself". The lack of appreciation of ancient Egyptian philosophical heritage as African by Wiredu has serious consequences for the manner in which he looks at the history of philosophy in the world in general, and in Africa in particular. Wiredu (1984:158) regards Ethics, Political Philosophy, Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics as having been developed in the West, and yet, as pointed above, ancient Greek and other Western philosophers have identified these as having had their genesis in African Egypt. In contrast to both Wiredu and Hountondji, Gyekye (1995:xi) demonstrates an appreciation of Diop's scholarship and Ancient Egypt's philosophy as an integral part of African philosophy by pointing out that the "late erudite Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop demonstrated with conviction that ancient Egyptians were an African people, and thus, their civilization was

African". If the ancient Egyptian civilisation was, indeed, African, Gyekye (ibid) further observes, then ancient Egyptian "philosophical thought – a well documented intellectual component of that civilization – can be said to be African".

Having noted that a "colonial student does not by origin belong to the intellectual history in which the university philosophers are such impressive landmarks", Nkrumah (1970a:2 – 3) observes that the "colonial student can be so seduced by these attempts to give a philosophical account of the universe, that he surrenders his whole personality to them". When the colonial student does this, s/he fails to draw from his education, and from the concerns displayed by "the great philosophers for human problems, anything which he might relate to the very real problem of colonial domination, which, as it happens, conditions the immediate life of every colonized African" (Nkrumah, 1970a:3). By "reason of their lack of contact with their own roots, they became prone to accept some theory of universalism, provided it was expressed in vague, mellifluous terms" (Nkrumah, 1970a:3). Driven by this "universalism, they carried away from their university courses an attitude entirely at variance with the concrete reality of their people and struggle" (ibid). This attitude on the part of the colonised African student "is a result of the academic treatment which they are given" (ibid). The academic treatment is the result of an attitude to "philosophical systems as though there was nothing to them but statements standing in logical relation one to another" (Nkrumah, 1970a:3). Yet, Nkrumah (ibid) argued, these philosophical systems to which the students were exposed "did aim at providing a philosophical account of the world in the circumstances and conditions of their time". The point made by Nkrumah is that some academic institutions have presented philosophy to students as if it were a mere abstract thought that had no concrete link with real life situations, an approach he clearly disagreed with. For Nkrumah, as demonstrated above, philosophy in general, and in Africa, in particular, had to respond to human conditions and seek to change them for the better in a practical way. Nkrumah was not content with simply protesting against the failure of the African students of philosophy to do what he expected them to do, but himself produced a book, entitled *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation*, which was first published in 1964. In this exercise he was followed by Julius Nyerere, who published his book, *FREEDOM AND SOCIALISM: UHURU NA UJAMAA*, in 1968, and Kenneth Kaunda, who published his book, *Humanism in Zambia AND A GUIDE TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION*, in 1987. We will return to Nkrumah's, Nyerere and Kaunda's and texts later, but for now we are going to focus on the marginalisation of literature making reference to African philosophy, which was not an accident of history, but a deliberate act that

has its roots in the denial of African origins of philosophy and the promotion of the idea of Greek origins of philosophy.

3.4.2 Attribution of the Genesis of Philosophy to Greece: Denial of the Egyptian Genesis of Philosophy

There is a consensus among Western historians of philosophy in tracing the genesis of philosophy to Greece, specifically to Ionian philosophers – Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes – around 600 BC (Finley, 1975:117-119; Armstrong, 1981:2-3; Russell, 2004:32;36). Russel (2004:33) points out that "[i]n every history of philosophy for students, the first thing mentioned is that philosophy began with Thales", a Greek philosopher. While acknowledging that "ancient Egyptians were learned and had what we would now call advanced civilizations" and "could have developed an abstract terminology for discovering causes and principles had they chosen to do so", Lefkowitz (1997:188 – 189) argues that "they did not study and analyse the nature of reality in abstract, nontheological language". This "specialized notion of philosophy was invented", Lefkowitz (ibid) argues further, "so far as anyone knows, by ancient Greeks". While many Western historians have presented the origin of philosophy as Western, their statements reveal an element of discomfort with their own claims. This discomfort is laid bare in Russell's (2004:15) observation that "[i]n all history, nothing is so surprising or so difficult as to account for as the sudden rise of civilization in Greece". Russell (ibid) is conscious, as he states, in his own words, that "[m]uch of what makes civilization had already existed for thousands of years in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and had spread thence to neighbouring countries". But in a self-redeeming move, Russell (ibid) further points out that "certain elements had been lacking until the Greeks supplied them […] They invented mathematics and science and philosophy; they first wrote history as opposed to annals". Having declared the Greek genesis of mathematics, the discomfort with this claim is exposed in Russell's footnote where he (ibid) acknowledges that while arithmetic and some geometry "existed among the Egyptians and Babylonians", this was "but mainly in the form of rules of thumb. Deductive reasoning from general premises was a Greek innovation." While Russell (2004:15) unequivocally declares that "[p]hilosophy begins with Thales", he reveals a very cautious approach about where Thales got his philosophy from. Addressing Thales' origins of philosophy, Russell (2004:34) notes that "Thales is said to have travelled in Egypt, and to have thence brought to the Greeks the science of geometry". The boldness and conviction present in associating the beginning of philosophy with Thales is absent with reference to Thales' travels and learning in Egypt. Instead, Russell elects to say that it "is said",

thus de-linking himself from the statement. Having reluctantly acknowledged this fact that centres ancient African Egypt, Russell (ibid) is quick to recover the lost ground and re-centres ancient Greece by arguing that "[w]hat the Egyptians knew of geometry was mainly rules of thumb, and there is no reason to believe that Thales arrived at deductive proofs, such as later Greeks discovered". Russell's reluctance to acknowledge ancient Egypt's influence on Ancient Greece is not a once-off thing. He does the same with another Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, whom Russell (2004:38) describes as "intellectually one of the most important men that ever lived, both when he was wise and when he was unwise". In the same manner in which Russell uses the words "is said", he (Russell, 2004:39) does the same with Pythagoras: "It is said, and is not improbable, that Pythagoras visited Egypt, and learnt much of the wisdom there; however that may be, it is certain that he ultimately established himself at Croton, in Southern Italy." Pythagoras is revered in the history of Greek philosophy because he is credited with introducing the idea of the immortality of the soul (Finley, 1975:119; Armstrong, 1981:6). While both Finley and Armstrong agree that Pythagoras was responsible for the idea of the immortality and reincarnation of the soul, interestingly, and, significantly, Armstrong (ibid) adds that the idea of the immortality of the soul was "a new idea in the Greek world". The Pythagorean school of thought taught that this "other-worldliness and the ascetic life which went with it were very different from normal Greek beliefs and religious practice and had an effect of the greatest importance on later Greek philosophy and religions" (Armstrong, 1981:6-7). If the idea of the immortality of the soul was new to the ancient Greeks, but not only that, but had an effect of the greatest importance on later Greek philosophy and religion, to an extent that, adds Armstrong (1981:7), "Plato himself, and later Platonics were deeply influenced by the Orphic-Pythagorean-tradition", it is appropriate to ask: where, then, did the idea of the immortality of the soul come from? An answer to this question is given by Herodotus (2014:160), an ancient Greek historian, who points out that "it was the Egyptians who were the first to propose the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; they maintain that, whenever the body of a human being ceases to be animated by life, its soul will always pass into some other living thing, directly at the point of its conception […] There are some Greeks who have made use of this doctrine, both in the past and more recently, as though it were exclusively their own." So, we have it from Herodotus, that as far as the philosophical idea on the immortality of the soul is concerned, the ancient Egyptians were the pioneers, and the Ancient Greeks were the followers. More explicitly, philosophically, the ancient Greek philosophers borrowed and benefitted in this regard from ancient Egyptian philosophy.

Discomfort comes through in Finley as well. While Finley (1975:118) points out that Thales undoubtedly took the notion that the earth floats on water from several Near-Eastern versions, he argues that Thales, however, was "not merely borrowing a myth to fill out a gap in the traditional Greek stock, but was seeking something new and different, something unmythical". Finley (1975:117) finds it necessary to emphasise that "the kind of inquiry into the nature of the universe which was initiated by the Ionian philosophers of Miletus at the beginning of the sixth century was completely original". In line with Finley's claim of the Greek originality of philosophy, Armstrong (1981:1) attributes to Aristotle the observation that the Ionian impulse seems to have been the "beginning of all of all philosophy". This may be true for ancient Greece, but not applicable when ancient Egypt is included in the equation, as demonstrated above.

There are a number of definitions, categories and sub-categories identified by African philosophers themselves that characterise African philosophies. It is generally the case that before engaging with given categories, a definition or definitions are given. Below we begin with the general categories before giving definitions. That is the case because an appreciation of the categories of African philosophy gives us a better view of where the definitions flow from.

3.5 African Philosophy: Categories, Sub-Categories and Role/s in Africa

The two general categories are "traditional African philosophy" and "modern African philosophy". In this chapter, ten sub-categories of African philosophy identified by African philosophers are discussed. Two issues need to be observed before the categories and the sub-categories are stated and discussed. The first is that in naming these categories and sub-categories, the purpose is to give clarity to the differences that exist in them. But the recognition of these differences is not the same as not recognising commonalities and overlaps. Secondly, with reference to the sub-categories, it needs to be stated that there is an element of arbitrariness in them in that in some cases certain philosophers associated with certain sub-categories did not choose to be identified with them. Rather, identification of them with such sub-categories has been imposed. In recognition of this fact, Karp and Masolo (2000:1) acknowledge that one of the sub-categories, "ethnophilosophy", to be discussed later, refers to literature "called [as such] by its critics". With this recognition in mind, where philosophers have been labelled in a certain way by their critics, the labelling is placed in inverted commas. The first four categories identified, and attributed to Oruka by Bodunrin (1984:1 – 2) are ethno-philosophy, philosophic

sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. Three identified by Karp and Masolo (2000:1 – 2) are what they refer to as three phases of African philosophy. Karp and Masolo (ibid) do not attach labels to the first and third phases, but discuss what they entail. The second phase is given a name, though, and Karp and Masolo (2000:2) refer to it as the "Philosophy of Culture", a reference they attribute to Kwame Appiah. Two identified by Serequeberhan (1991:xix) which he refers to as "trends" are the "scientistic" and "historico-hermeneutical trend". Two identified by Eze (1997:3 – 4) are "post-colonial" and "Africana" philosophies. Having given the definitions of the categories of, and African philosophy itself, we will explore what African philosophers consider as the role or the purpose of African philosophy. We first turn our attention to the general categories – the "traditional" and "modern" African philosophy.

3.5.1 African Philosophy: The "Traditional" and the "Modern"

In distinguishing between the "traditional" and "modern", Wiredu (1984:149 – 150) refers to the former as "pre-scientific, spiritistic thought", and the latter as "scientific thought by means of a clearly articulated criterion (or set of criteria)". Having made clear that the "traditional" is not the exclusive property of Africa, but that all peoples have some background of traditional thought, Wiredu (1984:150) points out that while this may be the case, "[u]nfortunately instead of seeing the basic non-scientific characteristics of African traditional thought as typifying traditional thought in general, Western anthropologists and others besides have tended to take them as defining a peculiarly African way of thinking". This act has, in Wiredu's (ibid) observation, had many ill-effects. Having made these observations, Wiredu (1984:155) argues that "the least that African philosophers and foreign well-wishers can do in this connection is to refrain, in this day and age, from serving up the usual congeries of unargued conception about gods, ghosts, and witches in the name of *African philosophy*". Clearly finding the association of the "traditional" with African philosophy distasteful, Wiredu (ibid) further notes that "[i]f at all deserving of the name of 'philosophy', these ideas should be regarded not as a part of African philosophy simply, but rather as a part of *traditional* philosophy in Africa". In emphasising this distinction, which he says is not "verbal cavilling", Wiredu (1984:156) argues that the habit of talking of African philosophy as if all African philosophy is traditional carries the implication, even if not always deliberately so, that modern Africans have not been trying or worse still, ought not to try, to philosophise in a way that takes account of present-day development in human knowledge. Modern African philosophy, in Wiredu's (1984:158) view, refers to the works of "[p]resent day African philosophers [who] have been trained in the

Western tradition, in the continental or Anglo-American style, depending on their colonial history". In clearly privileging and elevating his version of what constitutes "modern" African philosophy, Wiredu (1984:158) points out that "if there be any who are anxious to compare African philosophy with Western philosophy, they will have to look at the philosophy that Africans are producing today". As if to ensure that no one is left uncertain in privileging the Western philosophical heritage, Wiredu (ibid) goes on to emphasise that in practice the contemporary African philosopher realise that it is the "philosophies of the West that will occupy him the most, for it is in that part of the world that modern developments in human knowledge have gone farthest and where, consequently, philosophy is in closest touch with the conditions of the modernization which he urgently desires for his continent".

Gyekye (1995:11) agrees with the view that "a distinction must be made between traditional African philosophy and modern African philosophy", but with a different emphasis and approach. For "modern" African philosophy to qualify as "African" philosophy, Gyekye (1995:12) argues that it must "have a basis in African culture and experience, [and] must have a connection" with "traditional" African philosophy. Unlike Wiredu, whose definition of modern African philosophy places emphasis in the training of Western philosophical tradition, Gyekye (1995:32) refers to modern African philosophy as a product "that is being produced by contemporary African philosophers, but which *reflects*, or has a *basis* in African experience, thought categories, and cultural values". This being the case, for Gyekye (ibid), "the distinction between traditional and modern African philosophy cannot be hard and fast" because due to the outstanding qualities, persistent influence or inseparability of some elements or categories of traditional thought from the cultural life and thought of the people, they will naturally find their way into the modern African philosophical syllabus.

Up to this point, no clear definition of the word "tradition" has been given. The discussion so far can easily leave the reader with the idea that tradition or traditions refers/refer only to the past. That is not the position or the understanding of this study. Tradition can refer to the past, the present and the future. Okolo (1991:202) gives sense to this take of tradition in defining it "as the matter that is delivered over and transmitted from generation to generation". Defined in this way, Okolo (ibid) continues, "tradition finds itself fundamentally linked to the act of interpretation, which preserves and continues it". In this sense, defined in this manner, tradition, like culture in general is not static but dynamic. This approach to the understanding of tradition means that one leans towards Gyekye (1995:32) who argues that "the distinction between traditional and modern African philosophy cannot be hard and fast". Having addressed

the "traditional" and the "modern" in African philosophy, we now turn to definitions of African philosophy given by African philosophers themselves.

3.5.2 African Philosophy: Definitions

In the first edition of his book, *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality*, Hountondji (1996:viii; 33) defines African philosophy as a "set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their authors themselves". This definition, by Hountondji's (ibid) own admission, gave "rise to sharp controversy". The "strongest objection" to Hountondji's definition was that reference to written texts amounted to restricting, in an arbitrary fashion, the forms of philosophical expression, and overlooked the extraordinary richness of oral literature (Hountondji, 1996:ix). In his defence, Hountondji (1996:ix) points out that though his "polemical thrust of the incriminating sentence […] had the formal structure of a definition, this prefatory declaration was not meant as a definition". The truth, though, is that while Hountondji says that his sentence was not meant as a definition, in his own words, Hountondji, (1996:33) refers to it, verbatim, as a "definition [which] begs no question". Hountondji (1996:ix) further points out that the "possibility of an oral philosophical literature (philosophical 'orature') was not excluded". In a revised definition, Hountondji (1996:xii) makes reference to African philosophy as a "set of philosophical texts produced (whether orally or in writing) by Africans". In Hountondji's definition, the "Africanness" of "philosophy" does not necessarily reside in "themes" but depends "above all on the geographical origin of those who produce it and their intellectual coming together" (Hountondji, 1996:53). This position is informed by Hountondji's (1996:53 – 54) observation that the best European Africanists remain European even if they invent a "Bantu 'philosophy'" in the same way that African philosophers who think in terms of Plato or Marx, and with authority, engage with Western philosophy, assimilating and transcending it, are producing "authentic African work". In Hountondji's (1996:66) view the "criterion now being the geographical origin of the authors rather than an alleged specificity of content" is a "radically new definition of philosophy". The effect of this new definition is to "broaden the narrow horizon which has hitherto been imposed on African philosophy and to treat it, as now conceived, as a methodical inquiry with the same universal aims as those of any other philosophy" (ibid).

This being the case, for Hountondji (ibid), the works of Ashanti scholar, Anton Wilhelm Amo, who studied and taught in German universities during the first half of the 18th century, qualifies as African philosophical literature, "although this may be regarded as a borderline case, since

Amo was trained almost entirely in the West. But is not this the case with almost every African intellectual even today?" Hountondji's definition may have been "radically new", but in Gyekye's (1995:36) view, it is equally "radically false", and "radically unacceptable". Gyekye's (1995:36 – 37) objection is based on the following reasoning:

- It cannot be that an American or British philosopher located in the USA or Great Britain, researching into Chinese or Indian philosophy, would ever imagine that s/he is producing American or British work. Such a product would neither be American nor British but a contribution to Chinese or Indian philosophy.
- If a British philosopher teaching a course on Greek philosophy were to assign works on Plato and Aristotle, written by an African philosopher, such a dissemination would not be that of African philosophy but of Greek philosophy, and such a contribution, even if written by an African geographically based in Africa, would be a contribution to the knowledge of Greek, not African philosophy.
- A respectable tradition of philosophy in Africa will be established only when modern African philosophers engage with African conceptual schemes, present African philosophical arguments employing concepts and categories derived from African thought and experience.

Flowing from the logic above, while on the one hand, Hountondji argues that Anton Wilhelm Amo's work qualifies as African philosophy, on the other hand, Gyekye (1995:34) argues that "the philosophical works of the eminent Ghanaian thinker Anton Wilhelm Amo, who distinguished himself by his philosophical acumen in the eighteenth century, cannot count as African philosophy". The objection to Amo's work being regarded as African philosophy is based on Gyekye's (1995:43) logic that philosophy, being "essentially a cultural phenomenon [and] part and parcel of the cultural experience and tradition of a people", it, therefore, stands to reason then that "if a philosophy produced by a modern African has no basis in the culture and experience of African peoples, then it cannot appropriately claim to be an *African* philosophy, even though it was created by an African philosopher" (Gyekye, 1995:33).

Towa (1991:195) defines African philosophy as the "exercise by Africans of a specific type of intellectual activity (the critical examination of fundamental problems) applied to the African reality". Such intellectual activity for Towa (ibid) is neither African nor European but philosophical activity in general. What is "African" about African philosophy, for Towa, is its practitioners who are "men of flesh and bones who are and who evoke the problems of supreme

importance and on whom the same problems are applicable immediately" (ibid). It can be said of philosophy that it is either African or European as an indication that Africans or Europeans have philosophised on their fundamental problems (ibid). There has to be a recognition that "any philosophy is always elaborated by philosophers who are not themselves abstractions, but are beings of flesh and bones who belong to a continent, to a particular culture, and to a specific period. And for a particular philosopher, to really philosophize is necessarily to examine in a critical and methodic manner the essential problems of his milieu. He will thus elaborate a philosophy that is in an explicit or implicit relation with his times and his milieu" (Towa, 1991:194 – 195). Serequeberhan (1991:xix) defines African philosophy as "a body of texts directed at philosophically engaging African concerns and on the other hand, documenting the implicit philosophies and worldviews of ethnic Africans".

Having given different definitions of African philosophy, we now proceed to examine sub-categories of African philosophy identified by African philosophers themselves. We begin with four categories or approaches attributed to Odera Oruka by Bodunrin (1984:1) but shared by African philosophers who call themselves "professional philosophers". What is meant by such a phrase will be explained below.

(a) *Ethno-philosophy* – in African philosophical circles the concept "ethno-philosophy" is attributed to Hountondji, whose reference is to the works of anthropologists, sociologists, ethnographers and philosophers "who present the collective world view of African people, their myths and folk-lores and folk-wisdom, as philosophy" (Bodunrin, 1984:1). Philosophers associated with this category but are Placide Tempels, Aimé Césaire, Alexis Kagamé, John Mbiti, Léopold Senghor (Bodunrin, 1984:2; Karp & Masolo, 2000:5). What "ethno-philosophers" do is that "[a]s opposed to seeing philosophy as a body of logically argued thoughts of individuals, [they] see African philosophy as communal thought and give its emotional appeal as one of its unique features" (Bodunrin, 1984:1 – 2). Oruka (1991:47 – 48), who, like Bodunrin, credits Hountondji as the source of the concept "ethno-philosophy", points out that "ethno-philosophy" is the type that "requires a communal consensus", that which identifies itself with the totality of customs and common beliefs of a people, a folk philosophy which forms a sharp contrast with "philosophy developed by reason and logic". What the above means, in sum, Oruka (1991:49) further points out, is that "ethno-philosophy" gives the impression that traditional Africa is devoid of, (1) philosophic, rational discourse, and (2), personalised philosophical activity. The proponents of "ethno-

philosophy", Oruka (ibid) further charges, treat philosophy as "a general communal activity in which ready-made beliefs and emotions rather than reflection decide the outcome". Hountondji, (1996:xxii) himself, thought that he had coined the term "ethnophilosophy" until he read works of Kwame Nkrumah making reference to "ethno-philosophy", which revealed that the term had been in use as early as the 1940s. Hountondji (Irele, 1996:15 – 16) used the term in response to the work of Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, in which the Belgian missionary tried to demonstrate, with reference to Africans' traditional thoughts, that Africans had their own philosophy. But Hountondji was not impressed. He saw Tempels' endeavour as, in fact, "an ethnological work with philosophical pretensions, or more simply […] a work of 'ethnophilosophy'" (Hountondji, 1996:34). For Hountondji (ibid), what appeared, at first sight, as an attempt to "rehabilitate the black man and his culture and to redeem them from the contempt from which they had suffered until then", was, "on closer scrutiny", an enterprise that is "not addressed to Africans but to Europeans, and particularly to two categories of Europeans: colonials and missionaries". In this discourse, the "black man continues to be the very opposite of an interlocutor; he remains a topic, a voiceless face under private investigation, an object to be defined and not the subject of a possible discourse" (Hountondji, 1996:34). Hountondji (1996:38) dismisses "ethnophilosophy", as an "imaginary search for an immutable, collective philosophy, common to all Africans, although in an unconscious form". Hountondji (1996:53) argues strongly that "African philosophy, like any other philosophy, cannot possibly be a collective world-view. It can exist as a philosophy only in the form of a confrontation between individual thoughts, a discussion, a debate".

Bodunrin (1984:11) shares Hountondji's view, pointing out that "philosophy is properly studied […] through the examination of the thoughts of individuals", further pointing out that the argument held against "ethno-philosophers is that the collective thought of peoples upon which they concentrate is not genuine philosophy". In dismissing "ethnophilosophy" Hountondji (1996:44 – 45) does not limit his criticism to Tempels alone, but to African philosophers who, in his view, approached African philosophy in the same or similar manner or approach as Temples'. Just as Tempels "ethnophilsophy" is a Western discourse addressed to Westerners, African "ethnophilosophy has been built up essentially *for a European public*" – not a discourse intended for Africans (Hountondji, 1996:45). Relentlessly, Hountondji (1996:48)

charges that "African ethnophilosophers […] wanted at all costs to rehabilitate themselves in their own eyes and in the eyes of Europe". For them to accomplish this task of self-rehabilitation, they were "prepared to leave no stone unturned, and they were only to happy to discover, through Tempels' notorious *Bantu Philosophy*, a type of argumentation that could, despite its ambiguities (or, rather, thanks to them), serve as one way of ensuring this rehabilitation" (ibid). In Hountondji's (1996:48 – 49) eyes, it makes sense why many "African authors […] in various tones and moods, struck up the Tempelsian theme, whereas they should have been mindful of the massive and blinding fact that the Belgian missionary, by his own admission, was addressing not them but the European public". Dismissively, Hountondji (1996:44) argues that the "quest for originality" on the part of "African ethnophilosophers" is "always bound up with a desire to show off". Further dismissing this approach as a "scandalous extraversion", Hountondji (1996:45) advances the view that in present-day Africa, African philosophers must at all costs address their theoretical discourse to fellow Africans and offer it for the appreciation and discussion by Africans themselves. Though conceding that they were spurred by a genuine quest for an African philosophy, Hountondji (1996:53) argues that African "ethnophilosophers" have "wrongly believed that this philosophy lies in our past, needing only to be exhumed and then brandished like a miraculous weapon in the astonished face of colonialist Europe". In Hountondji's view, African "ethnophilosphers […] have not seen that African philosophy, like African science or African culture in general, is before us, not behind us, and must be created today by decisive action" (ibid). Hountondji (ibid) urges African "ethnophilosophers" to admit, then, that African philosophy is "yet to come", to take the word "'philosophy' in the active, not passive, sense" and that there is no need for "a closed system to which all of us can adhere and which we can exhibit to the outside world". Whether one agrees or not with Hountondji's objection to a "closed system to which all of us can adhere", there is a need to seek to understand the basis of his objection. Hountondji (1996:60) is uncomfortable with what he refers to as a "miraculous" change when the word "philosophy" is applied in the African context, designating a different discipline which it evokes in its Western context. When in the African context it designates "merely a collective world-view, an implicit, spontaneous, perhaps even an unconscious system of beliefs to which all Africans are supposed to adhere", this is a "vulgar usage of the word, justified presumably by the supposed vulgarity of the geographical context to which it is applied" (Hountondji, 1996:60).

Informing this usage of philosophy in an African context, is a "myth at work, the myth of primitive unanimity", the suggestion being that in non-Western societies, associated with primitiveness, "everybody always agrees with everybody else" (ibid). If this is the case, then, it would follow that there is no critical engagement. Absence of critical engagement, debates, for Hountondji (ibid) disqualifies an enterprise from being defined as philosophy, generally, and African philosophy in particular.

In his critique of "ethnophilosophy" Towa (1991:189), in advancing the view that this approach "does not belong properly speaking to philosophy, but rather to theology", argues that, in fact, "ethnophilosophers retroject into the African tradition Christian or Muslim dogmas so that these religions lose all foreign characteristics in the eyes of African nationalists who desire to realize a return to their roots and to assume with pride their cultural identity". In other words, "ethnophilosophy" is a strategy of making palatable imported religions to Africans, or, in Towa's (ibid) view, "a question of finding a strategy for better inculcating Africans with the evangelical message". On the basis of these observations, Towa (1991:191) concludes, therefore, that "[w]hile pretending to rehabilitate African culture, ethnophilosophy works not at revealing African thought but at concealing it".

Having pointed out that the sources of "ethno-philosophers" are African folk-lore, tales, myths, proverbs, religious beliefs and practices, and African culture at large, Bodunrin (1984:10) further points out that objection towards "ethno-philosophers" is not based on the denial of their worthiness or logic in them. His argument is that even if these concepts were logical, coherent and complicated, "not every rational, coherent and complicated conceptual system is philosophy" (Bodunrin, 1984:11) Having pointed out that many "ethno-philosophers mistakenly believe that all rational, logical and complicated conceptual systems are philosophical systems" (ibid), Bodunrin (1984:19) further strongly objects to the "view that anything can pass for philosophy", his reason being that such an approach "will hurt the development of philosophy in Africa". Having stated that not everyone is a philosopher, just as not everyone is a historian, Bodunrin (1984:19 – 20) points out that philosophy requires training. Bodunrin's requirement of training as a precondition for one to become a philosopher brings us to the next sub-category – professional philosophy.

(b) *Professional philosophy* – this category refers to the works of trained philosophers, many of whom reject the approach of "ethno-philosophers", advancing "a universalist view of philosophy", in the conviction that the meaning of philosophy must have the "same meaning in all cultures although the subjects that receive priority, and perhaps the method of dealing with them, may be dictated by cultural biases and the existential situation in the society within which the philosophers operate" (Bodunrin, 1984:2). Philosophers associated with this category are Peter Bodunrin, Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu and Henry Odera Oruka (Bodunrin, 1984:3). At the time of writing, a view was held by Bodunrin (1984:3) that the "debate among African philosophers was just beginning and that the tradition of philosophy in the strict sense of the word is just now being established". Bodunrin (1984:19) held the view that Africans had "a late start in philosophy". What this means, as Bodunrin (1984:10) points out, is that "an African philosophical tradition is yet in the making". This is a view shared by Hountondji (1996:53), as cited earlier, that "African philosophy […] is before us, not behind us, and must be created today by decisive action". For Hountondji (1996:33) whose book first appeared in 1983, and the second edition in 1996, "African philosophy is a body of literature whose existence is undeniable, a bibliography which has grown constantly over the last thirty years or so". Hountondji (1996:53) urges his interlocutors to "[a]dmit, then, that our philosophy is yet to come". For the professional philosophers, "criticism and argument are essential characteristics of anything which is to pass as philosophy" (Bodunrin, 1984:3). It is for this reason that professional philosophers argue that "mere descriptive accounts of African thought systems or the thought systems of any other society would not pass as philosophy" (ibid).

For Oruka (1991:48), professional philosophers identify their philosophy as "'professional' precisely because it is technical philosophy having professionally trained philosophers as its managers". Oruka (ibid) further points out that one "remarkable characteristic" of professional philosophy is its use of techniques that are "commonly associated with European or Western philosophy". The truth of the matter though, Oruka (ibid) counters, is that "such techniques are not unique to the West" (ibid). In a critique of professional philosophy, a category which Oruka identifies and associates himself with, written in 1991, Oruka (1991:48; 49) identifies a number of limitations in professional philosophy listed below:

- Professional philosophy focussed on the criticism of "ethno-philosophy", and yet lacked a dominating subject matter of its own. To remedy this situation, professional philosophers needed to address specific philosophical concepts and issues instead of merely discussing the possibilities of a philosophy, "albeit, an African philosophy".
- Professional philosophy lacked a history, "a prolonged period of debates and available literature within which to preserve and expand itself". To remedy this situation, there was a need for African philosophers to "let one hundred flowers bloom" and leaving it to the future to "sort out those flowers and preserve a tradition".
- Beyond the criticism of "ethno-philosophy", professional philosophy in Africa needed to "enhance its degree of self-criticism", and to "intensify the debate among themselves and with others outside themselves".
- The "arrogant claim" among some professional philosophers, which is "not representative of all who subscribe to this school", is that "authentic African philosophy can and must only be scientific (i.e., systematic) and/or written philosophy". This "arrogant claim" delegitimises philosophic sagacity (to be discussed later below) as part of African philosophy, since philosophic sagacity is largely unwritten, and, therefore, perceived as "pre-scientific". Such an "arrogant claim" is similar to that made by "ethno-philosophers" who argue that "no approach except that of "ethnophilosophy represents the right path".

(c) *Nationalist-ideological philosophy* – this approach entails efforts by African nationalist politicians who sought unique political theories based on African traditions to meet the challenges of independence from colonialism (Bodunrin, 1984:2). Philosophers associated with this category are Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Léopold Senghor (ibid). Though sympathetic to this endeavour, Bodunrin (1984:6 – 7) is "disturbed at certain presuppositions of attempts so far made". To start with, Bodunrin (1984:7) thinks that "the past the political philosophers seek to recapture cannot be recaptured", further arguing that "[a]ny reconstruction of our social order" must take into account that "[c]ontact with the West through colonization and Christianity and the spread of Islam have had far-reaching effects on African traditional life". Yet, according to Bodunrin (ibid) Nkrumah and Nyerere think that the African traditional way of life must be their *point de depart* even though the traditional African society was not as complex as the modern African society and the crisis of conscience prevalent in the modern African society was not there. To be sure, Kwame Nkrumah to whom

Bodunrin makes reference, did take into account the impact of both Christianity and Islam on traditional African life. In his own words Nkrumah (1970a:68) observed that at the return of political independence in Africa, there were three broad distinguishable features present, namely the African "traditional way of life"; the "Islamic tradition in Africa"; and the "infiltration of the Christian tradition and Western culture of Europe into Africa, using colonialism and neo-colonialism as its primary vehicles". Nkrumah was an advocate of the African Renaissance", in other words, for the reconstruction of the traditional African way of life (Nkrumah, 1970a:63). Though cognisant of the presence of both Christianity and Islam, he was neither the advocate of "Christian renaissance" nor that of "Islamic renaissance". This being the case, it was logical that, citing Bodunrin, that "the traditional way of life must be [his] *point de depart*". Nkrumah (1970a:70) appreciated that fact that with the presence of Christianity and Islam, African society was "not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences". This being the case, a "new emergent ideology is therefore required, an ideology which can solidify in a philosophical statement, but at the same time an ideology which will not abandon the original humanist principles of Africa" (Nkrumah, 1970a:70). Nkrumah (ibid) argued for the forging of a "new harmony" which would "allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society" (ibid).

Nyerere's views on spirituality were also very clear. He emphasised that a person's relationship with the Supreme Being was a "personal matter" and "own affair" (Nyerere, 1968:12). This could come across as both being dismissive and insensitive to spirituality, but it was not. Although Nyerere (1968:13) argued that "socialism and religion are two different things", he also pointed out that such "does not mean that socialism is anti-religious". Even as he saw socialism and religion as two different things, Nyerere (1968:13) also recognised commonality, pointing out that "[t]here is nothing incompatible between socialism and Christianity, Islam, or any other religion which accepts the equality of man on earth". An advocate of socialism, Nyerere (ibid) stressed that "socialism cannot require its adherents be atheists" (ibid). Not only did Nyerere argue that socialism should not require its adherents to be atheists, but further pointed out that in a socialist society everyone would be free to choose whatever spiritual orientation they preferred and that a socialist society would work hard not to

offend any spiritual sensibilities (ibid). Freedom of spirituality, however, would not extend to absolutism. Nyerere (ibid) pointed out that if, for example, "questions of public health arose in an urban city out of certain religious burial practices", there would have to be interventions, but even then, every effort would be made to reach an agreement with the people concerned taking their "religious feelings […] always […] into account".

Bodunrin (ibid) further points out that African communalism was possible in a predominantly non-money economy where people lived and worked all their lives in the same locale and among the same close relatives. But with urbanisation, communities are heterogeneous and live in big cities (ibid). With people coming from different backgrounds and places, and "not necessarily hav[ing] blood ties [they] are less concerned with the affairs of one another than people used to be". Bodunrin (ibid) is concerned that political thinkers tend be "guilty of romanticizing the African past", while the reality, as he further argues, is that "[c]ertainly not everything about our past was glorious". In substantiating this point, Bodunrin (1984:7) points out that there were, in Africa, "interminable land disputes between communities, sometimes within the same village, show[ing] that the communalism we talk about was between members of very closed groups". Further, Bodunrin (ibid) argues a "way of life which made it possible four our ancestors to be subjugated by a handful of Europeans cannot be described as totally glorious". This being the case, therefore, Bodunrin (1984:7 – 8) observes that any "reconstruction of our past must examine features of our thought system and our society that made this possible". Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Bodunrin (1984:8) further notes that "African humanism must not be a backward-looking humanism" because there is "no country whose traditional ideology could cope with the demands of the modern world". Bodunrin's foregoing argument can easily be mistaken to mean that he thinks that there is nothing of value in African traditional values that can be useful in modern times. That would be a misinterpretation of his argument. In his own words, Bodunrin (1984:20) points out that doubtlessly "many things are worth preserving in our traditional culture—especially in the moral sphere—but we stand in danger of losing these if we do not take pains to separate these from those aspects that are undesirable". In advancing this argument, Bodunrin is echoing Wiredu (1980:59) who argues that cultural re-appraisal "implies the admission that our culture is less than ideal in some important respects and that we have to introduce new

elements". That is so, according to Wiredu (1980:61) because "the African, who asks himself why it came about that everywhere on his continent other peoples were able to easily put his people in bondage, is bound to realise that the trouble lies not in our stars nor in our biology but in certain aspects of our culture". Cultural reappraisal entails a realisation that while it is accepted that colonialism damaged Africans' self-esteem, resulting in a necessary cultural self-affirmation, such a process has potential pitfalls. One of such potential pitfalls is an "uncontrolled nationalistic enthusiasm" which could lead to a "wholesale cultural recrudescence which would in the long-run prove to be self-defeating" (ibid). That task of the African philosopher in this delicate project is "quite a suitable job to balance the enthusiasm for cultural revivalism with a spirit of forward-looking self-criticism" (ibid). The need for a critical engagement with African culture, and the necessity to acknowledge weakness within it, which exposed Africans to defeat by European colonialists has not been ignored by the African Renaissance advocates. A typical example was a belief in some African societies that the birth of twins was an abomination, and, as a result, twins had to be killed (Amadiume, 2015:123). This practice caused deep grief for twins' mothers, especially. Another practice that caused pain in African societies was the branding of women as witches (ibid). The acts were recognised by the early Christian missionaries and used them to the disadvantage of African culture and the the advantage of winning converts. Consequently, the "bulk of the first Christian converts were drawn from the poor, the needy, and the rejected: the mothers of twins, women accused of witchcraft, those suffering from diseases such as leprosy which were seen as an abomination" (Isichei, in Amadiume, 2015:123).

Up to this point, we have given Bodunrin's views on the thoughts of Nkrumah and Nyerere, and sought to contextualise their views. Fairness demands though, that these philosophers' views should be presented in their own right. In his book, *Consciencism: Philosophy And Ideology For De-Colonisation*, Nkrumah (1970:79) outlines what he refers to as "philosophical consciencism", which he defines as "the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality". Nkrumah (1970:78) singled out African traditions, Islamic traditions and Christian traditions as values which existed in Africa but whose "principles animating them are often in conflict with one

another". As a way forward, Nkrumah (ibid) argued that for Islam and Christianity "to be rightly seen" they "must be accommodated only as experiences of the traditional society" failing which "our society will be racked by the most malignant schizophrenia". Nkrumah (1970:79) held the view that the African personality is, itself, "defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society". Philosophical conciencism is a "philosophical statement […] born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society" (Nkrumah, 1970:70). It is that "philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience" (Nkrumah, 1970:79). Philosophy for Nkrumah (1970:78) meant responding to the need for "a body of connected thought which will determine the general nature of our action in unifying the society which we have inherited, this unification to take account, at all times, of the elevated ideals underlying the African traditional society".

Although Tanzania became independent in 1961, and the country's ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), formally committed to socialism since it revised its constitution almost immediately after independence, "it gradually became clear that the absence of a generally accepted and easily understood statement of philosophy and policy was causing problems, and some Government and Party actions were having the effect of encouraging the growth of non-socialist institutions, values, and attitudes" (Nyerere, 1968:1). Against this background, TANU adopted the Arusha Declaration in 1967 on January 29, a document that marked a turning point in Tanzania, which made explicit the country's alignment with the ideology of socialism (Nyerere, 1968:1; 231). The declaration of Tanzania socialist, was not the same thing as assuming that it was a socialist country. As Nyerere (1968:1) explained, while recognising that Tanzania was not yet a socialist country, that socialism is not built by Government decisions alone, or by Acts of Parliament, the Arusha Declaration was only a beginning, a commitment to building socialism. Nyerere (ibid) recognised that "a country does not become socialist by nationalizations or grand designs on paper. It is more difficult than that to build socialism, and it takes much longer." While Nyerere (1968:2 – 3) acknowledged the universality of socialism and that the idea related to humankind, not just Tanzanians, he also argued that since socialism was international, that meant that it also had to relate to the Tanzanians, encompass them as they were, their geography

and the history that made them. Nyerere (1968:3) rejected the notion that socialism demanded the "remoulding of man to a single pattern, regardless of whether man has been born in Uzanaki or Hunan, Colchester or Uppsala". In Nyerere's (ibid) view, the "universality of socialism only exists if it can take account of men's differences, and be equally valid for all of them" (ibid). The meaning of socialism for Tanzania was "implicit" in "ujaama", which the TANU chose to describe Tanzania's socialist policies (Nyerere, 1968:2). Nyerere (ibid) points out that the choice of the word "ujaama" was neither accidental nor solely the result of a desire to find a KiSwahili equivalent for the word "socialism". The choice of the word "ujamaa" was an expression and a statement of African rebirth or the African Renaissance. For Tanzanians the choice meant that "socialism involves building on the foundation of our past, and building also to our own design" (Nyerere, 1968:2). The choice of "ujamaa" was a clear indication that the Tanzanians were not "importing a foreign ideology into Tanzania", but an expression of a decision "to grow, as a society out of our own roots, but in a particular direction and towards a particular kind of objective" (ibid). Ujaama was an emphasis of "certain characteristics of our traditional organization, and extending them so that they can embrace the possibilities of modern technology and enable us to meet the challenge of life in the twentieth century world" (ibid). The word "ujamaa" was chosen for special reasons. It was chosen because it is "an African word and thus emphasizes the African-ness of the policies" that Tanzania intended to follow (ibid). The word literally means "'family-hood'", so that it brings to the mind of our people the idea of mutual involvement in the family as we know it" (ibid). Nyerere (1968:4) emphasised that "most central of all, is that under socialism Man is the purpose of all social activity". Nyerere (1968:6) also made explicit that "in a socialist society there will be no exploitation of one man by another". The concept of a "man-centred society" implied the promotion of the dignity and the growth to excellence of all members of the human race (Nyerere, 1968:5). In a world saddled with not only with racism, but sexism as well, Nyerere (1968:4) observed that "the word 'man' to a socialist, means all men – all human beings", specifically, both "Male and female". Whether these human beings were black, white, brown, yellow, long-nosed or short-nosed, educated or otherwise, wise or stupid, strong or weak, was immaterial (ibid). For Nyerere (ibid) "all these, and all other distinctions between human beings, are irrelevant to the fact all members of the society – all the human beings who are its purpose – are equal". In the context of the "Nationalist-ideological philosophy", we have thus far examined Nkrumah and

Nyerere's thoughts. We focused on the two, and in that order, because they were made reference to by Bodunrin, and, also in terms of the times of their publication. But not discussing the works of Kenneth Kaunda, a philosopher, and Zambia's former head of state, would impoverish this study because Kaunda, firstly, made a significant contribution to this discourse, and, also, his book, discussed below, was published ahead of that of Nyerere.

Zambia regained its independence in 1964. Three years after gaining independence, Kaunda (1987:vii; 1; 3) committed his country to the "Philosophy of Humanism" which he considered as an important element of a "revolutionary" programme. Kaunda (1987:1) reasoned that having removed a colonialist order, it was essential to be conscious of the fact that "for society to organize itself on […] revolutionary lines the people must have a clear idea of what things were, of what things are and indeed what they might have been". Kaunda (1987:6) appreciated deeply that colonialists realised that for the art of colonisation to succeed, political oppression without economic and cultural oppression would be insufficient. Therefore, "the act of political independence forms but the first part of the process of decolonization" (ibid). The choice for Zambia was the "Philosophy of Humanism" (Kaunda, 1987:4). The Philosophy of Humanism was an act of the African Renaissance because this "Humanism must be understood against the background of what we know to have been the way of life enjoyed by our forefathers" (Kaunda, 1987:9). Kaunda (1987:7) held a conviction that traditionally the "African society was progressive and human". This being the case, the "present generation with its responsibility of taking care of the past traditions, remoulding the present to prepare for the future generations, would do well to bear this in mind in all its political, economic, social and cultural activities" (ibid). Such a task, in Kaunda's (1987:6) view, was "more difficult than the attainment of political independence", and may not be "possible to complete it in one generation, for it does not only require careful thought and planning, but also a lot of material, human and otherwise, to bring it about". The Philosophy of Humanism, argued Kaunda (ibid), stood for the creation of an "egalitarian society – that is, a society in which there is equal opportunity for self-development for all". Equal opportunity would not be possible without a humanist basis (ibid). Kaunda (ibid) had "no doubt at all" in his mind that the "greatest blessing bestowed […] is that we have always had a gift for Man enjoying the fellowship of Man simply because he is Man. This is at the heart of our traditional culture" (ibid). The

brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity being at the heart of African traditional culture, Kaunda (ibid) pointed out that "Africa's gift to world culture must be in the field of Human Relations". The Philosophy of Humanism that Kaunda called for, drew its inspiration from an African traditional way of life. Kaunda (1987:17) argued that by "advocating a humanist way of life we are appreciating the wisdom and values of our forefathers. Mere appreciation, however, of a good thing is not sufficient even if it is written down. What is required is understanding the philosophy and appreciating the importance of methods of organisation, that is, organising for a humanist society." The above observations by Kaunda point to the fact that he realised that philosophical ideas required a methodical approach for their implementation. This point was best articulated by Nkrumah (1970:78) who noted that "[p]ractice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty". Kaunda's (1987:12) appreciation of the importance of methodology in philosophy is illustrated by his observation that his forebears' humanist way of life "did not come about by making high sounding declarations in the form of ideologies, etc". Instead, African philosophy, "came about by a carefully worked out order and discipline which everybody in society was required to follow" (Kaunda, 1987:12 – 13). What this reveals is that there was an expectation in traditional African societies that philosophy was not just to be an abstract thing, but something that was put into practice. Philosophy in traditional African societies was communal in at least two senses. In the first sense it was communal because it governed the way of life of the people. In the second sense it was communal because members of the community participated in its development. While not everyone may have been a philosopher, many adopted the philosophy, not passively but actively, and, in that sense, establishing a sense of ownership over the philosophy of African humanism. Painting a picture of a communal and methodological approach of the development of philosophy in traditional Africa, Kaunda (1987:13) points out that in traditional African culture, elders taught their values by imparting knowledge and wisdom a "carefully worked out order and discipline". Appreciating this, Kaunda (1987:13) observes that "[f]rom what has been said above, it is clear that we cannot ourselves expect to achieve once again the Man-centred society without very careful planning". This being the case, "in this direction nothing is more important than institutions of learning". It was against this background that Kaunda (1987:9) envisioned establishing "a chair in Human Relations as against just race relations, at the University of Zambia. Human Relations is a subject much wider in its coverage than the latter" (ibid). The point emphasised by

Kaunda was that if African Humanism were to be *reclaimed*, *recovered*, there would have to be a conscious effort to *re-inculcate* the traditional, ancestral values for the future. To bring about a humanist society, Kaunda (1987:12) cautioned, "we will need to spell out clearly how we go about this". In calling for the appreciation of the "wisdom and values of our forefathers", and advocating the appreciation of the past for the future, Kaunda (1987:17) was sensitive to the fact that he could be accused of romanticising the African past. In a preemptive move, Kaunda (1987:12) emphatically pointed out that the fact that "(and this is not, repeat not, to glorify the past but rather to humbly try to learn from it for the good of the present and the future) our ancestors were able to achieve a society in which social and political order was tight and effective calls for some examination on our part of how they achieved this". Part of the examination of the forebears' social and political order should entail, for Kaunda (1987:13), the following reflections: "Is this social harmony still possible? Frankly, the answer is 'Yes'; it is a question of how we organize society in the face of those shattering and aggressive forces already referred to – (from both the West and the East)". The Philosophy of Humanism being in favour of an egalitarian society meant that any form of exploitation of one human being by another is abhorred, and that human society has to be planned in such a manner that all forms of exploitation are fought and eliminated (Kaunda, 1987:3 – 4). But while the point of departure was Zambia, the Philosophy of Humanism was not limited to Zambia. Kaunda (1987:3) held the view that the "expectations of Man do not apply to Zambia alone insofar as Humanism is concerned. Humanism is looking at Man in global terms". The quest of the Philosophy of Humanism was a "genuine membership of one world […] the unity of the human race […]" (Kaunda, 1987:2). The Philosophy of Humanism sought to create a world order in which "Man must be central in all that we decide to do in both word and deed" (Kaunda, 1987:3). Kaunda (1987:4) appreciated that the "forward march towards the attainment of a humanist society will be long and difficult". Kaunda (1987:3) also appreciated that "[n]o society can be what its individuals are not" and, this being the case, "Zambia [was] no exception". He argued strongly that a "nation can only be what its citizens wish it to be, no more, no less" (ibid). This meant that for the vision of his Philosophy of Humanism to be successful, the people of Zambia had to be involved in bringing it about. The ideal could be achieved, Kaunda (1987:4) argued, "only if all our Party militants and their allies are completely committed to the Philosophy of Humanism". This being the case, Kaunda (ibid) further pointed out, it was "imperative

that the Central Committee of our Party should spell out in very clear terms what this exploitation of man by man is and what it means to the people who suffer it".

We now turn to what Bodunrin refers to as Philosophic sagacity.

(d) *Philosophic sagacity* – In order to be able to appreciate the meaning of "philosophic sagacity", Oruka (1991:51) points out the need to distinguish between two cencepts: "philosophic sagacity", on the one hand, and a "culture philosophy" (a philosophy of culture), on the other hand. Oruka (1991:51) defines philosophic sagacity as a "reflection" of a person who is "a sage" and a "thinker". In other words, though there may be a relationship between a "sage" and a "thinker", and that a person may be a sage and a thinker at the same time, the two are not necessarily the same. A sage in one who is well-versed in the wisdoms and traditions of one's people, and recognised (but not necessarily) as such by one's people as having this gift. However, for Oruka, (ibid) possession of wisdom and traditions of a people does not necessarily make one a philosopher. Oruka's logic can be discerned when we delineate his distinction between a "culture philosophy" and "philosophic sagacity", in that order. In elucidating his perspective on "culture philosophy", Oruka (1991:52) begins by acknowledging the fact that "[e]very culture has ideas and beliefs which underlie and justify it", and refers to such ideas and beliefs as "*mythos* of a culture". Mythos, can be loosely referred to as a "people's philosophy", its contents making up the "'philosophy' as underlying the culture in question and acting as its immediate and ultimate justification" (ibid). But the "mythos", Oruka (ibid) further notes, is not "philosophy proper". This is so for Oruka (ibid) because "[b]eliefs or truth claims within a culture philosophy are generally treated as 'absolutes'", and "[a]nything outside or contradictory to the culture is treated with indifference and even hostility". The sages or persons who are experts in the culture, Oruka (ibid) further points out, tend to defend their philosophy and their society's structure "with the zeal of fanatical ideologists defending their political line". In contrast to the "culture philosophy", Oruka (1991:52) argues that philosophic sagacity is often a product and a reflective re-evaluation of the "culture philosophy", meaning that the few sages who have the philosophical inclination make a critical assessment of their own culture and its underlying beliefs, making use of the power of reason instead of the celebrated beliefs of the communal consensus and explanation. In this way the sages produce "a system within a system, and order within an order". When sages fail to use critical faculties, and simply play the role of being "moralists

and the disciplined diehard faithfuls to a tradition", or "merely historians and good interpreters of the history and customs of their people", they fail to meet the criteria of philosophers (Oruka, 1991:51). In other words, Oruka (ibid) further points out, the sages, in this regard, are only wise within the conventional and historical confines of their culture but not rational in engaging the inconsistencies in their culture, nor coping with the foreign innovations encroaching on it (ibid). While the sages are, in this context, the spokespeople of their culture, they say nothing knew that is not already known. Philosophic sagacity goes beyond more than just sagacity, and attains "a philosophic capacity" when the sages who are "versed in the beliefs and wisdoms of their people" and, as "thinkers", who are rationally critical, they "opt for or recommend only those aspects of their beliefs and wisdoms which satisfy their rational scrutiny" (Oruka, 1991:51). Such a critical stance by the sages, Oruka (ibid) further observes, may create conflict between the critical sages and the "diehard adherents of the prevailing common beliefs". The critical sages are "capable of conceiving and rationally recommending ideas offering alternatives to the commonly accepted opinions and practices. They transcend the communal wisdom" (ibid). In this category the thrust is to identify people in society reputed to have wisdom so as to demonstrate that literacy is not a prerequisite for one to be a philosopher (Bodunrin, 1984:2). Bodunrin (1984:10) points out that those interested in philosophic sagacity "would succeed and have succeeded in showing that the ability to philosophize is not necessarily tied to literacy and that there exist among Africans men and women capable of engaging in serious philosophical discourse". But even then, this approach in Bodunrin's (ibid) view seems to be "an implicit admission that an African philosophical is yet in the making" (ibid).

Now we turn to Karp and Masolo's three phases of African philosophy. It will be seen that, with particular reference to their first phase, there is an overlap with Oruka's sub-category, namely "professional philosophy".

(a) *The First Phase*

The "history of African philosophy", from the standpoint of Karp and Masolo (2000:4), is one of "two contesting parties", namely "ethnophilosophy", and what is "now known as African philosophy". This distinction between "ethnophilosophy" and "African philosophy" by Karp and Masolo (ibid) gives a clear indication of their non-recognition of

"ethnophilosophy" as part of "African philosophy" even though in the same breath they regard "ethnophilosophy" as part of the "history of African philosophy". The rejection of "ethnophilosophy" as an authentic philosophy by Karp and Masolo (2000:1) comes out clearly when they note that "'[e]thnophilosophy' shares two featurers with African philosophy". While one practice is, on the one hand, referred to as "ethnophilosophy", on the other hand, their first phase of African philosophy is referred to as "African philosophy", even though they recognise and acknowledge that what they regard as "ethnophilosophy" and "African philosophy" are both "texts […] largely written by African scholars who seek to explain how African culture(s) resolve those key issues also posed in Western philosophical systems" (ibid). This rejection of "ethnophilosophy" as authentic philosophy on the part of Karp and Masolo is an attitude common between them and professional philosophers. While on the one hand Karp and Masolo (ibid) seek to distinguish between, and distance "African philosophy" from "ethnophilosophy", not only do they acknowledge that "ethnophilosophy" texts are largely written by African scholars, but they also recognise that "both bodies of literature are shaped by a more or less self-conscious sensitivity to the imperial and colonial histories out of which African nations have emerged". Karp and Masolo (2000:4 – 5) define "ethnophilosophy" as the "study of collective forms of culture as manifestations of African philosophical systems" and an examination of the "systems of thought of existing and precolonial African communities in order to determine what might be the ideal forms of 'authentically' African philosophy and praxis in the emerging postcolonial situation". What is "now known as African philosophy" is defined by Karp and Masolo (2004:4) as an argument that advances the notion that "philosophical practice, as a second-order critical evaluation of first-order thinking about nature, culture, and experience, must be a vital activity in Africa". Karp and Masolo (2000:1) trace the emergence of the "first phase of African philosophy" to the 1970s, and further note that it was largely a critique of how colonial categories were "inadvertently reproduced in ethnophilosophical accounts of African cultures". This first phase of African philosophy sought to "establish standards" through which African belief systems and customs could be evaluated (ibid). Without calling their first phase "professional philosophy", it becomes clear that reference is made to professional philosophy when Karp and Masolo (2000:1 – 2) note that in the "first phase", African philosophy tends to defend the value of philosophy in post-colonial African states by arguing that "philosophical training and tools provide rigor and method that are badly needed for the task of national development". In their critique of "ethnophilosophy", Karp and Masolo (2000:6) argue that

its literature is riddled with contradictions, pointing out that while "ethnophilosophy", on the surface, is robustly anti-colonial, "it still accepts the basic categories in terms of which colonial culture defines other cultures and peoples […] such as the distinction between culture and civilization or the 'traditional' and the modern" (ibid). Karp and Masolo (ibid) further point out that while on the one hand, "ethnophilosophical" writings are "powerfully critical of colonial rule and culture", on the other hand, they are "profoundly descriptive and anti-normative – that is, non-critical – about African traditions and customs". This criticism is a generalisation if it is taken into cognisance that among those counted as ethnophilosophers by Karp and Masolo (2000:5) is Léopold Senghor who is not only, as Karp and Masolo (2000:4) point out, "powerfully critical of colonial rule and culture", but also, a point missed by Karp and Masolo (ibid), *critical – about African traditions and customs*. With particular reference to Christianity and Islam, Senghor (1964:83) observes that the Europe and Asia brought to Africa "more elaborate religion, more rational or, to repeat, more attuned to the present age". Senghor (1964:82) makes this point notwithstanding the fact that, as he himself notes, "Islam, with its horror of imagery, has done more damage to cultural values, and Christianity, with occidental materialism, did more harm to moral values". We now move to Karp and Masolo's second phase.

(b) *The Second Phase*

The second phase seeks to develop a "Philosophy of Culture" that can critically examine the cultural resources that Africans utilise in the conduct of their lives (Karp & Masolo, 2000:2). Not only does the Philosophy of Culture interrogate the "so-called 'Traditional' African culture", but also examines issues such as the role of African intellectuals and academics in the public life of African states (ibid). Next we look at Karp and Masolo's third phase.

(c) *The Third Phase*

In the third phase of African philosophy, African philosophers endeavour to engage with unanticipated social, economic and environmental crises which confronted African states after regaining their independence from colonial rule (Karp & Masolo, 2000:2). The third phase of African philosophy marks a departure from the critique of how cultural difference are defined, to a more critical stance that engages issues such as nationalism and pan-nationalism, and critically examines "claims to racial solidarity", and confronts "the claim

that the postcolonial period and scholarly writing about Africa exhibits a conceptual break from the themes and epistemological practices found in the colonial archive" (ibid).

We now turn to two categories identified by Serequeberhan (1991:xx; 11; 15) as "scientistic" and "historico-hermeneutical" philosophies.

(a) Scientistic philosophy

Scientistic philosophy is a concept imposed on those African philosophers who identify themselves as "professional philosophers" because of their emphasis on science and literacy as a condition for philosophy without which there can be no philosophy (Owomoyela, 1991:156). Even as this label is applied, there is no failure of recognition that even among the professional philosophers there are different perspectives – as will be shown below – on the very question of science and literacy as a precondition for philosophy, and attitude towards African culture/s (ibid). The acknowledgment that professional philosophers are not homogeneous, and that a distinction between those, on the one hand, who regard writing and "science" as a precondition for philosophising, and those, on the other hand, who do not, is crucial. That is so because Oruka (1991:49) who identifies himself with the professional philosophy category argues that even though the argument in favour of writing and "science" as preconditions for philosophy "represents a significant portion of the school [professional philosophy]", he, simultaneously, points out that such a "claim is not representative of all those who subscribe to this school". Oruka (ibid) further points out that is "an arrogant claim" to argue that "authentic African philosophy can and must only be a scientific (i.e. systematic) and/or written philosophy". The advancement of such an "arrogant claim", Oruka (ibid) argues, rules out philosophic sagacity as a part of African philosophy considering that philosophic sagacity is largely unwritten and, apparently, "pre-scientific."

Two points made by Bodunrin (1991:10; 18) reveal that he is conscious that the issue of the written word in reference to philosophy is a sensitive one, and, therefore in addressing it, proceeds very cautiously. Firstly, Bodunrin (1984:10) points out that "[e]ven if writing cannot be a precondition for philosophy, nevertheless the role of writing in the creation of a philosophical tradition cannot be underrated". While Bodunrin in the foregoing observation grants that writing is not a precondition for philosophy, his second observation, to be cited below, as Oruka (1991:58) observes, reveals that Bodunrin "tries unsuccessfully to water it down". In the second observation, while on the one hand Bodunrin (1984:18)

points out that surely writing is not a prerequisite for philosophy, he expresses doubt about whether philosophy "can progress adequately without writing". Had others not written down the sayings of Socrates, the pre-Socratics and Buddha, Bodunrin (ibid) further points out, they would not be recognised as philosophers, for their thoughts would have been lost in the mythological world of proverbs and pithy sayings.

What is it, in what Bodunrin says above, that gives the impression to Oruka that Bodunrin "tries unsuccessfully to water […] down" the acknowledgment that writing is not a precondition for philosophy? It is the words "doubt" and "adequately" in this sentence that exposes Bodunrin's stance. By saying that he doubts whether philosophy can progress "adequately" without writing, Bodunrin is revealing that he is not "convinced" that this can be the case. The word "adequately" reveals that Bodunrin believes that if the measure is "inadequate", then the exercise is incomplete and, therefore, not philosophical. Anything inadequately anything falls below what it purports to be. But a strong counter-argument can be made that Socrates, as Bodunrin (1984:9) himself, acknowledges, "did not leave […] any written work". Sensitive to this, Bodunrin (ibid) hastens to point out that Socrates "was still not an illiterate". Bodrunrin (ibid) further argues that in fact there is "indeed evidence that Socrates and a large section of the Athenian free adult male citizenry was not illiterate". This being the case, Bodunrin (ibid) further argues, it is, therefore, "reasonable to assume that those who met in the *agora* for intellectual discussions were well-educated persons thoroughly familiar with the written and oral traditions of their people". Bodunrin and those who share the emphasis on the written word may be right in arguing that Greek philosophers and their interlocutors were highly educated, but wrong in emphasising that they made the written word central in this endeavour. As Finley (1975:95) points out, it would be a "distortion to overstress the written word" because the "Greeks preferred to talk and listen: even their architecture is that of a people who loved talk". It appears as if it was not just the Greeks in general who preferred oral engagement above the written word, but, interestingly, Greek philosophers as well. Finley (ibid) points out that "Plato openly expressed his distrust of reliance on books" since books cannot be questioned, and, therefore, their ideas are closed to corrections and further refinement, and, besides, weaken the memory. Finley (ibid) further points out that Socrates built his reputation solely on a long lifetime of talk, for he never wrote a line. Even though Finley makes the above frank statement in his book, *The Ancient Greeks*, whose first edition appeared in 1963, exactly twenty years before Hountjondji published the first edition of his book, *African Philosophy:*

Myth & Reality, in 1983, his (Finley, 1975:28) observation is preceded by an argument to the effect that "[o]nly a society which can write, can sort out, preserve and transmit its knowledge on paper, is capable of systematic inquiry into its religious beliefs (or any other kind)". Are these the origins of the professional philosophers' emphasis on the written word in philosophy? The almost word for word argument is very difficult to ignore.

Owomoyela (1991:158) points out that apart from the arguments regarding what is and what is not African philosophy, Hountondji and his fellow philosophers raise larger concerns among which is the "adequacy of traditional African cultures". More specifically, Owomoyela (1991:159) refers to Hountondji's citation of Towa about the need to "welcome and assimilate the spirit of Europe" and the need for the "destruction of traditional idols", sentiments which, Omowoyela argues, "Hountondji […] echoes". In fairness to Hountondji, it is essential that we afford him the opportunity to represent himself in his own voice. With reference to Owomoyela's point regarding Hountondji's echoing Towa's argument, in his own words, Hountondji (1996:171) notes that he is in "fundamental agreement with the main argument developed in [Towa's] brief but concentrated piece of work". The greatest merit of Towa's work, Hountondji (ibid) further points out, is to have "explored the political terrain in which the discourse of African ethnophilosophers unfolds, to have shown the necessity of recognizing there has been a change of line and an alteration in the political stakes and that these should produce 'a new philosophical orientation in Africa'". Hountondji (1996:171 – 172) calls for the reading and re-reading of the "marvellous passages" in Towa's work in which, while recognising the "underlying dialectic" which, at the climax of imperialism, gave rise to the "project of a Bantu philosophy" as a manifestation of a revolt against the "assertion of the essential and exclusive Westernness of philosophy", yet succeeds to show "why and how this project is now a thing of the past, why and how, with the accession of most our countries to independence, it is now necessary to replace 'the quest for originality and difference as a certificate of humanity… by a quest for ways and means of achieving power as an inevitable condition for the affirmation of both our humanity and our freedom'". Towa's proposed change of perspective would, in Hountondji's (1996:172) view, enable African philosophers to "profoundly modify" their relation with their cultural past in such a way that they "can now regard it coolly, critically, without complacency or self-satisfaction, and to try to discover not our unrecognized greatness or nobility but the secret of our defeat by the West". What Towa proposes, Hountondji (ibid) further points out, is "nothing less than

'revolutionary iconoclasm', a 'destruction of traditional idols' which will enable us to 'welcome and assimilate the spirit of Europe, the secret of her power and of her victory over us'". Rather than pitting African culture against that of Europe, Hountondji (ibid) advances the view that Africans must, for the sake of their own liberation, take up European science and technology, and in order to attain this goal, they must begin by putting to work the European concept of philosophy that goes hand in hand with this science and technology, and by developing free and critical thinking on the subject of present realities. Proposing that African philosophers must take a critical approach to African culture in order to discover the "secret of our defeat by the West", gives a clear indication that Hountondji subscribes to the view that there was something superior in Western culture, and something inferior in African culture which resulted in Africans being conquered by Europe. Hounntondji is not alone in having this concern – it is shared by some of his fellow professional philosophers, with particular reference to Wiredu and Bodunrin. Wiredu, (1984:151), remarking on the calls by certain Africans for the "cultivation of an African authenticity or personality", argues that "it was a certain pervasive trait of this same culture that enabled sparse groups of Europeans to subjugate large masses of African populations and keep them in colonial subjection for many long years and which even now makes them a prey to neo-colonialism". What does Wiredu mean by the above, exactly? What is this "pervasive trait" in African culture that rendered Africans vulnerable to European conquest? Two observations by Wiredu provide answers to the foregoing questions. The first is Wiredu's (1984:151) observation that "[i]f a culture is both non-scientific and non-literate, then in some important respects it may be said to be backward in a rather deep sense". The second is Wiredu's (1984:153) observation that "it is a fact that Africa lags behind the West in the cultivation of rational inquiry". For his part, making reference to Wiredu, Bodunrin (1984:7 – 8) argues that any reconstruction of an African past must examine the features of African thought systems and African societies that made African defeat by Europeans possible. It is clear to Bodunrin (1984:7) that a "way of life which made it possible for our ancestors to be subjugated by a handful of Europeans cannot be described as totally glorious". As if not to leave anyone in doubt, Hountondji (1996:172) makes clear that the "the main interest of Towa's analysis lies in the emphasis that he places on science as a principle of power and on its relationship with philosophy, in the courage with which he affirms the 'necessity of freedom of thought and freedom in general for the development of science and therefore also indirectly of power'". This emphasis on science by Hountondji, imputes, in Owomoyela's (1991:160) view, to traditional African cultures

an “innocence of the scientific spirit”, a “lack of science” which is “closely tied to the […] lack of literacy, one explaining the other”. Owomoyela’s preceding observation can safely be linked to Hountondji’s (1996:33) definition of African philosophy as “the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their authors themselves”. In response to criticisms that he limited and reduced African philosophy to written texts, Hountjondji (1996:ix) pointed out that though his statement “had the formal structure of a definition, this prefatory declaration was not meant as a definition”. He then explained that in his definition of African philosophy, the “possibility of an oral philosophical literature (a philosophical ‘orature’) was not excluded”. Despite this accommodating stance towards the “possibility” of an oral philosophical literature, Hountondji’s inclination to the written word remained unchanged. Having considered his critics’ arguments, and “after comparing the effects of the written and the spoken word”, Hountondji (1996:ix) “finally admitted the privilege of writing and its absolute necessity for the development of critical philosophy and scientific culture as a whole”. Hountondji (1996:ix – x) found it inconsistent and contradictory the argument by Africans who defended oral literature on the one hand, while on the other hand they indulged in and benefited from the practice of writing. In a confrontational tone Hountondji (1996:ix – x) asked whether, in the name of African authenticity, or in his own words, “in order to remain ourselves”, should African philosophers “renounce writing and pretend to ignore what we have long known, deceive ourselves and others as we continue to proclaim the superiority of our oral cultures, write lengthy indictments against writing, in articles which, by their very existence refute in practice what they pretend to say?” Hountondji (1996:99) was unequivocally clear that the “first precondition for a history of philosophy, the first precondition for philosophy as history, is therefore the existence of a scientific practice”. Having established this argument, Hountondji (ibid) emphasised that the “chief requirement of science itself is writing” (ibid). For Hountondji (ibid), it is rather “difficult to imagine a scientific civilization that is not a civilization based on writing, difficult to imagine a scientific tradition in a society in which knowledge can be transmitted only orally”. On the basis of the preceding observations, Hountondji (ibid) concludes, therefore, that “African civilizations could not give birth to any *science*, in the strictest sense of the word”, until African civilisations had undergone the “profound transformation through which we see them going today, that transformation which is gradually changing them, from within, into literate civilizations”. In arguing that Africa lacks science, Hountondji (ibid), as he, himself points out, is not oblivious to the fact that prior colonialism “Africa had undoubtedly

amassed a wealth of true knowledge, of effective techniques which have been transmitted orally from generation to generation and continue to this day to ensure the livelihood of a large part of the population of our countryside and cities".The problem for Hountondji (ibid), even as he makes these concessions, is that this "wealth of true knowledge" is not "*recorded, systematized, integrated*". In arguing that Africa lacks the scientific spirit, does this mean that Hountondji was not conscious of ancient African Egypt as the mother of science, philosophy, mathematics? Indeed, in arguing that the "view of philosophy as a critical activity whose function embraces an interrogation of its own nature and meaning is undoubtedly a legacy of the Greek philosophers", Hountondji (1996:7) is discounting Ancient Egypt's global pioneering role in philosophical thought? The attribution of the genesis of philosophy to the Greek by Hountondji is ironic considering that in his own words he observes that "Europe is what she is today because she assumed and transformed the cultural heritage of other peoples, in the first rank of which were our own continent: the ancient Egyptians" (Hountondji, 1996:54). Hountondji's preceding observations about Africa's literacy heritage is not an isolated one. Having acknowledged that "Pre-colonial Africa was certainly not, or not quite, a society without writing", Hountondji (1996:100) demonstrates his awareness of Africa's heritage of literacy in several ways. He makes reference to the Egyptologist, Theophile Obenga's book, *Africa in the Ancient World*, which he calls an "excellent work" in which Obenga discusses African writing systems before colonial invasion (ibid). Particular reference in Obenga's work is made to the Vai of Sierra Leone, the Bamun of the Cameroun, "not to mention the more ancient and better known systems such as that of ancient Egypt" (ibid). If Hountondji is aware of this African legacy in writing, why does he not count Africa as having a scientific tradition? Addressing this issue Hountondji (ibid) notes that it is "not enough to know that systems of writing existed in certain societies in certain parts of Africa" because "this does not solve our problem". The important questions that Hountondji (ibid) thinks should be confronted and answered are:

- How were these writing systems used?
- What were the concrete purposes that they served?
- What place did they occupy in the spiritual and material culture of their societies?
- Did they convey an esoteric or aristocratic kind of knowledge or were they "within the reach of the masses?"

Having raised these important questions, except for saying that these questions constituted "the real problem", Hountondji (ibid) does not attempt to give answers, a puzzling factor after having passed judgement on Africa's lack of scientific spirit on the basis of the "absence" of writing. With reference to another Egyptologist, Cheikh Anta Diop's scholarship, which highlights that "Africa, in the remotest antiquity, knew a most brilliant scientific civilization, as witness in particular by the spectacular achievements of the Egypt of the Pyramids", Hountondji (1996:100) argues that in this regard a thesis of historical regression can be advocated. In the case of Ancient Egypt, Hountondji (ibid) further points out, it can be argued that the "present penury of Africa on the scientific and technological planes is not original but the result of regression, a decadence". Having made such an important observation which can help shed light on significant African issues regarding science and philosophy, Hountondji (ibid) opts to shy away from engaging this issue further, and elects to "not dwell on the difficulties confronting this thesis", which, to him seems "extremely fruitful but is likely to remain speculative, until definitive arguments, as opposed to impressionistic or conjectural ones, can be given for the biological and historical continuity between the populations of ancient Egypt and of the present-day Africa". Unlike Wiredu who, with scepticism, approached the notion of Ancient Egypt as being the heritage of the entire indigenous Africa, not Arab heritage, and Hountondji, who dealt with the notion of Ancient Egypt as being indigenously African, Bodunrin does not even entertain this debate. To begin with Bodunrin's (1984:4) reference to, and discussion about Africa is limited to "sub-Saharan Africa". Since he does not address the northern African heritage, such an approach explains why Bodunrin (ibid) says it was after Africa's colonisation, and the beginning of evangelisation in Africa that "writing was introduced". Hountondji (1996:100) argues that even if the hypothesis that the "present penury of Africa on the scientific and technological planes is not original but the result of a regression, a decadence" were true, such "does not explain why such a cultural regression should have taken place". Hountondji (ibid) speculates that one possible explanation for Ancient Egypt's cultural regression has to do with a "hieratic, esoteric character of science and literacy in a society in which these ere monopolized by a tiny class of priests who made them instruments of their domination". If such were true, this would be contradictory to the spirit of philosophising because what is "certain" to Hountondji (1996:101) is that "the first and most basic requirement of *philosophy*, as *science* (in the strict sense of the words) is the broad, democratic practice of writing – a necessary, if not sufficient, condition". In arguing strongly in favour of the written word as a necessary, if not sufficient condition of

philosophy, Hountondji (1996:103), comparing the oral and the written traditions, concludes that the written has merits, strengths, and advantages that the oral lacks. Following is Hountondji's (1996:103 – 104) hypothesis and logic:

- Oral tradition has, one the one hand. an inclination towards consolidating knowledge into dogmatic, intangible systems, while on the other hand, the written word (archival transmission), gives rise to the possibility of a critique of knowledge between individuals, and from generation to generation;
- The transmission of knowledge orally, on the one hand, is dominated by the *fear of forgetting*. This fear is driven by the bereftness of external or material support since memory is left to its own resources. This sense of vulnerability compels people to "hoard their memories jealously, to recall them constantly, to repeat them continually", thus accumulating and heaping them up in a global wisdom always ready to be applied, perpetually available. On the contrary, on the other hand, the written tradition, with its provision of material support, "liberates the memory", allowing it the space to forget its acquisitions, enabling it, provisionally, to reject or question its acquisitions, because it is safe in the knowledge that whenever necessary it can recapture its acquisitions. The permanent record being guaranteed, the written record makes actual memory superfluous.

  Having studied the above pronouncements by Hountondji and other professional philosophers, Owomoyela (1991:158) concludes that whereas the case against "ethnophilosophy" could be interpreted as being opposed to the "misguided concoctions of foreigners and their African cohorts, the philosophers' pronouncements leave one with the certainty that the real object of their displeasure is African tradition and not what ethnophilosophers make of it". But Hountondji (1996:x) denies the charge. In the first edition of his book, *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality,* first published in 1983, the basis upon which Owomoyela (1991:156) charges Hountondji, the latter (Hountondji, 1996:x) argues that his book "did not deny the importance of oral literature, as some critics understood; neither did it attempt to minimize the heritage of traditional beliefs". Secondly, Hountondji (1996:xvii) points out that his book did not "deny the urgent need in Africa for self-rediscovery and self-rehabilitation". Instead, Hountondji (ibid) further points out, his book "does exactly the opposite. It warns against wrong ways, against illusory paths and intellectual dead ends which, in

the long run, can never lead us where we want to go." A closer examination of pronouncements by Hountondji on both "ethno-philosophers" and African cultures or traditions, reveals that critical as he is of both – in a philosophical spirit, or as he understands philosophy – Hountondji does have admiration for both "ethno-philosophers" and African culture or traditions, while insisting on the need to take a critical approach to both. Beginning with "ethno-philosophers", Hountondji (1996:xxii) emphatically points out that "[q]uestioning ethnophilosophy did not amount to denying the existence and importance of endogenous thought". In appreciation of African "ethno-philosophers", Hountondji (1996:53) concedes that it is "[t]rue, we must grant African ethnophilosophers the merit of having tried, with the means at their disposal, to defend their cultural identity against the avowed or cryptic assimilationist designs of imperialism". Two points need to be noted in Hountondji's observation here. The first is his acknowledgment of the *merit* of the African "ethno-philosophers"' endeavour to defend their cultural identity. The second is an acknowledgment of the difficulty of the task in the context of colonialism's sustained and devastating effort to destroy African culture. It must have been Hountondji's consciousness of how Eurocentric educational institutions tried to keep away African young people from having contact with their African culture that Hountondji notes "the means at their [ethnophilosophers] disposal" (ibid). But granting this acknowledgment does not come without a critical spirit or engagement on Hountondji's part. He (Hountondji, 1996:53) argues that driven by the "genuine need for an African philosophy, they have wrongly believed that this philosophy lies in our past, needing only to be exhumed and then brandished like a miraculous weapon in the astonished face of colonialist Europe". Again, however critical of, and in disagreement Hountondji may be with African "ethno-philosophers", he acknowledges that their endeavours are "motivated by the genuine desire for an African philosophy" (ibid). Having made these acknowledgments, Hountondji (1996:53) raises two criticisms. The first is that African "ethno-philosophers'" project is the "most ambiguous ever to have been invented", and that having failed to perceive this ambiguity, African "ethno-philosophers" have "unwittingly played their opponent's game" (ibid). Hountondji (ibid) further points that in their "ambiguous" project, African "ethno-philosophers" fail to recognise that "African philosophy, like African science or African culture in general, is before us, not behind us, and must be created today by decisive action" (ibid). In clearly identifying himself with the need for the re-creation, reconstruction of African cultural values, but in a critical manner,

Hountondji (1996:53) argues that no one would deny this creation will not be effected *ex nihilo*, that it "will necessarily embrace the heritage of the past and will therefore rather be a recreation. But this and simple withdrawal into the past are worlds apart." The same can be said about Wiredu. Even though he is – in the spirit of his understanding of philosophy – critical of certain aspects of African traditions, he does not criticise or condemn African traditions wholesale. Declaring or identifying himself as an "anxious African", Wiredu (1984:151) points out that there is an "urgent need in Africa […] for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture […] from those that are worth keeping". More emphatically, Wiredu (ibid) points out that such "desirable aspects exist is beyond question, and undoubtedly many African political and intellectual leaders are deeply impregnated by this consideration. Yet the analytical dimension seems to be lacking in their enthusiasm". A careful examination of Bodunrin's pronouncements leads us to see that just like Hountondji and Wiredu do not call for an indiscriminate jettisoning of African traditional values, but for the discarding of those – in the spirit of his understanding of philosophy – that undermine the development of the African continent. Unequivocally, Bodunrin (1984:20), declares that doubtlessly there are many things worth preserving in African traditional culture, especially in the moral sphere, but warns that Africans stand in danger of losing if they do not take pains to separate these from those aspects that are undesirable. This, Africans can do only by the method of philosophical criticism (ibid).

Next, we discuss the Historico-hermeneutical philosophy.

(b) *Historico-hermeneutical philosophy* – The emphasis of African philosophers in this category is on the importance of a "serious and concrete engagement with the traditional, historical, and contemporary situation of the [African] continent" (Serequeberhan, 1991a:xxi). For the African philosophers in this category, philosophy should not be limited to a methodologically and rigorous undertaking, "but, and more fundamentally", philosophy "is a serious engagement with one's historicality and tradition, that is, with the African situation" (ibid). While African philosophers in this category certainly do not articulate a single position, they are one at "emphasizing the importance of the historicity of the African situation for the methodologically rigorous and reflective project of African philosophy" (ibid). For the African philosophers identified with the historic-hermeneutical category, philosophy, with particular

reference to African philosophy, "is a historically engaged and politically explorative reflection on the African situation aimed at the political empowerment of the African people" (ibid). Historico-hermeneutical philosophy is "basically concerned with interpretatively engaging and thinking through the concrete politico-historical actuality of the present African situation and its future possibilities" (Serequeberhan, 1991b:15). The need for Africans' self-affirmation in the construction of an "authentic culture and tradition" is a strong motivation for an interest in hermeneutics amid an identity crisis on the part of Africans which was a consequence of foreign cultural domination (Okolo, 1991:201). To the strong need for an "authentic and African philosophy, hermeneutics seems to give a positive response" (ibid). Arguing that the African philosopher must not only seek to restore the monuments of African traditions but also "the philosophies and orientations that occurred in our traditional past, Okolo (1991:206 – 207) further points out that the "history of philosophical ideas is one of the conditions for an African philosophical hermeneutics". This should be the case because left to itself "African hermeneutics […] must die as a hermeneutics if it is not sustained by a sense of history applied to ideas – a science that will supply African hermeneutics with a subject matter, a problematic, and its own proper course […] (Okolo, 1991:207).

Next, we discuss categories identified in Eze (1997:3; 14) as "post-colonial" African, and "Africana" philosophies. Though there is a relationship between "African" and "Africana" philosophies, there is a conceptual distinction beween the two which will be elaborated on below. So, we begin with the "post" colonial in African philosophy, and then move on to discuss "Africana" philosophy.

(a) Post-colonial African philosophy

In making reference to the category of African philosophy as "(post)" colonial African philosophy, Eze (1997:14) makes points that are of great significance. He (ibid) draws attention to the deliberateness in putting the "post" of the "colonial" in brackets. This is so, Eze (ibid) argues, because the "post" of the postcolonial in brackets serves as signal of unfulfilled dreams in many parts of Africa since the continent achieved independence. By recognising the unfulfillment of the dreams of the African anti-colonial movement in the context of African philosophy, Eze (1997:4) highlights and addresses a concern raised by many about the unwelcome invasiveness and pervasiveness of "colonialism" in the lives of African people in such a way that whether

before or after colonialism, colonialism becomes a central point of reference, in that when Africans discuss their history, they find themselves having to identify it as either "pre-colonial" or "post-colonial". While cognisant of this legitimate and genuine concern, without dismissing it, Eze (ibid) argues that when dealing with African philosophy, the strength of such a concern or objection evaporates or is significantly attenuated because the single most important factor that drives the field of contemporary African/a philosophy "*has to do with the brutal encounter of the African world with European modernity* – an encounter epitomized in the colonial phenomena". Eze's (1997:4 – 5) observation can best be understood if there is an appreciation of his argument that colonialism must not be reduced or limited to the time when many African countries regained independence from the 1960s through to the 1990s. Instead of limiting colonialism in a periodical manner, colonialism should be seen as the "resilient and enduring ideologies and practices of European cultural superiority (ethnocentrism) and 'racial' supremacy (racism)" (Eze, 1997:4). Because colonialism has proven to be resilient and compelled Africa to have an enduring "colonial and neocolonial" relationship with the West, "African philosophy labors under this yet-to-end exploitation and denigration of African humanity" (Eze, 1997:14). This being the case, contemporary African philosophy raises questions about the the ambiguous and enduring legacies of modern Europe, a capitalistic economic system that serves the interests of Europe rather than Africa and the racism that oppresses Africans in the diaspora (Eze, 1997:15). The foregoing observations reveal a number of factors about (post)colonial African philosophy. Firstly, in no order of importance or hierarchy, it is clear that (post) colonial African philosophy is not limited by continental African concerns, but that its approach is Pan-Africanist in that it addresses issues involving and affecting Africans in the diaspora as well. Secondly, and linked to the first observation, it reveals that Eze does not limit "colonialism" in Africa to physical occupation by Europe, but appreciates that is also a "cultural" phenomenon as alluded to in the preceding observation above. Such an understanding is an enabling factor in the Pan-Africanist stance of (post)colonial African philosophy because it enables an appreciation that it was not only the Africans who remained on the continent whose culture was undermined by European colonialism, but also Africans who were forcibly taken to the Western world by force through slavery. In fact, Africans in the diaspora suffered more cultural slaughtering in that not only were they forced to abandon African cultural practices, but were also compelled to give up use of their African languages as

well. Africans who remained on the continent were able to preserve more of what diasporic Africans could not hold on to. The enabling factor for this Pan-Africanist approach and sensitivity on the part of Eze lies in his description of colonialism (Eze, 1997:4). He (ibid) describes "colonialism" as an "indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples in their tragic encounter with the European world, from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into the first half of the twentieth". While the above observations are a generally shared understanding of colonialism, Eze (ibid) makes an observation about colonialism that has escaped many, this being that colonialism is a "period marked by the horror and violence of the transatlantic slave trade, the imperial occupation of most parts of Africa and the forced administrations of its peoples". Eze's description of colonialism includes and accommodates not just the pain of the Africans who were oppressed in the African continent, but also those who were taken into slavery. While Amilcar Cabral was, without doubt, an insightful and incisive Pan-Africanist revolutionary philosopher, he seems not to have fully appreciated the colonial condition of the African-Americans. Addressing an African-American community while visiting the USA, and reflecting on a conversation he had had with the Black Panther Party's Eldridge Cleaver, a man Cabral (2012:198) acknowledged as "clever" and "very intelligent", Cabral (ibid), simultaneously observed that he and Cleaver "disagreed on one thing". Cleaver told Cabral that the African-American condition was a "colonial condition" (ibid). Cabral (ibid) disagreed, pointing out that while in "certain aspects it seems to be, but it is not really a colonial condition", further pointing out that the "colonial condition demands certain factors", one "important factor [being the] continuity of territories". By referring to territoriality, Cabral seems to have limited and reduced colonialism, in this regard, to geographical occupation. Colonialism covers a broad aspect of issues, including the destruction of people's cultures, while colonisation refers to an occupation of people's territories by foreigners (Mudimbe, 1988:1). Even with reference to colonisation, the diasporic community suffered from this. This is so because not only were they taken to foreign lands, the lands back home, were taken from them and colonised. So, they suffered from both colonialism and colonisation. Reference to, and inclusion of diasporic Africans necessitates some discussion of what has been, in the preceding paragraphs, been mentioned in passing without an attempt at defining, and or, explaining it – Africana philosophy.

(b) Africana philosophy

Africana philosophy is defined by Outlaw (1998:23 – 24) as a "gathering" notion under which to situate articulations – including writings and speeches – and traditions of Africans and peoples of African descent. However, as Outlaw (1998:24) points out, Africana philosophy is not limited to the works of Africans and peoples of African descent alone. Africana philosophy also includes the works of those who are neither African nor peoples of African descent (ibid). The criterion of including people who do not constitute the African or people of African descent communities is the recognition by those outside these communities of the legitimacy and importance of the issues and endeavours of the people of Africa and those of African descent (ibid). Africana philosophy "emerged in part from the historical contexts of the modern civil rights and black power movements" (Outlaw, 1998:35). In that context, then, it is accurate to refer to Africana philosophy as, in the words of Leonard Harris (cited in Outlaw, 1998:26), a "philosophy born of struggle". While Outlaw (1998:24) notes that the qualifier "Africana philosophy" is consistent with the practice of naming intellectual traditions and practices in terms of their national, cultural or ethnic origin, as is the case with "American philosophy", "German philosophy" or "French philosophy", he is cognisant of a concern of, and a question that may be expressed or raised about how possible it is to speak of "Africana philosophy", cogently, taking into consideration the global dispersal of Africans and the subsequent development of regional groupings (Carribean for instance), local-national (African American), and nation-state groupings (Nigerian/Kenyan). Africana philosophy does not shy away from confronting this question. Unequivocally, Outlaw (1998:29), cognisant of very "important aspects of these ethnic and geographical diversities […] fueled, in significant part, by the incursions of Europeans and others into Africa", declares that "Africana philosophy is constituted by diversity". Saying that Europeans' and others' incursions into Africa fueled ethnic and geographical diversities is not the same thing as saying that prior the outsiders' arrival Africans were a homogeneous entity. There is a recognition that even before the incursions and related dispersals that followed, there were diversities among Africans (ibid). Consequently, Africana philosophy's practices, traditions and literatures are tied to Africans' numerous life-worlds which have diverse histories, sites and conditions of emergence (ibid).

While the foregoing discussion focussed on the definitions of African philosophy, examining broad categories and sub-categories, it certainly brought to the fore the political roles of African philosophy even if from different perspectives. So, the next section – African philosophy – its political role – does not do much that is different from the foregoing discussion. The only difference is that while the above discussion focussed on particular perspectives on the political roles of African philosophy, the following is not limited to opinions associated with any particular perspective.

3.5.3 African Philosophy: Its Political Role

While there is no doubt that African philosophers hold sharply different views among themselves, as can be expected, what emerges is that there is a common position among them regarding the role of African philosophy in the African continent, that being that "beyond documenting the philosophies of ethnic Africans, African philosophy has to be concretely engaged with the contemporary lived concerns and problems of the African continent" (Serequeberhan, 1991a:xix). Having noted that the "basic and most fundamental fact" contemporarily facing Africa is the "misery" the continent is immersed in, and the varied struggles waged by the African people, Serequeberhan (1991a:10) argues that while African thinkers may reflect on their "religious beliefs and myths", it is "clear that African philosophy has to – at some level or other – be connected with the contemporary struggles and concerns facing the continent and its diverse people". Explaining this hierachisation or prioritisation of issues, Serequeberhan (ibid) points out that "it is not the 'beliefs and myths' of the peoples of Africa – in their intricate magnificence – that are mindboggling, but the concrete misery and political insanity of the contemporary African situation". For Serequeberhan (1991b:19), the documentation of African traditional philosophies and world-views "is fruitful only when undertaken within the context of and out of an engagement with the concrete and actual problems facing the peoples of Africa". The foregoing emphases by Serequeberhan (1991a:xix; 1991b:19) of the need for African philosophies to engage with the problems of "contemporary lived concerns and problems of the African continent", and the "concrete and actual problems facing the peoples of Africa", directly speaks to the African Renaissance advocates' quest for African political philosophies "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses" (Makgoba et al, 1999:i).

The role of African philosophers in the continent is to pronounce their positions on, among other things, firstly, the mode of social and political organisations best suited for Africa, and, secondly, taking a "lead, in the reappraisal of [Africans'] traditional culture (Wiredu, 1980:52). Recognising that in Africa it is often the politicians who tend to propound ideologies, and that such efforts tend to lack conceptual preparation and analysis, consequently having no real impact upon basic thought habits, Wiredu (1980:58) observes that it is not surprising that such ideologies have tended to degenerate into instruments of coercion. It is against this bullying approach of the politician that the philosopher steps in, taking a pedagogic, as opposed to a demagogic approach. As Wiredu (ibid) notes, the "really enduring effects of philosophy on the thinking of the majority of men are the result of a rather slow process, and are always of an indirect character".

While the African liberation struggle, in the 1960s, through the 1990s, succeeded, to an extent, to physically or politically dislodge colonialism, Africa continued to experience many challenges that were a creation of colonialism. As a result of this, among many questions confronting the African philosopher are, (a) what are the African people striving to continue to struggle to free themselves from, and (b) what order are they trying to usher, or trying to establish? (Serequeberhan, 1991a:12). In an attempt to address these questions, Serequeberhan (1991b:22) observes that African countries, upon regaining limited political independence, inherited educational, political, juridical, and cultural institutions whose parameters were "Eurocentric". Confronted with this challenge, the task of African philosophy becomes a "deconstructive" exercise for the purpose of "unmasking [the] Eurocentric residues in modern Africa that still sanction – in the guise of science and enlightenment – the political subordination and intellectual domination of Africa" (ibid). Linked to the "deconstructive" role of African philosophy is its "reconstructive" role (Serequeberhan, 1991b:22). In this regard, African philosophy "is aimed at critically revitalizing – in the context of the modern world – the historico-cultural possibilities of the broken African heritage. It is an indigenizing theoretical-practical project (ibid). This means, then, that among the roles that African philosophy can and should play is to help give meaning to, and to bring about an African Renaissance. This is the case because the African Renaissance project, borrowing from Serequeberhan, above, is about "revitalizing – in the context of the modern world – the historico-cultural possibilities of the broken African heritage". More explicitly, Serequeberhan (1991b:23) argues that the "concrete resurrection of Africa – beyond the tutelage of Europe, requires – in all spheres of life – a rethinking of the contemporary state of affairs in terms that

are conducive and congenial to the emancipation and growth of Africa and its diverse people. This then is the task of the African philosopher." Pointing out that for some time Africa has been in the process of "recovering and establishing its own cultural-historical existence after almost a century of colonial rule", Serequeberhan (ibid) further points out that this "recovery requires a rethinking of much that we have inherited – consciously and subliminally – from the colonial past". The revitalisation of the broken African heritage would enable Africans to distinguish between what and who they are from what and who they are not, and identify what is "*mistaken* for the true indigenousness of the formerly colonized African. In this respect, the tasks of the African philosopher acquire historical and political importance in the contemporary situation of the continent." (Serequeberhan, 1991b:23-24). The foregoing observation made by Serequeberhan, regarding what is "mistaken" for the "true" indigenousness of the formerly colonised African is very important. That is because as a consequence European colonialism's endeavour to replace African memory with European memory, Africans suffered cultural amnesia, which resulted in them losing what is culturally theirs and claiming what is culturally not theirs as theirs, and on the basis of this "mistaken" indigenousness, making false claims (wa Thiong'o, 2009:96). For modern African philosophy, therefore, to be "African", Gyekye (1995:40) argues that it must endeavour to provide conceptual responses to the problems confronting contemporary African societies – in other words it must reflect the contemporary African situation. It is crucial, Gyekye (ibid) further argues, that African philosophers should investigate "questions relating to African political life and institutions". Among specific questions that modern African philosophy should confront, Gyekye (ibid) lists the following:

- What ideology should Africa embrace in order to accomplish socio-economic development?
- Is political violence, revolution morally justifiable?
- What are the moral challenges that are posed by "development", "modernisation" and the transfer of technology?
- Are there connections between moral standards and economic conditions?

Additional to these questions, Gyekye (ibid) further points out that the African political and moral philosopher should raise the "fundamental questions about the structure and objectives of the African systems of law and education". Such an exercise would not just have theoretical but practical benefit for African societies because "African philosophers engaged in such relevant investigations can influence the general climate of opinion and, consequently, public policy" (Gyekye, 1995:40). In proposing and posing these questions, Gyekye (ibid) is not

oblivious to the fact that these questions can be raised by philosophers of other non-African societies. While that may be the case, Gyekye (ibid) holds the view that proposals put forward by African philosophers may, in fact, be different from those presented by non-African philosophers. This could especially be the case if modern African philosophers do not fail to neglect – something they cannot afford to do – the "concepts and values in traditional African life and thought, which after all constitute the background of the modern African cultural experience" (Gyekye, 1995:40). Modern African philosophers, therefore, should "critically examine such concepts and values such as humanism, communalism, altruism, consensus, and others as they function in socio-political life and thought" (Gyekye, 1995:40 – 41). The basis for the call of the examination of traditional African thought's concepts, does not only have to do with the fact that only a little has been done in this area, but also that "this is the only way to avoid a wholesale and indiscriminate condemnation of African values" (Gyekye, 1995:41). Elucidating his logic, Gyekye (ibid) advances the view that African traditional conceptions have not been given adequate philosophical articulations, formulation, and analysis by modern African philosophers, and, consequently, it is not known to what extent African traditional conceptions can or cannot fit in the ethos of contemporary culture, and, therefore, the extent to which they can be modified. It is only when this task of analysis and elucidation has been carried ou, Gyekye (ibid) further points out, that Africans shall discover what to salvage and what to jettison (ibid).

Gyekye (ibid) holds a strong view that the "social, nonindividualistic character of traditional African ethics, the traditional conceptions of the value of man and the relationships between people in a society, and the sense of community and solidarity, mutual social responsibility […] are in harmony with the contemporary cultural ethos and can provide an adequate basis for a contemporary social and moral philosophy". If modern African philosophy is to have relevance and meaning for the African people, if it is to enrich them, the organising concepts and categories of modern African philosophy have to be drawn from the "*cultural, linguistic, and historical background of African peoples*" (Gyekye, 1995:42). If modern African philosophy is to succeed in giving conceptual responses to modern challenges of African societies, there has to be a recognition that many Africans in modern society continue to subscribe to African traditional values, and that being the case, Gyekye (1995:42) argues that modern African philosophy must not, and cannot, dispense with a fully-fledged inquiry into concepts of African traditional philosophy. An engagement of African traditional thought by modern African philosophy is a necessity "in order to provide continuity in philosophical

orientation, at any rate in respect of some core philosophical concepts and values" (ibid). Along these lines, Owomoyela (1991:178) argues that "a true African philosophy would aim at reconciling Africans to Africaness, not at advocating dissolution in a European cultural mélange". This means that taking into cognisance Africans' experiences in the hands of colonialism which resulted in "cultural amnesia", it becomes clear that the "most urgent need for Africans would seem to be self-rediscovery [African Renaissance]" (Owomoyela, 1991:176 – 177).

Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:232) argues that if there is a disagreement with the imperialist opinion that the "masses of African people" are foreign to theoretical work, there must be an endeavour to inquire how theoretical work was organised and carried out "by our ancestors prior to the Asiatic and European penetration of Africa, and how it was transformed by, and after, those penetrations". For Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:223), without a transformation of a philosophical consciousness which devotes itself completely to metaphysical preoccupations which ignore the present moment of the real power relations in Africa, the African philosopher's deep rooting among African people will always be called into question. The rootedness of African philosophy and African philosophers among the African people – which is what the "African philosophical struggle for truth aims at" – implies the protracted struggle for the complete liberation of the entire African people, that is, the struggle to annihilate every form of exploitation of one human being by another, of African people by another, of the "African masses" by one section of the African people, and of African women by African men (Wamba-Dia-Wamba, 1991:224). The foregoing articulated notions regarding the discourse of modern African philosophy make clear, as Serequeberhan (1991b:22 – 23) points out, that African philosophy is "directly linked to the demise of European hegemony (colonialism and neocolonialism) and is aimed at fulfilling this demise". There is a recognition on Serequeberhan's (1991:23) part that if European hegemony were to be successfully brought down, there has to be a conscious critical effort to "rethink the African situation beyond the confines of Eurocentric concepts and categories".

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine different definitions, by different African philosophers, associated with African philosophy. Such an exercise is informed by the African Renaissance advocates' quest for political philosophies that can offer *practical solutions to problems faced by the African masses.* The examination revealed that many African philosophers see the need

for African philosophers to identify and play political roles in the lives of the African people. More particularly, many African philosophers pointed out that for the African masses to participate in the struggles for African people's continued quest for political, social, economic freedom, they have to be empowered. Such empowerment, African philosophers have argued, is possible if the African masses see potential in their own selves. If that is to happen, African philosophers have argued, further this potential must be identified in African people's traditional culture. As Kaunda, cited earlier, argued, it can be successfully point out that African people's ancestors have in the past created a kind of a humane society that should be revived for the future of the human race. Kaunda's observation is in line with the call by African Renaissance' advocates to revisit the concept of Ancestor Reverence in order to reclaim the Ancestors' humane values. For that reason, in the next chapter, we interrogate the meanings of the Ancestor Reverence concept.

Chapter 4

Ancestor-*Reverence, Not Ancestor-Worship*

4.1 Introduction

In the 19th century, literature, which dealt with African spirituality, was dominated by American and European writers, mainly missionaries and students of anthropology (Mbiti, 1989:6). As a result of this domination, American and European missionaries and anthropologists became "experts" and "authorities" on African spirituality, and their impact was felt because their literature was widely circulated (ibid). The irony, though, was that some of these self-appointed authorities and experts had "never been to Africa and only a few had done serious field study" on African spirituality (ibid). As a result of the colonialists' usurpation of the Africans' right to represent themselves with regards to their cultures, Westerners imposed upon Africans the interpretation of African traditions. It is as a result of this usurpation and, consequently, imposition, that Africans were said to be practising "ancestor-worship", a term which is "inadequate, derogatory and prejudicial" (Mbiti, 1989:7). If, as Mbiti points out above, missionaries, in the 19th century, took it upon themselves to misinterpret and misrepresent African spirituality, and that their projection of African spirituality was immanent, it is not accident of history that the German philosopher, Hegel, relied on the Christian missionaries to further advance the distortion of African spirituality. In distorting African spirituality, Hegel makes two false, albeit, significant observations. The first is that "copious and circumstantial accounts of Missionaries completely confirm" that Africans had no independent knowledge of the Supreme Being and that "Mahommedanism [Islam] appears to be the only thing which in any way brings Negroes within the range of culture (Hegel, 1956:93). So, if Africans did not know and worship God, what was the nature of their spirituality, if they had it at all? Hegel (1956:94 – 95) has a ready answer: Africans worshipped their dead ancestors. In other words, Africans practised "ancestor-worship". In the act "ancestor-worship", Africans' "idea in the matter is that these ancestors exercise vengeance and inflict upon man various injuries – exactly in the sense in which this was supposed of witches in the Middle Ages" (Hegel, 1956:94 – 95). Even in this act of "ancestor-worship", Hegel (1956:95) charges that the dead are not accorded a "superior" status to that of the living, because the "Negroes command the dead and lay the spells upon them". If Hegel had not depended on a falsiefied interpretation of African spirituality, and sought Africans' own explanations about what he regards as Negroes' "command of the dead" and laying of spells

upon them, he would have understood, he would have understood these activities in their proper context, and realised that Africans' interactions with their departed indicate, in fact, contrary to Hegel's claims, that Africans did not, traditionally, worship their Ancestors.

In clarifying this point, Ntuli (1999:191 – 192) observes out that the "'uneducated' African knew that *idlozi*/shade or ancestor was not worshipped. *Idlozi liyathethwa* – you scold your ancestor to serve you; only then do you thank him!" In line with Ntuli's foregoing observation, Nyathi (2001:8), with reference to the amaNdebele Africans, notes that "there are times when the living dead [the Ancestors] are communicated with in order to chastise them when they have abandoned their protective role". By making the point that an "uneducated" African knew that the ancestor was not worshipped, Ntuli is making reference to those Africans whose thoughts on this matter are independent of European missionaries' education. That is because, as Ntuli (1999:191) points out, "the missionaries distorted the natives' world view. They invented ancestor worship and the African 'educate' classes accepted this distortion."

Labelling African spirituality as "ancestor-worship" was not an accident of history on the part of the Westerners, but an act of prejudice and malice. Two cases, that of the Gikuyu and amaNdebele – among other many African cases – illustrate Westerners' malice and prejudice very well. In the case of the Gikuyu, Kenyatta (1965:224) notes that it is "worth mentioning […] that Christian missionaries have ignored both […] Gikuyu words for religion". The two words are significant because they help illuminate the sacred among the Gikuyu in connection with sacred offerings associated with the Supreme Being and the Ancestor Spirits. These sacred words are "koruta magongona", meaning "to offer or to perform sacrifices or rituals and ceremonies" and "mumbura", meaning "sacred". There are two types of sacred sacrifices involved in the acts of offering. One is "gothaithaya Ngai", meaning "To worship Ngayi" (the Supreme Being) (Kenyatta, 1965:223). The other is "goitangera ngoma njohi" meaning "to pour out or to sprinkle beer for spirits" (ibid). Kenyatta (ibid) emphasises that the term "gothaithaya" (worship) is "never used in connection with ancestral spirits" – it is reserved for the Supreme Being alone. Rituals offered to and for the Ancestors, Kenyatta (ibid) observes, are understood among the Gikuyu as "communion with ancestors" – not "ancestor worship". With reference to amaNdebele, Nyathi (2001:11) notes that when the Christian missionaries failed to convert amaNdebele into Christianity, they "scandalised" amaNdebele by charging that they had no true idea of God and, as a result, exercised "ancestor-worship" (Nyathi, 2001:11). Nyathi (2001:x) further observes that when the colonialists came into the midst of amaNdebele communities in Southern Africa, they "excited their adventurous desires by

studying the ways of the Ndebele". Singling out the Christian missionaries, Nyathi (ix – x) further notes that in studying and recording the cultures of amaNdebele, the missionaries gave "vivid, though arrogant, accounts of some ceremonies". While European writers, including missionaries and anthropologists, "contentrated on the conduct of ceremonies", in other words what was visible to their eyes, significantly, as Nyathi (2001:x) further observes, in these records of amaNdebele culture, the "underlying philosophies behind the various practices were not delved into". Be that as it may have been, even if amaNdebele had tried to explain to the European adventurers, Nyathi (ibid) observes that for some, given their "arrogance and strong tendency towards cultural imperialism, it would have been difficult to believe that there was an underlying philosophy". Yet, a careful study of amaNdebele culture would reveal that "behind each ritual behaviour is an underlying philosophy or belief". Because of the arrogant attitude of many Europeans who came into contact with amaNdebele, and because they assumed responsibility for recording amaNdebele culture, and disseminating their version as a result of their control of the production of literature, while amaNdebele culture is well-documented, the "documents are devoid of the religious philosophy" of amaNdebele (Nyathi, 2001:3).

Kenyatta and Nyathi are not alone in stating that African sprituality, as far as the Ancestors are concerned, is not Ancestor-worship but Ancestor-Reverence. African-centred scholars emphatically state that Ancestors are not worshipped, but only honoured and revered. By "African-centred" scholarship, we mean an engagement of African issues, or any other issue, for that matter, affecting Africans by "describing it and interpreting it through African experience and understanding" (Mbiti, 1989:13). The advantage in using African-centred scholarship is that African issues are examined "from within and not without" and with an understanding of African languages (ibid). While one agrees with Mbiti (ibid) that understanding and speaking African languages is one of the main factors in African-centred scholarship and that it is "key to serious research and understanding of traditional religions and philosophy" (Mbiti, 1989:14), in African-centred scholarship we include those African scholars who may not be able to understand African languages as a result of alienation caused by being born in exile, slavery, or even being born in Africa, but denied the opportunity to study anything in any African language, but yet committed to interpreting issues informed by African experience/s. An African-centred approach to Ancestor-Reverence is a recognition, as wa Thiong'o (1997:139) emphatically points, out that "[r]everence for the ancestors does not mean their worship". Williams (1987:230) is adamant that historically "[t]here was ancestor

reverence, not ancestor worship". Wiredu (2003a:24) insists that this African belief system is "ancestral veneration, almost standardly misdescribed as 'ancestor-worship'". Wiredu (ibid) appreciates that such a misconceptualisation is a consequence of a superimposition of Western categories upon African thought, which is the quintessence of conceptual colonisation (ibid). Mphahlele (2002:240) points out that Africans did "not worship the ancestors" but served as "intercessors with the Supreme Being". In echoing this point, Rukuni (2007:113) emphasises that "Afrikan tradition is not to worship ancestors" but a "worship [of] the Creator […] through […] ancestors". As a result of this confusion and misunderstanding, some Africans do genuinely "mistakenly believe that they should worship their ancestors" (ibid).

This chapter examines the meaning of "Ancestor-Reverence" as opposed to "ancestor-worship". Such an exercise is informed by the calls of African Renaissance advocates to reclaim this exercise, which opponents of African spirituality tried to do away with. Such calls have been made not oblivious to the reality that, as a result of the immanence of distortive literature by missionaries, the true meaning of Ancestor-Reverence was lost to Africans themselves resulting in them not knowing the philosophy behind it and content to go on with the practice regardless (Nyathi, 2001:xii). As a result of this ignorance, many Africans, when pressed for explanations of their rituals, simply respond by saying either that "Our fathers did so", or "Our fathers said so" (Louw in Nyathi, 2001:3). Reflecting on this response by Africans when confronted about their spirituality, Gyekye (1996:165), points out that the giving of "[t]oo much attention" to their customs, practices, and modes of thought of the ancestors has led to Africans' "reluctance or inability by many Africans to wean themselves from such utterances as 'This is what the ancestors said' or 'This is what the ancestors did'". Gyekye is not alone in experiencing frustration regarding the answer "this is what the ancestors said". Wiredu (1984:157) in sharing this frustration, argues that the crucial difference between Africans and Westerners on this issue is that while the Western philosopher, on the one had, tries to argue for his thesis, elucidating his meaning and answering objection, on the other hand, the African "transmitter of folk conceptions merely says: 'This is what our ancestors said.'" But both these philosophers – Gyekye and Wiredu – are failing to contextualise their statements with reference to the inability of Ancestor-Reverence adherents to rationalise their belief system, on the one hand, and the Western philosopher's ability, on the other hand, to argue for her/his thesis. There is a historical context for both the inability, on the one hand, and the ability, on the other. With the advent of colonialism, there was a systematic and conscious effort to destroy African culture from the memory of the Africans. As Mthembu (1996:218) explains, "education

system, workplace management values and religious practices all served to reinforce a particular dominant culture which is Eurocentric". It should be remembered that when Christian missionaries first arrived in the African continent, "[c]hurch and school were synonymous" in the sense that education "[c]lasses were in fact held in church buildings and no one was admitted into the school who had not been converted to Christianity" (Amadiume, 2015:121). In these missionary schools, "[t]he first lessons and teachings focused on condemnation of indigenous religion and beliefs" (ibid). The European missionaries' "descriptions and studies of African religions left [Africans] with terms which are inadequate, derogatory and prejudicial" (Mbiti, 1990:7). These attacks on African spirituality had deep psychological effects that compelled Africans to "live in conflict throughout their lives […] mediating their way through different worlds" tending to "become chameleons in adjusting their role and behaviour to accommodate a particular cultural system" (Mthembu, 1996:218). This chameleon-like character alluded to by Mthembu manifests itself when, for those who abandoning African spirituality, [i]n times of crisis they [African traditional "religions"] come to the surface, or people revert to them in secret" (Mbiti, 1990:2) The interest in studying Ancestor-Reverence as a potential and powerful factor in the African Renaissance is informed by the foregoing observations. But in addition to that, it is also informed by Rukuni's (2007:1) observation that unless Africans rediscover themselves, their roots and heritage, embrace, understand and love everything that made their ancestors survive and thrive for thousands of years, how they succeeded so well in creating a dynamic society in the past, Africans cannot create a new modern Africa.

In order to explain the meaning of Ancestor-Reverence, a distinction must be made between worshipping the Supreme Being and Ancestor-Reverence. This, then, necessitates that we first examine the relationship between Africans and the Supreme Being prior the arrival of Christianity and Islam in Africa. Once that is done, we will engage with the notion of what is, and what is not, Ancestor-Reverence. The rest of the chapter will examine both the philosophical and practical manifestations of Ancestor-Reverence. Emphasis on the philosophical, on the one hand, and the practical manisfestations of Ancestor-Reverence, on the other hand, is not the same thing as saying that philosophy is merely abstract and separate from practice. Rather, the point here is to draw attention to how the theoretical and the practical are reciprocal.

This study uses, with reference to Africans, "spirituality" as opposed to "religion". That is because the word "religion" is too confining and limiting, as opposed to "spirituality". Perhaps, the fact that, as Mbiti (1990:2) observes, "many African languages do not have a word for religion as such", is related to the fact that the word "religion" does not quite sum up African spirituality.

4.2 Indigenous African Notions of, and their Traditional Relationship with the Supreme Being

In his study, which covered nearly three hundred African ethnic groups, investigating African notions of the Supreme Being, Mbiti (1989:29) found out that "without a single exception", all these Africans had a notion of God. These notions of God were independent of the influences of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Mbiti, 1989:30). As Mbiti (1989:8) notes, it "needs to be emphasized, that African religions are historically older than both Christianity and Islam". It also needs to be added that not only is African spirituality older than just Christianity and Islam, but also older than Judaism as well – a point we will return to, later, below. This point is important because even though there are similarities in how traditional African spirituality explains the Supreme Being, on the one hand, and how Judaism, Christianity and Islam, do, on the other hand, there are differences as well, as will be shown below.

An examination of African spirituality reveals that Africans exercised a great sense of caution and humility in their quest to understand and interpret the Supreme Being. While Africans perceived the Supreme Being as The One who knew all, the Powerful One, and The One who was everywhere, they had a sense that they did not comprehend The One completely, and did not know The One fully. With this realisation of their limitations in comprehending the Supreme Being, traditional Africans had the humility to concede that the Supreme Being was "Unexplainable", "Unknown", "Unknowable" (Mbiti, 1989:33; 35). This concession is not the same thing as saying that they did not know of the existence of the Supreme Being. What it actually means is that they realised that God's "very Being and […] very Shape would be beyond the interpretation of the human eye and human brain" (Mutwa, 1998:562). This human limitation notwithstanding, ancient Africans carved concepts and symbols as "a means of satisfying the common rabble which cannot be made to worship any God unless that God has a shape that they can more or less understand and hold in the mind" (Mutwa, 1998:564). Two African carvings of the Supreme Being which, according to Mutwa (1998:562 – 563) can be found in the land of amaSwati and BaTswana depict the Supreme Being "an image of a woman"

riding a canoe, which "symbolises the Great Mother, the Ultimate Feminine Cause of All, and a symbol of the bisexuality of the Most Ultimate God". Another carving of the Supreme Being "shows a figure which is neither male nor female, with a neck and a backward-facing head growing out of the top of its forward-facing normal head" (Mutwa, 1998:563). The representation of the Supreme Being as a "symbol of the bisexuality of the Most Ultimate God" and the carving of the Supreme Being as "neither male nor female" (Mutwa, 1998:563) is significant and deserves attention. It signifies the different understandings of the Supreme Being between, on the one hand, African spirituality, and, on the other hand, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the former, the Supreme Being is seen as both female and male, and, at the same time, as neither female nor male. Among the practitioners of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Supreme Being is perceived as exclusively male. With particular reference to what she calls the "process of Yorùbánizing Christianity" and "Christianization of Yorùbá", Oyěwùmi (1997:140) observes that there arose an attempt by scholars and Yorùbá churchmen "to reinterpret the [Yorùbá] religion using the male bias of Christianity". This saw Olódùmarè (the Supreme Being) who has no gender in Yorùbá, equated to Christianity's "Our Father in heaven", and "our ancestors" becoming "our forefathers", thus creating the impression that among the traditional Yorùbá, God and the Ancestors were seen as only male, which was not the case (Oyěwùmi, 1997:140 – 141). Reflecting on the African representations of the Supreme Being, Mbiti (1989:49) observes that some matriarchal societies, such as the Ovambo and southern Nubians, conceive and speak of the Supreme Being as "Mother" (ibid). The image of the Supreme Being as "Mother also carries with it the idea of cherishing and nursing, and it is used in patriarchal societies" (ibid).

Traditionally Africans had no confusion about the Supreme Being's position in the scheme of creation. In "traditional Afrikan philosophy", as Rukuni (2007:31) points out "an Afrikan's first purpose is to strengthen the relationship with their Great Creator, and thereafter, to build on the great deeds of their ancestors". In the hierarchy of things, as far as traditional African spirituality is concerned, the Supreme Being ranks top, and below The One, being the spirits and nature, and below that – at the bottom – being human beings (Mbiti, 1989:32). In line with this observation, Kenyatta (1965:224) explains that the "Gikuyu believes in one God, Ngai, the creator and giver of all things […] He has no father, mother, or companion of any kind. His work is done in solitude. He loves or hates people according to their behaviour." The recognition that the Supreme Being, alone, is responsible for creation, gives a clear indication the S/He was seen as being Omnipotent (Mbiti, 1989:31). But not only did Africans see The

One as being Omnipotent, but also as the Omniscient and the Omnipresent (ibid). Research on the relationship between the Supreme Being and traditional Africans indicates that Africans worshipped the Supreme Being anywhere and anytime they saw the need to do so (Mbiti, 1989:71). They did this by sacrificing animals to the Supreme Being, praying to The One through songs and dances, among many approaches (Mbiti, 1989:58; 64; 67). In order to be able to make sense of the concept "Ancestor-Reverence" it is essential to define what or who the Ancestors are.

4.3 Ancestor-Reverence: What it is and What it is not

The Ancestors or Ancestor-Spirits are beings who were once human but passed on, leaving the physical form in the grave and assuming spiritual form in the world of the unseen (Mbiti, 1989:26; 69). Because the Ancestors were once human, and understood human language, and because they were now seen as having joined the Greater Spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, and now being able to speak the spiritual language, traditional Africans reasoned that it would serve their purpose to convey their requests through the Ancestor-Spirits (Mbiti, 1989:69). Explaining the case of Ancestor-Reverence in the case of Gikuyu, Kenyatta (1965:228) notes that the Gikuyu, in the belief that the Supreme Being should "not needlessly be bothered", reasoned that The One should only be approached when humans were in real need. In cases when people were afflicted by illnesses, and recourse to medicines and the Ancestor-Spirits yielded no positive results, the Gikuyu turned to the Supreme Being, directly (Kenyatta, 1965:230). Interestingly, even as they approached the Supreme Being directly, the Ancestor-Spirits' presence was acknowledged (ibid). This approach of directly approaching the Supreme Being, in traditional African spirituality, is not uniquely Gikuyu, but a pan-African cultural approach (Mbiti, 1968:68). What this means is that whether traditional Africans spoke to the Supreme Being directly or through the Spirits of their Ancestors, ultimately, the Recipient of such communication was the Supreme Being (Mbiti, 1989:58). By extension, it also means that the Ancestor-Spirits worshipped the Supreme Being together with their earthly families. In order to make better sense of the concept of Ancestor-Reverence, it is important to locate the position of the Ancestors in the configuration of society among those who subscribe to that notion. Such a task necessitates that we define the concept "family" in the traditional African context. We do this fully cognisant that there is a chapter (Chapter 5) dedicated fully to a philosophical interrogation of the concept "family" in the African cultural context. In the African cultural context, the concept "family", refers to the Ancestors (also referred to as the "living dead"), the living, and those yet to be born (Mbiti, 1989:104 – 105; Dandala, 1996:72;

Richards, 1990:212). This philosophical statement, definition, symbolises the recognition of life's continuity, meaning that death is not regarded as an end but a continuation of life in another form. Those who pass on into the spiritual world continue to be part of those who remain on earth. The understanding of the relationship between life and death among Africans, regarding those who have passed on, means that it is believed that "death does not totally discontinue the life of [the] departed beings" (Ramose, 2003:236). Rather, a view is held that "death has discontinued their existence only with regard to the concrete, bodily, and everyday life as we know it" (ibid). African spirituality teaches that "when our body stops living, our spirit continues to exist" (Rukuni, 2007:4). The departed "enter into and continue living in a world unknown to those left behind" (Ramose, 2003:236). The new world entered into, and lived in, is called "the world of spirits", and its inhabitants are known as the Ancestors or Ancestor-Spirits (Gyekye, 1996:13). They are also known as the "living-dead" (Mbiti, 1990:25; Ramose, 2007:237). In line with the belief that the departed enter into the "world of spirits", Mphahlele (2002:145) observes that the Khoisan people "think of the wind as a carier of ancestral spirits – unlike more settled communities who want to live and die where their ancestors are buried. The wind thus meets a need in the Khoisan to be assured of a divne presence in their hazardous life". A deeper examination of African spirituality will reveal that the Khoisan's belief that the Ancestor-Spirits are carried by the wind is an indication that they are, in fact, carried by the Supreme Being. With particular reference to the Ga, Langi, and Shilluk Africans, Mbiti (1990:34) notes that they "compare [the Supreme Being] with the wind or air". Among those Africans where "the wind is associated with God", the Supreme Being is described "metaphorically as being like the wind or air, or moving like the wind; and others think that the wind is one of the vehicles by which God travels in great power through the sky (Mbiti, 1990:53 – 54).

Africans do not believe that the living-dead vanish out of existence (Mbiti, 1990:26). They believe that while a person may be physically dead, s/he lives on in the memory of those who knew her/him in physical life, as well as being alive in the world of spirits (Mbiti, 1990:25). The remembrance of the living-dead by their families in the physical world is important because if they are forgotten, this means that they are cast out and ex-communicated, their immotarlity destroyed (Mbiti, 1990:26). Being reduced to non-existence is, in traditional African belief systems, the worst possible punishment for anyone, a treatment resented by the living-dead, which earth-dwellers must do all they can to avoid, the belief being that such treatment of the living-dead brings about illness and misfortunes (ibid).

The foregoing observations attest to the fact that Africans do not only believe that the life of the departed is not discontinued, but also that the relationship between the earth dwellers and the inhabitants of the spiritual world is also not discontinued. Even in their physical absence, the living-dead continue to "form part of the family, and must therefore be kept in touch with their surviving families" (Mbiti, 1990:8 – 9). In appreciating the links connecting the past (the Ancestors/ living-dead), the present (the living/ earth dwellers) and the future (those yet to be born/ future generations), wa Thiong'o (1997:139) refers to the past as a source of inspiration, the present as an arena of perspiration, and the future as a collective aspiration. It is for this reason that wa Thiong'o (1997:138) observes that the "dead as part of the living and of the unborn is the one common thread in African thought and experience". With particular reference to the Yoruba of Nigeria, Gbadegesin (2003:188) observes that in the Yoruba community, the abiding belief is that "earthly death is not the end of life". The Yoruba further believe that a person who passes on at a matured age will re-merge in a different form in the next life (ibid). It is on this basis, that Gbadegesin (ibid) further points out that the Yoruba do not forget their "dead ancestors", and that they name their new-born children after them. The Ancestors are held to be central in the lives of children. Making particular reference to amaNdebele, Nyathi (2001:89) observes that not only are children regarded as a gift from the Supreme Being, but that they are also regarded as not only belonging to their parents but also to the departed Ancestors. What this implies is that children's parents hold their children in trust for the departed Ancestors (Nyathi, 2001:96). Even though the Ancestors know about the birth of the children as they are being conceived, the earthly or material family has an obligation to formally inform the spiritual family about the birth of the newly-born (Nyathi, 2001:89). Failure to do so angers the Ancestors because it means that they are being excluded from family matters (Nyathi, 2001:96).

A crucial question needs to be raised at this point: does death of a human being automatically qualify her or him to become an "Ancestor"? Not according to African scholars who have reflected on this concept. Ancestors, in the traditional African cultures, are those human beings who, while still in the physical form of life, distinguished themselves by their actions, having "led virtuous and exemplary lives worthy of emulation by succeeding generations of the lineage" (Gyekye, 1996:162). Defined in such a way, "not just any departed member of the lineage qualifies as an ancestor" (ibid). In line with Gyekye's definition, Meyers (2003:124) points out that dying does not automatically make one an Ancestor. To deserve the status of being an Ancestor, a person must have "realized good consciousness in individual/group

experience" (ibid). In articulating this perspective, Gbadegesin (2003:188) notes that the Yoruba hold the view that the fate of a deceased person in the after-life is determined by the quality of life that a person lived on earth. This means that if a person performed good deeds while alive, s/he will be rewarded (ibid). Similarly, if a person "grossly misbehaved" s/he will suffer punishment (ibid). While, on the one hand, Gyekye is fully cognisant of the definition given for Ancestors, one that he, himself (Gyekye, 1996:162) has given, on the other hand, Gyekye (1996:162) is not convinced that "the term 'ancestor' is reserved for certain individuals among our dead forebears who lived morally exemplary lives". That is because, Gyekye (1996:162 – 163) further argues, in rituals where Ancestors are invoked, it is "surely not true that certain individuals upon whom the honorific title of 'ancestor' is conferred necessarily led excellent moral lives, that they were 'moral paragons'". Gyekye's criticism is valid, and exposes a crucial point about belief systems and their adherents, that being that what adherents do is not always consistent with the tenets of those belief systems. This is true with Christians as it is with Muslims, but their behaviour does not change the tenets of the said faiths. Gyekye (1996:166) is not content with criticising the adherents of Ancestor-Reverence, but dismisses the value system itself, arguing that judging from the enormous and resilient probles faced by post-colonial Africa, a preoccupation with what ancestors can do to help cannot be justified. While on the one hand, Gyekye (1996:167 – 168) agrees that Africans "must surely remember, and praise" their forebears for their achievements, on the other hand he argues that they "must not expect from them to bestow favours on their descendants". The greatest reverence earthdwellers can bestow on the ancestors, Gyekye (1996:168) further argues, is to "let them rest in peace". Effectively, and in clearer terms, Gyekye's argument is that the departed Ancestors are not effective in solving human problems and, therefore, those who look up to them, must give up on them. While on the one hand, Gyekye does not provide an alternative, in this regard, Lembede (2015:131), who, ironically, was a strong advocate of the African Renaissance, as outlined in Chapter 2, diplomatically relegates Ancestor-Reverence, while, simultaneously, elevating Christianity. In a clear indication that Lembede (ibid) succumbed to the mis-naming of Ancestor-Reverence, by referring to African spirituality as "ancestor-worship", Lembede (ibid) notes that the "ethical basis of our forefathers was based on ancestor worship […] We must retain and preserve the belief in the immortality of the spirits of our ancestors but our ethical system today has to be based on Christian morals since there is nothing better anywhere in the world". Firstly, as already pointed out, Lembede is erroneous in making reference to Ancestor-Reverence as "ancestor-worship". Secondly, Ancestor-Reverence was not only about "our forefathers", as Lembede makes reference to the Ancestors, but also about

our “foremothers”. A better alternative to the “Ancestors”, which is gender-sensitive, is “forebears” because it accommodates both “foremothers” and “forefathers”. But Lembede was not the only advocate of the African Renaissance who, at the same time, relegated African spirituality, and elevated Christianity that was imposed, or exported to Africans. Senghor did the same. In an indication that suggests an acceptance of the victory of Christianity and Islam over African spirituality, Senghor (1964:82 – 83) submits that Islam and Christianity gave Africans spiritual values that are “more elaborate”, “more rational” and “more attuned to the present age”, and that once Africans have chosen them, it is Africans’ task to adopt them to their historical and sociological conditions, and more importantly, to “Negrofy them”. In claiming that Islam and Christianity gave Africans “more elaborate religions, more rational, or, to repeat, more attuned to the present age”, Senghor demonstrates his ignorance about the ability of African spirituality in playing the roles that he mentions in the lives of Africans prior to the advents of Islam and Christianity. With particular reference to Ancient Egyptians, whose spirituality precede both Christianity and Islam by thousands of years, Jacq (1998:13) notes that Ancient Egyptian scribes wrote thousands of pages which have been brought together into collections referred to as “magico-religious texts”. These texts, Jacq (1998:13) further notes, had “certain specific aims” such as having a long life on earth, having sufficient food in the Netherworld, protection from snake bites or scorpions’ stings, health on earth. Ancient Egyptians perceive material wishes and spiritual aspirations as mingled, recognising a relationship between heaven and earth (Jacq, 1998:14).

In Hermopolis, one of the ancient and sacred cities of ancient Egypt, in a tomb of Petosiris, was found texts that “were written to help man fulfil himself, to find deep within himself the truth without which there can be no happiness on this earth” (Jacq, 1998:13). Taking the preceding into consideration, there is nothing in ancient Egyptian spirituality that is less “elaborate”, or “rational” or “more attuned to the present age”, as Senghor, cited above, suggests. From an African philosophical perspective, the Ancestors deserve to be honoured because “by their heroic examples, they established standards of moral excellence which succeeding generations are expected to emulate” (Kunene, 1982:xi – xii). What this means is that “Ancestor-Reverence” was not, and is not merely about admiration, but, as pointed out by Kunene, above, also about emulation. It is about continuing to put into practice the heritage of the forebears. This being the case, “[t]he idea, therefore, of ‘a great modern age’ in which the past generations are viewed with disdain, is inconceivable” (Kunene, 1982:xiv). This observation is not synonymous with believing that Ancestral constitute the highest point of

material civilisation. To the contrary, there is an expectation that succeeding generations must have the quality of knowledge that surpasses those of the past generations (ibid).

Kunene's observations give a clear indication that celebrating the achievements of the ancestors is not about romanticising the past, basking in the glory of their achievements, and being complacent. Ancestor-Reverence, therefore, is not merely about acknowledging the greatness of the Ancestors, but also "means learning from them. Learning from our past." (wa Thiong'o, 1997:139). Learning from the ancestors is not an uncritical glorification of the past which turns a blind eye to its blemishes (ibid). The exercise of learning from the past, rather, is recognition of both successes and failures, victories and defeats associated with such a past (ibid). Learning from the past, as wa Thiong'o (ibid) further explains, "means learning from the strengths and the weaknesses of the past experience". This learning from the past is crucial because, Kunene (1982:xii) Africans' perspectives are "philosophically deeply anchored in the pas, which is the *sine qua non*" of their present. An appreciation of the past is a recognition that the contributions of the Ancestors are not only laudable in themselves but are also a primary aspect Africans'survival and continuity (Kunene, 1982:xiv). Considering Kunene's call, above, for the emulation of the Ancestors, it is appropriate, at this point to ask: What are these standards of moral excellence established by the Ancestors that succeeding generations must emulate? In addressing this question, Kunene (1982:xii) points out that the recent cultural domination of Africa by Europe "obscured many of Africa's crucial and fundamental philosophies that distinguish man and beast". African philosophies, Kunene (ibid) further points out, teach that it is not "precision" intellect that distinguishes humans from animals since "many animals possess a higher degree of this intellectual quality than man". What distinguishes human from animals is an all-round social and "philosophic intellect" (ibid). Informed by this philosophical viewpoint, Kunene (1982:xii) points out, therefore, that the "earliest act of civilization was not the creation of a tool but the establishment of a cooperative, interactive human community". It was only after the establishment of a "cooperative, interactive human community", that the second task followed – that of developing technological tools so as to improve means of providing for sustenance. It is against this background that Kunene (1982:xi) notes that where other societies regard social progress, on the one hand, and material progress, on the other hand, in identical terms of growth, from lower levels to higher levels, African society separates the two, projecting the ethical element, and the technological aspects, as often capable of moving in opposing directions. The Ancestors, therefore, are celebrated and honoured for the "*founding* of a civilization [that] laid the

foundation for the ethical direction of society" (Kunene, 1982:xii). It is against this background, Kunene (1982:xv) further points out, that it is "crucial that the present generation and all subsequent generations must revere the Ancestors for the alternative is reverence of the tool as the measurement of human progress". Focusing on the tool, which is only one aspect of human activity, as the primary instrument defining human progress, runs the risk of putting the social purpose into second place (ibid). The above observations give a clear indication that comparatively speaking, development of ethical values is placed on a higher pedestal than the development of the tool or, more specifically, technology. This emphasis cannot be overstated because, as Kunene (1982:vii) further observes, the Ancestors made crude tools compared to the modern, is neither here nor there. What is of significance is that through the achievements of the Ancestors, Africans were able to add to the "Great Heritage that is Human Civilization" (ibid). Such is "specifically the improvement in the nature, scope, quality of human relations" and "the highest goal of civilizations as conceived by African society".

With reference to the discussions on the relationship between African ethics, as articulated by the Ancestors, and technology, especially that which came with European presence in the African continent, it has been noted that as Africa experiences more industrialisations, and becomes "advanced", Africans will also become less communal and more individualistic (Gyekye, 1996:90). Such an "advanced stage", it has been pointed out (ibid), will result in Africans having less time for others, including their relatives, such as their aged parents, who will be compelled to live in old age homes as is the case in the "technologically advanced societies of the world". In a dissenting voice, Gyekye (ibid), argues that technological and industrial advancement does not, and should not, necessarily lead to the abandonment of basic human values such as love, caring for others and human fellowships.

In the same way, Kunene, as cited above, calls for the reverence of the Ancestors, not technological creations, Gyekye (1996:90) observes that human beings are the "creators of technology and should be able to resist the possible deleterious consequences that may develop from it". In showing reverence to their ancestors, Africans performed certain rituals which symbolised such reverence. These symbols are (a) libation, (b) accompanying the spirits of the departed, and (c) bringing back the spirits of the departed. Below, we examine these, the focus being the interrogation of the "philosophical" in these rituals.

4.3.1 Rationalising Libation: A Symbol of Ancestor-Reverence

While acknowledging the importance for African philosophers in not only examining, but also preserving the good aspects of traditional African culture, Wiredu (1984;151;159) cautions that such exhortations, minus emphasising critical analysis, are not useful. While also observing that the existence of desirable elements of traditional culture is in no doubt, Wiredu (1984:151) expresses anxiety about what he perceives as the missing element of the analytical element in calls for the preservation of African culture. Among the distressing things for Wiredu (1984:151 – 152) is the "frequent spectacle of otherwise enlightened Africans assiduously participating in the pouring of libation to the spirits of our ancestors on ceremonial occasions". This "spectacle" of "enlightened" Africans participating in libation is distressing for Wiredu (1984:152) because, in his view, libation is an act "based on superstition", and by implication, "enlightened" people should not participate in acts of "superstition". Conscious that different concepts have different meanings for different people, Wiredu (ibid) takes care to explain what he means by "superstition": a rationally unsupported belief in entities of any sort. What does Wiredu mean when he says that libation is a rationally unsupported belief? The first hint that Wiredu (ibid) gives to this question is his stating that the departed ancestors continue to hover around in some rarefied form, ready now and then to take a sip of the ceremonial schnapps is a proposition that he has "never known to be rationally defended". But the fact that Wiredu has "never known" libation to be rationally defended does not mean that it cannot or has not been rationally explained, let alone being defended. One may not dismiss something as non-existent only because s/he does not know of its existence. This is not the only assumption that Wiredu makes regarding the inexplicability of libation. He (ibid) goes on to observe that if one were to ask a traditional elder, "'unspoilt' by the scientific orientation, for the rational justification of such a belief, one's curiosity would be quickly put down to intellectual arrogance acquired through Western education". But even so, it is the responsibility of a philosopher to raise the necessary question/s so as to get the necessary answer/s. In this case, instead of fulfilling his philosophical responsibility, that of making an inquiry about a subject that raises his curiosity, he resorts to assumptions and conjecture. But it must be said, to Wiredu's credit, and in his defence, that unlike many who associate "superstition" exclusively with Africa, he is unambiguous in declaring that "rational knowledge is not the preserve of the modern West, nor is superstition a peculiarity of the African peoples" (Wiredu, 1984:153). But even then, that does not exonerate Wiredu from the responsibility to establish facts before making pronouncements. While anyone is entitled to opinions about people's cultures, such opinions

must be informed ones, especially from philosophers. Had Wiredu made an effort to investigate reasons behind the performance of libation, he would have established that the exercise is informed by a lot of reasoning even if he disagreed with it. Where Wiredu has failed in examining the *thinking* that informs libation, Kimani Nehusi (2016), through his book, *Libation: An Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*, has risen to the occasion. By examining ancient Egyptian literature, Nehusi (2016:46), sought to "to provide the intellectual basis […] for the ritual drama known as libation". While Nehusi (2016:41; 43) notes that the existence of the performance of libation can be traced to about 3 000 BCE, available evidence indicates that this practice was committed to writing in about 1 550 – 1 080 BCE. Tracing libation to Kemet (ancient Egypt) is not the same thing as saying that it originated there. The point is that extant literature links the exercise to Kemet, and even so, its origins are available in myth (Nehusi, 2016:41; 43). According to the myth, Ra – one of the names of the ancient Egyptians for the Supreme Being – driven by anger for human beings who plotted against, and ridiculed The One, sent The One's daughter, Hathor, to punish humankind (Nehusi, 2016:43). At a particular point in time, when Hathor had wreaked so much havoc on earth, Ra pitied humankind, and wanted the destruction to stop (ibid). The challenge, though, was that Hathor was so accustomed to human blood, it was difficult to stop her, whereupon a plan was hatched to stop her. She was supplied with large amounts of red beer which she drank in the belief that it was blood, and in the process becoming so drunk that she forgot about killing, thus humanity being spared (ibid). The teaching in the myth is that humankind disrespected the Supreme Being and the latter was punished to an extent where the Supreme Being's agent of punishment, Hathor, had to be appeased with beer (Nehusi, 2016:44). Libation, as expressed in the present moment in the African world – in the continent and the diaspora – among its many functions such as thanking the Ancestors, celebrating them, is also used to appease the Ancestors when the living think that they have offended them in one way or the other. Even though the focus in libation is the departed Ancestors, in the ancient Egyptian records, some utterances give a clear indication that the Supreme Being is not left out:

> Pour libation for your father and mother who rest in the valley of the dead. God will witness your action and accept it. Do not forget to do this even when you are away from home. For as you do for your parents, your children will do for you also (Nehusi, 2016:47).

What the above utterance reveals is that there was an existing belief among the ancient Egyptians that (a) there was an expectation that the living had an obligation to remember the

departed beings by pouring libation, (b) not only was this offering pleasing to the departed beings (in the valley of the dead), but (c) that the offering was pleasing to the Supreme Being who was watching the performance of the ritual, and (d), finally, the Ancient Egyptians held the view that if the living adults honoured their departed parents (the Ancestors), their children will also honour them when they have departed from the earth. So, in addition to everything else, libation served as a tool to inculcate ethics. The performance of libation gave, and continues to give a practical expression to the definition of the family as the departed, the living, and those yet to be born. In order to appreciate libation more, it is important to take note of Nyathi's (2001:4) observation that "beliefs and practices among the Ndebele, as indeed among all African peoples, manifest themselves as a two-way communication system between the living and the living dead, that is to say, the departed ancestors". The foregoing must be read in the context of traditional African spirituality which held the view that the Supreme Being did not speak to human beings directly (Nyathi, 2001:134). Instead, the Supreme Being, who is spiritual, spoke to human beings through the Ancestor-Spirits, who, themselves, are spiritual (ibid). By the same token, human beings spoke to the Supreme Being through the Ancestor-Spirits. This means, therefore, that the communication that takes place between the Ancestors, who dwell in the spiritual world, and human beings, who dwell in the material world, does not leave the Supreme Being out of the equation (Rukuni, 2003:6). It is, as Nyathi (2001:136) points out, that "communion between the living and the living dead […] is, by extension, communion with God". When isiNdebele-speaking Africans propitiate the Ancestor-Spirits, their concept of the Supreme Being is gleaned because after calling out to the Ancestors, "there is always reference to, '*Lawe osemafini*' [You, too, who dwells in the clouds], in reference to God, thought to be up in the clouds (Nyathi, 2001:14).

In the belief that human beings only died physically, but lived spiritually, Africans took care to provide spiritually for the spiritual journey ahead of the departed souls. Material things, since these were humans, were used for these spiritual things. Material things like plates, beads and bangles were placed in their graves for use in the new life (Nyathi, 2001:124). That is not the only gesture made for bidding the departed a good farewell. The libation exercise entails giving of food and drinks (milk, water or beer) to the departed (Mbiti, 1999:9; 25). The food and drink given are "symbols of family continuity and contact" (Mbiti, 1990:9). Reflecting on the portions of food placed on the graves, Williams (1987:230) points out that "nobody expected the ancestral spirits to eat it (only fools outside Africa allege that they did). What they were doing was a demonstration that the communal spirit of sharing was being maintained".

It is important to note that when Africans perform the ritual of libation, they pour the liquid on the ground first, before the officiating person sips (Nyathi, 2001:139). Such is a symbolic act that manifests respect for the Ancestors (ibid). The ground, or the soil upon which the liquid is poured, represents the Ancestors (ibid). In the same way that traditional African culture taught that when food is served, those to whom it is given first, are the elders in the family, traditional African culture taught that before the living consume food or drinks, they must first offer these to the spiritual elders in the family (ibid). Among the Ndebele, when a traditional ceremony is held, the officiating person takes a sip, spits it to the ground, first, and, thereafter, takes a second and swallows it (ibid). Such an exercise "signifies the precedence of the departed ancestors over the living" (ibid). In line with this reasoning, something significant needs to be said about the verbal communication on the part of living to the Ancestors that involves libation. Nyathi (2001:6) points out that "libations […] will not mean a thing unless, at the same time as this is done, words are said to the living dead". In the same way that in African earthly traditional communities elders would not eat food if the giver did not accompany the giving with words such as "here is your food" grandmother or any other person, traditional Africans reasoned that the Ancestors, the "procedure is the same with the living dead – after all, they were living beings and have not wholly abandoned some of their physical traits" (Nyathi, 2001:6 – 7). This belief gives an indication that it is false to assume that the material items used in libations are the "chief items in communicating with the dead" (Nyathi, 2001:7). While material things certainly assist in performing libations, they are not the "essence" (ibid). Utterance, the "word" is the most important aspect in the communication, because even without material offerings the "word" can be said, meaning that communication between the spiritual and and the material can take place in the absence of material offerings (ibid).

At this point it needs to be asked: What is the explanation of the centrality of the "word" in African spirituality? In the absence of the availability of any other explanation yet, ancient Egyptian texts, with particular reference to one of the myths of creation, hold the answer to the above question. According to the Memphite myth – Memphis being one of the provinces of ancient Egypt, Ptah – one of the names given to the Creator – all creation came through what Ptah's heart thought, which The One commanded through the tongue (Breasted, 1993:37). This Memphite Theology, which is estimated to have been in existence 3 500 years BCE taught that the Supreme Being created the world with the word (Breasted, 1933:35). This belief in the Creator's power to create with the "word" preceded the teachings of the Bible which, later, echoed the same teachings. Conscious of this fact, Breasted (1933:37) rhetorically asks: "Are

we to recognise here the pre-historic background of the Logos doctrine of New Testament 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' – is there here an echo of remote human experience on the Nile?"

This ancient Egyptian narrative places into context the ancient Egyptians', the Ndebeles', and, indeed, generally, African Spirituality's belief in the sacred power and the centrality of the "word" in African rituals. It traces this power to the Supreme Being. Such reinforces the argument that Africans, in honouring or revering the Ancestors, are, in fact, revering the Source of all things, the Supreme Being. The foregoing observations give a clear indication that there was and continues to be logical reasoning behind the act of libation. Such logic informs the ritual of accompanying the Spirits of the Departed.

4.3.2 Accompanying the Spirits of the Departed: The Philosophical Context

Death, among Africans, carries a great significance in the endless drama that characterises human life (Nyathi, 2001:126). In traditional African belief, when the spirit leaves the body, it joins the world of the Ancestor Spirits (Nyathi, 2001:125). This journey is perceived to be a long one, and this being the case, just as humans in the physical form needed provisions when embarking on a journey, Africans believed that provisions were needed for a departed soul (ibid). Failure to provide provisions for the departed souls, Africans believed, would result in the wandering of the spirit and failure to find the right direction leading to the Abode of the Ancestors (ibid). It is against this background that the rituals of accompanying the spirits of the departed should be understood. The philosophical explanations for the rituals reveal a psychological engagement on the part of Africans with death. As Richards (1990:213) points out, performance of rituals helps to make sense of issues that are not explainable, through them that trauma is avoided, crises dealt with and overcome.

Cattle are slaughtered, among the Ndebele, for both women and men, to accompany the soul of the departed (Nyathi, 2001:128). It is interesting and significant to note that while Mbiti (1990:146) on the one hand, observes that in the ceremeony, among the amaNdebele, for the accompanying the spirits, an ox is slaughtered for a man, and a goat for a woman, Nyathi (2001:128), on the other hand, observes that for a man it is a bull, and for a woman a cow. While there is an agreement between Mbiti and Nyathi regarding what is offered for a man, there is disagreement and difference regarding what is offered for a woman. One says, respestively, that it is a goat for a woman, while the other says it is a cow. What explains this difference? It can be argued that the difference lies in the smuggling of patriarchy in the

amaNdebele culture. The smuggling of patriarchy brought about the relegation of the woman by some, among the amaNdebele culture, in this instance. Such an argument is plausible if it is taken into consideration that, according to Mbiti (1990:145 – 146), traditionally, if a person were ill and the pain of sickness lingered, relatives slaughtered an animal called "the beast of the ancestors" to invoke the Ancestor Spirits to hasten a person's death, sparing the person from pain. The interesting point here is that generally, it was an ox, or "a goat (for a poor man)" (Mbiti, 1990:146). So, there is a status factor in question here – an ox, generally, and a goat for "a poor man". Nothing is said about what was done for a woman by both Mbiti and Nyathi – there is silence. But a closer examination of Nyathi's (2001:126) statement on what Mbiti calls the "beast of the ancestors" gives an indication that it was also slaughtered for women. Nyathi (ibid) points out that when the ritual is performed for a man, a bull was used. While Nyathi, above, says nothing about what happens when a woman was ill, but only addresses what is done for a man, it is his last observation that says much about what he says not: "For a man a bull was used." If the "beast of the ancestors" was exclusively a privilege of men, there would be no need for Nyathi to state that for "a man a bull was used". Following his observation, above, that in the case of accompanying a spirit of the departed, a bull was used for a man, and a cow for a woman, it is reasonable to state what he does not state, that being that in the case of an ill woman, a "beast of the ancestors" in the case of a woman is a cow. Such a conclusion is consistent with what was done for a woman when her spirit was accompanied, and, as will be seen below, when her spirit was recalled. That Mbiti says that in the ritual of accompanying women's spirits a goat was reserved for women, while a bull was slaughtered for women, gives a clear indication of the reduction of women's status among some amaNdebele. Such a conclusion is reached on the basis that while generally a bull was used for helping an ill person hasten their death so as to relieve them from pain, a goat was used for a poor man. Interestingly, a goat used for a poor man is used, according to Mbiti, when accompanying the spirit of a woman. We now turn to the ritual of returning the Spirits of the Departed.

4.3.3 Returning the Spirits of the Departed: The Philosophical Context

Just as there is a deeply philosophical significance in the ritual of accompanying the spirit of the departed, such is the case in the ritual of returning the spirit of the departed. The ritual is a celebration of conquest over death (Mbiti, 1990:147). In the absence of performing the ritual of bringing back the departed to the community of the living, the two-way communication between the Ancectors and the earth-dwellers is threatened (Nyathi, 2009:133). The ritual of returning the departed is necessary because without its performance the departed cannot be

elevated from the "status of the dead to that of the living dead" (ibid). Both Mbiti (1990:147) and Nyathi (2001:134) are in agreement that the ritual of returning the spirits of the departed are performed for both women and men. For a man it is a bull, and for a woman, a cow, according to Nyathi (2001:137). Mbiti (1990:147) is not gender-specific in the ritual of recalling the spirit but simply notes that slaughtered the "animal is normally a black ox".

Before proceeding with the philosophical explanation regarding the ritual of recalling the Spirits of the Departed, attention must be drawn to the women-erasing use of the pronoun "he" by Mbiti (1990:147 – 148) above. It gives the false, and, perhaps, unintended impression that the subject discussed is only a man, yet by Mbiti's own declaration, the ritual is both for women and men – not only men. It can easily be argued that these are constraints imposed by the English language that has pronouns that are gender-specific while African languages' pronouns are gender-free. But even then, while the English language has gender-specific pronouns, it allows a writer to use she or he, her or him, for purposes of clarity. In the absence of clarity that recognises the presence of women in a discourse, a false impression is given that African cultural rituals cater for men only. This false impression, this erasure of women, even if, perhaps, unintended comes out again, on Mbiti's (1990:147) part when, in observing that the ceremony is a symbolic way of "reviving", "summoning back" and "inviting back" the departed, he observes that the ceremony thus renews contact "with him" in the next world.

Renewing contact with "him"? What about "her"? Ancestor Spirits are both female and male in African culture. If this failure to pay attention to gender issues on the part of some African scholars were not a general feature in discourse, one would not raise an objection, but it is not. Reflecting on how death is received among amaNdebele, Nyathi (2001:124) observes that when an "ordinary man" passes on, it is said that a tree has fallen because it is considered rude to say that "a man has died". By paying attention to "an ordinary man's" death, as Nyathi (ibid) does above, he is marginalising an "ordinary woman's" death. By saying that it is rude to say "a man" has died, Nyathi, even if unintentionally, ignores respect due to "a woman". By consistently using the "he" pronoun, Nyathi, even if unintentionally so, treats women's experiences as if they do not exist. While on the one hand, Nyathi can, in his defense argue that his use of the "he" pronoun is consistent with his reference to "a man", it is indefensible to translate "umuntu", a "human being", in isiNdebele", as "the man". *Umuntu* – a human being – is both a woman and a man. If Nyathi wanted to be specific with reference to a man, he could have said, in isiNdebele, "umuntu oyindoda" – a male person, not just "umuntu" as if only males are "abantu" – human beings.

Having pointed out these flaws on Nyathi's part, it must also be said, to his credit, that he, in his book, *Traditional Ceremonies Of Amandebele*, makes a commendable effort to pay attention to women's issues. While Nyathi (2001:127) gives a detailed attention in the rituals associated with a man's burial, by stating that a night vigil is kept during the night preceding his burial, that the deceased spends a nigh in his hut, and that, traditionally, "Ndebele men were buried near the cattle pens, since when the lived they "cared for the cattle" and "it was where their hearts were", he gives detail, too, with reference to women. Nyathi (2001:131) observes that the "process described above will apply in the case of a woman", while at the same time "there are a few differences that need to be pointed out". A woman's body was buried in the granary area since in the culture of amaNdebele the "growing of crops was the responsibility of women", and therefore, "proper […] to bury her where her heart belonged". It is significant to note that in both rituals of burying women and men, careful attention was paid to satisfy their "hearts". There was sensitivity to both the hearts of women and men.

In the same way that being an Ancestor is not a given, in the context of African philosophy, to be "human" is also not a given.

4.4 The Meaning of Being "Human" in the Context of African Culture

Being "human" in the African cultural and philosophical context is not a given. To deserve to be called a human being means that in this life one must evidence a "potential to manifest good consciousness" (James, 2003:124). Having a human body is not a guarantee for being accepted as a human being. Having a human body is simply, using Menkiti's (2006:324) phrase, a "brute biological fact", or, using Ramose's (2003:232), a "biological definition or nature of a human being". To be able to discern the meaning of being "human", reference to African languages is a very helpful exercise. This is so because efforts to express African thought in European languages can, at times, be strenuous, inadequate and distortive (Gyekye, 2003:301 – 302; Ramose, 2003:231). But even more importantly, access to African languages is "the key to serious research and understanding of traditional religions and philosophy" (Mbiti, 1990:14). In the languages of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, "being human" or being a "human being" is known as Ubuntu (isiNdebele, isiSwati, isiXhosa, isiZulu), Vumunhu (Xitsonga), Vhuthu (Venda), Utu (Swahili), Botho (Sotho, Tswana), Unhu (Shona) (Khoza, 2011:439). The popularly used word across these languages is Ubuntu, hence it will be the one used throughout this discussion as far as the Eastern and Southern African regions are concerned. The philosophy of Ubuntu or Ubuntu philosophy is regarded as the "root", the "foundation",

the "edifice" of African philosophy – the "wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology" (Ramose, 2003:230). It is a "concept that is generally regarded as the foundation of sound human relations in African society" (Khoza, 2011:437). In explaining the immanence of Ubuntu philosophy in African life, Mthembu (1996:216) points out that the "treasure and richness of African life, culture, philosophy and value systems can be traced through *ubuntu* which is the main stem which underpins values". That is because Ubuntu philosophy is "key" to all African values, which include humanness, good disposition to fellow human beings and all other creation.

Before we go much further, it is important to note that the term "African Humanism" employed here is utilised because many philosophers (Khoza, 2011:437) have used it. But not all African philosophers are at ease with using the –ism suffix. In objecting to the use of the suffix, Ramose (2003:231) argues that the suffix gives the erroneous impression of dealing with verbs and nouns as fixed and separate entities existing independently, functioning as fixations to ideas and practices which are somewhat dogmatic and hence, unchangeable. Ramose (2003:231) prefers to refer to Ubuntu as "humanness". The philosophy of Ubuntu refers to the "affirmation of one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish[ing] humane relations with them" (Ramose, 2003:231). To become a human being, therefore, is an "activity" rather than an "act", an "ongoing process impossible to stop unless motion itself is stopped" (ibid). Ramose's reference to the establishment of humane relations between human beings is central to the understanding of Ubuntu philosophy. This can best be understood by invoking the maxims "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (in isiZulu), "motho ke motho ka batho (in seSotho/seTswana) which, when loosely translated means that a human being is a human being through other human beings (Ramose, 2003:231). It means that being a human being is recognised and affirmed on the basis that an individual person relates well or humanely with fellow members of the human family. If an individual fails to meet this expectation, s/he is regarded as a non-human being (ha se motho/ gase motho – in seSotho; akamuntu wamuntu in isi) (Mthembu, 1996:220; Ramose, 2003:232, Khoza, 2011:445). Such expressions do not literally imply the non-existence of a human being but the loss by a human being of a sense of being human (Khoza, 2011:445). The unbreakability of the community refers to the "link between the living and the living dead" which is "not only sacrosanct" but "also unbreakable" (ibid).

Beginning with the Yoruba language, we learn that the word for "person" is ènìyàn (Gbadegesin, 2003:175). This word has two meanings – an ordinary one and a normative one.

The ordinary sense is the one to which we made reference earlier – the "brute biological fact" – the bodily or physical appearance of a human being. The "body", in the philosophical conception of the Yoruba, is seen like a "case which houses the senses, which also constitutes its most important elements" (Gbadegesin, 2003:176). The physical dimension raises no serious debates in Yoruba culture because "the question whether a human is all body or something else […] appears too obvious to [the Yoruba thinkers] that there is more to a person than the body" (ibid). This, then, takes us to the normative dimension of the human person or being. In the Yoruba culture it is perceived that human existence has a purpose to fulfil (Gbadegesin, 2003:191). Being human or not is determined or dependent on whether or not an individual fulfils that purpose or not. A valid question then arises: how does a person know what her/his purpose is on earth? It is here that the significance of the community into which a person is born acquires meaning. That is because it is the community that gives an individual person the meaning and purpose of human existence, and nurtures the individual by giving her the values of the community (Gbadegesin, 2003:191). What this then implies is that "a person whose existence and personality are dependent on the community is expected in turn to contribute to the existence of the community" (ibid). This means that according to the ènìyàn concept, the crown of personal life is to be useful to one's community" and that the "meaning of one's life is therefore measured by one's commitment to social ideals and communal existence" (ibid). The foregoing observations illustrate clearly that to be a human person, in the normative sense, is not automatic. Recognition of human personhood, in the normative sense, is conditional upon identification with, and commitment to the community's values. It is premised upon active engagement with the community's expectations. If and when a person fails in carrying out these expectations, it thus becomes, in the Yoruba culture, "not unusual when referring to a human being for an observer to say 'Ki i se ènìyàn (He/She is not an ènìyàn)" (Gbadegesin, 2003:175).

The Akan appear to have the same attitude or approach as the Yoruba to what constitutes a human being or person. Among the Akan, the word for human person or being is onipa (Wiredu, 2003:292). Just as is the case with the Yoruba, the Akan attach more importance to the normative dimension than the ordinary one. Among the Akan be human is to be the "centre of a thick set of concentric circles of obligations and responsibilities" (Wiredu, 2003:291). These obligations and responsibilities are "matched by rights and privileges revolving round levels or relationships irradiating from the consanguinity of household kith and kin, through the 'blood' ties of lineage and, to the wider circumference of human familihood based on the

common possession of the divine spark" (ibid). Just as is the case with the Yoruba, the "Akan society is of a type in which the greatest value is attached to communal belonging" (Wiredu, 2003:291). This logic of the emphasis on communal belonging can be appreciated when one considers the Akan maxim, "onipa firi soro besi a, obesi onipa kurom" (when a person descends from heaven, he/she descends into a human society) (Gyekye, 2003:299). The Akan hold the view, as expressed in one maxim, "onipa nnye abe na ne ho ahyia ne ho), meaning that a person is not a palm tree that s/he should be self-complete or self-sufficient (Gyekye, 2003:300). What the above reveals is that communalism regards individuals as inherently communal beings, tied to social relationships and interdependence, not as isolated, atomic beings (Gyekye, 2003:299). Implied in this perspective is that the community is not merely an "association of individual persons whose interests and ends are contingently congruent", but belong to a group of persons "linked to interpersonal bonds, biological and/or non-biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of the group and who have common interests, goals, and values" (ibid). An individual's image in this communal society is heavily dependent on the extent to which an individual's actions benefit the society s/he lives in, "not, of course, by accident or coincidence but by design" (Wiredu, 2003:292). To be a human person in this community, therefore, means that an individual must be conscious of the importance of pledging human solidarity, by extending support to fellow human beings, especially those who find themselves in vulnerable positions (Wiredu, 2003:293 – 294). Just as is the case with the Yoruba, among the Akan, when a person fails to live up to the expected human responsibilities, s/he is regarded as "a non-person (onye onipa)" (Wiredu, 2003:292), or "he is not a human person (onye' nipa)" (Gyekye, 2003:303). This judgment is not passed lightly, but applied when an individual's conduct is found to be "wicked, bad, ungenerous, cruel, selfish" (ibid). What this further reveals, from an Akan philosophical perspective, is that personhood is not something that someone is born with but something to be achieved, and is subject to degrees "so that some are more onipa than others, depending on the degree of fulfilment of one's obligations to self, household, and community (Wiredu, 2003:315). Not withstanding this failure, human beings are not stripped of their sense of dignity and respect due to them because they have failed (Gyekye, 2003:305). Instead, there is an expectation to rally around her/him in an effort to re-humanise the individual. This is captured well in isiZulu (and other Nguni languages as well) saying, "Umuntu kalahlwa" (A person cannot be thrown away, despite bad behaviour) (Mthembu, 1996:216). If to be human in the African philosophy of humanism means to be actively engaged in making a contribution to the community's and human welfare, two questions arise. Firstly, what is the status of those who are disabled? Secondly, other than being regarded as non-

persons, what happens to those who undermine the philosophy of African humanism? Kaunda's (1987:10) reflections help us to answer both questions. With reference to the first question, Kaunda (ibid) notes that the traditional community, being an accepting community, did not regard failure in an absolute sense in the the "slow, the inept and incapable were accepted as any other member in community life provided they were socially amenable". What this means is that social qualities counted more than individual achievement (ibid). In other words, human beings were valued not for what they could achieve, but for their very existence and their presence, and their contribution, however limited, appreciated (ibid). With reference to the second question, Kaunda (1987:10) notes that when "anti-social activities were punished, very often the punishment was heavy".

The concept of being human, expressed in compassion for others, was, and is not reserved for fellow human beings only, but also for other creatures which share space with human beings, whether the latter are regarded an animate or inanimate. This approach, which European Christian missionaries distorted as "animism" (Mbiti, 1990:7) is referred to, by Africans, as Nature-Reverence.

4.5 Nature-Reverence: An Expression of Ancestor-Reverence

The objective of mis-naming Nature-Reverence as animism was driven by the European missionaries' quest to project African spirituality as being "devoid of a philosophical system that might stand against Christianity and other so-called world religions" (Bujo, 2009:395). Mbiti (1990:7) traces the etymology of animism to the Latin word "anima" which means "breath, breath of life, and hence carries with it the idea of soul or spirit". In Africa, the concept "animism" was popularised by an English anthropologist, E,B Tylor who, in 1886, advanced the idea that "primitive" people believed that the anima was capable of leaving the body and entering other people, animals or things, and continuing to live after death (ibid). Such "primitive" people believe that every object has its own soul (ibid). Since then, this inadequate term, which Mbiti (1990:7 – 8) argues that it should be "abandoned once and for all", came to be widely used in describing African traditional spirituality.

Nature-Reverence is best appreciated if and when one recalls the definition of the concept of the family or the community as referring, as stated earlier, those who have passed on – the Ancestors, those who are living, and those not yet or yet to be born. Such a recognition enables an observer to appreciate, as Kamalu (1990:155) explains, that this African philosophical approach "implies an ecologically oriented ethics in which our concern for those who come

after us is reflected in the state in which we choose to leave our social and natural environment". This African "ecologically oriented ethics" implies that the "African way of life is to live in harmony with nature through avoiding disturbance of the ecological balance" (Kamalu, 1990:138). It is for this reason that traditional Africans' ethical code stood opposed to unwarranted and excessive destruction of trees and the desposing of toxic wastes in the rivers (Kamalu, 1990:138 – 139). Driven by this "ecologically oriented ethics", traditional African teachings of the Ancestors were "quite clear that you only kill, or even harm, another animal or a plant for a worthy cause" (Rukuni, 2007:89). So that, then, it was expected that those who went for hunting, would first speak to the Supreme Being, invoke the Ancestor-Spirits, and also "speak to the local spirits and ancestors looking after that forest on the Creator's behalf, to ask for permission to hunt, in order to feed their families. No other harm to animals was acceptable, no hunting just for selfish pleasure (ibid). In Kenya, prior the arrival of the Europeans, Mount Kenya was called, by those who lived in its surroundings, Kirinyaga, a name meaning "Place of Brightness" in Gikuyu (Mathaai, 2009:173). This mountain and its forests were, before the arrival of Europeans, "considered sacred grounds" (ibid). The relationship between the mountain and the Gikuyu people was governed by the belief that the Supreme Being dwelt on the mountain and that rains, water, crops and vegetables flowed from it (ibid). But upon their arrival, the European Christian missionaries told the local inhabitants that the idea that the Supreme Being dwelt on Kirinyaga was false, and that Kirinyaga was not sacred (ibid). Consequently, the reverence status of the mountain was destroyed in the minds of the people (ibid). Soon and for a long time, thereafter, when the European settlers, together with the local communities, began to cut down trees, and encroached into the mountain, they encountered little resistance (Maathai, 2009:174). Henceforth, trees were seen as commodities used for selfish interests (ibid). Reverence for nature withered (ibid).

In embarking on the programme of reforestation, the Burkinabe revolutionary, Thomas Sankara, recalled that "African tradition included a form of preservation of nature, a kind of socio-ecological tradition known as the sacred woods" (Kongo & Zeilig, 2009:117). In this tradition, a "certain number of rituals, in particular initiation rituals, were carried out" in the belief that "these woods supposedly possessed certain powers that protected them" (ibid). But, "[a]s these values gave way to more modern and rational ones, as well as other forms of religion, the protection disappeared and the woods with it". Thus, the "protective shield afforded by the forest was destroyed so that, as you can imagine, the spread of the desert proceeded at an even more rapid pace" (ibid). Appreciation of the "sacredness" of nature – the

mountains and the forests – in Kenya and Burkina Faso, are a clear indication of African cultural unity. It is for this reason that Rukuni (2007:88 – 89), authoritatively, and, confidently, argues that traditonal African philosophy taught that "all beings are intelligent and therefore sacred", and that, therefore, despite human beings' terrible capacity for violence, they should care for all creation and always live in harmony with animals and plants. The foregoing clarifications are useful in enabling an appreciation of Mutwa's (1996:23) observation that it is "not an exaggeration to say that African people had more laws governing people's behaviour towards the Earth, plants and animals than they had governing other acts of human behaviour" (ibid). These African laws dictated that when crops were planted, "we conducted rituals not only with the aim of ensuring a good harvest, but also to thank the Earth Mother and to apologize for injuring her sacred flesh in order to plant food" (ibid). An examination of these African laws governing the relationship between human beings and nature reveals that the laws were not just about enforcing obedience to rules, but also aimed at inculcating a profound sense of compassion not only for fellow human beings but nature as well. Hence, when hoeing to get rid of weeds took place, rituals were performed as a form of apology to the weeds, an explanation made to them that even though it was understood that weeds were not evil, they had the misfortune of growing where food was planted.

As a way of raising consciousness about the critical importance of compassion for animals, "a strictly observed law was that no beast could be slaughtered or skinned in the presence of another (Mutwa, 1996:82). Special care was taken to remove the animal to be slaughtered from the rest of the herd and to conceal its hide from them so that they would not see and mourn over it (ibid). This shows that Africans appreciated that animals, just like human beings, had feelings. Africans, Mutwa (1996:13) points out, held a belief that in every human being there lay a spiritual animal with which humans should keep contact with at all times so as to anchor families upon the shifting surface of this often troubled planet. As if reading directly from Mutwa's script, Rukuni (2007:86) points out that in African mythology "animals can house a human spirit, and vice versa: a human can host an animal spirit". This mythology, Rukuni (2007:85) argues, has proven to be more than a myth but validated by modern science that has demonstrated that "the DNA of a chimpanzee is 98% that of a human" while that of elephants, lions, hyenas, cattle and dogs "hold more than 90% of the same DNA that is found in a human being". This scientific evidence is a clear indication that "while modern science is only able to prove this now, Afrikans have always known that we are closely related to animals and plants, and in some mysterious sense, even to water" (Rukuni, 2007:85 – 86). Informed by this logic,

Rukuni (2007:86) notes that it is "not surprising, therefore, that the bulk of the totems of our clan names are based on animals". Among Africans, there are clan names who are called Ndlovu (in isiNdebele, isiSwati, isiXhosa, isiZulu), Tlou (is seSotho, seTswana). Ndlovu and Tlou are, in English, the elephant. There are also those who are called "lion" – Ngonyama in isiXhosa, and Tau in SeSotho and SeTswana. You can also find those who are called "cow", "Nkomo" among amaNdebele, amaXhosa, and amaZulu. There are the "baboons" – amaMfene among the Nguni-speaking groups, and Tshweneng among the SeSotho and SeTswana-speaking Africans.

Regarding the baboons, there is an interesting narrative about how the amaNguni, BaSotho and BaTswana recognise a familial relationship between human beings and the baboons. Called imfene in Nguni languages and tshwene in SeSotho and SeTswana languages, Mutwa (1996:116) traces the etymology of the name imfene/tshwene to fana/tswaana, respectively, a verb which means "to resemble". Mutwa (ibid) goes on to point that in isiZulu and SeSotho, the baboon is known as "that which resembles" a human being. What this means is that traditionally and historically, Africans had no sense of shame in being associated with, and likened to baboons. They regarded these animals as human beings' relatives. The recognition of animals as part of the family of the human race was not limited to the baboons but to many others. In Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa, there is a clan that is known as the Bakwena, translated as "the people of the crocodile" (Mutwa, 1996:18; 198). This clan regards the crocodile as their totem and their "holiest animal symbol" (Mutwa, 1996:18). Those belonging to this clan were traditionally and historically expected never to harm the crocodile in any way, such that if they encountered a dead one on the banks of the river, they were expected to give it "a solemn burial, as if it had been a human being" (Mutwa, 1996:198). The "people of the crocodile" are not only found in Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa, but also in Zimbabwe (Mutwa, 1996:18). A narrative regarding the Tangwena people reveals a profound relationship that exists between the Tangwena and the crocodiles. According to the narrative, the Tangwena people were profoundly humiliated by a group of white colonialists (ibid). The white colonialists humiliated a Tangwena chief by meting out cruelty and disrespect to him. In an act of retaliation, the Tangwena people met under a tree and solemnly placed a curse on a white official they considered to be the worst among the white colonialists (ibid). They then prayed to the "great crocodile of heaven" for the immediate death the white man who had humiliated their chief (ibid). Having carved an image of the offender from clay, they, then shattered the image, ceremonially, with a crocodile carved out of a Zimbabwean (then known as Rhodesian)

teak (ibid). Subsequent to the performance of this ritual, a vehicle that was carrying the cruel white official was trapped as it was crossing a river. In the process the white official was seized and viciously ambushed by a crocodile (ibid). Upon learning of this incident, the Tangwena people believed that one of their ancestral spirits had punished the offender (ibid). This story of the Tangwena people is reminiscent of another story that took place among the Igbo of Nigeria who regarded the killing of the python as a punishable taboo (Amadiume, 2015:121). A Christian convert, driven by zeal, violated the Igbo's belief by killing a sacred python, thus provoking the ire of Igbo women of Nnobi, who went to the man's house and razed it down, an "indigenous Igbo female custom of dealing with offending men. Two weeks after the incident, the man is said to have died" (Amadiume, 2015:122). Of course, the offended Igbo people felt that the sacred python had avenged itself against the offending man. It is not only among the Igbo of Nigeria that the snake is treated with reverence but among other Africans, too, especially the python (Mutwa, 1996:192). It is believed, among some Africans, that the first creatures created by the Supreme Being were reptiles and fishes (ibid). Unlike the teachings of the Bible that regard the snake as an evil and deceitful creature, and to be called a snake is an insult, among some Africans being called a snake is not an insult, but, in fact, a compliment, because the name snake means a very clever person (ibid). In a traditional African context, to dream of a snake can be interpreted as a signal of a wish from the ancestors to communicate a message to the dreamer (ibid). If, in the dream, the dreamer is bitten by the snake, this is interpreted to mean that there is a powerful enemy that seeks to harm the dreamer – so, the dream is a forewarning (ibid). Driven by this appreciation, with special reference to dogs, there was a belief that without dogs, human beings could not survive (Mutwa, 1996:46). Informed by this logic, children were taught that a dog was to be respected and treated with kindness at all times (ibid). Kicking and swearing at a dog was forbidden (ibid). Dogs were entitled to their own food rations, and when food supplies ran low, human beings were expected to sacrifice their own and share their food with dogs. Here, we see that the act of compassion was seen as more than an act of passive sympathy. There was an expectation that compassion had to be expressed through active solidarity and sacrifice. There was also an understanding that animals reciprocated human kindness. Credo Mutwa (1996:83), a South African traditional healer, reveals that as a young boy he observed that when his village was going to be attacked by a war-party, some cows would start making a sound in the direction of the enemy's approach, and would be joined in this by dogs (ibid). Such gestures from the animals served as a warning of an imminent attack, confirming an ancient African saying: "Very often your dog and your cow are far better seers than you are." (ibid)

At this point it should be clear that this sense of deep compassion and humility had firm philosophical underpinnings. In the Africa of old, Africans did not regard themselves as superior to the rest of creation but as part of all living things (Mutwa, 1996:13). Africans recognised their being the weakest of creation, and being dependent on nature around them, since human beings could not exist witout animals, birds, fishes and the greenery around them.

As if sharing notes, Maathai (2009:288) echoes Mutwa in pointing out Africans' recognition that "[w]ithout human beings, the creatures and plants and trees would flourish; but without those species, human beings have no hope of survival". This kind of thinking, Maathai (ibid) further points out, is an enabling factor in raising human consciousness that when considering "*human* rights, we need to reach another level of consciousness to appreciate that these other species, too, have a right to their existence and their piece of the Earth".

4.6 Conclusion

It should be recalled at this point that the notion of Ancestor-Reverence was selected for interrogation to respond to the African Renaissance advocates' call to examine "political philosophies or mechanisms […] essential for the sustaenance of the African Reniassance" (Makgoba et, 1999:ii). More speicifically, such political philosophies are expected to address "practical strategies and solutions for future action" that would "benefit the African masses" (Makgoba et al, 1999:i). Though this chapter gave attention to rituals associated with Ancestor-Reverence, the main interest and focus were on the philosophical aspects of such rituals. Such an examination revealed that while much has been said about the rituals, the philosophical was neglected, and where the philosophical was paid attention to, it was, in the main distorted. However, African-centred scholars have made a commendable effort in setting the record straight. In doing so, they pointed that Ancestor-Reverence is a philosophical teaching that taught that Africans were expected to perform virtuous deeds while on earth so as to attain the status of Ancestorhood. In doing so, they were expected to be "human beings", a status not gained by merely being born, but achieved by behaving in manners "humane" in relation not just to fellow human beings, but also nature or creation as a whole. This appreciation was brought about by seeking to understand the philosophy of Ubuntu, a heritage that is a creation of ancient African ancestors. Recognising that "African humanism […] has been savaged by European colonialism and overzealous missionaries with their racism", one of the African Renaissance advocates and philosophers, Reuel Khoza (2011:453), argues that since historically, African philosophy has been marginalised in institutions of learning, to bring about

an African Renaissance for the masses, African philosophy must be institutionalised. Institutionalisation of Ubuntu means "to insist on the inclusion of African history, sociology, psychology, geography, cultures, to be taught throughout informal and formal education" (ibid). It is significant to note that Khoza (ibid) does not call for Ubuntu to be taught in schools and institutions of higher learning just for the sake of doing so, and also to serve elitist appetites. Such institutions are to serve as a starting point. Ultimately, such institutionalisation must take the exercise to informal institutions, that is, in communities where everyone can have access to such education. Such an exercise would, as the African Renaissance advocates' call require, address "practical strategies and solutions for future action" that would "benefit the African masses" (Makgoba et al, 1999:i). When the philosophy behind Ancestor-Reverence is elucidated, the African masses who practise, will see how they, themselves, can fulfill the African Renaissance's quest for a true humanity. Not only were the Ancestors honoured for the performance of great deeds, for leaving the heritage of African philosophy in the name of Ubuntu/Botho/Maat, but were also revered for leaving to their posterity a particular and distinct notion of "family".

Chapter 5

The Notion of the Family in the Context of African Traditional Cultures

5.1 Introduction

Colonial, anthropological and missionary literature is awash with contentions that the traditional notion of the African family is patriarchal (Nzegwu, 2006:13). This characterisation of the notion of the traditional African family as being male-dominant is driven by an inclination to prove that, with reference to the concept of family, Africa is no different from the rest of the world (ibid). The point made by Nzegwu is best captured and articulated by Kenyatta (1965:158) who notes that there has been "some confusion in the minds of many writers who have tried to explain the system of marriage and the position of women in the African community". Singling out the Christian missionaries, in particular, Kenyatta (ibid) further observes that they have gone so far as to claim that African women are "regarded as mere chattels of the men". Dismissing the missionaries' claims as both "erroneous and a misconception" of African cultures, Kenyatta (1965:158 – 159) points out that well-informed anthropologists would disagree with the missionaries' distortion. Reinforcing this perception has been white Marxist and feminist-inspired Africanist scholarship which "explained the modern economic dependency and subjugation of African women on the indigenous structures of inequality embedded in African traditions" (Nzegwu, 2006:14). Diametrically opposed to the white Marxist and feminist-inspired Africanist scholarship is the African-centred scholarship, which makes reference to African cultures and histories, pointing out that historically and culturally, African societies have been matriarchal. Confidently and boldly, among the African-centred scholars, Diop (1989:62) points out that "African matriarchy existed on a continent-wide scale". Echoing Diop's point, Rukuni (2007:33) notes that a "common thread weaving through all Afrikan cultural groups is that the mother is at the centre". Having noted that among Africans a home does not exist without a mother, Rukuni (ibid) further points out that in "Afrikan traditional systems, a man cannot be allocated land or a home if he has no wife, because it is the mother that is central to a household". In these African matriarchal set-ups, women were not only central, but were also leaders of the societies they lived in. In ancient, or at the beginnings of times, Mutwa (1998:558) notes that Africans "were not ruled by chiefs, but by a Council of the Mothers of the People". This chapter engages, firstly, with contestations around the meaning of the notion of family in the context of African traditional cultures. Secondly, it engages with the definitions of the concept of family in African cultural contexts. It then proceeds to examine the arguments which advance the notion

that historically, and, culturally, African cultural foundations are matriarchal. Having engaged with matriarchal manifestations of African culture, we then proceed to interrogate the philosophical foundations of African matriarchy within the context of the notion of the family in African cultures. The philosophical interrogation goes on to examine the meaning of parenthood in African cultures and its implications for African societies. We then move on to examine, in detail, the claims that the notion of family in Africa is patriarchal. It needs to be recalled, at this point, that in the context of this study, the identification of the notion of family in the context of African cultures is informed by, amongst other factors, Rukuni's (2007:22) observation that "the decay of Afrikan society could be traced back to the decay of the family and community institutions that were developed by our ancestors over many centuries". We now turn to contentions and contestations about the notion of the family in African traditional contexts.

5.2 The Notion of the Family in African Tradtional Contexts: Contentions and Contestations

Considering that in traditional Africa, the notion of the family was devised in such a way as to protect orphans, and to give them a sense of safe belonging, Bujo (2009:396) argues that "in traditional society, there were no orphans" because "children with no parents were given priority care and integrated into the community". Traditionally, Africans "crafted family and extended family structures so it should be unthinkable for people to become destitute" (Rukuni, 2007:3). The family system served to deal with social issues (ibid). If traditional Africans utilised the family system to deal with social issues, Rukuni's (2007:25) rationale is that general problems facing Africans in the modern times are going to be solved by "re-building the family […] re-establishing the strong values of *Unhu-Ubuntu-Botho* within that group of institutions". If the above recommendation were to be applied, Rukuni (ibid) further argues, the "role of the state would then be to support these institutions rather than carry a major burden by trying in vain to replace them". Rukuni (2007:24) points out that the "general problem of fragmentation that we have in Afrika", is not only attributable to the breaking up of African families by colonialism, but is also a consequence of a "continuous erosion of the capacity of families and communities to handle issues and challenges that were initially handled by the family, extended family and community". In traditional African societies, family and community institutions were empowered to take responsibility of culture, education, spirituality, conflict resolution, the justice system, gathering knowledge and sharing it, politics and self-governance (ibid). Rukuni (2007:29) is driven by a strong conviction that Africans will be better off "developing a connectedness" within families, from an early age, than focusing on career goals, and then

trying to re-establish family relationships later. The prioritisation of career goals at the expense of strengthening families "is what has damaged, and is still harming our society" (ibid). Contrary to the perception that emphasis on the family destroys individuality, Rukuni (2007:50) argues that in fact, families "can only be as strong as the individuals in the family" and that the "family creates the individual and the individual creates the family". The question that confronts the student of philosophy who has read the German philosopher, Frederich Engels, would be: How does the African Renaissance project, whose advocates advance the emancipation of women, reconcile this project, considering that Engels (2010:105) argues that the "modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules"? Engels (ibid) continues to point out that to a very great extent, in "the husband is obliged to earn a living and support his family, and that in itself gives him a position of supremacy without any need for special legal titles and privileges". While Engels speaks of the family in general as an institution of female slavery, Hegel (1956:96) singles out the African family as an institution of slavery. Pointing out that "[a]mong the Negroes moral sentiments are quite weak, or more strictly speaking non-existent", Hegel (ibid) goes on to point out that parents among Africans sell their children and vice-versa when an opportunity arises. In the midst of pervasive slavery bonds of moral regard cherished by human beings disappear among Africans (ibid). Isolating polygamy as an object of attack, Hegel (ibid) charges that the "polygamy of the Negroes has frequently for its object the having many children, to be sold, every one of them into slavery". While Hegel condemns African family members for selling one another into slavery, thus exhibiting a non-existence of moral bonds that family members exhibit towards one another, Kant (2003:113) singles out African men as being brutal towards their wives, emphasising that among Africans, women are found "in the deepest slavery". The allegation that the African family was an institution in which the African woman was an object of oppression did not stop with the philosophers of the 18th century. With the rise of the feminist movement in the 20th century, the accusation continued. Following in the footsteps of Hegel, "[p]olygyny has been condemned in the West as one of the worst symbols of African women's oppression" (Nnaemeka, 2005:62). In a protest, Nnaemeka (ibid) argues that this projection of polygyny in African culture is done "without any assessment of the advantages the practice accords women: sharing child care, emotional and economic support, sisterhood, companionship, and so on". The irony in the Western feminists' approach with reference to polygyny is that, as Nnaemeka (ibid) further charges, "[o]ur Western sisters who pity us for having to share our husbands with other women forget that husband-sharing was perfected and

elevated to an art form in the West". By the perfection and elevation of husband-sharing in the West, Nnaemeka (ibid) refers to the tolerance of the husband with one wife and one or more mistresses. This perfection of husband-sharing begins with the manipulation of the definition of the word "polygyny". Its etymology being Greek, Nnaemeka (ibid) points out that with the first part being poly (many), and gyne (woman or wife), polygyny, therefore, has two possible meanings "many women" or "many wives". Yet, argues Nnaemeka (ibid), the English dictionary "sanctifies only one of the two possibilities, 'many wives', a limitation to which no one seems to object". Indeed, the 9th edition of The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (Thompson, 1995:1059) defines polygyny as "polygamy in which a man has more than one wife". Yet, the very dictionary says "*gyny* comes from Greek *gunē* 'woman'" (ibid). Nnaemeka is not being pedantic in taking this approach. That is so because if polygyny, which is being condemned by Western feminists, is limited to "many wives" in its definition, it spares those who have not "many wives" but have "many women". Western feminists have advanced the view, shared by Western-education-driven African men, that the African family has always been male-dominated, that the patriarchal view of the family is traditional and culturally-rooted, and that African women are voiceless and inferior to men (Nzegwu, 2006:18). Amadiume (2015:4) argues that even though Western feminists have "used material about Third World women, they were not really interested in the points of view or concerns of those they were writing about". Rather, they were "preoccupied with themselves and their own rebellion", and to them, "the universal social and cultural inferiority of women was a foregone conclusion" (ibid). This trajectory, taken by Western feminists, "indicated to Black women that White feminists were not less racist than the patriarchs of social anthropology whom they were busy condemning for male bias" (Amadiume, 2015:3). Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Amadiume (2015:xiv) rejects what she terms "Eurocentric feminism or wider Eurocentric perspectives on anthropology and African studies in general" and advocates "an African-centred focus". One of the advocates of the African-centred approach, Oyěwùmí (1997:129), argues that in the European missionaries' quest not only to de-Africanise Africans, but also to Europeanise them, "[a]s envisaged by the missionaries, the African family system was to be targeted for reform and, in turn to be the vehicle for the 'civilization' of these societies". Even though the primary focus of Christian education was the male species, the education of females was also important because the Christian missionaries "had a vested interest in producing mothers who would be the foundation of Christian families. They were clearly concerned that the home influence 'could be destroying the good seed sown in school.'" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:130) Thus, as a consequence of Western Christian education, the notion of the African "family itself

was slowly being redefined as the man plus his dependents (wife/wives and children) rather than as the 'extended' family, including siblings and parents" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:152). If Oyěwùmí argues that European Christian education "redefined" the notion of the indigenous African family, then that means that Africans had their own notion. It is for this reason that this chapter focuses on this issue.

Nzegwu (2006:5) points out that in the general field of African Studies, and the subfield of African philosophy, in particular, very little attention is paid to families. Nzegwu (ibid) further points out that the interest in families pales in comparison to interest in national politics and the national state. While Nzegwu (ibid) appreciates the importance of focusing on, and the importance of issues such as governance, democratisation, the viability of civil society, the rule of law, and the securing of people's provisions of human rights, she also argues that giving attention to families is no less important. That is because, she (ibid) further argues, "the stability of a nation depends on stable, functioning families". Nzegwu (ibid) further points out that when families are destabilised, whether as a consequence of wars or illnesses, the consequence is widespread post-traumatic stress disorders, collapse of social institutions, moral decay, law, order and security breakdown, senseless violence and massive social problems. Considering that there is a connection between the well-being of family and a healthy nation, and considering that family destabilisation weakens the very foundations of societies, Nzegwu (ibid) points out that priority should be given to discussions of the well-being of the African family. Greater attention, Nzegwu (ibid) further points out, should be dedicated to understanding the sources of this destabilization, including the impact of contemporary global policies and adopted values on families and how these, in turn, feed social pathologies that are an anathema to good governance (ibid).

Having noted that there was so much Liberia could learn from the industrialised world, former Liberian president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2009:34), simultaneously observed that one thing that the West could learn from Africa, one aspect of traditional African culture that she hoped her compatriots would never lose, "is the awesome support of the extended family system". In a pan-African spirit, Johnson Sirleaf further observes that "[i] n Liberia, as in all of Africa, parents routinely help their children care for the grandchildren – not just temporarily, not for a few hours or for the night" but for a long time that could take up to months or years. Revisiting the notion of the "extended family" which, "without doubt", is one of the elements of the "traditional African culture I would not want to see disappear", Johnson Sirleaf (2009:300) points out that the "extended family" in African culture, means, among other things, "having

concern for the aged of your family, taking them in, and giving them haven". Sirleaf Johnson (ibid) expresses revulsion about the notion of "nursing homes, where parents are left to fend for themselves". In a triumphant mood, Sirleaf Johnson (ibid) expresses great joy that so far "we still maintain that tradition: we take care of our mothers and fathers". While on the one hand, one former head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, celebrated the "extended family" notion, on the other hand, another former head of state, Kwame Nkrumah (1963:104), in spite of his advocacy of the African Renaissance project, disapproved of the "extended family" notion. Nkrumah (ibid) argued that "[c]ustoms which extol the virtues of extended family allegiance sustain nepotic practices, and regard giving and taking of 'presents' as implicit and noble, because they promote the family welfare". Nkrumah (ibid) further charged that customs which extolled "extended family allegiance" had a tendency to "encourage indolence and bribery [and] act as a brake upon ability [and] discourage that deeper sense of individual responsibility which must be ready in a period active reconstruction to accept obligation and fulfil trust". Customs that promoted the "extended family", Nkrumah (ibid) further charged, tended to "retard productivity and oppose savings, the crucial factors in the rate of development". Singling out polygamy for criticism, Nkrumah (ibid) pointed out that it tended to donate its quota to "these retarding influences, while our laws of succession and inheritance stifle the creative and inventive urge". A brief explanation to partly explain Nkrumah's attitude to the notion of the "extended family" is necessary for the purpose of contextualisation. Revisiting this issue after he was overthrown from power in 1966, Nkrumah (2017:72) noted that while still the head of state, not only did he find himself compelled to "combat" tribalism among the Ghanaians, but was also forced to confront the "African tradition that a man's first duty was to his family group and that therefore nepotism was the highest of all virtues". Nkrumah (2017:73) took note that as a result of selfish loyalty to their families, some in his ruling party, the Convention People's Party (CPP) were "prepared to recommend for detention individuals who took the opposite side to themselves in the election of a chief or in the running of traditional affairs". The picture of an African family, as that which promotes laziness, presented by Nkrumah above, argues Williams (1993:109), is a "perversion from what was the […] noblest of spiritual ideals that had been actually translated into a way of life – the spirit of mutual aid, the spirit of cooperation – brotherhood". As opposed to the perverted notion of the traditional African family witnessed by Nkrumah, Williams (1993:108) points out that the "original spirit behind this practice [the African family system] was one of the noblest in African family life, the spirit of family love and protection of the needy". In saying this, Williams (1993:108 – 109) is not dismissive of Nkrumah's observations, but acknowledges that "there are always those

family drones who depend on this and do not try to help themselves". However, argues Williams (1993:109) further, such family drones "are dependent by choice, not by necessity". In defending and advancing his proposal that the "African family system" is a "cultural institution that should be modernized and be preserved" as an important social unity in which both the personality and family disorganisation can be checked, and a basic economic unit in and around which cooperative enterprises may be developed, Williams (1993:108 – 109) further points out that originally, having there been no drones in traditional African communities, it "appeared to be inconceivable that anyone would sit back and live on the labors of others". While in traditional African societies there was no expectation that each person would produce the same as the other, there was certainly an expectation that everyone should do their best, and "best" being understood as an honest effort according to one's ability (Williams, 1993:109). Sluggards were not tolerated in traditional African societies (ibid). In line with Williams' observation that sluggards had not place in society, Bujo (2009:397) points out that "[d]espite the emphasis on hospitality, [in traditional African societies] a parasite was not to be tolerated". Bujo (ibid) backs up this argument by invoking a KiSwahili proverb, *Mgeni siku mbili, siku ya tatu mpe jembe* (One is a guest for two days; on the third day give him, or her, a hoe). What this means, as Bujo (ibid) further points out, is that in "traditional Africa, every guest was aware that hospitality was not to be enjoyed at the host's expense". With specific reference to families, Bujo (ibid) further points out that "[s]everal families would come together to work for a couple of days in the field of one of them", with each family having its turn in helping the other. Such an activity was at the core of the *Harambee* policy which was ushered by independent Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta (ibid). *Harambee* is a KiSwahili term meaning "to pull, or work, together" (ibid).

Williams (1993:109) argues that the "revival and promotion" of the "original family spirit in a cooperative family system would save one of the most precious things in African culture and at the same time afford needless dependents opportunities for self-help and self-reliance". While Rukuni (2007:103) acknowledges that it is inappropriate to choose to employ family members above other people in the public service, simultaneously, he argues that in private business working with family members can have great advantages. Rukuni (ibid) further points out that the Chinese, Indians, Jews and other national groups have achieved great success in using family networks to run global businesses in various capitals of the world. Consequently, Rukuni (ibid) further points out, in all major capitals of the world, there is a strong presence of Chinese and Jewish communities where these communities maintain strong networks. Contrary

to the picture, on the one hand, painted above about the Chinese, the Indians and the Jews, Rukuni (2007:102) points out that while Africans have a strong family tradition, on the other hand, they are "neglecting it, and have sadly failed to convert this tradition to benefit themselves in terms of commerce and industry". As pointed out above, while Africans are neglecting to use their strong family tradition, the Chinese, the Indians and the Jews, "have modernised their family systems to take advantage of business opportunities" (ibid). We now turn to definitions of the concept of family in the cultural contexts of African people.

5.3 The Family: Defined in African Traditional Cultural Contexts

In Chapter 4 we already defined the "family", in the traditional African context, as referring to the departed Ancestors, the living earth dwellers, and children yet unborn or yet to be born (Mbiti, 1989:104 – 105; Dandala, 1996:72; Richards, 1990:212). Worth noting, for Africans, is the observation by Mbiti (1989:104)'s reference to two concepts, namel "extended families" and "large family". When Mbiti states that the words "extended families" are an import into African cultures by anthropologists, this indicates that the concept "extended family" is not original in African cultures. The phrase "large family" is more appropriate. The phrase "extended family" raises a legitimate question as articulated by Nzegwu (2006:30): What are they extended from? The answer is traced to European scholarship which views the "nuclear family" as the "elementary, most basic form of family", disregarding the African notion of the family (Nzegwu, 2006:31). Distinguishing between the African and the Western perspectives on the concept of the family, Mbiti (1990:104) observes that for Africans "the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America". That is so because in African culture, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts. What in Europe or North America is regarded as a family, in Africa it is regarded as a household (Mbiti, 1990:105). Gyekye (1997:75) points out that it is a "matter of common knowledge" that when Africans speak of family, in an African cultural context, they are not referring to the "nuclear family" which merely refers to the wife, husband and children". In the African cultural context, family refers to "a large number of blood relatives who trace their descent from a common ancestor and who are held together by a sense of obligation to one another". In line with Mbiti and Gyekye, Rukuni (2007:29) observes that Africans' reference to family is about the "greater or extended family". Those sharing a living space are only a household (ibid). Similarly, Dandala (1997:71 – 72) points out that "unlike the western emphasis", the concept of family in African cultural contexts "embraces all those who have blood ties", the consequence of such an understanding being that there would be "many who

qualify as fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters". What the foregoing observation means, then, is that the concept of family is African cultural contexts is not confined or limited to "conjugal" relationships, but rather characterised by "consanguinity" (Nzegwu, 2006:30). In other words, what truly defines family is not merely marriage between two people, a wife and a husband, but the tracing of roots to a common ancestor – which is what consanguinity or the clan system means. Commending the "highly organised" African clan system, Rodney (2018:40) offers a perfect example with reference to Ghana, when noting that "a man from Brong could visit Fante many hundreds of miles away and receive food and hospitality from a complete stranger who happened to be of his own clan". This consciousness influenced the way Africans traditionally handled politics, in that in consolidating and expanding their territories, "instead of first attempting to conquer and annex by force", leaders "would approach independent states and seek to demonstrate from oral history that all of them were merely segments of a common lineage, all brothers in fact" (Williams, 1987:164). In cases where the approached "believed in the principle of a common ancestry", they accepted and became members of the empire (ibid). In cases of resistance, they were conquered and incorporated. But even during the wars, there were ethical guidelines. The "main objective was to overcome or frighten away the adversary, not to kill if it could at all be avoided" (Williams, 1987:164). That is why, "[e]ven when the enemy was defeated or completely surrounded, escape routes were provided, the victors pretending not to be aware of them" (Williams, 1987:164). In Shaka's Zulu kingdom, when one of his favourite generals, Mzilikazi, absconded, and Shaka's soldiers insisted that he should be punished, Kunene (1979:203) notes that "[i]t was Mlusi, Shaka's messenger, who, following secret orders, left open his flank to allow the escape of Mzilikazi's army". The opening of the escape route was a practice found among the Azande, as well (Davidson, 1970:201). The painting of such a picture in a war situation, as Davidson (ibid) observed has nothing to do projecting pre-colonial Africa as "a garden of sweetness and light" but only to make the point that pre-colonial Africa's "warlike manners were relatively merciful and gentle when compared with the warlike manner of conquering Europe". In contrast to traditional Africans' war conduct, Europeans were "better armed […] were trained to ruthlessness […] wanted to loot as well. African warfare […] was designed to minimize casualties, not maximize them. These invaders had no such care." (Davidson, 1970:200). Having given the definitions of "family" in African cultural contexts, we now proceed, in detail, to examine the manifestations of "family in African cultural contexts.

5.4 Manifestations of the Notion of "Family" in African Cultural Contexts

In examining the notion of family in African cultural contexts, we take a look at this institution as (a) a school of values: respect, solidarity, compassion, and, humility (b) an expression of parenthood (motherhood and fatherhood), and, (c) matriarchal manifestations of African Cultures: how they emerged and how they declined.

(a) *The family – A school of values: Respect, solidarity, compassion, humility*

In African cultural contexts, Rukuni (2007:22) observes that all important issues are discussed at the family and community level. Discussions of important issues withim family and community institutions bring out the rich ingredients of culture, including spiritual, educational and political values and how these impact on governance, peace and conflict resolutions.

In traditional African cultural contexts, elders, as members of the family, are not only needed but also "respected and venerated" (Gyekye, 1996:89). Elders are never regarded as an impediment to young people's enjoyment of life (ibid). To the contrary, they are regarded and appreciated as sources of joy, whose counsel is not only needed but sought out, this being the case because they are regarded as the "embodiment of experience, wisdom, and traditional lore."

In traditional Africa, parents taught their children to not only love their grandparents because they were "guardians of language and the keepers of culture", but also because they had the capacity, informed by wisdom, to counsel during bad times and to intervene when marriages are in crises (Christie & Mhlophe, 1996:123). Grandparents were relied upon to guide children, through wisdom conveyed in story-telling if and when children did not listen to their parents. Gyekye (1996:89) notes that in Ghana, people are always reminded that "[i]f someone looks after you to grow your teeth, you must also look after him [or her] to lose his [or her] teeth". But such a counselling, is not only Ghanaian – all Africans brought up under African cultural teachings will identify with that. Gyekye (1996:75 – 76) is right in pointing out that African culture teaches that "children have obligations to their parents and parents have obligations to their children". African culture-conscious Africans will embrace Gyekye's (1996:89) logic as African when he points out that "in the light of the care given to old people in African societies, it is most unlikely that episodes common in some other societies such as a lonely old man or woman dying and remaining unnoticed for several weeks would ever occur in African societies".Informed by the foregoing observations, Mphahlele (2002:90), argues that African

children are expected to show "respect for the aged – no matter how wrong we may think they are". This expectation to deal gently with the elders even if they are wrong is meant to inculcate a sense of compassion on the part of the young because of the recognition that as elders age, they become easily irritable and impatient. Added to the inculcation of compassion, patience and understanding, deference to the elders is meant to teach another important feature in African culture, namely, humility. This comes out in the *Book of Amenomope*, an ancient Egyptian:

> If you see one greater than you outdoors, walk behind him respectfully; Give a hand to an elder sated with beer, respect him as his children would. The arm is not hurt by being bared, the back is not broken by bending it. A man does not lose by speaking sweetly, nor does he gain if his speech bristles. The pilot who sees from afar, he will not wreck his boat (Lichtheim, 2006b:161)

This exhortation is an indication of recognition that humility is not the same thing as being weak, but that, in fact, it is a strength. In fact, according to African cultural teachings, the more resourceful, powerful and successful a person becomes, the more humble a person is expected to be. This comes out clearly in the *Book of Any*, an ancient Egyptian:

> Do not sit when another is standing,
> One who is older than you,
> Or greater than you in rank.
> No good character is reproached
> An evil character is blamed (Lichtheim, 2006b:139)

Africans put a great emphasis on the importance of "respect", which pervades all aspects of life (Mthembu, 1996:217). This is because, as Mthembu (ibid) further points out, when people exhibit respect towards one another, this "maintains harmony and embodies the ubuntu philosophy which cuts across any boundaries of position, status, age and gender". The latter point made by Mthembu is very important because the concept of respect in African culture is often misconstrued, both by the "defenders" and detractors of African culture, who falsely claim that uncritical respect is the privilege of adults and males, not due to women and children. Yet, as Mthembu (1996:224) correctly points out, the expectation is that adults and children should respect each other. However, having said that is not the same as denying that there is a hierarchy in the manner in which respect is accorded. Africans put emphasis on the according of deference to elders. Africans held the view, expressed in an Igbo proverb, that "[w]hat

an old man sees sitting down, a young man cannot see standing up" (Menkiti, 2006:325). The logic in this statement, as Menkiti (ibid) further observes, is that "passage through time helps create **[…]** a qualitative difference between young and old". The point made by Menkiti (ibid) is that wisdom is a process that takes time and that there are no short cuts in acquiring it. Illustrating this point further, Menkiti (2006:325 – 326) observes that although it does not present a great deal of talking about an 18-year-old "mathematical giant", it would be very difficult, in the same breath, to speak about an 18-year-old "moral giant". African philosophy, Williams (1987:165) points out, placed emphasis on age because "all other things being equal, those who were living in the world and experiencing life before others were born should know more than these others". The assumption here, Williams (ibid) further notes, was that "[i]ntelligence and age were supposed to match one's age". However, this was not always the case, and when elders fell below the expectations, Africans held the view that "being older or the oldest in one's group did not command the usual respect if one was lazy, a troublemaker or a fool" (ibid).

(b) *The meaning of parenthood (motherhood and fatherhood) as a social and communal phenomenon in African culture*

The communal aspect of the African family is the foundation and the basis of the values such as solidarity, mutual helpfulness, interdependence, and give full expression to the meaning of concern for the "well-being of every individual member of society Gyekye's (1996:75). Mthembu (1996:220) correctly observes that children, for instance, "belong not only to their biological parents, but are also under the authority and control of any adult in the community". This communal approach, Mthembu (ibid) further notes, becomes a "system regulating the behaviour of both children and adults". The expected behaviour is illuminated by Dandala (1996:78) in noting that in an "African setting", every child "would be expected to deal with all men [and women] who are the same age as one's father [and mother], as if they were one's father [and mother]". In the same way that children in the community are expected to treat every adult as their own parents, adults are expected to treat every child as their own children (ibid). In regulating the behaviour of children towards one another, African traditional education inculcated the importance of solidarity from an early age by emphasising the importance of "knowing and associating with members of one's group as brothers and sisters, and to regard them as brothers and sisters until death and beyond" (Williams, 1987:166). Communal parenting was not the same thing as giving space to biological

parents to neglect responsibility for their own children. This comes out very clearly in an Akan maxim "Absence does not bring up a child." Which seeks to emphatically impress on parents' minds that there is an expectation that they must be close to their children (Gyekye, 1996:85): In the case of boys' initiation, for example, Boateng (1990:119) observes that though an African father would not evade the coming into manhood of this son, the ritual was made easier or him by having the process collectively handled by an assembly of all fathers in the community. That parenting or parenthood is not merely biological, that Africans traditionally taught their children to refer as "mother" to everyone who is their mother's age, and "father" to everyone who is their father's age, not only built and strengthened a strong sense of communalism, but also a deep sense of respect – an important feature of African culture. African traditional education taught that a brother and a sister are to their siblings' children, also thier parents (Rukuni, 2007:3 – 4). Illuminating this point, Diop (1989:39), reflecting on the Walaf society in Senegal, notes that an African "calls his father's brother, father, or his mother's sister, mother" in the knowledge that these parents will serve as real parents in case of bereavement or illness. In this Senegalese society, a "Walaf will always call his father's brother Bay-bu-ndav = little father. In the same way he will say Yay-dju-ndav = little mother". In South Africa, the SeSotho and SeTswana-speaking Africans will recognise the Senegalese Walaf's Bay-bu-nday (little father), and Yay-diu-nday (little mother) as rangwane and mangwane, respectively. Similarly, the isiZulu-speaking Africans would recognise the preceding as ubab' omncane (little father) and umam' omncane (little mother). The English words, "uncle" and "aunt" are inadequate in expressing these relationships. In the Gikuyu language of Kenya, "elder father" is translated as "baba mokoro" while "little father" is translated as "baba monyinyi" (Kenyatta, 1965:15). A specialist in African languages cannot fail to see the similarity between the VhaVenda's "khotsi muhulu", and the Sotho/Tswana's "ra moholo" and the Gikuyu's "baba mokoro", all meaning "elder father". Similarly, the specialist cannot fail to see the similarity between the Gikuyu's "baba monyinyi" and amaXhosa's "utat' omncinci", all meaning "little father". Diop's observation regarding the meaning of motherhood and fatherhood among the Walaf, is shared by Wamala (2006:438), who, with reference to the Ganda society, notes that in the immediate family, "a brother to one's father was a father […] a sister to one's mother was a mother".

Rukuni (2007:32) shares yet an interesting observation about family relationships in African cultural contexts, with specific reference to the Shona-speaking Africans. He notes that as a member of the Shona-speaking Africans, although he is a man, he also plays various roles within his family – a father to his biological children, as well as his brother's. But to his sister's children, he plays a role of their "male mother" since he belongs to and represents their mother's family (ibid). Since he is a "male mother" to his sister's children he has to "step in as their mother, and play the role of their mother whenever there is a call for that role". In Gikuyu, what is understood as the "male mother" among the Shona, that is, the brother of a child's mother, is referred to as "mama" (Kenyatta, 1965:18). Explaining the relationship between a man and his sister's children, Kenyatta (ibid) notes that the relationship is of "fatherly love and affection". Fatherly? This is unlikely because in this relationship the uncle does not represent the father's side but the mother's side. He is a "male mother", not a "female father". The same kinship phenomenon – "male mother" – exists in the Dagara culture among the Burkinabe. In the Dagara cultural community, a "male mother is […] thought of as someone who 'carries water', the energy of peace, quiet, reconciliation and healing (Malidoma Somé in Oyěwùmí, 2016:21). The "male mother" is found among the Yorùbá as well. As Oyěwùmí (2016:21) observes, "one may refer to any male or female relatives of one's mother as mother because they are seen as representing the matrikin in one's life regardless of their body type". What the above observations reveal is that parenthood was not limited or confined to the biological make-up of a parent. A female can be a father, and a male can be a mother. In the case of a female father, this is captured well in the language of amaZulu who refer to the female father as "ubabekazi". Among the Igbo, African communities developed social norms which authorised wives to procreate, "whether or not their husbands were around, and whether or not their husbands were capable of impregnating them" (Nzegwu, 2006:40). In such set-ups, women "had the right to select partners when husbands proved infertile, sexually inadequate or dead; or to opt out of a marriage without foregoing conjugality" (ibid). In conditions of war, where husbands were abducted, kidnapped, and or killed, because the notion of fatherhood was not limited to, or reduced to biology, in the Igbo African communities, the "notion of social fatherhood" – not biological fatherhood – sanctioned the idea of wives or daughters being able to have children for themselves in the name of deceased or kidnapped father or husbands, and for husbands, whether or not he was the genitor" (Nzegwu, 2006:40).

For this arrangement to be possible, it meant that "wives had to have sexual autonomy even after marriage" (ibid). This exercise ensured that women were "assured that no obstacle stood in their quest to be mothers" (Nzegwu, 2006:41). In line with this approach, an Onitsha maxim counselled fathers, as late as the 1970s, to "not ask who impregnated one's wife, but to rejoice that one is the father" (ibid). Igbo African communities took the above measures in securing women's sexual autonomy because "reproductive responsibility of wives turned childbearing into a prominent social duty for them" (Nzegwu, 2006:40). But this "reproductive responsibility" should not be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misrepresented, as is often the case by Westerners, in the "unflattering light of baby producers" (ibid). To the contrary, in traditional Igbo communities, "reproductive responsibility […] provided them with the basis of their sexual autonomy and socially authorized pathway to move to an elevated, empowered social level" (ibid). This is the case because in the traditional Igbo society "[w]omen's desire to be mothers was rooted in their positive experience of motherhood, in the social validation of their reproductive labor, and the emotional needs having children satisfied for them" (ibid). In as much as these measures served the interests of women, careful measures were taken to protect and preserve the dignity of their husbands. In granting wives' sexual autonomy, "societies tied fatherhood to marriage and invalidated the parental claims of a nonspousal genitor. This meant that it was not the act of impregnation that made one a father, rather it was marriage (Nzegwu, 2006:40). The foregoing discussion gives a clear indication that Africans did not reduce or limit parenthood (motherhood and fatherhood) to biology. With specific reference to the Igbo African community, Nzegwu (2006:38) observes that traditionally, "it was well that Igbo families absorbed wives' children that were not fathered by their husbands as well as children who were not fathered by sons". What this means, in the Igbo African context, is that a "biological notion of fatherhood, therefore, is exceptionally narrow and cannot explain the range of relations that the Igbo notion of fatherhood covers". The picture painted by Nzegwu, above, is not uniquely Igboian, but can be found in other African communities as well. Among the Gikuyu, if a man is conscious of his natural impotence and simultaneously wishes to maintain harmony in his homestead "he allows his wife or wives to have sexual companions of friends to fulfil the duty of procreation. The children of such a union are regarded exactly in the same way as if the real husband had been physically fit to function sexually (Kenyatta, 1965:177 – 178).

What explains what appears to be a desperation on the part of Africans to have children? In Xitsonga, there is a phrase, "Ku veleka i ku tiolola" which means "to give birth is to extend yourself" (Khoza, 2011:xi). The same phrase is found is isiXhosa: "ukuzala kukuzelula". This phrase indicates that traditional Africans believed, as many continue believing, that having children is the continuation and extension of themselves. Having children meant that when parents died, their children would keep them alive in memory by performing rituals such as libation for them (Mbiti, 1989:131). It was, therefore, as Mbiti (ibid) further informs us, regarded as a misfortune, "the worst punishment that any person could suffer", if someone did not have someone close to keep the departed in their personal immortality. This desperation to have children – in the belief that they would continue the lineage – is what contributed to Africans adopting polygamy (Mbiti, 1989:139). Men married second or more wives because, generally, "[i]n traditional African societies, infertility is never attributed to the man" (Gyekye, 1996:82). However, as shown above, Africans knew that infertility was not a female preserve – men were known to be infertile, too, but society took measures to cover what was regarded as a shame of infertility. Contrary to the view that polygamy was practised to fulfil men's insatiable sexual appetite, one of the purposes was to curb sexual promiscuity. In line with this observation, Mutwa (1998:633) points out that traditional Africans believed that it was taboo for couples to engage in sex while a woman was going through her menstrual cycles. During such times, in polygamous arrangements, a man could turn to another wife instead turning to "prostitutes and mistresses" for solace, thus risking a disintegration of his family and "spreading all kinds of foul diseases" (Mutwa, 1998:634). Another reason that contributed to polygamous arrangements was the belief among Africans that "sexual fluid is dangerous to children and the wife either keeps away from the husband during the nursing period, or must thoroughly wash herself after intercourse if she has children" (Mbiti, 1990:143). Mutwa (1998:634) also notes that Africans held the view that a man should "keep away from his wife for at least a year while she is breast-feeding her baby", the belief being that "a man's semen poisons the mother's milk". African traditional communities did not consider men's interests only, but also those of women. This makes sense when one examines the matriarchal manifestations of African cultures.

(c) *Matriarchal manifestations of African cultures: How they emerged and how they declined*

Ancient Egyptians, like all other African people, were deeply spiritual people. They lived their lives preparing for eternal life after death. They were very conscious, though, that the attainment of eternal life had to be worked towards, and striven hard for. Among the many declarations individuals were expected to attest to, in accounting for their conduct on earth, was that they did not commit evil to humankind (Budge, 2008:360). Significantly, right after the declaration of not having committed evil on the members of the human race, the following expected declaration follows: "I have not oppressed the members of my family" (ibid). In clearer terms, the statement above gives illustrates that ancient Egyptians strongly believed that anyone who oppressed family members would not be admitted into the community of those deserving life eternal. Treating members of the family with justice (known as Maat in ancient Egypt), in other words, was a precondition for entering the Abode of Life Eternal. This, then, means that in this community of African people, the family, as an institution, had to be one of freedom, not of oppression and exploitation. While every member of the family had to be a recipient of justice, *women*, as *wives* and *mothers*, were singled out for *special* consideration. In a text written in the form of advice by a father to his son, known as *The Instruction of Any*, the ancient Egyptian sage has the following to say, regarding a husband's ethical conduct towards his wife:

> Do not control your wife in her house,
> When you know she is efficient;
> Don't say to her: "Where is it? Get it!"
> When she has put it in the right place.
> Let your eye observe in silence,
> Then you recognize her skill;
> It is joy when your hand is with her,
> There are many who don't know this.
> If a man desists from strife at home,
> He will not encounter its beginning.
> Every man who founds a household
> Should hold back the hasty heart (Lichtheim, 2006b:143).

The Instruction of Any makes clear that this sage taught that a husband was expected to give space to a woman to exercise *independence* in a household. A man wishing to build a family, thus becoming a husband to a wife, *The Instruction of Any* states, was expected not to be hot-tempered, but rather calm, and, in the words of Any, to "hold back the hasty heart" (ibid). This advice was given in the conviction that if a husband could contain confrontation at home, he would be able to maintain a peaceful atmosphere.

In his book, *The Teachings Of PtahHotep: The Oldest Book in the World*, the Ancient Egyptian philosopher, Ptah-Hotep (Hilliard III, Williams & Damali's (1987:27), addresses the matter of a husband's ethical conduct towards his wife thus:

> When you prosper and establish your home, love your wife with ardour. Then fill her belly and clothe her back. Caress her. Give her ointments to soothe her body. Fulfil her wishes for as long as you live. She is a fertile field for her husband.

Not only did Ptah-Hotep outline prescriptions regarding a husband's attitude and behaviour towards a wife, but he also outlined proscriptions:

> Do not be brutal. Good manners will influence her better than force. Do not contend with her in the courts. Keep her from the need to resort to outside powers. Her eye is her storm when she gazes. It is by such treatment that she will be compelled to stay in your house (ibid).

Ptah-Hotep's prescriptions and proscriptions merit an engagement because they can be easily misunderstood, misrepresented and misinterpreted. His prescriptions indicate that there was an expectation among the ancient Egyptians that husbands were expected, firstly, to be romantic to their wives by exhibiting a behaviour characterised by passionate love and tenderness. Husbands were also expected to demonstrate generosity by providing food and clothing to their wives, and showering them with gifts such as ointment to soothe their bodies. Husbands had a duty to fulfil their wives' wishes for as long as they lived. Does this mean that in the Egypt of Old, wives were expected to be dependants on their husbands? Far from it. Historically and culturally, Diop (1974:144) notes that African societies were, and continue to be, matriarchal, with the exception of societies that succumbed to alteration through territorial conquest or colonisation. In the African historical and cultural contexts, the "matriarchal system proper is characterized by the collaboration and harmonious flowering of both sexes, and by a certain pre-eminence of woman in society, due originally to economic conditions, but accepted and even defended by man" (ibid).

Speculating on the origins of matriarchy in Africa, and conceding that it is not known "for certain at the present time", hence the conjecture, Diop (1974:143) notes that available literature, then, points it to agriculture, whose discovery is attributed to women. If this explanation be true, that women were the first, ahead of men, of thinking of selecting nourishing herbs, since they were the ones who remained home while men went off to engage other men in war, and were also involved in hunting, such, along with matriarchy, would illuminate an "important but almost unnoticed aspect of African life", that being that "woman is the mistress of the home in the economic sense of the word" (Diop, 1974:144). Being the mistress of the home meant that she was "in charge of all the food, which no one, not even the husband, can touch without her consent".

Not only did the philosophy of ancient Egypt emphasise the reverence for women as wives, but also as mothers. In *The Instruction of Any*, the prioritisation of mothers, and the logic behind it comes out clearly (Lichtheim, 2006b:141):

> Double the food your mother gave you,
> Support her as she supported you;
> She had a heavy load in you,
> But she did not abandon you.
> When you were born after your months,
> She was yoked <to you>,
> Her breast in your mouth for three years.
> As you grew and your excrement disgusted,
> She was not disgusted, saying: "What shall I do!"
> When she sent you to school,
> And you were taught to write,
> She kept watching over you daily,
> With bread and beer in her house.

This ancient Egyptian call for the reciprocation of the mother's love and affection has an echo, similar to that of the Akans' teachings: "If your mother nurses you to grow your teeth, You must nurse her to lose hers" (Wiredu, 2003:314).

While the above ancient Egyptian and Akan declarations put great emphasis on, and explain why children have an obligation to exercise respect and admiration for their mothers, thus elucidating the logic behind African matriarchy, the lines below, illuminate that emphasis

on matriarchy is not only informed by gratitude for mothers' affection, but by recognition of mothers' natural leadership:

> When as a youth you take a wife,
> And you are settled in your house,
> Pay attention to your offspring,
> Bring him up as did your mother.
> Do not give her cause to blame you,
> Lest she raise her hand to god,
> And he hears her cries (Lichtheim, 2006b:141).

That Any, the ancient Egyptian sage, recognised mothers as natural leaders qualified to give leadership to men, can best be appreciated if it is recalled that *The Instruction of Any* is a text that was written by a *man* for his *son* about ethical conduct. Any (ibid) urges his son not only to pay attention to his offspring, but to "[b]ring him up as did your mother" (ibid). A son, not a daughter, it must be emphasised, is urged to emulate his mother. This means that there was an expectation on the part of Any that his son, being a man that he was, should be "motherly" to his child. This, then, shows clearly that the ancient Egyptian sage recognised motherhood as an *institution of leadership*. In line with the thinking of the ancient Egyptian sage, Any, Oyěwùmí (2016:218) notes that "mothers in raising children create and sustain the future. Motherhood is by definition visionary." Oyěwùmí (2016:218) further observes that "unlike in Europe and America, [in Africa] being called a mother in politics is welcome, because the role is associated with leadership and responsibility". The conclusion by Oyěwùmí that in Europe and America, motherhood is perceived as burdensome and insulting for many women, is informed by her readings on Western feminism (Oyěwùmí, 2016:212 – 213). The resentment towards motherhood is informed by "patriarchal conditions under which motherhood takes place" in the USA, where women are marginalised from positions of power and influence by sexist and patriarchal men (Oyěwùmí, 2016:213). Such resentment gave rise to *matrophobia* – the fear of becoming a mother (ibid). While this is the case in the West, as informed by Western feminist literature, Africa presents a different picture. In the Ohaffia language of Nigerian there is a saying "father's penis scatters, mother's womb gathers" (Kamalu, 1990:153). This saying is both literal and figurative at the same time. The literal is a given, while the figurative implies that while men are, to a great extent, well-known for being the architects of war, world-wide, it is often women who must clean up where and

when men have messed up. This saying, therefore, recognises the quality of women's leadership, particularly mothers.

In her research on "motherhood", Oyěwùmí (2016:216) found that "mother is the name many African women choose to call themselves: they revel in the role identity, and it is often an impetus to activism". Oyěwùmí (ibid) goes on to point out that a "central theme in much discussion of motherhood is that it is inherently the practice of leadership" (ibid). In their practice of leadership, "mothers are also visionaries, as they must constantly project into the future for the benefit of their children". The practice of leadership recognised by Oyěwùmí has, as its basis, what Nzegwu (2006:53) refers to as the "ideology of motherhood". This ideology "extends to all mothers" and constitutes the basis for "compelling obedience from everyone who gestated in the womb" (ibid) The power of the ideology of motherhood "covers a range of activities that continues long after the birth of the child, the most important of which is establishing the moral parameters for belongingness and loyalty (ibid). Having noted that motherhood is an enabling identity discernible across social movements in the African continent, Oyěwùmí (2016:218) further observes that such an observation points to the fact that "ordinary women are motivated by the ideology of motherhood, which propels their activism and leadership". Driven by the conviction that the ideology of motherhood, which Oyěwùmí (2016:220) also calls the "maternal ideology", she points out that this "enabling, ennobling, and inclusive" ideology should be "the basis of our activism". Since humanity cannot reproduce itself without motherhood, the "institution and everyday practices of mothering humanity must be a collective act, impelled by communal will" (ibid). For this to happen, society at large must be convinced that "motherhood should not be the responsibility of just one woman or just one nuclear family**,** but should be the bedrock on which society is built in the way in which we organize our lives" (ibid).

It is not only the sage of ancient Egypt, Any, who paid tribute to the leadership role of motherhood in African cultures. Jomo Kenyatta (1965:96 – 100), the first president of post-colonial Kenya, gives a detailed narrative, amongst his ethnic group, the Gikuyu, about the central and leading role of motherhood in moulding the character of human beings from their *infancy*, a very critical stage for all human beings. Kenyatta (1965:96) points out that among the Gikuyu, the "education of very small children is entirely in the hands of the mother and nurse". This education, which is carried through the medium of lullabies, embodies the "whole history and tradition of the family and clan" (ibid). At another critical stage, which is

when the child is beginning to speak, "care is taken by the mother to teach the child correct manner of speech and to acquaint him [and her] with all important names in the family, past and present" (Kenyatta, 1965:97). What this means is that in the early phase of childhood, the mother is the primary historian, history teacher and speech trainer – a critical leadership role. It is necessary to emphasise here that this history education entails the "history and traditions of the child's family (maternal and paternal)" which "become a stimulating influence in his [and her] life and form a fitting background to his [and her] environment". The significant point here, which merits emphasis, is that the child is not only taught about the history of her or his paternal family but also of that of her maternal family. That is because without including both the maternal and paternal sides of a child's family, the picture of a family is incomplete. In an illuminating observation that clearly shows the recognition of both the mother's and father's families as being of equal importance, and central in the children's lives, Kenyatta (1965:158) points out that the first male, in the Gikuyu family, is regard as perpetuating the existence of the man's father, and the second as perpetuating that of the woman's father. Such applies to the first and second female children, respectively (ibid). What this means is that the Gikuyu Africans were sensitive to the need to perpetuate the identity of both the mother's and the father's parents because the offspring do not belong to only one side of the families. While Kenyatta (1965:99) recognises the role played by both mothers and fathers beyond children's babyhood, he, simultaneously, recognises, the special role played by mothers. He (ibid) observes that while, on the one hand, the father takes charge of the boy's education when he has grown beyond babyhood, the mother, on the other hand, takes the whole responsibility of the girl's education, and part of the boy's education as well. Not only is the mother responsible for teaching her children about their family's history, but, as Kenyatta (1965:100) observes, in the evenings the mother "teaches both boy and girl the laws and customs, especially those governing the moral code and general rules of etiquette in the community".

How did women, in the context of the Gikuyu Africans, come to occupy such a unique space in this community? The answer lies in the Gikuyu legend of creation. According to this legend, this society was originally a matriarchal society which was initially called Mbari ya Moombi, named after its female co-founder, Moombi (Creator or Moulder), before it was changed and renamed after its male co-founder, Gikuyu. According to the legend, when Gikuyu and Moombi, who had nine daughters, could not reproduce male children, Gikuyu appealed to the Supreme Being's (Mogai or Ngai) intervention (Kenyatta, 1965:6). The

Supreme Being provided the couple with nine young men to marry their daughters (ibid). When marriage negotiations began, Gikuyu told the young men that if they wanted to marry his daughters, he "could give his consent only if they agreed to live in his homestead under a matriarchal system", a condition which they acceded to (Kenyatta, 1965:6 – 7). That is how these family sets came to be known as Mbari ya Moombi – Moombi's family group "in honour of their mother Moombi" (Kenyatta, 1965:7). It is significant to note, at this point, that in this matriarchal family arrangement, both the wife, Moombi, and the husband, Gikuyu, acted as the "heads of the Mbari ya Moombi" (ibid). The point was that being "head of the family" was not a monopoly of either a female or male – both women and men could be heads of the family. But as the family expanded, a decision was reached that the family groups had to be named according to the names of Moombi and Gikuyu's daughters, Acheera, Agachiko, Airimo, Amboi, Angare, Anjiro, Angoi and Ethaga (ibid). That is how the original clans among the Gikuyu were formed, named after Moombi's and Gikuyu's daughters, and whose ancestral collective name became Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi (Kenyatta, 1965:8 – 9). In this environment, women continued to be "the heads of this family groups and clans for some generations. But somehow the system changed from matriarchal to patriarchal" (Kenyatta, 1965:8).

How did this change – from matriarchy to patriarchy – come about? According to the legend, due to the power then exercised, women became domineering, practised polyandry, put men to death for committing adultery and other offences (ibid). Men were resentful and plotted to overthrow women from power. When women were overthrown, men took over leadership and "became the heads of their families instead of the women" (Kenyatta, 1965:9). To consolidate their position, men changed the original name of the ethnic group from Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi to Rorere rwa Gikuyu (ibid). As if that was not enough, they attempted to change the clan names as well, a move that incensed the women (ibid). In a strong objection, the women told the men that if they "dared to eliminate the names which stood as a recognition that women were the original founders of the clan system", the women would refuse giving birth to any more children, and kill male children born during the period of the overthrowal (ibid). Fearing the women's strong decision, and in order to avoid conflict, men conceded to the women's demand, resulting in the clans' names remaining unchanged, thus the Gikuyu cultural community continuing to be known under the names of the nine Gikuyu daughters who were the "founders of the Gikuyu clan system" (Kenyatta, 1965:9 – 10). The Gikuyu legend is only one explanation of how matriarchy declined, and caved in to

patriarchy. Notably, the myth does not point to factors external to Africa, or more particularly, to the Gikuyu society, but to factors internal. But that is not the only narrative which explains the demise of matriarchy in certain African communities. With particular reference to West Africa, Diop (1989:60) identifies the arrival of Islam as being responsible for the erosion of matriarchy. With the arrival of Islam, African traditional spiritual expressions, such as their mores and customs, with particular reference to matriliny, withered away, and the latter being replaced by patriliny, resulting in children adopting their fathers' names, an "Arabic influence" (Diop, 1989:61). Having identified the matriarchal manifestations in African cultures, we now move to the interrogation of the philosophical foundations of the matriarchal ideology in African cultures.

5.5 Philosophical Foundations of the Matriarchal Ideology in African Cultures

Attitudes to women in traditional African cultures, were and are informed by African spirituality. Informed by this consciousness, Rukuni (2007:33) notes that "[f]or Afrikans, mothers are always closer to our Creator than fathers are, because of the role mothers play in giving birth – with the Creator, physically giving life". What this means, as Kenyatta (1965:168) notes, is that female children are, as a consequence of this African belief system, regarded as the "connecting-link between one generation and another and one clan and another". What this means, therefore, in traditional African culture, is that "a woman, be she one's wife or one's mother, exists in the past, present and future at the same time" (Mutwa, 1998:626). This being the case, according to traditional African culture, a woman belongs not to her parents alone, or herself, for that matter, "but to those yet unborn, and to one's ancestors" (ibid). Consequently, in the Africa of old, "[m]en worshipped their mothers like goddesses and made sacrifices to them" (ibid). Informed by these beliefs, African traditional culture regarded the "killing of one woman as so great a crime that it needs a thousand men to die in a battle of vengeance" (ibid). That is because the killing of a woman meant "not only the destruction of her life, but the lives of thousands of others who could have been her descendants" (ibid). Informed by this logic, among the indigenous laws that Africans formulated, which Mutwa (1998:621; 626) calls "The Laws Of The Bantu", with particular reference to "The High Law Of Behaviour Toward Parents", it was stipulated that it should be known that in comparative terms between parents, the mother ranks higher than the father, and that in quarrels between parents, a child must come to the aid of the mother, "be she right or wrong", and that while a child may strike the father but never draw his blood, the mother may never be struck by a child, even accidentally (Mutwa, 1998:626). One of the sub-clauses of this law was that if a man

could not avenge the murder of his mother, he was expected to deliver himself to the murderer with the request to be killed as well (Mutwa, 1998:626). Men were bound by this law to kill anyone who called one's wife, mother, sister or daughter names, or referred insultingly, to their womanhood (Mutwa, 1998:627).

Among the Akans, it is believed that a child is made of three elements, the okra (life principle), the mogya (blood principle) and the sunsum (personality principle) (Wiredu, 2003:313). The life principle, the Akans believe, holds that a human being's life is from the Supreme Being (ibid). The blood principle holds that a human being's blood comes from the mother, and, significantly, the mother's blood, according to the Akans, who are a matrilineal people, "is the basis of lineage, or more, extensively, clan identity" (ibid). Following this logic, among the Akans, "the most important kinship group is the lineage, which may be pictured as a system of concentric circles of matrilineal kinship relation that, at its outermost reaches, can include people in widely separated geographic regions" (Wiredu, 2003:314). Recognising that in the widely separated geographic regions a lineage becomes a clan, among the Akans, the "innermost circle comprises the grandmother, the mother, the mother's siblings, her own children, and the children of her sisters". In the Akan cultural community, "with the mother as the principal personage, belongs the duty of nursing an Akan newborn"

Explaining the Akan logic in appreciating and celebrating the mother's centrality and principality in human beings' lives, Boateng (1990:114) notes that if the mother gave the blood to the child, it then follows that a child is closer to its mother than anyone else, and if that is the clase, it is therefore reasonable that a child should belong to the mother's clan and practise matriliny. The prominence of the mother in this arrangement does not mean the relegation of the father. There is recognition and appreciation of him, though, of course, the mother is appreciated more. The sunsum (personality principle) holds the view that while the blood of the child comes from the mother, the character comes from the father (Wiredu, 2003:313). Wiredu (ibid) is quick to add, though, that the "inherited characteristics of the new arrival are, of course, taken to be attributable to both parents". If this is the case, what then, does the sunsum really mean? In addressing this question, Wiredu (ibid) notes that the "father's input is believed to give rise to a certain immanent characteristic of the individual […] which is the kind of personal presence that he or she has". To the father, in the Akan cultural community, belongs the role of nurturing a human being by instructing the child in the arts of gainful living, that is, providing the child with "character training, general education, and career preparation"

(Wiredu, 2003:314). Boateng (1990:114) gives a different, though not a contradictory explanation from that given by Wiredu. Instead of referring to the sunsum principles as a "personality" principle as Wiredu does, Boateng (ibid) refers to the sunsum as a "spiritual" aspect. The Akans reason that if, then, the father gives the spirit to the child, the expection is that the child should not offend the father, and that if the child does offend the father, "he injures the spirit of the father and hence hurts his own spirit and as a result dies or falls sick" (ibid). The foregoing observations are summed up well by Diop (1989:32) who notes that it "seems rather, that in so-called primitive societies, the native had never doubted the participation of the father and mother". The reality, though, was that in the said societies, the inhabitants "did not assign to each the same degree of importance" (ibid). What this means is that in the "particular case of Black Africa, it is almost everywhere thought that a child owes more from a biological point of view to his mother than to the father" (ibid). If the "biological heredity on the mother's side is stronger and more important than the heredity on the father's side", then "a child is wholly that which its mother is and only half of what its father is" (ibid). While African scholars such as such as Boateng Diop, Mutwa, Nzegwu, Oyěwùmí, Rukuni and Wiredu have demonstrated a matriarchal aspect of African culture, Eurocentric scholars, as will be shown below, have imposed a patriarchal interpretation of African culture.

5.6 Arbitrary Association of Patriarchy with African Culture by Eurocentric Scholarship

At the start of the 19th century, Erlank (2000:205) observes, the "possession of power" among amaXhosa chiefdoms "rested on a series of power inequalities which had their origin in the control men had over women". In no uncertain terms, Erlank (2000:206) declares that the "Xhosa society was patriarchal. Women were considered inferior to men, though they might still exercise some social influence." In this African society, women were "perpetual minors (in a lived, rather than legal, sense), subject to the guardianship of fathers and husbands" (Erlank, 2000:206). Consequently, not only was women's status "lower than that of men, but their status was also dependent on that of their menfolk" (Erlank, 2000:206). The "subordination of women", which was applied differently, depending on whether one was a wife or daughter, enabled men to have to have social and political power (ibid). One of the manifestations of men's power and control that amaXhosa men had over their wives and daughters was, according to Erlank (2000:207), through female reproduction which entailed daughters bringing "wealth to the household in the form of cattle exchanged for them in marriage". In these "patriarchal" transactions, were accorded a status that symbolised that of

cattle which they could never hope to escape from since in amaXhosa society wealth was measured by the size of a man's cattle herds.

Before we proceed with what Erlank refers to as a "patriarchal" amaXhosa community, it is worth noting that it is not only to the amaXhosa community that scholars of European descent attribute the act of associating the value of women to that of livestock. Archdeacon Basden, a missionary belonging to the Christian Missionary Society, with reference to the Igbo society, notes that "[a]fter marriage the woman is ranked with the other property of the husband with a proportionate value attached, but little greater than that of the cows and goats" (Nzegwu, 2006:25). The characterisation of the Igbo society as patriarchal is shared by Meek, a colonial government anthropologist who notes that there is "little doubt that many Ibo husbands do, in fact, regard their wives as, to some extent, a form of property which they can treat as they please" (Nzegwu, 2006:25).

The "exchange" of cattle for women in amaXhosa community had at least two implications for women. The first was that, according to Erlank (2000:207) within a marriage, "the exchange secured a woman's children to her husband (who might not be the biological father of the children)". This meant that a "woman had no custody rights, in the event of a separation, over the products of her own fertility", since her "father transferred the right to its realisation to her husband through *lobola*". The second implication was that the women "exchanged" had no say in the matter other than to accept the instruction to get married. Refusal to accept to be married away was tantamount to "denying the hold their fathers had over them as much as they were refusing to marry particular partners" (Erlank, 2000:217). An enabling factor in the oppression of women among amaXhosa society, which was challenged by the arrival of Christian missionaries was that in this society was that "there was no ideology on which young women could draw to counter the prevailing hegemony that existed with respect to gender relations in Xhosa society". What this means, in explicit terms, is that Christianity came and saved women from a male-dominated and oppressive amaXhosa community.

At this point we need to pause and take into consideration that Erlank's study, published in the year 2000, covers the period 1836 – 1847, an eleven-year period in the 19th century. Explaining her approach, Erlank (2000:206) observes that although "[w]ork on gender amongst the Xhosa in the twentieth century is available […] there are problems with extrapolating its analyses back into the nineteenth century". That being the case her work is based upon "primary material

written by European observers for the period, such as Ludwig Alberti's account of his travels amongst the Xhosa in 1807" (ibid). Erlank's information about amaXhosa's customary practices is drawn from a British magistrate's compilate in the 1850s (ibid). Another source for Erlank (ibid) is a "testimony given by African men to the 1883 Government Commission on Native Law and Custom. Erlank's sources pose a number of problems. The first is that she chooses to use materials written by Europeans – a European traveller's account and material compiled by a British magistrate. Where she cites Africans, it is "testimony given by African men to the 1883 Government Commission on Native Law and Custom". Reference to "African men", to the exclusion of African women, and to "Customary Law", raises a number of problems about authenticity with reference to African culture (including amaXhosa culture) and gender. It is no accident that with reference to the "1883 Government Commission on Native Law and Custom", Erlank, as cited above, states that it is a "testimony given by African men". This exposes a gender bias that is characteristic of Customary Law, not only in South Africa, but in many parts of the African continent that has led to many African Studies' scholars to question, and to object to the origins of "Customary Laws" in Africa.

5.7 African Scholars' Refutations of Eurocentric Impositions of Patriarchy on African Cultures

In order to engage with Erlank's claims we will, below, do two things. The first will be (1) to demonstrate that the so-called African Customary Laws are a European invention with the collaboration of African men, whose result benefitted European colonialists and African men and, consequently, disadvantaged African women. The second will be the interrogation of the claim made by Erlank (2000:206) that it is "difficult" to "understand the role played by gender" amongst amaXhosa "because there is an absence of secondary literature on gender in Xhosa society for this period". Erlank (ibid) goes on to point out that gender "is not a subject touched upon in Jeff Peires' *The House of Phalo* (1981), which remains the definitive work on Xhosa history". The absence of gender in Peires' work has "resulted in an inadequate understanding of the degree to which power relations at all levels – both within homesteads and between the different sized homesteads which formed the chiefdom – supported and reinforced one another" (ibid).

We now, firstly, address the origins of Customary Law in Africa.

5.7.1 The Origins and the Sources of Customary Laws

The origins and the sources of Customary Laws can be traced to the late 19th century when European colonialists were preoccupied with the need to "enforce development among conquered populations" (Mamdani, 1996:110). This period – the late 19th century – was a period of "radical dislocation for different strata among the colonized" (Ibid). What this means is that this was a period when the colonised were vulnerable and weak. In recognition of the Africans' vulnerable position when Customary Laws were shaped, Nzegwu (2006:100) points out that much of what, presently, passes as African customs had, in the 20th century, been "invented, reshaped, or affected by the patriarchal ideology of colonial rule and the Native Authority system". In seeking to retain "all that is best in the African's own past culture", the challenge for European colonialists and the Western-educated Africans was that they (Europeans and the Western-educated Africans) knew "so little of what that past was" (Mamdani, 1996:112). In the European colonialists' assessment, those who possessed the "requisite knowledge" were "illiterate, and in consequence generally inarticulate for practical purposes, except when approached by the European who has spent a life time among them and has been able to gain their complete confidence" (Mamdani, 1996:112), leading Mamdani (1996:112 – 113) to, appropriately wonder as to why a literate European was indispensable while a literate African was ruled out. The difficulty facing the European colonialists "after a period of disintegration [was] to find out what the [Africans'] system was. *They* know perfectly well but, for one reason or other, they may not tell you." (Mamdani, 1996:112) Why were these Africans, who appeared as knowledgeable about their laws not keen to respond? We cannot, for certain, answer for all Africans of the time, but there are clues that can make us appreciate why the seemingly informed Africans did now want to give the Europeans the information they required. One of the reasons was that they did not want to contradict what they thought was the predisposed stance of their conquerors. In this case, Nzegwu's (2006:24) observation regarding Igbo Africans' response to a European anthropologist is insightful as it is enlightening. She (ibid) points out than unbeknown to the European anthropologist, his local male informants were aware that the "white man considered women to be inconsequential, and so narrowly tailored their responses to accord with the female dismissive spirit of his questions". European colonialists believed that "real customary law was in the minds of the oldest men (or even of the dead) and that the new elders did not know it properly" (Mamdani, 1996:113). It is significant to note that the Europeans did not only just think that it was the elders who knew about Africans' "real customary law", but that it was specifically the "oldest men", to the

exclusion of the "oldest women". This bias-driven research had far-reaching implications and consequences. With particular reference to the Igbo communities, Nzegwu (2006:24) notes that European anthropologists in writing about Igbo culture "consistently privileged men's experiences, completely respected men's voices and opinions, and methodically interpreted the world through their male-privileging lenses". While on the one hand the European anthropoligists ignored women's voices, on the other hand they "pronounced upon the subjugated status of women". It is against this background that what the European colonialists referred to as the "repugnancy clause" can be understood (Mamdani, 1996:115). What the "repugnancy clause" entailed was that anything African could only be accepted if it conformed to, and did not contradict, European moral standards (ibid). What this means is that the "Customary Law" that European colonialists accepted was a version that was not wholly historically African, but a diluted version given by a defeated African people, that which the European colonialists were willing to accept on their own terms. Therefore, Mamdani (1996:22) further notes, "this monarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal notion of the customary […] most accurately mirrored colonial practices. In this sense, it was an ideological construct." The privileging of European moral standards as the final arbiter in what would constitute Customary Law had serious implications and consequences for Africans. In the case of the Igbo, the concept of family was increasingly defined along "conjugal and patriarchal lines", it saw a "systematic assault […] launched on matrifocal consciousness", resulting in the "curtailment of mothers' and women's social relevance and their sexual autonomy" and the "insertion of patriarchal values and individualistic ideology into Igbo society" Nzegwu (2006:66). As a result of the now preponderant and privileged European values, a number of Igbo cultural values that were deemed morally repugnant by the arriving European community had to give way. These included

- The practice of woman-to-woman marriages which were aimed at the expansion of their own families;
- The *igba n'rira* institution, which was a swift process of divorce enabling a woman to simply relocate, from her marital home to a lover's home;
- The practice of women being the heads of families;
- The practice of women holding their own courts (Nzegwu, 2006:65 – 66).

For the settler European community, the "very idea that women could marry other women as wives or that a wife could choose both to initiate divorce and become the wife of her lover without public censure was repugnant to the early twentieth-century European morality and

conception of marriage and family" (Nzegwu, 2006:66). Added to this, the European "moral reprehension extended to the idea that women could be heads of families, a notion that the state's patriarchal ideology of family could not accommodate" (ibid).

In line with his observation that "Britain was the first to marshal authoritarian possibilities in native [African] culture", Mamdani (1996:21) points out that just as colonialists "usurped" the African people's traditional right to overthrow an errant chief, they also replaced the village council with their own chiefs as the tribunal. To effectively rule the Africans, colonialism gave power to the Native Authority/ies, "a tribal authority that dispensed customary law to those living within the territory of the tribe" (Mamdani, 1996:110). The colonial-derived and driven Customary Law "consolidated the noncustomary power of chiefs in the colonial administration". (ibid). What this means is that Customary Law gave power that was not due to them in pre-colonial Africa. What now emerged was the "privileging of a single institution – chiefship – as customary" (Mamdani, 1996:122). This was a "breach from the precolonial period" in two ways. Unprecedentedly, the Native authority and the customary law it dispensed came to be "all embracing" in that where, in the past, domains like the household, age-sets and gender associations were independent, now they fell within the scope of chiefly power (Mamdani, 1996:110). The second breach of the pre-colonial Africa was that "any challenge to chiefly power would now have to reckon with a wider systemic response. The Native Authority was backed up by the armed might of the modern state of the centre" (ibid). The new development, this Customary Law, was certainly not a "reflection of a traditional consensus that preceded the imposition of colonialism" (Mamdani, 1996:118). While European scholars are certainly to blame for privileging male opinions that were convenient to the European scholars, pioneering African male scholars did little to challenge their contemporaries. While African scholars were critical of the "racist" impact of Customary Laws, they did not display the same critical attitude to the Customary Laws' "sexist" impact (Nzegwu, 2006:80). In the context of the Igbo communities, African scholars "mistook the socially transformed customs they encountered in the 1950s and 1960s in their respective towns and villages, as well as the codified customary laws of Eastern Nigeria, as having existed since 'olden times'". There are reasons, though, for, on the one hand, the pioneering male African scholars' sensitivity to racism, and, on the other hand, the absence of the same to sexism. One of the reasons, Nzegwu (2006:82) points out, is that the pioneering male African scholars' "lack of attention to these matters speaks of their location in a nationwide system of power that privileges their male identity and generates a definite philosophical outlook toward women and women's

subordinate place in society". The other reason that male African scholars treated Customary Laws as "authentic documents of the past" is that they could, and did "use them to prove either that women never mattered, or that they were not entitled to family land or had no access to family resources" (Nzegwu, 2006:80). What this means is that when it was convenient for them to do so, Western-educated African males used colonialism as an ally when colonial "norms suited their goals and crosscutting interests" (Nzegwu, 2006:82). African males became convenient allies of Customary Laws because these norms "greatly inflated their importance" (ibid). There are, at least three enabling factors which opened the way for Customary Laws and made them effective in sidelining African women: (a) the co-option of African males as agents, and (b), the killing and fading of African memory, a process which, (c) was facilitated by Western education. We deal with these three factors below in the order outlined above.

(a) *Co-option of African males as agents of Customary Laws*

Oyěwùmí (1997:147) points out that in pre-British Yorùbáland, judicial power inhered in various courts (in the sense of a quorum), not just the council of chiefs. In the process of constituting Customary Law, Oyěwùmí (1997:146 – 147), writing in the context of the Yorùbá people in Nigeria, points out that "women were excluded" and, consequently, "[women's] rights steadily eroded as new customs were fashioned mainly to serve male interests". The colonial government imposed a European view of justice that would be in the hands of male chiefs to the exclusion of women. The exclusion of female chiefs was one of the sure signs that custom had nothing much to do with the fashioning of "customary court" (ibid). This exercise of defining "authority" as "male", "invented tradition being construed as authentic". Inflating men's social relevance, while subverting those of women was not only applied on the Yorùbá, but also imposed on the Igbo, where only male chiefs were appointed in a society that had traditionally both female and male chiefs (Nzegwu, 2006:64). The locking out of Igbo women by barring them from positions of relevance in the Native Authority Administration served to effectively marginalise them from political participation (Nzegwu, 2006:82.

Reflecting on the origins of Customary Law, Oyěwùmí (1997:147) forcefully argues that the very concept – Customary Law – is "a contradiction in terms because there was nothing 'customary' in the way it came into being". Distinguishing between the recording of customary norms and mores as laws, on the one hand, and the construction of new traditions as Customary Law, on the other hand, Oyěwùmí (ibid) argues that, in fact, the "ultimate

source of the 'new customary law' was not custom but the British colonial government". This is the case because in the exercise of setting up a "native court system […] Male local rulers became salaried officials of the colonial government, and one of their functions was to 'adjudicate' customary law". Instead of updating the pre-colonial laws that existed in Yorùbáland, the ushering of "native courts" in this community was a development of a "new way of thinking about justice": It is for this reason that Nzegwu (2006:81) observes that the "unifying factor in all these sources [of Customary Laws] is that men produced them at a time when women were removed from political significance", leading us to an interconnected point – African cultural amnesia and the disempowerment of African women.

(b) *African cultural amnesia, and the disempowerment of African women*

Faced with what they saw as many traditions in Africa, the "tradition that colonial powers privileged as the customary was the one with the least historical depth, that of nineteenth-century conquest states" (Mamdani, 1996:22). What this means is that the European colonialists picked and chose what they liked and discarded what they did not like. This provided the platform for the creation of "fictive customs" to which men "appealed to ground their newly won privileges" (Nzegwu, 2006:99). The marginalisation of Igbo African women and their interests resulted in the loss, not only of their historic rights, but also the loss of memories of indigenous structures and organisations (Nzegwu, 2006:82). As older generations of women passed on, and cultural amnesia set in, serious doubts regarding that Igbo tradition ever afforded women any rights at all also grew (ibid). While loss of memory disadvantaged women on the one hand, it advantaged men on the other hand because Igbo men assumed that allowing equality between women and men was inconsistent Igbo traditions and men (Nzegwu, 2006:82; 102).

Contrary to the view that African cultures promoted patriarchy, Nzegwu (2006:96) argues that colonialism was not merely responsible for the exacerbation of patriarchy, but responsible for its very introduction. Advancing her argument that the "Igbo political process and culture were not male dominated", she argues that, in fact, "the patriarchal ideology was at odds with the indigenous cultural ideology and inimical to the latter's conceptualization of women as social adults" (ibid). Contrary to the view that Christianity offered women an opportunity of liberation from an allegedly oppressive African culture, Nzegwu (2006:84) argues that, in fact, it was "Colonialism, with the help of Christianity",

which "created a new model of wives", who lived in "subservience to their master-husbands". In pre-colonial Igbo communities, wives were "rarely dependent on husbands and there was a clear separation between husbands and wives in areas of income, expenditure, and activities" (Nzegwu, 2006:100). It was with the introduction of the European colonialists' "concept of household", edicts and public policies, that Igbo husbands were turned into "sovereigns" (ibid). Where, previously, conjugal units were marked by two households – the mother's and the father's – the European colonialists' "concept of household" collapsed the two households into one single household, with husbands and fathers as the "exclusive head of the family" (Nzegwu, 2006:99 – 100). Prior to this reconfiguration of the Igbo family, women could be heads of the family (Nzegwu, 2006:66) In this new state of affairs, "[c]olonialism imbued Igbo fathers with rights that far outstripped what the consanguineal family system had ever accorded them" (Nzegwu, 2006:99). As Nzegwu (2006:100) further notes, this reconfigured the Igbo family from one that was consaguineal to one that became nuclear, becoming men's personal domains where husbands ruled as heads of families and wives were subjected to men's rules. The reconfiguration of the Igbo family reduced women to being the extensions of the "head-of-household's identity" (ibid). Consequently, women could no longer, without their husbands' approval, obtain medical treatment, receive education without the consent of fathers or husbands, or open bank accounts without thier husbands' permission (Nzegwu, 2006:100 – 101). The recognition of only males' rights resulted into male domination consciousness which restructured the "non-patriarchal Igbo lineages along patriarchal lines" (Nzegwu, 2006:101). The increasing definition of the Igbo family along patriarchal lines was a systematic "assault […] on matrifocal consciousness" or "matricentric consciousness" (Nzegwu, 2006:66; 85). Western education played a pivotal role in the erosion of matrifocal or matricentric consciousness.

(c) *The role of Western education in the erosion of matrifocal/matricentric consciousness*

Western education, as a carrier and disseminator of Western values, played a central role in the destruction of African cultural values while promoting those of Europe. In the case of the Igbo community, "[i]nfluenced by their Western education and Christian beliefs", African Christian converts "abolished institutions they deemed to be unprogressive and morally reprobate" (Nzegwu, 2006:71). One of the institutions deemed as such, which was condemned by their policies in the early 1920s was the idigbe (ibid). The idigbe allowed a woman to enter into a socially legitimate union with a man of her choice without necessarily

being part of a regular marriage (ibid). In this arrangement a woman could dissolve the union at any time she wanted to do so. Of great significance is that in the event of the annulment of the union, the woman could "retain full custody of her children who become members of her natal family with equal standing in the family to that of her brother's children (ibid). In the eyes of educated and Christianised men, the institution of idigbe was "immoral" and "antithetical" to the new "progressive" society they were striving to build (ibid). They regarded traditional Igbo values as "unnatural" and as "giving far too much freedom to women" (ibid). Women who wanted to hold on to freedom-giving Igbo vaules were "ridiculed as harlots, and over time the ridicule achieved the goal of presenting patriarchal marriages as the only model of connubial relationship for women" (ibid).

Having demonstrated that the so-called African Customary Laws are a European invention with the collaboration of African men, whose result benefitted European colonialists and African men and, consequently, disadvantaged African women, we now move on to interrogate the claim made by Erlank (2000:206) that it is "difficult" to "understand the role played by gender" amongst amaXhosa "because there is an absence of secondary literature on gender in Xhosa society for this period". We further argue that Erlank's (ibid) claim that gender "is not a subject touched upon in Jeff Peires's *The House of Phalo* (1981), which remains the definitive work on Xhosa history", is false.

5.7.2 Literature on the Role of Women and Men among amaXhosa, in Particular, and Africans, in General

In their book *Zemk' Iinkomo Magwalandini*, first published in 1906 and republished in 2002, Rubusana's and Satyo's account of traditional amaXhosa's marriage stands opposed to Erlank's observations regarding women's right to choose or reject marriage partners presented to them. Rubusana and Satyo (2002:120) point out that there were two ways in which a young man could have a wife. Either a young man chose a partner for himself, or his parents, or larger family members, identified a suitable partner for him (ibid). The right to choose a partner was not the exclusive privilege of the bridegroom's family. A family of a young woman could also identify a suitable young man for their daughter (ibid). The seeking of a partner on behalf of a son or daughter was called *ukuhlolela*, an exercise which resulted into an "arranged marriage", something that is distinct from a "forced marriage" (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:121). The logic in arranged marriages was that in traditional African societies the bond that was being established was not just between two individuals, but also between families. What influenced

the choice of the family was, above all other considerations, "character" (isimilo) (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:120). If a family had character, it would be preferred even if the family was "poor" (ibid), *Ukuhlolela* was a central custom among amaXhosa in the belief it was far better than to allow an inexperienced person to choose independently, a newly-met person, whose origins, and genealogy's character were unknown (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:121). The above observation by Rubusana and Soga makes clear Africans' philosophical position, as articulated by Mphahlele (2002:147): "Being, in African tradition, is more important than having. To be is to possess power and vitality. Being has force and direction." What this means is that traditional African philosophy taught that people's "values" or "character" were more important than "material" possessions. This being the case, then, traditional Africans held the view that the foundations of a family should be "values", not "material", so that children born into, and brought up in those families, would be individuals with character. But even then, young men and women could, if they were not interested in partners chosen for them, turn them down (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:120 – 121). Though physical beauty was certainly appreciated, moral beauty was more important. For this reason traditional Africans scrutinised the reputation and the background of the families their children were going to marry into (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:121). With this outlook and attitude, it was "not unusual for members from one lineage group to try to obtain information about the prospective husband or wife", the purpose of these investigations being to "enable both lineage groups to determine whether the man or the woman is worthy of their child or relative" (Gyekye, 1996:78 – 79). The investigations are aimed at determining the character of the family with which ties are going to be established through marriage (Gyekye, 1996:79). When all these inquiries were made, and both families had satisfied themselves, Gyekye (ibid) further informs us that the couple is informed that marriage is not between individuals but with family. In a remarkable observation, Gyekye (ibid) further observes that the statement that marriage is between families instead of individuals, does not imply that there is going to be "constant invasion of the privacy of the married couple by the members of the two contracting lineages (though there is no guarantee against it)" Rather the statement is an expression of an expectation that the couple should show interest in the affairs of each other's families (ibid).

Erlank's claim that Peires does not address gender among amaXhosa is simply not true. Peires' work certainly addresses the relationships between men and women among amaXhosa, and specifically, the question of gender, which deserves serious critical attention. In a conscious and deliberate endeavour to address the issue of gender among amaXhosa, Peires (1981:41)

notes that “since more than half of all Xhosa were women, it is impossible to conclude without some consideration of the subject, albeit brief and inadequate”. The foregoing, being quoted verbatim from Peires, what does Erlank mean by “absence of gender in [Peires’] work”? An examinatilkvhon of Peires’ work, with particular reference to the book that Erlank cites, Peires makes a number of strong observations regarding gender among amaXhosa societies.

There are a number of inaccuracies that Peires makes through his use of concepts and phrases that are gender-insensitive, and, consequently, misrepresenting amaXhosa society. Peires (1981:4) points out that cattle “slaughter and sacrifice was the principle method whereby the deceased forefathers were invoked and propitiated”. In the culture of amaXhosa, both in the past and in the present, it was, and is not just the “forefathers” that were/are invoked and propitiated, but the “foremothers” as well. Ancestors constituted and continue constituting both females and males. Just as the Ancestors were, and continue to be both females and males, both females and males could, and do lead, in the performance of rituals. Peires (1981:31) suggests otherwise. He notes that just as the “father” organised the economic production of the homestead, so the chief directed the economic, military, judicial and religious activities of the chiefdom as a whole (ibid). Along these lines, Peires (1981:4) further notes that amaXhosa were “a patrilineal people who traced descent through the male line”, and that everyone “belonged to a lineage, that is to say a group of people who could trace their descent back to a specific forefather”. The matter is not as simplistic as Peires presents it. Granted, where a woman and a man were/are married, the child took/takes the father’s clan name. But if a child was/is born outside marriage, the child took/takes the mother’s clan name. In such cases then, amaXhosa do not, as Peires suggests, only “trace their descent back to a specific forefather”. Descent is traced back both to foremothers and forefathers. Even in cases where people used/use their father’s clan name, in tracing their genealogy, they cite both parents’ – mother’ and fathers’ – clan names, thus tracing their roots to both sides.

The issue of names is very significant not only for amaXhosa but for all Africans. With specific reference to amaXhosa, Opland and Mtuze (2016:6) correctly observe that “names encapsulate references to physical characteristics, to family relationships, to singular achievements or to memorable events in which the subject participated”. Significantly, Opland and Mtuze (ibid) further note that people can be referred to, or addressed by the “name of their father or any of his ancestors’ names”. The problem with the above observation is that while Opland and Mtuze, on the one hand, correctly point out that people can be addressed by “any of their clan ancestors”, the following words, “by the name of their father”, centre and advantage the father,

while marginalising and disadvantaging the mother, by omitting the latter. The androcentric approach is further exposed by the words that follow – "any of his ancestors", leaving out "any of her ancestors". These emphases and omissions create the false impression that people were/are named or referred to after, and by their father's names, that only males were Ancestors, and that only males mattered/matter in amaXhosa community. None of the above is true. The Ancestors, among all Africans, are both female and male. Children were/are referred to, as will be shown below, by both their mothers' and fathers' names, and females were an integral part of the traditional African family. Among amaXhosa, when rituals are performed, it is not only the daughters and sons of the immediate clan who participate in "ukushwama" – the consuming of meat and drink meant exclusively by the clan's members. In this exercise – ukushwama – nieces and nephews participate, because through their mothers, they belong to their mothers' clan, and, therefore, are part of their mothers' families. In that sense, therefore, they are acknowledged by, and also acknowledge, their maternal ancestors or forebears. An excellent illustration of the maternal family's factor, among amaXhosa, in a person's life can be found right in Peires' (1981:13) own book:

> Among his mother's people Tshawe was a favourite on account of his courage, and when he reached manhood was granted, in accordance with custom, a considerable number of retainers, who formed the nucleus of a tribe. After a time, probably desiring to distinguish himself, and considering himself sufficiently strong, he collected all his people and set out ostensibly to visit his father, Nkosiyamntu […]

Tshawe, the youngest son of king Nkosiyamntu, who later became a king amaXhosa, was born among his mother's people (Peires, 1989:12). His mother's family was his first family before he joined his father's family. It was not by accident that children among traditional African communities grew up among their mothers' people – it was by both design and logic. Soga (1989:90 – 91) notes that among Africans, it was an old and known tradition for a child to grow up among her/his mother's people. Taken there while small, and having been fed there, a cow (inkomo yesondlo) was given to her/his mother's people, as a token of appreciation and a compensation for the costs and troubles incurred by her/his mother's people. Not only was/is it normal for children in African culture/s to grow up among their maternal families, but, also, as Mbiti (1989:104) points out, it is the "practice in some societies, to send children to live for some months or years, with relatives, and these children are counted as members of the families where they happen to live".

Peires (1981:4) misses a point in his limiting "kinship" among amaXhosa to male ties only. He (ibid) wrongly points out that relationships between "members of the homestead were strictly prescribed according to kinship: father's brother, eldest son, older brother, younger brother and all other positions were carefully distinguished both in terminology and in the rights and duties attached to each". Glaringly missing in this representation are the "father's sister" who, historically, played and continues to play a great role among amaXhosa communities, the "eldest daughter" who, historically, was and continues to be highly revered in amaXhosa communities. Male-bias comes out early in Peires' book. In his (Peires, 1981:vii) preface, acknowledging that not everyone – as expected – will be happy with his book, Peires points out that some may say that "this is not what we heard from our fathers". But what about "our mothers"? This is not being pedantic. Among Africans, amaXhosa included, mothers are regarded as custodians of culture (Kenyatta, 1965, 96, 97, 100). Considering that culture was, and continues to be the lifeblood of any people, and that in traditional African cultures mothers were regarded as cultures' custodians, Peires' (1981:5) following observation becomes inaccurate: "Each neighbourhood had its wise men and its fools, its brave men and its cowards, its diviners and (somewhere) its witches." Men, in the history of amaXhosa, had no monopoly over wisdom and bravery. There were wise women, as there were wise men, brave women, as there were brave men, and female diviners, too. This comes out clearly in Timothy J Stapleton's, book, *Maqoma: The Legend Of A Great Xhosa Warrior*. Maqoma was the son of king Ngqika who became the regent chief in his father's kingdom, since Ngqika's heir, Sandile, was still an uncircumcised minor when king Ngqika passed on (Stapleton, 2016:1). Maqoma, together with his brother, Tyhali, and Suthu (Sandile's mother), each "ruled roughly a third of the kingdom" (Stapleton, 2016:1). Not only does Stapleton (2016:1) observe that Maqoma was the "most renowned Xhosa leader of South Africa's Cape-Xhosa Wars", but he also observes that he was "arguably one of Africa's greatest military leaders of the nineteenth century". There is something very striking about this renowned and great military strategist that Stapleton could not ignore and fail to mention, and that is that among many people who surrounded Maqoma, his mother, Nothonto, was his "confidant" (Stapleton, 2016:76):

> Physically resembling Nothonto, he became extremely close with his mother and often sought her advice. He was eventually dubbed 'the mirror of Nothonto' […] In another reference to his mother, Maqoma became known as 'the tall and hefty man of Nothonto'. This praise name suggests that the impressive and popular prince continued to rely on the counsel of his mother (Stapleton, 2016:28 – 29).

That Maqoma often sought his mother's advice is a clear indication of appreciation that women were just as wise as men were. Maqoma's faith in a woman that was his mother, was not a unique case. Once, having caught wind of an impending attack on him by European colonialists, Maqoma, in 1831, "accompanied by several wives and warriors", visited the Rev James Laing at the new Burnshill mission to inquire about the rumoured attack (Stapleton, 2016:81). If it is taken into cognisance that Maqoma's relationship with his mother was not merely biological, but also intellectual, it would, then, be appreciated that in travelling with his wives, Maqoma did not merely need them for company. Travelling with his wives meant that he involved them in public political issues. His involvement of his wives in political and public issues was not limited to them. When the colonialists, led by Major Cox and Field Commandant, Van Wyk, waged a military campaign against Maqoma, the latter sent eleven women to Cox's camp and did the same three days later (Stapleton, 2016:108 – 109).

For Maqoma to assign women to perform diplomatic tasks in a military environment testifies to his recognition of both women's wisdom and bravery, a recognition that is absent in Peires' account above. But Maqoma's recognition of women was not a uniquely individual phenomenon. It was a societal characteristic among amaXhosa, the case in point being the rule of one section of the kingdom by Suthu, king Ngqika's wife. When in 1829 Ngqika's health condition deteriorated, in anticipation of his death, a succession dispute arose (Stapleton, 2016:75). While on the one hand Suthu had fallen out of favour with Ngqika, "she had gained support among some of his councillors […] Shrewdly, Suthu lobbied for the regency (Stapleton, 2016:75 – 76).

Two issues are significant in the foregoing observations. The first is that amid political intricacy, a woman, Suthu, did not display a passive, but an active stance. She lobbied for, and won support among Ngqika's councillors who were men. Secondly, the men in the king's council displayed faith in her capabilities and supported her lobby for political power. It is against this background that "[w]hile Maqoma would act as regent for external affairs, the kingdom was divided between three rulers, Jongumsobomvu, Tyhali and Suthu" (Stapleton, 2016:77) Yet, despite this evidence of women's prominence in the political life of amaXhosa, recorded in his own book, Stapleton (2016:11) points out that the "basis of Xhosa social organization […] was a male dominated and polygamous society". Yet another incident, in Stapleton's book, contradicts his claim of amaXhosa society being culturally male-dominated. Stapleton (2016:77) narrates a story about King Hintsa, being compelled to open doors to his Great Wife, Nomsa, whom the king had reportedly chased away. The reason that king Hintsa

had relented was as a result of having been persuaded by Maqoma to let Queen Nomsa come back since she, as the mother of Sarhili, king Hintsa's son, was required to play a role in a portion of her son's initiation into manhood, without which Sarhili could not enter into manhood (ibid). This narrative demonstrates the centrality of mothers in their sons' initiations, without whom the sons cannot enter into manhood.

Going back to Erlank, why, in spite of all the attention that Peires gives to gender, does Erlank (2000:206) claim that gender "is not a subject touched upon in Jeff Peires's *The House of Phalo* (1981) which remains the definitive work on Xhosa history"? Peires' (1981:41), observation that if a distinction were to be made "between control and exploitation as different aspects of male domination, it is probably fair to say that Xhosa women were controlled but they were not exploited", gives us a clue. If women were not "exploited", as Peires points out, then Erlank's claim that amaXhosa communities were "patriarchal" is on a shaky ground. It seems to be the case that Erlank does not recognise Peires' approach to the question of gender among amaXhosa because her claim, that amaXhosa were historically a "patriarchal" society, is not consistent with Peires' take on this community. Peires (1981:4) specifically observes that the "Xhosa were a patrilineal people who traced descent through the male line". The distinction between being "patrilineal" and "patriarchal" is very important. With reference to patriliny, Nzegwu (2006:19;25) makes two significant observations, the first being that "patriliny is not equivalent to patriarchy", and the second being that "ethnographers' correlation of patriliny with patriarchy raises questions about whether or not societies are patriarchal simply because they are patrilineal". Both Peires (1981:14) and Nzegwu (2006:5) understand patriliny as descent through the father's line. But this acknowledgment does not conflate "patriliny" with "patriarchy", something that Erlank seems to recognise and avoids at the same time. If patriliny is not the same thing as *patriarchy*, having defined the former, what is the definition of the latter? Patriarchy is a system of an arrangement in societies that gives exclusive power and authority to fathers as one dominant center of power in a family, and where men, as a group, also enjoy rights over women, as a group (Nzegwu, 2006:26 – 27). In a patriarchal society, "women's sexual and reproductive capacities are commodified and controlled by men, and whatever privileges or power women have is dependent on their singular attachments to men" (Nzegwu, 2006:27). For a society to be regarded as patriarchal, there are at least four features or conditions that must be identified, listed by Nzegwu (2006:28) as follows:

- the concentration of powers in the hands of men over women as a group;

- the division of a society into public and private spaces and the restriction of women to the private space of the home;
- the domestication and *exploitation* of women, including the control of their sexual and reproductive powers, and
- the systematic devaluation of women

Let it be noted, firstly, that Nzegwu (2006:28) categorically states that the features above associated with patriarchy were "absent in Igbo society prior to colonization". Nzegwu's argument makes sense considering that in Nigeria, Igbo women sing "woman is principal, is principal, is principal" (Amadiume, 1989:xv). Secondly, all these four features, "[i]n the face of massive female opposition […] were subsequently injected into Igboland through missionary activities, colonial administration, and education". Not only are the above features of patriarchy absent among the Igbo, but also among amaXhosa. Peires (1981:4) observes that "[g]enerally, the elder ranked above the younger and the men above the women". There can be no quarrel with the fact that African societies, in general, are gerantocratic, and this includes amaXhosa communities. But on what basis does Peires make the claim that men ranked above women? Peires (1981:41) argues that "inasmuch as [Xhosa women] were excluded from the privileged sphere of cattle", they were "disadvantaged". This was the case, according to Peires (ibid) because in the societies of amaXhosa a woman could not slaughter or milk cattle, or even wash the milkpails; she could not walk through a herd of cattle in the company of other women; she had no formal voice in the disposition of cattle as inheritance or bridewealth, or in the political and legal arenas where the role of cattle was crucial; women were jural minors subject to male control throughout their lives.

On the basis of the above observations, Peires is generalising, and his generalisations are not helpful at all in enabling one to gain insight into amaXhosa community. To begin with, regarding Peires' argument that women were not permitted to milk cattle, it is not clear whether he is referring to women as "wives" in their in-laws' homes, or as "daughters" in their natal homes. This distinction is very important because in their natal homes, women in amaXhosa community could milk cattle, unless they were going through menstruation. As wives, a ritual welcoming them to their new homes had to be performed before they could milk cattle. An examination of amaXhosa history and culture dispels Peires' (ibid) claim that a woman "had no formal voice in the disposition of cattle as inheritance or bridewealth". Let us begin with the issue of the so-called "bride-wealth" and then examine the issue of "inheritance".

(a) *Africans and the so-called bridewealth*

Lobola, as Mbiti (1989:137) observes, is the "custom of presenting a gift to the bride's people [which] is practised all over Africa, though in varying degrees". Before much is said, it should be noted that "lobola", in the African cultural context, is not the same thing as the "bride-price" or the "bride-wealth", as is the case in the Europeans' cultural contexts (Mutwa, 1996:76). Other words given in English for lobola are "bride-gift" and "dowry" (Mbiti, 1989:137). Mbiti (ibid) further observes that most of "these English terms are either inadequate or misleading". That is because African culture teaches that "no-one has the right to buy a woman or, for that matter, any other human being" (Mutwa, 1996:76). Under "no circumstances", Mbiti (1989:137) states firmly, and, unequivocally, "is this custom a form of 'payment', as outsiders have so mistakenly said". Rather, as Mbiti (ibid) further observes, lobola "is a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's people to those of the bride, for their care over her and for allowing her to become his wife". But it must be pointed out that, as Mbiti (1989:137) observes, "it is not only the man and his people who give: the girl's people also give gifts in return, even if these may be materially smaller than those of the man". A man's ability to afford lobola, in traditional African communitie, was a source of pride to his wife. There are a number of reasons for this. It proved that a man was not lazy, but a hard worker, and because he has worked hard for his wife, he would not treat her as something cheap that he can dump whimsically (Jolobe, 1973:39). Lobola gave the woman a sense of dignity both among her own family and that of her in-laws (Soga, 1989:69-70). Lobola is an expression of the appreciation of women's value not only to thier families but to their husband's people (Mbiti, 1989:137).

Jolobe (1973:40) informs us that Africans frowned upon the act of men and women living together without a marriage commitment, pointing out they perceived this as a declaration of war against the nation. That is because without a commitment, children who come out of such a relationship could be vulnerable when their parents simply choose to go their separate ways. Such could result in children who could be a menace to society since they lack inculcation of human values in a family environment. Lobola, therefore, served as a safety measure for the married woman and her children, in case something went wrong in the marriage. If, for instance, the husband died, the cattle for lobola would be used to sustain the children on the side of the offspring's maternal family (Soga, 1989:70). This, Soga (1989:71) further notes, explains why nephews and nieces are treated with fondness, and are spoilt, by their mothers' families.

Claims that African men "own" wives as if they are men's property because they gave lobola for them, are distorting African culture. As Diop (1989:40) observes, in African culture, a woman, even after marriage, "retains all her individuality and her legal rights" and goes on carrying the name of her family, in contrast to the Indo-European woman who loses hers to take on that of her husband. In clearer terms, the adoption of husbands' surnames by African women in our times is a consequence of an imposition of European culture on African culture. But that imposition is not complete because to this day even after marriage African women retain their clan names. It is a freedom and right bequeathed to them by their Ancestors.

With reference to the lobola practice among amaXhosa, in disputing the claim that lobola is an act of selling the woman into slavery, Mqhayi (1970:62) points out that the very word "slavery" (ikhoboka in isiXhosa) is a foreign and acquired word in isiXhosa which found its way in the language through contact with other nations which he does not specify. Mqhayi (ibid) further points out that there is no nation that gives power and rights to women more than amaXhosa do, pointing out that among amaXhosa women are even given power to rule a kingdom. In line with Mqhayi's argument that amaXhosa traditionally accorded respect to women, Soga (1989:36 – 37) points out that traditionally, among amaXhosa, the girl child was treated in a special way. With reference to a married woman, Soga (ibid) notes that she was regarded as a child born into this household, not in the sense of being a minor, but in the sense of being re-born into her new family. Not only was she a source of pride in her natal family, but she was also regarded as a source of pride in her new family and, thus, as a new daughter of her new family, treated in a special way by everyone. Echoing Mqhayi's disputation of claims about ill-treatment and enslavement of women among amaXhosa, Soga (ibid) also dismisses such claim as non-existent. While Mqhayi is more general in saying that "people" or "nations" distorted the lobola tradition, Soga (1989:74) is more direct, singling out the first white Christian missionaries as being responsible for distorting this practice. Soga (ibid) notes that not only did white condemn the practice by calling it a sin, but they actively enjoined amaXhosa to abandon the custom. Objecting in very strong terms, Soga (ibid) points out that the main objective of the white missionaries in vilifying lobola was to destroy Ubuntu, nationhood and an old-age custom based on experiences that were not only lived, but reflected upon for a long time.

It needs to be pointed out, at this juncture that it is not only the bride that is re-born into her husband's family. A husband and her family are also re-born into the wife' family. Among the Batoro of Uganda, for instance, Mbiti (1990:134 – 135) notes that after discussing various

issues, the boy's father makes a formal reuest, requesting to be born in his to-be-son's wife, to be a son, a servant, to take cattle to the river to drink. Mbiti (1990:135) goes on to observe that such declarations by the son's father are a commitment of delivering services for his son's sake, a readiness to "dissolve his own self in the family from where his son gets a wife". What this implies is that the father becomes "the bridge, the link and the solemn knot in tying the marriage covenant […] ready to cease to be in order that he may become alive in and through his son" (ibid). The request for the father "to be born" into the family means exactly the same thing (ukucela ukuzalwa) in isiXhosa among amaXhosa (Rubusana & Satyo, 2002:120). This practice – to be re-born into the bride's family – finds an echo among the Gikuyu Africans as well. Traditionally, among the Gikuyu, if a young man had interest in marrying a certain young woman, he would approach her in her homestead, and let her know that he was looking for a homestead where he could be "adopted" as a child of her homestead (Kenyatta, 1965:159 – 160). If the approached young woman accepted the young man's proposal, the young woman would tell him that she consented to his adoption in her homestead. If Africans accepted that their daughters would be children of their in-laws when they get married into the other families, and that their sons would be the sons of the families of their wives, and that the sons would be expected to contribute to the welfare of their wives' families, and the daughters to contribute to their welfare of their husbands' families, this is an indication that Africans perceived sons and daughters to be of "equal value", though in different ways. None of the two is of less value or importance. In fact abeNguni, the cultural unit to which amaXhosa, amaZulu, amaSwati, amaNdebele, belong, call married couples "abalingani". This word literally means "equals", and is derived from the word "ukulingana", meaning "equality". The seTswana and seSotho speakers' equivalent of this word "abalingani" is "balikani". The equality perspective between the bride and the bridegroom is given weight by Mbiti's (1989:136) narrative of the ritual that welcomes the bride among the Batoro of Uganda. Mbiti (ibid) notes that a "rite is performed by which the bridegroom sits on and off, four times, first on his father's lap and then on his mother's lap. The bride repeats this act, but only three times." This sitting on and off the parents' lap, Mbiti (1989:137) informs us "is a rite of the 'new birth'. Both the bride and the bridegroom are being born anew, they are made twins […]" Twins are equal!

It needs to be pointed out at this stage that traditionally, in Africa, it was not always the case that the bride went to join the bridegroom's family – it was the other way around as well. In "matrilocal societies the man generally goes to live in the home of the wife and these two establish their own household there" (Mbiti, 1989:135). A presentation of lobola is "a pledge"

that the husband will be a responsible, loving, and dutiful father to any offspring that God and the ancestral spirits might present to him and his wife (Mutwa, 1996:78). What this reveals is that Africans expected men to be providers for their wives and their children. As stated earlier, though, this had nothing to do with men or husbands being better than, or superior to women or wives. Africans recognised that carrying children for nine months, and delivering them into the world, is an exclusively female task, and that taking care of children in their infancy is, to a very great extent, a female task. Therefore, Africans reasoned that men needed to reciprocate. But, even then, as stated earlier, traditionally, African women were entitled to, and exercised economic independence. This leads us to discussing the false claim that women among amaXhosa were not entitled to inheritance.

(b) *Inheritance for women among amaXhosa*

Soga (1989:134 – 135), in explaining the concept of "Inkomo yobulunga" (the cow of ubulunga) settles this matter. Soga (1989:134) further notes that *inkomo yobulunga* is a cow that a young woman getting married takes with to her in laws' household. The cow, together with its offsprings, belongs to her. Significantly, Soga (1989:134) further notes that according to the old ways of the Ancestors, it is for this reason that a married woman would not expect anything from the inheritance of her maiden family, because by being given this cow, she is being given her share. Her maiden home caters for the young women who are not married yet, by buying them dresses in the modern times, since in the modern times cows are not slaughtered for their cowhides to make traditional dresses. All the control of *inkomo yobulunga* is under the control of this woman. She is the only one who can dispense it to solve a problem. Soga's observations make it clear that women – both married and unmarried – were, according to traditional African culture, entitled to inheritance, thus contradicting Peires' claim to the contrary. *Inkomo yobulunga* is the married woman's "right", which she "inherited" from her maiden family, taking it with her to her husbands' home, over which *she, alone,* has "all the control". To this cow her children are entitled. Nothing says that her children, who are entitled to *inkomo ubulunga* and its offsprings, are for her "male" children, but simply her children. With reference to the unmarried daughters, traditionally they were entitled to the cows of their family. It is from them that they get the material to clothe themselves.

5.8 Conclusion

If the African Renaissance is a liberatory project aimed at liberating Africans in general, and African women, in particular, then the issue of language has to be given serious attention in the African Renaissance project. That is because, as Oyěwùmí (1997:157) observes, language is a social institution which not affects social behaviour at an individual's level, but also a reflection of a people's patterns of social interactions, lines of status, interests, and obsessions. With particular reference to the English language, Oyěwùmí (ibid) notes that Western feminist theorists who have identified the importance of language and the construction of gender, have demonstrated the link between the male-centredness of the English language and, linked to that, women's secondary status in Western societies. Emphasising this point, Oyěwùmí (1997:158) cites Richard Gilman who observes that the employment of the words "man" and "mankind", as references for the whole human race in the English language, "demonstrates that male dominance, the *idea* of masculine superiority is perennial, institutional, and rooted at the deepest level of our historical experiences". With particular reference to the Yorùbá language, whose speakers were once colonised by the English, Oyěwùmí (1997:158) notes that the "impact of English on Yorùbá continues to be felt through loanwords, translation of Yorùbá culture into English, and the adoption of Western values". Demonstrating the distortion of Yorùbá culture as a consequence of translating Yorùbá culture into English, which result, ultimately into the adoption of Western values, Oyěwùmí (1997:164) cites two cases. The first relates to a Yorùbá speaker, Oyekan Owomoyela, who, in his book on Yorùbá proverbs, having acknowledged that Yorùbá pronouns are gender neutral, proceeds to note that in translating them into English, found it "somewhat clumsy to use the combination 'he or she' or 'he/she,' or 'him or'" and expressing hope that his readers will accept the use of "masculine pronouns with the universal application in the non-sexist spirit" in which he uses them. In objecting to this approach, Oyěwùmí (1997:164) argues that Owomoyela's acceptance of English categories comes neither as a surprise, and nor is it a solution. That is because, in the first place, it is easy for Owomoyela to take the route he has chosen because his "male identity is on the side of privilege" (ibid). Have noted that this issue goes beyond awkwardness, and is more about accuracy, Oyěwùmí (ibid) emphasises that using "masculine pronouns when maleness is not specified communicates inaccurate information", and that even more "serious is the fact that accepting the English categorization erases the Yorùbá gender-free framework". The second case that Oyěwùmí (1997:163 – 164) cites is related to the first. As a result of the male-centred English language, translation of gender-neutral Yorùbá such as *sènìyàn seranko* and

ènìyàn, which should be translated, respectively as "be-human, be-animal", and "humans", are translated as "be-man-be-animal" and as "man".

One of the cultural institutions that have been adversely impacted by the translation of Yorùbá culture into the English language is *Ifá* – the Yorùbá's indigenous knowledge system (Oyěwùmí, 2016:14). Although, as observed already, *Ifá* is the Yorùbá's indigenous knowledge system, "much of the scholarship on it has been conducted in English, essentially through translation". As a result of translation, where terms in Yorùbá are gender-neutral, when translated into English, not only are they are male-centred, but they also distort the *Ifá* system (Oyěwùmí, 2016:14 – 17). Oyěwùmí (2016:17) notes that perhaps the most significant claim about *Ifá*, that has had a "major impact on defining the knowledge system as existing in a male-dominant world", is that in spite of the existence of *Ifá* female diviners, is the false notion that only males can be *babaláwo*. European scholars have translated the word *babaláwo* as "father has secrets" or "father of secrets" (Oyěwùmí, 2016:20). This misleading translation – which is male-centred, or privileging males – is informed by a limited understanding of the word "baba" in "babaláwo" (ibid). It is erroneous to translate the "baba" in "babaláwo" as "father" (ibid). Oyěwùmí (ibid) further points out that "the *baba* in *babaláwo* is the equivalent of the English "expert in" or "master of" […] The *baba* in *babaláwo* alludes to the expertise or mastery of the Ifá corpus that *babaláwo* must attain before they are admitted into the order of Ifá diviners". As a result, "the word *babaláwo* is not gendered male, and in actuality, the term is used to refer to both male and female diviners, all of whom have gone through the rigorous and lengthy training to become Ifá diviners and have been inducted into the Ifá order".

Therefore, Oyěwùmí (ibid) emphatically points out, it should be clear, and known, that *babaláwo* is a mark of intellectual distinction and not gender division. The point being made by Oyěwùmí is that just as the notion of the African family has been colonised through European languages, the decolonisation of this concept has to be liberated through African languages. In this exercise, the role of education is indinspensable. This is so because schooling and academic scholarsh "represent the most systematic ways in which Yorùbá society and discourse are being gendered" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:158 – 159). To achieve the goal stated by Oyěwùmí, the decolonisation of African concepts, such as the notion of the African family for the purposes of the African Renaissance in the quest for women's liberation, necessitates the confrontation of Eurocentric education by Afrocentric education. On this point, Kamalu (1990:157), argues that in Africa, the education system should be designed in such a way that "children are taught that the natural line of descent is through the mother. This can be

demonstrated as beyond doubt once it is understood that all human beings are conceived by woman". An Afrocentric education system in Africa, Kamalu (ibid) further observes, should make African "children […] aware that the traits of both sexes exist within each human being", and this being the case, "[w]ithin every man there is a woman and within every woman, a man. Therefore any man who hates women is a man who hates an aspect of himself which he cannot come to terms with." The next chapter addresses traditional Africans' consensus and its implications for the African Renaissance.

Chapter 6

Consensus, Capitalism, Socialism: Implications for the African Renaissance

6.1 Introduction

In the 1960s, when African states were regaining independence, African leaders adopted Western forms of democracy (Bujo, 2009:391). This approach failed because, among other reasons, the "Euro-American models, which emerged in their own specific cultural and historical space, were imposed on African nations" (ibid). This is so because, as Bujo (2009:392) observes "[l]ong before the arrival of colonial powers, the African people of the sub-Saharan region had their own political structures and socio-economic administrative systems which were completely appropriate to local needs". Colonialism, Bujo (ibid) further points out, "which did not take the local culture into consideration, threw things completely out of balance". Taking the foregoing into cognisance, Lumumba-Kasongo (2005:200) argues that there is a need for investigating "African contributions to global democracy". Traditional African political systems need to be examined because, as Ansah (1988:4) points out, "[f]rom the way in which human rights have been disregarded in Africa, the impression can easily be created that there is no tradition of human rights in Africa". Such an impression creates a false view that the authoritarian behavior of some African traditional leaders, is "rooted in the traditional concept of a chief's authority" (Bujo, 2009:392). Yet, "if the original political system in Africa is analysed, this assumption cannot be maintained. The chief or king did not rule absolutely but with the support of a council of elders" (ibid). In traditional Africa, kings and chiefs were, themselves, subject to the laws of the land, and failure to adhere to the laws of the land resulted in their destoolment or removal from office (Ansah, 1988:4). This being the case, Ansah (ibid) points to the fact that in traditional Africa there was "little room for despotic or absolute power over the citizens". If this were the case, then, there is a basis for arguing that if records in Africa in terms of human rights are dismal, such should not, and cannot, be associated with African political traditions (Ansah, 1988:5).

While it is acknowledged that most parts of Africa had kings and chiefs, it must be equally acknowledged that there were communities that were "kingless" and "chiefless" (Williams, 1987:96). In such arrangements, the communities organised and exercised their political participation through the election of the Councils of Elders (ibid). Williams (ibid) refers to this system as an "African constitutional system of real self-government by the people". When European colonialists found those communities to whom the notion of "chiefdom had been a

remote or vague reality [the colonialists] had chiefs imposed on their polities" (Kongo & Zeilig, 2017:13). While Kongo's and Zeilig's observations apply to French colonies, Molony (2014:30), similarly, observes that the Germans and the British in African areas they dominated "simply created chiefs where none existed before". In making reference to kings and chiefs, it needs to be pointed out in this study that such terms (kings and chiefs), unless specifically stated otherwise, refer to both women and men. This means that traditionally, Africans had both female and male political leaders. Ancient Egypt had four women pharaohs, namely Nitokris, Sebeknefru, Hatshepsut and Tauostre (Yoyotte, 1990:84). In Ghana, an Asante proverb – it is the woman who gave birth to the King – gives a clear indication of the status of women in politics (Akyeampong & Obeng, 2005:23). This proverb found practical expression in co-ruling between the queen mother and the king among the Asante (Ankeampong & Obeng, 2005:29) Remarking on this phenomenon, Akyeampong and Obeng (2005:29) note that "the very existence of the queen mother at the highest level of state organization signifies the complementarity of power as both male and female". African Studies reveal that queens and queen mothers in Southern Africa ruled among the Lovedu, the Swazi and the Lunda (Amadiume, 1997:110). Amadiume (ibid) further points out that systems of female rule and power-sharing with men are recorded among the Bamileke of Cameroon, the Chamba of Benue in Northern Nigeria, and the Ashanti of Ghana. The same, Amadiume (ibid) further observes, obtained in Nigeria and Chad, among the Nupe, the Bolewa, the Kotoko and the Balgrimi. Amadiume (ibid) further notes that it "was the same among East African societies such as the Bemba of north-eastern Zimbabwe, the Bushongo of the Kasai and the Loango, the Kitara, Ankole and the Bateke" (ibid). As late as the 19th century, it has been established that among the Asante of Ghana, three women – Ama Sewa, Afrakuma Panyin and Ama Saponmma – ruled in succession as chiefs of Dwaben (Akyeampong & Obeng, 2005:28).

A type of democracy, and democratic practices informed by "African traditions and value systems", Lumumba-Kasongo (2005:203) argues, will contribute to meaningful democracy where the majority of African people will participate. Furthermore, such a type of democracy and democratic practices must provide work opportunities, eradicate poverty, gender inequalities and punish corrupt politicians (ibid). In explicit terms, what this means then is that Africans should invent their own democracy that is philosophically and ideologically relevant to Africa. The foregoing observations informed this study's quest to examine "consensus" as an African-type form of democracy for the purposes of the African Renaissance. In fact, while Lumumba-Kasongo, above, calls on Africans to "invent their own form of democracy as a

means for social progress", the preferred term for this study is "re-invention". Lumumba-Kasongo's argument is significant considering Nhlapho's (2000:137) caveat that if a culture of rights is to take root in Africa, "the association of human rights with Western thought and a Western world-view in the minds of a general populace does not help". That is because, Nhlapho (ibid) further points out, such an approach "clutters up an already acrimonious debate when disapproval of selected aspects of 'Western' culture seeps into the area of human rights as well". Pointing out that to fashion and build a modern system of politics which will simultaneously reflect the best traditional thinking about human rights is one of the profoundest challenges facing Africans, Wiredu (2003:323) argues that a "good beginning is to become informed about traditional life and thought".

This chapter examines indigenous African notions of democray, with particular reference to consensus, and their implications for the African Renaissance. It also examines how such notions speak to ideologies such as liberal democracy, capitalism, African socialism, and scientific socialism since these ideological concepts have featured prominently among advocates of the African Renaissance and African philosophers in general. We begin with a critique of liberal-democracy.

6.2 Liberal Democracy: A Critique

Before much can be said about liberal democracy, an acknowledgment must be made of the criticism that liberal democracy has not only failed Africa, where it was exported to, but the Western world, too. In the United States of America, in particular, democracy appears to be reduced or limited to elections. Blum (2002:169) observes that in the Western Hemisphere, there is an "inescapable conclusion that this thing called 'democracy', as seen from the White House, may have little or nothing to do with many of our most cherished human rights". This is because democracy, "at best, or at most, is equated solely with elections and civil liberties", where "[n]ot even jobs, food and shelter are part of the equation". In a similar observation, Pilger (2002:2) observes that the "undermining of the Bill of Rights in the United States and the further dismantling of trial by jury in Britain and a plethora of related civil liberties are part of the reduction of democracy to electoral ritual […] competition between indistinguishable parties for the management of a single-ideology state. Singling out competition between political parties in Africa, Lumumba-Kasongo (2005:202) further argues that the "mere presence of multi-party democracy alone may not be the solution to all the problems that continue to plague […] women, peasants, farmers and lumpen-proletarians". Not only does

Lumumba-Kasongo point to the inadequacy of liberal democracy's multi-partyism, but also argues that competitiveness – one of liberal democracy's characteristics – is incompatible with African culture (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005:216). This is so, Lumumba-Kasongo (ibid) notes, because "there is a certain ego associated with this dimension of liberal democracy" further pointing out that "[c]ompetition is generally perceived negatively, as a sign of vanity". This is the case considering that in a multi-party, competitive electoral environment, contestations are won by those who are "clever", "intelligent", well-informed, more aggressive or persuasive individuals with greater political clout and access to resources (ibid). Such resourceful people are few, the resourceless being the poor majority. Political parties, Wamala (2006:440) argues, "have come to the scene with many promises, but at the same time with many inherent problems". The party system "destroys consensus by de-emphasizing the role of the individual in political action" (ibid). This happens because when elections take place, the representatives do not really represent the people but the party (ibid). The party representatives, Wamala (2009: 440 – 441) further argues, do not really have loyalty to the people whom they are supposed to represent, but to the party. Power being personalised by a few in the party hierarchy, those who want favour find themselves compelled to ingratiate themselves to the powerful few who personalise power (Wamala, 2006:441). Bujo (2009:399) further notes that enforcing western-style democracy in the African continent implies exposing illiterate people to "arbitrariness and manipulation by parties and despotic politicians" whose parties are often dependent on foreign funding, the funding enabling the funders to dictate political and economic policies to the funded. Rukuni (2009:140) notes that "more often than not governments and political parties have a vision of Afrika that is directly opposed to what we experience from civil society organisations". Rukuni (2009:141) further points out that part of the reason that there is no true transformational leadership in government is that leadership normally comes from political parties which are not (a) "truly Afrikan" in their "transformative philosophy" and (b) genuine in embracing the day-to-day needs of the people. To deal with this challenge, Rukuni (2009:141-142) points out that there is a need to interrogate the relevance of political parties in African politics.

6.3 Consensus

In traditional African societies, for any community programme to take place, it had to be sanctioned by the communities involved (Gyekye, 1996:111). The implementation of the programme was preceded by long discussions in the assemblies where everyone had a fair

opportunity to air their views. This type of engagement was referred to as "consensus" (Ansah, 1988:5; Gyekye, 1996:111; Wiredu, 2003:317). Pointing to consensus as an African model of democracy does not have a shortage of criticism. The concept's critics have argued that it is "a kind of idealization of the past **[…]** which ignores and, in fact, obscures the deadly conflicts that Africa endured before colonialism" (Wamala, 2006:439). This criticism, Wamala notes, misses a very important point, that being that "consensus presupposes dissensus, and talking until people agreed points to the existence of opposed views which needed to be reconciled". Consensus implied availing an opportunity to every citizen (female and male) to speak her or his mind in an environment that promoted patience, mutual tolerance, and an attitude of compromise (Gyekye, 1996:117). In this environment, every view is given a hearing and never cavalierly thrown aside as is generally the case in straightforward majotarian decision-making systems which deprive minorities the right to have their opinion reflected in a decision (ibid). In this type of arrangement, Busia (cited in Ansah, 1988:5), with specific reference to the Akans, notes that the traditional council members gave space to free and frank exchanges of opinions, and that where disagreement arose, spent hours and even days, when occasion demanded until consensus was reached. Robust discussions in traditional Akan communities were informed by at least two Akan maxims, these being, (a) "one head does not go into council", and, (b) "wisdom is not in the head of one person (Gyekye, 1996:117 – 118). This is a clear indication that traditional Africans appreciated the fact that there was no single individual who had monopoly over knowledge, wisdom, and the truth. Again, with specific reference to the Akan society, Gyekye (1996:117) notes that it would be "impolitic as well as illegal for the chief (king) or the head of a clan to set aside or oppose a decision that has been reached through consensus". Referring to the same Akan society, Wiredu (2003:317) observes that the "chief had absolutely no right to impose his wishes on the elders of the council". The council "would keep on discussing an issue till consensus was reached" (ibid). Based on consensus, once a decision had been taken, it was binding for everyone, including the chief, irrespective of his personal view (ibid). The consensus approach, Wiredu (ibid) further argues, like Gyekye (cited above), that unlike majoritarian systems, the rationale of decision by consensus helped to forestall the trivialisation of minority views.

Studies on traditional African societies reveal that this is not uniquely Akan, but generally a pan-African approach. With reference to the Ganda society of Buganda (in Uganda), Wamala (2006:440) notes that "[i]f after due deliberations the council reached a consensus, it was taboo for the monarch to oppose or reject it". In fact, as Wamala (ibid) notes, in deliberations, a king

rarely took part. If he had any contribution to make to the issue at hand, he was expected to convey this through his councillors (ibid). There was an expectation, though, that once decisions were reached, the king had an obligation to execute the council's decision (ibid). In African traditional societies if a chief or king defied the people and refused to rule according to their will, he could be defied, deposed or even killed (Bujo, 2009:394; Wiredu, 2003:317; Gyekye, 1996:111; Davidson, 1994:36).

The foregoing observations reveal that there is a recognition that dissensus preceded consensus (Wamala, 2006:439). There is no illusion that the recognition of consensus is the same thing as an assumption of the existence of unanimity in traditional African democracy. Rather, in the recognition of consensus there is a recognition of the existence of oppositional politics in traditional African democracy. The notion of the politics of opposition in the traditional African democracy is different from Western democracy in that in the traditional African context "it was not the formal and ossified opposition instituted for the sake of an adversarial form of political pluralism" (Wamala, 2006:439). Had political opposition not existed in traditional Africa, "it would have been superfluous to talk of reaching consensus" (ibid). The reality about traditional African democracy was that because of opposition to the head of state, sometimes there was complete failure in efforts to reach consensus (ibid). In such cases, kings or chiefs, as pointed out above were deposed, and or killed, or forced into exile (ibid).

Regarding the permanent removal of a family from leadership if and when he contravened the rules, Davidson (1994:36) cites the case of an East African community, known as the Zanj, which gave their king the title "Waqlimi", meaning "supreme lord". The Zanj not only withdrew this title from their king but killed him and excluded this posterity from ascending to the throne if he departed from the rules of justice because, they argued, such a departure meant the he ceased being "the son of the Master, that is to say, of the king of heaven and earth (ibid). Significantly, Davidson (ibid) further notes that "[o]ther Africans will quickly recognize the echoes of their own attitudes to good rulers, as well as to bad rulers who depart from the ways of God and the wisdom of the ancestors".

In cases where the king or chief proved to be too powerful, a section of a community broke away from the main group and settled elsewhere as a different polity (Williams, 1987:172; Wamala, 2006:436). This secession, Wamala (2006:436) refers to as the "avoidance relationship" (ibid). So, contrary to what the critics claim, reference to "consensus" does not imply in any way an existence of unanimity in traditional African societies. Rather, consensus

implied that different and conflicting views were given space until a common understanding to address the needs of community members was reached. What consensus also points out to is that there was freedom of expression. Freedom of expression was not only limited to communities' assemblies. It meant a number of things, two of wich are discussed in this chapter. The first, as already discussed above, is the right to secede when there are irreconcilable differences. The second, discussed below, is the right to participate in the process of the appointment of chiefs or kings.

Before proceeding with this discussion, it is important to take note of Williams' (1987:96 – 98) clarifications with reference to the meanings of the terms "kings" and "chiefs" in the traditional African cultural context. In traditional Africa, the king was a person who was elected by a Council of Elders and had the honour of belonging to a "family whose ancestors had either founded the state or had been the most outstanding in promoting the welfare of the whole people" (Williams, 1987:96 – 98). Such an outstanding family was given a permanent leadership status on condition that the family's descendants were qualified (Williams, 1987:98). While in the Western cultural context the ruling family is known as a "royal family", in the African traditional context, such a concept was unknown but an imposition of colonialism (ibid).

In the traditional cultural African context, the Council of Elders, the kings and chiefs were regarded as "leaders, not rulers" (Williams, 1987:171). During discussions "[d]ecisions in council are made by Elders. The Chief or King must remain silent." (Williams, 1987:171) The rationale for this approach was informed by the perspective that the king or the chief was not the "ruler", but the "mouthpiece of the people and the instrument for carrying out their will" (Williams, 1987:168). On the king or chief being the "mouthpiece" of the people, an unnamed French scholar (cited in Gyekye, 1996:110) observed that "over the free citizens the chief's authority is valid only insofar as it is the mouthpiece of the majority interests, lacking which character it falls to the ground". Writing about the Akan of Ghana, Gyekye (1996:112) further notes that even though a chief was elected by kingmakers from the royal lineage, the person elected had to be acceptable to the whole body of citizens. In cases where there was widespread opposition to the choice of the kingmakers, the person elected had to be replaced by another person, also from the royal lineage. Thus, Gyekye points out, "it is clear that never is a chief imposed upon an Akan community" – people had a say in the decision of the appointment of their chief (ibid). In taking office, the chief was sworn to observe the following: not to insult

the citizens "but rather show respect for them […] that is, the chief should recognize their equality as human beings"; that the chief should never act without the advice and full concurrence of his councillors who are the representatives of the people (Gyekye, 1996:114). These two oaths, among many, are very significant. The first one – with reference to respect – addresses the concern raised by many that in African culture "respect" is a one-way process on the part of ordinary people to authority. No, it is a two-way process: in as much as the citizens exhibit respect to authorities, the latter are expected to reciprocate. It was, as Davidson (1992:61) points out, that "[b]etween ruler and people – one can say state and people – there was an acknowledged recognition of ties of mutual obligation and respect". The second oath – not acting without councillors – is an indication that Africans have historically jealously guarded their right to freedom of expression. One of the expressions indicating jealousy of their freedom of expression was the insistence on certain values that served as conditions to be met for one to be a king or chief. The people reserved their right to object to the character and actions of the chief, and if their accusations proved true, had the option to call for his removal from the throne (Gyekye, 1996:113).

In electing a king or chief, there were certain qualities that had to be fulfilled by the candidates, and below we list a few:

(a) *Knowledge and wisdom*

Driving the point home that "[k]nowledge is highly valued in traditional African societies for its practical results and implications for life", Gyekye (1996:137) invokes the following Ewe maxim: "The freedom that comes from ignorance enslaves the one who entertains it." What this means is that true and genuine freedom comes from knowledge (ibid). There was an appreciation on the part of traditional Africans that knowledge did not fall from the tree – in many instances it had to be sought, and even when acquired it had to be constantly worked at, improved and, hence another African maxim, "Knowledge is like a garden; if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested" (Gyekye, 1996:140). Metaphorised as gardening, cultivation and harvesting, is an indication that acquiring knowledge was not seen as a once-off event, but a process, or an endless journey, huge like an ocean, hence another African maxim, "Knowledge is like a baobab tree; no one person can embrace it with both arms" (Gyekye, 1996:141).

While there is a relationship between knowledge and wisdom, the two are not the same, and traditional Africans distinguished between the two (Gyekye, 1996:137). Wisdom refers to,

among other things, the ability to reflect on fundamental principles underpinning life and human experience, such being an exercise in philosophy (Gyekye, 1996:137). It means the ability to grapple with the complexities and intricacies of life, for which there are no easy and readily available answers. What this then means is that wisdom is the application of persistence in dealing with life's challenges, hence the African maxim: "If a problem lasts for a long time, wisdom comes to it" (Gyekye, 1996:143).

Though there is an indisputable relationship between intelligence and wisdom, traditional Africans distinguished between the two (Gyekye, 1996:143). Intelligent people can use their intelligence to get away with evil. From an African traditional perspective, the "ultimate purpose of the exercise of human wisdom is human well-being; that which leads to something else is other than wisdom" (Gyekye, 1996:143). Gyekye's preceding argument finds full expression in a KiSwahili maxim: "Wisdom creates well-being" (Gyekye, 1996:142). It is against this background that Bujo (2009:393) observes that in the traditional African context the "king or chief was not only expected to be intelligent in the western sense but to be a person of wisdom under all circumstances, concerned for his people's welfare". Being concerned for people's welfare meant being imbued with African Humanism, the meaning of being "human".

(b) *Being human and being of humans*

The Baasa of Cameroon gave the name "Mbombog" to their chief, a name implying that "he embodied the ideal Baasa or human person" (Bujo, 1996:393). In being given this name there was no expectation that such an ability was in-born. Rather, there was an understanding that in order for the chief to carry out what the community expected of him, "he should use peg (learning) in addition to yi (knowledge and understanding). Only he who could combine peg and yi was wise." (ibid). Just as the name Mbombog among the Baasa of Cameroon means a "human person", among the Bahema and Lendu of Kongo-Kinshasa, the expression "nrupi" means "king of human beings" (Bujo, 2009:394). The expression "nrupi" refers to a person "who is faultless and a benefactor to all humankind" (ibid). The expression "nrupi" is informed by a view that an immoral and inhumane chief reduces his people's life force which leads to death, calling for his displacement and replacement by a better candidate (ibid). Punishment for lack of generosity was not confined to the Baasa alone. Among amaXhosa, as Peires (1982:29) notes, "[c]hiefs have been deposed or superseded for being 'cruel', 'stingy' or even 'stupid'". The removal of a chief from her/his position shows the traditional Africans' great appreciation on the unbreakable link between "being human" and "being of humans". While

the first puts great emphasis on human values such as kindness, love and generosity, the latter puts great emphasis on the need for the chief or the king to always know that s/he was serving at her/his people's pleasure. Failure to appreciate that meant, as pointed above, losing the position of leadership. It is for this reason that there exist the following African maxims:

- Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho (SeSotho – meaning "A chief is a chief by the people (Gyekye, 1996:110)
- Chieftainship is people (Lovedu) (Gyekye, 1996:110)

- The king is the people. To respect the king is to respect oneself. He who despises our king despises us. He who praises our king praises us (Gyekye, 1996:110).

The above maxims indicate that traditional Africans held a firm view that they and their leaders were inseparable, that what the leaders did, either represented or misrepresented them, and were determined to see to it that their leaders did not misrepresent them. The leaders,too, were very conscious of what was expected of them, and complied. Those who did not, faced the consequences of their defiance. This attitude to leadership among Africans indicates, as Rukuni (2009:1) observes, that leadership, on the part of the leading entailed love and care for the led, view being that a person could not lead people he did not love. On this score, Peires (1982:36) observes that historians who have written about isiXhosa-speaking people have note that a chief appealed to this community if s/he possessed qualities of bravery, wisdom and kindness, generosity being "the most important of all". Love was not expected to be an empty slogan or rhetoric. It was expected that it should be manifested in practical ways. A Moroccan historian, Ibn Battuta (in Davidson, 1994:34) is cited as having noted in the year 1332, that on his visit to Kilwa, in southern Tanzania, he had greatly admired the king of Kilwa whom he remembers as having been "noted for gifts and generosity" because he saw the king giving "clothes off his back to a beggar who asked him for them". A missionary who visited amaXhosa community in 1848 observed that a chief by the name Mhala, "had no blankets of his own because he had given them all away" (Peires, 1982:37). It cannot be a coincidence that two foreigners witnessed a king in Tanzania doing the same thing as a chief in South Africa. This is an indication that these leaders were sensitive to the expectations of African culture with particular reference to Ubuntu.

Expected to play a father-figure role to his people, among amaXhosa, "the chief provided refuge for culprits, bridewealth for young men and assistance for all who needed it" (Peires,

1982:32). Helping those who could not afford lobola (wrongly referred to as bridewealth by Peires) ensured that no one at the age of marriage would not marry because he did not have economic means, and providing refuge to culprits was not condoning crime but making sure that there would be no mob justice. With reference to amaXhosa communities, Peires (1982:33) further notes that "[w]hen misfortune struck an individual […] the chief provided for him". The generosity expected from kings/chiefs was not only in material, but, also, in emotional or spiritual terms.

Just as kings and chiefs were expected to have certain qualities, failing which they were relieved, the same applied to councillors, that is, they were removed from power when they failed in their duties (Bujo, 2009:394).

(c) *Councillors – people's representatives in checking the power of kings and chiefs*

In general terms, in traditional African socities, councillors were constituted on the basis of their seniority, wisdom, accessibility and ability. Among the Barundi (in Burundi) the council consisted of sages "recognised by the village community and well known because they lived among them" (Bujo, 2009:392). To be able to play the role of being advisors to the king, Bujo (ibid) further notes that, a "thorough preparation was required, conducted in different stages and with a tough probation period". During the preparation period, it was expected of a councillor to demonstrate a very high sense of "truth and justice" and virtues such as "diligence at work, sharp-mindedness and courage". The Ganda of Buganda believed that for a councillor to be able to represent the people properly, before the king, he would have to possess "human and moral qualities", in other words, ubuntu (Bujo, 2009:393). If councillors failed to meet these expectations, "they would be relieved of their duties" (ibid). There was so much faith placed in the councillors to the extent that, with reference to the Ganda society, Wamala (2006:440) notes that "the king rarely took part in the deliberations himself, the rationale being that the monarch should not prejudice the proceedings". The expectation was that if the king had anything to say, such should be conveyed through his councillors. With reference to amaXhosa, Peires (1982:30) notes that "absolute domination was no part of the Xhosa political ethic", the power of any chief being "limited by what his subordinates were prepared to accept". The chies among amaXhosa knew that they had to respect their councillors because if and when necessary people sided with their councillors against their chiefs (Peires (1982:35).

With reference to the Akan society, people qualified to be councillors to the chiefs/kings if they showed a sense of maturity, were experienced in human affairs, and well-versed in the tradition

and lore of the community (Gyekye, 1996:119). The councillors were expected to give advice that would be good, well-considered and reliable. It is on this basis that emerged the maxims:

- It is when a chief has good councillors that his reign becomes peaceful;
- There are no bad chiefs (rulers), only bad advisors (Gyekye, 1996:119).

The latter Akan maxim finds an echo among the Ancient Egyptians in the Book of Kheti (Lichtheim, 2006:100; 105):

- Strong is the king who has councillors, […]
- A king who has courtiers is not ignorant

If traditional Africans, before the arrival of colonialism had such an appreciation for consensus, where and how did things go wrong? An easy answer would be to blame colonialism. Pointing in the direction of colonialism answers this question partially, but not fully. Africa, traditionally, had dictators and despots before the arrival of colonialism. Had there been no endogenous African dictators, who were kings and chiefs, there would have been no deposing of kings and chiefs, sending them to exile, and killing them. There would have been no secessions. All these factors were existent before the coming of colonialism. As Davidson (1992:61) observes, "[d]espots certainly arose; they were dethroned as soon as could be". However, equally true was that there were certain principles and philosophical foundations – as pointed out above – that guided governance. Defiance of those – as pointed out above – had consequences. Invoking their ancestral culture, ordinary Africans resisted and fought back courageously. Acknowledging Africans' own contribution in the destruction of their own cultural approach to democracy does not in any way exonerate colonialism's contribution in the destruction of African consensus. The arrival of colonialism, backed by the gun, proved very powerful in doing away with African philosophical underpinnings of democracy. How did this happen?

6.4 Colonialism and the Destruction of Traditional African Democracy

When the colonialists arrived in the African continent, they found some rogues in some communities who, finding themselves on the receiving end of the law, were only too happy to collaborate with the colonisers by sharing their community's secrets and lifestyles (Maathai, 2009:26 – 27). In return for their collaboration, these natives were elevated to the positions of chiefs – positions they would not have acquired in traditional communities – and thus imposed on their communities (Maathai, 2009:27). The selection and the imposition of these chiefs,

who, in fact, became the agents of the colonial powers, were the cornerstone of the colonial administration (ibid). Not only did the colonialists use the deviants in African communities, but they also sought to co-opt and coerce existing chiefs (Davidson, 1992:48; Molony, 2014:32; Kongo & Zeilig, 2017:13). The traditional consensus approach was undermined when the European colonialists' appointed "[i]ndividuals were given powers that had never before been wielded in their communities" (Molony, 2014:32). While the preceding observation was made with reference to East Africa, the same applied to the African continent in general. For instance, Oyěwùmí (1997:125), with particular reference to Nigeria, notes that the "African males designated as chiefs by the colonizers had much more power over the people than was vested in them traditionally". But to the credit of some kings and chiefs, both during the periods of slavery and colonialism, they resisted European encroachment. Not only did they oppose slavery but also "fought against it to the death – literally" (Williams, 1987:56). On the other hand, the colonial "acknowledged chiefs" became the "agents of foreign domination instead of being, as in the past, the guardians of African traditions and self-respect" (Davidson, 1992:48). When a chief did not comply with the colonial administrations' expectations, he could be dismissed for insubordination (Molony, 2014:32). The pressure on African chiefs, in Kenya by British colonialists was so intense such that some chiefs resorted to "apathy and alcoholism" (ibid). Resorting to alcoholism as a coping mechanism by African chiefs was not a uniquely Kenyan phenomenon. In South Africa, about one of the amaXhosa kings, Ngqika, it was said that he "sold the land [of his people] in exchange for […] a bottle of brandy" and was "[r]avaged by liquor" (Peires, 1981:79; 82). It is said that Ngqika was so addicted to brandy such that not only did he purchase it, but also "danced for it, sold his wives for it, begged for it, and ultimately died of it (Peires, 1981:82). In traditional Africa there was an appreciation that politics and economics were inextricably linked, and there was a conscious effort to make sure that kings and chiefs were not allowed to amass wealth that would enable them to exercise dictatorial powers.

6.5 Politics and Economics in Traditional Africa

Reflecting on the Africans' "Earliest Judicial System", Williams (1987:168 – 169) notes that Africans "proudly speak of the freedom and absolute powers of the chief or the king", some going as far as saying that the king "owned all the land" in the country. Having noted that words of one language often fail to translate other people's meanings or concepts, Williams (1987:169) further points out that when Africans say that the "king is supreme or has absolute power", what they are actually saying is that the king has "absolute power to carry out the will

of the people". What was actually meant was that the king exercised power and owned the land on behalf of the people (ibid)

As if sharing notes with, or copying from Williams' notes, writing about the king's role in Africa, with particular reference to Ancient Egypt, Grimal (1994:57) observes that as the "heir of the gods, the king was holder of the theocratic power vested in him". The theocratic power vested in a king was neither absolute nor permanent. A king was "only the temporary holder of power […] on condition that he governed with respect for the laws of the land, which were actually identical to the laws of the universe" (Grimal, 1994:57 – 58)**.** As if to make sure that there is no room for a loose interpretation of his observation, Grimal (1994:92), echoing Williams, notes that the "whole country theoretically belonged to the king, in his role as the personification of the creator". Since the ownership of the land, or, the country by the kings or chiefs was, in traditional Africa, only theoretic, what was its actual status, taking into cognisance, as Williams points out, above, that "nobody owned the land", in the "Western sense"? Drawing from some political theories and principles of Ancient African Constitutional Law and fundamental rights of the African people, Williams (1987:171) notes that the land *belonged to no one*, was regarded as the Supreme Being's gift to humankind for use as a sacred heritage, transmitted by the Ancestors as a "bond between the living and the dead, to be held in trust by each generation for the unborn who will follow, and thus to the last generation". According to African traditional culture, sale of land was proscribed so that right to land, free of charge was afforded to all family thus enabling everyone to make a living (Williams, 1987:171; Wiredu, 2003:319)). As if, too, sharing notes with, or copying from Williams' notes, with particular reference to the Akans, Wiredu (2003:314) notes that "the right to land" is a human right. Reference to "a right", means "claims that people are entitled to make simply by virtue of their status as human beings" (Wiredu, 2003:313).

The abolition of the traditional African cultural principle on land by colonialism had devastating consequences for African people, particularly the poor masses. As Wiredu (2003:319) observes, "[]and sale is now a thriving racket in which chiefs yield no ground to commoners". As a foreseeable consequence, Wiredu (ibid) further observes, "a human right, recognized of old, […] seems to have been devoured by time", and many Akans have been left without land to till.

Blaming colonialism alone without noting that even in traditional times there were chiefs who violated the traditional African principle on land would be disingenuous. As pointed out earlier,

not all kings or chiefs in traditional Africa were just. There were some who were unjust and, consequently, removed or killed. In recognition of this historical fact, Gyekye (1997:128) observes that "[i]n many traditional societies, political power could become absolute and unchallengeable because of the wealth of the ruler". In order to prevent absolute power by chiefs, in Akan traditional laws chiefs were strictly prohibited from giving land without the consent of the council of elders (ibid). This exercise served to prevent what, in politics, is called patronage. Gyekye (ibid) further tells us that "the chief, until the 1930s and since then, was not allowed to have personal property". The logic in the "denial of private property to the chief was to pre-empt conflict of interest, conflicts between his managing his own property and his managing the property of the state" (ibid). The strictness of the Akans about the management of land reveals a significant attitude towards land, and that being that, as Gyekye (1997:128) points out, in the "Akan society land is held as an important source of wealth as well as political power". The Akans's act of keeping the power of chiefs in check can also be traced among the Mossi of Burkina Faso. In that community, "the Mogho Naba, or king, and chiefs did not own land or have the power to distribute and determine who could farm. Much authority for the division and farming of land rested with the village council, or *tengbiisi*" (Kongo & Zeilig, 2017:11).

Before his death in 1961, Fanon (1967:78) observed and warned that what counted then, "the question […] looming on the horizon" was the "need for a redistribution of wealth". Fanon (ibid) further pointed out that humanity had to confront this question, "or be shaken to pieces by it". In urging humanity to confront the crisis of poverty, of the unequal distribution of wealth, Fanon (ibid) was aware that at the time, underdeveloped countries, including African countries, were caught up in the struggle between world powers that, on the one hand, advanced socialism, as the mode of production, and, on the other hand, capitalism. Fanon (ibid) held the view that underdeveloped countries "ought not to define [themselves] in the terms of values which have preceded [them]". Rather, Fanon (ibid) argued "under-developed countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them". While Fanon urged underdeveloped countries to pursue an independent line of thought and action, his preference for socialism and opposition to capitalism was evident. He referred to capitalist "exploitation and cartels and monopolies" as the "enemies of under-developed countries", further pointing out that the "capitalist regime, in so far as it is a way of life, cannot leave us [under-developed countries] free to perform our work at home, nor our duty in the world" (ibid). We deal with this issue next.

6.6 Capitalism or Socialism?: The African Renaissance and Economic Decolonisation

On regaining political independence from European colonialism, Gyekye (1997:144), notes that African political leaders, in their search for ideologies to guide them in their quest for their societies' development, "flirted with two main ideologies", namely, "capitalism – the free enterprise economic system, and socialism – the system of public ownership of the means of production and distribution". Gyekye (ibid) notes that the "ideological system chosen by all but a few was socialism". Gyekye (ibid) further notes that the African political leaders who chose socialism as their preferred ideology, "preferred to call it 'African socialism'". The logic for this choice, Gyekye (ibid) argues, was aimed at investing it with a "spurious patina of African ancestry, originality, and justification". By making reference to the association of African socialism with traditional African cultures as a "spurious" claim, gives a clear indication of a dismissal of such a stance by Gyekye. In fact, Gyekye (1997:146) refers to the linking of African socialism to traditional African cultures as "suspect". As far as Gyekye (1997:149) is concerned, the "view of the traditional moorings of the modern socialist ideology in Africa presents a simple and misguided picture of an otherwise complex situation". Gyekye (1997:157) argues strongly that an association of Marxist socialism with traditional African economic culture was a result of inadequate historical and conceptual inquiry resulting in a distotion of the traditional African socioethical communitarian system. Not only does Gyekye dismiss as "spurious" and "suspect" the association of socialism with traditional African culture, but he (Gyekye, 1997:162) also argues that the "use of the term 'socialism' in reference to understanding the nature of the society envisaged by the African political leaders and thinkers under the inspiration of the African tradition is a misnomer". The term "socialism", Gyekye (ibid) further points out, was used, in his view, as "undoubtedly […] a surrogate for 'humanism'". In support of his argument, Gyekye (1997:158) argues that an examination of the views of the advocates of socialism reveals that they were not so much concerned about investigating how the economy was really managed in the traditional setting as about the material needs or social welfare of all the members of the society that resulted from the social or moral arrangements established by traditional society. An interrogation of the ideas and arguments of African socialism' advocates lays bare, in Gyekye's (1997:158) view, that the "humanist norms of traditional African society most probably were at the base of the interpretations (or, rather, misinterpretations) of the communitarian system as a form of socialism". Reference to "humanism" in the African traditional context by Gyekye (1997:158) means "a philosophy that sees human needs, interests, and dignity as of fundamental importance and concern": In backing up his argument that advocates of African socialism

mistook and misinterpreted African humanism for African socialism, Gyekye (1997:159) cites Nkrumah who argued for the remolding of African society's traditional African life into a socialist direction. Gyekye (ibid) further cites Nkrumah for saying that the "restitution of Africa's *humanist* and egalitarian principles *requires* socialism" (emphases Gyekye's). Having made the points that Nkrumah's socialism was inspired by African humanism, and that Nkrumah's use of the word "requires" suggested that Nkrumah saw a necessary logical relation between socialism and African humanism, Gyekye (ibid) disputes the existence of any such relation, pointing out that "it can be argued that the same principles may require some form the capitalist system". With reference to Kaunda, Gyekye (1997:161), points out that Kaunda, "who often prefers the term 'humanism' to 'socialism' […] has made humanism the basis of his conception of the nature of the human being and society", adding that Kaunda "understands socialism in terms of *humanism*, in terms of the profound concern for human well-being". What is "more correct to say", in Gyekye's (1997:157) view, is that the "traditional economic culture exhibited features of both the 'socialist' and capitalist methods in the management of the economic lives of the people".

Space will be given, later, below, to consider Gyekye's objections. But before entertaining his objections, we will first examine the arguments of those in favour of socialism as part of African cultural heritage. But it needs to be said here and now, emphatically, that not all African political leaders who chose socialism as their political ideology "preferred to call it 'African socialism'" as Gyekye (cited above) suggests. Some, as will be shown later, preferred "scientific socialism". We begin with the calls for "African Socialism".

6.6.1 African Socialism: A Return to African Roots?

In 1964, Friedland and Rosberg, Jr (1964:vi) note that since 1959, the "proliferation of the ideology of African Socialism [had] been so significant […] that an attempt must be made to define its parameters". This was necessary because it had emerged that the "doctrine [was] of growing significance" to "increasing numbers of African political leaders" who viewed African socialism as a "communicable ideology which gives a perspective for the exigencies of present rapid development and change in society (Friedland & Rosberg, Jr, 1964:v). Friedland and Rosberg, Jr's observations were also made taking into consideration that in 1962, the Senegalese government, headed by its president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, hosted, together with the Congrès Méditerranéen de la Culture, a colloquium, to examine policies on development and African approaches to socialism (Zolberg, 1964:113). The colloquium drew a number of

delegates from African countries as well as participants from other international communities (Zolberg, 1964:114 – 115). Although the colloquium produced neither a definition nor a full-blown theory on African Socialism, the ideology dominated the discussion to an extent that the *Afrique Nouvelle*'s (in Zolberg, 1964:115) editorial observed that "African Socialism has now acquired the rights of full-fledged citizenship". Senghor (in Zolberg, 1964:118), expressed the view that "socialism is merely a rational organization of human society, considered as a whole, according to the most scientific, modern, and effective means". The choice of socialism, particularly African socialism, as a political doctrine, was aimed, according to Senghor (1964:107), at making the "anticolonialist struggle effective", informed by a need for "a practical method that would be the application of a certain theory". If the African Renaissance advocates (Makgoba et, 1999:i) sought "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses", and looked up to African philosophers to provide some philosophical solutions, African socialism was Senghor's answer to this quest. Along similar lines, another delegate (in Zolberg, 1964:118) expressed the view that socialism was the right choice because "its scientific method for the analysis of reality will enable us to us to understand the realities of our nation and hence to transform them rationally". Yet, another delegate (in Zolberg, 1964:118) having declared that socialism was a "method for the understanding of social realities and more particularly economic realities", argued that "[as] such it [socialism] is scientific" and that "[f]ar from being the exclusive property of a single determined ideology, it is the common source of all those who are in search of objectivity". If, as the preceding observation suggests, socialism is not the exclusive property of any single determined ideology, but a common source of all those who are in search of objectivity, why then distinguish "African Socialism" from other socialisms?

Part of the answer to this question can be answered by providing observations made by Senghor about "African Socialism" and "scientific socialism". Senghor (1964:77), in elucidating his argument, emphasised the need to recognise that scientific socialism, also known as what Karl Marx referred to as "dialectical materialism", was "born of history and geography; it was born in the nineteenth century in Western Europe." This being the case, Senghor (ibid) further argued, Marx's dialectical materialism was essentially designed to analyse the environment in which it was born, and to transform it. On this score, the facts of history stand on Senghor's side. Reflecting on the "emergence and subsequent impact of Marx's thought", Spencer (2013:xxv) observes that it is "tempting to see his ideas and writings as being the product of a particular stage in the development of European thought and culture". This means that Marx's

writings, despite his commitment to internationalism, exposed the influence of his geographical and cultural origins. John Elster (cited in Spencer, 2013:xxi) observes that even though, on the one hand, Marx's writings were meant to motivate "factory workers of the world", on the other hand, Marx "assumes that *his* readers know Greek, Latin and the major European languages; that they are capable of recognizing remote allusions to literary and philosophical works, besides being thoroughly familiar with the arcane matters of political economy". The geographical fact of the origins, and influence thereof, on Marx's thought also comes out in *The Communist Manifesto,* a book authored by Marx and Engels (2008:3). The very first sentence makes reference to a "spectre [that] is haunting Europe", this spectre being communism. In this same sentence reference is made to the powers of "old Europe […] French Radicals and German-spies"

In the third paragraph of *The Communist Manifesto,* the European origins of the book and their influence come out clearly again: "Communism is already acknowledged by all European Powers to be itself a power." (ibid) And if there were any doubts about the influence communism's European origins, the following, in the fourth paragraph of *The Communist Manifesto* (ibid), the observation that communists of "various nationalities have assembled in London, and sketched the following Manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish languages", should remove them. None of the foregoing questions Karl Marx's commitment to internationalism. But Senghor's argument sought to emphasise that internationalism did not preclude a national and continental consciousness. Senghor (1964:90) sought to highlight that the Russians and the Chinese, in becoming communists, did not become less Russian and Chinese, but were more Russian and Chinese, exhumed and exalted their nationalities' civilisations (ibid). Senghor (1964:77) argued that even in the European environment in which dialectical materialism was born, philosophers, writers and artists, went beyond Marx's contributions and enriched them in order to adapt them to their own time and conditions. Senghor (ibid) pointed out further that in the case of the Chinese and the Israelis, these nations were able to find their own road to socialism, "adapted to the spirit and realities of their native soil", adding that these examples inspired and informed the choice of African socialism. If the Chinese could, and did find their own road to socialism, adapted to the *spirit* and *realities* of their own *native* soil, Africans were no less entitled to such a choice. In advancing the choice and the preference of the notion of socialism, Senghor (1964:83) made it explicit that for those who made African socialism, as opposed to scientific socialism, their choice, "socialism is a *method* to be tested in contact with African realities". Senghor (1964:49)

held the view that an examination of African history would reveal that because in the past the Negro-African society was "collectivist or, more exactly, communal", therefore, Africans "had already achieved socialism before the coming of the Europeans", and, consequently, the duty facing Africans "is to renew it by helping it to regain its spiritual dimensions". In other words, Senghor held the view that the choice of African socialism was an act of the African Renaissance, this conclusion being based on his use of the word "renew". Giving emphasis to this view, Senghor (1964:132) pointed out that African socialism was "a return to our roots, to the values of *Négritude*". Négritude was about treading cautiously, about Africans being critical in their encounter with foreign ideologies. Négritude was not a question of rejecting of being hostile to other ideologies as such, but rather "a question of not accepting them without examination", of opposition to assimilation (Senghor, 1964:165).

On May 16 – 19, 1960, Senghor, presented a paper entitled "The African Road to Socialism: Attempt at a Definition" to the first Young Seminar of the Party of African Federation (PFA) (Senghor, 1964:67). The paper, which was later anthologised in his book *On African Socialism*, published in 1964, sought to advance the need to rethink the "socialist doctrine, more specifically, of its method […] *in the light of African realities*" (Senghor, 1964:67). Senghor's (1964:68) analysis of the socialist doctrine and its method/s led him to the conclusion that Africans' "error" was not that they had fought against colonialism with the "weapons of colonialism" but with the "weapons of Europe". What he meant by this was that in the struggle against colonialism, Africans borrowed the weapons of the European proletariat who had told Africans that the European proletariats' struggle and Africans' struggle were "identical", a point which Senghor disagreed with (ibid). While Senghor (ibid) was willing to concede that the struggles in Africa and Europe might be "similar", they were certainly not "identical". The difference was that while Africans, colonised by Europeans, were oppressed as "a race or a people", the European proletariats were oppressed as a "class" (ibid). Linked to the foregoing argument, Senghor (ibid) further argued that colonial oppression of Africans by Europeans entailed cultural oppression by the latter in that European racists despised Africans and claimed that Africans were "ugly to boot" and "primitive" (ibid). Having elevated themselves, and relegated Africans in this manner, European colonialists then further claimed that "progress and civilization could only be European" (ibid). On the basis of this claim, European colonialists then claimed that "European civilization was identified with the Civilization of the Universal and thus should be adopted as *the* Universal Civilization" (ibid). Returning to the point of equating the European proletariats' struggle to the colonised Africans' struggle, which

he called a "romantic theme popularized in Europe", Senghor (1964:68 – 69) argued that such a claim did "not stand analysis". This was because, Senghor (1964:69) argued, European colonisation and conquest was not only beneficial to the European capitalistic bourgeoisie, but also the European middle classes and the proletariat, in that European conquest "permitted the emigration of 'poor whites' to the colonized countries, the conquest of exotic markets, easy sources of raw materials". As a consequence of European conquest, Europe could industrialise and afford a "higher living standard for the European masses" (ibid). Senghor (ibid) outlined all the above arguments to demonstrate that "independence of the spirit, cultural independence, is the necessary prerequisite of other independences: political, economic and social" (ibid). In critiquing "European socialism", Senghor's (1964:69) objective was to demonstrate that "this socialism, even the 'scientific socialism' of Marx and Engels, cannot be accepted in its present form – as too many African intellectuals do, whether they be students or trade unionists". One of Senghor's (ibid) reasons for critiquing European socialism, including scientific socialism, was that "the knowledge of Marx and Engels was conditioned by their era, by the rather limited progress of science and philosophy". Having chosen African Socialism, Senghor's (1964:3) "African road to socialism [had to be] built on national values and starting from national realities": "From our ancestors, we have inherited our own method of knowledge" (Senghor, 1964:72).

For some at the 1962 colloquium in Senegal, the concept "African Socialism" was an expression of a quest for originality, and tied to that, a struggle for conceptual decolonisation (Zolberg, 1964:119). It was an expression of economic decolonization on Africans' own terms independent from the influence of Marx and Engels' theory which was "designed in the nineteenth century according to European scientific methods and realities" (cited in Zolberg, 1964:119). A view existed at the colloquium that socialism had to take into consideration "African realities", and this being "particularly necessary because Marx and Engels were not anticolonial" (ibid). It was argued that "Engels defended classical slavery and Marx supported British colonization of India." (ibid) Linked to the argument about distinguishing African Socialism from that informed by European conditions and thinking, a view was expressed at the colloquium that given the achievement of socialism in Europe involved the mobilisation of the propertyless against those who controlled the means of production in Africa, this was not the case, the logic being that since in Africa "there is no class struggle, African socialism will be gradual and peaceful" (ibid). There was a sense at the colloquium that in Africa, "a society which has never been really stratified into classes a redistribution of wealth is a normal process"

(in Zolberg, 1964:122). This supposedly being the case, "the provision of equality for all is merely translating into modern terms what goes on all the time and perhaps extending it more consciously beyond the confines of the extended family" (ibid). The suggestion of translating African Socialism "into modern times" implies a subscription to the view that socialism existed in Africa in "traditional times" or in the past. Hence, one participant (ibid), invoking Senghor, understood African Socialism as a "*return to Africanism*". African Socialism was seen as a true expression of African culture in that while African culture puts emphasis on the interests of a community as a whole, it does "not wish to sacrifice the individual in favour of the collectivity" (in Zolberg, 1964:122). In this sense, therefore, "African Socialism can provide a middle ground: it can be both 'man-oriented' and 'community-oriented'" (Zolberg, 1964:122). The expression of the view that there was no class struggle in Africa did not, however, imply that participants at the colloquium were oblivious to the reality of contradictions between the corrupt ruling African elites, and the masses of the people (Zolberg, 1964:121). Corruption on the part of the ruling African elites impoverished the masses while the elites received "excessive wages" and positioned themselves in such a way that they became involved in "fraudulent conversion of public funds", resulting in the alienation of the masses from economic development (in Zolberg, 1964:121). So, there was an appreciation for "African Socialists [that] the end of the colonial regime [would] not automatically bring about the end of alienation" (in Zolberg, 1964:121). The convictions of the advocates of African Socialism were in opposition to the growing gap which separated the "class of the privileged of the new regime" – politicians, civil servants, the military – from the rural and urban masses, including the jobless youth (in Zolberg, 1964:121). The latter articulation gives an indication that there were differences of opinion even among the advocates of African socialism regarding the existence of classes and class struggles in Africa. On the one side, as pointed out earlier, some argued that there was "no class struggle" in Africa, and that, therefore, "African socialism will be gradual and peaceful". On the other hand, there was a recognition of the existence of "the class of the privileged" against which "socialist convictions are in revolt" and a class of the unemployed and jobless youth (in Zolberg, 1964:121).

The quest for invoking traditional values was not blind. There was recognition that in some African communities, there existed feudal and corrupt practices upon which, on their arrival, the colonialists built on against African masses (Zolberg, 1964:123). The invocation of tradition, the squest for a return to Africanism, did not translate into embracing practices where traditional leaders in Africa practised corruption. As one participant (cited in Zolberg,

1964:123) noted, such a view was "not [to] advocate a crusade against traditions", further explaining that traditions "which represent our past civilization, our attachment to moral values and individual genius, will be jealously guarded". Yet, at the same time, the participant (ibid) emphasised, traditions "which are the by-products of declining centuries will be denounced and combated with our last breath". In line with the preceding sentiments, one participant (ibid), in advancing a balanced argument regarding the "role of traditional values in African Socialism", noted where elements of nepotism, bribery and corruption might have been manifested, the objective was to expunge all such imperfections without, though, destroying the sense of community which sometimes gave rise to such ills (ibid).

It is worth noting that at the Dakar Colloquium, attention was brought to the importance of, and the centrality of the African masses. In an observation reminiscent of Fanon, one observer (cited in Zolberg, 1964:124) noted that it was "essential to associate the citizens with the design and the realization of the plan". But, as the observer emphasised, reminiscent of Fanon, this was "not a matter of gaining their formal support or of mobilizing them by a simple recourse to commands" (ibid). To the contrary, the necessity was to "make the population conscious of the policy of development" in order to enable people to "experience the problems, to make them will the means, first at the level of village realities, and then, step by step, at the level of regional and national realities (cited in Zolberg, 1964:124 – 125).

It was in the same year, 1962, and in the same month, December, that proponents of African Socialism gathered at the Dakar Colloquium, that *The Spark*, a publication owned by Nkrumah's party, the Convention People's Party (CPP), was established. It wasted no time in dismissing notions of African Socialism as "spurious" and "neo-colonialist" (Legum, 1964:151). The proponents of African Socialism, argued *The Spark*, had a historic mission of combating, and if possible, defeating scientific socialism, firstly by introducing elements "alien to socialist thought, and secondly by denying some of the foundations of socialist ideology" (ibid). The publication also dismissed the view that the nature of traditional African society was "communalistic", a view, ironically, that was held by Kwame Nkrumah (as we shall see later), the leader of the CPP whose publication *The Spark* was (ibid). Characterising traditional African society's life as "collectivist" was a "mere illusion", *The Spark* argued (ibid). *The Spark* further argued that African traditional society's life was neither a classless society, nor were its relations harmonious (ibid). Instead, *The Spark* further charged, traditional African society was a feudal system based on the hegemony of a few big families "lording it over less privileged ones and even serfs", and where human rights were "non-existent and

industrialization was absent" (ibid). Regarding the responsibility of socialist parties in Africa, *The Spark* held the view that they had to put emphasis on the notion of the "class struggle" (Legum, 1964:151 – 152). Socialist parties in Africa, in *The Spark*'s view, had to "wage unrelenting war against the view that there are no classes in Africa" because "classes do exist in Africa both in the sense of economic groups occupying different positions in the production system (that is as employers, self-employed, workers, etc.) and in the sense of different income groups" (Legum, 1964:152). The denial of the existence of classes in Africa, *The Spark* argued, was "ultimately a denial for socialism in Africa" (ibid). In view of the arguments above, *The Spark* argued, therefore, that the obligation of socialist parties in Africa was to "quickly spotlight and destroy any attempt to revise or even deny some fundamentals of socialism under the guise of creating an 'African socialism'" (ibid).

In a strong identification with the notion of African Socialism, philosophising along with Senghor, was former Tanzanian head of state, Julius Nyerere, whose African Socialism was expressed as ujaama in KiSwahili. Like Senghor, Nyerere (1968:14) objected strongly to an "apparent tendency among certain socialists" who were trying to "establish a new religion – a religion of socialism itself". This "new religion", Nyerere (ibid) argued further was called "scientific socialism" and in it the "works of Marx and Lenin are regarded as the holy writ in the light of which all other thoughts and actions of socialists have to be judged". As far as Nyerere (1968:15) was concerned, the "attempt to create a new religion out of socialism [was] absurd", and, in his view, "not scientific", and, "almost certainly not Marxist". While Karl Marx was a "combatant and quarrelsome a socialist" and a "great thinker", Nyerere (ibid) argued that Marx was "not God" or an "infallible divinity". While the works of Marx and Lenin were useful to a socialist, and much could be learnt from their methods of analysis, Nyerere (ibid), just like Senghor, argued that it was important to take into cognisance that Marx and Lenin's philosophies were produced in certain objective conditions. Having made this point, Nyerere (ibid) further pointed out that African conditions were very different from Europe's in which Marx and Lenin wrote". Nyerere (ibid) further pointed out that to talk as if Marx and Lenin "provided all the answers to our problems, or as if Marx invented socialism, is to reject both the humanity of Africa and the universality of socialism". While Marx did contribute a great deal to socialist thought, Nyerere (ibid) argued that "socialism did not begin with him, nor can it end in constant reinterpretations of his writings".

The debate around "African socialism" or "scientific socialism" in Nkrumah's (1973:439) view, tended to "lose its objective content in favour of a distracting terminology and in favour of a general confusion". In Nkrumah's (ibid) view, the discussion centred more on the various conceivable types of socialism than upon the need for socialist development. But Nkrumah himself could not resist entering into this debate, and taking sides in it. Pronouncing his views, Nkrumah (ibid) distinguished between African leaders he referred to as "socialists in Africa" and "African socialists". Socialists in Africa were those who, in Nkrumah's (ibid) view, used the term "socialism" to describe a complex of social purposes and the consequential social and economic policies with the ultimate aim of bringing about socialism. For "socialists in Africa", the objective is to "remould African society in the socialist direction; to reconsider African society in such a manner that the humanism of traditional African life reasserts itself in a modern technical community".

With reference to "African socialists", Nkrumah (1973:440) pointed out that some African political leaders used the term "African socialism" in order to "label the concrete forms that socialism might assume in Africa". Nkrumah's (ibid) response to this stance was that the realities of the "diverse and irreconcilable social, political and economic policies" pursed by the African leaders of the day "made the term 'African socialism' meaningless and irrelevant". Nkrumah (1973:439) remarked that "African socialists" used the term "socialism" in the belief that socialism would, citing Chandler Morse, "smooth the road to economic development". In Nkrumah's view (ibid), "African socialists" found it necessary to employ the term "socialism" in a "charismatic effort to rally support". As far as Nkrumah (ibid) was concerned, "African socialists"' policies did not "really promote economic and social development" (ibid).

A close reading of Nkrumah's writings reveals, though, that he, himself, once subscribed to the notion of "African socialism", meaning, therefore, that he was first an "African socialist" before he elected to be a "socialist in Africa". Such a conclusion is based on Nkrumah's (1973:440) observation that the uncertainties concerning the meaning and specific policies of "African socialism" had led "some of us to abandon the term" because it failed to express its original meaning and tended to obscure fundamental socialist commitments. If Nkrumah, in 1966, made the argument above, it must mean that before he *abandoned* the term "African socialism", he had embraced it before. This appears to be strongly the case if two historical issues are taken into cognisance. The first is that at the 5th Pan African Congress (PAC) held in Manchester in 1945, Nkrumah (1971:52 – 53) observes, that while, on the one hand, "both capitalist and reformist solutions to the African colonial problems were rejected", on the other

hand, "the Congress unanimously endorsed the doctrine of African socialism". Significantly, according to Nkrumah (1971:53), not only did the 5th PAC, adopt "African socialism", but also "adopted Marxist socialism as its philosophy". The second is that at one stage Nkrumah (in Legum, 1964:140) had argued that his party, the Convention People's Party (CPP) should be disciplined, well-led, and "fortified by the African Socialist ideology which will reinforce the invincibility of our Party". Of significance here is that Nkrumah made reference to an "African Socialist ideology", not "Socialist African ideology", an indication that, indeed, Nkrumah, at one stage, was an adherent of, and subscribed to "African Socialism". If Nkrumah argued that at the time that "African socialists" had deviated from the original meaning of the concept, before the abandonment of African socialism, the concept represented a particular notion he subscribed to. If this be true, then, it becomes necessary to interrogate what Nkrumah understood by "African socialism". His book, *Consciencism: Philosophy An Ideology For De-Colonisation*, published first in 1964, gives us a clue. The ideas expressed in the book suggest that Nkrumah (1970a:68) fervently subscribed to the view that the "traditional face of Africa includes an attitude towards man which can only be described, in its social manifestation, as being socialist". This, Nkrumah (ibid) further pointed out, arose from the "fact that man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with a certain inward dignity, integrity and value". In contrast to Christianity, Nkrumah (ibid) charged, traditional Africa was "opposed to the Christian idea of the original sin and degradation of man". The idea of the "original value of man", therefore, Nkrumah (1970a:69) further argued, "imposes duties of a socialist kind upon us. Herein lies the theoretical basis of African communalism." Nkrumah (1970a:73) held the conviction that communalism was the "social-political ancestor of socialism". This being the case, Nkrumah (1970a:76) held an equally strong view that capitalism was "irreconcilable with those basic principles which animate the traditional African society" (ibid). This was the case for Nkrumah (ibid) because the "evil of capitalism consists in its alienation of the fruit of labour from those who with the toil of their body and the sweat of the brow produce this fruit" (ibid). Under capitalism, the portion of society which transforms nature and produces goods is not the one which enjoys the fruits of this transformation and productivity (Nkrumah, 1970a:71). Instead, while one class of the citizens toils, another class reaps where it has not sown (ibid). Not only was capitalism for Nkrumah (1970a:76) "unjust" and "too complicated to be workable", it was also "alien" to Africa. Being irreconcilable with capitalism, socialism "stands for the negation of that principle wherein capitalism has its being, lives and thrives, that principle which links capitalism with slavery and feudalism" (Nkrumah, 1970a:73). The theoretical basis of African communalism,

on the other hand, resonated with socialism because it "expressed itself on the social level in terms of institutions such as the clan, underlining the initial equality of all and the responsibility of many for one" (Nkrumah, 1970a:69). In the traditional African society, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, no sectional interest could be regarded as supreme; nor did legislative and executive power aid the interests of any particular group. The welfare of the people was supreme." These views, first articulated in *Consciencism*, linking socialism to traditional Africa in 1964, Nkrumah (1973a:441) would reiterate again in a paper in which he disavowed "African socialism". Critical as he was of "African socialism", he pointed out that "not withstanding" his criticism, he could still argue that the "basic organization of many African societies in different periods of history manifested a certain communalism" (ibid). This being the case, therefore, meant that the "philosophy and humanist purposes behind that organization are worthy of recapture" (ibid). In other words, for Nkrumah, traditional African communalism laid a philosophical basis for an African Renaissance founded on socialism to bring about an Africa based on humanism. In advancing his argument, Nkrumah (ibid) advocated a "philosophical approach [which] stands on much firmer ground and makes generalization feasible", instead of an "anthropological approach to the 'traditional African society [which] is too unproven". Thus, for Nkrumah (ibid), what socialist thought had to recapture in Africa, wss not the structure of traditional African society, but the African spirit of communalism captured in African humanism, its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare. If Nkrumah's arguments in 1966 were so similar, if not the same as those he made in 1964, what were the contradictions between his associates, the "socialists in Africa", and those he opposed, the "African socialists"? Justifying his abandonment of the term "African socialism", since in his view it had lost its "original meaning", as citied above, Nkrumah's (1973a:440) charge against "African socialists" was that their approach was both superficial and ahistorical. The espousal of the concept "African socialism" seemed to suggest, Nkrumah (ibid) that the traditional African society was "classless" a view that was devoid of historical or even anthropological evidence for any such a society (ibid). Feudalism, argued Nkrumah (ibid) further, "existed in some parts of Africa before colonization; and feudalism involves a deep and exploitative social stratification, founded on the ownership of land" (ibid). It is important to note that Nkrumah did not say that all of Africa was characterised by feudalism but that it was *some parts of Africa* that had such characteristics. In being critical of these characteristics in some parts of Africa, was not the same thing as not acknowledging that "the 'traditional African society' was founded on principles of egalitarianism" (Nkrumah, 1973a:441). Nkrumah (1970b:13) appreciated that in "traditional times", under communalism, all land and

means of production belonged to the community. This arrangement meant that there was a "people's ownership" of the land, and that "[l]abour was the need and habit of all" (ibid). The allocation of a piece of land to an individual did not entitle and individual to do as s/he wished because the land continued to belong to the community (ibid).

Taking the above into consideration, Nkrumah (ibid) argued that the "political maturity of the African masses may to some extent be traced to economic and social patterns of traditional times". In appreciating traditional African society's egalitarianism, simultaneously, was not the same as turning a blind eye to the fact that "[i]n its actual workings, however, it had its various shortcomings" (Nkrumah, 1973a:441). Shortcomings notwithstanding, traditional African society's "humanist impulse", Nkrumah (ibid) argued, "is something that continues to urge us towards our all-African socialist reconstruction", in other words, a pan-African Socialist Renaissance. Nkrumah's recognition of "egalitarianism" in the traditional African society, its shortcomings notwithstanding, led him to conclude that any meaningful humanism must have, as its point of departure, egalitarianism which, leading to "objectively chosen policies for safeguarding and sustaining egalitarianism. Hence socialism. Hence, also scientific socialism (Nkrumah, 1973a:442). The point that Nkrumah (1973a:444) sought to emphasise was that socialism was "not spontaneous", or, in other words, would "not arise by itself". Nkrumah (ibid) recognised and acknowledged that socialist countries in Africa may "differ in this or that detail of their policies, but such differences themselves ought not to be arbitrary or subject to vagaries of taste". Such differences would have to be scientifically explained as necessities arising from differences in the particular circumstances of the countries themselves (ibid). If the building of scientific socialism were to be accomplished, those who aspired to usher such a society had to be conscious of, and acknowledge the fact "the defeat of colonialism and even neo-colonialism will not result in the automatic disappearance of the imported patterns of thought and social organization" (Nkrumah, 1973a:442). The reality, which had to be taken into cognisance, seriously, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, was that colonial "patterns have taken root, and are in varying degrees sociological features of our contemporary society". Achievement of scientific socialism depended, in Nkrumah's (1973a:445) view, on the "elimination of fancifulness from socialist action that makes socialism scientific". Attaching "tribal", "national" or "racial" labels to socialism was, in Nkrumah's (ibid) view, "chauvinism". Nkrumah's foregoing observation suggests that he believed that "African socialists" were not objective. His examination of "African socialists"' literature suggested that even with the invasion of colonialism, African societies retained their communalistic character

(Nkrumah, 1973a:442). Nkrumah, emphatically opposed this view, arguing that African societies before colonialism, on the one hand, and African societies after the invasion of colonialism, on the other hand, were not coterminous (ibid). Having dismissed the notion that the traditional communalistic character of Africa remained intact after colonialism, in opposing "African socialism", and proposing "scientific socialism", Nkrumah (ibid) argued that "a simple return to the communalistic society of ancient Africa [did not] offer a solution either". Advocating "a return" to Africa's ancient communalistic society, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, though a "charming thought", was unrealistic, because modern Africa was confronted with modern challenges which had arisen from political subjugation, economic exploitation, educational, social backwardness, population increases, etc. (ibid). Even though Nkrumah (1973a:444) maintained, unequivocally, and consistently so, that "there is a connection between communalism and socialism", that "[s]ocialism stands to communalism as capitalism stands to slavery", and that socialism "can be, and is, the defence of the principles of communalism in a modern setting", he simultaneously argued that "whereas communalism in a non-technical society can be laissez-faire, in a technical society where sophisticated means of production are at hand, the situation is different". Nkrumah (1970a:69) held and advanced the view that capitalism infiltrated and entrenched itself through colonialism, whose chief instrument was Eurocentric education. This was the case because for the accomplishment of its task, the colonial administration required "a cadre of Africans, who, by being introduced to a certain minimum of European education, became infected with European ideals, which they tacitly accepted as being valid for African societies" (ibid). The African educated class, in turn, acquired a certain rank and prestige "to which they were not entitled by the demands of the harmonious development of their own society" (ibid). The educated class, which Nkrumah (1970b:10) referred to as the African bourgeoisie, "the class which thrived under colonialism, is the same class which is benefitting under the post-independence, neocolonial period". The African bourgeoisie's basic interests lay in preserving capitalist social and economic structures, in alliance with international monopoly finance capital and neo-colonialism, "and in direct conflict with the African masses, whose aspirations can only be fulfilled through scientific socialism" (Nkrumah, 1970b:10 – 12). Even though Senghor, on the one hand, represented African socialism, and rejected scientific socialism, and Nkrumah, on the other hand, rejected African socialism in favour of scientific socialism, both philosophers believed that socialism was the answer, and a practical solution to the hard life of the African masses. This means, then that the quest by the African Renaissance advocates for political philosophers "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses" was

attended to even if from different perspectives (Makgoba et al, 1999:i). Nkrumah (1970b:12) believed that the African bourgeoisie "are committed to capitalism because of their background, their western education, and their shared experience and enjoyment of positions of privilege". In a relentless attack, Nkrumah (ibid) further charged that the African bourgeoisie "ape the way of life of their old colonial masters, and are determined to preserve the status and power inherited from them". This being the case, and in order to fulfil the needs of the African masses through scientific socialism, Nkrumah (1970b:9) argued strongly that "a determined attack must be made on the entrenched position of the minority elements amongst our own peoples". The minority elements Nkrumah (ibid) referred to were the African bourgeoisie because the acquisition of independence had exposed class struggles which pointed to the "unity between the interests of neo-colonialism and the indigenous bourgeoisie. The existence of class divisions, and, consequently, the relevance of class struggle, Nkrumah (1970b:10) further pointed out, "became blurred during the pre-independence period, when it seemed there was national unity and all classes joined forces to eject the colonial power". This joining of forces "led some to proclaim that there were no class divisions in Africa, and that the communalism and egalitarianism of traditional African society made any notion of a class struggle out of the question" (ibid). The "fallacy" of the argument which ignored the relevance of class struggle had been submerged during the struggle for political freedom but "reappeared, often with increased intensity, particularly in those states where the newly independent government embarked on socialist policies (ibid). Nkrumah's observation with reference to the reappearance of class cleavages, was informed by personal experience as a leader of his government and that of his ruling party, the Convention People's Party (CPP). Some within the CPP regarded "socialism with disdain" since in their view they saw socialism posing an "elimination of whatever privileges they possess[ed]" (Legum, 1964:132). With the growth of the CPP, and the increasing heterogeneity of its composition, Nkrumah realised that there lurked "danger"in that the party's socialist objectives could be "clouded by opportunistic accommodations and adjustments to petit bourgeois elements in our ranks who are unsympathetic and sometimes even hostile to the social aims to which the Party is dedicated" (in Legum, 1964:134). The CPP, as a political party, and the ruling party, was committed to socialism, and socialism meant the "public ownership of the means of production – the land and its resources – and the use of those means for production that will bring benefit to the people" (Nkrumah in Obeng, 1997:72). Socialism, Nkrumah (ibid) argued, was not intended for individual private poverty which deprived large sections of people goods and services produced

The building of socialism on depended on the existence of socialists – in other words socialism could not be built without socialists (Nkrumah in Obeng, 1997:83). If this, then, was the case, it meant that the CPP and the country at large, needed to produce women and men who would be able to handle a socialist programme. To produce such a calibre of women and men required concentration on the development of "socialist education" (Nkrumah in Obeng, 1997:72). In line with these preconditions, Nkrumah (in Obeng, 1997:78) articulated the view that the CPP and his government should seek the cooperation of everyone and every organisation concerned with performing the basic work needed to make success of such a plan. That is because, Nkrumah (ibid) further argued, it was "only with the wholehearted interests and support of the mass of the people in the carrying out of any such plan, that such a plan can succeed". This argument by Nkrumah gives a clear indication of his appreciation of the need for the *centrality of the African masses* in the successes of his socialist project. Because of the centrality of the masses in the success of the socialist revolution, Nkrumah (in Obeng, 1997:67) emphasised to the members of his party, the CPP, that it was essential to remember that the CPP's strength derived from the "masses of the people […] unknown warriors – dedicated men and women who serve the party loyally and selflessly without hoping for reward". It emerged, though, that the great majority of the CPP's members did not take seriously the CPP's commitment to socialism, their attachment to socialism being only if and when socialism "merely served the Party as a slogan" (Legum, 1964:144). Such an attitude, Nkrumah realised, spelled doom for the socialist project because it alienated the key players needed for the realisation of the socialist project – the African masses. Faced with high levels of corruption, what Nkrumah (1997:75) referred to as the "shocking disregard for and misuse of public funds and property that presently obtains, especially in such departments as the public works and the transport services", Nkrumah (in Obeng, 1997:67) reasoned that it was natural, therefore, for the masses of the people to be resentful when they saw the people they had put into power with the mandate of serving the country on their behalf, forgetting the mission assigned to them and indulging in ostentatious living. Confronted with these challenges – threats to the socialist project, the alienation and marginalisation of the masses – Nkrumah (in Legum, 1964:144) advanced the view that a point had been reached in the life of the Ghanaian nation when it was a prerequisite to recapture the "lofty spirit" of the past and impress upon the CPP's members that the national task was not individual gain and personal prosperity but "service to the country and the masses for the cultivation of popular prosperity". In the same way that Nkrumah (1970a:68) argued that Africa's traditional face includesd an attitude towards humanity which could, in its social manifestation, only be described as being socialist, Nyerere (1968:16) also argued that

"traditional African society was in practice organized on a basis which was in accordance with socialist principles". With specific reference to Tanzania, Nyerere (ibid) argued that "traditional Tanzanian society had many socialist characteristics". To be sure, Nyerere (ibid) was conscious of the fact that the Tanzanian people did not call themselves socialits, and were not socialists by deliberate design. Yet, Nyerere (ibid) all Tanzanians were workers, and did not live off the sweat of others. The absence of vast amounts of difference in the amount of goods available to the different members of the society was a mark of socialist characteristics (ibid). By pointing to the traditionality and indigenity of African socialism, Nyerere sought to achieve at least two interrelated aims, simultaneously. The first was that socialism was not a foreign import to Africa. African socialism, in other words, was not an adaptation of Marxism or Leninism to Africa. In line with Senghor's argument, cited earlier, Nyerere (1968:15) emphasised that Africa's conditions were very different from those of Europe in which Marx and Lenin wrote. He rejected arguments that gave the impression that that, firstly, gave the impression that Marx and Lenin had all answers to humanity's problems and that, secondly, Marx was the inventor of socialism. Such arguments, Nyerere (ibid) further pointed out, were the denial of both the humanity of Africa and the universality of socialism (ibid). While, on the one hand, Nyerere (ibid) acknowledged Marx's great contribution to socialist thought, he also argued, on the other hand, that socialism neither began with Marx, nore nor would it end in constant reinterpretation of his writings. Nyerere's second aim, linked to the first, was that socialism was indigenous in Africa. Having argued, as cited above, that traditional Africa was characterised by socialist principles, Nyerere (1968:16) went on to argue that in many parts of Africa, including in urban areas, there continued to be social expectations of people sharing what they had. The rejection of this base, Nyerere (ibid) further argued was to submit to the idea that Africa had nothing to contribution to the march of humankind and tantamount to arging that the only way Africa could make progress was the rejection by Africans of their own part and imposing upon themselves the doctrines of some other society. To recognise and accept that prior colonialism Africa had her own model of socialism, lay the basis for Nyerere to be able to argue that the invocation of socialism was simply a recalling of an African traditional way of life, a basis for an African Renaissance. Having heard the arguments of the proponents of socialism, in general, and African socialism, in particular, we now return to the opponent of such an argument, in particular, Gyekye.

6.7 Socialism in Africa: A Critique

Gyekye (1997:148) argues that the "alleged relation of identity" between African traditional society and socialism can be denied on the basis that not everything associated with communalism can be associated with socialism. In advancing this argument, Gyekye (ibid) points out that while on the one hand, communalism is "essentially a socioethical doctrine, not particularly – or perhaps only narrowly – economic", on the other hand, socialism, "which was understood by the African political leaders as Marxian socialism, is fundamentally economic, concerned, as a matter of testament, with the relations of production". Gyekye (ibid) emphasises that the "basic premises of socialism are economic", adding that while the concern of socialism with such moral values such as justice and equality can be acknowledged, such concern is certainly not idiosyncratic with socialism. Even if concern with justice and equality can be associated with socialism, Gyekye (ibid) points out that it cannot be denied that "in the states where the socialist system was established injustices and inequalities existed". Before we proceed, it would be appropriate to examine Gyekye's arguments above. The first point that needs to be made is that not all African political leaders who advocated socialism, as pointed out above, were Marxian, and this being the case, it is wrong to suggest, as Gyekye does, that for all of them, socialism was "fundamentally economic". In his readings of the African socialists' arguments, Gyekye must have missed Senghor's (1964:108) following argument in which Senghor made it clear that socialism should not be reduced or limited to economics. Senghor (ibid) held the conviction that "the object of socialism is not the economy, as too many Marxists now believe, but concrete, living man, in his totality, body and soul". In opposing scientific socialism or Marxism, Senghor (1964:83) rejected "especially its *atheistic* materialism". As pointed out above, Nyerere associated his socialism, ujaama, with "family" and, as pointed out in the chapter on family, family in African traditional African cultures refers to the departed, those occupying the earth, and those yet-to-be-born. This being the case, therefore, contrary to Gyekye's argument, African socialism, like its ancestor, communalism, can be regarded, using Gyekye's (ibid) own words (a point he disputes), as "essentially a socioethical doctrine, not particularly – or perhaps only narrowly – economic". If Gyekye had confined the argument above to Marxists, he could be given a benefit of doubt about his claims – but he does not. Gyekye (1997:149) singles out the "advocates of African socialism" who, "in making the traditional communitarian system a justificatory basis for their choice of the socialist ideology", interpreted traditional communalism "as an entirely economic system that can easily evolve into a socialist economy in a modern setting". Such an interpretation (which

is not the case, as pointed out above), Gyekye (ibid) strongly argues, is "erroneous". The reason for his disputation, Gykye (ibid) points out, is the same that he advances in the case of Marxian socialists, that being that "the communitarian doctrine, to repeat, is essentially a *socioethical* doctrine, not markedly economic". Gyekye's (ibid) understanding is that while, on the one hand, the communal doctrine is about social relations, that is, how individuals relate to one another in a society, not limited to social-political relations, on the other hand, the socialist docrine, is primarily an economic arrangement, involving public control of the economy, notwithstanding the fact that it "genuinely cherishes the ethical values of social justice and equality". Further arguing against Nkrumah's statement that there is a "continuity of communalism with socialism", dismissing it as an "oversimplification", Gyekye (1997:148) points out that the "modern socialist conception" of public ownership is different from the conception of communitarian ownership in that while the "traditional conception of ownership of the land admits the right of the individual member of the group or lineage to use the land, though not to own it, there is no room in the modern Marxian conception of state ownership for such a right". This being the case, Gyekye (ibid) argues further, "it is evident that the relation of communalism, as it is understood and operated in the traditional setting, to modern Marxian socialism has been misconstrued". Again, here, Gyekye does not clearly distinguish between those who were regarded as "African socialists" and those who were regarded as "socialist Africans". In this vein, Gyekye (1997:149) goes on to point out that the "European societies that gave birth to Marxian socialism were not markedly communitarian societies; they were in fact societies characterized by the ethos of individualism". Had Gyekye paid closer attention to the arguments made by Nyerere and Senghor, he would have appreciated that these African socialists appreciated the difference between, on the one hand, socialism of African origin, which they embraced, and, on the other hand, socialism of European origin, which they rejected.

Up to this point, we have paid attention to Gyekye's argument in which he makes the point that it is erroneous to attribute the ancestorship of socialism to African communalism. But even as he makes this point, Gyekye (1997:157) concedes that such an argument can be accommodated to a point, or partially. In making this concession, Gyekye (ibid) points out that it "would be correct to say […] that the traditional economic culture exhibited both the 'socialist' and capitalist methods in the economic lives of the people". That Gyekye puts the word "socialist" in inverted commas, and does not do the same with the word "capitalism" exposes his ideological bias or inclination. That he is entitled to, but his bias does cloud his arguments.

This inclination comes out clearly in his (Gyekye, 1997:155) observation that it "seems, however, that saving, thrift, capital accumulation, and efficient management of money can be practiced more at the level of the individual than of the state". In comparison to *individual efficient* management of money, Gyekye (ibid) further argues that at the "state level, the pursuit of welfare conceptions of the state, seen, for instance, in the dispensation of largess by the chief (the ruler), would often lead to the frittering away of state finance, making capital accumulation well-nigh impossible". That Gyekye (1997:159) favours capitalism, as opposed to socialism comes out clearly in his observation that "the capitalist system […] historically has been most successful in the creation of wealth, fundamental to the fulfillment of human needs and well-being". The critical question here is: does the creation of wealth by the capitalist system serve, using Gyekye's (ibid) words, the "fulfillment of human needs and well-being"? This does not seem to be the case. In South Africa, where the negotiation settlement did away with white minority rule, and agreed on "liberal capitalism" or the "free market economy", Terreblanche (2002:18) observes that the terms of this settlement were in such a way that the poorest half of the population had, eight years after South Africa's first inclusive elections found themselves "entrapped in a new form of oppression". Terreblanche (2002:16) is unequivocal in identifying capitalism as being responsible for the deterioration of the condition of the poorest half of South Africa since 1994 because, he argues, "capitalism is based on self-seeking inequality and conflicting individual and group interests". Terreblanche (ibid) further argues that the 'logic' of capitalism – given the unequal freedom and unequal rights upon which this economic system is base, is based – flies in the opposite direction of the 'logic' of democracy.

In exercising great cuation in declaring his attitude to socialism, Gyekye (1997:162) points out that "to be sure", he is not suggesting that a choice of a socialist economy cannot or should not be made by an African nation. Rather, Gyekye (ibid) expresses "doubt that the premises of the arguments for such a choice should essentially be derived from the African socioethical communitarian doctrine". While Gyekye exercises this cautious approach, he (Gyekye, 1997:163) also points out that from the point of view of development of the African economy, "most people will agree that the choice of socialism was a disaster", and a choice that had "devastating effects on the development efforts of many African nations". Relentlessly, Gyekye (ibid) argues further that the "failure of the pursuit of socialism led early African champions of that ideology, such as Nyerere, Kaunda, and Sékou Touré, to retreat, to retreat, though belatedly". In the case of Nyerere, "seeing the economy of his country in ruins and without any redemption from the message he had incessantly preached", he stepped down from

the "socialist throne he had occupied for a quarter of a century, his successor charting a different ideological course, having discarded the old dysfunctional or misleading ideological campus" (ibid). In the case of Sékou Touré, in the last years of being in power, he "drove a nail into the coffin of socialism in his country, and, after embracing a new ideology in his old age when realism was beginning to take over, was himself put in a coffin" (ibid).

An examination of literature relating to countries where capitalism has reigned supreme, reveals that the same arguments that Gyekye makes against socialism, can be made against capitalism. As Terreblanche (cited above) noted, the adoption of capitalism in South Africa resulted into the deterioration of the poor people's lives after 1994. South Africa is not a unique case. Having noted that the transition of Russia after 1989 was far from over, Stiglitz (2002:133) notes that the transition has "fallen far short of what the advocates of the market economy had promised, or hoped for". Instead, Stiglitz (ibid) further points out, for "the majority of those living in the former Soviet Union, economic life under capitalism has been worse even than the old Communist leaders had said it would be".

Even as Gyekye (1997:149 – 150) promises to advance arguments to "establish the fact that the concept of private enterprise or ownership is well understood and practiced in the traditional African culture of economic management", he finds himself obliged to acknowledge, or to "point out from the outset, however, that on the existence of the economic system of private enterprise in the traditional African culture, historical and anthropological opinion seems to be divided". In engaging with scholarship articulating divergent views on individual or private ownership of property, Gyekye (1997:150) quotes a British anthropologist, R.S. Rattray, who stated that in the Asante of Ghana's culture, "individual ownership in land did not exist". Gyekye (ibid) also quotes others who, "while affirming the existence of private property, seem to express doubts about its originality in the Ghanaian tradition, not knowing how far back in history the practice goes in that tradition". Making reference to southern Africa, Gyekye (ibid) cites S.M. Molema, who, in pointing out that "no race or society is really entirely communistic [that is, communal]", backs up his argument by pointing that "even among the Bantu, private property, such as cattle, existed side by side with communal property such as land".

Gyekye (1997:170), driven by the conviction that (a) the traditional African society bears both individualist and communitarian features, (b) there are materialist, acquisitive, and capitalist elements in the African character, and (c) communitarianism, as is traditionally understood and practiced, is essentially a socioethical system, not particularly economic, makes a number of

interrelated conclusions. The first is that African political thinkers and leaders, in their "strident and unrelenting advocacy of the socialist ideology as a basis for the development of their nations, cavalierly set aside […] wittingly or unwittingly, the individualist elements in African socioethical thought and practice". As a result of the existent "acquisitive, capitalistic element in the African character", Gyekye (1997:162) notes that it was not a surprising development to witness "during the heyday of the pursuit of socialism in postcolonial Africa, many individual members of the socialist parties and governments in African nations […] pursuing private business interests under the aegis at the expense of the masses". The foregoing observation by Gyekye was already acknowledged earlier, with particular reference to members of Nkrumah's party, the CPP, which, on the one hand, advocated socialism, while some leaders of the party pursued private economic practices in line with capitalism. Gyekye (1997:162 – 163) is correct, therefore, in arguing that in this way those holding political power or office became, at the same time, owners of property, shamessly exploiting the state apparatus by acquiring private property and business interests, thus the brandishing of socialism being a masquerade for practising capitalism. These actions that went contrary to the declaration of commitment to socialism, Gyekye (1997:163) further points out, had everything to do with the "acquisitive, capitalistic element in the African character that was asserting itself". A weakness in Gyekye's argument is that he is conflating socialism with the ill practices of socialists. The problem with that approach is that it does not assess socialism on its own merits. To his credit, Gyekye offered us a definition of socialism, which does not contradict the definition given by others. To his discredit, Gyekye does not offer a definition of capitalism. Without that, Gyekye's (1997:170) argument that there is a "materialist, acquisitive, and capitalist element in the African character", stands on a shaky ground. Marx and Engels (2008:16) define capitalism as an "expression of the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonism, on the exploitation of the many by the few". Marx and Engels objected to capitalism because it enabled the "exploitation of the many by the few". In recognising this feature of capitalism – exploitation – Nkrumah (1970a:78) argues that the "principles which inform capitalism are in conflict with the socialist egalitarianism of the African traditional African society". That communalism in traditional Africa accommodated private ownership of cattle, this existing side by side with disallowing selling and buying of land, was not an accommodation of a capitalist feature. The objection by African traditional culture to the selling and buying of land was a rejection of the exploitation of one human being by another using economic muscles to achieve this end. The African traditional economic system allowed private initiative or entrepreneurship as long as the profit motive which led to exploitation did

not have an upper hand. Another relevant and important point in this discussion that needs to be addressed is Gyekye's (1997:170) argument that "the traditional African society bears both individualist and communitarian features". In raising this point, Gyekye (1997:36 – 37) seeks to dispute the notion by some African philosophers that "individualism" was not accommodated in traditional communal Africa. Such an argument, Gyekye (1997:37) further points out, is "overstated and somewhat misleading". In defending the existence of "individualism" in traditional African society, Gyekye (1997:40) cites African proverbs such as "It is by individual effort that we can struggle for our heads" and "Nobody cracks palm kernels with his [or her] (square brackets original) teeth for another". To be sure, Gyekye does not deny that the community is very important in an individual's life. He (Gyekye, 1997:38) appreciates the Akan proverbs that emphasise the great role played by the community in shaping an individual such as (a) "When a human being descends from heaven, he [or she] descends into a human society", and (b) "A person is not a palm tree that he [or she] (square brackets original) should be complete or self-sufficient" (ibid). The existence of these proverbs, Gyekye (1997:41) argues, are "part of a body of evidence that the espousal of communal values does not in any way involve the rejection of individualistic values". The advancement of such a view "requires recognizing the claims of both communality and individuality and integrating individual desires and social ideals and demands" (ibid). These maxims are an indication, in Gyekye's (1996:49) of the the appreciation that success and well-being of the group depend on the exercise of individual members' unique talents and qualities. This being the case, therefore, Gyekye (1996:47) argues, "the individual is real and his or her individuality cannot be diminished by membership in a human community". Based on the foregoing analysis, Gyekye (1996:50) holds the view that the "fact that the African people express appreciation for both communal and individualistic values means that for them these two seemingly opposed concepts can co-exist, however precariously". A recognition of the above means, in Gyekye's (ibid) thinking, highlights "the need to strike a balance between communal and individualistic values".

How does Gyekye propose that this balancing act between "individualistic values" and communal values should be achieved? Gyekye (1996:51) suggests that African people and their cultures "should resist the path of extreme individualism, which will only lead to the rise of lonely crowds in their societies and the fragmentation of values and, in consequence, undermine the whole meaning and essence of a human society" (ibid). Does a rejection of "individualism" mean the same thing as a rejection of what Gyekye (1997:40) calls the

acknowledgment of the "intrinsic worth and dignity of the individual human person", her/his "individuality, individual responsibility and effort"? A reading of Kamalu's (1990:154) reflection on this issue suggests otherwise. Kamalu (ibid) observes that the "material individualism of Western society is the philosophy that each individual should be left alone to struggle for his/her own good". Such "individualism" advances the notion of an individual's independence that allows her or him to do as s/he wishes regardless of the thoughts and feelings of those in her surroundings (ibid). In constrast to the West's individualism, Africans practice "collectivism" (ibid)**.** This African "collectivism" can easily be misunderstood and misrepresented easily, the way Gyekye does, as if it refuses to accommodate "individuality". But that is not the case. As Kamalu (1990:27) explains, African collectivism recognises and accepts "individuality". If the African collectivist approach appreciates individuality, which Gyekye advances, where is the problem then? The problem lies with the use of the words, "individuality" and "individualism". The African philosophers which Gyekye criticises, object to "individualism", not "individuality". While Kamalu, on the one hand, distinguishes between "individuality" and "individualism", Gyekye (1996:51) uses the concepts, "individuality" and "individualism", interchangeably. That is the source of conflict and misunderstanding on Gyekye's part.

6.8 Conclusion

While the African Renaissance project has, historically been one aimed at regaining African people's freedom, in all respects – politically, economically and socially – such an exercise has not been carried out in a vacuum. There has been an emphasis that such a task must be carried out within an African cultural context. This means that in regaining their freedom, Africans wanted to shape their future on their own terms, retrieving from their history all the good practices that can serve as a basis for the future. This had to be done not just to demonstrate to the world that Africans have a past, contrary to the colonialists' claim who denied this fact, but for Africans' own psychological stability, to restore the confidence in their African selves that the colonialists sought to erode. It is against such a background that African philosophers examined indigenous African concepts such as consensus, in order to see how such can be reclaimed by Africans, so as to give an African meaning to the concept of democracy. In examining the concept "consensus" African philosophers did not paint a rose-coloured picture about Africans' consensual approach to democracy. The point that was recognised and emphasised was that consensus was preceded by dissensus. The point is that African philosophers recognised that there was no illusion that traditional Africans automatically

agreed on everything placed on the table for discussion. The exercise of consensus was not an easy, but could be a difficult and strenuous one. At times Africans recognised that despite the differences that existed in their communities, there was more that was common. In the spirit of consensus, they either set aside, or postponed for another day their differences and pursued issues that united them. African philosophers also acknowledged that even with the best of efforts, traditional Africans failed to find common ground and, consequently, communities split and went in different directions. The discussion on consensus also recognised that the political did not exclude the economic, and, therefore, interrogated how Africans, traditionally, pursued their economic lives. There is consensus that in managing their economies Africans emphasised communal welfare as opposed to private and individualistic interests. It is on the basis of this understanding that some African philosophers have argued that for the future Africans must reject capitalism and embrace socialism, in the belief that socialism is an African traditional practice that must be reclaimed. As can be expected, not only has there been a disagreement about what type of socialism – African socialism or scientific socialism – there has also been disagreement about the validity of the very claim that socialism is traditionally and indigenously African. For African philosophers advancing socialism, the conviction is that it is a practical strategy for future action that would benefit the African masses – a quest of the African Renaissance advocates.

If the African Renaissance advocates (Makgoba et, 1999:i) sought "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses", and looked up to African philosophers to provide some philosophical solutions, African socialism was Senghor's answer to this quest.

Conclusion

C. 1 Introduction

The point of departure of this study had, as its premise, the convening of the African Renaissance conference, whose quest was, among other objectives, the creation of a platform for Africans to define themselves and examine how they fitted in the global community (Makgoba et al, 1999:i). Two issues at the African Renaissance conference informed this study. The first was that the African Renaissance conference sought "to formulate practical strategies and solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses" (ibid). The second was that the conveners of the African Renaissance expressed the need for the identification of "political philosophies or mechanisms […] essential for the sustenance of the African Renaissance" (Makgoba et al, 1999:ii). Taking these foregoing observations into cognisance, the major focus of this study was to investigate what African philosophers, prior, and after the African Renaissance, had offered anything, in terms of political philosophy/ies in the context of the African Renaissance which would benefit the African masses. In this chapter we first give summaries of the chapters that constitute this study.

C. 2 Summaries of Chapters

Each chapter of this study has had, at its end, conclusions. These conclusions captured key arguments of the chapter. Below, we only recapture, briefly, the conclusions. We begin with Chapter 1 and end with Chapter 6, but not failing to mention that the Introduction gave the background of this study and that the Conclusion summed up the arguments and gave concluding remarks.

C. 2.1 Chapter 1 outlined how the quest for a "true humanity" became a central feature of this study. The quest for a true humanity was informed by a recognition that colonialism and slavery violated the humanity of the African people, both in the continent and in the diaspora. Not only did slavery and colonialism erode the humanity of the enslaved and the colonised, but also that of the enslavers and colonisers. The African Renaissance project, its advocates have argued, sought to bring about a "true humanity" that would re-humanise not only Africans, but also all members of the human race.

C.2.2 Chapter 2 traced the historical origins of the "African Renaissance" concept. We pointed out that the 1998 African Renaissance conference's advocates quest for "practical solutions for future action that would benefit the African masses" was nothing new, but a common factor

among the advocates of the African Renaissance. This conclusion is informed by the examinations of the writings of the pioneers of the African Renaissance movement such as Wilmot Edward Blyden, Pixle ka Isaka Seme, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah and Thabo Mbeki. The chapter concluded that the African Renaissance concept is, historically, a political one aimed at liberating African people, wherever they are, meaning that the African Renaissance is, historically, a project of the movement of Pan-Africanism. This chapter identified the African masses as the workers, the marginalised women of Africa and the vulnerable children of the African continent. It noted that African philosophers such as Kwame Nkrumah identified Eurocentric education as having play a critical role in psychologically damaging African people by robbing them of their self-esteem and inculcating an inferiority complex. Key in the dehumaning project of Eurocentric education was the elevation of European languages and the relegation of African languages. Cognisant of this fact, African philosophers such as Blyden, Diop, Nkrumah and wa Thiong'o have argued that African languages are indispensable in reclaiming the humanity of the African people, firstly because such an exercise would restore Africans' pride in their own languages, and also because an African Renaissance project discussed in African languages would be understood by the African masses for whom it is intended.

C.2.3 Chapter 3 examined different definitions of philosophy in general, and African philosophy in particular, specifically interrogating different African philosophers' perspectives on the political role of philosophy in the lives of Africans, both on the home continent and in the diaspora. This exercised established that even as they were offering, expectedly, different perspectives, in general African philosophers are at one that African philosophy must make a contribution in African politics.

C.2.4 Chapter 4 examined the philosophical aspects of Ancestor-Reverence. The chapter established that Ancestor-Reverence is a philosophical exercise whose focus was on teaching that human beings were expected to perform virtuous deeds while on earth so as to gain access to life beyond physical death. An examination of Ancestor-Reverence established that departure from earthly life did not automatically guarantee entrance into the next life – the condition was living a life of virtue while still on earth.

C.2.5 Chapter 5 examined indigenous African philosophical perspectives on the notion of "family". The chapter established that "family" in African traditional contexts, referred to those who have passed on, those who are living, and those who are yet to be born. The philosophical

in the concept teaches that the link between the departed and the living, on the one hand, and the living and yet to be born, on the other hand, signifies the imperative on the part of the living to honour the great deeds performed by the departed by not only continuing their good traditions, but by taking them to a higher level for the benefit of those not yet born, or yet to be born.

C.2.6 Chapter 6 examined the meaning of the concept "consensus" in the African traditional concept because a number of African philosophers have recommended it as an alternative to Western forms of democracy. Moving from the premise that there is an inextricable link between politics and economics, this chapter examined how consensus, as an African traditional notion of democracy, addressed the economic needs of African communities. The chapter, then, interrogated political and economic systems such as socialism, with particular reference to "African socialism" and "scientific socialism" since some African philosophers, in support of the African Renaissance project have argued that communalism is an African ancestor of socialism, and that, therefore, socialism should be an ideology adopted in modern times. However, such a proposal by some African philosophers did not go unchallenged. Space is given in this chapter for contesting and dissenting views.

C.3 Concluding Arguments

This study has established that a number of African philosophers have made concrete and practical solutions, in the context of the African Renaissance, for the benefit of the African masses. Césaire went as far as writing plays so as to dramatise his political philosophy in order to make it simpler and more accessible to the masses of the African people. Césaire's gesture was a demonstration that while it is important for philosophers to engage in rigorous exercises of debating complex concepts, the ultimate exercise must be to simplify such for the ordinary people if the intention is to liberate them. Césaire is not the only advocate of the African Renaissance to recognise the importance of the arts in this project. Carruthers (1984:74) observes that the exploration of the "avenue of cultural heritage calls forth those who have talents for preaching, acting, singing, dancing, painting, sculpturing, teaching and writing to use these talents as ways of putting forth truth of speaking and acting Maat".

For the African people to be effectively liberated, Césaire (2009:59) held a strong view that psychological liberation must be a priority because colonialism is based on psychology. Echoing Césaire, Asante (2014:ix) notes that any struggle that seeks to reverse, or overcome the effects of colonialism, must be engaged in a struggle for "mental resurrection". With

particular reference to the African Renaissance, a project designed and dedicated to the liberation of Africans, and by extension, the whole of humanity, Asante (2014:x) further notes that the "African renaissance cannot occur until we have adequately dealt with the issues of misorientation and disorientation". The task of the African Renaissance, therefore, Asante (ibid) concludes, "is the work of thinkers and philosophers and perhaps African psychologists". This study embraces both Césaire's diagnosis and Asante's prognosis, with its focus being philosophy, particularly African philosophy, the central element being the "political", as identified by the African Renaissance advocates in 1998. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the African Renaissance advocates were clear and specific in identifying the "masses" of the African people as being the main beneficiaries of the African Renaissance project. Taking into cognizance that African philosophers have noted that African people are a spiritual people, Carruthers (1984:73) points out for the African Renaissance to be meaningful to the African masses, "it is apparent that our goal for reorganizing the world must include the restoration of a harmony among the Creator, Nature and man". What this means is that "the negative forces opposing this way of life must be made to not exist [to phrase it in Kemite fashion] (square brackets original) (ibid). What Carruthers (ibid) implies is that "to have peace one must nullify the destroyers without corrupting ourselves". The "upshot", Carruthers (ibid) further points out, is that "we must recreate our spiritual foundations because all of our organized efforts will end in disaster as long as we worship alien ideologies and utopias which cause our estrangement from the African world".

There two main key instruments and strategies that African philosophers have identified for the African Renaissance that would serve the African masses: African-centred/Afrocentric education and employment of African languages. We recapture and summarise them below.

C.3.1 African-centred/Afrocentric Education for the African Renaissance

It was pointed out that some African philosophers, because of Eurocentric education, traced the origins of philosophy to Greece, while a thorough examination of the history of philosophy points it to ancient Egypt, where prominent Greek philosophers such as Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, to name but a few, travelled to, imbibed from the wells of Ancient Egyptian philosophy, and acknowledged this openly. Because of Eurocentric education, even as they advocated the African Renaissance, philosophers such as Senghor and Lembede, saw Christianity and Islam as being superior to African spirituality. For this reason, the African philosopher, Cheikh Anta Diop (1974:xiv), has argued strongly for the study of ancient Egypt in African education,

noting that the "history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt". Along arguing for an African-centred education, African philosophers such as Blyden, Diop and wa Thiong'o argued for the centralisation of African languages in the African Renaissance project. This is in line with the objective of making the African Renaissance project a project of the African masses.

C.3.2 Restoring African Languages for the African Renaissance Project: Prospects and Problems

This being the case, then, there was a clear recognition that this project would have to be communicated to the African masses in the African languages that they speak, as opposed to the European languages, namely English, French and Portuguese, which, historically, have been made official and dominant languages in Africa at the expense of African languages. The introduction of European languages in Africa served as an instrument of Europeans gaining an advantage over one another as they were involved in their enterprise known as the "Scramble for Africa" (Rodney, 2018:313). Restoring African languages to the centre of African people's lives, for the purposes of the African Renaissance, desirable as the project is, has its own challenges, which the advocates of the African Renaissance must confront. In as much as the call for the reclamation of the African Renaissance has been eloquently articulated, and is noble, advocates of the African Renaissance have to take into consideration certain historical factors which, if ignored, can have the opposite effect of the desired goals of the African Renaissance. An examination of African history reveals that in a move that apparently sought to promote African language, Belgian colonialists, in the Congo "insisted that primary education should be in one of the five main African languages of the territory" (Rodney, 2018:306). In truth, what appeared, on the surface, to be a "progressive decision" was aimed at the cutting off of one Congolese ethnic group from another, and to seal off "the educated […] from a wider world of knowledge, because the missionaries translated into the local languages only that which they thought desirable" (ibid). The case of the Congolese was not an isolated one. In South Africa, the notorious Bantu Education Act of 1953 sought to promote differences between ethnic through languages (ibid). The above exposes the fact that in the name of "promoting" African languages, European colonialists, indeed, used this "promotion" to raise ethnic chauvinism and use such to antagonise and divide Africans for their own selfish and colonial project. In post-colonial Africa, an examination of African history reveals that in fact, some African politicians mobilised Africans on the basis of ethnicity for their own selfish

ends resulting in bloodshed. In identifying this complexity is not the same thing as saying that nothing can be done, or nothing should be done in promoting African languages. The point being made is that great caution must be exercised so that a noble intention does not result into a disaster.

C.4 Conclusion

This chapter is a summary of this study. The chapter briefly captured key themes captured in all chapters.

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