

PHILOSOPHY AND THE THIRD WORLD

O.A. Ladimeji

When dominant and subordinate groups exist in close relation to each other, the dominant group which usually has control of the centres of intellectual orientation will set about constructing a world-view in which the subordinate group has its submission ontologically determined, and will begin systematically indoctrinating members of that group into believing this. As Cesaire wrote:

*"He was a very good nigger
And it did not occur to him that he might ever hoe
and dig and cut anything except the insipid cane."*
[1]

When the subordinate group is relatively distant their subordination need not be so systematically integrated into the dominant world view but will become part of a new study that is relatively obscure and exotic from the point of view of the dominant group. Anthropology - that bastard son of the illegitimate union of the academic profession and the colonial administrator - in the recent past performed this function among others. Karl Mannheim write:

*"Ideologies coexist in an antagonistic
relationship to one another. The most radical
form of this antagonism consists of the un-
spoken assumptions and the suggestive framework
of thought by which dominant groups inhibit the
independent self-awareness of subordinate
strata."*
[2]

Anthropological theories based on the distinction between primitive and civilized reduced the natives to imperfect replicas of western man, somehow stunted. (3) The self-image of the western man is thrown at the Third World as the image of man himself, with the implication that in so far as we fail to measure up to this model so also are we less than truly men. Whenever this self-image undergoes a violent reconstitution, a bold face is still kept to the Third World such that in most cases the image which peoples of the Third World have of the West is at least ten years out of date regardless of the veracity of image.

Modesty compels the admission however that the anthropological edifice was not created solely to confuse the natives, whom it might be irrelevantly argued never read such works, but mostly as a factor to reinforce social control within the metropolitan countries. The discovery of social orders completely different to the ones existing within the metropolitan countries might suggest to suppressed elements and social classes within those countries that what they

1 Aime Cesaire, *Return To My Native Land*, p.87

2 K Mannheim, *Essays On the Sociology of Knowledge*, p.100

3 I once asked Professor Friedman of Oxford what the difference between anthropology and sociology was, and he replied that anthropology studied foreign societies. This has the beautiful consequent that if I and an English friend were studying English society, I would be doing anthropology while he would be doing sociology. Also see A Montagu, *The Concept of the Primitive*, for an intelligent discussion.

had taken to be the natural and inevitable order of things was entirely alterable and that other arrangements were not only possible but could be seen to be workable. Anthropological theory solved this problem with a neatness that has haunted all discussion about the Third World ever since. The western world, they claimed, was the paradigm of social progress which naturally issued forth from western man as he was innately the most creative, and his social systems ensured the rapid progress of mankind, while the diversity of social orders among peoples of the Third World were just so many examples of experimental failures, due in part to their innate inferiority, with their failure so to speak demonstrated by their political and physical subjugation.

Even the western marxist theoreticians, whom it must be admitted were not averse to a bit of racism on their own part, fell for the bait. In spite of the fact that Marx nowhere committed himself to such views, they began propagating the view that the Third World must sit still and wait till the European revolution which will put them in power and then, in a symbolic reenactment of Abraham Lincoln, they will free the slaves. This doctrine is still in favour among white American Communists against black radicals.

This leads to the realization that the true meaning of the revival within the very centres of western intellectual activity of racist ideologies, the theories of Ardrey-Morris-Jensen-Eysenck, is the reflection of the fact that the Third World has impinged upon the internal self-consciousness of the West. These theories reinforce within the metropolitan populations a high tolerance for sheer brutality acted out before their eyes upon members of the Third World. In this respect the theories about aggression of Konrad Lorenz, who, as reported in *7 Days*, was advocating race-health in Germany at the time that organized race-murder was going on, are particularly disturbing not least for their current popularity. It will not be surprising if there is a wide-scale re-emergence of torture and brutality within the capitals of the West as occurred in Paris in the fifties, but on a scale to make Ulster child's play.

What is suggested here is that assaults upon and denials of fundamental human dignity are almost invariably preludes to or attempts to perpetuate forms of human enslavement. The struggle against such actualizations of inhumanity as the Viet Nam war must be carried on along intellectual as well as political levels.

If there is to be an intellectual struggle it is unacceptable that we, the peoples of the Third World, should be entirely dependent upon the western liberals or radicals to speak for us, to argue for us, to present our case. For what they have done and are doing, we are grateful, but this is something which we ought to be doing ourselves, for in the debates about the Third World experts from those countries are usually conspicuous by their absence.

In contrast to the issues that are usually associated with the Third World in western discussions, such as birth control, more or less aid, communist infiltration etc, two themes can be said to occupy the major part of intellectual activity in the Third World:

- 1 How to counter racist imperialist aggression emanating from the West but often mediated by a local bourgeoisie.
- 2 The ends and means of developing a wholesome and independent society where each man is free to fulfil himself.

In order to discuss, analyse and examine the various alternatives that present themselves, philosophy is a crucial tool. Not only must there be an exposure of the revision of history that followed the era of imperialism, a revision that concealed the fact that:

"As late as the early seventeenth century India was more advanced economically than Europe."

and the theories which buried the consciousness that:

"... it was a combination of Europe's military superiority and her relative material poverty which shaped events in the early phase of European expansion."

[4]

but it is essential that new theories of man be developed, theories that encompass, as Fanon demanded, the whole man. [5]

But we must not neglect, as is now fashionable, the cultural problems of the Third World; Anthropology left the Third World with a theory of acculturation, but Marx was far closer to reality when he wrote of India:

"England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindoo, and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history."

[6]

The alienation of the native from his own culture is a problem that hangs over much of the cultural activity in the Third World. Western experts are not reluctant to fill the debate with the most ludicrous philosophical rubbish - like the idea of converting the entire Third World to Protestantism in order to foster economic growth. Philosophy in the heroic sense provides the key to the reconstitution of national cultures, the necessity for which Marx clearly saw.

Yet philosophy is often regarded as an unnecessary luxury in the Third World. The bourgeois economists who never tire of accusing Marx of reducing man entirely to economic relations, happily reduce the peoples of the Third World to *homo economicus*, pure and simple. Philosophy should be abandoned for more useful economic pursuits, they say. Professor Ernst Gellner was asked by a Nigerian University on the advisability of setting up a philosophy department and he replied that a developing country does not need one. [7] But such an answer attains its plausibility entirely through the mystification of words. Replace 'philosophy' with a synonym like 'clear and ordered thinking' (or 'critical understanding') and we get:

4 K Griffin, *Underdevelopment in Spanish America*, p.35.

5 F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, see especially the conclusion.

6 Karl Marx *On Colonialism and Modernization*, ed. S Avineri, p.90; alternatively *New York Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1853.

7 Private communication from a Nigerian Professor

(a) A developing country does not need clear and ordered thinking.

(b) A developing country does not need critical understanding.

Certainly Gellner would have a case if he meant that a developing country does not need philosophy as presently carried on in Britain, but then who does? Such a philosophy is 'an attempt to combine the appearance of being in earnest and taking trouble about the subject with an actual neglect of the subject altogether'. In *Consciencism*, one of the best books on general philosophy from contemporary Africa, we read:

"Whereas the great philosophers, the titans, have always been passionately interested in social reality and the welfare of man, many of their twentieth century descendants in the West serenely settle down to a compilation of dictionary of sentences as opposed to a dictionary of words; engulfed in their intellectual hermitage, they excuse themselves from philosophical comment on social progress or social oppression, on peace or war. While they thus pursue 'the exact sense of the word', all authority, political or moral, passes ever more firmly into the hands of the politicians."

[8]

It might appear that the argument so far has been pointless for there are departments of philosophy in the Third World. But the essential point is to know what exactly is the true need for them and then to ask whether they are fulfilling this need. The negative answer shouts itself resoundingly back. Not only have they failed in the task of reviewing the accepted theories and histories of Man, but they have also totally neglected the future of Man. This should not be surprising for the relationship between the two tasks is dialectical. One cannot review the given theories unless one is dissatisfied with them and one cannot reconsider the future if one accepts the present theories which define the future as a process of ever closer approximations to the West.

It would be entirely mistaken to view the argument presented here as merely ideological, i.e. political. Philosophy in the heroic sense is an intrinsic part of man's self-fulfilment, and the case argued for here is that the Third World develop its philosophical resources in order to help its societies flower creatively and intellectually, to become instances of humanity fully becoming itself.

All this, it might be thought, is not much concern to the West. "If the Third World wants to develop its own philosophy let it do so, but we are concerned with our own problems." Not only is this wrong because the problems which obsess western intellectuals closely affect members of the Third World, but also wrong because the search for a vision of the whole man, proclaimed by Fanon and Soyinka, is a matter concerning all men. We do not intend to replace a Western chauvinism by a Third World chauvinism.

Take for instance the growing interest in the social responsibility of science, Skolimowsky has written:

"From Bacon's time Nature has become a doormat which we tread upon, exploit, plunder and use to whatever purpose we think right and suitable for us... All things seem to be going about man's business and not their own - this presumption has been one of the main causes of our ecological plight."

[9]

8 Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, p.54

9 Skolimowsky, *Cambridge Review*, Vol.93

The expulsion of spirits from science, he argues, led to the 'purification' of the entire universe expelling all elements not capable of mechanistic explanation, and this notion of a 'purified' universe became built into the notion of the scientific enterprise. If we tie this in with Robert Young's arguments about the ideological orientation of the scientific paradigms which a society adopts [10], it is clear that what is needed is that the conceptual structure of science be reconstituted and a humanism established within its very centre, for it is inadequate merely to humanize science: there must be the creation of science as a humanism. In the Third World where science departments are not heavily encrusted by a tradition and where sciences are often just being established, such a vision has great and urgent relevance.

Any Third World philosopher who does not participate in the tasks of (i) liberating the study of Third World societies, economies and cultures from ana-

10 R Young, "Anthropology of Science" - BBC talk.

chronistic philosophical presuppositions and reconstituting it within a broad humanistic framework, (ii) creating science as a humanism, as a technology at one with the whole spirit of Man [11], (iii) a reconsideration of the whole phenomenon of Man and the development of an anthropology of the Spirit [12], any Third World philosopher not participating in these tasks is wasting his own and everybody else's time.

11 Skolimowski is aware that the essentially impersonal and manipulative ethos of natural science spills over into social relations, so that as he wrote, "What we need is not an objective science, but a compassionate one", *op. cit.*

12 An anthropology of the Spirit that would destroy the tearing apart of man from himself, that has epitomized both the West and its imitators in the Third World, and restore to man his essential unity, having as its purpose the increased awareness of what makes man fully human, and the exploration of the nature of man's fulfilment.

THE METAPHYSICS OF LSD

George Gretton

In the discussion of drug-effects there exists a hiatus: the heads/hippies/freaks, call them what you will, haven't as a rule had the benefit of an education in philosophy, and conversely, the philosophers are ignorant of the drug-experience. The psychologists have discussed the subject from their point of view, yet it is one that also cries out for philosophical interpretation; the hippies are constantly talking bad metaphysics in the attempt to make sense of their experience. And the LSD experience is certainly remarkable; feelings of solipsism, or that the subject himself does not exist, the sensation of stepping out of the usual continuums of space and time, are relatively common under strong doses of the drug. The acid experience used to be called "LSD intoxication", but this expression is seldom used today because there is really very little similarity with alcohol or hashish intoxication; the acid experience immediately impresses itself as being *sui generis*, at least under the aspect of being a drug. The psychotomimetics - LSD, mescaline, psilocybin etc. have less in common with other drugs than with madness and mysticism. This is expressed in a vague way in the proverb "acid isn't a drug; people who have taken it tend to feel that they have entered a reality that is in some way ontologically prior to ordinary reality, rather than simply a confused version of it. I myself can confirm this, and in this article I hope to make a few suggestions as to the lines along which these phenomena can be interpreted. In particular it strikes me that the work of Kant and, to a lesser extent, that of Wittgenstein, provide valuable suggestions. Much of the Critique of Pure Reason can be seen as an analysis of the structure of normal consciousness, and in undertaking this analysis Kant throws out ideas about what possible deviations from this norm would be like. Kant, it should be said, would not have used the word "possible" about such deviations. It has often been noticed that his use of the words "possible" and "necessary" does not strictly conform with the usual acceptance. The LSD experience can be regarded as empirical confirmation of at least one of these deviant states of consciousness.

interconnected (possible) consciousness, and so would not conform to the transcendental and necessary unity of apperception." (C.P.R. -B195)

I cite this quotation at the beginning of my discussion because of the remarkable phrase that occurs in the middle of it - "a rhapsody of perceptions" - that is a disturbingly sharp hint at the LSD experience. "Experience" will be a "rhapsody of perceptions", Kant tells us, if we take away "the synthetic unity of appearances". I do not wish to get bogged down in Kantian terminology and the exegesis of it; fortunately this is not necessary, for the burden of Kant's argument in the area with which I am concerned is reasonably clear - this area being the relation between our experience of space and time to the categories of substance, causality and community, and between the synthesis of appearances and the unity of apperception.

"Clock time has very little meaning when one is under the influence of the drug", wrote one experimenter, R.H.Ward (A Drug-Taker's Notes, Gollancz, 1957), and elsewhere he expresses himself more strongly, speaking, for instance, of "the absence of time". This is not simply a question of time passing quickly or slowly, as we feel, in the ordinary way, when we are excited or bored. What is interesting (from a philosophical angle) is a much more basic phenomenon that sometimes takes place under large doses. It is the sensation of being "out of time". Experimenters, when they have returned to ordinary reality, seem unable to describe this experience in terms which make sense to the uninitiated, for they get caught up in unintelligible metaphysics, giving the appearance of self-contradiction; thus they claim to have been altogether "outside time", and yet agree that their experience did not cease to be successive in nature. What are we to make of this? Having myself been through this experience, it strikes me that it can be cogently fitted into a Kantian (or neo-Kantian) schema, and it is possible, through this schema, to relate it to other phenomena of the LSD experience.

Kant sometimes refers to space and time as "intuitions" and sometimes as "forms of intuition". This does not necessarily indicate a confusion. As Ewing says (Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason):

"Experience rests on the synthetic unity of appearances, that is, on a synthesis according to concepts of an object of appearances in general. Apart from such synthesis it would not be knowledge, but a rhapsody of perceptions that would not fit into any context according to rules of a completely