

# Philosophical Bases of African Freedom beyond Black and White

**Maduabuchi Dukor**

Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Email: [madudukor@yahoo.com](mailto:madudukor@yahoo.com)

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## Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to philosophically and critically examine and outline the bases of African freedom. The approach will adopt the following sub-headings: Introduction, Metaphysical Basis of African Freedom, Beyond “Black” and “White” to Pluralism, African Philosophy and the Paradox of African Freedom. The philosophical basis of African freedom consists essentially in the categorical assertion and defense of the freedom of man. The philosophical basis of African freedom is to seek the theoretical, metaphysical, ideological and scientific bases or justification for African freedom. Hence the intention is an attempt to establish the universality of mankind and ipso facto examine the propositions and ideologies that justified African freedom. We shall first of all take up the issue that the African race is an inferior race and a different “species” of being from the white man and then assert the common ancestry of man or humanity of man.

## Keywords

Man, Existentialism, Racism, God, Consciousness, Africa, Freedom

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## 1. Introduction

The dismembering of human race is not only historical (as Darwin would argue in his theory of evolution) but also is accentuated and propagated by racist philosophy. But it has been observed that racism is not only unnatural but also bogus in the sense that it was the invention of one race to assert its superiority over others. Racism, some argue, is a sociological term in the sense that it is predicated on colour, that is black and white and it has no genetic significance. However, it would be interesting to observe that racism could be traced to several earlier theories including Aristotle’s theory justifying slavery. In his book *Politics* Aristotle argues that slavery must be natural, because the relation of master and slave confirms to a broad pattern found universally in nature in the widest sense: better/worse, male/female, man/beast, mind/body, rational/irrational, rule/ruled... (Aristotle, 1962).

Aristotle ideologically justified this pattern of life by arguing that to be ruled is to the slave's advantage, and is to that extent just. On the other hand what he calls legal slavery comes about not by nature but by human force, as when men perfectly fitted for mastership become slaves through capture in war. Aristotle's concept of the natural slavery is an analogy drawn from the relation of body and soul in which the body of one man is related to the Soul of another and which, by implication, is legal and social legitimation of the lopsided human race. Interpretation of this absurd but awkward naturalism portrays the African, for instance, as a weak race, a toddler who must be governed and fathered by a superior race. As has been argued; if there is a man with a mentality like that of the child, who cannot perceive that it is sometimes good to take bitter medicine, then he must be ruled like a child, for his own good. But such a man cannot have a good of his own, as normal child can have. That is, the child must be ruled by his father in order that he may eventually become a good man, independent of his father's commands. But the natural slave, being a grown man who must be ruled as a child, can never be a complete human being (Leo-Strauss & Joseph Cropsey, 1981). Following the positivist thoughts of Aristotle, subsequent Western racists like Charles Darwin, David Hume Immanuel Kant and so on have justified the slavery of the African. The African is among the category of natural slaves, the relation being a universal experience of mankind. The Africans, by this status, are called mental incompetents by Hume, Kant, Darwin, etc. Aristotle however laid the theoretical background of this conception of the African in his natural slavery which sees the slave, the African, as not being a grown man, although he may have the body of one. He is part of a whole only as he belongs to another, in the sense comparable to that in which any grown man's body is part of him, namely, as an instrument of his intelligence (Leo-Strauss & Joseph Cropsey, 1981). This trend in thought action is nothing short of precursor to colonialism and imperialism. It is in this sense that a natural slave which the African is conceived to be, is a property, i.e. he is an instrument for action by a soul able to live a good life; the sense in which the instrumented reason of modernity after Aristotle becomes the only reason, the monological and monotheistic reason of the Enlightenment Europe. For Aristotle and for the apostles of modernity the superiority of the West noble actions is not possible for the African who cannot do noble things for their own sake, and as a natural slave, the African is bereft of the higher functions of the soul.

But the histories of mankind, and the crisis of modernity have not justified all these hallowed thoughts about the human race. Aristotle's understanding of natural slavery, slavery by force and unjust law opens the possibility that the slavery of the African could have been by force and racist injustice. He started the perpetration of this injustice by his alleged looting of the intellectual archives of the African Egyptian antiquity to his glory and the triumph of Europe. Also the documents and history of Africans who manifested the powers of reason, intellect and invention in the middle ages, the renaissance and modern period have negated the low opinions about the Africans. In whatever way one looks at both forms of slavery, none can be justified ontologically. At best Aristotle's account of the inequality of man is social racism. Racism means (a) division of mankind possessing in characteristic proportions certain combinations of physical traits that can be inherited and that are sufficient to set the group apart as distinct human types (Watch Tower Bible, 1985). Racism, by this definition, presupposes human inequality and differences intellectually and genetically. On the other hand an anti-racist doctrine argues that the fact that the races are capable of intermarriage and reproduction shows that they are actually of one kind and of the same human family and that various races are merely facets of the total variation possible in human kind. Anti-racist arguments have elicited frequent references to the Bible which ironically was referred to by racists as justifying racism. In Genesis, we are told that In the day of God's creating Adam, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them. After that he blessed them and called their name Adam in the day of their being created (King James Version, 2007). God blessed them and said to them "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth" (King James Version, 2007). In the *Act of Apostles*, we are told that "God made out of one man Adam, every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth" (King James Version, 2007). This means that all men are descendants of the first human pair and that regardless of what races make up a nation, they all are the offspring of Adam. Racist ideology has often been said to be scientifically probable, but even modern scientists have not been able to find a scientific ground for Racism. It is argued that Biological differences among individuals within a race or within a populations are often greater than the average differences between races or population... (Watch Tower Bible, 1985). This means that differences among races are not enough to account for their biological differences.

A race is simply one of the partially isolated gene pools into which the human species came to be divided during and following its early geographical spread. Roughly one race has developed on each of the five major continental areas of the earth. Man did indeed diverge genetically during this phase of history and we can meas-

ure and study the results of this divergence in what remains today of the old geographical races. As we would expect, divergence appears to be correlated with the degree of isolation... The paradox which is before us is that each group of human appears to be externally different yet underneath these differences there is fundamental similarity (Watch Tower Bible, 1985). It is on this basis that UNESCO made the following declarations: 1) All men living today belong to same species and descent from the same stock. 2) The division of the human species into "race" is partly conventional and partly arbitrary and does not imply hierarchy whatever...3) Current biological knowledge does not permit us to impute cultural achievements to differences in genetic potentials. (Awake, 1990) Differences in the achievement of different peoples should be attributed solely to their cultural history. The peoples of the world today appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any level of civilization. What I mean by the humanity of man is ontological equality. The fact that all men have common humanity, common ancestry and equal biological and genetic potentialities creates no doubt as to the humanity of man. "Humanity of man" means "the humanity of all races". This ideologically stands against man's inhumanity to man. The "humanity of man" is empirically and biologically and intuitively cognitive. It is a logical and necessary truth whose opposite is a contradiction. The humanity of races can be expressed logically to mean that every race  $x$  has a human origin  $H$  or alternatively put, every man is man. Expressed symbolically it means  $(x)(Rx \supset Hx)$ , or  $(x)(Mx \supset Mx)$ . On the other hand if we have to argue, as racist doctrine implies, that some races are more human than others or that some races are not human at all, then it means that there is a man,  $x$  who is not a man. Expressed symbolically it means  $(\exists x)(Mx \supset \neg Mx)$ , which is not only a logical absurdity but also possesses an existential import which contradicts what it is saying. Therefore the categorical and universal proposition  $(x)(Rx \supset Hx)$  or  $(x)(Mx \supset Mx)$  stands the test of logical, empirical and scientific verifiability. Africa, therefore belongs to the family of humanity, and no particular race is outside humanity.

## 2. Metaphysical Basis of African Freedom

Metaphysical grounds for African freedom are the theoretical, transcendental and idealistic grounds for African freedom. The metaphysical nature of man presupposes an ontological equality and freedom of man and hence that of all races. This inference is based on the belief that race equality is essentially an ontological substance. It is only at secular and mundane existence that there exist all forms of inequalities and unfreedoms because of the struggle for the survival of the fittest, natural selection and endowment. This is the metaphysical basis upon which a prior understanding of African freedom is based. According to A. R. Lacey, Metaphysics is

*That which comes after physic's, the latter being the study of nature in general. Thus the questions of metaphysics arises out of, but go beyond, factual or scientific questions about the world... A central part of metaphysics is ontology. This studies being, and in particular, nowadays, what there is e.g. material objects, minds, persons, universals, numbers, facts etc. (Lacey, 1976)*

Here metaphysics as a process of looking beyond empirical and scientific facts are going to be utilized to defend African freedom. But it is curiously observed that ontology, though part of metaphysics, is according to Enrique Dussel, negative to the freedom of the periphery. In the treatment of metaphysics as ground of freedom we examine the concept of exteriority (as adumbrated by E. Dussel), God, consciousness and existentialism. "Exteriority" is the metaphysical category of Enrique Dussel. For Dussel, to understand the plight of the oppressed or Africa and or, to achieve the freedom of the oppressed or Africa, it must begin from the metaphysical exteriority and not from metaphysical interiority which he negatively calls ontology or interpreting the world in a solipsistic manner without being transcendental to it. According to Enrique Dussel, "Exteriority"

*Is to know how to think about not just the negativity of a being, which gives way to ontic novelty when it goes back to the origin of the world, the foundation, Being: it is to know how to think about Being from the exteriority that judges it-just as the periphery-centre that pursues the philosophy of domination be it ontological or functional, structuralist, analytical, or semi-logical. (Dussel, 1985)*

For him, therefore, exteriority is to think about the system, the world from within ontological negativity. The metaphysical tension of a moment in the system thrown toward exteriority, toward the other as other, is what Enrique Dussel calls "a pulsion-desire of alterity" (Dussel, 1985). This pulsion, desire, and love for real justice is like a hurricane that destroys walls, makes a breach in the ontological horizon and turns itself inside out into exteriority. According to him, the category of exteriority is misunderstood when what is "beyond" the ontological horizon of the system is thought of in an absolute total way without any participation in the interior of the system. Enrique Dussel advocates what I think should be "Immanence Transcendentality". For him, "exteriority"

must be understood as a transcendental interior to totality. No person as such is absolutely and only part of a system. All including even those who are members of an oppressing class, have a transcendental interiority with respect to the system interior to it (Dussel, 1985). The oppressed, the poor, the other, or Africa is free as exteriority of totality. Freedom is the ability of the other to make choice in one world in which “Europe” or “I” is the center. Enrique Dussel says,

*The other is the exteriority of all totality because the other is free. Freedom here is the unconditioning of the other with respect to the world in which I am always the centre...All persons, in so far as they take part in a system are functional, professional, or members of a certain structure-but they are not other, others are other insofar as they are exteriority to the totality. Without exteriority there is neither freedom nor personhood. (Dussel, 1985)*

Persons recognize and develop themselves as persons in “proximity” (using Dussel category) never in solipsistic condition. So the unfreedom of blacks in relation to the whites could also be the unfreedom of some whites in relation to other whites.

Also God, the creator of all human race, could provide ground for human freedom through its manifestation “and nature”. In liberation theology, God answers the question concerning African freedom. “Theology” is construed liberally as “logos” about “Theos” or thought and speech. Liberation theology in this context seeks to free the downtrodden, the African from the westernized and neo-colonized theology of the Right and the West. Liberation theology views man as a historical subject capable of making himself as well as his societies and cultures. This makes man an active subject of historical change. It is, therefore, a reflection on the ethical, or existential aspect of all religions rather than of its narrow metaphysical dimension. Espousing liberation theology as the philosophy of freedom, S. M. Ogden argues that faith, perhaps, in the context of religion is the existence of freedom in freedom for freedom. Faith in God is existence in freedom in the negative sense of freedom from all things, ourselves and the world in a way that would determine the ultimate meaning of our lives. Faith is utter trust in the love of God as the primal source and final end of our own unique existence, as well as of everything else, to exist in faith is to be freed from any compulsion, to find the ultimate ground of one’s life in something else alongside God...Being bound utterly and completely freed from everything else (Ogden, 1979). Secondly, faith is existence in freedom in the positive sense of freedom for literally everything, ourselves and the world, are all worthy of our own love and devoted services since faith is trust in God’s love, for us. To exist in faith “is to be freed from ourselves and the world and, at one and the same time, also to be free for them” (Ogden, 1979). Also, faith in God should be the answer to the question of African freedom and authentic existence of freedom is faith in God. This assertion finds justification in process metaphysics which asserts that to be anything actual whether the least such thing that can be conceived, or that than which “none greater can be conceived” (Aselm st, 1969) is to be an instant of process or creative synthesis, and, therefore, a free response to the free-decisions of others already made. Freedom here means self-creation and, therefore, determinations by self in contrast to determination by others. This presupposes the free-will of being created by God, which further suggests that African unfreedom could be altered by the collective will of all Africans. There is a concept which I construe as African Theistic panpsychism and from which I deduce African freedom. Theistic panpsychism shows that the Africans have a panpsychic and theistic view of the universe. This is shown by their understanding of the relationship between the supreme God and lesser gods or divinities, man and natural objects. African panpsychism is the belief that everything in the universe is spiritual and that spirits, divinities, man, plants, animals, physical objects, rivers and waters are creatures of God, the supreme being (Dukor, 1990). It means that the African has the freedom to determine herself in love of God. It also means that African freedom is God’s freedom in self creative process. In the philosophy of African freedom, therefore, Africa is identified as part of the whole universe, neither inferior nor superior to it. God is also viewed as a Redeemer and Emancipator, and because he is a redeemer and emancipator, Africans should naturally not be slaves to any people or nation. Faith as the existence of freedom is the effect of God’s grace because it is the action of God’s love that is the necessary condition of the possibility of faith. The proper name of God’s love, as ground of the possibility of faith is redemptive. The creative work of God’s love is also emancipative and this sets Africans free to create themselves and one another. Therefore the redemption and emancipation of Africa are parts of the creative process of God.

Self-consciousness also provides ground for freedom. Self-consciousness simply means self-“awareness”; it is the awareness of one’s own mind and its acts and states. Self-consciousness as a form of freedom presupposes the colligatory concepts of freedom; self perfection, self-determination and self-realization. Freud would argue that sex urge is the strongest impulse in men. But really the most fundamental and strongest impulse in man is

the urge of instinct and urge of self for greater ideals. The urge of self for greater ideals is the progress of self-consciousness. In Hegel as in existentialism, we observe that the progress of self-consciousness is a movement towards freedom. According to M. Rafi-ud-Din the universe is the creation of consciousness because its fundamental nature is a conscious process. He says that creation took the form of evolution because all creation whether human or divine, takes this form. The evolutionary process started with matter with no organic life and then into the stage when there was only consciousness. According to M. Rafi-ud-Din, Self-consciousness must grow or decline. It must progress or regress. No progress in self-consciousness is possible unless a man conforms strictly to the discipline imposed by the right ideal (Rafi-Ud-Din, 1946). If he yields to any resistance willingly, the progress of his self consciousness is dimmed. Perhaps, if Africa yielded to Europe's resistance against her progress, then her freedom and consciousness got thwarted. Rafi-ud-Din would, therefore, advice that Africa should resist any European incursion and interference in African affairs. To attack resistance is to make progress. a self-conscious man feels impelled to break all resistance in his way and he must succeed in breaking it ultimately because his efforts to break it are favourable to the aspirations of consciousness. But if Africa must be free, she must possess that ability for self-determination with which she will then define her ideas and then realize her self. Naturally the urge of self or self-consciousness is for "goodness", "beauty" and "perfection". So African ideas must border on her concepts of "goodness" "beauty" and "perfection". According to Rafi-ud-Din it is the ideal that calls for action because it impels the self to change the actual conditions in the world to suit itself and its ideal. He said that slavery is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall an individual. It is an impediment in the way of his continued self-realization. The slave uses his own powers but realizes the ideals of others. The ideal compels and goads the self to strive for its achievement.

According to Rafi-ud-Din, every ideal imposes its own rules and restrictions. Everybody has an ideal and, therefore, everybody is bound by the rules and restriction imposed by his ideal. Freedom never means the absence of restrictions. It means freedom to seek an ideal willingly accepting all the restrictions that are imposed by the ideal. According to him, when we use the word "freedom" we need to qualify it by specifying the purpose or the ideal for which it is to be used. The self is really free only when it is seeking the Right ideal, otherwise it is a slave to desire and laws which are not its own. The African and all the downtrodden must seek the right ideal in order for them to be free. Whether a man is a subject, or a ruler, he is a slave, if he has a wrong ideal. If he is a ruler, his freedom is apparent and slavery real, although it is of his own choice.

Existentialism is one of the foremost Philosophical Schools that stand for the freedom of man. The major concern of this school of thought is the nature of the freedom of man. According to the existentialists, "men are conscious of the contrast between themselves and things, of their relations with other men and of their power to chose and become what they are not" (Lacey, 1976). The danger in existentialism is that it may imply the philosophy of the survival of the fittest or that of might is right. It may also mean an untamed freedom. Therefore, Africa's unfreedom, from existentialist point of view, must not be said to be determined by a conscious or divine will, or by some gonads or genetic pools. She must assert herself in a competitive world. Freedom, according to existentialism, is the means of freeing man from the bondage of despair, nausea, ambiguity, dread, self-deception and so on. What Sartre saw as a sign of the unfreedom of man is what he described as "nausea" which is the anxious experience of the incoherence or reality. He described as "Bad-faith" self-deception or excuse in every moment of moral choice or decision. He does not believe in any general valid principle or universal law of mankind. Africans are said to be in "Bad-faith" if they cannot interpret their lives existentially free of any moral maxim or principle. Sartre says that it is man that determines the values by which he lives, that is, he is not endowed with a ready-made self or nature but rather must be constantly making himself. He is nothing, he is always about to be whatever he chooses (Barnes, 1958). This means that Africa should be a historical subject in the process of self-creation. According to Sartre,

*Man's existence is a prospective existence rather than the classical static concept of existence which is inert and determined... Because of it's prospective nature, there is a fundamental instability in the contingency of the individual which leads to a continual instability of his existence. No positive gain is achieved; it is a constantly repetitive process. The individual must continually reassume his existence, being anew for ever. (sunil, 1990)*

For most existentialists, existence precedes essence in terms of freedom in ethics, learning, power and wealth. They argue that "men make their essences as they go along and do not live out a pre-determined essence or blue-print" (Lacey, 1976). It means that African political, economic and social unfreedom is her own making since she should have had the ability to determine her essences. According to Sartre, man makes himself a lack of being; that is, he recognizes that he, as a consciousness is not Being, hence can, so to speak, let Being stand

before him in for judgment (Barnes, 1958). Existentialism, espouses self-creative process as much as liberation theology and African theistic pansychism. So African freedom must mean her ability to emancipate herself from western domination politically, philosophically, economically and technologically through self-creative process. It means African capacity for self-determination and self-realization.

Materialism is also another metaphysical basis of the freedom of man. But for many it has been turned into the basis for unfreedom in the capitalist society. One can safely argue that it is an objective naturalistic metaphysics while exteriority (Dussel's category), God, self-consciousness and existentialism are transcendental metaphysics. Materialism as a partisan doctrine stands against idealism. It seeks to establish the equality of man as well as the evils of colonialism, imperialism and domination. Materialism is so part and parcel of Marxism that it is often viewed as synonymous with Marxism. In the era of decolonization of Africa and the third world in general, Marxist materialism was the popular ideology. Materialism postulates that matter is not only the fundamental stuff of the universe but also explains human relations, while idealism explains social phenomena by reference to spirit or divine mind and favours a social structure of horizontal sort with one class dominating the other. Materialism is humanist and egalitarian. A materialist doctrine argues that "the unity and fundamental identity of nature suggest the unity and fundamental identity of man in society" (Nkuruma, 1964). While an idealist would argue that apartheid in South Africa is due to "ill-will" or "evil intentions" of white people, a materialist would argue that apartheid is to be found not in the peoples head but in their pockets, in that material system of capitalist exploitation which makes apartheid highly profitable for financial investors, factory, and grant farms. Though materialism argues that man was not created by God, but evolved by a process of evolution, and idealism argues to the contrary, there is still a rapprochement of both these in terms of human freedom. Materialism espouses human freedom in the unity and identity of all races and the idealistic doctrine of God establishes the freedom of man. But more directly committed and relevant to the African plight and humanity of man is Marxism, a nineteenth century philosophy encapsulated in historical and dialectical materialism. Marx in his materialistic conception of history draws attention to the equality of man and the material basis of his consciousness. According to him, since materialism in general explains consciousness as the outcome of being, and not conversely, then materialism as applied to the social consciousness is the outcome of social being... In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production, which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces (Marx, 1973). Thereupon, Marxism not only revealed the reasons for colonialism, imperialism, lopsidedness in the world economic order and disparity in income among individuals, societies and nations, it also provided the colonized third world countries and the less privileged (or the proletariat) in all societies with the theory and consciousness for revolution and social action... It is not by accident that all nationalist leaders in Africa, Asia and Latin America came to be Marxists; ... (Dukor, 1990). So in Marxism, the credible and dialectical evolution of materialism from pre-Socratic philosophers, through German philosophy of Feuerbach get metamorphosed into the geopolitical and easthetical historical materialism of Karl Marx. Historical and dialectical materialism thereby becomes an internationalized philosophy of freedom for humanity and Africa.

An analysis of the points of convergence and departures of the whole metaphysical bases of the freedom of man makes a reconciliation of purely idealistic and materialist doctrines of freedoms like that of God and Self-consciousness and existentialism and materialism, imperative. While the analysis of each of the doctrines shows that they all stand for the freedom of man, each of them accuses the other of standing against the freedom of man. In other words each disagrees with every other doctrine on the freedom of man. For instance, a God-intoxicated-tradition believes that only God and God only provides human freedom and describes self-consciousness, existentialism and materialism as atheistic. And the doctrine of self-consciousness would argue that man gets free as he evolves self-consciously. While existentialism would argue that man should be governed by his own principle and not the society's norms in order to be free, materialism, in its classical Marxist tradition would argue that Man's freedom is defined by his place in the relations of production or the material and economic bases of the society. It is a common logic that if all the doctrines on freedom outlined above disagree with one another, all of them could not be true at the same time. But for the benefit of man and Africa (which is the subject of this discourse) any or all of them could be used in defense of freedom.

Incidentally, African culture and her conception of freedom stand to accommodate the spiritualist (or idealistic) and the materialistic conceptions of freedom. The pragmatism and spiritualism of African traditional thought attest to this very fact. The pragmatism and spiritualism is encapsulated in what I call "African polymonotheism". In my article, *African Polymonotheism: An Existentialist Humanistic Culture* I argued that,

*With the emergence of white man's imperialism in Africa, the existential Humanistic culture of the Black continent was misconceived and misinterpreted. But it is the African Polymonotheism which I shall refer here as the existential pragmatism of African civilization... Then the existential pragmatic culture of the Africans lies in their closeness to nature and living by the dictate of natural laws and gods (Dukor, 1989).*

But Among the traditional Africans, their spiritualist and idealistic belief in God and gods or ancestors is limited by their pragmatic and materialistic orientation in life. While the gods, spirits and ancestors are asked to come to eat and drink, and to continue to protect them against diseases and misfortunes, often these gods and ancestors are admonished when they fail to live up to people's expectations. Among the people of Ga of Southern Ghana, during the agricultural new-year, the people offer new corn to the ancestors and gods in their shrines and they also sing and rejoice saying

*Take life, take life May the year's end meet us, May we live to be old May no black cat cross between us AT the end of this year may we sit again. (Parrinder, 1962)*

These utterances show a pragmatic and humanistic approach to African life. Conversely, when the kings or chiefs (the spiritual heads) or the gods fail to satisfy their life pragmatically, they would not hesitate to say things like

*O king, you are fool We are taking the victory out of your hand O king, you are impotent We are taking the victory out of your hands (Parrinder, 1962).*

The traditional African was always trying to reconcile his religious and pragmatic world-views. By so doing, he indulged in what the anthropologists call secondary-elaboration by using a lot of excuses to explain the failures of one spiritual means to cure his sickness or solve his problem. Robin Horton lucidly illustrates this attitude of the African in the following words.

*A sick man goes to a diviner, and is told that a certain spiritual agency is "worrying him". The diviner points to certain of his past actions as having excited the spirits anger and indicates certain remedial actions which will appease this anger and restore health. Should the client take the recommended remedial action and yet see no improvement, he will be likely to conclude that the diviner was either fraudulent or just incompetent, and to seek out another expert. The new diviner will generally point to another spiritual agency and another set of arousing circumstances as responsible for the man's condition and will recommend fresh remedial action. (Horton, 1977)*

These attitudinal approach to illness, problems and the role of spiritual leaders, ancestors and gods attest to the African appreciation of spiritual and material freedom. So for the Africans, God, self-consciousness, existentialism and materialism could collectively and individually be the bases of African freedom.

### 3. Beyond "Black and White" to Pluralism

To go beyond black-and-white doctrine to another realm of idea known as pluralism is expected of humanity, and is one of the philosophical bases of the freedom of any people. Earlier, we argued that Manichaeism or the doctrine of opposites, black and white, good and bad could be the basis of European discrimination against, and domination over, Africa. To go beyond, and against the doctrine could not have come at a better time than in this contemporary time of the white domination over black man. Pluralism as a philosophical concept and doctrine is rooted in the realm of ideas whose elaboration has been found to be of practical importance to humanity. In practice and theory, it tends to reconcile the divergent and conflicting views and values of life. Pluralism, analytically and philosophically, makes nonsense the distinction among cultures, religions, races and colours. According to Thomas F. Mason,

*We may describe pluralism in a negative way, as the quality of society within which people of different religions, cultural and linguistic traditions are treated equally as citizens and that they suffer no form of discrimination because of these differences. We may give pluralism a richer content by describing it as the harmonious and enriching co-existence within one political community of people of divergent, at time, incompatible views and their cooperation in establishing and promoting the common good (Mason, 1985).*

Pluralism therefore seems capable of establishing unity in diversity and consequently banishes polarities among individuals and their ideas. It could be promoted in a positive way to achieve unity among diverse people. Dualism, the philosophy of domination has never had a monopoly of dominating human mind in history; it flowered *paripasu* with the contrary and equal doctrine of pluralism. We can only appreciate the growth of dualism and pluralism better through historical perspective. Greece the birth place of the classical Greek philosophy was

a philosophical landscape of pluralism. In spite of her numerous gods, none was regarded as higher than others. Egalitarianism is applied not only to human beings but also to the gods. Ancient Indians and Africans were also pluralists and egalitarians. The Greeks and Indians were pluralists...Not blessed with any major prophets, their religions picked up gods and goddess from neighboring tribes and created many sun gods and with a jumble of divine genealogies. They did not or draw clear lines between the gods and men but were content in practicing that which was sufficient to pay hood to relatively few. The greatest powers in the world were frequently in conflict with each other, but none was always right or always wrong. To the Greeks, the chaotic nature of the world and existence was merely apparent than real. So the dualism between white and black was seen to be only apparent. The Greek power to organize chaos has rarely been equaled. Nietzsche tried to understand the Greeks in terms of Apollonian and the Dionysian, but because of some proceeding intellectual currents, he did not paint his two principles black and white. Though, it would be hazardous to offer sweeping generalizations about ancient Greece, we do know that poems of Iliad as well as fourteen of Aeschylus and Sophocles' tragedies are outstanding in the craftsmanship of their design. From Homer to Aeschylus and Sophocles, conflicts are prominent but never are adversaries colored in Black and White. Homer built the Iliad around contests, stressing the humanity of both sides. The gods participate in the contests, but some on this side and some on that, and like heroes they are neither wholly good nor altogether evil. The poet does not moralize but his insistence on the humanity of Hector no less than Patroclus, and of the Trojans no less than Acheons is anything but pre-moral or amoral (Kaufman, 1966). In the Greek tragedy, in Aeschylus libation Bearers, Orestos says that right clashes with right. In Greek tragic poetry, from Iliad to the Sacchae, it was recognized that nobility and oven divinity did not imply that all right was on one side and all wrong on the side of those who opposed Apollo, Dionysius or even Zeus. The ethos communicated by most of the dialogues of Plato is that of a common quest for knowledge in which even the most intelligent men make mistake. Socrates like Sophocles, insisted that he did not know the answers to the most important questions and that if he was wiser than other men it was solely because they thought they knew what they did not know.

Metaphysically speaking, it has been argued that the term "black" was not invented by the whites to make the black African or negroes feel inferior,. Nevertheless, the value judgments embedded in the language did undermine the self-esteem of the black Africans. Walter Kaufmann argues that taken out of its historical content, "black is beautiful" is as silly as the insistence that 'white is beautiful'. In its content it was a long overdue cry of humanity" (Kaufman, 1966). To regain the self-esteem of blacks, it would not be enough to adopt a pluralistic perspective on all things, but beyond that we must insist that black is beautiful and cultivate the habit of tolerance. Tolerance, both political and emotional is needed to promote the philosophy of humanism in all its ramifications to break down the wall of mutually exclusive opposites. Political tolerance is exhibited by one who defends the right of others to express and publish views that he detests, usually with the Proviso that he and others have to be allowed to criticize those views in public because the clarification and discovery of truths as well as political freedom depend on the free interplay of ideas. On the other hand, emotional tolerance or what is usually called lack of prejudice consist in not detesting any human beings simply because they belong to a certain group. Whoever sees the Negroes, Whites, Catholics, or Jews as sons of the devil or children of darkness or as pigs displays emotional intolerance or prejudice. 39 Most fundamentally, Western domination of African has been predicated on western prejudice and emotional intolerance of the Blackman. The case for political intolerance depends on pluralism.

*If all truths were on one side and nothing but error on the other; if there were good criteria for telling which was which but most of mankind were unable to tell truth from error, the case for tolerance would be weak indeed. If error is linked with wickedness and eternal ferment, while truth is linked with goodness or endless bliss, the case for intolerance would be won (Kaufman, 1966).*

Marcus's basic error is assumption that all right is on the left; all wrong on the Right. The basic error of the white's cosmology is the assumption that everything white is good and the black is evil.

*The moment we cease to see the world in black and white, the instant we see it in colour in its inexhaustible variety, we find a multitude of groups and some hate, some aggression, some stupidity, some lack of information, and some errors wherever there are sizable groups of human beings-but fused in ever different proportions with love and humanity, intelligence and information and even some truth (Kaufman, 1966).*

It is because men think in terms of good and bad that they construe such pairs as love and hate, truth and error. Hate and love may not be opposites, that is, metaphysically speaking. They are not even mutually exclusive concepts. They often co-exist and interpenetrate each other. There are no opposites in nature. Only human



thoughts and ontologies introduce opposites. To understand complex and chaotic situations like black and white, first and third worlds, colonizers and the colonized, we need concepts and abstractions. We need to idealize on contingent factors and ignore the imperfections of their existence. Kaufman says, The analytically minded tend to leave the realms of faith and morals if not politics, to feeling and intuition, while the prophets of direct experience indulge in a bare minimum analysis and have fondness for politics (Kaufman, 1966). Analysis and direct experience lead to pluralism, and so does any thinking that subjects even faith and morals to analysis. Questions like: Are truth and error opposites? or is falsehood the opposite of truth? are questions concerning words or possibly concepts of understanding. The concepts we use to understand our experiences are functions of our language and also of our historical situation and science and philosophy of our time. To illustrate that truth and falsehood are not logically opposites, here is an intelligent question: “Abraham Lincoln was born on February 11, 1809; True or false?” (Kaufman, 1966). The answer is false, but which is hardly the opposite of the truth which is that he was born on February 12, 1801.

True and false dichotomy is hardly applicable on issues that involve philosophy, ideology, or evaluations. When we are considering an essay, a book, or a position, it stands to reason that some of the propositions in it are true and others false, and that neither epithet should be applied to the whole. As such single propositions like “Causality is a concept” or “X caused African unfeedom” or “black is evil” may require analysis before we can say that on one interpretation of it is false and on another, perhaps true. When “true and false” are proclaimed to be “equivalent” of “progressive and regressive”, it is clear that we are no longer concerned with the correctness or incorrectness of propositions and this goes back to Hegel’s dictum, in *the preface to the phenomenology*: “The true is the whole” (Kaufman, 1966). This is a pluralism but not for indiscriminate relativism. In Robert Paul Wolff’s contribution to *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* concludes: “Pluralism assumed a genuine social need during a significant period of history” (Kaufman, 1966) but now we need to go “beyond pluralism and beyond Tolerance” (Kaufman, 1966). Pluralism, according to him, is indeed a philosophy of equality and justice but whose concrete application supports inequality by ignoring the existence of certain legitimate social groups. But Kaufman says that we cannot go beyond pluralism because we have not yet attained pluralism. Our fellow citizens are still Manichaeans under skin. They think in terms of “us” and “them”. For a pluralist “we” is a contextual term that refers now to one grouping, now to another. A pluralist can say “we” dozens of time without referring twice to the same group. That is perhaps why the philosophical basis of African freedom needs, among other things, to go beyond black and white polarity to pluralism and equality.

#### 4. African Philosophy and the Paradox of African Freedom

Philosophy, no doubt, criticizes the mode and the terrain of thought of a people. Therefore in a localized and nationalistic sense, it portrays the identity of a people. Philosophy could be the cultural basis of a people’s freedom. One could contend without fear of contradiction that the assertion of African Philosophy is the assertion of African freedom. This assertion has some weakness in the face of issues that have been thrown-up in the debate about the status of African Philosophy. Yet the assertion of African Philosophy as the philosophical basis of African freedom is plausible in the historical context of African colonization. Besides, the mere assertion of African philosophy as the basis of African freedom will remain arguable as far as the understanding of Philosophy is vigorously pursued. It is in this context that we identify a paradox involved in the concepts of African freedom. The paradox of African freedom as embedded in the debate about the status of African Philosophy is obvious. The writings and the quest for a distinctive African Philosophy are in a way a move for African freedom, to liberate Africa from the pervasive europeanization. While a monist conception of philosophy holds that African participation in the common world heritage of philosophizing is seen as constituting an African freedom, conversely put, African philosophical freedom must of necessity be ideological. While the former school of thought holds that African philosophy must be withdrawn from the ideological myth of ethnophilosophy and focus on the universal conception of philosophy, the latter argues to the contrary. The monists like Paulin Houtondji, Kwasi Wiredu and Peter Bodunrin stand for a historical, progressive attitude embodied in the term “Philosophy” against the dogmatic (systematic) and conservative attitude of ethnographers, anthropologists and mythologists. They advocate for a march by all races into humanity or neck to neck relay of all nations to humanity. They construe African freedom in her joining other races in the noble task of philosophizing as a common heritage rather than indulge in a paradoxical ideological and narcissistic defence of African culture. On the other hand, the ideologists or liberalists’ (like Profs Kwame Gyekye, C. B. Okolo etc.) arguments presuppose

that African freedom is entailed in the ideological and nationalistic defense of African ancient thoughts against the eurocentricism of modern philosophy. They believe that African identity lies in her philosophy from which her freedom can be established. They hold that the ancient African religious world views constitute a philosophy in their right and must be treated and regarded as such to uphold African freedom.

Paulin Houtondji and other monists want African philosophy to be viewed from universalist perspective rather than from the ideological and (anthropological) perspective. Paulin Houtondji argued that the interlocutors of African philosophy exalt their own cultural particularities, a situation which arises when one faces people from other countries and is forced to assert one's uniqueness by conforming to the current stereotypes of one's own society and civilization. He advocates for a universality where one is set-free from the need to assert oneself in the face of others in internal discussion and exchange of ideas among philosophers and scientists in the scientific tradition. He says that philosophers should not be content to repeat hallowed themes, justify them, and give them a new and sounder foundation. He described ethnophilosophy as an implicit, unexpressed world-view, which never existed anywhere but in the anthropologist's imagination. Ethnophilosophy is a pre-philosophy mistaken itself for a metaphilosophy, a philosophy which instead of presenting its own rational justification, shelter lazily behind the authority of a tradition and projects its own thesis and beliefs on to that tradition (Houtondji, 1983). Houtondji criticizes Tempels, Kagame and Awolalu for conceiving philosophy on the model of religion, as a permanent stable system of beliefs, unaffected by evolution, impervious to time and history ever identical to itself. According to him, African philosophers should promote and sustain constant free discussion about all the problems concerning their discipline instead of being satisfied with a private and somewhat abstract dialogue which encourage "folklorism", cultural exhibitionism and particularism.

Much as one can agree with Houtondji on the nature of African Philosophy, there are, however, grounds, mostly ideological, for which one must discountenance his claims. According to Abiola Irele the intellectual presupposition of colonialism represented a formulation in negative terms of African identity; its racism was a large statement about the nature of the African which called for a refutation (Houtondji, 1983). The European mind, especially in the Enlightenment period attempted to understand itself through the mirror of other races and cultures which afforded a justification for their domination over Africa. Take for instance, in Hegel's philosophy, Africa is excluded totally from the historical process, through which, according to him, the human spirit fulfills itself. Hegel places Africa at the opposite pole to Europe, as its ideal and spiritual antithesis (Houtondji, 1983). Lucian Levy-Bruhl, in a similar tone, argues that there is a disparity between the nature and quality of the European mind, and, what he called "primitive mentality" of non-western people and cultures (Houtondji, 1983). According to him, rationality is the prerogative and defining quality of white man it is this ideological and ethnophilosophical undertones of these white authors, among others, that justified the equally ethnophilosophical and ideological definition of African philosophy. Hence the so called African Ethnophilosophers were in a dilemma to rescue Africa from European ideological and philosophical domination. The encounter between Africa and Europe has brought about a conflict of cultures, a situation that, in the specific context of colonization, has produced extension of the heart of the African system of values (Houtondji, 1983). The dilemma of an African philosopher involves a consideration of the relationship between the modes of thought which inform the traditional values and cultural expression of African life on the one hand and, on the other, those enshrined in western philosophy, which historically have shaped the course of Western civilization and the enslavement of Africa. Seen from the point of view of their global import the circumstances in which philosophical reflection is proceeding in Africa today present some important parallel to those that presided over the early phase of the elaboration of western philosophy itself (Houtondji, 1983). African intelligentsia therefore were compelled to reflect upon African historical being in the intellectual response of Africans to the challenge of western civilization.

The ideological and narcissistic monologue of Western culture naturally engenders the ideological response of African intellectuals in terms of narcissistic monologue of African culture. Therefore, it becomes a legitimate means of establishing the philosophical basis of African freedom. It is out of the zeal to pursue this goal that Leopold Sedar Senghor wrote *Negritude* as the racial and cultural consciousness of the African. But unfortunately, Senghor in trying to define and assert African authenticity, plays into the Whiteman's hand and creates a dichotomy between the European mind and African mind by saying that emotion is characteristic of the African while reason is characteristic of Hellenism (Houtondji, 1983). However "*Negritude*" inspired a movement among French speaking scholars towards the investigation of traditional thought system. Tempels and Kagame studies on Bantu and Rwanda philosophies respectively were also good attempts at showing that Africans had thought-system and that they were not all that slavish to Western-oriented philosophy (Houtondji, 1983). Simi-

larly, Cheik Anta Diop attempts to define African identity in sociological and materialistic terms and to demonstrate the Negro origin of ancient Egyptian civilization and refute the argument that black race had produced no great civilization. He traces the continuity of ancient Egyptian civilization in the traditional cultures of contemporary Africa (Houtondji, 1983). Yet the historical approach to African identity and personality is to counter the evolutionary view of classical anthropology which contrives to place the White race and Western civilization at the apex of human development. Instead of the unilateral and ethnocentric conception of history of Hegel, Diop proposes a universal history in which Africa is involved. This view of Diop incidentally is an approach to African freedom, which anticipated the views of Paulin Houtondji and Peter Bodunrin as well as enhancing the paradox involved in African freedom. But in an ideological overtone, Diop views history as a primordial and determining factor of African's cultural unity and the effect of this is the differentiation of the African in terms of his cultural expression and attitude to the world. This is what Senghor conceptualized as a structure and mode of being.

Frantz Fanon's contribution to African freedom is in some sense ideological and in other sense universalist. He infuses a radical spirit in the process. For him the struggle against colonization is a process through which colonization is a process through which colonized man would remake his humanity, diminished and distorted by the experience of domination. He criticized Senghor's *negritude* as a theory of collective personality of the race objectified in the forms of articulation of the traditional culture. According to him, African culture will take concrete shape around the struggle of the people not around songs, poems and folklore (Houtondji, 1983). For Fanon, cultural expression refers not to a predetermined model offered by the past but to a reality that lies in the future as a perpetual creation. Culture, for him, is not a state but a becoming. In this sense of African freedom, Fanon, Marcie Towa and Houtondji seem to be in agreement against Senghorian *negritude* and "ethnophilosophy" which seeks to perpetuate and foster the illusion that African can offer to Europe, a heightening of its soul before the complete liquidation of European imperialism in Africa. In reality, no cultural development of an importance will be possible in Africa until she has built up a material strength capable of guaranteeing her sovereignty and her power of decision not only in the political and economic field but also in the cultural. Our inferiority in material terms places our culture at the very mercy of the great powers in our time (Houtondji, 1983). C. B. Okolo's view on African philosophy and freedom looks like a combination of the ideological and monist approach. But if one must locate him in either of these schools, he seems to fit the model of Senghorian *negritude*, which is ideological, as articulated in his article *Negritude, a philosophy of Social Action*. Nkrumah Kwame and Walter Rodney in their books *Consciencism* and *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* respectively are plainly and uncompromising ideological.

## 5. Conclusion

It is within the foray of the ideological and monist approaches to African freedom that a reconciliation must be sought. While the monist approach to human freedom, including that of the Africans, is necessarily true, the monists must at the same time appreciate the predicament of the Africans and the ideological assault on them by their overlords, the whites. The debate on African philosophy and freedom must therefore necessarily begin with an ideological defense of African personality which has hitherto been humiliated by the ideological universalization of European culture. One may therefore, suggest that the quest for African freedom should begin with a narcissistic monologue and defense of African culture and then a twist into a monist approach, after the ideological and narcissistic monologue of European culture must have been eliminated and countered. It is at the equal standing on the ideological struggles of Europe and Africa that a fresh start can be made in the search for the freedom of humanity. One thing obvious in the two approaches is that each of them connotes both African freedom and unfreedom. Since that is the case, African freedom would mean the pursuit of the two approaches simultaneously. While the monist approach is utopian from the point of view of the conservative Africans, the ideological (or liberal) approach is at best racist from both some African and European point of views.

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