Being an African in the Twenty-first Century and the Prospects for Africa's Progress[1]

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Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Africa continues to waddle in poverty, disease, and ignorance, having long lost the momentum of the socio-economic gains of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Worse, still, the continent is being ravaged by intra- and international conflicts, notwithstanding the scourge of AIDS, with devastating effects on life and property. Not only do the development obstacles highlighted in development literature of the 1950s and 1960s continue to persist; new ones have also emerged in post-colonial Africa to compound the economic woes of the continent. Inadequate infrastructure and lack of entrepreneurs; predator-political leaders, intra- and international wars, military intervention in politics, weak and inappropriate institutional arrangements, and political instability appear to be intractable obstacles to development (Mbaku 2000). Others such as the debt crisis, exploitation and destabilization; globalization and marginalisation, and the imposition of a misplaced neo-liberal macroeconomic agenda and the promotion of a 'hegemonic polyarchy', have swung the clock of Africa's progress decades backwards.

With these internally and externally generated impediments to Africa's development, it is hardly surprising that the average African lives on less than two United States dollars a day (Human Development Report 1999).

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[1] An earlier version of this paper titled 'The African of the 21st Century and Africa's Transformation' was published in the AAPS Internet Journal of Politics (AIJP) of the *African Association of Political Science*. See http://www.aaps.co. zw/publications/AIJP/Ampomah.html.

Today, 83% of the poorest countries in the world, as measured by the UNDP's human development index (HDI) are found in Africa, and the growth rates of most African countries, for the period 1987-1997, are negative. In contrast, many developing countries, particularly the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) such as South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore have achieved phenomenal economic growth rates in the last four decades or so (Mbaku 2000:1). Yet, some African economies such as Ghana's, at independence, were much stronger than many of these East Asian economies.

Against the backdrop of Africa's bleak economic disposition, what does it mean to be an African in the twenty-first century? What is the way forward for Africa to extricate itself from the quagmire of poverty, instability and the threat of disintegration? In exploring answers to these critical questions it is the belief of this paper that the African problem is too complex to elicit simplistic solutions. The paper thus seeks to indicate possible directions and offer practical suggestions that might be useful for Africa's emancipation.

The Eurocentric Idea of Africa

First and foremost, how is Africa perceived, and how does this perception impact on the African of the twenty-first century? The bleak picture of Africa has, at the turn of the millenium, watered the fields of Afro-pessimism. Already assorted delicacies of despondency, ultimatums and threats have been served in the western-controlled media—e.g.: Africa is 'a high risk investment area'; 'write off the continent' if it does not put its house in order; South Africa (relatively better-off) should distance itself from the 'basket cases' (*Daily News* June 14 2000). These conclusions do not even faintly acknowledge the West's complicity in the pathetic goings-on on the continent let alone commend the high level of sophistication of the great African empires—Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and others at a time when Europe was in the dark (Chavis 1999).

Apparently, the kind of reporting on events in Africa by the western media makes a mockery of the tools of objective analysis that the so-called liberal paradigm purports to expound: logic and empiricism. But what is the purpose of this deliberate denigration of the African, one form of which began with the zoological exhibitions of 'exotic natives' in Germany in 1874 (Bancel et al. 2000:22). The answer is obvious:

[T]o serve their capitalistic greed .... [for] .... the African continent is a malignant appendage rather than as an integral, systemic part of the earth and all its natural functions in accordance with universal laws. Its indigenous populations are depicted as without value (pp. 1-2) .... [It is] for psychological purposes as strategy to fulfil Machiavellianism, later Darwinism, Imperialism, still later the so-called white man's burden, colonialism, and neocolonialism, the final stage of imperialism eruditely presented by the late Ghanaian President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (p. 4) .... The fact of the matter is the continent's mineral resources, strategic metals, and natural resources are significant factors in the wealth of European Nations, America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, to name a few .... [It] is a function of white supremacy, plain and simple (Chavis 1999:5).

In perpetuating this notion of supremacy, Subcommandante Marcos's observation that 'lies have become a universal currency', is as much applicable here as it is with the Zapastita's cause (Esteva 1997). The root of these lies dates back to the Enlightenment philosophers, who framed the African as a different, sub-human species and therefore philosophically and anthropologically sanctioned the exploitation of Africans in barbaric ways that were not allowed for Europeans (Eze 1997:7). For Hegel, for example, Africa was outside History, a wasteland filled with 'lawlessness', 'fetishism', and 'cannibalism'—waiting for European soldiers and missionaries to conquer it and impose 'order' and 'morality'. The African was incapable of rational thought or ethical conduct, and deserved to be enslaved, so that the relationship between the European and the African need not be prescribed by moral or ethical considerations. In a later treatise, the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel justifies imperialism and colonialism as a logical solution to poverty and enhancement of the welfare of Europeans (Eze 1997). In this context one cannot fail to understand Hegel's deliberateness to ignore the tenets of his own theoretical edifice and embrace ignorance as a source for his irrational racism, and thus, turning a blind eye to the contradictions in his discourse on 'African culture' (Neugebauer 1991).

Being an African in the Twenty-first Century

The damned image 'imposed by outsiders, especially Europeans' (Mudimbe 1992) on the African is obviously devastating, and should be of great concern

to the African of the twenty-first century. But before we turn to it, 'who or what is an African'? While the question is ontologically and teleologically significant—the former addressing the question of being and the latter that of purpose' (Gordon 2000:7) it has proven to be problematic in various contexts, particularly, in the 'new' South Africa (More 2000a). According to More identity is fundamentally a dialectical notion whose meaning makes sense only in the presence of the Other that is different than self, and in the post-apartheid South African context 'the term "African" is multi-dimensional; it connotes racial, geographical, political or ideological dimensions'.

Evidently, then, it makes sense for Kwesi Kwaa Prah to argue that if everyone is an African, then Africanism has lost its meaning (see Molefe 1998:5). Arguably, however, if we should throw in the Lucy factor, then, at a macro level of analysis, we might conclude that humanity are all Africans and that there is no 'Other', contrary to the theories on Otherness. But paradoxically, there *is* the Other even if some of the differences are unreal, and therefore there must be an African, whose 'Africanness emanates from history, culture and African consciousness [such that] "He-is an African who feels African"' (Karioki 2000). But if he who feels African is an African, then for teleological purposes, it might not be easy to identify an African, for, to paraphrase Shakespeare, it is virtually impossible to find the mind's construction in the face. Thus, trying to discern identity from a person's psychological disposition is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The question who or what is an African? could, then, be polemical; it could also evoke bizarre ideas and destructive goals, especially when it is racially perceived. It might, then, suffice to conclude—taking a cue from Hernando de Soto—that we may not be able to define precisely who or what an African is but we know him/her when we see him/her.[2] The particularism of the adaptation of de Soto's conclusion manifests itself for instance, in the context of international sports and conferences,

> institutions such as the OAU and the African Development Bank, and in such regional organisations as SADDC (now SADC) and

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[2] At a conference on the '*Informal Sector*' in Ivory Coast in 1989 Hernando de Soto is reported to have remarked, 'The informal sector is like an elephant; we may not be able to define it precisely, but we know it when we see it' (see Mead and Morrison 1996).

ECOWAS, as well as the African caucuses of the agencies of the UN and the World Bank (Appiah 1992).

By this conclusion we, perhaps, lay to rest the risk of committing what More (2000b) describes in philosophy as the naturalistic fallacy, i.e. trying to define an indefinable concept.

Appiah (1992) reminds us that being an African has 'a certain context and a certain meaning', and in accord with Achebe, 'that meaning is not always one that we can be happy with'. Invariably, 'identity is one we must continue to reshape'. Indeed, like all human beings, Africans cannot be happy with the denigrating Eurocentric image imposed upon them even if it is premised on objective conditions. If a denigrating image constructed on so-called objective conditions is repugnant then an 'invented' identity, a kind that is based on ignorance and falsehood (Appiah 1992; Mudimbe 1992; Neugebauer 1991) is absolutely objectionable and must be confronted. In the confrontation we must observe with conviction that the identity of any civilization is constructed on images of the other, which through their mirroring effect, enable it to develop an image of itself and define its place in the world (Bancel et al. 2000:22). From this perspective, there cannot be any exceptionalism about pre-colonial Africa, and if that is so, post-colonial Africa will then necessarily have to reshape her distorted image. Reshaping Africa's identity in the twenty-first century should thus have a rational appeal: It is, at least, a psychological recipe for Pan-Africanism, black solidarity, which can be an important force with real political benefits. One condition that appears unassailable in reshaping Africa's identity is the internalization of Africanism, which invariably should inspire the African to be proud of being, in the Nigerian platitude, a son-of-the-soil, and nurture a deep sense of moral and philosophical rejuvenation. In the process, the African of twenty-first century ought to recognise that there is no other *bona fide* habitat other than the continent called Africa. Africans, thus, need to transform themselves and the continent from '*the wretched of the earth*' (Fanon 1967) to a realist and responsible engagement of autonomous development.

This is an enormous challenge but it should inspire the African's primordial instinct to survive and live within the community of nations with dignity. After all *Obi nom aduro ma oyarefo*—'no one takes medicine on behalf of the sick'. Thus it is the primary responsibility of Africa to extricate herself from poverty and insecurity, and no one else's; an outside intervention is a mere bonus.

Prospects for Emancipation

The prospects for Africa's recovery appear not to be encouraging, but recovery is not impossible. Africa has the potential to rejuvenate itself, and Nkrumah's vision that the black man is capable of managing his own affairs ought to ring constantly in the consciousness of the twenty-first century African. Here, we may not need to look far for a visionary dream. Of this, Abiola Irele (2000:18) reminds us:

> ... the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah, which envisioned an Africa free and self assured, is still a relevant concept for us, reinterpreted as this concept must be in our own time as an ideology of African interests, bent towards the formidable task of repositioning Africa and its Diaspora with dignity in the world.

Africa's vision in the twenty-first century could also be perceived in terms of a continent capable of sustaining a decent livelihood; being a major part of the world's population, it can, with one voice, and under one banner contribute towards the directing of the trajectory of the international system; she can use her relative power to maximize her access to the world's resources. Besides her natural endowments, these are strategies which will create the needed conditions for the development of the continent and her people(s).

Historically, the resilience, courage and tenacity of the continent's forebears, who, firmly believing in their inalienable right to freedom and self-determination, wrested the continent from the clutches of colonialism and *apartheid*, constitute a source of inspiration. These attributes should stand Africa in good stead to turn the tide against poverty, insecurity and oppression. In doing so there is the need to 'banish the image of a naive and simple Africa that gave a powerful affective charge to the literature of cultural emancipation but which can have no place in any serious proposition concerning our place and status in the contemporary world' (Irele 2000).

In spite of the diversity, African peoples share a common basket of experiences and history which is a great unifying factor in itself: the pain of subjugation, humiliation and deprivation, untold economic hardships, an unprecedented scale of exploitation in human history and even genocide. As Appiah (1992) puts it:

> We share a continent and its ecological problems; we share a relation

of dependency to the world economy; we share the problem of racism in the way the industrialized world thinks of us (and let me include here, explicitly, both 'Negro' Africa and the 'Maghrib'); we share possibilities of the development of regional markets and local circuits of production; and our intellectuals participate, through the shared contingencies of our various histories, in a common discourse ....

Although the plundering of the continent's human and natural resources has been going on for over half a millenium, Africa still has substantial levels of, and diverse human and natural resource endowment to meet her needs if judiciously harnessed. Africa, in the twenty-first century, has even greater human resource capacity to transform the continent than she has had at any other time. Tanzania's case, succinctly articulated by the late president Julius Nyerere in a dialogue with top-level staff of the World Bank in Washington in 1998 illustrates this point:

> The British Empire left us a country with 85% illiterates, two engineers and twelve doctors. When I left Office (thirteen years ago) we had nine per cent illiterates and thousands of engineers and doctors.

This is equally true of all African countries. However, the brain drain, induced by the lure of the so-called modernity in the west and the push of the insensibility of the African state, has deprived the continent of realizing the full potential of its pool of highly skilled professionals. As yet, Africa has failed to successfully tap into the huge human resource potential in the Diaspora. This source is beckoning, and it should not be out of Africa's reach when the dust settles.

The Way Forward

Prescribing concrete solutions to the African crisis, given the multi-faceted nature of the dilemma and the complexity of the development phenomenon, is a daunting task, and far beyond the scope of this paper. What we intend to do, therefore, is to sketch possible direction(s) which could form the building block(s) for *action* towards Africa's socio-political and economic· transformation.

Development Ideology

In his book *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Ake (1996) postulates that political conditions in Africa are the greatest constraints to development. He demonstrates that the two main characteristics of the colonial state in Africa, absolutism and arbitrariness, carried over into the post-colonial state, encouraged a development paradigm—*modernisation theory*—which ignored the historical and cultural specificity of African countries. Thus, from the outset, modernisation theory was useless as a tool of social transformation and economic development. In view of this, Ake proceeds to prescribe a development paradigm for Africa that is people-centred and based on empowerment, confidence building, self-realisation and self-reliance. This development paradigm, according to him, must necessarily be operative in a kind of democracy that places emphasis on concrete social, political and economic rights, recognizes collective rights, inclusiveness, and the development of institutions, and empowers people to participate in decision making at all levels of government.

Concurring with Ake's conclusions, Mamdani's prognosis captures the African crisis as a 'political legacy of colonialism' whereby Africa's 'dilemma is the form of the state: the economy dynamizes, and the state disenfranchizes the most dynamic'. To escape from this maze, Mamdani suggests that we

> re-think the institutional legacy of colonialism, the idea that we must define political identity, political rights and political justice first and foremost in relation to indigeneity (Mamdani 2000).

From Mamdani and Ake's propositions the appropriate trajectory for the resolution of the African crisis ought not to be fuzzy: *autonomous development* and *good governance*, both of which must be informed by African traditional humanistic, philosophical and political values.

Autonomous Development

Abiola Irele correctly observes that the African crisis today is as much inward, psychological and moral, as it is structural, related to objective realities, and thus, that they should be tackled at the levels of the *mind* and *action*. The starting point, to my mind, is for African intellectuals to give substance to the idea of autonomous development, to unravel this development paradigm

through research and publications, lectures, seminars and workshops, not only in universities but also at all levels of the educational system, and beyond.

The rationale for autonomous development is not farfetched. *Firstly*, as Africans, we need to 'create our own unique space of life and expression in a challenging international system'. *Secondly*, development cannot be imposed from outside. Africa's experience bears testimony to this view. The imposition of Eurocentric development theories and strategies—modernization, import substitution, balanced growth, post-modernism, neo-liberalism etc.—have not only failed as tools of transformation in Africa but have also, in relative terms, inflicted serious damage on the socio-cultural, political and economic organisation of African societies. Marxist variants of development theory— *post-imperialist discourse, dependency theory, modes of production problematisations, and world systems analysis*—have not fared better although they have provided useful insights into the African crisis. The strategy that perhaps, appeared to hold the greatest promise for Africa—the basic needs approach—was inexplicably truncated before it could take root. *Thirdly*, the desire for progress is primarily an innate propensity, voluntary, and inherent within the individual or society, although it may be a reaction or response to internal or external stimuli. *Fourthly*, autonomous development is a logical sequence to, and a validation of the struggles for independence and self-determination, without which the idea of sovereignty becomes a mirage.

The idea of autonomous development does not suggest the isolation of the continent from the rest of the world. The reality of the contemporary world does not permit such a stance. Africa is obliged to acknowledge the interdependence of nations and the competitiveness of the international system, but within this framework, she should be able to take vital decisions to resolve her own peculiar problems which no one is better placed to do than herself.

Here, a caveat may be necessary. Pursuing a path of autonomous development does not imply automaticity of success. Much will depend on a number of factors, some of which will be discussed shortly. However, like 'the idea of progress', the impact of the idea of autonomous development could be tremendous. Apart from it serving as a general orientation device, it could also serve as a powerful tool of mobilisation, and as an ideology, contribute to our interpretation of social reality (Shanin 1997). It would also promote our understanding of the causes of *our* (i.e. the entire African populace) continued underdevelopment, the dynamics of the international system, and the formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of realistic development policies.

As in the case of the 'idea of progress', autonomous development, connoting many derivations, such as self-reliance, self-assurance, economic growth, science and technology, egalitarianism, democracy, education, and health, could become 'an important ideology—a blinker of collective cognition' for the African cause (Mead & Morrison 1996:69). This conjecture, of course, pre-empts the urgent need to address the ideological vacuum that has characterised contemporary Africa. The vacuum is predicated not so much on the lack of ideologies—sets of ideas embodying the norms, values and ideals of African peoples—but on the problem of 'evolving appropriate, credible and viable ideologies for contemporary African nations' (Gyekye 1997:viii).

At various times Africa's development initiatives have been premised on ideologies such as 'Pan Africanism', 'Negritude', 'African Renaissance', 'Black Consciousness', 'African Unity', 'Nationalism', 'Black Power' and 'African Socialism'. The degree to which the failure of our development efforts is dependent on these ideologies is a moot point. However, it seems apparent that the underlying racial factor in these ideologies (or so it seems), as indicated earlier, did have some negative repercussions on the development process. We may then pay heed to Appiah's caveat and search for ideologies that cannot, implicitly or explicitly, be faulted on the racial card. In this sense *autonomous development* perfectly fits.

Autonomous Development and the African Renaissance

In a way, autonomous development resonates with the idea of Africa's Renaissance which, if it is to succeed, need to chart its own path rather than follow the trajectory of the European Renaissance (Owusu-Ampomah 2000). This path could possibly be a 'move away from the process of *moving away from* traditional society *and* internalizing *the colonial state*' (Wamba-dia-Wamba 1992). This return should not be misconstrued as a return to the Hobbesian 'state of nature' in which there is 'continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (Hobbes *Leviathan*). By the return to tradition we mean that tradition must function as a source from which to extract elements that help in the construction of an authentic and emancipative epistemological paradigm relevant to the conditions in Africa at this historical moment (Ramose 1992). In this event, the 'return' will have to be viewed in the context of the three

'sub-cultures' that characterise Africa's cultural map: traditional African culture, Euro-Christian culture and Islamic culture (Nkrumah 1970).

African Values and Political and Philosophical Ideas

Autonomous development requires the incorporation of some of the positive African values and philosophical ideas that may be relevant to our approaches to transformation. A fundamental value that underlies the social and economic management in African societies is humanism—the concern for human well being. This should form the bedrock of African development strategies. The concern for human welfare, widely acknowledged, is 'pervasive and fundamental to African social and moral thought and practice' (Mead & Morrison 1996:158-159, 258). It manifests itself in theory and practice. Gyekye cites several Akan proverbs to demonstrate that humanity is central in African culture e.g.:

> It is the human being that counts; I call upon gold, it answers not; I call upon cloth, it answers not; it is human being that counts. The human being is more beautiful than gold (Mead & Morrison 1996:259).

Bearing in mind that the African is essentially *communal* and/or *humanist*, the process of socio-economic transformation should reflect this spirit in the way we do things. This notion must particularly have resonance with policy formulation and implementation at all levels but particularly, with regard to community issues and projects. Essentially, kinship and communities have long been a source of security and socio-political organisation in Africa.

This spirit of communitarianism or humanism should be reinforced in the twenty-first century African society, but with caution, as More (2000b) advises. According to him the indiscriminate application of humanistic ethics constitutes a recipe for perpetual slavery, marginalisation and dependency. For More (2000b), part of the problems of Africa is a direct consequence of humanistic ethics. According to him an ethic that valorises and prescribes forgiveness, gentleness, altruism, vulnerability and compassion as opposed to competitiveness, aggressiveness, abrasiveness, acquisitiveness, revengefulness, and greed amongst others—which constitute the hallmark of the rich and powerful nations—are problematic because it means the

continued enslavement of Africa and its people(s). For him, humanistic ethics can only make sense if the power relations were to favour Africa, or if there was a reciprocal recognition of humanism by the Other and was explicitly demonstrated in the Other's relationship with the African. Since this is not the case, it should be obvious for Africans that extending a hand of friendship indiscriminately, means their continued subjection. Relations must be constructed in accord with the dictates of realism.

Our main task, then, is how to give substance to this fundamental, intrinsic and self-satisfying value in modern Africa. This is an open question, which requires us to engage in praxis, and no one answer may be finite. One possibility, however, is a critical examination of the factors that play significant roles in the social organisation of African societies. These include kinship; social status and occupation; the sexual division of labour and gender-based organizations; and age ranking (McCall 1995:176). One of the aims here could be the identification and analysis of the different types of structured relationships between individuals and groups, and the traditional and modern norms and values that have characterized these societies, with a view to enhancing the dynamism and adaptive potential of these societies to consolidate community identity and mobilize community action in modern Africa (Mead & Morrison 1996:188).

Further to these possibilities, specific choices that would foster a common identity, and reflect the elements of shared sentiments and ideals for the attainment of the African dream may be required. Such choices may include distinctive symbols such as a common flag, an anthem, a coat of arms and a common language for the continent. Of these choices, a common language is apparently problematic given its sensitivity, amidst the hundreds of languages in Africa. Nevertheless, it seems indisputable that four major languages in Africa have a competitive edge over all others in terms of space coverage and population. These languages, Arabic, predominantly in the North, Hausa, widely spoken in the West, Swahili, in East and Central Africa, and Nguni in Southern Africa could become the fulcrums of African solidarity. Kwesi Kwaa Prah's emphasis on language as pertinent to Africa's development is thus not misplaced (Prah 1993).

Traditional Political Ideas and Values

Issues of good governance have featured in most analyses of the African crisis. But what does the term 'good governance' mean? How do we harness it

for our own good? In one sense good governance is equated with democracy, i.e. the institutional expression of the will of the people and respect for democratic principles and institutions such as the constitution, bill of rights, multiparty system, elections, the rule of law, the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. In the context of the development agenda of the World Bank, the concept is used with reference to 'public management techniques: it stresses elements such as an efficient public service; an independent judicial system; and accountable administration of public funds—it is 'synonymous with sound management' (Friedman 2000).

The colonial and post-colonial African experience of liberal democracy, as good governance is supposed to mean, has been disastrous: it did not only fail to function but also resulted in 'political confusion, instability, uncertainty and frustration'. The reasons may not be farfetched: These institutions were alien to Africa and hence Africans were not disposed, psychologically, culturally and politically to grapple with their concomitant demands and practices. Moreover, the colonial governments made no effort to inculcate the liberal democratic ideals in the people in a way that would have ensured their understanding, legitimization and entrenchment into the political fabric of African societies. Rather the colonial governments were themselves undemocratic. Laws were made without popular participation (Gyekye 1997a: 115).

Good governance, as defined by the World Bank i.e. in relation to management, according to Friedman, requires that democracy be regarded as simply a means—a device to ensure that public officials manage in a particular way. In this sense Friedman correctly argues that the characteristics of good governance are separated from the question of those to whom those who govern are responsible. With the World Bank and donor countries' insistence on good governance, as defined in these terms, African governments are required to shift their allegiance from their citizens to the World Bank and the donor countries. Yet democratic government requires rulers to be accountable to those who gave them power to rule—the people. Thus, good governance must be in relation to popular participation in the decision-making process on matters that affect citizens' interests and values, and the right of citizens to hold their government accountable for its actions and policies. (An attempt by any party, agency or actor to usurp these fundamental prerequisites of democracy, under any pretext, therefore, undermines democracy itself, as a value, and the very existence and survival of the people). On that score democracy in the African context is far superior;

it allows far more opportunities for the majority to participate in the decision-making process, than liberal democracy which by and large, reduces political participation to a once-and-for-all activity, i.e. voting. Among the Asante, for example, *participation* in politics did not end with the 'election' of the chief or king, as Rattray testifies:

> ... To him (i.e. an Ashanti) the state is literally a *Res Publica*; it is everyone's business. The work of an Ashanti citizen did not finish when by his vote he had installed a chief in office .... The rights and duties of the Ashanti democrats were really only beginning after (if I may use a homely analogy) the business of the ballot-box was over. In England, the Government and House of Commons stand between ourselves and the making of our laws, *but among the Ashanti there was not such thing as government apart from the people.*

Indeed, democracy was not, and has never been alien to pre-colonial Africa, in both centralised and acephalous societies, and participation in political life was virtually natural in the lives of the people. Essentially, participation in political life in these societies was not only motivated by the obvious desire for societal equilibrium but also by peer- or group-pressure and the significance of issues arising within the communities. Moreover, democratic institutions that permitted power to be *decentralised* made governance at both state and local levels a *fait accompli*. The system was not exclusive; it did not divide the people; it promoted *oneness* since decisions taken were *consensual* (Ramose 1992; Wiredu 1997). People 'elected' to public office represented all the people or lineage (as the case may be), which in the case of the Asante, was the basic political unit (Wiredu 1997:305). Elected officers did not represent a section or the majority of the electorate, as it is the case with liberal multi-party democracy, and they served the people with *humility*. From these premises it makes sense for Wiredu (1997) to call for 'a non-party polity' in Africa, as a way out of the many conflicts and political instability surrounding multi-party democracy on the continent.

The point we are making is that the political ideas and values of pre-colonial Africa are consistent with the modern elements of democracy: accountability, consent/popular will, participation, freedom of expression, consensus, reconciliation, toleration of opposing views, the rule of law, consultation and conferencing, openness/ transparency, oneness and humility.

Indeed, in relative terms, these values manifest themselves more profoundly in the African political setting than even Europe's, and these should guide us to structure a functional modern political system.

Bearing in mind that western democracy has evolved through the rugged terrain of despotism, wars, and revolutions there is no gainsaying about Africa gearing itself up for a 'purposive construction of a mode of politics responsive to the political (and economic) problems of contemporary Africa' (Wamba dia Wamba 1992). I cannot therefore agree more with Gyekye (1997a) when he emphasises 'a need to urge that traditional values and ideas be brought to bear on modern political life and thought', taking into account the exigencies of modern African politics, and the contemporary international system. Neither can I disagree with Wamba dia Wamba's call for emancipative politics which is in conformity with the idea of autonomous development, and has a wide support among Africanists, including Ramose and Eboh.

On this account, there appears to be a consensus on the need for the following.

- The accommodation of traditional authority, which is an indispensable feature of our political system, either as an integral part of formal government or outside it. Its role and powers, in each case, must be clearly defined to enable it to contribute positively to Africa's reconstruction. If it should operate outside the formal government it should be strengthened administratively with adequate resources especially qualified personnel.
- The construction of a more active role for traditional rulers in infusing traditional African values (discussed throughout this paper) in citizens, especially the youth, through constant interaction, exhortation, rewards and citations.
- To give due recognition to openness as a traditional value, through adequate dissemination of information to citizens; media restrictions, including ownership and operation of information outlets of all forms (such as the press, radio, and television) should be removed.
- Responsive and committed governments that seek the interests of citizens, as defined by them.
- An electoral system that allows greater representation, and in this respect, permits nomination of representatives of sections of the community e.g. the traditional authority (where it remains outside formal government),

civil society organisations, and gender organisations, at local, regional/provincial and national levels.

- Direct accessibility of elected and nominated representatives, as well as the traditional authority, by the citizens;
- National, regional and continental coalitions of civil society organisations to serve as a bulwark for democratic government on the continent.
- Decentralisation in the interests of effective local government.
- Referendum as an important feature of the political system to maximise participation.

The Role of Intellectuals

It is commendable that through the writings of a vast array of intellectuals our knowledge of traditional rule in Africa has been greatly enhanced. Knowing, per se, is not a bad thing but it should not be an end in itself. The critical social scientists rightly argue that (acquisition of knowledge through) 'research must be a transformative endeavour' (Neuman 1997). Many African intellectuals have taken pleasure in playing the role of colonial anthropologists and historians, conducting social research just to maintain the status quo (the colonial state). They have perpetuated a slavish acceptance of western liberal democracy and negated the authentic African democratic values, which make sense to the African, and hence are more likely to promote his or her progress. This is one of the puzzles, which Fanon explains as being 'the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class (the African intellectuals), of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mould that its mind is set in'.

Similarly, Nkrumah (1964:4) writes (of the African intellectual):

Instead of considering culture as a gift and a pleasure the (African) intellectual .... saw it as a personal distinction and privilege .... The degree of national consciousness attained by him was not of such an order as to permit his full grasp of the laws of historical development or of the thorough-going nature of the struggle to be waged if independence was to be won ....

Sadly, independence was won but the African intellectual, in the main, did not change. This, of course does not mean that all African intellectuals are timid,

western-oriented or traitors. Some African intellectuals have 'sought knowledge as an instrument of national emancipation and integrity' (Nkrumah 1964:4). The list may include revolutionaries like Nkrumah himself and Amilcar Cabral, and others like Anta Diop, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Claude Ake and Steve Biko.

While the number of such intellectuals in post-colonial Africa is without doubt growing, the collective weakness of African intellectuals seemingly remains intractable. This 'traditional weakness ... laziness ... cowardice ... the incapacity of the national middle class (the African intellectuals) .... to rationalise popular action, to see the reasons' (Fanon 1967) for the propagation of liberal democracy has become the bane of our societies. It is even unthinkable that some African intellectuals and politicians—a minority, although their negative role is debilitating—collaborate with external actors to exploit the continent for parochial gains.

New Directions in Education

The problem of the African intellectual as expounded by Nkrumah and Fanon above is a crisis of alienation, which in part is a direct consequence of cultural imperialism. The colonial educational system bombarded the African with knowledge and values that he/she could hardly relate to, and far removed from his/her culture, immediate experience and aspirations to be of any practical use to him/her. This was done for a purpose: to subjugate, 'civilise' and exploit the African. Strangely, the educational system of Post-colonial Africa has not changed much after independence. The result is that Africa continues to miss the boat of functional education, which among other things should aim at empowering the receiver to be able to take control of his or her environment, manage his/her affairs efficiently and contribute to the common good of his or her society.

A case in point is the content and trajectory of political science as a discipline in South African universities[3]. By and large African politics is taught as an appendage, i.e. as an option, to the western-centred political

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[3] Admittedly, South Africa may be an extreme case, given her peculiar historicity and demographics, and therefore atypical of the continent on this matter. Nevertheless, the point being made here is generally applicable to most African countries and across the disciplines; any differences may be a matter of degree.

science curricula in these universities. Of course, it should be understandable if African Studies is an adjunct to the study of politics in European universities, but certainly, a serious anomaly if it is peripheral in African universities. In fact, it is unthinkable for African Studies to be in the mainstream of a political science course in a European university, and European Studies becoming peripheral. This does not suggest any prejudice against the teaching and learning of European political philosophy and/or system, and for that matter that of any other part of the world. The point is that feeding the African on purely European epistemology is a misnomer. Africans need to have a thorough grasp of their own knowledge systems, cosmology and environment, as a principle. It is only there and then that they will be able to go beyond the university walls to join those social forces struggling for radical socio-economic change in their lives and the attainment of the second independence in the twenty-first century (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1997). While the acquisition of others' knowledge is significant, it should not serve to merely equip African students with 'technical and administrative skills but also conceptual skills that would enable them to contextualize their role in a world community, and most importantly to understand how to service a critical citizenry' (Gibbon, *et al.* forthcoming).

In this event, Africa surely needs to get her house in order. Getting our house in order, in educational terms, does not only mean rethinking of what goes on in institutions of learning or rearranging the subjects and disciplines; it is also a question of rethinking which education, for whom, for what and by whom? (Eboh 1992). Towards these goals:

- ♦ Greater co-operation among African countries is required in areas of curriculum design, methodology, and teaching aids;
- ♦ Curricula should reflect African culture, philosophy, socio-economic and political experiences, and the aspirations of African peoples;
- ♦ Curricula must aim at developing the positive human qualities that are sine qua non for the progress of any society, and producing a new African, conscious of his/her role in the development of himself/herself and his or her society.
- ♦ Exchange programmes for African students should be a significant feature in the educational system;
- ♦ Efforts should be made to educate African students in other African institutions where necessary, instead of sending them to study in western institutions.

♦ Integration of the educational systems of the various African countries should be explored to avoid duplication, ensure efficient use of resources and guarantee institutions of a high academic standing.

Self Reliance: The Economy, Pharmacopoeia, and Science and Technology

The discussion, thus far, logically brings us to the concept of self-reliance, which as observed earlier, is a derivative of the idea of autonomous development. On the premise that the pursuit of a better life is the ultimate goal of every society, it might well be justifiably grounded in *self-reliance*, i.e. building one's economy through one's own efforts and resources. This approach does not imply a rejection of foreign assistance or investment. All that it means is that the continent must take, as a principle, the responsibility for its own progress, using its human and material resources, and buying only from abroad things she cannot produce or are least in demand. The role of self-reliance in the success of North Korea (Payer 1974) barring her recent economic setbacks and food crisis, for example, should awaken Africa to the virtues in this philosophy, long articulated by prominent black leaders like Nkrumah, du Bois, and Nyerere.

The notion of self-reliance necessarily connotes relying on our knowledge systems, and resource endowment, to a large extent, to 'intellectually ... free ourselves from Professor C.Y. Thomas' famous definition of underdevelopment: "producing what we do not consume and consuming what we do not produce"' (Depelchin 1993). A successful self-reliance policy will reduce pressure on foreign exchange reserves and the balance of payments, and reduce the continent's dependence on outsiders, especially the West. This will require a definition of our priorities, commitment, the will and tenacity to harness local resources, and above all, improvise, with a depth of ingenuity, to fulfil our societal needs.

We will need to 'develop radically different modes and practices of production and reproduction of knowledge' (Depelchin 1993) or engage in what Wamba dia Wamba refers to as the 'democratisation of knowledge', particularly in the fields of science and technology. This implies that Africa must move away from esoteric knowledge, a specialised knowledge accessible to a chosen few, to scientific knowledge accessible to all (Gyekye 1997b). This is particularly significant in the field of herbal medicine the efficacy of

which, in many cases, has been unquestionable, and could prove to be decisive in the battle against widespread diseases—even the HIV/ AIDS pandemic. A full-scale attempt to bring herbal medicine into the mainstream of health care, dominated by western medicine, should be our goal in this millenium.

This attempt will have to include not only institutional arrangements but also concrete R&D policies in this field, and the placing of herbal medicine on the health care and education agenda. Already, this trend exists in some African countries, albeit as an appendage to western medicine. Granting it a full scale formal recognition will facilitate its development and unlock its potential impact on our health care delivery system, and the economy as a whole.

Parallel to such initiatives, is the issue of technology. In the modern context technology is widely held to be the engine that drives the economy (Huria 2000:95). This assertion places significant demands on Africa to take technology management seriously if we are to make any economic breakthroughs, and improve both rural and urban livelihoods. The management of our technology should thus be concerned with the incremental innovation of existing technologies, development of new and emerging technologies, combining older technologies to create a new powerful hybrid technology (technology fusion), and acquiring, absorbing and appropriating strategically relevant technologies with minimum lag when they cannot be developed internally (Huria 2000:95).

The promotion of science and technology in the twenty-first century Africa is imperative, and there is the need for a renewed commitment in these fields. It baffles Gyekye why the ratio of students who register for courses in the humanities and the social sciences on the one hand, and mathematical and natural sciences on the other, has not changed much in spite of efforts to promote the latter. He asks whether culture has anything to do with it. This is not an easy question to answer. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the problem has much to do with the promotional approaches to the study of the mathematical and natural sciences. Besides more places, incentives, and facilities we need to explore other promotional mechanisms, especially in the area of methodology. It should not be 'forgotten that when the missionaries came, it took them a long time to produce engineers and medical doctors, but very quickly they had produced seminarists, priests, theologians, philosophers, classical philologists, bishops, (and) cardinals' (Depelchin 1993:104). These were what they needed to attain their goals, and they found the wherewithal to produce them. Africa can, and should be able to produce what she needs to

attain her goals, too, if our leaders have the political will and the moral fortitude to eschew corruption.

Economic Growth

Considering the failure of the socialist experiment and the liberal macroeconomic strategies, epitomized by the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes and South Africa's *Growth, Employment and Redistribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy* (GEAR) to address the widespread poverty on the continent, Africa may have to pursue a more pragmatic approach that elicits the virtues in capitalism and socialism and to do so in accord with the cultures and traditions of the people. This would imply some sort of syncretism, with a mix determined by the continent's socio-economic exigencies, in the context of the international economic system, and the social, economic and political values of African societies.

The syncretic approach to economic growth does not in any way conflict with the idea of autonomous development discussed in this paper. Rather the idea of autonomous development affords Africa the leverage to be selective and pragmatic in the choice of appropriate strategies for rapid economic growth and development. On the other hand, in a situation in which the complexity of the African crisis does not easily lend itself to an easy or a single solution, syncretism appears to be a logical path. China's economic quantum leap in the last twenty years or so, should, perhaps, testify to the dynamism of a syncretic approach to economic growth.

Although the Chinese success story is significantly linked to its favourable trading relations with the US, and to her internal sociological and bureaucratic dynamics, the shift from a purely socialist economy to a hybrid economic system has significantly enabled her to harness the synergy between capitalist and socialist approaches to development.

The Chinese experiences as well as those of the East Asian countries suggest that certain basic conditions are necessary, though not sufficient, for economic take-off. These include a high rate of literacy, unfettered social mobility, equal opportunity, national integration, a high sense of national unity, a high level of education, patriotism, an exceptional equal distribution of income, and far reaching land reforms. Besides these conditions, there is the need for an appropriate government intervention and support for the business sector, the provision of subsidies, tax incentives, and cheap credit, and investment infrastructure. Needless to say, most African countries hardly

measure up to the basic conditions listed above. This makes it imperative for African states of the twenty-first century to pay serious attention to social and human-factor development, and commit themselves to the economic growth and development of the continent. By and large human factor (HF) decay has proven to be the bane of Africa's development (Adjibolosso 1993), and we might do well to attend to it now.

To begin with, Africa must return to the *Lagos Plan of Action* and the *African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Recovery and Transformation* (AAF-SAP); appropriate institutions should be set up to formulate and coordinate investment policies, review the regulatory framework of the macro-economic environment; free or partially free education may be considered; higher education should lay emphasis on science and technology and entrepreneurial development. We should also invoke traditional values that enhance productivity e.g. the need for achievement, honesty, hard work and patriotism in all its ramifications. One form of patriotism that requires attention is *economic patriotism*. This is because, as pointed out elsewhere, it has a significant impact on job creation, as well as political and environmental stability (Owusu-Ampomah 1999). In short Africa should pursue a development strategy that focuses on developing formal economic and political institutions that are compatible with informal institutions, values and behavioural factors of her people for a successful democracy and economic growth and development. This implies a paradigmatic shift from the neo-liberal macroeconomic framework to a people-centred development strategy that prioritizes human-factor development[4].

The African Union

The African Union may not be the best option for Africa to counter the vagaries of globalization and the hegemonic strategies of the United States and its NATO allies. Nevertheless, it is indicative of the new crop of African leaders' determination to position the continent for progress, peace, security and stability. As a unifying factor, even if loose, it is also likely to pave the way for collective approaches to finding solutions to the continent's economic

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[4] For a thorough analysis of the Human Factor model see Adjibolosoo (1970; 1995:1-26; 1996; 1998); Mararike (1998; 1999); Adu-Febiri (1997); Praeger (2001); Owusu-Ampomah (2001); Haucap (1997).

woes, political instability and susceptibility to manipulation. The new continental body must then charge itself with a mission to lead the continent to stability and prosperity for all by the year 2050, working in tandem with the Pan-African Parliament and other agencies it might find necessary to establish. In this task, the restructuring and institutional arrangements may cover areas such as

♦ Greater co-operation among African countries in areas of curriculum design, methodology, and teaching aids;
♦ Economic Growth and Development;
♦ Social and Human-Factor Development;
♦ Peacekeeping and Security (ECOMOG can serve as the starting point);
♦ Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation;
♦ Science and Technology;
♦ Gender and Youth;
♦ Human Rights;
♦ The Environment;
♦ The Legal Framework, including the harmonization of Customary Law and Common Law;
♦ The Issue of Refugees;
♦ Land Reform;
♦ Foreign Policy;
♦ Political Reforms (to incorporate traditional African political systems).

The new continental body, with a new mandate to articulate the common vision of African peoples, should position itself as the common voice, speaking for and on behalf of Africa, and as an equal actor in the international system. It should be able to engage the rest of the world, particularly the West (in spite of their exploitative and destabilizing machinations) in the constant struggle for power over the world's resources on behalf of Africans. It will have to move away from the position of self-inflicted weakness and marginalisation that tend to humble African governments—to negotiate with a cup in hand, accept raw deals or fail to register their displeasure at the West's policies that are inimical to African interests and ultimate survival. (The former President of South Africa, Mr. Nelson Mandela, demonstrated that after all, weaker countries could also have their way, at times, in the

international system when he defied the West, on a few occasions, to pursue foreign policies that he considered in the best interest of his country.)

In this context the contemporary African leaders' development initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is commendable. However, it stands the risk of being stillborn. It does not prioritise Africa's fundamental development problem—human factor decay and/or underdevelopment. Rather it adopts the neo-liberal macroeconomic framework, which views social and human-factor development in developing countries as secondary. Further, it assigns a key role to the Bretton Woods institutions, which have proven to be unreliable allies for the development of the continent (forget about the loans and aid; they are a source of Africa's dependency, poverty, and sluggish response to the need for ingenuity). For NEPAD to succeed, the architects will have to rethink and live up to their objective of pursuing a policy of 'sustained indigenous development' (Mbeki 2001) in the true sense of the phrase. This will require an assertion of autonomous development, as discussed earlier, and a paradigmatic shift to social and human-factor development without which Africa's progress would simply be a mirage. Indeed, the hegemonic forces in the international system constitute a major obstacle to these designs, but they are not insurmountable if African leaders share a common vision, act in concert, marshall their political will and hone their skills in statecraft.

Conclusion

This paper has been concerned with Africa's dilemma, and the possible directions for the continent's rejuvenation in the twenty-first century. The reality of the African situation has been presented, and in that context it is acknowledged that the task of Africa's emancipation may not be an easy one. Notwithstanding the gargantuan internal deficiencies and external pressures, and the damaging Eurocentric ideas on Africa, there is hope that Africa can reshape its image and identity, and emerge as the triumph of the twenty-first century. This hope emanates from Africa's resilience and courage that hitherto, spurred her to confront her history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism; the existence of her vast human and natural resources and the common experiences of her peoples which ought to act as a unifying factor. However, the critical issue is Africa's ability to find ingenuous ways of overcoming the plethora of problems confronting her, i.e. transforming this hope into reality, bearing in mind that Africa is primarily her own emancipator.

The process of emancipation may require radical and uncompromising approaches that place a premium on theory and action. Such approaches may take into account traditional African philosophical ideas and values underlying the political, the social and economic organisation of the African peoples, in the context of the exigencies of the contemporary world economic order. This will meet our vision of peace, stability and prosperity.

The process, informed by the ideology of autonomous development, the ideas of the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism, and guided by a pragmatic educational system and a combination of modern science and technology and autochthonous knowledge systems, requires a syncretic approach in a unified Africa. Above all, Africa's emancipation, while requiring both theory and action, and perhaps, more action than ever before, also needs the political will of her leaders and people(s) and a positive attitude, to pursue an appropriate development strategy, which for now, ought to be the human-factor development approach in the framework of syncretism and autonomous development. Pascal's wager should guide us here: assume the worst, and it will surely arrive; commit oneself to freedom and justice and its cause may be advanced.

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