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Abstract
Mabogo P. More is a philosopher who stands for the principle and this makes his philosophical anthropology to be understood as black in its intent and articulation. It is here that the politics of being, become embodied with the very conception of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world. As such, Black Consciousness becomes the rallying point of the existential struggle to be free. Moreover, as a black philosopher, More takes it as his responsibility to account for the lived reality of being black and doing philosophy in black, and this, as a matter of principle, is an effort to create a different set of conditions to be free.

Keywords: philosophical anthropology, antiblack, existential struggle, liberation, Black Consciousness

To stand for something means not to stand for just anything and everything. It is taking a position. It is to practice what you preach and to put one’s words into action. That, as a matter of fact, defines the contours of a philosopher by the name of Mabogo Percy More. His philosophical anthropology stands for blacks who must, by virtue of their being, inherit and inhabit a liberated world that combats the clutches of an antiblack world. He insists that reality must change as it is fundamentally racist and as being is confined within a racist infrastructure.

Why does More put his blackness first in his philosophical anthropology? Why does he always claim it as the locus and logos of his Africana philosophy? What does he have to consider when he philosophizes as being-black-in-an-antiblack-world from the Africana existential philosophical
disposition? These questions may help to understand More as a philosopher who not only takes a clear stance but the first stance. To be the first to take a position is to stand for the principle. This position can in no way be reduced to just a floating signifier of the past. Rather, to stand for, to stand by and to stand with the principle is to be in relation to the very core essence of the principle and to oneself. More made this very clear. There is no way that he can avoid the principle of his philosophical anthropology as it is concerned with the question of the being of the black. Here is a philosopher who stands as black in the world that questions the humanity of the black.

What More puts first is what he stands for, which is not alienation from oneself. In his philosophical anthropology, the confrontation with the denial of being becomes the locus through which the existential struggle is launched. That, as a matter of principle, comes into being because the matter at hand is the principle itself. It is putting philosophy to work, making it to work things out, philosophy’s inner-workings not only in pursuit of the truth but in making it so potent that it exposes the lies that have been crafted and cemented on blacks as the non-ontological other. Here, philosophical anthropology stands against what is against blackness. A philosopher of More’s stature will always rise to the occasion and take his stand on this in the world.

The vanguard of the black existential struggle is assumed by those who stand for the principle. This is their spirit and it is the first thing, one of the most important amongst many others, they will cherish and defend. For More to stand for the principle means that he does not stand for nothing, and he will not fall for anything. What he stands for will propel the existential struggle and forge ahead. Also, being in the vanguard of the existential struggle makes his position and his confrontation of the dehumanizing logic very clear.

In the name of being, philosophical anthropology, defined by More (2012) as a branch of philosophy that is concerned about being, becomes the principality through which the existential struggle, named Black Consciousness, is waged. It is here, then, that the politics of being become the positionality of principality. It is this existential response that More captures thus:

This response has mainly been in the form of a concern for the category of ‘being’ (especially the ‘being’ of the Black human being
in an antiblack world). My contention here is that the interest in the
corecept of ‘being’ shown in Black Consciousness adherents was
born not only of struggle, but also of the politics of ‘being’, that is,
the politics of being in an antiblack world (More 2012: 24).

In the name of philosophical anthropology, where being is not a matter of
generality but of principle, standing for the being of the black in a particular
experience denies that being. More makes the philosophical choice to be
what is necessary to fundamentally change the way reality is structured.
These changes should be in accordance with what blacks want as they are at
the receiving end of imposition that makes them lead a life that they do not
wish to. The politics of being are not, therefore, life as lived, but how it
should be changed for it to be lived differently – say, livable. It is this
different form of life that More’s philosophical anthropology amplifies and
punctuates – the politics of being not rooted in the individual but the
collective of blacks. The lived experience of being-black-in-an-antiblack-
world is what is structured and posed as the way of life while that is not the
case. It is a racist fabrication that aims to maintain the asymmetrical non-
relations that give rise to different forms of being, namely, being-in-the-
world and being-black-in-an-antiblack-world. In the philosophical anthro-
pology, this ontological distinction that More makes is taken seriously. From
the principled stance of being black, the question of specificity is a matter of
concern in a world that aims to propagate generality, that hides exclusion,
and that cries anomaly when blacks emerge in their own name – Black
Consciousness. Even more generally, blacks are not allowed to emerge and
assert themselves as blacks. Therefore, every effort is made to propagate the
myth that what blacks experience is being-in-the-world while the matter of
the fact is that they are trapped in the nightmarish experience of being-black-
in-an-antiblack-world.

Thus, insisting that there should be an affirmative register of the self,
More (2004: 86) insists ‘on the self by the self, an affirmation not from the
Other but from and by the self’. This is the principle of the self that refuses
to be the exteriority, and thus it is being submitted to being a tool of racist
ends. The self that is conscious of being denied will push forward towards
the realization of a liberated self. It is the self that is not in denial of its
condition as it comes to consciousness, having realized that the self has been
objectified, and blacks will, according to Steve Biko (1978), become the
‘envisaged self’. This is the self that wages the existential struggle that envisaged the original conception of the self. It is the self that knows itself and that will continue to search for itself in the direction of being liberated. This self, black qua black, is the authentic self that is engaged in what Robin Kelley (2002) calls ‘freedom dreams’. This self is a dwelling, a point of departure, a mode of life in pursuit of the existential struggle as it were. The being of blacks is aimed at the imagining, creating and actualizing of other radical possibilities. In freedom dreams the nightmarish lived experience must be altered radically and the reality of another form of existence should come into being. It is the being of the black to insist on another idea of living, and that is the politics of being as More sees it. Blacks are the category of beings who are beings in their own right as opposed to being racially imposed and perpetuated by racist fantasies. In freedom dreams, blacks define their own being, and nothing is deferred to the future. It is freedom dreams in the now, and being actional, as Lewis Gordon (2000) states, is what sets the politics of being in motion to make the existential struggle actualizing a different set of conditions. This, according to More (2004: 89), is ‘a means towards freedom rather than an end in itself’. The politics of being, in the name of existential freedom, is what must be actualized, and it clearly means dethroning dehumanization. There can be no politics of being in its purest sense if there is dehumanisation.

The politics of being, More argues, come from having a profound understanding of antiblack racism. The reality of race and racism that raise philosophical questions, as More states, mean that things should be engaged from the situation of blacks. The suffering that is based on existence being denied and the reality that is fabricated through race and racism will make the desire for black existential freedom to be clearly pronounced. Black Consciousness came right after that realization and with a clear focus on race and racism as fundamental problematics. Biko (1978) took a principled stance and emphatically stated that the problem is white racism. He also said, without mincing words, that apartheid is evil. By taking a principled stance, as opposed to dovetailing and pussyfooting, the problem is clearly diagnosed.

One needs to understand the basics before setting up a remedy. A number of the organisations now currently ‘fighting against apartheid’ are working on an oversimplified premise. They have taken a brief look at what is, and have diagnosed a problem incorrectly. They

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have almost completely forgotten about the side effects and have not even considered the root cause. Hence whatever is improvised as a remedy will hardly cure the condition (Biko 1978: 27).

What Biko calls for is a clear understanding of the fundamental problem. This, in fact, stems from the profound understanding that has made Aimé Césaire (1972: 32) ask: ‘What, fundamentally, is colonization?’ This question is rooted in specificity and it cannot be answered in terms of generality. It is the fundamental question that is posed, having come to the realization that the definition and answers of what colonization is have been found wanting as they are structured in dissimulation. Thus, it is necessary to ask the question at a deeper level. Césaire makes it clear that this is the first question – not because it is being posed before other questions but because it is the principal, the fundamental question. As such, this question will not demand feeble responses on what colonization is. Césaire makes it clear that colonization is not something of the past; it is the ghostly presence of the now, and it haunts blacks in the now. It is not something that passes but something that intensifies, hierarchizes, orders, categorizes, indexes, classifies, differentiates, divides, and discriminates.

Colonization is making what Anthony Farley (1997) calls ‘white-over-black’ the defining order of being. The fundamental nature of colonization has been rooted, from its onset and through its perpetuation, in structures of elaboration, calibration, and fabrication. These structures make it clear that blacks are not in the domain of being, only whites are. Therefore, white-over-black has made blacks to be, according to Farley, the fetish object in the world that does not see the black as being. In such a world, More (2012) emphasizes, all is permitted when it comes to what whites can do to blacks as there are no structures that stand for the legibility of blacks as an ontological set of beings. What whites do to blacks is, most often, without consequence. What prevails, instead, is what lies in Césaire’s answer to the fundamental question he posed. It is this question that has led Césaire to the precise formulation of an equation: ‘colonization = thingification’. The ontological question of being disappears in the state of thingification – those who are thingified dissolve and evaporate. They do not exist. Their sentient suspension means that whatever is done to blacks has no consequence whatsoever. Thus, the claim for humanity by blacks is dismissed as absurd. For, they are not in the fold of being-in-the-world, and their thingification,
which is their sentient suspension, accounts for nothing that can be extended to them in ontological terms.

In human terms, to live under the threat of non-being is to live in what existentialists call a condition of finitude, the constant possibility of disintegration and death and, therefore, anguish and anxiety. The fundamental source of such anguish is the ever-present possibility of death. Apartheid racism is misanthropy, total and complete hate. It is the hatred of the being of the Black victim. The original project of this hate is the total suppression of the Other’s consciousness; it is the desire to annihilate and kill the Other (More 2012: 31).

Colonization still exists and that is why thingification still stands. What Césaire posed as the fundamental question and the answer to it directs More’s philosophical anthropology to the heart of the matter. What is critically engaged by More (2012: 30) is that ‘Black Consciousness becomes the way to critically engage that human being through so-called non-human beings’ struggle for humanity’. There is no way that all blacks will be complicit in their own oppression. They will stand firm and refuse to be thingified, and they will wage the existential struggle to be humans in terms that are set and defined by them. This is the quest for freedom, and it is by way of freedom that More (2019) articulates his philosophical anthropology. The question of being is foregrounded where the being is free. The necessity and justification of freedom where it is being denied makes Black Consciousness a principled stance that is taken even in the face of fear. What has been denied is what is demanded and insisted on.

Let us be clear what is at stake here. At the heart of the matter was an issue of authority – the authority of Blacks to describe reality as they perceived it and to define themselves as they saw fit within that reality. At stake here was the power and authority to define (More 2012: 35).

The trait of Black Consciousness, named black solidarity, is what More (2009) has been calling the philosophical defense. Black solidarity arises from the collective experience of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world. As
More (2009: 21) notes, ‘the history of black political and social thought defended a collective black identity that was tied up to liberatory black solidarity’. Here, there is no room for the liberal appellation and interpel-lation of the individual. The reason why More philosophically defends black solidarity and puts it in the locus of liberatory politics is to change the black reality altogether. The racist lived reality is confronted through black solidarity. The collective constitution of the racist reality cannot be understood, exposed, uprooted, and undone by individuated gestures that muse in the universal abstracts while they mask antiblack racism. The existential struggle of blacks is meaningfully the unity of ‘black people as a constituted group’ (More 2009: 25). Blacks are connected by their lived experience and the black condition that dehumanizes them. Becoming conscious of their situation will elicit a response to their lived reality that only resonates with them. It will be absurd to expect them to respond in the ways set out by the liberal appellation and interpellation. Only in black solidarity will blacks charge forward and institute change in a manner that they deem fit and not in a way dictated by those who seek to perpetuate dehumanization. The realization of a single purpose, as More states, is what will enable liberation.

To call black solidarity racist borders on absurdity and is, at best, malicious. Those who do that want to control blacks; they do not want them to define their reality themselves in terms that they see as just and relevant to them. The white liberals dictate, and their apologetic black junior partners deny that antiblack racism exists. More argues that victims of racism are deliberately denied their pain to render the justification of black solidarity meaningless. How, then, should those who are affected and afflicted by racism respond? To collapse blacks in the nebulous category of ‘humans’ is to lose sight of or to deliberately mask the specificity through which the racial markings have been imposed to ensure dehumanization. What is human to those who are dehumanized because they are black? The liberal appellation and interpellation fear the emergence of blacks; they do not want to imagine the change of reality where blacks are no longer severed from themselves. Black Consciousness, as the exposé of this liberal dupe, stands on principle, which means things will be thought, said, and done as they are and as they are supposed to be. Black Consciousness is, then, the principle that is foregrounded in black solidarity. For More’s confrontation of the liberal appellation and interpellation, it is, therefore, necessary to expose the
lie that black solidarity is racist. The logical and obvious determination is
that those who are oppressed because they are black will respond from their
individualism is its intolerance of group identity, and therefore its disregard
of the fact that racist consciousness always operates at the level of collectives’. In no way living in the real, racist world will it make blacks to
be invested in things that make them lose touch with their reality. More
(2009: 39) asserts: ‘But ours is not an ideal possible world; it is cruelly a real
existential world’. That is why the understanding of that world comes into
being as the result of having to wage the existential struggle from the lived
experience of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world. Due to this specificity, the
call for black solidarity may not to be couched in ways that appeal to the
moral sensibility of whiteness and its racist infrastructure. By taking a
principled stance, More rejects the tendency to fashion the articulation of
being black to the sensibilities of whiteness. That is why the lived experience
of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world is not invested in the desire to make
blackness the site of legibility. More’s principled stance is that no whiteness
is to be appeased while liberation is to be pursued. Appeasing whiteness will
not bring an end to an antiblack world; that can only come about if the
existential struggle is fought right to the end to realize liberation. In fact, for
blacks there is nothing in whiteness. In whiteness, everything is against
blacks. For, they are subjected to exclusion and enclosure in antiblackness.

It is here that blacks define the nature of their struggle and the
conditions that brought it into being. They determined that the problem is
antiblack racism from whites as a group against blacks as a group. Antiblack
racism does not take place at an individual level. Therefore, it demands a
response from the group. Hence, black solidarity departs from the
dehumanization of the black as a group. Antiblack racism does not affect and
afflict blacks as individuals but is the lived experience of the group. By being
defiled as black and thus expelled from things ontological, the blacks’
domain of existence is made porous and precarious. Any form of violation
to blacks will remain justified and not accounted for. There is no way that
those who are dehumanized as a group cannot come together and respond
collectively. According to Biko (1978), Black Consciousness as a philosophy
emphasized a collective self-pride. This means the black as a group is
standing for the principle of knowing thyself as black and they stand up for
what is just and justified in the name of the principle itself. The principle
here is that to be black is not to be complicit and not to let oneself be used and abused, as Biko puts it. The principle is also to wage the existential struggle in the name of being the self that is, in itself, the consciousness of itself. It is the self that knows that it is dehumanized and is taking action by coming back to itself, as Biko defines Black Consciousness. This is the envisaged self that is in solidarity with other black selves. They stand for the identity and liberation which, to More (2017), embodies the way to freedom by any means necessary. The lived experience of the black is a matter of concern; the envisaged self (the self in Black Consciousness) may not be alienated. The meaning of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world is the lived experience that is fabricated by its direct opposite, being-in-the-world. The latter, in its generality, supposed by way of deliberate distortion, is a given and that if the black assume their specificity, they are just essentialist as opposed to being universal. What is not made clear in this generality is that being-in-the-world is fundamentally white qua whiteness, and the lived experience of being-in-the-world is purely a white one, thus antiblack. The expectation here is, as Biko has suspected, an integration where blacks should renounce their blackness. They are expected to go in pursuit of the liberal ideal that eliminates the collective experience of blacks which is structured by antiblackness, and they are expected to ignore the dehumanizing logics that are targeted at blacks.

The myth of integration as propounded under the banner of liberal ideology must be cracked and killed because it makes people believe that something is being done when in actual fact the artificial integrated circles are a soporific on the blacks and provide a vague satisfaction for the guilty-stricken whites. It works on the false premise that because it is difficult to bring people from different races together in this country, therefore the achievement of this is in itself a step forward towards the total liberation of the blacks. Nothing could be more irrelevant and therefore misleading. Those who believe in it are living in a fool’s paradise (Biko 1978: 22).

Those who stand against black solidarity most often happen to be black. It is their own liberation that they are against. They are disinterested in what is in their interest. It is clear that the matter of principle is abandoned since it is a balancing act and calculated move to see what liberation will bring. They
focus narrowly on how to ingratiate themselves into whiteness and get the gains and the comforts that come with the status quo.

As such, Black Consciousness, as Biko (1978) argues, is not focused on the distractions and red herrings that perpetuate the ‘static circle’. What is key is not to keep the group there but to make it useful. For Gordon (1995), antiblack blacks are those blacks in bad faith who lead an inauthentic life as if it is well-lived while it is not; they flee from the responsibility of their own freedom. Biko (1978) points out that these antiblack blacks keep other blacks in check, and they also expose them to the whims of racist oppressors. Their desire to be white makes them detest those who are living by principles and who rally around their blackness without pandering to the sensibilities and fragilities of whiteness. Antiblack blacks stand against their fellow blacks and they are so animated and passionate in their hate. They lie to themselves and become loyal servants of whiteness. Biko (1978: 23) amplifies: ‘These are the sort of blacks who are a danger to the community’. By way of their racial performance, they try to appear before whites as good blacks who have nothing to do with black solidarity but are individuals who just want to be human, if not, at all, white. These are blacks who will stand for whites who dehumanize blacks. Without any principle, they justify racism, colonialism, and apartheid. They are against their own blacks because they yearn to be exempted from dehumanization. For Biko (1978: 81), they are ‘people who deliberately allowed themselves into an unholy collusion with the enemy’. They are those who condemn blacks who seek liberation to secure their comforts. The loyalty of antiblack blacks to whiteness let them engage in the politics of respectability. It does not matter how many times they get humiliated, they still show loyalty to whiteness at the expense of blacks. Biko (1978: 86) has this to say: ‘For me as a black person it is extremely painful to see a man who could easily have been my elder being so misused by the cruel and exploitative white world’.

Black Consciousness, in calling for blacks to come to themselves, shatters the myth of integration as a matter of principle. The point of departure is that for blacks to be free, they must free themselves. No one can break their shackles of dehumanization but only them. They are responsible for their own freedom. This means in the name of liberation and identity, blacks must assert their humanity as a matter of principle in a world that denies them their humanity. The antiblack reality is menacing and manacling. ‘In other words, antiblack racism constructs whiteness as the
“normal” mode of “humanness” (More 2017: 98). It is in the denial of the humanity of blacks that whiteness justifies itself. Therefore, antiblack racism is propagated as reality and it is put in the realm of the natural – it is the way things are, nothing can be done about it and change is unnecessary if not ludicrous. Blackness is fabricated as something that has nothing of value, nothing human, attached to it.

For an antiblack racist, to see a black *as black* is to see enough. He requires nothing more. All else will follow like effect to cause in the mechanistic world. What’s more, there is an endorsement of an array of institutions and prevailing ideologies to discourage many efforts at human contact. A crushing weight of predetermined identification grows to the point of limiting options in an antiblack world (Gordon 1997: 14, emphasis in the original)

Antiblack racism, according to More (2014), creates a reality where the humanity of blacks is questioned. That is why blacks are in the world but not of the world. The world sees itself better off without blacks, but it needs blacks as objects to be extracted and destructed. This parasitic non-relationality makes whites’ claim that they are human diabolical as it is driven by the logos of dehumanization. Black Consciousness stands for what Biko (1978) calls a quest for true humanity, a humanity that is not determined by whiteness and its dehumanizing logos. Clearly, there is nothing human about that. The quest for true humanity does not mean that this assertion will make the ontological demands of blacks audible to the world. Instead, the existential struggle is narrated through black solidarity. Black Consciousness makes it a matter of principle that blacks are in charge of their existential struggle and only they must pursue it. The freedom that is at stake is that of blacks, and it is in their own interest to make fundamental change a matter of principle. To realize that things must change fundamentally means to realize that change is the responsibility of those who want the change. The status quo will not be in their favor but against them. More, then, cannot stand for, by, and with what is against him. By defining his place in the world as being-black-in-an-antiblack-world makes him obviously irreconcilable with whites who, in their white consciousness, are being-in-the-world.

Black Consciousness is not conjured up; it is a formidable response to antiblack racism. Having been informed by the lived experience of being-
black-in-an-antiblack-world, it is a principled stance to change that world in meaningful ways to make life bearable. This principle of the collective understanding of the meaning of existence is what plagues the black. Biko (1978: 87) correctly states: ‘It is perhaps fitting to start by examining why it is necessary for us to think collectively about a problem we never created’. The condition of being-black-in-an-antiblack-world is created by antiblack racism, and blacks have nothing to do with it. The black condition is created and sustained with the expectation that blacks will automatically be submissive, docile, and impotent. The principled stance of Black Consciousness emerges as an interruption and eruption. More has witnessed the collective experience of being in a quotidian sense. He emerges as a philosopher who is subjected to dehumanization and he summons the collective response of black solidarity. The collective experience, in the name of philosophy, brought Black Consciousness, not as a negative response, but one whose principality is rooted in the interiority and exteriority of being black and taking that blackness as a rallying point. It is in the name of being black that the world must be constructed, and philosophy became the basis through which black solidarity makes the existential struggle a matter of necessity to actualize freedom. In this move, the terms of engagements and dispositions are couched, not to kowtow to the structured sensibilities of whiteness which has a made it a point that for the black to lay a claim and raise a stake this must be legible. It is this faux pas that has underwritten the logic of the civil discourse with the pretense that being-in-the-world is a discursive field where race does not matter but only the human question. This generality hides the logic that underwrites antiblackness, and they act as if Black Consciousness just came out of the farce of ‘separatist politics’. The inner desire has been nothing but to dominate and subjugate blacks not to think about matters that concern them and matters which, without irony, are brought into being and perpetuated by white racism.

More is in concert with Biko that white racism must, as a matter of principle, be confronted by black solidarity. Due to the continued intensification of white racism and its antiblack design, this necessitates and justifies the philosophical defense of Black Consciousness. White racism is a fundamental problem and it is named as such. The principle will then be the continued exposé of its mechanics and machinations. The identity and liberation of blacks are fought for because the being of blacks is denied by perpetual questioning by antiblack racism.
Standing for what is right and just, More makes the necessity of a clear conscience clear throughout his philosophical anthropology. What More lives for makes his life worth living – he is a philosopher who is rooted and grounded in principle. That is why he refused to be a tool in the service of antiblack ends. What matters, to and for More is a life of freedom, and the quest for it demands responsibility. This cannot be neglected and disavowed as it is a matter of principle. By way of freedom, through the matter of principle, the genuine existential struggle still stands in the name of that freedom of the world that does not dissimulate the nature of an antiblack world but its end.

References

1 Upon request from the author, online url addresses of sources, are not supplied in the References – Editor.

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