"THE "LIVING DEAD" IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: A

CONCEPT ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE ANCESTORS

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IGBO CULTURE."

A Thesis Presented to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and

the Department of Philosophy

University of Manitoba,

Winnipeg, Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Chukwuemeka Raphael Osayi

October, 1980

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MASTER OF ARTS

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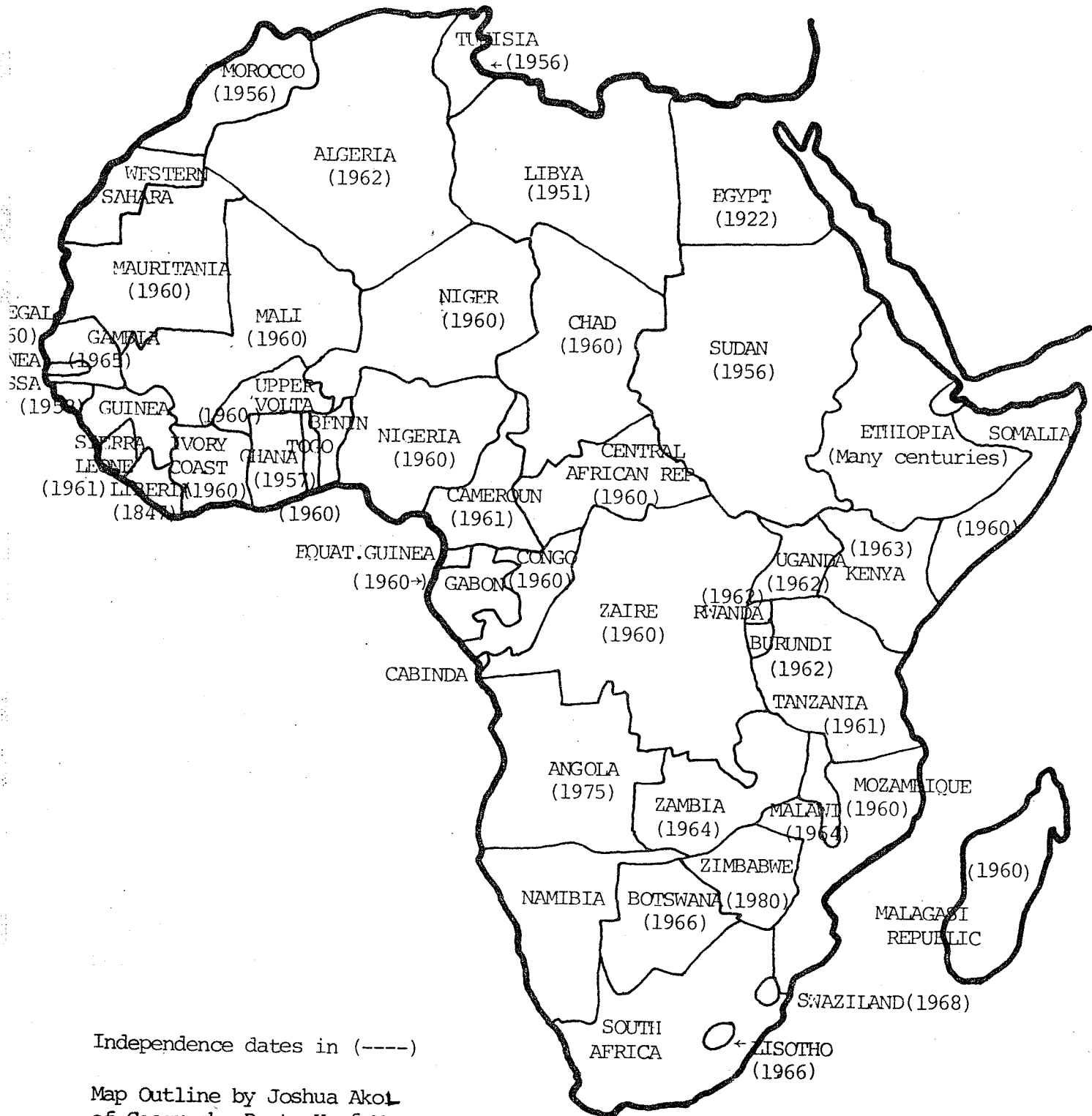I am grateful to each and everyone of them.

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C. R. O.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES

MOROCCO
(1956)

TUNISIA
←(1956)

ALGERIA
(1962)

LIBYA
(1951)

EGYPT
(1922)

WESTERN
SAHARA

MAURITANIA
(1960)

MALI
(1960)

NIGER
(1960)

CHAD
(1960)

SUDAN
(1956)

EGAL
50)

GAMBIA
(1965)

NEA
(1965)

SSA
(1958)

GUINEA
(1960)

UPPER
VOLTA
(1960)

BENIN

NIGERIA
(1960)

CENTRAL
AFRICAN REP
(1960)

ETHIOPIA
(Many centuries)

SOMALIA

(1960)

SIERRA
LEONE
(1961)

IVORY
COAST

GHANA
(1957)

TOGO

LIBERIA
(1847)

(1960)

(1960)

CAMEROUN
(1961)

EQUAT.GUINEA
(1960→)

GABON

CONGO
(1960)

ZAIRE
(1960)

UGANDA
(1962)

(1963)

KENYA

RWANDA
(1962)

BURUNDI
(1962)

TANZANIA
(1961)

CABINDA

ANGOLA
(1975)

ZAMBIA
(1964)

MALAWI
(1964)

MOZAMBIQUE
(1960)

ZIMBABWE

NAMIBIA

BOTSWANA
(1966)

(1980)

(1960)

MALAGASI
REPUBLIC

SWAZILAND(1968)

SOUTH
AFRICA

←LESOTHO
(1966)

Independence dates in (----)

Map Outline by Joshua Akol
of Geography Dept. U of M.

TO

MY WIFE

BEATRICE IJEOMA OSAYI

Who in patient understanding did the home keep;

While in Canada I did further studies pursue.

v

CONTENTS

CONTENT - Continued

INTRODUCTION

> It is time for Africans... to say what is and what
> is not for ourselves. To re-define, to reverse the
> frame of reference, to establish different values,
> to reach for different goals, and to develop differ-
> ent behaviour patterns. This movement must make
> changes in the entire process beginning with the
> working definitions. If new definitions are made,
> or re-definitions are made from African frame of
> reference, then, different interpretations, per-
> ceptions, responses, goals and behaviour patterns
> will follow. It is time, past time, to re-define
> and make things become.[1]

This is a "war-cry" by Johari Amini. Or, better, a passionate

call for action, a challenge directed to the discipline of

Philosophy. It is only Philosophy which can "re-define".

Philosophy being the study of being in all its ramifications

aims at establishing order through the contemplation of wisdom;

and Philosophy re-discovers itself fully when it becomes a

method cultivated by Philosophers for dealing with the

problems of men.

The thesis is basically a modest philosophical analysis.

By it, we wish to reflect on one aspect of African culture

(where culture should be understood as a way of life of a

people — the Africans), and perhaps through the reflection,

come to "re-define", to order or to give meaning to African

conception of reality as a whole.

---

[1]Johari Amini, Re-definition, concept as a Being,
Black World (May, 1972), p. 12.

In practical terms, our Africanness, our deep-rooted unity had been manifested in the development of what has been called the "African personality" in world affairs. But the onus of researching further into the African culture so as to show that ours is as good as other cultures or perhaps even better, lies more on African academic philosophers. One cannot but agree with Amini that there is an urgent need "to reach for new goals and make changes in the entire process beginning with the working definition." For, African epistemology, African Metaphysics, African ethical systems to mention but a few, are unfortunately new concepts in philosophical circles. But they are concepts that must be "Redefined", if the "frame of reference" to Africa, must be reversed. Hence, in the inquiring, philosophical spirit, we cannot but accept Amini's challenge.

"The "Living-dead" in African philosophy, a concept analysis of the African conceptions of the role of the ancestors, with special reference to the Igbo culture," is perhaps, a good starting point. This title, it must be admitted, takes certain things for granted. We have assumed for example, that our readers would be tolerant of the view that: (a) Africa, as a total geographical, cultural, religious, political, aesthetic, and above all, philosphical concept, does exist even before we attacked the issue in the thesis; It should however, be noted in parenthesis that the term "Africa" will be used throughout the thesis in a general,

philosophical sense. But we are not unconscious of the fact
that, considered anthropologically, there is a variety of
religious, ecological, family, and even social organizational
patterns in Africa. This issue will receive more positive
attention in Chapter One. We shall also use the term 'Igbo'
in attributive sense. And many Igbo terms will be used to
illustrate some of our points of view, and (b) We have further
taken for granted that our readers would understand the terms
"living-dead" and the "dead" in the purely metaphysical-style
of the traditional African. For the African, everything
(animate and inanimate and non-physical) are "forces" so that
the "living-dead" are those, who although physically dead,
possess the life-giving forces, while the real "dead" are all
those beings that lack this "force". They are terms used by
Africans to explain what happens in this life and beyond dying,
beyond the physical demise of the physical body.

The "Living-dead" in African philosophy, is an analytical
framework for understanding the nature and values of the tra-
ditional African society - the pre-colonial African society.
Traditional in the sense that the thesis is basically about
the African society that was. That is, it is about Africa
before the colonial experience. We want to investigate the
African-experience from this stand-point because this society
seems to be the sum total of the resemblances, similarities,
identity of principles, identity of values which tie the
African people all over the globe together. Perhaps, by our
analysis, some of the basic principles that guided the pre-
colonial "African-man" would be recorded before they change too much, or
become completely swallowed up by imported cultures. We think this way

because these views and principles reveal the African man's view of his world, of God, of man, of human behaviour, of justice and the African man's hopes, that is of great significance and force in the lives of the African people in the contemporary world of today.

The first task, and indeed, the main objective of this thesis, is a philosophical discussion, which as far as possible will be treated with simplicity and I hope, with common sense. "Philosophy", according to Aristotle, "begins in wonder." But what I think the philosophers do which go to distinguish them from idle day-dreamers, like most children, is that philosophers wonder about the world in which they find themselves. Philosophers wonder about the natural and human and social world of man. At times philosophers are perplexed, that things should continue the way they are. When this happens, philosophers ask questions (the handmaid of philosophy). Our motivating force in this thesis, is our perplexity about mother Africa. It is our firm conviction that one can only claim membership in this "distinctive wondering-group" (i.e., philosophers), if with some intellectual pretensions and not mere indifference of the ordinary citizen one finds most things men do and say and ask, are apt to set him asking questions - wondering.

Thus, the thesis has some practical aims:
(1) We share the view that the time has indeed come when the false light of some deceptive modern philosophers to the effect that Africa is pre-philosophy or has no philosophy at all or both, should be exposed and examined. In other words, we accept the challenge that time has really come when we

should do away with the fantastic notion that men of other cultures other than the Greeks, were not capable of abstract thoughts. And, (2) as African philosophers, we sincerely share the sentiment that – it is time, past time, for Africans (Philosophers) to begin to apply critical rational analysis on some aspects of the non-philosophical experiences of the African culture. Perhaps, through such postulation and analysis, we could demonstrate the traditional African man's desire to solve the four enigmas of life,namely:

   a) Who we are;
   b) Where we come from;
   c) Where we are going; and
   d) What is our considered best way to get there.

"The "Living-dead" in African Philosophy," hopes to throw some light on these enigmas, for the thesis is about the African-man's way of life, a life which is uniquely and essentially based on his view of his world.

Our approach to our problem will be by a combination of question-raising and objection-meeting. For this, the thesis has been divided into three broad parts. Part One, which contains the introduction, gives without much critical discussions a general information or definitions of some terms. In it, however, the question whether Africa is pre-philosophy or has any philosophy at all, is raised and briefly answered. The second part contains two chapters. In these chapters, varying pre-suppositions of the African about the "Living," the"Living-dead" and the "dead" in African

thought, are presented together with a little of their
historical background rather than a critical analysis of
them, although I recognize it is impossible to completely
ignore the latter. It is in Part three, which also contains
two chapters that real question-raising and objection-
meeting are carried out. Here, attempt is made to carry out
a fair amount of philosophical analysis of the issues or
assumptions arrived at, in the preceding parts. This part
raises some questions which may not be apparent from the
table of contents. It sketches some of the difficulties which
an African-world-view must face in its attempt to describe
the humaneness and reasonableness of the African man. The
aim of the analysis is to establish a system that is uniquely
African.

In electing to think on the African conception of the
"Living-dead", and perhaps, re-define it, I fully realize
that I have to take my courage in both my hands. In other
words, I fully realize the great odds against me. I realize
for instance that: (a) it is my problem, my decided objective
in attacking these great problems of life and death on which
there is much controversy, to lay down propositions which are
little likely to please everybody —Africans and non-Africans.
The question of role of the ancestors is one of Africa's
common-sense beliefs. It is common-sense belief in the sense
that it is taken for granted. That is to say that many
Africans like G. E. Moore, "are inclined to suppose that

these were almost certain to be true," for, in traditional

African society, the idea of the "Living-dead" was loved and

even in contemporary African society, still cherished. And

according to Spinoza:

> When a thing is not loved, no quarrels will arise
> concerning it, no sadness will be felt, if it is
> possessed by another, no fears, no hatred, in
> short no disturbance of mind.[2]

But the fact is that the concepts of "Living-dead" and the

"Dead", are beliefs deep-rooted in African thought. They

are passed on from one generation to the other. Possibly,

eye-brows would be raised as our "philosophical axe" is laid

on the foot of these beloved beliefs;

(b) Furthermore, there is the problem of limited space and

the amount of time available for the whole exercise. The

result is that one can, perhaps, only scratch here and there

on the surfaces of problems so serious and fundamental as

those which deal with human behaviour; duty; existence of

evil; the concept of Chukwu (God); the African world-view

generally, and still acquit oneself with some modesty, some

knowledge and perhaps with no little humour. Obviously one

may not attain such combinations of gifts.

My consolation, however, and what I have taken for

granted, is that there is one indispensable basis on which

we must try to rest the edifice we are trying to build. We

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[2]Andrew Boyle, Trans., Spinoza's Ethics and on the
Correction of Understanding, Everyman's Library, Deut.,
London, [1910], p. 229.

must found our theories on Philosophy. This is because without
philosophical foundations, our theories whether attractive or
not, whether detailed or scanty, will be floating in the air,
baseless and therefore uncertain. For myself in this matter,
I have also a personal reason. I am an African. I am per-
plexed that things should continue the way they have been
without being questioned. And when a man is fairly advanced
in the vale of years, he ought to be able to wonder, to ask
questions and by so doing, give account of the faith which is
in him based on, and tested by his own experience. Whether
this is likely to be useful to others is a dubious matter.
But surely, it will be useful to himself.

I do not in anyway wish to claim that I have thought
comprehensively upon the African thinking on "The Living-dead"
in African Philosophy". The pages that follow are intended
as a prolegomena to future philosophy on the problem and
not as a complete and detailed treatment of the problem.
However, being mere introductory discussion of one of the
crucial issues in African Philosophy, it will involve us
in presenting answers or partial answers to some of the
questions raised in the thesis, but these are not to be
understood dogmatically or taken to be final answers unless
they stand up under the reader's own scrutiny. These an-
swers are simply designed to give insight into Africa's most
significant philosophical reasoning.

Therefore, should the discussions stimulate others to think further on our thinking and provide answers other than our own then, we have succeeded in "making things become, in reversing the frame of reference."

CHUKWUEMEKA RALPH OSAYI
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
October, 1980

PART ONE

Africa has, for generations now, been viewed
through a web of myth so pervasive and so glib
that understanding it becomes a two-fold task:
the task of classifying the myth and the
separate task of examining whatever reality has
been hidden behind it.

                                    - Paul Bohannan

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITIONS

1.1) <u>WHO AN AFRICAN IS</u>

For the purpose of this thesis, we shall call an African:

a) Every person born in Africa either of whose parents is of African descent;

b) Every person born outside Africa either of whose parents or grandparents is of African descent. No matter how and where the children of African descent are born, they have a claim to Africanity. So that geographical or legal situations not withstanding, Africa is the homeland of all dark-skinned people. I think that this is basically what late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had in mind when he said:

> All people of African descent, whether they live in North or South America, the Carribean, or any other part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation. The core of the Black Revolution is in Africa, and until Africa is united.... the blackman throughout the world lacks a national home. It is around the African people's struggles for liberation and unification that Africa or Black culture will take shape and substance. Africa is one continent, one people, and one nation.[3]

The implication of this, is that the African continent belongs to all her sons and daughters born within or outside its borders

---

[3]Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Class Struggle in Africa, (New York: International Publication, 1970), p. 88.

so long as such persons satisfy criteria (a) and (b) above.
Nkruman's oneness-thesis, indicates in no small way that the
African Personality transcends Africa's geographical boundaries
— include all African descendants spread out in the world.
And as one people, of one continent, we have one destiny.

1.2) AFRICA - A SHORT GENERAL BACKGROUND

Africa is the name of a vast continent located in the Eastern Hemisphere of the Earth. The African continent is encompassed by the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. The Continent is the second largest continent on the globe. Africa is about three times the area of U.S.A., or six times the area of Europe (excluding U.S.S.R.). And the area of land under cultivation per person is about twice that in Europe.

The African Continent naturally divides into two major parts: i) North Africa : this area runs from Egypt (the Cradle of Civilization) through Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Tripoli ... and, down the River Nile to Ethiopia.
ii) Africa South of the Sahara: This area runs from East and West Jordan through the Tropical and Equatorial regions, right down in South Africa.

Africa is a continent endowed with many natural re-sources —mineral wealth and wild life., while there are numerous rivers and lakes in many parts of the continent. Rivers of greatest importance being: The Niger, Benue, Nile, The Congo, Zambezi etc. and Lakes Victoria, Chad in East and Central Africa, and North-East tip of Nigeria, respectively, are usually regarded as Lakes of importance in Africa.
b) People: Traditionally, all Africans were called Ethio-pians, a view founded on passages of Herodotus, Theophrastus, Eusebius, Homer, in fact most classical writers. Pliny the

elder and Terence are of the same opinion. The Spanish
and the Portuguese, used the term 'Ethiopian' to designate
the whole race of Black people. The world 'Ethiopia' is a
Greek root for Black.

With a population approximately more than 350 million,
the African continent is made up of language-groups speaking
some 700 tongues. Before the advent of slave trade in the
5th century A.D., it was usual to speak of Mandingoos, Asantes,
Moores, Fulanis etc. etc. But with the enslavement of Africans,
many of these designations merged in common term of servitude
and the Africans became known as the "Nigger" (A Latin term
for Negro or black). Most Africans are then Negros and the
Negro is roughly described by darkskin, woolly hair and
broad noses.

In West Africa, specifically Nigeria, are found the
Igbo speaking people. They occupy the areas lying between
latitude 5° to 7° North and latitude 6° to 8° East. This
area stretches across the River Niger from west of Abor to
the fringes of the Cross River and runs roughly from Nsukka
highlands to some parts of the Atlantic coast. The Igbos
are fairly numerous and could be found in almost all parts
of Africa, the world.

In South Africa are millions of people of European

descent - coloured people from the mingling of races and Indians, while the great Island of Malagascar is inhabited by a mixed population of which the majority is of Malayan-Polynesian with influence from India, Arabia, and African-Bantu and Swahili tongues.

c) Politics and Government

We can distinguish the following phases of the system of government of Africa and they correspond with the periods of her development: (i) Traditional period/Pre-colonial era

(ii) Colonial period

(iii) Neo-colonial period/Contemporary period

i) The traditional system of government was a system of government personified in the elders as the symbol of authority in every community. The community was the main feature of the traditional African society. The community was the determinant of the sort of life which each of its members must live.

Every member of this community was regarded as a part of the integral whole (which is the Community). And the Community was seen by all as the coherent embodiment of something higher than himself, something which he and his fellowmen have been inspired to create together.

Generally, The Family was the smallest unit of the

community, but the most significant aspect of it. It was the nucleus of the Community. The family, for the African, is extended. It is not the nuclear family, which denotes a small family made up of only the husband, wife and children. Family in African context is extended. It includes the husband, the wife, their own children, the in-laws, the children's children, dependants and relatives far and near. The African believes he has a great deal of responsibility to all with whom he is related. From the family responsibility spreads (for example among the Igbos) to the Umunna (a collection of families which have common descent); to the village and finally to the town in lesser and lesser degree.

In most traditional African town and village, the oldest member of the family was by custom the head. These heads were regarded as the "fathers" (or Living-Ancestors) of their people, and the eldest of them the overall head.

Under the government of the elders or "Living Ancestors" of each family, village, town, the Community was well governed, for these elders usually chose one of them, usually the eldest as the head of the Community government. There was no need for political parties. The Community was organized on the spirit of helpfulness for every member whose progress was identified with the progress of the whole community and whose

failure was regarded as the failure of every other member of
the community.

In some of the large communities in the Continent, there
were large Kingdoms which administered the areas. Thus, in
West Africa, for example, there were the Empires of Ghana,
the Empire of Mali, Songhai, Kanen Bornu and Old Oyo. There
were also some powerful states or kingdoms like: Sokoto State,
the Kingdom of Dahomey, the Ashanti Kingdom. In South Africa,
we had an age-old parliamentary system known as the "PICHO".
The 'Picho' was democratically administered by the Buchuana
Kings who were assisted by the elderly statesmen.

While in some other parts of Africa like in Nigeria,
government was in the hands of the chiefs, the Obis, the Obas,
the Obongs etc., these are different titles for the chosen
leader-elder of each community. Some communities were also
ruled by a government under the chief-priest (Atama) of an
important oracle in the community. He was regarded as the
divine ruler.

All those forms of government operated to ensure social
harmony and no one felt that his freedom was stifled in any-
way.

The traditional system of government by the elders
is very crucial to our understanding, the role of the ancestors
in the lives of the Africans both now and hereafter (in the
future) as we shall see later.

ii) <u>Colonial Period</u>: The colonial rule was born in Africa early in 1900 with the partitioning of Africa by some seven European countries namely: Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Italy and Spain. Each of these countries established her own area of authority or influence, and obtained legal recognition of her boundaries. The new areas were called Colonies. That is to say that each of these areas of land was taken over by law by the alien country now designated "Protectorate". All these processes were done by mere brute force of arms.

In a sense, it seems justified to say that the colonial era saw to the destruction of the African traditional system of government. Thus, the Community Government of the "Living-Ancestors"/elders, was replaced by the conqueror's own method of government. Each African state so subdued, had colonial administrators which merely tolerated Africans to participate in the administration of African states! This of course, was not universal. It was only the practice in mainly British administered colonies.

But, no matter the part or role played by the Africa-elder or "Living-Ancestors" in the administration of the community, he was no longer his own master. The colonial government had the final say in all issues.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that it was during the colonial rule that the European administrators introduced some radical changes into the cultural and social affairs of the Africans.

iii) <u>Neo-colonial Period/Contemporary Period</u>: Throughout
the colonial era, most African states waged relentless wars
to free Africa from the "clutches of foreign domination."
By the dawn of the twenty century, "European education"
(one of the social advantages of colonial government) which
had been producing some considerable number of literate
Africans, who continued the demand for increasing participa-
tion of Africans in colonial administration, started to yield
some visible fruits. And by the 1960s many African states
had become independent. Although most African states are
now independent (the latest so far being Zimbabwe), which
became independent Friday, April 18, 1980, after several
years of struggle against white minority rule, it must be
accepted against mother Africa, that the nature, and per-
formance of leaderships in some independent African nations
have indeed left much to be desired. We can see here and
there in Africa, political powers being manipulated by neo-
colonial subjects. In such states or nations, their in-
dependence can only be said to be a mere theoretical proclama-
tion. For, though such countries have the outside trappings of
international sovereignity, in reality, both their economic
and political policies are still directed from outside. In
some states/countries, the new political elites because of
their personal weakness or corruption, or both, have caused
a lot of problems to the common man. In most of these states,
the military have been in and out of power with consequent loss

of lives and military dictatorships.

These 'neo-colonial subjects,' are obviously ignorant

of Nkrumah's foresight and warning that:

> Our attitude to the Western and Islamic experience
> must be purposeful. It must be guided by thought,
> for practice without thought is blind. What is
> called for as a first step is a body of connected
> thought which will determine the general nature of
> our action in unifying the society which we have
> inherited.[4]

If the Contemporary African Political leaders could only heed

this warning and resolve to turn a new leaf through improved

performance guided by the African conscience of old then, the

future would be bright for Africa and Africans. But would they?

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[4]Kwame Nkrumah, Consciencism, Philosophy and Ideology
for Deidonization, Panaf, London (1970), p. 78.

1.3)   IS THERE AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY?

A question that some might ask is: Is there an African Philosophy?

Perhaps, the best way to answer this question is to ask the question: What is Philosophy? If we know the answer to the second question, perhaps we might be in a position to judge for ourselves whether or not there is an African Philosophy.

Doubtless, both Philologists and Philosophers have been aware that it is by no means easy to define Philosophy. And, it is perhaps, even more difficult to cause any such definition to be universally acceptable. But this should not discourage us. Let us, therefore, hazard some definitions of Philosophy.

First, the word "Philosophy" is most often used to refer to a person's Weltanschauung, to borrow the German word, which literally interpreted means "World-picture". But what does it mean to have a "world-picture?" One's "World-picture" is one's general beliefs about and attitudes toward life. Every person has a "World-picture" and every group of people, possesses a world-picture. What each person or every group sees in his own world-picture is most likely to be peculiar to him or to his group. And as a social heritage which the individual acquires from his group, one's "world-picture" includes the ideals, beliefs, laws, arts, artifacts and even values.

This "world-picture" can be described by the term culture.[5] For, "Culture", maintains C. Geertz, "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conception expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and attitude towards life."[6] Thus understood, Culture is the sum total of all the idiosyncracies, traits, potentialities and capacities of the given people within a given space.

Perhaps, it may not be difficult to concede that in this sense of Philosophy, philosophizing must be regarded as a universal experience. Every culture becomes the philosophy of the people associated with the culture. Furthermore, every culture is often divided into various philosophies: for example, political philosophy which describes the operations of government and the beliefs of the people about proper role of government; the people's moral philosophy, which would include the people's beliefs about and attitudes toward not life in general, but those more specific matters that pertain to what are the people's moral obligations and what things are valuable and Legal philosophy, Religious philosophy,

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[5]We shall use "Culture" and "World-picture" interchangeably.

[6]C. Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System: An Antropological Approach to the Study of Religion, Tavistock Publications, London, (1966), p. 3.

Economic philosophy to name but a few. In other words, in each culture, the people's metaphysical conception of reality, ethical conception of reality, religious conception of reality etc. enable them to organize their own world.

Now, Africa, as a total geographical, cultural, religious, political and aesthetic concept does exist. And if our thinking thus far has been correct, then it seems we may not have any further difficulty in our attempt to qualify Philosophy with the adjective "African".

It is a presupposition of this thesis that there is a common or unitary African Philosophy. We wish to call this Philosophy — Pan-African-Philosophy. This is because we are conscious of the fact that: "All African People of African descent," as confirmed by Late Dr. Nkrumah, "Whether they live in North or South America, the Carribean, or any other part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation... Africa is one continent, one people and one nation.[7] So that although there may be some geographical and linguistic differences, in oneness of culture (that is Philosophy), the African Nation stands."

The Pan-African-Philosophy evolved from Ancient Egypt — the cradle of civilization. As a result of series of outside invasions, Egypt was forced to surrender her leadership in Philosophy. Conquered by the Persians (in 525); the Macedonians

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[7]_Loc. cit._

under Alexander the Great (in 333 B.C.); the Romans under
Julius Caesar (50 B.C.); the Arabs in the 7th Century; the
Turks in the sixth Century; the French with Napoleon and then
the English at the end of the 19th Century, Egypt, the cradle
of civilization for about ten thousand years lost her political
and educational leadership. But one important result of these
invasions and conquests was the dispersion of Egyptian Philo-
sophers and teachers throughout Africa. With this, came a
more concentrated spread of the Egyptian Philosophy. Further-
more, there were Philosophers in the University towns of
Timbucktu and Jene in West Africa. These, wrote books on
Philosophy. Basil Davidson, in his Book: A History of West
Africa, quotes the historian Leo Africanus who wrote around
1520 concerning African scholars in Mali and Songhai empires:
"By the 16th Century, West African writers were at work on
historical, legal, moral and religious subjects."[8] All these
scholars helped to preserve for Africa what was left of the
Egyptian Philosophy. And this is the genesis of our Pan-African
Philosophy.

The Pan-African Philosophy, has some basic philosophical
truths or canons which are common to all Africans. As a living
Philosophy, the Canons we shall discuss in the pages that
follow, have tended to provide common answers to the African
man's desire to solve the four enigmas of life, namely Who

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[8]Basil Davidson, A History of West Africa, (New York:
Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 166.

we are, Where we come from; Where we are going; and What is our considered best way to get there. Let us now consider them:

1. <u>The Family</u>: The family, answers the question: Who we are?, for the Africans. It is the most important single unit in the system of Africanity. As we indicated in the preceding section, the African-family is extended. Each person remained an active member of the family he is born into "until death do them part." The feeling that this "oneness" should continue forever, beyond the grave, is the very cause of our present inquiry. In Africa, one was born into a family and belonged to it forever. Marriage or physical death does not divorce one from one's family. The wife, in traditional African society belonged to her own family, not to her husbands. And in most cases, upon death, her corpse was returned to her father's compound for burial.

In the system of Africanity, whatever happens to any member of any family be it good or evil, is shared in common by all members of that family. From the family this sharing spreads out to the <u>Umunna</u> to the village and finally to the town in lesser and lesser degree.

This notion of "collective responsibility" obviously served as a check against anti-social behaviours. And everyone was his brother's keeper.

2. <u>Religion</u>: In many ways, the "official" Philosophy of the African is a religion rather than a philosophical school of thought in the Western sense. This is so because the African

everywhere is a vehicle of his religion.

This 'religion' is traditional and not the imported religion. The African had always believed that there is a God. This God is addressed by different names in different parts of the continent due to the great variety of the African languages. In Ghana, He is called Nyame; the Igbos of Nigeria call Him Chukwu or Chineke; in Central Africa, He is called Leza; Between Congo and Botswana God is called Nyambe etc.

Religion, apart from being the "official" Philosophy has tended to answer for the African almost all the questions concerning the riddles of existence. But most specifically, it answers the question: What is the goal of life — the end of man? Man's life in Africa, is very much conditioned by his relationship with the Supreme-Being-God. Hence, when one hears an African Being described as a 'Pagan' or 'heathen', one cannot but feel very embarrassed. This is because in African Society, religion can be said not to be written on paper but on people's hearts/minds, oral history, rituals and religious personages. For according to Mbiti:

> Traditional religion permeates all departments
> of life, there is no formal distinction between
> sacred and secular, between the religious and
> non-religious, between the spiritual and material
> areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is
> his religion... In traditional African, there are
> no irreligious people. To be human is to belong
> to the whole community, and to do so, involves
> participating in beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and
> festivals of the community.[9]

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[9] John Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, New York, Praget (1966), p. 2.f.

And we need only add that the common source of this traditional religion is the Egyptian mystery system.

3. <u>Respect for Elders</u>: This canon, answers more than two questions for the African. For instance, it supplies the answer to the questions: What type of personality is most valued? Who are we? etc.

The African places much emphasis on respect for age. That is to say, any person who is older than one. The old parents are the direct responsibility of their children and grandchildren. This is among the requirements of the African culture.

In African society, the elders are regarded as the custodians of wisdom. As Mbiti reports:

> Ontologically and jurisdically, the elders, who hold the ascendency are the only ones to know fully, in the last resort. Their wisdom exceeds that of other men. The young cannot know without the elders.[10]

This is the common belief of the African. In a Philosophy which looked upon the elders as the nuclear-bearers of tidings to the unborn, the would-be-spirit of the Netherland, the foregoing attitude would hardly be surprising. While it served a moralistic goal, it seems to me that it must have tended to dwarf the spirit of criticism of the old by the young. Nevertheless, it helped to keep very alive in the African, the desire for old-age. This seems to account for why most Africans pray for long life, old age, and loathe

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[10]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 152.

dying young. Above all, respect for elders ensured peaceful governments in the communities. For the "Philosopher king's" wisdom could hardly be questioned.

4. <u>Plural marriage</u>: The role of women in Pan-African Philosophy cannot be overemphasized. Women are usually held in high regard. Plural marriage stems from the community's sense of order and morality. This, in turn provides for the safety and well-being of women. It thus, insures that every woman will function to express her womanhood - to exercise her God-given right to motherhood, and every man, his God-given right to fatherhood. But this must be done according to the "Laws of the Land" — in the open — in marriage. In the traditional African society, there was nothing like "unwanted-child" or the "bastard". All women who were of marriageable-age, got easily married. The multiple-wife-system ensured this.

It must be added, however, that in those days when infant mortality was high, when one was not sure the only child or wife would be captured and taken away into slavery; when there was extreme need for many hands to eke out a living from the soil etc., multiple-wife-system provided the answers.

5. <u>African Arts</u>: Like Religion, African Art is divine. And so, most African Arts portray life, death, mystery, power and above all harmony.

The African everywhere is an Artist, versed in, and

proud of harmonious maintenance of balance between spirit
and matter. Art for the African is an active or lively
interplay of forces, the "Living-dead" and the "dead" and
even the unborn. It is a means of restoring the order of
the world by recreating it. The African is a painter, a
dancer, singer, a dramatist etc.

In the foregoing senses of the African Art, it
cannot be a mere photography. It is a taming. Images
are presented as rhythm, form and movement on one hand and
color and rhythm, on the other. Art is a social activity
not separated from life itself.

6. <u>Principle of Vital Force</u>:

This is a very significant philosophical concept
of Pan-African-Philosophy.

The Philosophy of "Forces" tend to answer for the
African the basic question about the theory of beings and
the relationship of beings to nature. The African everywhere
accepts that everything is force — humans, animate, inanimate,
non-physical etc. There is a heirarchy of these Forces:
God, Ancestors, man, Animals, plants, non-living things e.g.
stone. Each of these forces is said to interact with the
other.

This concept will receive further attention later in
this work.

The foregoing may be considered the historical
foundation of the Pan-African-Philosophy. But for space,

one could have also pointed out that the political philo-
sophical foundations of the Pan-African-Philosophy is
communalism. It is not essentially Marxist-Lenist Marxism.
For, in the sense that the Philosophy is very much rooted on
religion, it must be anti-marxist. But due to the communal
nature, the socialistic nature of the African man, we say
that he is positively socialistic. The Canons have guided
the African man everywhere in the continent/Globe.

II.   On the other hand, it has become conventional to
reserve the term "Philosophy" to just one of the many
academic subjects or disciplines taught in institutions of
learning just as History, Physics, Psychology etc. are
taught as school subjects. In this case philosophy becomes
the discipline of contemplative knowledge. What Hiedegger
called episteme theorelike. In other words, speculative
thinking. This means that Philosophy involves thinking
critically and clearly. This is the sense Dr. Theo Okere
has in mind when he says that:

> Philosophy is a reflection on non-philosophical
> experience, by which is meant every other
> element of culture. A Philosopher as here
> understood is an individual who is a lover of
> wisdom in the sense that he makes a systematic
> effort to reflect on the data of his culture
> and from this reflection, aims to order or to
> give meaning to reality as a whole.[11]

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[11]Rev. Dr. Theo Okere, "The Relation Between Culture
and Religion." A lecture delivered during a symposium
organized by Philosophy/Classics Students' Association of
the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (April 15, 1975).

Thus understood, philosophy is a clarification and criticism of fundamental beliefs involved in all human mental beliefs involved in the great enterprises of human culture, science, art, religion, the moral life, social life and political activity. And it is especially the clarification and criticism of those beliefs that may have come into conflict, normally through the impingement of fresh discovery of knowledge and wisdom.

It is now possible for us to assert that the distinguishing characteristics of the Philosophers is that they try to have knowledge by sitting down and thinking. And Philosophy, then means thinking clearly and critically. Thinking, however includes:

a) Ordinary thinking or habituation

b) Thinking proper - the starting point of Philosophy. This usually begins in wonder and involves reasoning things out.

c) Thinking upon thinking - This is philosophy properly so-called. It involves reflecting upon opinions. The philosopher's job with respect to this level of thinking becomes to reflect upon the thinking of others; on what Okere calls "non-philosophical experiences" with the aim to "order or to give meaning to reality as a whole."

Thus, to stimulate one into wanting to know is to introduce

him to philosophy and wanting to know is manifested by
wanting to ask, and actually asking the why, how, what, where
and when of things? To ask these questions about one thing
is to gain initiation into philosophy and to attempt to
answer them, to philosophize.

It is in this sense of philosophy that today, names
like Rene Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hume, Locke, White-head,
Quine, and a host of other names are identified with Philo-
sophy in the Western world and indeed the whole world.

Could it be true to hold that Africa has no Philo-
sophers (i.e. academic philosophers) in the sense under
reference? It seems our answer must be in the negative.
The African nation is also blessed with reputable names
associated with academic philosophy. There were many in
Ancient Africa and there are still a handful of others in
contemporary Africa. Consider the following: (1) All the
Egyptian Kings associated with the Egyptian mystery-system
— were referred to as "Philosopher-Kings" by their generations.
This may be justifiable since it was claimed that the Egyptian
system served as an educational centre (as a University in
the modern sense). If this is correct, then

(a) Ptah-hotep, who was said to have lived about 2700 B.C.
Several hundred years before Plato and Aristotle was a Philo-
sopher. Ptah-hotep believed in Chastisement as a spur to
virtue, in the rule of heaven on Earth, which he said is
learnt through suffering. He urged the virtue of self-control.

This doctrine was later to become the cornerstone of Plato's and Aristotle's Philosophies.

(b) The Philospher-King Ipuwer of Egypt was one of the earliest pessimistic Philosophies. And because of his negative aspect of wisdom, he was a skeptic who may be regarded as the philosophical grandfather of Schopenhauer. The ancient unbeliever bemoans the fact that he is unable to make offerings to God because he does not know where God may be found. Ipuwer, anticipated Schopenhauer and Tolstoy when he advocated race suicide as an end to human misery — would that there might be an end of men, no conception, no births, he said, and if the earth would be no more, how good a thing it would be for all.

Surely, Ipuwe and Ptah-hotep, though designated as 'Philosophers', paved the way for the greater Philosopher who has to come after them.

(c) Ikhnaton is regarded as the founder of the supreme concept in human thought: one God, one World and one Universal Law — the harmony of mankind. He was inspired by the early Egyptian Philosophers and The Theban Book of the Dead. The Theban Book of the Dead, was a sort of "Negative Confession" that the "Souls" of the dead were supposed to recite on their day of judgment — a sort of declaration that they had refrained from breaking the Laws of God.

(2) Hypatia, the first woman Philosopher, was from Alexanderia in Egypt.

(3) St. Augustine, born at Tagaste in Numidia (North Africa) by Patricius, a Roman and Monica - a north-African, in A.D. 354, was by African tradition, an African. A theologian and a philosopher, St. Augustine does not need much introduction in philosophical circles.

(4) The renowned medieval Philosopher, Origeon 185 - 254 A.D., is a black African. And by far, he seems to have possessed the most synthetic mind than any of the Christian writers. A man of virtue and genius, Origeon left a large corpus of writings which only a part has been preserved in Greek or Latin-versions.

(5) Willie Abraham in his book, The Mind of Africa, describes a Ghananian Philosopher by name Amo Anton, born about 1700 and who in about 1738 had published the Magnum Opus, a book of Logic, theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics; to name just a few of the Ancient Philosophers.

In Contemporary Africa, there are Philosophers who have written and still write tremendous literature. These are multi-continental coming as they are, from continents beyond but including Africa. We are referring to names like: i) Late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and his Consciencism: Philosophy of Ideology and De-colonization, Panaf, London, 1964, which comes readily to mind; ii) Leopold Senghor, defines the sum total of the cultural values of the African in his Negritude. Negritude, is Aesthetics;

iii) There is the West-Indian born Aime Cesaire, a fire-brand, black-liberation-movement-organizer. Mention must be made of his: <u>Discourse on Colonialism</u>.

iv) What of Frantz Fanon, another Lurid writer, a diasporan African? Mention may be made of his Black-Skin, White-Mask (1952); <u>The Wretched of the Earth</u> etc.

v) The "Philosopher-King", President Julius Nyerere of Tazania, is a philosopher; and his <u>Uhura Na Ujama</u>, a Book of creative process which ensures self-reliance and independent programming, needs some mention;

vi) There is Janheinz Jahn and his <u>Muntu</u>, an <u>Outline of the New African Culture</u>, (1961); and among others, there is

vii) John Mbiti and his <u>African Religions and Philosophy</u>.

All these go to symbolize the African man as a Philosopher, nay, an academic Philosopher. And if our train of thought thus far has been correct, then we hasten to say that the essence of our survey in the foregoing pages, is the suggestion that Africa seems to have Philosophy in the two senses we have outlined. For, as we have tried to show, philosophy as one's "world picture", is a Philosophy expressed in simply everyday layman's language. Africa has been shown not to lack this "world-picture". With respect to philosophy as a speculative enterprise, as ideas of some great thinkers, usually stated in a more abstract and more technical vocabulary which must be learned like the special vocabulary or terminology of any science, we have also

endeavoured to show that Africa cannot be completely written off here. Therefore, it seems correct to hold that Philosophy can be qualified with the adjective "African".

1.4) THE BASIS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

AND OTHER PHILOSOPHIES.

The basis of agreement between African and other philosophies which this section seeks to establish grows out naturally from the two definitions of philosophy the preceding section arrived at.

Based on the view of philosophy as a "world-picture", there seems to be some obvious similarities with respect to the basic issues posed by people's "world-picture". Such issues concern the knowledge of things existent as existent; the knowledge of things divine and human and so on. But although there could be different ways each culture tries to answer these questions, our conception of agreement between cultures or philosophies, leads us to the suggestion that there is an agreement since the basic themes seem the same for most people, in most cultures, most of the time. Thus understood, the African philosophy, shares the basic themes with other philosophies.

When we turn to the speculative aspect of philosophy, we also notice a good deal of agreement. For most part, philosophers are concerned with the same questions — nature, God and man. And speaking very generally, philosophers tend to come up with similar conclusions about these issues. This is what we regard as the basis of agreement between African and other philosophies. In holding this position, however, we are taking for granted that our readers understand that

philosophy, especially in this "reflective" or speculative sense, is a quest for knowledge; a quest for truth. And hence philosophy becomes a quest for the Universal rather than the particular - an attitude towards the Universe. The nature of philosophical attitude is a critical and searching attitude. It is the open-minded, tolerant attitude and willingness to consider all sides of an issue. So that whoever engages in this type of enterprise, anywhere, anytime, ought to be regarded as a philosopher.

There is also a concord between African philosophy and other Philosophies in another sense. If we accept the verdict of history, Ancient Egypt is traditionally regarded as the birthplace of philosophy. On the basis of this, it could be claimed that Greek Philosophy and Pan-African-Philosophy share a common basis - the Eqyptian-mystery-systems.

Thus, George A. M. James, in The Stolen Legacy, informs us that the Greek philosophy was the offspring of the Egyptian-Mystery-System. Thus conceived, the Egyptian theory of salvation becomes the purpose of Greek Philosophy. The importance of this view to us is that if is true, then an examination of the Egyptian-mystery-system or theory of Salvation, and the purpose of the Greek philosophy should make evident some underlying agreement or Unity between the two systems.

It might be necessary, therefore, to examine very briefly the set-up of the Egyptian-Mystery-system to see if it has anything in common with the purpose of Greek Philosophy. According to Herodotus and C. A. Vail, the Egyptian-mystery-system could be construed as the modern University. It was the centre of learning, of organized culture and candidates from far and near entered it as the leading source of Ancient culture. It has three grades of students. First, the Mortals (i.e. probational students who were being instructed but who have not yet experienced the "inner vision"; second, the Intelligences (i.e. those students who have attained the "inner vision") and lastly, the Creators or sons of light (i.e. those students who have become identified with or united with the light through spiritual consciousness. C. H. Vail also reports that, the education of the students "consisted not only in the cultivation of virtue but also of Liberal Arts which were intended to liberate the soul. There was also admission to the greater mysteries where esoteric philosophy was taught to those who demonstrated proficiency."[12] This, in brief, is an outline of the Egyptian theory of salvation through which the individual was trained to become God-like while on earth, and at the same time qualified for ever-lasting happiness. There was no mediator between man and his salvation as we find in Christian theory.

. . . .

[12] C. H. Vail, Ancient Mysteries, pp. 24-25.

Now a brief survey of Greek Philosophy easily reveals
the agreement or harmony we are in search of. Consider
first the indictment and prosecution of Greek philosophers.
Several Greek philosophers one after another, were indicted
by the Athenian Government on the common charge of "intro-
ducing strange divinities"; Anaxagoras, Socrates and
Aristotle, received similar indictment. We are familiar
with the famous charge against Socrates which reads as
follows: "Socrates commits a crime by not believing in the
Gods of the cities and by introducing new deities; He also
commits the crime of corrupting the youths." In order to
find out what these new deities and/or divinities are,
we need to go back to the popular opinions which Aristophanes
in The Clouds, arouses against Socrates. It says, "Socrates
is an evil doer, who busies himself with investigating things
beneath the earth and in the sky and who makes the worse
appear a better reason, and who teaches other this same
things."

From the foregoing exposition, it is clear that
Socrates offended the Athenian Government simply by pursuing
the study of Astronomy. Other philosophers were possibly
persecuted for the same reason. For the study of science
was a required condition for membership of the Egyptian
mystery-system, since its purpose was the liberation of the
soul from the bodily fetters. Thus, if the Greek philo-
sophers studied Science, they were simply fulfilling a

required condition to membership in Egyptian mystery-system and its purpose either through direct contact with Egypt or its schools or lodges outside its territories.

There were mystery schools or what we would commonly call Lodges in Greece and other lands outside of Egypt, whose work was carried on according to Osirica, the grand Lodge of Egypt. Such schools have been frequently referred to as private or philosophic mysteries and their founders were initiates of Egyptian mysteries. The Ionian temple at Didyma, the Lodge of Euclid at Magara, the Lodge of Pathagoras at Crotona and the Orphic Oracle, with the schools of Plato and Aristotle. "Consequently," maintains C. H. Vail, "we make a mistake when we suppose that the so-called Greek philosphers formulated new doctrines of their own; for their philosophy had been handed down by the Great Egyptian Herophans through the mysteries."[13]

Further, in Timeus of Plato, we are told of how aspirants for mystical wisdom visited Egypt for initiation and how the prince of Sais (old name for Eqypt) used to refer to the Greeks as "children" in the secret doctrine. Herodotus, Diogenes and William Turner, all devote some great attention to the fact that Egypt was the educational centre of the Ancient World. The implication of all these, is that there was, and still is, an indissoluble link between Greek philosophy and Egyptian mystery-system.

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[13]Ibid., p. 59.

If the account so far, is correct, the agreement
we refer to in this section, suggests an identity of Parts.
There has been, no doubt tremendous progress in Philosophy.
So much so that if King Ikhnaton were to "come back" to life
today, he would not dare regard himself as a Philosopher.
Philosophy has undergone changes in the hands of the Greeks.
But we are inclined to hold that the well-organized and
systematized Greek philosophical system, still share the
same common origin with Pan-African Philosophy. And since
other philosophies borrowed their philosophies either directly
from Egypt or from the Greeks, all the philosophies of the
world have a common bound. And this is the basis of claim
that there is an agreement between African philosophy and
other philosophies.

PART TWO

There is in the minds of men, I know not how
a certain presage, as it were, of future
existence and this takes deepest root in the
greatest geniuses and the most exalted souls.

                                    - Cicero

CHAPTER TWO

THE LIVING IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

2.1) THE AFRICAN WORLD-VIEW

As we indicated in section two of part one, the

African has his own world-view. So that when we reflect a

bit and understand what is at stake in the cultural ordering

of action, and when we survey the lush of variety of ways of

life over the planet, we cannot but agree with the Nigerian

Historian, Dr. Uchendu that:

> To know how a people view the world around
> them is to understand how they evaluate life,
> and a people's evaluation of life, both
> temporal and nontemporal, provides them with
> a "Charter" of action, a guide to Behaviour.[14]

There is the implication here that someone's world is what

he sees, hears and so on. And what the African sees in his

"world" is surely radically different from what his contemporary

say, an Asian, sees in his own "world". Furthermore, the African

view of his "world" is not only intelligible to him but provides

him with what, Uchendu calls — "a chatter" of explaining among

other things, the notion of life and death. What then, is

this African-world-view?

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[14]Uchendu, V. C., The Igbo of Southern Nigeria, Holt
Rinehart and Winston, (New York: 1965), p. 11.

The traditional African believes in a multiplicity of worlds in which existence occurs. The number of these worlds are indefinite. But generally speaking, we can distinguish two broad types of the "African world". There is the world of man or the physical world, peopled by all created Beings — animate and inanimate; then the world-of-spirits or spirit-world. It is this latter world (the-world-of-spirits) which, I think, we can describe as being indefinite.

The Spirit-World (<u>Ala muo</u>), is the abode of the Supreme Being (<u>Chukwu</u>), the smaller dieties, the disembodied and malignant spirits, and above all, the "Living-dead" or the ancestral spirits. It is, therefore, viewed as the future abode of the "Living-dead".

In the African culture, the number of times or "rounds" each "soul" is supposed to cycle these two worlds of man and spirits, is also indefinite. Among the Igbos for instance, it is not uncommon to hear the living-person exclaim in his/her pre-incarnation forecast (i.e., <u>Ebibi Uwa</u>) thus:

a) "In <u>Uwa m Ano</u> (in my fourth world);

b) In <u>Uwa m Asaa</u> (in my seventh world);

c) In my world ad infinitum (in <u>Uwa m Kwulu Uwa m</u>) etc.
I would be this or that." Each of such <u>Ebibi Uwa</u>, is meant to indicate the social status desired in the number of rounds the speaker hopes to cycle the world of man and spirits.

The two worlds do not, however, operate in isolation. The African believes that there is constant interaction

between the world of Man (Uwa) and Alamuo (the world of
spirits) i.e. between the visible and invisible worlds of
forces. This world-view, is what may be described as "world-
affirming philosophy." It is world-affirming since the world
is a realm of powers, vital-energy and dynamism. The most
fruitful life has the most power and harmony. The powers
of the worlds interact with each other and man tries to keep
in good terms with them. These powers or forces, are, however,
not all equal. The African recognizes a hierarchy of forces.
At the apex of this hierarchy is Chukwu who created all other
forces and who strengthens all that call on Him. The African
notion of interaction of forces is fundamental to his belief
in the "Living-dead"; the ancestral spirits, as the founding
fathers of the races who are continually interested in the
world of the living and are capable of "returning" in new
infants from time to time.

Existence for the African, is, therefore, a dual but
interrelated phenomenon involving the interaction between
material and spiritual, the visible and invisible, the good
and the bad, the "living-dead" and the "dead". In African
thought the "land of the dead" are inhabited by Spirits,
Ancestors. And these are organized in the same way as their
living descendants in Uwa are.

From the above sketched world-view, an African
"Philosophy of Forces" seems to emerge, for, like Leibniz,
the African,

never abandoned the idea that the Universe is a
harmonious whole... the principle of nature makes
no leaps; there must be something that persists
when motion ceases, a ground of motion: this is
force, or conatus, or the tendency of body to move
or to continue its motion; and force is constant
in quantity. Hence, there is no substance that
does not act, that is not expression of force:
what does not act does not exist. Only what is
active is real. Consequently, Force, and not
extension, is the essential attribute of body.[15]

Similarly in the multiple "worlds" of the African, 'Force'

is the essential attribute of everything. Nothing living

can be conceived as being devoid of force. But the forces

in Uwa (world) are categorized. Man is at the centre. He

is a creature endowed with mind and body and force. The

relationship between Man's body and his soul cannot be

denied when there is force. We shall see the importance of

this notion when we discuss human personality. In the

pyramid of the living, therefore, God is at the apex. He is

the great Muntu or Being. The most perfect Being. Every

other Force is created but only God is uncreated. And in

Leibniz words: "God is the highest and perfect Monad, Pure

activity (actus purus), the original monad, the monad of

monads. The principle of continuity demands the existence of

a Supreme Monad.[16] God or Chukwu, occupies a special place

in African Philosophy. After Him, in the category of the

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[15]Frank Tilly and Ledge Wood, A History of Philosophy,
Henry Holt & Company, New York (1955), p. 386.

[16]Ibid., p. 389.

living, comes the "Living-dead" — founding fathers of the clan, according to their rank in terms of seniority; next, is the animal forces; vegetable forces and even mineral forces, each categorized according to the relative importance in their own classes. The earth (Ala) is a living force, and a very important one, too.

In the thinking of most Africans, the earth is a mighty force comparable only to Igwe (The Havens) in power or force. The Igbos, in particular, personify Ala to the extent that it has a cult. It is a goddess. Ala is the symbol of forces that promote the common welfare of mankind without discrimination. It "opens" up its mouth to receive back all mankind without discrimination. For, at death (the great leveller), all the poor, rich, educated or illiterate are buried in Ala. Sacrifices were offered to Ala in traditional Africa for increased yields, especially when crops fail. The importance of Ala may account for why nobody owns Ala in African society. It is a gift of God for man's good and well-being.

The Igbos talk of Ala's remorseless punishment of Sacrilege, and things it prohibits. Ala, is here assumed to have her own laws which, every Living Muntu must obey. These Laws (nso Ala), however, are usually identical with the norms of the community. Thus, anyone who contravenes these "Laws of the Land," is said to have commited sacrilege (Iru nso Ala). And a person charged with such a crime must perform

some cleansing rites or purification rites without which, he

is numbered among the "dead". Every other lower force in the

category of the living forces, possesses its own different

degree of forces. I think this is what Leibniz has in mind

when he says that:

> Every monad has the power of perception or
> representation; it perceives or represents and
> expresses the entire universe. In this sense
> it is a world in miniature, a microcosm; it is
> a living mirror of the Universe," a concentrated
> world, a world for itself. But each Monad re-
> presents the Universe in its own way, from its
> unique point of view, with its characteristic
> degree of clearness; it is limited, an individual,
> and has other individuals outside it. The higher
> the Monad, the more clearly and distinctly it
> perceives, expresses or represents the world; the
> monads with which it is most closely associated
> constitute its own body, and these it represents
> most clearly.[17]

So that we need only add that the African believes that

every force has an intimate bond one with the other. He also

recognizes "vital force" as the chief element, active prin-

ciple, and the source of energy in every Bantu. Hence,

according to Placide Tempels:

> The human being apart from the ontological
> hierarchy and interaction of forces, has no
> existence in the conception of the Bantu.[18]

It is the relationships of these forces one with the other,

which constitute the African notion of the living and an

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[17] Loc. cit.

[18] Placide Tempels, Ibid., p. 104.

understanding of this notion seems crucial to an understanding of the entire African Philosophy. This is because 'Force', has a determining influence on the metaphysical concept of "Being", and on the psychological understanding of personality, a notion which we shall be examining in the next section. This is why Placide Tempels, who had worked with the Bantu and who, obviously understands the notion of interaction of forces had to write:

> We may conceive of the transcendental notion of "being", by disentangling it from the attribute of its force, but not the Bantu; Force is in his thought a necessary element of Being, and the concept force is inseparable from the definition of being.... We have a static conception of being, they have a dynamic notion.... In Bantu thought, a being is what possesses force,.... force is being, being is force.[19]

Tempels, surely presents a better picture of the notions we have been trying to explicate. In African philosophy of "Forces", there is the view that there is life or at least Force/Power, in all things. This seems to me to make African philosophy nearer to the modern conception of all pervading energy.

However, I also realize that a non-African, might tend to ridicule the above notions, especially the African conception of the lower forces e.g. Ala, as superstitious. But it needs to be pointed out that these views have their

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[19]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

roots in the people's belief systems; For, living in their world of forces, all of which may affect man directly or indirectly, our laws include not only purely human laws but make reference to working forces recognized in nature.

Hence, all natural calamities are considered possible when some forces are thwarted, neglected or turned into evil channels. Nevertheless, to a mind untutored in crop science, in scientific farming, Ala, which causes "mysterious" crops' growth can not but be reverenced. It is possible that this type of world-view may tend to paralyze the mind or dwarf its development, but it served the traditional African some useful purposes. Surely the concept of Nso Ala (Law of the land) among others, helped: (a) to check some anti-social conducts among individuals in African communities; (b) to prevent the interruption of the working of nature or an attempt to upset the rhythm of nature; and (c) nso Ala, helped to ensure or induce respect for human life. We are familiar with the Biblical Story of Cain and Abel: But the Lord said to Cain:

> Your brother's blood calls to me from the ground.
> What have you done? You are hereby banished from
> the ground which you have defiled with your
> brother's blood. No longer will it yield crops
> for you, even if you toil on it forever! From
> now on you will be a fugitive and a tramp upon
> the Earth, wandering from place to place.[20]

From the above, we can now appreciate the African

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[20]Genesis, 4: 10-12.

conception of <u>Ala</u> (Earth) and the requirement that purifica-
tion be made when <u>Ala</u> has been defiled. It is essentially
moralistic.

But before we conclude our discussion of the African
world-view, there is some need to raise a question or two
which, we guess must be agitating the breast of a critical
reader. In the first place, how do we now categorize the
African philosophy based on the foregoing analysis? Could
we say that it is pantheistic, idealistic or materialistic?
We ask this because, the African world-view seems to harbour
under the same roof the elements of at least three widely
but different philosophies, namely: Pantheism, Idealism
and Materialism.

Thus: 1) By making mind and matter co-ordinate aspects
of God, who becomes the indwelling "substance" of all things,
we inevitably arrive at Pantheisms of Spinoza;
2) If on the other hand, matter is absorbed into spirit,
as though in Divine mind, we inevitably arrive at the idealism
of Berkeley or Malebranche; and finally
3) If, however, the African abolishes the realm of thinking
substance and explain thought as a function of the bodily
machine, we inevitably arrive at the materialism of Hobbes.

This is our problem. But the African could reply that
our problem is really not problematic. He could resist our
attempt to categorize his Philosophy in the manner we have
outlined (1) - (3) on the grounds that:

a) He does not hold that mind and matter are mere aspects of
God as Spinoza would hold. For him, they are God's creatures,
brought into being by a free act of Chukwu's will and hence,
they are distinct from Him. We are not pantheistic, he would
reply. Matter is much more than a thought in the Divine Mind
or in human mind. Matter is a substantial reality, issuing
from Chukwu as its source.
b) On the charge of materialism, he would reply that — we are
not materialistic in our philosophy because, though the bodily
machine can do many remarkable things, it can never think
thoughts. "Thinking, in African philosophy, belongs to Mind."
c) May be there is an element of idealism in our thinking,
but, it is perhaps best to regard our philosophy as a unique
philosophy of forces. This philosophy may seem to resemble
in one way or other the systematized philosophy of the West.
But it cannot be said to be fully identifiable with it.

To sum it up, the notion of 'vital force', is central
to understanding African world-view, and 'vital force',
power, or if you like a sort of energy, possessed by every
man, every animal, every living being including God, may never
disappear.   For, even after death, it is said to continue
to exist and influence things, except of course, one is a
"bad-dead" i.e. a buloji or has nobody to keep his force alive.

This conception arises from the African man's belief
that life keeps on developing like a plant. It grows or
evolves —from lower to higher forms. The spirit of man, like

a flame leaps forever forward. And the conception returns,
as it were to the African man's conception of the good man,
the moral man — the man who does not defile Ala by committing
attrocities or sins which Ala forbids. From this, it seems
to follow that some measure of religiousness is as much a
necessity of a truly happy and successful life as the sense
of justice and fair play.

In this sense, it seems correct to hold that religion
and morality have a more compelling claim over the African
man's allegiance than the different arts and sciences taken
severally. Thus, it is easily seen that from the African
point-of-view, life divorced from active life, indicative
of involvement with our fellow beings, religion and morality,
is not itself competent to fix up or define the purpose or
goal of life for the living and this is the crux of the African
conception of the living.

2.2) THE AFRICAN NOTION OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

What is Man? What is special about him? Before
we answer these questions, we wish to reiterate that each
culture has its own way of knowing man and other realities,
and the African is no exception. In African culture, the
different images or shades of Man are superimposed on one
another; to present the integrated personality of man, we
shall discuss in this section.

The African distinguishes, besides the <u>Muntu</u>, the
human being properly so called, his <u>Ahu</u> (body); his <u>buzima</u>
(shadow); his <u>Nkpuruk Obi</u> (heart); the person's <u>Ndu</u> (life or
breath); and person's <u>Chi</u> (one's guardian angel/personal
god). In other words, the African notion of human personality
might be construed as a dual process. There is something
material — the body, heart and the shadow together. The body
is one of the things in which our true feelings are located,
but it is not the only one, and it may not even be the prin-
cipal one, for the Africans and all believers in Reincarnation
and Karma. There is also something spiritual — the person's
<u>ndu</u> and his <u>Chi</u>. And these two aspects — material and
spiritual, unite to give us the <u>Muntu</u>. The principle which
designates this union is called <u>Magara</u>[21] by Janheinz Jahn.

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[21]Magara – a Kintu force which assists every beginning
of a human creature (Janheinz Jan, <u>Muntu: The New African
Culture</u>, Grove Press, Inc., New York (1961), p. 107.

Muntu without a body, is inconceivable to the African.
Such a being is simply a Spirit. On the other hand, the Muntu,
who has a body, but lacks the spiritual aspect, is similarly
absurd. Such a being is a mere Kintu (thing). For the
African, the Muntu, properly so called is not physical; it
is symbolic. The "Being" of the person is "in" the body but
it is rarely completely integrated with the body, like dominoes
in a box, not like a tightly woven tapestry. In other words,
none of these two aspects (physical and spiritual), can
function in isolation if a Being is to be designated — Muntu;
that is to say, that it is the union of these two aspects
which is the instrument through which the ego is able to
function in various planes.

Consider the following touching interview I held with
Itodo Onyishi, aged about 96 years, and who is the eldest man
in my town early January, 1979:

Question : Who are you?

Itodo : Itodo.

Question : Who is Itodo?

Itodo : Muo m (my spirit in me).

Question : Where can we see this muo or where is it located?

Itodo : "In" me. I doubt if you can see it in the manner
you think. It seems to be invisible but yet
visible because it makes all things about me
possible.

Question :   But why can't we? You can see your body in the
             mirror. Why can't you see this your very
             important 'You' in the mirror?

Itodo   :   Mirror, can only lie. A mirror shows only the
             external aspects of you, it stops at the face,
             but the face is not what we call your "yourness".
             Even your voice seems strangely alien — when you
             hear it on a recording — we muse: "Is that me?"

The face, is, indeed a liar for a typical African
"Ancestor" who has an unshakable belief in the dualism of the
human person; and who equally believes that what constitutes
"him" is 'interior', "inside", even though we cannot locate
the "insideness". And Itodo's replies exemplify for us the
sort of reply you get from most African elders. You can not
project "interiors" onto mirrors. This is vital dualism
of African experience — the fact that everything there is, has
an "inside" and an "outside". And, he seems perfectly right.
Why not? Theoretically, all objects in nature seem to con-
form to this characterization — have "interiority" and
"exteriority" or inside and outside. Gustav Fechner, known
as one of the fathers of psychophysics or experimental psy-
chology accepts that all objects have interiority, even trees.
If this is the case, why not say that a Palm tree leans on
my fence because it "feels" weak, or soaks up water because
it is thirsty or it produces nuts because it has been pregna-
ted? Perhaps if you take a slow motion you can see this

happening. We do not know what is going on inside it, but it must register some internal reaction to experiment. In the African category of the living, the object with the least "internal" would then be the rocks — probably they would have no more "inside" or inner life than the idling of their atomic structures, but in these, as physicists have taught us, there is anything, but repose.

However, in the thinking of the African, also, the Chi, is an aspect of the spiritual. Consequently, therefore, the Chi, it is claimed, is able to reincarnate several different combinations of the other aspects of the person. This quality of the Chi helps to make it possible for the Ancestor to reincarnate and at the same time remain present in the Spirit-world to receive sacrifices. The implication here, is that it is not strictly the ancestral spirit that is born; the child being supposed to come under any particular Chi's influence, inherit "Spirit-genes" and so receive part of its vitality and quality. Furthermore, the Chi could thus express itself in many different persons, sometimes actually living contemporaneously. These are hardly new or startling thoughts. But they help to introduce us to the African conception of man. The conception makes a lot of sense to the average African man. We shall grant him his view meanwhile, and go ahead to consider the notion of the ancestors, the categories of the living, the functions of the "living-dead" or ancestors and so on. Our philosophical 'axe' will descend on the former notion — the African Personality and other latter ones in Part three of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

THE "LIVING-DEAD" AND THE "DEAD" IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

3.1) THE NOTION OF THE "LIVING-DEAD"

Who are the "Living-dead"? What are their functions in African Philosophy? How do the Africans ensure continuity of "life" in the "Living dead"? These, and more issues, will be taken up in this section.

The "Living-dead", according to the African-Philosophical thinking, are the dead who lived worthy lives in Uwa And as conceived by the African, these, are the invisible segment of the lineage. The African feels very strongly that death (i.e. the demise of the physical body) is not the end — that it is rather an "image" which reflects the vain gratification of the living. Thus, for the African, the 'dead' who are said to look back here (to Uwa) with pleasant memories, are those "worthy" sons and daughters who lived exemplary lives in Uwa. These sons and daughters can never 'die'. Death has no power over them.

Hence, the African says that the dead "live" and very close too; in full command of their faculties and powers. In other words, the belief seems to be that:

> Those who are dead are never gone
> They are in the breast of the woman;
> They are in the child who is wailing,
> And in the firebrand that frames;
> The dead are not under the earth;

> They are in the fire that is dying;
> They are in the grass that weep,
> They are in the whimpering soul,
> They are in the forest, they are in the house,
> The dead are not dead.[22]

Because the "dead are not dead," their continued existence, or their vital life has to be insured in the several ways we shall examine later. Also, because the "dead are not dead" these "living-dead" are said to expect their fair share of whatever prosperity comes to their living descendants and their households. These relatives in Ụwa, are the surviving sons and daughters, grandsons and great-grandsons and nephews on both sides of the family.

There is, therefore, in the mind of every African, a loving reverence for these "living-dead" who are believed to be "looking into" the spirit-world, communicating with other spirits (Ndị Muọ) there, and considering being reincarnated anew.

Frazer, in The Fear of the Dead In Primitive Religions, says that the attitude of "Primitive" people towards the departed spirits is very different from that of "civilized" people. The general attitude of the former, he suggests, is that of fear rather than affection. This statement, as far as the African is concerned, is a half-truth. It needs some qualifications if ever it can apply to the African man's con-

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[22]Janheinz Jahn, Ibid. (The Stanzas are by a Senegambian poet).

ception of the departed (i.e., the "living-dead"); I think it's also true to hold that many 'civilized' races fear the dead, are terrified by Ghosts and even try to shut their eyes to the reality of death to such extent that it can be said that they suffer from thenatophobia or fear of death. In African culture, the dead are feared but the African equally seeks their help. The African attitude can, at best be described in the term — "ambivalent", i.e. as a compound of both fear and affection.

This "ambivalent" attitude stems from their notion of the dead. The Africans Love, respect and fear their living elders and these attitudes are carried beyond this life. The African life was never that of carefree attitude or "I don't care attitude." He really fears the "bad-dead" or the buloji (we shall discuss this notion later). Beyond this distinction, it seems not correct to say without qualification that the African fears the dead and has no affection for them. This leads us to a consideration of the functions of the "living-dead" in African Philosophy.

3.2) THE FUNCTIONS OF THE "LIVING-DEAD" AND HOW CONTINUITY OF LIFE IS ENSURED IN THE "LIVING DEAD"

The "Living-dead", play very significant roles in African-Philosophical thinking:

1) Being the "good-deads", they "live" in Ala-muọ and because they are said to "live" in the Spirit-World, they can "return" to the World-of-Man in new infants to their descendants as many times as possible. These surviving descendants, pray to them for children. The childless, in particular, implores his/her Ancestor to give him/her children, for the worst thing to happen to an African is to die childless. The Ancestor-worship, which we shall consider shortly, has much to do with this urge. And, the desire to multiply and replenish the Earth is also one of the basic reasons for polygamy in traditional Africa. For, multiple wives not only ensured some protection to the women but the perpetuation of the race in times of high mortality.

2) The 'living-dead' were the elders of their various Communities during their lifetime in Ụwa; they were the transmitters of past experience; the existential links of the past and present, and above all, the custodian of wisdom of the ages, for according to Placide Tempels:

> True Knowledge; human wisdom, then will equally
> be metaphysical; it will be intelligence of forces;
> of their hierarchy, their cohesion and their inter-
> action.
>   Ontologically and jurisdically, the elders who hold
> the ascendancy are the ones to know fully, in the
> last resort. Their wisdom exceeds that of other

men. The young cannot know without the elders.[23]
And for the African, death is not seen as putting a stop to
the ontological hierarchy. The elders were the rulers of
their clans while in Uwa, but death is not an end, hence,
they are considered to continue this leadership role in the
world beyond. However, this cannot be done directly, hence,
their role is to guide the current leaders. These surviving
elders, rely completely on the "Spiritual-light" from their
"Living-dead"; they guide them and no action or important
decision is ever embarked upon without first and foremost
invoking the "living-dead" in prayers or sacrifices.

3) The "Living-dead", are believed to "fertilize" the land
and promote the growth of crops. Because of this, they must
receive sacrifices or offerings before the land is dug or
crops harvested. No man, may, therefore exploit the land
or eat the first fruits of the land before the Ancestors
just as the elders in Uwa partake of the first fruits.

4) Similarly in times of draught, the "Living-dead" are
called upon because they are believed to have more influence
with the Great Muntu (God), than have any lesser mortals —
they may give a shower or a bumper harvest.

5) In times of war, the "Living-dead", are looked upon as
the leaders of their clan. They carried out this function in

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[23] Tempels, Ibid., p. 73

their lifetime. Why should they not continue from the world beyond especially as "death is not the end"? Thus, they are invoked before battles. This is because they are believed to have acquired special knowledge of the World-Beyond.

B) <u>HOW CONTINUITY OF "LIFE" IS INSURED IN THE "LIVING-DEAD"</u>

To ensure that the "Living-dead" continue to perform the foregoing functions, specifically (1); efforts are made to keep them as lively as possible. This is done in two principal ways.

a) Burial rites — Burial rites are directed towards the following goals: i) To help put the dead "to rest";

ii) To enable them achieve ancestor-hood;

iii) To avert the wrath of the ancestors;

iv) To console and propriate them; and

v) To give or arm them with the appropriate "passport" for a "return" to <u>Uwa</u>.

In other words, death alone, is not a sufficient condition of a good man becoming an Ancestor/Living-dead. He has to be "sent off" this world with the appropriate Burial rites. It is the duty of the descendants to make sure that this is done and done well too, if they expect the Ancestors to reciprocate by "returning" in new infants or indeed, carrying out the other functions we enumerated. We shall see clearly the advantages claimed to be associated with Burial rites when we turn to the notion of the "dead", properly speaking.

But Burial rites alone, are not sufficient to keep
the "Living-dead" alive in Ala-mụọ (Spirit-world). The Burial
rites merely ensure a safe journey to Ala mụọ. In Ala-mụọ ,
there is need of a continued vital-force nourishment —
food from the living, sacrifices or offering, libations and
prayers for these "Living-dead". Thus, the belief that the
Chi (Spirit) of the Ancestor "lives" prompted the traditional
Africans to set up dieties in honour of the dead. In Ancient
Egypt the bodies of the Philosopher-kings were preserved as
mummies in tombs filled with all kinds of food and even articles
of clothing. The Igbos, for example, used to set up what they
call the Clan-ọfọ.[24] The Ọfọ-Ụmụnna is kept at the Obi
(i.e. large living-quarters of the eldest of the Clan); there
is also the "Ọnụ Nna", (a Shrine) for the immediate dead fathers,
to name but a few. These shrines or dieties are set up to make
communication between the Living and the 'dead' easier. The
"Living-dead" are supposed to be very near indeed. And because
the "Worlds" of the departed are considered to be located
nearby, in the vicinity of the Earth (Ala) in which the An-
cestors were buried, highly-valued persons are buried within
their own houses. This is to ensure that prayers, libations,
honour, and sacrifices are offered to them regularly to keep
them alive in their world, for this will help to facilitate

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[24]Ọfọ - a symbol of integrity and an emblem of justice
and uprightness; as "a clan-ọfọ", it is worshipped.

their "return". These "good-deads", are supposed to take active interest in all that their surviving sons and daughters do, and also expect their own fair share of the fortunes from such children. This is so because according to Robin-Horton, "the essence of what has happened to all the dead is that their spirits have separated from their bodies."[25] So that because, death is a mere "separation", the 'good-dead', who are viewed hopefully as sources of new human beings in Ụwa are worshipped. And they are believed to "return" periodically in new-babies to their tightly related consanguineous group "Ịkwu-ụmụnna", (having reference to father's agnates), and Ụmụnne (having reference to the mother's agnates).

The "Living-dead" are "scolded" in prayers as if they are still living. They are usually reprimanded for failing in their duties to their children by closing their eyes to the depredation of evil — Spirits which cause deaths in family, crop failures, and make trade unprofitable. For, while the living must help to keep the "Living-dead" alive in Ala-mụọ, the latter, are also to do certain things for the living members of their family.

This explains, in no small way, the desire of the African to have children. For to leave no heirs behind one is the greatest evil that can befall an African. This is

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[25]Robin-Horton, "The Kalabari World-View, An Outline Interpretations", Africa, Vol. XXXII, (No. 3, July, 1962), p. 199.

because those Ancestors who have relatives in Ụwa to keep
them constantly nourished via Ancestral-Worship have their
"vital-force" prolonged. But the childless or those without
relatives to offer regular sacrifices, prayers and so on,
soon experience final or ontological death. Tempels confirms
the foregoing when he said:

> To leave no Living heirs behind is the worst
> evil that can befall a man, and there is no
> curse terrible to put on a man than to wish
> him to die childless.[26]

And this is a desire that emanates from the urge to live for-
ever - (not to undergo Ontological or total death). The
Ontologically-dead-person, cannot perpetuate himself in any
descendant.

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[26]Tempels, *Ibid.*, p. 109.

3.3) THE "DEAD" IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY; AND HOW THEY ARE
      KEPT PERMANENTLY "DEAD"

> There is only one Liberty....
> to come to terms
> with death.
> After which,
> everything is possible.
>
> - Camus

In his thinking, the African distinguishes between the "Living-dead" and the real "dead". The latter are those according to Camus, who have come to terms with "death". They are ontologically "finished". In other words, no one expects anything, in terms of the functions, we assigned to the "Living-dead" in the preceding section, from them.

Now, there are at least three categories of these types of "bad-dead":

The first, are those whose life courses have been condemned for certain forms of evil (the "buloji"[27] or "ndoki", according to the Bantu). After death, these are usually cast into distant "Bad" Bush (ajo Ohia) and never given respectful Burial ceremonies. That Tempels, who is familiar with African traditional systems appreciates the reasons for the sort of treatment usually given to these category of the "dead", is borne out from the fact that he says:

> the not life, the force destructive of life
> cannot possess rights,
> It is anti-Ontological.[28]

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[27]Buloji, is the perverter or destroyer.

[28]Tempels, Ibid., p. 134.

The second category of the "bad-deads" are those who die without reaching adulthood, could not get married. Marriage and arrival of children to the family (i.e. consumation of marriage), is the only single qualification for adulthood. Thus, those who die without reaching adulthood, are usually declared ineligible for certain rights like burial rites; and without this rite, "return" to Ụwa after death, is considered difficult, if not impossible. For Burial rites indicate the ranks or social status of the individual in life. Hence, says Mbiti,

> an unamarried, is not given the final ceremony,
> which in many ways is the most important and
> most meaningful in man's attempts to symbolize
> his conquest over death. This would mean that
> the unmarried is in effect conquered by death,
> he is not recalled, nor is he ceremoniously
> invited back into the human family.[29]

The third category are children who die before the adolescent age. These are known as the "repeaters or changelings". The Changeling, dies prematurely, in most cases, without any sign of ill-health. Most often the Changeling never grows old. They are said to have a common bond to obey — a sort of mystical identity of destiny specified for them as associates, and one's associates can call one to the land of the dead at will in accordance with the bond he has with them.

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[29]Mbiti John, S., _African Religions and Philosophy_, Heinemann, London, (1971), p. 152.

Before these sort of children decide to reincarnate,
they are said to had taken a vow, an oath on the world (Iyi-Uwa)
with their associates. By this Iyi-Uwa (or Oath) the Change-
ling agrees to remain for a certain length of time in the
world, to accomplish certain tasks in his life course, and
then to "return" to the other world (Ala muo) in fulfillment
of the pact or vow it shares. Such endless cycling of the
Ogbanje or Abiku is aptly painted in this Versimilitude by
J. P. Clark:

> Coming and going these several seasons,
> Do stay out on the baobab tree,
> Follow where you please your kindred spirits
> If indoors is not enough for you
> We know the knife scars
> Serrating down your back and front
> like beak of the sword-fish,
> And both your ears, notched;
> As a bondman to this house
> Are all relics of your first coming.[30]

The "Ogbanje", as depicted by J. P. Clark, is an unwanted
child that torments the parents by its regular circles, and
when he abruptly dies, is mutilated as suggested in the
stanzas. This is to ensure that it is identified whenever
it "returns", and in majority of cases, it is claimed to
"return" with those "marks" made on it before it's burnt or
thrown into Ajo-Ohia. Consider the bluff of Abiku in Wole
Soyinka:

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[30]Donatus Nwoga (ed.), West African Verse: An Anthology,
Longman Ltd., (London: 1967), See Abiku by J. P. Clark.

> In vain you bangles cast
> Charmed circles at my feet
> I am Abiku, Calling for the first
> And repeated time.
> So when the snail is burnt in the shell
> When the heated fragment, brand me
> Deeply on the breast, you must know him,
> When Abiku calls again.[31]

From the foregoing, all life seems a state of flux, never continuing in one stay, a perpetual dying to be born again. A halt, if ever, is made to the Abiku's dangerous cycling, if and only if, it feels tired of its evil rounds, or when it takes pity on the woman whom it had again and again tormented. Another way of stabilizing Abiku is by unearthing its Iyi-Uwa.

When a changeling is born with the "knife-cuts" made on it before its burial in the former round, parents are not happy. The keen interest characteristic of the birth of one supposed to resemble a "living-dead", to identify the "living-dead", who has "returned", is absent. Most inquiries with respect to the birth of one suspected to be a changeling, is how to stabilize him/her.

The notion of the "dead" seem to have served to explain many issues which could not be explained otherwise, in traditional Africa. We shall attack this conception in the next chapter.

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[31] Ibid., p. 62.

PART THREE

The cultural functions of Philosophy are essentially
critical. Confronted by a cultural or culturally
significant social conflict between men's Beliefs,
the philosophical mind, that is the mind in which
such conflicts generate philosophical response is
driven to examine the fundamental beliefs that
underline the clusters of beliefs that have come to
collide.

                              - John Herman Randall, Jr.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTORY

The time has come after these preliminary considera-
tions in the preceding pages, to direct our attention to an
analysis of the problem, to ask some set of questions and
perhaps formulate a rationale for the doctrine of the "Living-
dead" in African Philosophy. What then is the Problem? Our
train of thought thus far, has led us to the assumptions of
African philosophy:

1. that the human personality is multiple - apparently dualistic

    (i.e. consisting of material and spiritual aspects);

2. that (1), justifies the belief that, at least a part

    of this multiple personality (the life-force and/or the

    Chi (personal God) of the Ancestor, can reside in Ala muo

    (spirit world) after the death of the material aspects of

    the Person, and be able to "return" to Uwa (world) at

    Will; and

3. that because the "bad-deads" lack certain aspects of the

    Human Personality possessed by the Ancestors or "good-deads",

    the former cannot behave as the latter.

    These are the basic claims, and collectively, they raise

a Philosophical problem of justification of the African concep-

tion of Life and death. Thus, our problem in this chapter is
a Philosophical one aimed at a critical analysis of (1) through
(3). And for this, we shall be "a philosopher" in Richard
Lewis Nettleship's sense of the term. According to R. L.
Nettleship,

> A Philosopher is a man with a greater power of
> thinking than other people. One who has thought
> more than others on subjects of common interest.
> All Philosophy must be critical; And in thinking
> facts out to their consequences, the Philosopher
> necessarily arrives at conclusions different from
> and often contradictory to the ideas current
> around him.[32]

I think that Nettleship is correct. For, what I think makes
a Philosopher is this critical and enquiring spirit which he
advocates. It is this balanced conviction which never takes
things for granted, on trust, but requires that everything
shall prove itself to reason, that motives us in this chapter.
This is what we choose to call "a philosophical Analysis of
the problem." Analysis, because the chapter is not going to
be content with making statement of facts without questioning
further. No. The analysis that this chapter addresses itself
to, is essentially a criticism, a questioning of the rather
uncritical exposition carried out in the earlier parts of
this thesis. And perhaps at the end of it all, it would be
possible to come up with an answer to the question: can men

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[32]Richard Lewis Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of
Plato, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., (New York: 1958), p. 3.

"return" to <u>Uwa</u> in part or whole after death? Or would it be

true to hold that the doctrine of the "Living-dead," is,

perhaps that upon which reflection is futile, since the question

is purely of fact?

The purpose of the chapter is two-fold:

a) to investigate more critically some of the claims made with

respect to the African Human Personality; the notion of

"Vital Force";

b) to examine more critically some of the doctrines which "Force"

is used to formulate. These doctrines include:

(i) the doctrine of the "Living-dead:

(ii) the "return-theory" of the "Living-dead"

(iii) the doctrine of the "dead" in African philosophy.

Doctrines (i) and (ii) will be treated together under

the heading - The doctrine of the "Living-dead" in Pan-African-

Philosophy.

The chapter will not concern itself with mere linguistic

analysis (i.e. analysis concerned primarily with words and

their uses). Analysis, as here used, is a concept analysis

concerned with ideas which words represent.

4.1) THE AFRICAN NOTION OF HUMAN PERSONALITY - CONCEPT OF VITAL FORCE.

The African, like St. John of the Gospel, strongly believes and advocates that:

"It is the spirit that gives life,

the flesh has nothing to offer";[33]

Though for St. John, "words are identical with Spirit: "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."[34] Hence, we may ask: how do we characterize the "Spirit" which the African claims gives life? Let us even ignore questions about how the terms associated with the whole concept of "Human Personality," namely: Ahu (Body), Shadow, Nkpuruk Obi (heart-ball); the person's Ndu (life or breath); his Chi (the personal God) etc., are precisely to be understood. Let us ignore further the question whether the characteristics are to be possessed and possessed uniquely by man; and rather ask:

1. What is material aspect of man? What is the Spiritual aspect of man and what is Vital Force?

2. Granting that there are two aspects of man - "material" and "spiritual", what could be the relationship between them?

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[33]See St. Joseph's Gospel 1: 1-4.

[34]Loc. Cit.

3. How could we explain the role of the personal-God or the
    Chi, which is claimed to be the director-general of The
    "return-theory" of the Ancestors? And if we grant the
    role of the Chi, what past, if any, does the Great Muntu
    (God) play in the whole episode of the "return" of the
    Ancestors to Uwa?

These, are some of the questions which we wish to
address ourselves to, in the section. As we pointed out in
the introductory remarks, we are no longer concerned with
mere names, but with description of what actually happens,
which will penetrate the heart of the matter. Let us then
start with the question:

1) What is the "material aspect of man? Our discussions
of Human Personality in chapter two apparently drew a dis-
tinction between the "material" aspect of man and his
"spiritual" aspect. Hence, it seems appropriate to seek a
classification of these notions now.

Asked, what things are "material" in the world, the
African, in particular, will intuitively point to the rocks,
trees, chairs, tables, water, animal bodies to name but a
few. And about us, he can also say that comprehensively,
the substances, processes, events, relations, characteristics
and so on, that are overt and can be perceived, may be
designated "material". Thus, the answer to our first
question seems then obvious: the objects, events etc., that
are perceptually public are physical or Ahu (Body). So that

as far as the traditional African is concerned, this cannot be otherwise. Still it is clear that he thinks this way not because technical research had detected in all those things designated, some recondite peculiarity that go to constitute their materiality; but simply because some name was needed and the name Ahu, was adopted. Physicists had earlier believed that rocks, trees, and other substances about us are ultimately composed of atoms which are in-divisible. That is, not themselves composed of more minute parts.

But modern Physics "over-turned" not only the traditional African man's notion of "material", but has now shown that the earlier conception of Atom was incomplete and that there are sub-atomic "particles": electrons, protons, neutrons, positrons, mesons etc; that these "Particles" maintain distances from each other which are vast, relative to their own size.

The significance of this to us, is that a "material" object like a table or a chair, is shown to consist mostly of space empty of anything more substantial than electric charges or electromagnetic fields. And if the state of affairs is correct, then we can argue against the traditional African notion of "material" by claiming that modern science has "dematerialized" your "simple-minded" notion of "material".

But the traditional African man may still hold to his guns i.e. refuse to accept our new thesis. He can insist,

and indeed challenge any physicist to kick a table, a rock
with a barefoot and come without getting bruised. And if
this is true, then physics has not "dematerialized" matter.

Again, the African seems quite correct, Dr. Samuel
Johnson adopted the same method in his effort to disprove
Bishop Berkeley's extreme idealism of Esse est percipi (i.e.
to be is to be perceived). In other words, the claim that
there can be no reality apart from experience - Chairs,
tables, trees etc. have no other existence than as experience;
they are not knowable. But our reply is that whatever may
be the recondite sub-atomic constitution of chair, table and
other "solid" objects, they really do have the capacity to
resist penetration by other such objects. We are not
claiming that these objects have no existence apart from
experience as Berkeley did. Physics has not "dematerialized"
matter in the sense of having shown that wood or table, chairs,
water, other living bodies of familiar substances do not have
the properties we perceive them to have. What Physics has
actually shown is that their familiar properties are very
different from, indeed from those of their sub-atomic consti-
tuents. In other words, the distinction we are drawing, is
a distinction with respect to the nature of the ultimate
constituents of all material things and the laws governing
the relations of these constituents are to the other. This
is the issue or the question which is of interest to Modern
Physics. It must be added that though this revelation of

modern Physics is very appealing, the answer is yet very incomplete. Nevertheless, it serves our purpose. It goes a long way to show that although the traditional African man's notion of "material" is "sophisticated" it does not take account of modern Physics.

However, let us go further to ask: What is the "spiritual" aspect of man?

The traditional African believes that man is not just an immensely complicated arrangement of molecules. Man's "manness" is that plus something else. What else? He says that it is the "spiritual" aspect. This aspect of man is invisible, we cannot observe it. It consists of: the person's Ndu (Life-force) and his Chi (the personal God). But if this is the case, how then is the spiritual aspect related to the material aspect of man? If this relationship cannot be explained then, the "simple-minded" answer that Man consists of "material" and "spiritual" aspects becomes of no use.

But the African is quick to point out that his concepts must not be "simple-mindedly" understood, since we call his talk about them, "simple-minded". Thus, he points out that we have misinterpreted his distinctions between the "material aspect" and the "spiritual" aspect. The point to notice, he says, is that he does not really hold a very sharp distinction between what is "material" and what is "spiritual", which our foregoing analysis seems to point to. His, is a Philosophy of "Forces". And strictly speaking, the Muntu (humam being properly so-called), is not Physical. Muntu,

is a mere symbolic reference to the body as "self". Bodies
are "Forces". Spiritual aspect is also "Force". So that,
for him, "Force" and not extension is the essential attribute
of Bodies (matter).

This seems to make all the difference. He is not
purely Cartesian, in the sense of holding a strict mind-
Body dualism. He sees the world as a dynamism of Forces. My
Philosophy, he concludes, is "dynamic". "Dynamic" because the
actual use depends on human decisions. The interaction of
"Forces" in my "dynamic" Philosophy, shows that no "force" is an
"island" to itself. The "Forces" coalesce one with the other.

This being the situation, we must investigate the
meaning and/or function of the concept of "force" in Pan-
African-Philosophy. Hence, we ask "What is "force"?

Perhaps the best approach to this question, is to turn
to Philosophy for some guide.

4.2) PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONCEPT OF "FORCE"

Philosophy has not always remained content with the
limited task of criticisms. Sometimes, Philosophy has en-
deavoured to reach positive conclusions. We shall, therefore,
attempt to seek out such "positive conclusions" with respect
to the function and/or meaning of the term "force" or "vital-
force".

Because of limited space, we must limit our horizon.
We cannot give an adequate outline of the development of Philo-
sophical thought on this very significant concept of "Being as
Force." We shall be content with only a few relevant philo-

sophical treatment of the concept. The result of our survey may be a good indicator of how far speculative reason can assist us in our quest. Should we fail to get a conclusive help from Philosophy, our only alternative, would be to turn to Science for an answer.

Now, if you go through the History of Philosophical speculation beginning from the earliest times to the present day, you will notice an almost instinctively belief by Philosophers in what the African calls, "Vital Force", or the Belief that everything is "alive". Examining the world from their different points of view, the early Philosophers - The Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Chinese, Hebrews, all came to the same conclusion - that everything is alive or has force.

This notion of "Force" went under different names but the underlying emphasis is the same. For example:

a) The Eqyiptians, as typical Africans, viewed the Heavenly Bodies - the stars, as "conscious bodies" flaming with souls;

b) The Persians describe the "Forces" of nature as the living collaborates with God in the progressive evolution of the Universe;

c) The Hindu, on the other hand, prefer to talk of the "Soul". Accordingly, this doctrine turns on to the doctrine of the identity between individual soul and the "World-Soul". Basically, this view is consistent with the African notion of interaction of one force with the other.

d) The Chinese conception of the "ceaseless current of

living-energy from whole to the part and from part to whole,"
agrees perfectly with the African notion of force and the
African concept of interaction of forces.

e) The Hebrew picture of One God as the Creator of life
and light out of chaos and darkness, seems to me, to point
to the same direction. Spirit becomes for the Hebrew the
fundamental reality.

So you see, all these ancient people agree that life
could be viewed as a single ocean divided into many waves;
a simple rhythm composed of many beats and a single existence
observed through many minds.

When, however, we move to the Greeks - to Plato and
Aristotle, specifically, we notice that the underlying theme
remains unchanged.

Plato wrote about thirty dramatic dialogues in which
he expounded his Philosophy. Most of these dialogues are a
sublime revelation of truth we are in search of. In Phaedo
for e.g.; Plato holds that the "Soul" is indispensable to
life according to the very idea of it. It must be admitted
that Plato was not clear about what he thought about the
Soul - whether it is a required part of the body or the
spiritual aspect of man or whether he would accept that the soul
life force animates both the bodily and the spiritual aspects
of man. Assuming then that Plato's view of the "soul" is
interchangeable with the African's notion of "force", then,
the statement that the soul is indispensable to life, agrees

perfectly with the African's view that "force" is the "giver" of life; that force is indispensable to life; Force is life.

And as we may recall, the world of Plato is the world of "living ideas"[35] - an ordered design of goodness and justice and beauty which we instinctively try to incorporate into our daily lives. The tendency here, is clear - there is an internal tendency or prompting toward the external standard - Ideas. This is an expression of faith in an upward growth of being for the "better". Existence for Plato, could be seen as the pursuit of the Ideal - an upward movement of the soul toward the sublime. The African elder, who lives in the world of Forces (or Plato's world of living "Ideas") instinctively tries to increase his "life-forces" by his ordered good life; pursuit of justice and other virtues. The aim Being to attain the "sublime", life-everlasting or long existence in the next world.

In Phaedrus, Plato takes a view which is not the same as those of other Greeks of his day. Plato talks of "all Souls Being the vital principle" of the Universe (psyche pasa athanatos.[36] Interpreted in the language of the African (i.e. the vital-principle or force-language), Plato at once

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[35]See Paedo, 245c.

[36]See Phaedrus 105, in which the Story of Ideas seems uppermost in Plato's mind.

agrees with his conception of force as the vital principle of the Universe, of being in general. We can go on pointing out Plato's identification with the African view, but space doesn't permit us.

After Plato, we encounter Aristotle. The world of Aristotle in spite of his apparent departure from Plato, is the same Platonic World under different name. Aristotle, regarded the Platonic essence of external life - "Idea", as a form perceived by the human mind. All objects in the world, according to Aristotle, "are composed of form and matter; the principle of Entelechy,[37] gives form to matter, thus actualizing (realizing) matter. The world is arranged according to the relative standing each object occupies in the Universe, objects, of superior form (Spirit or Mind) standing relatively higher in the scale."[38]

The above notion is very similar to the African category of forces.

In his Aristotle, W. D. Ross, distinguishes what Aristotle calls "three souls or life principles."[39] They include:
a) The principle of vegetable life or physical life - source of digestion and assimilation.

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[37]Entelechy is a self-realization process of essence as it transpires from mere potential to actual reality.

[38]William S. Sahakian et al., Ideas of Great Philosphers, Barnes & Nobles, Inc., New York, (1966), p. 127.

[39]See W. D. Ross, Aristotle, Chapter V.

b) The principle of animal life or emotional life - which in addition to (a), possesses sensation and image production; and

c) The rational or human life - which possesses both (a) and (b) and in addition, a divine principle. He christianed it "Nous" or "Pure reason". "Nous" for Aristotle is deathless.

As already indicated, Aristotle substituted the word "Form" for Plato's "Idea". And while Plato's "Idea" was an external pattern for men to copy, Aristotle's "Form" was an internal stimulus for men to follow. It could, therefore, be said that in the Philosophy of Aristotle, the "Form", becomes interchangeable with the African vital force. Thus understood, the "Form" or "Force" is the instinctive aim of growth of which the living elders are the material, the child in embryo is the material, all Beings are the material. For, everything is seen by Aristotle to have some compelling instinct. This is exactly how the African sees Beings. Force is seen by the African as something analogous to our sensations and to our tendencies to action.

For Aristotle, the immortal aspect of man is "Pure reason". But for the African the powers that are included in the "spiritual" aspect, which are said to be deathless seem not to be clearly pinned down. They may include what Aristotle calls "Reasoning power" or they may involve some additional powers.

Aristotle's philosophy like that of the African does not overlook the existence of God. Aristotle regards God and

the active intellect (Nous Poietikos), as immaterial - and
yet individual in form. The Aristotlelian God is the mover
of the world's actions or transformations - that is forms.
For the African God is the highest force and indeed the prime
mover of other forces in the world.

The tendency in Plato through Aristotle which seems
relevant to us, is what we have touched on - the fact that
both Philosophers seem to accept that life is sublime down
flowing from heaven to earth; and that there is an eternal
upreaching from earth back to heaven. There is a living,
driving purpose ("Ideas" according to Plato), or "Form
Entelechy," according to Aristotle) or "Force" (according
to the African) that shapes, guides and moulds our destiny.

Before we turn to Leibniz, whose philosophy seems
closer to the African conception of forces, there are two
issues we would have liked to give some adequate attention.
But for limited space and time, we can only mention them.
They are:

1) The contemporary idea or doctrine which relate to the
notion of vital force - this is the doctrine of Vitalism.
According to Paul Edwards, "Vitalism is primarily a meta-
physical doctrine concerning the nature of living organisms,
although it has been generalized by Bergson, for example,
into a comprehensive metaphysics applicable to all phenomena."[40]

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[40]Paul Edwards, The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 8,
pp. 253-4.

Thus understood, "the vital entity that animates an organism becomes identical with its life." If we follow up the quotation a little, with respect to the reference it makes to Bergson, we will notice that Bergson actually "generalized the concept of vitalism into a comprehensive metaphysics applicable to all phenomena." But since space would not permit detailed investigation of Bergson's notion and treatment of Vitalism, we would be content with this simple statement: The Evolutionary French Philosopher, Bergson Henri (1859-1941), simply takes up the thread from the Oriental philosophers, traces it all the way through Plato and Aristotle, St. Augustine and Spinoza, Rousseau and Kant and Schopenhauer up to his own day, and declares that three things: matter and mind and spirit - are really one. For, as reported by Wildson Carr, in his translator's preface to Henri Bergson's Mind-Energy, "Mind is not a vis vitae convertible into a vis inertiae. Equally impossible is it to conceive an ultimate dualism, - mind and matter as the co-existence of two in-dependent realms of reality. Mind and matter are divergent tendencies; they point to an original and necessary dichotomy; they are opposite in direction; But they are mutually com-plementary and imply the unity of an original impulse."[41]

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[41]See Henri Bergson's Mind-Energy (trans.) by Wildson Carr, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., (1920).

2)   In modern Physics, the development of electro-magnetic
theory of matter has introduced the new concept of radiant
energy. Thus, a mention need be made of Einstein's theory
of Mass-energy. According to this theory, Mass is convertible
to energy according to the following formula: $E = MC^2$.
This theory seems very much parallel to the African notion
that it is Force or Energy, which is essential attribute
of matter. What is extended is convertible to Force, energy.

Having pointed out these issues, we shall now turn to
the German Philosopher, Leibniz. The Philosophy of Leibniz,
like the Pan-African Philosophy of "Forces", is pluralistic
and individualistic. And because of this apparent closeness,
together with sameness of most terms adopted by both systems,
we will examine in greater detail Leibniz's philosophy of
forces or Monads, than we had hitherto done.

Extensions for Leibniz, is not the ultimate concept.
"Leibniz, called the Basic element in his unified world view,
a "Monad," which may be defined as a center of Psychic
activity."[42] In other words, Leibniz claims that the funda-
mental reality is spiritual individuals or Monads. Notice
that Leibniz's conception of monads or forces, particularly
his pluralism of monads, may be profitably compared with the

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[42]W. T. Jones, Hobbes To Hume: A History of Western
Philosophy, 2nd ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanonich, Inc.,
New York, Chicago (1952), p. 224.

African notion of human personality; and his characterization of Monad equally viewed almost side by side with the African characterization of Forces. What are Leibniz's characterization of Monads?

First, "Monads are not identical with one another."[43] The non-identity doctrine of Monads is based on the qualitative differences in the state of consciousness of the Monads. In African Philosophy, however, one can hold that no two forces can occupy the same scale or level of consciousness, otherwise exactly alike. In other words, the African accepts that there is a difference in rank, hierarchy between Beings. But this view is quite unlike the non-identity doctrine of Leibniz which seems to assign consciousness to all beings - Monads. For the doctrine of non-identity says that no two individuals can be exactly alike in consciousness otherwise it is impossible to differentiate them. The African does not consider all forces e.g. stone, conscious. This, then is a dissimilarity between Leibniz's characterization of Monads/Forces and the African's characterization. The African does not equate force with consciousness. Consciousness is one kind of force, but force is not limited to it.

Second, "Monads," as characterized by Jones, "(a) have no parts; (b) cannot begin or end naturally; and (c) consequently last

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[43] Rand, _Leibniz - Monadology_, p. 9.

as long as the Universe, which will be changed but will not
be destroyed."[44]

Again, African conception of Forces, differs with
Leibniz's (c); "Forces," in African thought, are said to
live as long as the "Living-dead's" life-force, is constantly
strengthened by the activities of the surviving descendants
in Uwa. Hence, it seems that if (c) is designed to imply the
immortality of "forces", in the "Living-dead", then there is
a difference.

On the other hand, if the "deathless notion" is applied
to the "spiritual" aspect of man whatever may be the consti-
tuents of this "spiritual" aspect, then Leibniz's charac-
terization becomes parallel to the African conception.
Characteristics (a) and (b) seem quite in accord with the
African view of Forces.
Third, "Mind", says Leibniz, "is not absolutely the same in
stone, plant and Man.... Mind consists of perceptions and
tendencies. Perceptions differ in clearness and distinctness
in different Monads; indeed, the mind itself reveals
perceptions of different degrees of clarity."[45] This is a
very distinct contribution of Leibniz. It has an added

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[44]The letters (a) (b) (c) are mine; W. T. Jones, Ibid.,
p. 225.

[45]Thilly & Wood, Ibid., p. 388.

advantage (as Thilly & Wood, correctly point out) of making Leibniz's thesis more acceptable than Descarte's dualistic thesis. This is because, Leibniz has overcome the Cartesian dualism by establishing a continuity between physical and psychological realms. Body and extension are not identical terms, neither are mind and consciousness co-extensive."[46] The African thesis like Leibniz's equally avoids Cartesian dualism.

Fourth, we are also further informed by W. T. Jones, that, "the Monads have no windows through which anything can enter or depart. The accidents cannot detach themselves nor go about outside of substances, as did formerly the sensible species of the schoolmen. Thus, neither substances nor accidents can enter a Monad from outside."[47] But the question which seems reasonable at this point, is, if monads have no windows, and hence cannot be influenced or acted upon from without, how does the mind (the dominant monad) relate to the body (the less dominant Monad) in Leibniz's system? Does the dominant monad influence the lower monads constituting its body? We might assume interaction between them. But Leibniz denies this.

But this is just a serious point of departure between the African conception of forces and Leibniz's notion of the

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[46] W. T. Jones, Loc. Cit.

[47] Ibid.

same concept. We think that Leibniz, is inadequate here.
The doctrine of forces or monads, must provide for a
plausible relationship between the Forces. No Being is
an Island to itself. For the African, psychic activity is
a centre of influence which can interact one with the other.
And we also think that this denial makes Leibniz's conception
of relation between Soul and Body a difficult concept. The
dominant Monad, while it was in a condition of harmony with
the group of lower Monads, could neither directly influence,
nor be influenced by them - "Monads have no windows through
which anything can enter or depart." But if the notion of
the Mind/Soul as the dominant Monad is to be fruitful and
acceptable, it must mean that the Soul organizes and informs
the group of elements which is subordinate to it. Perhaps,
however, the extreme individualistic strain in Leibniz's
Philosophy is responsible for this attitude.

A philosophy which fails to recognize the notion of
interaction of one being with the other, the African would
say, lacks an essential ingredient which would help it ex-
plain the nature of causality. Many philosophers disagree
with Leibniz on this one very important omission in his
philosophy. Thus, W. T. Jones declares:

> If a Monad is a distinct substance, it cannot
> (as Leibniz pointed out) be in causal inter-
> action with other Monads. In fact, for
> Spinoza's complete and closed attributes,
> Leibniz simply substituted the complete and
> self-contained lives of the various individual
> Monads. And, like Spinoza, he explained away
> causality by presupposing a kind of parallelism
> among Monads instead of between attributes.[48]

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[48] Ibid., p. 228.

If Leibniz must explain the relationship between Soul and Body, he cannot avoid an appeal to Spinoza. For in his system, in creating minds and bodies, God had arranged it from the Beginning, that the two shall go together; the relation between the two is a harmony pre-established by God, so that causal interaction is out of the question. And since the body itself, a material expression of the soul, consists of an infinity of Monads or psychic forces, every one of which is organic, it acts according to some pre-ordained Laws of its nature. "Souls act according to the Laws of final causes by means of desire, ends and means. Bodies act according to the Laws of efficient causes or motions. And the two realms are in harmony with one another."[49] In other words, Leibniz, thinks that the organic body and its minutest parts are performed by God; they are "divine automata" or "divine machine".[50]

This inconsistency does not affect the African conception of Being. The African system is not a "closed" system or "static" system. It is dynamic in the sense we indicated earlier. The _Muntu_, properly so-called is not physical. The Body is a mere symbolic reference of the man. And as a philosophy of "forces", force not extension, is the actual

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[49]Monadology, _Ibid._, sec. 79.

[50]_Cf_ _Op._ _Cit._, sec. 64.

basis/attribute of "bodies". And since the forces interact one with the other, the question of relationship of Mind and Body does not arise for the African.

Like the African, Leibniz, recognizes God as "the highest and perfect Monad, pure activity (actus purus), the original Monad, the Monad of Monads."[51] But as we have seen, Leibniz, is anxious to emphasize and maintain the distinctive character and value of the human Soul, contrasting it with the lower forms of psychical life. Hence, he is led to maintain a doctrine of personal survival in which he characterizes the assembly of immortal spirits as the "City of God."[52]

Now, Leibniz believes in the existence of Monads and the African believes in the existence of forces. But neither Leibniz nor the African ever succeeded in proving the existence of these Monads or Forces. Both of them seem to take this issue for granted. Perhaps, this lack of absolute demonstrability or proof, is one of the factors that makes both Philophies appealing to some.

If our interpretation of Leibniz has been correct, it need only be emphasized that due to the extreme individualism of his Philosophy, Leibniz, unlike the African, had no choice but to adopt the "pre-established-harmony of Spinoza.

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[51]Loc. Cit.

[52]Monad, Ibid., p. 85.

According to W. T. Jones,

> It would seem then that Leibniz really ended,
> like Spinoza, with one substance, the only
> difference being that whereas Spinoza's
> "One", was a self-transcending whole, Leibniz
> was a whole consuming self.[53]

Jones, however, quickly changed his mind and decided to grant

Leibniz's Spinozism. For, continuing, he said, "Whether we

have a world that has swallowed self or self that has swallowed

the whole world seems almost a matter of indifference. In

both cases, we are a long way from the kind of real world

that the physicists supposed themselves to be investigating."[54]

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[53] W. T. Jones, Ibid., p. 236.

[54] Loc. Cit.

4.3) SPECIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF FORCE IN PAN-AFRICAN-PHILOSOPHY.

Philosophy, it may seem, has not provided us with a decisive answer we are in search of with respect to the concept of "Force", but this is just the characteristic of Philosophy. However, the different individual philosophers we surveyed in the preceding section, confirm one important point - the World is a unity of matter, energy or force, and spirit - call it Mass, motion or Life. There are no separate entities but one essence which is viewed from different angles. This seems a good starting point for us to ask the intended use or function of "Force" in Pan-African-Philosophy. Can we throw some light upon the epistemic status of the term "Force?"

In the first place, "Force", must be understood as a Primitive or an undefined term in African Philosophy. Secondly, with respect to the epistemic status of the term - "Force", it seems two possibilities are open to us: We can try to make very explicit the basic doctrines which "Force" is used to formulate; on the other hand, we can attempt to paraphrase this primitive term into a different terminology.

Let us consider these two possibilities beginning with the latter.

Common usage, suggests the following classification of Force in African Philosophy:

1. <u>Force is the Principle underlying Unity in Beings</u>:

According to African Philosophy, it is through the medium of Force that Unity is achieved, first, within every Being, and among Beings.

Now, in the human person, for instance, Unity between the "Philosophical trinity," consisting of the Physical aspect, the spiritual aspect and the person's force, is said to be impossible without "Force". It is "Force", which ensures mutual relationships between these three aspects of man. Thus, "Force" becomes a symbol of unity.

On the other hand, through the medium of "Force", Fellowship with other Beings is made possible. Force, therefore, may be regarded as a "window" through which Beings pass to and from other Beings. So that because other Beings, are Forces, (a symbol of unity), they can achieve fellowship with even the greatest <u>Muntu</u> (God).

Thus, conceived, Vital principle or Vital force becomes a "Force" distinct from the psycho-chemical forces and because it is a "force" superior to mechanical energy, it is completely "Sui generies", and produces organization.

2. <u>"Force", is the Non-material agency in man</u>:

In this sense, Force shares the same characteristics with the "spiritual" aspect of man (properly so-called). It cannot be felt or seen. It is thus, apparently immuned from observational testing.

Thus, understood, Vital force is comparable with the explanation of the regularities of the Planetary and Lunar notions by means of Newtonian theory. In other words, both accounts invoke non-material agencies. One of the vital-force, and the other gravitational ones, although admittedly, they must have different implications.

As the invisible, non-material aspect of man, "Force", is, as it were, said to be "nourished" by a man's virtues. And Force, animates its host. But Force cannot be explained by Physical, Chemical or Biological principles alone.

3. "Force" is a Teleological Concept:

The Oxford dictionary defines Teleology as the doctrine or study of ends or final cuases. This definition contains a technical term "final cause" not much used nowadays. A more familiar word would be "purposes".

Questions about Teleology, are broadly to do with whether a thing has a purpose or is acting for the sake of purpose, and if so, what that purpose is.

In African Philosophical thinking, everything has a purpose - men often do things on purpose, Chairs, tables, planets, etc. have purposes. For, the African maintains that if God has created anything then it has a purpose. God does nothing in vain.

The purpose inherent in "Force" is to give life. Force is thus seen as the driving purpose in all Beings.

It directs the course of a Being.

If we consider this sense of Force carefully, we will be able to appreciate the fact that every living organism manifests a variety of striking underlying agencies of a non-physical kind. And there is, in each individual Being, a remarkable co-ordination of such processes as though following a common plan.

By the concept of Force, natural phenomena are explained by reference to supernatural cause - Chukwu, a non-physical cause. There is nothing wrong with that from logical or theological point of view. But it is not scientific. There is no way of checking its truth-value experimentally.

4. "Force" is not the Immortal Principle in Man:

According to the African, Force is the principle that guarantees life in Beings. Loss of force means loss of life.

But unlike the Muo (the spirit, properly so-called) in man, Force is not immortal. Force is mutable or subject to changes - it can be increased both in those still living in physical experience and in the "Living-dead". In the former - through the virtuous acts of the living and in the latter, via the activities of the ancestor's surviving descendants in Uwa. Force is capable of diminishing in "living-dead" if it is not "nourished" constantly through

the activities of those in Uwa. Worse still, Force could diminish to a zero point in the "living-dead". In other words, Force could completely die-off in the Ancestor. When this happens, the Ancestor undergoes an Ontological death, total death.

This, however, should not be understood to mean that the "spiritual" aspect of the Ancestor ceases to exist in Ala muo. It should be understood to mean simply that because the person's "Force" has died, he can no longer influence anything. And according to African he is no more. He is dead.

5. "Force" is the Entelechy (to borrow an Aristolelian term) in Man.

The most interesting aspect of "Forces" is that they are essentially active. Thus, understood, Force is actuality as against potentiality.

The true concept of substance is the concept of activity or Force concentrated at a metaphysical point. There is in Force, therefore, something analogous both to our sensations and to our tendencies to action. And in the inanimates (in plants and animals), the same principle is active - Force is in everything. Everything is active, alive. But the quantity of Force in each individual is different and very much dependent on the nature of the individual in question.

At this point, it might be necessary to refer to Leibniz,

who makes it quite clear, that he (like the Africans) regards

the activity under discussion as imminently teleological.

Thus, wrote Leibniz in 1694:

> The active Force, differs from mere power
> familiar to the schools, for the active power
> or faculty of the scholastics is nothing but
> a close possibility of acting, which needs an
> external excitation or a stimulus, as it were,
> to be transferred into action. Active force,
> in contrast, contains a certain action or
> entelechy and is thus mid-way between the
> faculty of acting and the action itself
> involves a conatus. It is thus carried into
> action by itself and needs no help but only
> the removal of an impediment.[55]

The tendency here is obvious - the end to which each substance

tends is the progressive actualization of its potential.

And since the "seeds" of its future development (in U̱wa and

in Ala mu̱o) are already to be found within it, its present

state is really "pregnant with the future," as Leibniz also

contends. The point of being "pregnant with the future,"

indicates, I think, that every present act of a Being, in a

sense, determines the status that Being is going to enjoy.

Thus, the African elder who knew and obeyed the "Law of the

Land" could view the present in the light of what is neces-

sarily going to follow - becoming a "living-dead".

The African does not believe that persons just sit

back and wait for their destiny to unfold. They are active

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[55]See, "On the Correction of Metaphysics and the
Concept of Substance," by Leomker, L. E., p. 709.

Beings. They actively strive for it. They are, therefore, "pregnant with the future" in the stronger sense of the term that their present state obtains for the sake of the future. This is the basic notion of Force as the "Entelechy" in man.

4.4) GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE DOCTRINES WHICH "FORCE" IS USED TO FORMULATE

Our analysis so far has indicated the centrality of the concept of "Force" in Pan-African Philosophy.

In this section therefore, attempt will be made to examine some of the doctrines which "Force" is used to formulate. And as indicated in the introductory remarks in this part, only two of these doctrines:

i) the doctrine of the "Living-dead", specifically the "return theory" of the "Living-dead", and

ii) the doctrine of the "Dead" in Pan-African Philosophy, will receive attention. Let us start with (1).

Our discussion of human personality, among others, contended: i) that every living person has a personal God or the Chi;

ii) that the Chi being an aspect of the "Spiritual" (properly called), is not affected by physical demise of the physical Body;

iii) that because of (ii), the Chi of each Ancestor could be stationed in Ala muo (spirit world);

iv) that in Ala muo, the Chi could then act as the director general of reincarnation and, that to ensure that the Chi of the "Living-dead" does not die Ontologically (i.e. cease to influence things in the world of man), sacrifices, prayers etc. must be offered to it regularly by the surviving descendants.

The question now becomes how logically satisfying are these claims? In the first place, the general notion of the Chi seems to contain some problems. For, if the Chi of the Ancestor actually stays with God and directs the "return" of the Ancestor to Uwa, from where does the incarnate get his own Chi, or does he lack one? If the latter is the case, when this incarnate dies, which Chi will direct his own re-incarnation, or does the cycling terminate in the second death? There is equally no evidence that the Chi could create other Chis, or even split itself.

Furthermore, what would be the function of the Great Muntu (God) in the overall scheme of things? It seems that God, Himself (if we accept the Chi hypothesis), has no part to play in the "return-theory." But this would be absurd to an African. It would be totally against the African notion of being based on the ontological hierarchy of forces, their interaction and cohesion among themselves. Except we wish now to deny this interconnection. For, this interconnection is said to terminate in God, The Great Muntu. Man, it is true, is the dominant "Force" among all created forces. Yet, Tempels tells us that, "his force, his life, his fullness of being, consists in his participation to a greater or less extent in the force of God; God is the Supreme, complete, perfect Force.[56] Thus, any theory of "return," which asserts

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[56]Tempels, Ibid., p. 98.

that any "living-dead", can, at will, independent of the Supreme _Muntu_, reincarnate severally into different homes, and yield new several human beings seems to go against the ontological chain of forces.

And, if explanation can not be given to this difficulty, the implication would be that the "return" of the "Living-dead" would occur only once (not as many times as possible as we suggested earlier). That in turn would imply that no new human beings are being created. For, only the already created ones circulate the earth and end up in second cycle. If we accept this, then the obvious implication will be that population will sooner or later diminish to the point where nobody would exist. Thus the whole system would be shattered.

But this need not be the case. Science can now sketch an alternative answer to the problem which the hypothesis of the _Chi_ is designed to solve. The physical, behavioural or, even intellectual resemblances or characteristics in the offsprings which constitute the rational for claiming that the "Living-dead" has "returned", can be explained by the notion of genes. Inheritance (the science of Hereditary) has shown that the resemblance in the external morphology and behaviour between an individual and his ancestors could be pinned down to the genes. There are hereditary characteristics in the chromosomes. The characteristics of an individual are passed down from one generation to another except in the rare cases of mutation. Each gene in the chromosome, according to this

theory, is particularly responsible for just one particular

character, and all the genes in the parents are transferred to

the offsprings so that they have all the genes, hence all the

characteristics of their ancestors.

If we accept the foregoing, then, we should be able

also to hold with J. B. Dangnah that:

> To the race of conscious individuals death is
> is nothing but a stage in the consciousness of
> the race, the experience of a kind. The Primary
> fact with him, is that, within, is an inheritance,
> the blood of the race, and from him must go that
> heritable treasure to other descendants, the blood
> of his own body. For such, death, Owu, is only
> an aspect of birth, the permanence and persistence
> of the organic whole, which is the greater good
> of endeavour.[57]

This must be the case. Death should be viewed as "an aspect

of birth" in Dangnah's sense and not as "an aspect of the Chi."

There is still another notion which is connected with

the "return" thesis which deserves little attention. This is

the concept of Ancestral-worship. This concept seems very

incoherent, if not absurd. Consider the following objection:

1) 'X', as an ancestor, can be worshipped even at those times

when he is believed to be reincarnated in a living person 'Y';

2) In the worship, X's spirit is thought of as being in

Ala muo;

3) But if the living person Y, is a reincarnate of the "Living-

dead" or Ancestor X, the two (X and Y) must have the same

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[57] J.B. Dangnah, The Akam Doctrine of God: A fragment of
Gold Coast Ethics and Religion, Lutherworth Press, (London:
1944) p. 156.

spirit;

4) Therefore, if we accept the assumption that all the Ancestors are Spirits in Ala muo, then this spirit is simultaneously thought of as being in Ala muo, and as being reincarnated in a living person. But, it is IMPOSSIBLE that it should be in both these conditions at the same time.

Furthermore, I doubt if it makes any sense worshipping a Soul in Ala muo when we firmly believe that such a Soul has "come back" to Uwa either as a new son or a new daughter. Still, we find this concept deeply rooted in the African conception of the role of the Ancestors. Hence, these Ancestors are worshipped to keep their vital forces alive, and thereby enable them "return" in new infants severally to their descendants. It becomes even more of a joke when the incarnate of a particular Ancestor, joins in offering sacrifices to the Ancestor.

So that if our analysis had been correct then, it would seem that any "return-theory" of the "Living-dead" which is rooted in Ancestral-worship is false. We base our conclusion on the broad ground that the Ancestral-worship which is claimed to be one of the necessary, and indeed, sufficient conditions for a "return" of the "Living-dead" to Uwa, seems (from our foregoing analysis), to say the least, incoherent.

Thus, understood, the Ancestral worship must have other aims other than the "return-theory". What could these aims be? We can concede that the living contribute in prolonging the

"Life-Force" of the dead by means which include ancestral-worship, prayers etc. For, in the words of Janheinz Jahn:

> The living person has an innate wish to exist
> forever. But, since death is inevitable,
> he prolongs his existence as a living person
> in his descendants.58

The ancestral-worship could be one of those ways by which the living "prolongs the existence of the dead." Beyond this, the ancestral-worship becomes really problematic, if not meaningless. Or, perhaps, the rationale for ancestral-worship could be rooted in what Bryant A. T., describes as:

> a sense of helplessness experienced by the relics
> of the dead which in turn drove them onto hope
> that he would have cared for them and theirs
> since life begun, and would continue to care for
> them even though now out of sight; that as they
> have prayed to him in the past and been ever-
> heard, he would not reject them now.59

Before we end this section, there is need to attempt to answer few questions, namely:

1. What precisely does the African mean by the "return-theory," he advocates, a Belief in Immortality of the Soul, or What?

Most Africans presuppose that men are spiritual Beings (in one form or the other), capable of surviving the destruction of their bodies in death so long as they lived worthy lives in

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58Janheinz Jahn, Ibid., pp. 108-109.

59Bryant, A.T., in Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa,
by Scharpera et al., (Broadway House, Carterfane: 1937),
pp. 77-78.

Uwa. If a man is in fact nothing of the sort, then such a pre-supposition or belief rests upon a misconception. It is for this reason that it seems reasonable for us to ask: What precisely does the African mean by the "return-theory" he advocates - a Belief in Immortality of the Soul, or What?

Doubtless, the African "return-theory," could be confused with yet another old doctrine, Immortality. But this would be wrong. Immortality, strictly speaking, is incapacity to die, which as ascribed to the human conscious-ness entails life without end or survival forever after bodily death.

On the other hand, the "return-theory" which the "Living-dead" doctrine implies, is a belief that there is for the individual Ancestor, after the demise of the physical body, some survival of one form or the other. This is not a belief in immortality per se. It is simply a belief in a survival for some indeterminate, though considerable period, rather than specifically forever. Survival could be for a long period (if the Ancestor had descendants who kept him "alive" through the processes we described in Chapter three) or for a brief period (if he lacked descendants). The "return-theory" the African advocates, therefore, resolves around his conviction that when the living Madu dies, the "person behind the person," what Tempels calls "the little man behind the man."[60] (The spiritual aspect - Life-Force

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[60] Tempels, Loc. Cit.

and <u>Chi</u>) remains. It is the vital principle of the good-dead
which influences most activities of one's surviving descendants.
It is the vital force which insures the "Life" of the <u>Chi</u>.
And, once the Life-force is constantly kept "alive," then the
"littleman behind the man in the "Living-dead" can act on or
influence his surviving descendants in <u>Uwa</u>. But it cannot be
said to "return", we can only say that it influences. When
a fire at the center of the room warms the surroundings, we
do not confuse the distinct nature of the two things. We
do not consider it a mistake in language, to say that because
of the "influence" of the fire, the surroundings are now
"fire-like." To make sure that the influence of the fire
continues, we must also continue to feed the fire with fire-
wood or charcoal, otherwise it will die off. The "fire" of
our analogy, is like the Nomo-force of the Ancestor, the
surroundings analogical to the "influence" of the Ancestor
observable on the newly-born. The surrounding is not fire,
and vice versa. Similarly, the newborn is not the Ancestor
"returned" in a new form. In other words, we can simply
say that:

> An Ancestor, who is an aggregate of <u>Magara</u>,[61]
> can transfer to many newborn individuals the
> small share of <u>magara</u> that they need to
> begin their lives." And,

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[61]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 46.

"This quantity," continues Jahn," is not great and it must be constantly 'strengthened' in the course of the individual's development, and even as an adult, he will always beg the Ancestors to strengthen him further."[62]   It must be emphasized that the transfer of the Magara principle or the vital-principle, has nothing to do with the "return" of the Ancestor in any newly-born.   Rather, the transfer we imply here, is a "transfer of the "warmth" or influence of Nomo-force of the Ancestor to the new-born."   This must be the claim of the African. Anything to the contrary is illogical and based on a mistake. Thus, we cannot but agree with Tempels that:

> It is not a predetermined human being
> belonging to the Clan who is born, but it is
> his individuality, returning to take part in
> the life of the clan by means of vital influences
> through which the deceased gives Clan individualiza-
> tion to the newly-born, to the living fruit of the
> womb, that is to be born to the Clan.[63]

Unless the "return-theory" is based on a mistake of nomenclature, the above thinking seems correct.   The "return" of the "Living-dead" cannot be a quantitative "return" of the dead to Uwa after death.   It is a "Return" of the vital-influence of the Ancestor.   So that what the African claim seems to amount to, is that the vitality of the "Living-dead", influences the activities of the surviving descendants.

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[62]Janheinz Jan, Ibid., p. 112

[63]Tempels, Ibid., p. 109.

(B)   SCIENCE AND THE "RETURN" DOCTRINE OF THE "LIVING-DEAD"

This seems a good point to pause and turn to biological science to provide whatever specific answers there are with respect to the "return theory" of the "Living-dead".

Now, in addition to the notion of gene we talked about earlier, the League of Life of Manitoba in its recent publication informs us that:

> In human reproduction, Biological life does not begin. It is continuous. There is no period where life stops. Cells come only from living cells.[64]

This seems to be the correct position. But Vitalism, in its opposition to mechanism insists on the biological doctrine that organic processes are not explicable in psycho-chemical terms but can be accounted for only by assuming an unknowable non-material entity or substance called variously, the 'psychoid", 'entelechy', Vital-force, Vital principle, Nomo-force, Monad etc. etc.

Speaking also on purely biological level, J. A. Thompson also supports the scientific view when he says:

> that death is like a surplus of income over expenditures; it means merely one of the primal conditions of organic growth; there is no aloofness in the realm of organism, nothing lives or dies of itself; Animate nature is characteristically a system - a fabric that changes in pattern and yet endures; though individual threads of the web are always dying they are replaced without discontinuity.[65]

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[64] The Position of Modern Science on the beginning of Human life, A publication by the League for Life of Manitoba, 5 - 288 Marion St., Winnipeg, Manitoba (1980).

[65] See J. B. Dangnah's The Akan Doctrine of God, p. 158.

It is, perhaps this replacement "without discontinuity," which Thompson advocates, that those not scientifically inclined, tend to regard as the manifested characteristics of the "Living-dead", who has "returned" in the newly-born. Death, it now seems, is but a mere preface to other life.

(C) THE DOCTRINE OF THE "DEAD" IN PAN-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

According to John Mbiti:

> It is clear that people view death paradoxically;
> It is a separation, but not annihilation, the
> dead person is suddenly cut off from the human
> society and yet the corporate group clings to
> him.[66]

Now, if Mbiti is correct that death is a mere "separation" and not "annihilation," what justification could there be for the notion of some "dead" who are said to be "annihilated" by death in African philosophy? In other words, to what extent can death be viewed negatively (as a punishment for some and positively as an "aspect of birth" for others)? We ask this question because our discussion of the "dead" in Pan-African philosophy in Chapter three distinguished the following categories of the "dead":

a) the Buloji or perverter or the evil man;

b) those who die without reaching adulthood (i.e. without getting married; and

c) those children who die without reaching the adolescent stage - the Abiku or Changelings.

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[66] Ibid., p. 129.

But it is not easy to see very clearly what takes place in the negative aspect of death as in (a) and (b). To say that some individuals (adults) who undergo the same event namely dying, do "live" again, while others fail to "life" or do "die", and are annihilated completely, seems a hard pill to swallow. Common usage regards death as the "great leveller". This is a realization which stems from the impartiality and sovereignty of death.

Thus, if we accept the view that there is something in us, call it the Soul, vital principle, the Monad etc., which is usually untouched by physical decay and which leaves the decaying Body to rot in its own manner, while itself survives, then, whether 'X' is a 'good-dead' and 'Y' is a 'bad-dead'; it ought to leave X and Y in the same degree.

The African argues that some "deads", the "Bad-dead" as in (a) and (b) cannot achieve Ancestor-hood because, these "bad-deads" were not given befitting burial rites. For, as we said earlier, Burial rites, among others, were supposed to be a sort of passport to Ancestorship. So that failure to per- form burial rites for any dead exposes such a dead to the danger of not reaching its destination - namely, Ala muo (spirit world). But it seems that there can be only one justification for this claim. The African believes that if the Living is capable of performing a Burial rite for his dead-parent and fails to, then the spirit of the dead-parent will not get to its destination - spirit-world; the Spirit can't "return" in new infants; the Spirit will continue to

parambulate, eat wild leaves and grass and haunt the living descendant. Thus, understood, Burial rites must be seen as one of the basis for the spirit of possession or obsession in African culture; burial rites are therefore, preventive exocism aimed at diring away or stopping the "bad-deads" from haunting the living.

But although burial rites are intended to emphasize the social ranks of the dead, they can not provide adequate explanation for the concept of the <u>Buloji</u> or the evil man. What then could be the rationale for the <u>Buloji</u> in African Philosophy?

This concept it must be admitted, seems to be used in a paradigmatic way. It is aimed at driving home a moral lesson. According to the Igbo proverb: "There is always a little perfume that adheres to the hand that presents a rose." Analogously, we could say that sin, leaves its marks on the sinner. And should the evil man persist in his evil ways, these "little marks" or "perfumes" soon grow into a proportion that reduces the evil man into a stinking wretch. He soon becomes a social outcast. Inferentially, we could assume that if he has any part of him that is spiritual, such a part would experience also the, corroding effects of his evil ways. He would diminish spiritually. This is basically the thinking of the African. Hence, he says that the non-force is "dead".

Above all, the African also believes that no sin can

ever go unpunished, so that, his refusal to accord the

notorious sinner - the murderer, the armed-robber, the

witch or wizard, who practices witchcraft, a befitting

burial ceremony can now be understood. They are the kind of

individuals the psalmist warns us against:

> Be not incensed because of the evil
> doers nor envious of those who work
> iniquity; for like grass they will soon
> wither and like green herbs they will fade
> away.[67]

This is the lesson behind the doctrine of the "bad-dead-adults."

It is meant to be a constant reminder of the negative concept of

a sinful life. And it is hoped that it could motivate us

to eschew evil, to remain good, unless we would like to

"wither" like the grass. Surely, evil/sin like a weathering

action of the wind or rain which alters the shape, color or

even texture of the rocks, the earth surfaces, "alters" the

face or personality of the sinful man before a morally con-

scious society. And just as excess drinking not only rubs one

of one's bodily health but saps one's mental abilities too,

sin, diminishes one, not only physically, but inferentially,

can be said to sap one's "spiritual" vigor.

But, what of the notion of the unmarried-adult-dead,

any justification for the belief? In the first place, it

seems this concept aims primarily at emphasizing the African

man's strong dislike towards dying young. Otherwise, we could

suggest that there could be many reasonable reasons for not

getting married and raising children. We say this because

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[67]Psalm 36:1.

Marriage and consumation of marriage seem the key points
that disqualify these group of the dead from being "invited
back to human society."

Thus understood, the doctrine of the "dead" in African
Philosophy (i.e. categories (a) & (b), is basically a moralistic
doctrine. At each stage of the African experience, there is a
well-laid down procedure or rule-of-conduct, and the good who
observed it, is usually honoured as an Ancestor or the "living-
dead." They are the "dead" who are said to 'live' on, though,
in a diminished condition of life or as lessened life force.
Nevertheless, such a dead retains, according to Tempels,
"the higher strengthening fathering life force." And to help
this life force of the dead grow ontologically greater and
stronger, is the privileged position of the living. For, "the
living <u>Muntu</u>," continues Tempels, "is in relation of being to
being with God, with his descendants."[68]

When however, we turn our attention to category (c),
the "Changelings," the notion of the "bad-deads" becomes
extremely ridiculous. The Changeling or <u>Abiku</u>, as we noted,
can be termed a mischievous repeater, that surrounds itself
with perplexing occurrences. But it seems that this negative
aspect of death, is a gratituitous anecdote invented to explain
infant mortality. At one time, infant mortality was a per-

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[68]Tempels, <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 106.

plexing phenomenon all over the world, and more so in Africa. This mortality resulted from diverse diseases - convulsion, epilepsy, malnutrition, yellow-fever etc. These took heavy toll of children prematurely. These deaths resulting from complete lack of, or inadequate treatment, wittingly or unwittingly could only be labelled Abiku/Ogbanje or repeater. And the unfortunate affected children, were unkindly treated at death as we had earlier described.

Again, the notion of Iyi-Uwa (the claimed link between the Ogbanje child and his group in the underworld - Ala muo) is, in my opinion, not free from gross trickery and bad faith. The dishonesty of the diviners, who claim that a given child is n Ogbanje cannot be ruled out.

On the whole, therefore, scientific explanation apart, it seems there is no reasonable justification for holding that this present self or body which is claimed to "return" is the same as the one I used to know which is dead and buried or burnt or thrown into the Ajo Ohia, unless there is a substantial evidential reason in its favour.

Furthermore, since the 'self' is here meant inter alia, a changing being, that is, a being of successive experiences, this mutual awareness carries with it an awareness of P of Q's changing experiences and of Q of P's changes, complete and adequate intercourse, finally must imply a correspondence between these successive changes in P and Q. But is the case in the Changelings?

However, it seems to us that the Abiku doctrine like the "deads (b)," above, is not free from the African man's repugnance for early deaths.

On the other hand, however, in order for the African to remain consistent, his conception of the unmarried, especially (c) - the Changelings, needs further qualifications. Or else, the things he says, the Changelings (the unmarried) do, must be false. For, if these unammaried people are "conquered" by death, it follows they need no Burial ceremonies or invitation back into the human family. The African, in fact, deny most of the unamarried, particularly children (the "repeaters"), Burial ceremonies. Hence, we cannot without involving ourselves in inconsistency, claim that these same unmarried persons could be Ogbanje or "Changelings". How can those who have been denied one of the essential passports to a happy death and a quick return to Uwa (be said to "come and go" from the world more often than those (the Ancestors) better equipped for this sort of cycling? The only conclusion we can draw is that the "Changeling myth", is simply a way of accounting for early deaths in Uwa (world).

4.5) THE RATIONAL FOR THE "LIVING-DEAD" IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Can the idea of the "Living-dead," that is to say the thinking that an ancestor who has died in physical experience, but still regarded, as "living", and capable of "returning" to Uwa (world) in new infants, be so formulated as to preserve, perhaps, even increase its metaphysical and religious value, while at the same time avoiding the apparent contradictions we encountered earlier in this discussion? To show that this can be done is the aim of this section. By metaphysical and/ or religious value, we imply, the ability to express or enhance philosophical prestige and/or cultural and ethical reverence which the theory deserves.

The African, seems to me a Hegelian in his view of man. Hegel, it must be remembered teaches that the development of the Universe proceeds by the "triad of dialecties" or certain creative contradictions. The triad consists of a position (thesis), negation (antithesis) and a higher unity (synthesis). Now, the African sees man (thesis), as a seed which undergoes disintegration through death (negation/ anithesis) and the tensions between these formers, is resolved by a metaphysically leap to the Ancestor (a higher unity/synthesis), who then "returns" to the world (Uwa) in the new born or remains in Ala muo (spirit world) to ensure a continued flow of blessings to his descendants in Uwa. This is the claim.

Notice that what the African does, is to extract what he finds of value in the "thesis" and the "anti-thesis" in order to arrive at the new higher order. Thus, the living man of value becomes the "good man". And the dead man of value the "good-dead". The two "goods" together, yield the Ancestor; who is the insignia of his clan.

On the whole however, it seems we must now concede that the doctrine of the "living-dead" is a logically possible doctrine. It has both necessary and sufficient conditions. And by drawing equivalences between having life and having force (which may be true or false), we can really show that there is nothing contradictory about the doctrine. Thus:

1. The presence of life in the Ancestor is sufficient for the presence of vital influence in the Ancestor;

2. The absence of vital influence in the Ancestor is sufficient for the absence of life in the Ancestor;

3. The presence of Life in the Ancestor is necessary for the presence of vital influence in the Ancestor; and

4. The absence of Life in the Ancestor is necessary for the absence of vital influence in the Ancestor.

(b) <u>The Social Importance of the Doctrine of the "Living-dead"</u>

We are now in a position to ask - What could be the social importance of the doctrine of the "Living-dead" in Pan-African-Philosophy? For an answer, we can only suggest that as a doctrine invented to solve the great mystery of life and death this doctrine, has among others, the following social importance in African experience:

1. It emphasizes the strengthening of parental ties to offsprings. I think that this is partly what Dr. Uchendu has in mind when he said:

> The Social importance of reincarnation (return-theory) is that it provides the "idea system" that rationalizes, interprets, accommodates or, rejects changes and innovations as well as tolerates certain character traits.[69]

This is true. And the greatest merit of the doctrine of "return" of the Ancestor is that it helps to mitigate the problems associated with "certain character traits" in the offsprings. Thus, hot-temper, irritability, etc. in the children are traced back to one Ancestor or the other. Thus understood, the "return theory" of the Ancestor now becomes a kind of rough-and-ready-made systems of solutions to our lack of answers to causes and effects. Indeed, some events we cannot explain fill us with awe. To maintain our ego, we need some guiding norms for understanding the world. And as Uchendu contends, the "theory of return" of the "living-dead", surely helps to explain many character traits in infants. Such defensive mechanisms had and are still serving their desired goals for the African.

Further, this doctrine seems, in a sense, to ensure parental love for the new born. For, "everything," says Janheinz Jahn, "is concentrated on the precious existence of the living in whom the life that was transmitted to them from their Ancestor is carried."[70]

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[69] The bracket, is mine; V.C. Uchendu, _Ibid._, p. 16.

[70] Jahn, _Op. Cit._, p. 109.

2. The doctrine of the "Living-dead," provides the African with an important, rationally satisfactory answer to the question: Why should I be good? As we have indicated, only the "good dead," can achieve Ancestorship.

There can be no doubt that the African has the idea of good and bad. This idea finds its utmost expression in the lives and activities of the elders. Because of their unique positions in their societies, these elders are the epithet of goodness. Every elder worth the name, speaks and lives the truth at all costs. He is just and scrupulously careful in his dispensation of justice. Similarly, these "possible" candidates of "return" in "new infants," can rarely be charged with immorality involving their neighbour's wives or daughters, or charged with shading the blood of any member of their clans or other clans (except, perhaps, in times of war). Doing this, that is, (killing) would not only amount to a serious disruption in the ontological chain, but very wrong before God. For according to Tempels:

> "Every premeditated act directed towards the
> destruction of the life of others is reprehensible
> in the sight of God the giver and preserver of
> life."[71]

Thus, moral consciousness is kept alive in the Society for at least three reasons: to preserve the ontological chain; to respect Chukwu (god), who loathes sin, njo, and to ensure the return to Uwa after death.

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[71]Tempels, _Ibid._, p. 126.

So that, the fear of not "returning," or the hope of "a return," helps to deter the individual African from committing certain abominations in his society. For the departed can be looked upon as the guardians of morals of the living if and only if such "living-dead" are not evil ones themselves. Accordingly, it seems true to hold that the "return-theory" as an aspect of the doctrine of the "living-dead" is a moralistic doctrine. Even the Bible seems to confirm the hopes of the Africans by holding that - "the good shall inherit the Earth." And those "good-deads" who are to inherit the Earth, or to "return" to Uwa, are usually those sent out of Uwa with befitting burial rites. This positive way of thinking, helps in no small way to influence the lives of the living.

3. On the other hand, it is possible that the doctrine of the "Living-dead", is simply a wonderful means of mortalizing the names of society heroes. As the expression of a person's individuality, Tempels defines name as that, that:

> Expresses the individual character of being.
> The name is not a simple external courtesy,
> it is the very reality of the individual.[72]

There are people who immortalize their names by their gallant activities or meritorious services - consider such names in African experience as: Dr. Kwame Nkrumah - Pan-Africanisms; Idi Amin - negatively associated with killing and dehumanizing

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[72] Ibid.

fellow Africans, Dr. Zik of Africa, associated with early independence struggles, etc. in every African society, there is this conscious effort towards the preservation of Ancestors' names. And one of the surest and effective methods had been to claim that, this or that Ancestor or elder had "returned" in the infant.

The African maintains that there is something in name, and as the "individuality within the clan," it has to be kept alive.

4. It seems also that most others who accept the doctrine of the "Living-dead," do so as a part of their personal commitment to the religious tradition encompassing the belief. For, it provides part of the solution to the problem of evil by denying non-moral evil of death and postulating the possibility of return, expect for those who are "condemned" to suffer because of their sins or evil ways.

It does not deny that there is moral evil. But it does not seem to answer the question: Why is there no non-moral evil, namely death? Nevertheless, it is perhaps a useful contribution to the solution of the problem of evil. There could be more social reasons for the doctrine of the "Living-dead," but the foregoing (1) through (4), are what we consider the main ones.

To conclude this part therefore, it seems that in the open-minded, tolerant, philosophical attitude, we cannot but say that:

a) Insofar as the doctrine of the "living-dead" has some
philosophic rigor, for example, it has some necessary and
sufficient conditions and hence logically possible;

b) Insofar as some of the problems it sketches can be
scientifically accounted for now; and

c) Insofar as it expresses in no small way (its apparent
weaknesses notwithstanding): the synthetic nature of the
African man's mind; his humaneness; and his extreme religiousity
(ideas which seem evident in our analysis and in what we termed
- the social importance of the doctrine of the "Living-dead"),
we feel very much inclined towards it.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Our train of thought thus far, has led us to suggest:

1) that the doctrine of the "Living-dead" far from being merely an extravagant philosophical fantasy, foreshadows much that is central and of value to the traditional African-man, and indeed to man in general;

2) that because human life is made in such a way that it feeds itself essentially on hope, the doctrine of the "Living-dead" seems to answer very adequately the African man's inner yawnings for life-everlasting;

3) That as a philosophy of hope, of life, it grows out of the African man's austere moral life and his concept of Being as "Force"; and

4) That this philosophy represents a highly significant contribution which the African can make in ethical theory, psychological theory, metaphysical theory and in fact, the whole gamut of philosophical enterprise.

But, we cannot stick out our necks that we have offered a fairly satisfactory analysis of this very complex but important philosophical thinking of the African.

So, we can only conclude by joining our voices with

Roderick Chisholm's in saying:

> I cannot feel, therefore, that it is
> reasonable for anyone to accept the theory
> but if we reject the theory, we must find
> some other way of dealing with the problems
> it was designed to solve.[73]

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[73]Roderick Chisholm, <u>Theory of Knowledge</u>, 2nd Ed.
Prentice-Hall Inc., Eaglecliffs, New Jersey (1976), p. 101.

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