

The Dialectics of Transformation in Africa

Elias K. Bongmba



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First published in 2006 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN™

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 and

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bongmba, Elias Kifon, 1953

The dialectics of transformation in Africa/Elias Kifon Bongmba.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-4039-7211-7

1. Africa—Social conditions—1960- 2. Africa—Politics and government—1960- 3. Political corruption—Africa. 4. Postcolonialism—Africa. I. Title.

HN773.5.B66 2006

303.4'096—dc22

2005051710

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

First edition: March 2006

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

This book is dedicated to the loving memory of
Monica Munkeng Bongmba
Abel Yuven Bongmba
Alice Ntala Bongmba

And also to Odelia Y. Bongmba for her constant support

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PREFACE

This book is a personal attempt to make sense of the debate on African issues by scholars and observers of the African sociopolitical scene. In it, I reflect on what is now generally called “the African crisis.” My aim is to suggest humanistic avenues for transforming Africa. I argue that such a humanistic approach lies in the recovery of religious and theological critiques of power and the recovery and deployment of relationality. The book begins with a meditation, a lamentation, and a confrontation with Africa and offers a narrative of the corruption of power and the effect such a praxis has had on Africa. I also explore and offer critical perspectives on projects of recovery that remain crucial for transformation. My goal is to suggest that humanistic interventions could enable Africans to work through their personal and political relations to chart a new course of action. In that sense, I also express hope that the present course of events will be reversed and that we can talk of “Afro-optimism.”

I grew up in Cameroon, and spent some years in Nigeria. Before leaving Cameroon, I worked for the Cameroon Baptist Convention, serving churches in rural areas such as Wanti and Ntumbaw and in the urban environments of Kumba; and Yaoundé. I lived through the administration of President Ahidjo and the early part of the administration of President Biya and remember very vividly the days of the one-party state, the mystique that surrounded power, and the pomp and circumstance of the Cameroonian bureaucratic system. While growing up, I knew that Cameroonians were hard-working people. Like many Cameroonians, I listened to President Ahidjo’s call for Cameroonians to join a new revolution—the Green Revolution. This call to turn to agriculture and plant food crops as well as cash crops succeeded because many Cameroonians took pride in farming. My family tried to grow coffee, but did not succeed. We then took up rice farming, and for many years used the income from rice farming to supplement what my father earned as a day laborer at the Estates and Agency Company Limited, which grew tea in the town of Ndu. Like many other Cameroonian families, we struggled to meet our needs and did not think that life was bad. However, we all lived in a state governed by one single political party, the president ruled by decree, and there were very few freedoms. We were aware that the complex state machinery that President Ahidjo had established was a hindrance to development. Everywhere one looked, it was evident that life could not go on as usual, because the massive

government bureaucracy was ineffective. In 1982, Ahidjo suddenly resigned from his position as head of state. We were frightened by this move, but after a few days, we also fell in love with the new president, Paul Biya, who preached rigor and moralization.

In 1985, I left Cameroon to study in the United States; soon after that, Cameroon and the rest of Africa was plunged into an economic crisis. In response to this situation, the president called on Cameroonians to tighten their seat belts, saying only that the times were difficult. Since then I have followed the story of these difficulties in Cameroon and other African countries and have had numerous discussions with my colleagues and mentors about Africa. I have debated African issues with colleagues at the African Studies Association, the American Academy of Religion, and other academic forums. I have made several trips to Africa in the past seven years, doing research on gender issues and on witchcraft. During these visits, I have talked with politicians, academics, business people, and ordinary people about the state of affairs in Cameroon and Africa. In this book, I have attempted to give my perspective on these issues. This work should be seen as my own hermeneutical perspective on the human condition in Africa and on ideas that remain crucial to reconstructing and changing all social relations that involve political praxis in Africa.

I do not pretend that I understand the whole story. I do not even pretend that I have clearly understood the parts of the story that I have tried to understand, or that I have articulated them in a manner agreeable to all readers. Experts in different fields will raise legitimate questions about my approach and the broad sweep I have given to some topics, and some will point out issues that I have ignored. My perspective, like other perspectives, is limited and provisional. These reflections must be taken for what they are—personal and partial reflections on the human condition, and an invitation for a broader interdisciplinary conversation on these issues.

In bringing together my thoughts on these issues over the last three years, I have had conversations with numerous scholars at conferences and lectures and through email exchanges, all of which cannot be mentioned here because of space constraints. However, I must express my appreciation to the following people, who have listened to me, given me critical perspectives, and shared some of their work with me: E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, Edith Wyschogrod, Charles Villa-Vicencio, Steven G. Crowell, Nantang Jua, John Mukum Mbaku, Diane Ciekawy, Rita Kiki Edozie, Obioma Nnaemeka, Anthony B. Pinn, and Isabella Mukonyora. Andrew Lazo and Catherine Howard read the entire manuscript and provided useful comments. I also extend my appreciation to the dedicated staff of Fondren Library of Rice University for their assistance in locating material and getting them through interlibrary loan in a timely manner. I thank

the anonymous reviewer who read the manuscript and offered me very useful criticism. I thank Amanda Johnson, editor at Palgrave Macmillan and William Fain, production associate at Palgrave Macmillan, Petrina Crockford, Emily Leithauser, editorial assistants at Palgrave and the editorial team of Macmillan India Ltd. for their professionalism. I discussed the Ahidjo era in Cameroon at the Cameroon Conference at Rice University in April 2001. I am grateful to the Rockwell foundation, the dean of humanities, and the Department of Religious Studies at Rice University for providing funds for me to organize that conference.

My reflections on Mahmood Mamdani's work, which appear in Chapter 2, were first presented at the Pathways Conference organized by Toyin Falola at the University of Texas in April 2001. I am thankful to Professor Falola for inviting me to participate in that conference. Chapter 7 was presented as a public lecture titled "Theological Perspectives on Power in Africa" at the Global Review Forum at the International House, Illinois State University, March 21, 2002. I am thankful to the Global Review Committee and to Professor Cassandra Veney, who was a member of the Committee and of the African Studies faculty of Illinois State University, for inviting me to speak on that topic. Parts of Chapter 4 were presented at a panel on African philosophy and contemporary issues at the African Studies Association in Houston in 2001. Finally, I presented the final chapter at a panel on "African Philosophy, How I See It" at the African Studies Association in Boston in October 2003. I am grateful to Dismas Masola and Barry Hallen for inviting me to be on the panel. My research trip to Cameroon in the summer of 2000 and 2001 was supported by the Mosle faculty grant and administered by the dean of humanities at Rice University. I am thankful to Dean Stokes, Dean Gary Wihl, and Becky Heye for providing summer travel grants to Cameroon. Finally, I am thankful to Odelia Yuh Bongmba, who has debated these issues with me on a daily basis, sometimes challenging me to look beyond my own questions as I try to cultivate a sense of hope about the future of Africa.

Elias Kifon Bongmba
Houston, 2005

INTRODUCTION

The Economist, in its May 13–19, 2000, edition, carried a dramatic cover: a map of Africa, a picture of a young soldier with a gun slung over his shoulder, and a headline reading “The Hopeless Continent.” Briefly summarizing the cover story, the editors wrote: “What is it about Africa? The crisis in Sierra Leone is only the latest in a catalogue of horrors. The continent is plagued with floods and famine, poverty, disease and state-sponsored thuggery. The West cannot solve these problems, but should try harder to help.” Calling the strife in Sierra Leone a special yet typical case, the editors contended that Africa “has poverty and disease in abundance, and riches too: its diamonds sustain the rebels who terrorize the place. It is unusual only in its brutality: rape, cannibalism and amputation have been common, with children . . . among the victims.”¹

This reporting on Africa continues to draw criticism for its bias, shallowness, and negativity. Academics who see complexity in African and global issues warn us that this reporting continues a long tradition of the misrepresentation of Africa. Africanists should rightly scrutinize media and popular bias, which ignore the historical, contextual, and international dimensions of the crises they report. Today criticism of negative media bias is tempered by the reality that something has indeed gone wrong on the continent. There is little doubt now that a certain political praxis has created the social climate in which agony thrives, and that this has exacerbated the effects of natural disasters and brought the continent to the brink of collapse.

This book examines the human condition (political, economic, and social) in Africa. That condition is not much worse in Africa than in other places in the world but I focus on Africa because of my personal and professional relationship to the continent. The book is about transformation and is situated on the dialectic of pessimism and optimism, because one cannot write off Africa and one cannot dismiss some of the attempts that have been made to transform the human condition on the continent. In this analysis I take positions on the priorities of the postcolonial state, and such positions cannot be interpreted mainly as advocacy in scholarship or prescription, but ought to be seen for what they are—perspectives that

offer certain convictions about the role of the state. This is not the place for a debate on the appropriateness of prescriptive language and positions, but I should point out that the nature of the issues addressed in this book requires constructive proposals, which others might see mainly as prescriptions.

I reflect on Africa from an interdisciplinary perspective, employing a methodological approach articulated by John Dunn, who has argued that theoretical work ought to diagnose a predicament and reflect on ways to confront the predicament.² A theorist who seeks to address an issue should: (1) give an account of the present situation, (2) articulate an alternative situation, and (3) indicate what is needed to move to the alternative situation.³ In what follows, I provide a selective hermeneutical perspective on the sociopolitical crises in Africa. In the first part of the book (Chapters 1–4), I define the politics that has created the crisis, discuss the genesis, and describe the recovery projects undertaken by African states. In the second part (Chapters 5–7), I discuss humanistic prospects for recovery, highlighting the reconstruction of intersubjective relations and gender equality, and offering theological perspectives on power. Readers already familiar with the expert literature on the African crisis will be particularly interested in the second part of the book, where I claim that humanistic approaches, which stress intersubjective bonds, would strengthen recovery.

This book therefore is a dialogue rooted in the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences). By taking this approach, I do not draw sharp distinctions between the human sciences and the other sciences. I agree with Cornel West that: “the difference [between] *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturewissenschaften* is between the relative stability of normal vocabularies in the natural sciences and the relative instability of normal vocabularies in the human sciences . . . And the irreducibility of one vocabulary to another implies not an ontological or methodological distinction but only a functional difference.”⁴ Preference for the functionality of the language of the human sciences reflects my background rather than my privileging of the humanities over other fields.

In the past, several African scholars have offered a *compte rendu* on the prospects of Africa. Ali Mazrui in his 1979 BBC Reith Lectures on the African condition discussed “Africa’s aches and pains.” Chinua Achebe discussed the situation in his 1984 book *The Trouble With Nigeria*, in which he argued: “the problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” Wole Soyinka discussed the crisis in *The Open Sore of a Continent*. Mahmood Mamdani has analyzed the mechanism and structures of domination in *Citizen and Subject*. Recently, Achille Mbembe has written his critique of the postcolony.⁵ These are representative works in which Africans reflect on the taxing human condition in Africa. In reading

the literature, one is reminded that for nearly three decades, bewildered scholars have reflected on the highly contested view that a new and “dark age” has descended on the continent. The literature discusses economic decline, Leadership crises, betrayal, chaos, an open sore, and collapsed states; a condition caused by what Mbembe has called “a technology of domination” and “captured state.”⁶ The terminologies describe the situation in many African states and portray the precarious existence and the perilous times that demarcate and circumscribe human existence in states presided over by management systems that, though simultaneously strong and weak, have engaged in crusades of domination and exploitation unparalleled in recent history. Scholars argue that Africa’s leaders lack legitimacy and that their selfish ambitions have undermined their mission to govern.⁷ In 1983, James Coleman and C. R. D. Halihi argued that thinking about Africa had shifted from “unbounded optimism” in the 1950s to “deep pessimism” in the 1970s. This mode of thought was later conceptualized as “Afro-pessimism.”⁸

Writing about the African crisis poses great challenges. Africa as a colonial invention is a heterogeneous complexity that one has to study from a variety of angles. In addition, there are differences between states on politics, nationhood, political economy, religion, and the varied social relations, which colonial and postcolonial domination have so grievously compromised. Additionally, the writer’s task is complicated because the discourse on Africa has involved what Mbembe calls a “*negative interpretation*.”⁹ Such negativity is constitutive of the othering process and the politics of representation that has evolved out of the dynamics of Africa’s engagement with the rest of the world; that is the view that Africa is a result of global forces and the negative encounter with agents of enslavement and domination. Mbembe wonders if one needs to look for any discourse on Africa at all, because, he says, scholarship on Africa stresses arbitrariness, absence, lack, and nonbeing.¹⁰ However, Mbembe himself gives a compelling account, noting that the dearth of scholarship lies in the fact that most of the critiques lack “any sign of radical questioning,” and he concludes that social theory has failed in Africa.¹¹ I do not propose a new social theory for Africa but instead reflect on the abuse of power that has created a human crisis of catastrophic proportions and offer humanistic perspectives on reconstructing social and political relations. Writing about the African crisis is an exercise of hope, because one should not write off the continent.

Another difficulty in writing about Africa is the tendency toward specialization, which prevents scholars from thinking in broad terms and across disciplines. Jeffrey Herbst argues: “The unwillingness of many Africanists to generalize has its origins in the need to differentiate countries

on the continent in the face of racist perceptions that Africa is a homogeneous region that is in constant turmoil.”¹² The fear of presenting a homogeneous account has pushed scholars to specifics and to generate specialized monographs on single issues and countries. Conscious of these challenges, the scholar who attempts to write on broad themes soon realizes that he or she encounters a broad representational spectrum in which to discuss the malaise of Africa, its ruthless experimentation with coups, the decimation of its economy, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and other social issues. Scholars can face this challenge appropriately by building on proposals offered in different fields. Those who engage in this discussion have to present their conclusions as partial perspectives that remain open to criticism, debate, and amendment.

The argument of my book will proceed in the following manner. In Chapter 1, I define the African crisis as the privatization of power, the pauperization of the state, the prodigalization of the state, and the proliferation of violence. In Chapter 2, I argue that the genesis of the crisis lies in the negative praxis of postcolonial leaders who decided to maintain the structures of domination established in the colonial era. In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyze various reform projects: structural adjustment, democracy, good governance, civil society, and the African Renaissance. These projects remain crucial to recovery; Africans ought to look beyond structural and institutional solutions to humanistic agendas that offer a critique of power.

In Chapter 5, I propose that Africans continue to rebuild intersubjective bonds as part of an on-going political praxis. In Chapter 6, I engage in a phenomenology of eros to argue that erotic plenitude and freedom ought to structure gender relations as part of a broad socio-political renewal. I offer a critique of the state of widowhood as an example of gender relations that could be reconfigured today. In Chapter 7, I provide a religious and theological critique of power, arguing that a proper deployment of power could create the conditions for an emancipatory political praxis. I conclude the book by calling on Africans to employ love as a political praxis. I have drawn materials from my research in Cameroon every summer from 1999 to 2003, and from my critical engagement with ideas on and about Africa.

Scholars have used the term “Afro-pessimism” to express doubt that the African state can survive its crisis without a major realignment of political conditions and structural mechanisms of governance and social praxis. While I share in large measure the assumptions of Afro-pessimism and fear that the discourses on political recovery might ultimately be discourses on the obituary of the continent, I also harbor a hope that refuses to yield the day to Afro-pessimism and for that reason, I will propose an optimism that begins with a love for Africa. I hope that dialogues about the continent,

which has been exposed as it has been enigmatized, could indeed contribute ideas about empowering practices that could nurture human existence. I do not offer a unique African vision, but I reflect on common human themes that resonate with people who are interested in the realignment of the forces that shape political experience.

The scholarly discourse seeking remedies has addressed nationalism, post-coloniality, rationality, sovereignty of ideas, and critical self-consciousness of Africans in the determination of their own agenda. As welcomed as these reaffirmations and critical recontextualizations of discourses are, most Africans today are not focused on the inventions and crises of the past, but on negotiating and making meaning of the present. This does not mean that Africans do not think of the past and future. I mean that many Africans often focus on the need to survive on a daily basis and seek answers to the issues that bring discomfort first to the body and then to the body politic.

One may wonder about the futility of the discourses on Africa on two grounds. First, many Africans who have not been tempted with bourgeois pleasures may not be worried about negative dialectics and the discourse of agony as scholars are. After all, crisis or not, Africans have thought things through, come up with their own solutions, and to the best of their knowledge live normal lives, provide for their families, and raise children, some of whom are now part of the new African diaspora. Africans are aware of the resources available in other parts of the world because they have had a dynamic and conflictual relationship with the world. Their dynamic and problematic relationship with the rest of the world is reflected in Africa's history, a narrative animated by enslavement, domination, and abandonment. However, the forces that dictate the nature of things in their societies do not appreciate, or tolerate, the views of the common person, and it is for that reason that one could say that the common person does not really care about what goes on elsewhere.

Second, the discourse about the failure of the state in Africa has for some time now become a discipline with a large library. A survey of the literature would be a daunting task, as would an attempt to give a comprehensive account of the various interpretations. These discourses have their own "politics" manifested in claims of authenticity and Africanness—academic and political posturing designed to privilege certain voices. Regardless of their claims and motivations, the truth is that the crisis that has gripped political existence in Africa has shaken the very foundations of the post-colonial state and forced scholars to rethink the nation-state in Africa and its conflicts ad nauseam. The crisis has manifested itself in various forms: wars, civil unrest, religious conflicts, poverty, mounting debt, shortage of food and fuel, lack of basic health services, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and the deterioration of educational services and the decline of famous

institutions such as the University College of Ibadan, Makerere University, University of Nairobi, Yaoundé I University, and Foura Bay College. Many countries have very few prospects for capacity building. A failed political economy, poor management, and an excessive abuse of power have driven these issues. The discourse on Africa is about a dialectics of agony. I am aware that discussing the effects of political totality in Africa may just play into the hands of the detractors of Africa who are ready to write off the continent. Yet, one is challenged always to take a courageous stand, not only in the interest of critical scholarship, but also with the view of generating a new dialogue propelled by humanistic practices.

I should state that I do not discuss some issues systematically in this book. First, although I employ the designation “postcolonial” throughout the text, this is not a book on postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory has emerged in the metropole and is concerned with the global reality of the European imperial order, its definitive colonial projects, its continuities in neocolonialism, and the new age of global movements and displacements of people that has strengthened the subaltern voice as an alternative discourse in the metropole. Postcolonial theory reflects on the indelibility of the empire and offers alternative reconfigurations of global relations. Some of the thinkers include Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Jean Comaroff, John Comaroff, Homi Bhabha, and Achille Mbembe.¹³ Homi Bhabha has called it a mode of discourse that reaches beyond one’s immediate horizon, and this is reflected in discourses that are prefixed by the word “post.”¹⁴ My book focuses on the crisis of the African state, and I offer humanistic perspectives on different ways of restoring social, economic, and political relations that have been damaged by the politics of greed.

Second, this is not a study of the state in Africa as such. I refer to the African state frequently and by this I mean postcolonial configurations that have emerged as nation-states in Africa, but I do not seek to offer a systematic study of the intractable and complex concept of the state. The liberal perspective posits the state as a free association of individuals who have come together to seek mutual good and undercut the Hobbesian drives of its members. For some, market forces determine the operations of the political economy in such a free association. However, the state has the responsibility of promoting the good of the commonwealth, and in order to do that, the state may intervene in a limited manner in the workings of the economy.

Finally, this is not a study of African political institutions, although institutions are the “theatre” of political action.¹⁵ In Africa, the key institutions tend to be informal patronage relations in which unwritten rules dictate political order and process.¹⁶ Instead, this study reinforces the scholarly tradition in African studies that underscores African agency and

responsibility. Many scholars in that tradition have argued that the post-colonial leaders of Africa inherited a political mess at independence, but that they have also been the main actors in the political theater where the majority of Africans have been ignored and manipulated. Postcolonial leaders have done this to promote their own personal and private ambitions.¹⁷ This study examines that agency on the part of postcolonial leaders and establishes the basis for optimism in the recovery of intersubjective relations.

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CHAPTER 1

DEFINING THE HUMAN CRISIS IN AFRICA

But these things we can say because they are true . . . that in many instances, three decades of independence and self-rule have left behind a trail of despoliation and regression; that, in this period, the disparity in income and wealth has worsened not only between ourselves and the developed world, but also within many of our countries, between those who had the possibility to use access to power to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest, who are the wretched of the earth; that this parasitic growth on the African body-politic is driven by its own internal dynamic which aims at self-preservation, uninterrupted reproduction and continued domination.

Thabo Mbeki¹

The epigraph by Thabo Mbeki of South Africa mirrors my own reflections and arguments about the human condition in Africa. President Mbeki was reflecting W. E. B. Du Bois's firm belief that race would be a dominant issue in the twentieth century and calls on Africans to affirm other realities about Africa and talk openly about Africa's self-inflicted agony. Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1994, Robert Kaplan painted a disturbing picture of decline and civil war in Sierra Leone, stating that the picture he sketched reflected the decline that was sweeping the continent.² Describing the political fate of the continent, Claude Ake argued that little changed with the proclamation of independence: "State power remained essentially the same: immense, arbitrary, often violent, always threatening . . . politics remained a zero-sum game; power was sought by all means and maintained by all means."³

In this chapter, I sketch the African crisis as the privatization of power, the pauperization of the state, the prodigalization of the state, and the proliferation of violence. These articulations, while malleable, serve as a hermeneutical device employed to provide a perspective on the African

state. It is a perspective that examines Africa's responsibility for developments in the postcolonial state, while recognizing that negative historical manipulations from outside Africa have also shaped the postcolonial state.⁴

The Privatization of Power

I contend that central to the sociopolitical crisis in Africa is the political praxis politicians have employed to acquire, deploy, and concentrate power in the hands of a few elites, a practice described by Africanists as the "privatization of power." By "privatization of power," I mean, in a limited way, an exclusionary political praxis that has reserved political power and the spoils of power to a few self-anointed rulers.⁵

Postcolonial politics has given a new twist to power, which, according to Max Weber, "is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which Weber's probability rests."⁶ This view of power is influential because it highlights actors in social relations and the desires of those actors to impose their own will on the people. Weber also points out that members of "a social relationship" often contest and resist those who attempt to impose their will on other people. The idea here is that power is competitive and negotiable.⁷ In the African postcolony, many leaders have exerted their will, distorted legitimate authority, and deployed deadly force to hold on to power. The will to contest the excesses and aporias of power has been suppressed, often violently, weakening the negotiable and contestatory dimensions of power. Michel Foucault offers another perspective when he argues that power is not merely a commodity located in political institutions, but a reality entangled in the totality of human existence, part of "every point of social body, members of families or between every one who knows and every one who does not."⁸ Foucault proposes a multiform view of power in relations of domination to reflect the dynamic and circulatory nature of power that resists simplistic commodification.⁹

Discourses of power in Africa probe people's perception of power, who has what kind of power, how they acquired power, the nature and structures that legitimize power, the purposes and extent to which power is deployed, and the distribution of visible and invisible power. Government structures and investiture processes demonstrate visible power in politics, while invisible power may fall on a continuum that ranges from the proverbial power behind the throne to what Achille Mbembe has called the "*ton-ton macoutisation*" of state power.¹⁰ The leadership crisis in Africa which has been studied by Africanists and observers of political developments in Africa during the last three decades, demands an ongoing phenomenology

of power and socio-political relations because the leaders continue to reinvent themselves and new forms of brutality to consolidate their hold on power. I will limit my discussion to the methods politicians have used to consolidate power in the hands of a few people.¹¹

It is important that I distinguish the notion “privatization of power” as I use it here from the relationship of the private and public realm. Privatization here refers strictly to the political praxis of turning a public office into a personal, private privilege, not to the interplay between the private and public. Aristotle considered the private sphere as a space where one could retreat and refocus in order to develop healthy relationships and thoughts that would enable one to cultivate excellence, to function well, and to promote the public cause.¹² Accordingly, the private sphere, was a place where one could cultivate virtues such as self-sufficiency, excellence, and humility, and employ such virtues to serve the public and promote the welfare of the political community. Leaders who use the private domain to cultivate virtues for the public good are not likely to impose their own forms of politics on the people.

The private domain could offer an opportunity to develop important dispositions necessary for good governance, a vision and art that enables practices that promote the interests of the commonwealth.¹³ This private realm is quite a contrast to the private networks of selfish accumulation that have devastated the postcolonial state and overturned the Aristotelian view that friendship ought to serve the public good. Indeed, political self-love in Africa reflects Machiavellian tendencies, as in the case of politicians such as Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire and Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon, who cultivated the loyalty of their people to serve their own selfish ambitions.¹⁴ The question before us now is, how did the political elites privatize power?

First, some leaders have privatized power on the pretext of governing like an African chief or king. In Cameroon, for instance, President Ahidjo argued that a nation required a single leader who would rule like an African chief and restore African traditions distorted by colonialism.¹⁵ Ahidjo used this excuse to impose his vision and privatize power and the political agenda. He desired to rule “as a territorial sovereign, wielding power over the whole community: legislative, executive, judicial and religious power.”¹⁶ Such a false nostalgia consolidated power in the hands of a few governing elites.¹⁷

The false pretext that one could recover the structures of precolonial society was disingenuous. Ahidjo failed to acknowledge that in many precolonial societies a council of elders was the seat of power, and members of such a council had the responsibility of appointing, installing, supervising, and deposing chiefs. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, where the *Oba* (King)

was believed to have power like the *Orìsà*, (divinities) the council of chiefs selected the *Oba*. The Yoruba system had checks and balances to ensure that he was responsible to the people and to the Supreme Being.¹⁸

Second, leaders privatized power through bureaucratic centralization. In Cameroon, President Ahidjo replaced the federal system with a unitary state and centralized government services in Yaoundé. Provincial governors reported directly to him and frequently ignored the opinion of their supervising department, the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Where politicians instituted a form of decentralization with the intention of reaching the people, they still subjected the lower systems to a centralized system in what Joshua Forrest has called “political penetration.”¹⁹

Centralization slowed down government business, rendered state functions ineffective, and encouraged political corruption. Centralization also introduced corruption into all levels of society, including the educational establishments as well as public service competitive examinations. Individuals reportedly manipulated examination results to insert names of candidates that did not perform well. Stories abound in the Cameroon public service about individuals who bribed officials to secure appointments or get the names of their relatives on the list of successful candidates in competitive examinations. Centralization of public services created a strong temptation for bureaucrats at the top to change plans and proposals without regard to the decisions made by individuals directly responsible for the projects in question. A central system therefore ensured that political elites used corruption to influence public service, reward their supporters, and consolidate their power.

Third, African politicians have privatized power by eliminating political competition. Many African leaders who led the struggle for independence used their disagreements with political opponents as justification to marginalize and eliminate them. Jomo Kenyatta marginalized political rivals such as Oginga Odinga early on in his rule. In Cameroon, Ahidjo forcibly removed rivals and co-opted politicians who were willing to go along with his political vision. Many African leaders also eliminated political competition and consolidated political activity in a single party. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (former Zaire), Mobutu Sese-Seko consolidated political activity in one party and ruled his country as the supreme chief, head of the party, and head of the government.²⁰ Ernest Wamba dia Wamba has argued: “Mobotist political culture [was] characterized by the following features: religious-like cult of the chief, intrigues, any means [were] all right to achieve power, commitments as a negative value (*vagabondage politique*, or constant search for the highest bidder), [and] factionalism.”²¹

Some leaders used restrictive electoral processes to limit competition. In Kenya, when President Moi’s political fortunes declined, his supporters

introduced the concept *majimbo*, loosely translated as federalism or regionalism, to restrict political participation in some areas. Moi's supporters used this idea to prevent other Kenyans who lived in the Kalenjin and Masai areas from contesting elections in the areas where they lived on the grounds that they were non-indigenes.²² Moi's regionalism and federalism was a direct effort to balkanize the country along ethnic lines to ensure that only people who supported his own vision were elected to parliament.

During the June 2002 municipal and parliamentary elections in Cameroon, it was alleged that the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), used Senior Divisional Officers (SDOs) to hinder members of the opposition parties from registering to vote on the grounds that they were not indigenes. Furthermore, the SDOs refused to register opposition candidates for the elections, claiming that they had turned in their registrations late, although the SDOs allowed late registrations from members of the ruling party. The SDOs also made it difficult for opposition candidates wishing to register to qualify by charging them a deposit fee of 25,000 francs CFA, in gross violation of the electoral law of 1996, which stipulates that candidates who file for public office have to pay a fixed deposit of 10,000 francs.²³ These tactics were employed to limit the participation of the opposition parties from the pools. The ruling party allegedly used similar tactics to frustrate the opposition from participating fully in the elections in the Littoral, the Far North, and the South Province. The National Election Commission, appointed by the Biya government, did not respond to any of the charges brought by the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), and did not correct the alleged irregularities.²⁴

Fourth, African politicians privatized power by monopolizing the press. In most postcolonial African states, the government owns and controls daily newspapers, radio, and television. The governments regard the editors and reporters as state employees who ought to serve as agents of development by promoting the agenda of the state rather than criticizing the state's political practices. State authorities frequently restrict both state owned media outlets and private presses from publishing and distributing news critical of the government. In Cameroon, the ruling elites have restricted the rights of private presses and also used ethnicity to manipulate the press in order to score political points and eliminate political rivals. Francis Nyamnjoh has argued that during the recent democratic transition in Cameroon, ethnic leaders used the Cameroonian press to promote a vicious ethnic policy aimed at shutting down critical voices and competing political ideas from other parties.²⁵ Although many states now have multiparty systems, the ruling party tightly controls official media, and opposition leaders such as Ni John Fru Ndi in Cameroon do not get equal air time.

Fifth, some leaders have employed occult forces to privatize power. While making no value judgments on the occult at this point, I argue only that some leaders have used such powers to gain access to public power and in turn, to privatize it. One might argue that in some countries, using occult practices has been a further corruption of indigenous traditions that played an important role in the anticolonial struggle. We can cite as an example the key role the Mau Mau movement and spirit mediums played in the liberation struggle in Kenya and Zimbabwe, respectively.²⁶ However, in the case of the Mau Mau and the Zimbabwean guerrillas, resistance leaders used indigenous religious practices rather than current occult practices engaged in by political leaders with the aim of staying in power indefinitely.²⁷ Several African leaders have consulted people who claimed that they could endow them with occult powers, and these leaders have established clientele relationships with medicine men and women with the aim of consolidating their hold on power.²⁸ The bulk of the work by some traditional healers in Cameroon today involves advising politicians on how to acquire and hold on to political office. Many politicians believe that medicine men and women are able to procure for them appointments to lucrative state positions and to enable them to hold office for as long as they want.²⁹

These practices are intended to privatize power and exclude many people from attaining it. One could argue that there is nothing wrong with consulting occult forces. It is widely reported that Mrs. Nancy Reagan consulted astrologers when Ronald Reagan was president of the United States. In Africa, however, politicians do not have term limits to force them out of power. If there were term limits, then leaders would not seek occult powers to stay in office indefinitely.

Privatization of power that thrives on restrictive networks, clientele relationships, and the politics of patronage has been disastrous for the social and economic well-being of the continent in several ways. First, through its culture of absolutism and longevity, privatizing power has marginalized the masses and prohibited most people from participating in public life. The history of African political leadership is one of longevity and gerontological politics. While there is nothing wrong with political longevity, the fact that politicians have invoked suspicious means to maintain their grip on power lends a particularly insidious tone to gerontological politics.

One cannot resist the temptation to compare the machinations of some African leaders with the actions of Nelson Mandela, who became state president at an advanced age, made his contribution, and stepped down at the end of his first full term. One could argue that, given the high price he paid for democracy and the liberation in South Africa, he would be the one person who could have staked a legitimate claim to remain in power, but he did

not do that. Mandela realized he was not a messiah and resisted the temptation to stay in power even though he remains the visionary he has been throughout his life. In stepping down in a timely manner, he has allowed others to step up and to bring new vision and leadership to South Africa.

Second, privatization of power has established the cult of personality and promoted messianic delusions. Many African leaders have monopolized power and have come to believe that they have a right to stay in power as long as they want to. Leaders have cultivated a cult of personality to prop up a state machine whose failure has resulted from a diminished political vision. The cult of personality has taken various forms in Africa, with leaders assuming titles such as “Father of the Nation” and “Architect of Democracy.” Mobutu established the quintessential cult of personality in Africa through a dominating presence that pervaded his entire country.³⁰

Many public buildings, institutions, and roads have been named after politicians. This can be an honorable thing to do. However, it is clear in the case of Mobutu that the things named after him are more than honors for the president; they have given rise to “the Mobutuzation” of the country.³¹ In Cameroon, Ahidjo’s portrait was everywhere—in offices, in public places, and in the homes of citizens. The unofficial/official attire of top civil servants was the *baban riga*, a dress style Ahidjo liked. When Paul Biya took over in 1982, his image also became ubiquitous, appearing, among other places, on money and postage stamps. Biya liked double-breasted pin-striped suits, and the civil service couture in the country instantly reflected his tastes as civil servants updated their wardrobes with double-breasted pin-striped suits.

Dr. Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, who declared himself president for life, is another example of a leader who had messianic delusions and stayed in power for a long time. During the pro-democracy period, politicians desiring to maintain longevity came up with new strategies. A new constitution was pushed through in Cameroon to extend the president’s term from five years to seven years. The ruling party pushed through these constitutional changes to create a new dispensation for President Biya and make him eligible for reelection in 2004. In 2004, Biya was reelected to another seven-year term in office. Longevity has its place, and political experience is an important commodity, but the problem is that many African leaders who have ruled for decades have not articulated or executed an empowering project. They have governed as if the state were their private estate, and Africans have paid a high price for the privatization of power.

The cult of personality has gained such sway in some parts of Africa that popular musicians have often exceeded the role of the *griot* and have promoted the political ambitions of the dictator. (In some cases, this has not always been a simple relationship, because some musicians have used their

art to criticize human rights violations.) Politicians in many African countries have used artists for their own political goals.³² Some musicians have collaborated with politicians out of their own free will or out of fear for their security; in doing so, they have promoted a cult of personality. When they faltered in their praise, musicians such as Le Grand Maître Luambo Makiadi, alias Franco, who criticized the Mobutu regime from time to time, were thrown in jail. In Cameroon, Manu Dibango, went into exile in 1964 because he became frustrated by the fact that politicians watched everything he did.³³

Artists have promoted the cult of personalities in different ways. First, some of the artists have composed songs mainly to celebrate milestones in the political evolution of the country. When Ahidjo had been in office for ten years, a Garoua-based orchestra sang two songs, one of which was "*Cameroon À Mon Payé*," which praised President Ahidjo for leading the country through independence, reunification, and the creation of the Cameroon National Union (CNU) party. Like other songs composed to celebrate independence, the refrain toasted the new Africa and an independent Cameroon. The group's second praise song, recorded in Ahidjo's language, Fulbe, explicitly praised Ahidjo. It was simply titled "*Da Ula Dube Saapo*," meaning, "He has ruled for ten years" (I have not used Fulbe orthography.) Tchana Pierre composed and recorded "*Unité Cent Percent*" to reflect Ahidjo's political project that imposed a unitary state abandoned federal system in Cameroon. This particular piece was incorporated into the daily radio public service program, "Luncheon Date."

Other compositions that fall into this category include songs by Cameroonian artists André Marie Talla, Prince Nico Mbarga, and Anne-Marie Nzie. André Marie Talla composed his famous "*Vingt Années des Progress, Vingt Années des Paix*" in 1978 to celebrate Ahidjo's twentieth year in power. The song had its world premiere in February of 1978 at celebrations organized to mark that event at the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium in Yaoundé. Distinguished Cameroonian musicians and artists participated in the extravaganza that included performances by the National Orchestra. On that occasion, Nico Mbarga's "*Le Père de la Nation*," praising Ahidjo as the father of the nation, also had its world premiere. A few days after this celebration, state radio officials recorded an instrumental version of André Marie Talla's song and used it regularly as the signature tune for news broadcasts. When Paul Biya became president, this song remained the signature tune for a short while, but state radio officials replaced it with Anne-Marie Nzie's piece, "*Va de l'Avant*," which was composed to mark the accession of Paul Biya to power. Cameroon Radio and Television still uses this piece today as the signature tune for news. Similarly, Archangelo de Moneko's song "*Renouveau National de Paul Biya*," which praises the New

Deal policies of Biya, has also become a signature tune for radio programs, replacing songs by Manu Dibango and André Marie Talla. Later, Anne-Marie Nzie threw her unflinching support behind Paul Biya by forbidding the opposition SDF to use the lyrics of her 1984 song “*Liberté*” for their campaign, insisting that the song was composed for President Paul Biya. Musicians have composed songs praising Biya as “*père de la nation*,” whose position has been given by God. Although Paul Biya has been lavished with praise songs like his predecessor, with most of the composers being members of his ethnic group, the Betis, O. Essono has argued that some Beti musicians have composed songs that are critical of the failures of the Biya regime.³⁴

Elsewhere, in the DRC (then Zaire), Le Grand Maître Luambo Franco also composed songs to celebrate the reign of Mobutu, such as “*Cinq Ans Ekoki*” (“Five Years On”). His orchestra also released a 10^{eme} Anniversaire 1965–1975 (tenth anniversary of the rule of Mobutu), which included party songs such as “*Republique du Zaïre*” and “*Belela Authenticité Na Congress*” to celebrate Mobutu’s reign.³⁵ Graeme Ewens points out that Franco argued that he only used music to explain Mobutu’s policies and educate the public. In an interview with Georges Collinet, of Voice of America and host of Afro Pop Worldwide on National Public Radio, Franco stated that his songs were mainly patriotic, but as an afterthought he said they were also political because he could not ignore the politics of his country.³⁶ When Mobutu came to power, Franco composed and sang “*Au Commandement*” to mark the rise of Mobutu to power. He celebrated Mobutu’s rise as the gift of God by stating: “After Lumumba, God has been merciful. We have found another prophet. The face of Mobutu is like the face of Lumumba.”³⁷ Other praise songs by Luambo Franco include his overtly political compositions such as “*Lito Moboti*,” “*Kisombe amasco*,” and “*Candidat Na Biso Mobutu*.” It is hard to see how Franco could have claimed that he was merely spreading the word about the message of Mobutu when he concluded the last piece with these words: “Let us pray, let us pray to God for our candidate Mobutu. Catholics, Kimbaguists, and Muslims, Mobutu is our candidate. Protestants, adherents of Mahi-Kari, Salvation Army, Bima, and Mpeve ya Longo, Let us pray God to give him long life so he can stay at the helm of our country Zaire.”³⁸ This was a clear call to all to support Mobutu.

The Pauperization of the State

I do not use pauperization here in the way Alexis de Tocqueville used it in *Memoirs on Pauperism*, in which he offered a critique of the English Poor Laws.³⁹ Here, pauperization describes political practices that have caused the

economy to decline and that have led to the scandal of poverty and environmental degradation. Pauperization also refers to the dearth of political and economic ideas and resources that has beggared African communities.⁴⁰

At the time of independence, the ruins of the colonial state did not provide a strong infrastructure for the new governments to build a sound economy. Apart from countries that had mineral resources, most African states produced little more than raw materials, and industrial development was nonexistent or at its infancy. Independence was the beginning of a rough ride, but the crisis started in the 1970s, when Africa and the rest of the world suffered through the oil crisis. Many economies did not recover, and states resorted to deficit spending, leaving African countries with huge debts. Although countries such as Cameroon experienced a boom because of receipts from petroleum and its robust agricultural program, bolstered by the Green Revolution, agricultural production declined in other countries and there was increased dependence on food imports. The Sahel states were hit hard by a long drought, which disrupted food production for several years.

The decline of productivity forced African states to import most necessities, including food, further aggravating the already huge balance of payments deficits. Countries that did not have a balanced budget were forced to borrow more and more from the international financial institutions. The mounting debt, estimated in the 1990s at U.S.\$143 billion, has destroyed the economic fabric of most states. African states in the 1980s and 1990s spent much more servicing their debts than repaying the principal on their loans. According to H. W. Singer and Soumitra Sharma between 1982 and 1987, "the developing countries have paid back to their creditors a little over 700 billion U.S. dollars."⁴¹ The damage done to the economies of sub-Saharan Africa is so huge that even if Jubilee 2000 had succeeded at debt cancellation, its effects would not have lasted long, because it would require far more than the forgiveness of debt to reconstruct economic systems that did not respond to the development strategies of the newly independent states during the 1960s.⁴²

The economic crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s has triggered massive poverty of scandalous proportion which might get worse in some countries. The Commission for Africa (CFA), recently established under the initiative of British prime minister Tony Blair, estimates that about one-sixth of the people on the continent "are chronically poor"—described in Ghana as those who have two bags, one for begging during the season of plenty and the other for begging during the season of hunger.⁴³ Poverty results from personal crisis, major catastrophes such as drought, changes in economic fortunes that result from a drop in prices of commodities, or bigger catastrophes such as lack of rain, "conflict, or HIV and AIDS."⁴⁴

The CFA points out that it is difficult for individuals and states to recover from the massive poverty. "Individuals and families are trapped in vicious circles of poverty, which can easily turn into downward spirals. Another African expression encapsulates these reinforcing cycles of poverty and exclusion: in Zimbabwe they speak of 'poverty that lays eggs.'"⁴⁵ The CFA defines the poor as those who have been born into poor economic circumstances and live on about U.S.\$ 2 a day, and it points out that most of the people live on less than that amount. It is fitting that the CFA adds that "the poorest people are those who are excluded from information, from government services, from full participation in society, politics and the economy and even informal community support systems."⁴⁶ Exclusion from public services and informal support networks results from discrimination against women, physically challenged people, ethnic groups, and people affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The CFA estimates that the number of poor people in Africa will rise to 404 million in 2015.⁴⁷ Poverty is intergenerational and "the best way to address it is to break out of the traps that have strangled growth and kept income so low, while also working to end the exclusion of particular groups."⁴⁸

Pauperization of the state has resulted from several factors. The CFA has grouped the causes into political, structural, environmental, and human causes. The political causes include poor governance and civil conflicts in regions such as "the DRC, Darfur, Northern Uganda, and Côte d'Ivoire."⁴⁹ The structural causes include a weak investment climate, dependence on primary products, costs of transportation and colonial legacies, and late development of the manufacturing sector. The environmental factors include low agricultural productivity, the climate, and the fragility of the environment in Africa. The CFA contends that the human causes are poor health and education, population growth, and urbanization.⁵⁰

Historically, the pauperization of the state in the postcolony has resulted from a number of other factors. First, there have been ill-adapted development projects. Second, a neocolonial economy simply provided new managers (a mixture of African and expensive, foreign experts) who did not promote development in the interest of the African masses but instead worked for the colonial metropolis, which benefited from raw materials produced by the so-called "third world." Third, and most important, observers agree that African economies failed because of political corruption and poor management of the economy. The now-famous 1981 World Bank (WB) report blamed the failure of economic growth in Africa on a number of factors, including poor infrastructure and bad domestic policies and practices.⁵¹ Initially, Africanists criticized the report and its recommendations as top-down neoclassical economic approaches imposed

on African states. This criticism is now in retreat because it has become clear that the policies of African governments have indeed been responsible for the collapse of their economies. One cannot ignore the fact that precolonial and colonial economic policies and natural disasters have contributed to economic decline.⁵² However, many observers now conclude that the economic problems of African states have been caused by corruption, poor resource allocation, neglect, mismanagement and misappropriation of public property, internal conflicts, and civil wars. These activities have pauperized the African state and have driven it to its present situation.

Second, pauperization also refers to an impoverished political praxis in the postcolony. The independence movements were a turning point for all of Africa, not because the colonial regimes bequeathed liberty, freedoms, or material wealth, but because the achievement of independence ushered in a new day for Africa, the birth of hope, and faith in new possibilities for Africans. Beginning with Ghana in 1957, each country gained independence with its leaders announcing that the time had arrived for Africans to redress the wrongs of colonial experience and to redirect the long and often brutal encounter with the West. Africans were not alone on this march to progress: a few years before the African experience started, the colonial edifice was already falling apart because of the independence movements of India and Southeast Asia. The nationalist movements championed independence because the leaders believed that they had been given (some would say taken on themselves) a mandate to invest in the lives of their people.

By the mid-1960s, many people in the region began to question the survival of an open political culture in Africa because military rulers staged coup after coup, each time promising to return the country to civilian rule. The problems that emerged disrupted political praxis. African leaders such as Ahidjo, Mobutu, and Houphouët-Boigny used sham constitutional procedures to abandon early experiments in multiparty democracy, and instituted the one-party system. Political praxis was then subjected to the will of one-party dictators and military dictatorships. Under the weight of the politics of control, these dictatorships vaporized open democratic ideals, compromised politics, weakened the political process, diminished the dreams of independence and thus pauperized the idea and practice of politics. Self-centered rulers impoverished politics and the idea of statehood by sacrificing the future of their countries on the altars of their own personal fortunes. Political practice became private business and the state itself became a mere staging ground for their unchecked ambitions. Africans continue to engage in politics and the political process, but it is impoverished in many respects because politicians have abandoned the grand visions which marshaled the liberation movements that ushered political independence.

Third, pauperization refers to the poor management of resources and the environment. An environmental disaster continues to loom large. Despite the staggering toll of HIV/AIDS on many lives in Africa, population growth projections and declining natural resources point to certain environmental and ecological disaster. Droughts in the Sahel and parts of East Africa continue to threaten life there. Large multinational corporations continue to extract trees and through that economic activity continue to deplete forests at a rate faster than people are able to plant replacement trees. In the Northwest Province of Cameroon, eucalyptus trees have taken over the land and are rendering it a wasteland, a process that will have devastating consequences for the water and food resources of the region. N. N. Susungi has argued that in addition to the growth of eucalyptus trees, a mild drought in the area has threatened the settlement on the Nkambe plateau. This settlement was ill-conceived because people were encouraged to live along the road rather than near water sources.⁵³ In Nigeria, oil exploitation led to the Ogoni crisis and the eventual death of novelist and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa.

A new green revolution is needed that will invest in the planting of trees to stem the rising tide of desertification. Africa needs a broad ecological vision today that will include massive intervention strategies to stem the tide of the drought that continues to cause crop failure, as well as an aggressive project to plant trees to replenish the forests. It would be folly to give up on strategies to protect the environment at this stage, because the task is monumental. Some African governments have mounted their own efforts, mainly through departments of agriculture and forestry, although some of these departments have come under the influence of multinational corporations that have acquired licenses to cut down trees but made no commitments to replenish what they have cut down. The work of multinationals in Africa has created a severe biodiversity crisis. International environmental organizations such as the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) work in some countries in Africa with the hope of reversing the destructive trend. Other experiments in remedying the situation include the earth-keeping ministries of several African Initiated Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe, which have refocused their mission to include a confession of ecological sin because human beings are largely responsible for the destruction of the forests. These churches have dedicated their mission to reforestation, resulting in a church structure and liturgy that support the restoration of the environment.⁵⁴ It is not enough that human beings work things out among themselves and ignore the environment. Human reconciliation should take place alongside ecological reconciliation.

This type of practical theology has direct implications for all who are concerned about the pauperization of natural resources of Africa. It calls

for individuals, communities, chiefs, and elected officials to inquire about the nature of the exploitation of the African ecosystem. Those who are designated to conduct such an inquiry have an obligation to question activities that have depleted the forests and wildlife, and, the political leaders should work with members of their communities to preserve these resources. In addition, communities have an obligation to work together to come up with alternative sources for fuel as members of different communities work hard to replant what they take out for present fuel needs. This calls for a new stewardship of the Earth's resources that includes a quest for coexistence between humans, nature, and all the other species that inhabit Africa. In this way Africans might begin to redress the damage to the ecosystem. The possibilities in this area are numerous. Perhaps what makes such a task appealing is the prospect of restoring ecological balance by launching projects requiring little technological sophistication. In the fight against ecological degradation technology will play a key role, but there are things that people could do at the village level without technology, which could contribute significantly to the struggle to stay green. Planting trees and guarding water sources with appropriate vegetation may not require the approval of political authorities.⁵⁵

The fallout from the pauperization of the state is clear. Detractors and friends alike perceive the continent in the spirit of Hegel, whose premise was that Africa is incapable of producing something good and that therefore Africans have no significant vision for their own futures.⁵⁶ Others insist that the present political crisis is the outworking of Western hegemony and its neocolonial project that refuses to die. Then, there are those who see the continuation of neocolonial policies in globalization, which is represented not only by the ever-growing power of multinational corporations, but also by the Big Brother image that is being projected by the WB, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the G7/8. Beginning with the Seattle protest against the WTO in 1999, critical voices have argued that globalization has ignored the developing countries from where the developed world continues to extract resources. The critique of the international market system is correct; however, it is also necessary to direct criticisms at African countries where elites have pauperized the state.

Furthermore, pauperization has created a sense of hopelessness throughout the continent. In the lament over the crisis of Africa, people wonder if things have gone this way because Africans are dealing with something greater than pauperization: the juggling of two systems, Western and African. Some observers believe that some leaders had good intentions, but that they failed to deliver on their promises and lost the opportunity to create a new polis where human freedom, creativity, and progress would abound.

The dream of a thriving society has all but faded, and a dark cloud of gloom has descended on the continent because a systematic pauperization of Africa's political vision has derailed the liberating visions that ushered in *Uhuru* (liberation or freedom). In the absence of *Uhuru* the continent has seen countless wars, religious crises, ethnic violence, and genocide. In the wake of the collapse of the anti-imperialist Marxist forces, the irresponsibility of the military state, and the futility of dictatorship and the one-party state, globalization and neoliberalism have placed a premium on markets. With African countries not strong on the international capitalist market, Afro-pessimists question whether there is a way out—or rather they declare that the continent may never recover from its own doing.

The Prodigalization of the State

I use the idea of “prodigalization” to refer to the politics of looting and mismanagement practiced by some African leaders.⁵⁷ I do not imply that the colonial state bequeathed wealth to the postcolonial leaders. In fact, the shortage of infrastructure precipitated a huge construction boom in the postcolony to make up for the failure of the colonial state, although some of these projects might have been initiated for prestige purposes. Even where one might have justified, for example, much-needed road infrastructure and communication projects, political and economic praxis in the postcolony has been marked by waste, abuse, and destruction of resources by those who were elected to manage the resources.

The ruling elites have prodigalized the resources of the state by raping them in a brutal and extreme manner. They have calculated all political moves to consolidate wealth and power for their own interests.⁵⁸ They have created networks to amass wealth and secure appointments to lucrative state offices. They have set up state companies where those appointed to positions of responsibility run the companies as their own private businesses and are not answerable to anyone. In former Zaire, Mobutu spent the resources of the country. He “did not use loans to build state bureaucracies or provide services.”⁵⁹

In some countries, government leaders earmarked youths and sent them overseas to receive advanced training in the arts and sciences so that they would return home and use their knowledge to promote development. The state expected these new cadres to develop managerial wizardry to facilitate the establishment of industries, promote economic development in different sectors, and enable the state to maintain a strong economy and ameliorate the problems of the people. In Cameroon, for instance, brilliant performance at the Baccalaureate and the General Certificate of Education at the advanced level always guaranteed the student a place at an overseas

institution at state expense or with sponsorship acquired through cooperation agreements with foreign governments. But this investment has not paid off, because even though many elites received training overseas and returned to Africa to serve their countries, their efforts were often frustrated by the political leaders who practiced corruption, and enticed those elites trained overseas to join them.

My account of the prodigal activities of the governing elites is similar to René Dumont's provocative critique of the postcolonial state in *False Start in Africa*.⁶⁰ Dumont argued that colonial financial allocations did not promote industrial development but instead made Africa a supplier of raw materials. As others have described, colonials encouraged the cultivation of coffee plants at the expense of food production.⁶¹ They neglected industry and made very little investment into heavy industrial production.⁶² Early industrial policy in Africa promoted local industry as an essential ingredient of postcolonial economic development.⁶³ But postcolonial leaders faced difficulties in this area because foreign capital dropped with independence. In order to encourage capital investment and promote industrial development, the new governments proposed tax breaks, protected local industries, and established stringent labor laws.⁶⁴ However, Africa's industrial growth was short-lived, and the gains of the early years of independence were undercut from the 1970s onward for a number of reasons.

First, the state dominated industrialization in a top-down approach, thus making the state the only source for industrial initiative and financing. Second, the most important strategy used in promoting industrialization was the import substitution industrialization (ISI) model.⁶⁵ Third, in order to promote the ISI model, states provided incentives to local industries such as cheap credit, favorable exchange rates, and a protected market. Protective tariffs forced some of the transnational corporations (TNCs) to establish local branches of their companies in African countries to avoid tariffs and take advantage of protection offered to local industries.⁶⁶ However, these TNCs did not invest any of their profits in Africa, and did not contribute in a significant way to the development of subsidiary industries.

Fourth, industrial development did not take place, because African states did not develop the "public social capital" needed to sustain industrialization. I use social capital here in the sense in which Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning use it when they describe government institutions that could facilitate economic activity in the private sector, such as courts.⁶⁷ Finally, Africa's inability to develop social capital resulted largely from the lack of confidence in African economic management on the part of international financial institutions. Ernest Aryeetey has demonstrated that as African countries entered the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, a vicious

debate occurred in development circles about state priorities, which highlighted the fact that ideological positioning rather than the specific needs of African states often served as the basis of policy.⁶⁸ The debates often pitted liberal economists against Marxist economists, who interpreted the economic fortunes of African states mostly in light of “dependency capitalism,” which, they argued, dominated international trade and held back development in African countries.⁶⁹ These debates delayed projects, left the countries without a strong industrial base, and rendered African states vulnerable to poverty. Since some of these ideologies served the interests of the ruling class, one could argue that the members of the ruling class contributed to the prodigalization of their economies by placing ideology above development.

In an attempt to deal with the lack of industrial growth, African leaders launched the Monrovia Declaration of 1979, which called on African countries to explore regional cooperation to promote self-reliance. They further adopted the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), which called on African leaders to establish a democratic culture to promote industrial and economic development. This plan gave high priority to food. The goals of the plan were modest.⁷⁰ In support of these African initiatives, the United Nations General Assembly designated the 1980s as the Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA). Industrial development during this period was dismal, and experts attribute this to poor planning, economic crisis, inadequate use of industrial capacities, a weak bargaining position, and a lack of technology transfer.⁷¹ Recent political moves by African leaders to form the African Union and launch the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad) might bring new perspectives to industrial development, which remains central to economic growth in Africa.

Expensive administrative systems have also led to the prodigalization of the state. The new African states created several government departments and had far too many ministers. The size of the government has never been an issue with the African state, and the situation has not changed for decades: the present government of Cameroon has about forty ministers. In Cameroon, ministers divert discretionary accounts of their departments for personal use. Senior government officials use state vehicles as private cars, running them with gasoline provided by the state. It is alleged that the elites and officials who have access to gasoline vouchers give some of these vouchers out as gifts to their relatives and girlfriends. Dumont had complained that members of parliament worked only three months of the year and earned more than what a peasant would have earned in thirty-six years of hard work. This has hardly changed; in Cameroon, the National Assembly (parliament) meets twice a year, and each time it meets only for two months, but members of parliament are paid for the whole year.

Prodigalization in the postcolonial state has been exacerbated by a lack of dedication to the civil service. Government officials believe that they have a right to use their positions for self-enrichment and have used the civil service to loot and make money from the state. The public has come to accept this lavish lifestyle as the norm. Relatives and friends expect government officials to build large compounds and to do that they need money, which they do not have. This tempts members of the civil service into corruption, and they use all the means at their disposal to siphon money away from the state. Some unscrupulous elites who hold political office and wield enormous power also take their money from the poor, claiming that these are “gifts.” Where large sums of money have not been budgeted for the upkeep of a senior official’s household, funds and resources marked for projects and the running of the office are diverted for personal use. Since *goat di chop for place where dem tie yi*, (a goat eats where it has been tethered) members of the public expect those who hold high office to behave this way.

Since prodigality has siphoned away funds from education and rendered universities weak, the elites regularly send their children to study abroad. Studying abroad used to be an opportunity to prepare for service in the country, but has now become a way for wealthy individuals and political elites to prevent their children from experiencing the economic difficulties back home. Meanwhile, the children whose parents cannot afford to send them overseas have to pay exorbitant sums to be admitted into local secondary schools, universities, and professional schools. In Cameroon, for instance, *radio-trottoir* (street radio, or rumor) has it that the going rate for admission into the National School of Administration and Magistracy is about 1.5 million francs CFA.⁷²

A further lack of dedication to the civil service is seen from the fact that many African elites travel frequently between their home countries and the West, where their children now live. Some of them abandon jobs and stay for extended periods overseas to provide childcare for their grandchildren. On the surface, this is what loving parents ought to do for their children and grandchildren. This practice could help the young ones in the diaspora to maintain a connection with their ancestral homeland. However, many parents who provide this service for their children are civil servants who remain on the payroll but are absent from work for several months when they have not been granted a leave of absence from their ministries. This behavior prodigalizes the state because people are paid for work they have not done. Thus, prodigality has heightened and complicated the long-established tradition of extraversion; as Jean-François Bayart argues: “Africans here have been active agents in the *mise en dependance* [situation of dependency] of their societies, sometimes opposing it and at other times joining in it.”⁷³

Prodigalization has created economic despair and, coupled with political violence, has intensified the new diasporization of Africa. We have a new situation in which many people in Africa, especially intellectuals, professionals, and frustrated politicians, have determined to seek a better life elsewhere. In addition to the wealthy ones whose children live permanently overseas and members of the middle class who can no longer stand economic and political deterioration, members of the lower classes are making the trek. While one ought to place the recent migrations in a historical perspective that emphasizes the push and pull factors, there is no doubt that the departure of intellectuals and technicians constitutes a major setback for Africa, because the new immigrants who are taking up permanent residence and citizenship in the new countries are the ones who might have been involved in planning and implementing recovery policies. The departure of intellectuals from Africa makes talk of a brain drain in the 1960s sound like a joke. One cannot simplify the crisis in order to make a point or speculate on the particular reason why individuals choose to leave Africa, because although people might migrate for personal reasons, migrations are often linked to the political economy. In this respect, Africans have provided a steady pool of labor.⁷⁴ The new migrations have enlarged and expanded the African diaspora in the West and also opened up new destinations, such as Australia, Israel, Japan, and New Zealand.⁷⁵

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported in 1992 that by 1987 nearly one third of skilled workers had moved to Europe from the time of independence, with Sudan losing 17 percent of its doctors and dentists, 20 percent of its university teaching staff as well as 30 percent of its engineers. The same UNDP report stated: "Africa as a whole is estimated to have lost up to 60,000 middle and high-level managers between 1985 and 1990."⁷⁶ Since the 1990s, about 20,000 educated and skilled Africans have left the continent every year.⁷⁷ Recent literature continues to map out trends in African migrations since the publication of *Global Dimensions of African Diaspora* in 1982.⁷⁸ Akyeampong indicates that between 200,000 and 400,000 Ghanaians live and work in the United States alone.⁷⁹ Writing in a special edition of *African Issues*, Uwem E. Ita reports that an estimated 300,000 African professionals live and work in Europe and North America, and figures from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) indicate that about 30,000 Africans with doctorates live and work outside the continent.⁸⁰ It is estimated that about 700 Ghanaian doctors practice in the United States, and about 10,000 Nigerian academics also work there.⁸¹ In the same issue, Anthony Barclay argues that the movement of scholars away from Liberia has handicapped the University of Liberia to the extent

that in 2001, “70 academic staff members held bachelor’s degrees, 107 held master’s degrees, and 10 held doctorates.”⁸²

The effect of the current brain drain on Africa is difficult to measure. Some have argued that the brain drain is gain because the people who have left Africa do send money back to their families and for development projects. Although many African immigrants in the West send money home, many of those countries lack a viable financial infrastructure to transform into productive capital the income that is sent home. The long-term effect of the brain drain is predictable: it will hold back and delay recovery because it is a significant blow to capacity building at all levels of society in Africa. The educational institutions directly responsible for capacity building, such as universities and research institutes, are inadequately staffed and cannot afford to hire overseas experts. Higher education has declined considerably, and African countries will not have the human resources they need to return to a productive capacity. Furthermore, the brain drain has robbed Africa of potential politicians and future leaders. The talent lost to the rest of the world cannot be replaced easily, and this loss will have a negative effect on attempts to institute good governance in Africa.

The great irony today is that members of the elite class, leaders, and even politicians who have mismanaged their countries, seek greener pastures elsewhere. A further tragedy is that some who have left their countries for the United States on the diversity visa (the visas issued by the U.S. Department of State to people from other countries to relocate to the United States) have contrived to remain on the payroll of their respective countries. Many Cameroonians have remained in the United States for several years but continue to earn money from their government jobs in Cameroon, although they no longer perform the services for which they were hired. They see nothing wrong with that, although they spend a lot of time and energy criticizing the corrupt regime at home.

Prodigal actions that impoverish the state raise moral questions for all Africans because these actions have marginalized the masses in Africa and destroyed African economies. African leaders need to think through the moral ramifications of the destructive trend that has ravished the continent. The use of position and power by a few individuals to loot and generate wealth constitutes an unconscionable prodigal activity.

The Proliferation of Violence

I use violence here in two ways. First, I use violence to refer to the abuse, torture, and denigration of the African people carried out by governing elites and their agents: the military, police, gendarmes, and administrators.

Second, I use violence to describe conflicts and civil wars in Africa. Autocratic leaders constantly inflict physical violence and abuse, thus making some African states violent by definition. Many Africans experience this kind of violence on a regular basis, and the news media do not always report it.⁸³ This day-to-day violence occurs not because the African communities lack cultural or educational resources or the constitutional means to protect members of their political communities, but because politicians have used violence as a form of control, even to genocidal proportions. Central to that systematic abuse is the organization of relations and regimes of survival, which has privileged the political elites and their networks.⁸⁴

Political authorities have used state security forces to systematically harass people. State security was important to the new independent states after the 1960s. African leaders moved quickly to establish various institutions charged with state security, such as the army, police, and in Francophone African countries, the gendarmes. Militarization of the continent started early, and it was clear very early on that military personnel at local stations had very little to do and often spent most of their time harassing, beating, and locking up local people when there was no full-scale war going on. The excessive control and brutalization of the general public has remained a permanent feature of the Cameroon state, where police and gendarmes mount road blocks on all highways to check vehicle registrations, personal identification papers of nationals, and resident permits for foreign nationals. This is often a violent practice because these officers subject travelers to verbal abuse and physical assaults. Furthermore, if drivers have all their papers, the officers who mount road blocks still force them to pay a bribe before they let them continue on their trip. These practices degrade and dehumanize members of the public. People are delayed unnecessarily at checkpoints for several hours, disrupting economic activities because the delays affect transportation and communication on which businesses depend. This petty corruption exists in many places in the world. In Mexico, the bribes police take from drivers are called *mordida*. Some might see this only as a nuisance, but I believe that such practices do violence to people and the economy.

Second, I use violence here to refer to conflicts and wars that have afflicted African states since independence. Africans are no more violent than other people in the world, as evidenced by the violence that erupted in Europe following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. However, in Africa, political realities rooted in colonial arrangements have perpetuated violence that continues on the continent today. The United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has stated that in the 1990s there were about thirty-five different conflicts on the continent, which were taking the lives of an estimated 1,000 people daily.⁸⁵ The continent has witnessed

an undue number of violent conflicts attributable to bad governance, ethnic strife, poor economic management, and the desire to cash in on lucrative opportunities in war-torn countries.⁸⁶

We can map out some general causes for violence in Africa. First, it is linked to the issues that have marked the decline of the state. These issues include the absence of a democratic culture, weak and ineffective civil society, the absence of good governance, financial mismanagement, the use of public office for personal gain, and the general economic conditions of the people.⁸⁷ Where people have no food and no access to economic resources, they have been mobilized to contest these conditions, and the result has been long-lasting conflicts. Second, the availability and lootability of resources such as diamonds has been a major motivation for the prosecution of protracted civil wars.⁸⁸ Third, violence has been generated by the manipulation of ethnic differences. Fourth, conflicts have also expanded and exploded owing to external facilitation of rebellion, as Libya's in the case of Sierra Leone. Fifth, as in the case of Rwanda and Sudan, economic development policies favored some regions and created conflicts because the other regions felt marginalized by the policy makers. These regional conflicts have also been exploited along ethnic and religious lines and have led to prolonged civil wars.⁸⁹ The combination of all these issues has created both short-term and long-term violence in Africa. These brutal conflicts have employed child soldiers, led to the rape and torture of women, and the brutalization of people in inexplicable ways.

In order to understand violence in Africa, I offer below broad generalizations about conflicts in Africa. First, scholars argue that conflicts in Africa involve a complex cast of internal and external players. The conflicts that led to Eritrean liberation, the Somali civil war, and the movement that liberated Uganda from Idi Amin all involved a number of factions from within and from without these countries. Recent conflicts in the Central African region, especially the civil strife in the DRC, cannot be understood alone without some reference to the Rwandan situation and its numerous combatants and supporters. For example, the DRC government, led by then President Laurent Kabila, received support from Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and especially South Africa, which invested a great deal of diplomatic effort to end the conflict. Other countries that provided support to the Kabila regime included Congo Brazzaville, Chad, Libya, and Sudan. The Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MCL), which fought against the Kabila regime, received support from Burundian troops, Rwandan Hutu forces, Rwandan troops, and UNITA (the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) rebels before the death of Jonas Savimbi.⁹⁰ Thus, Africa's conflicts have become complex, and it is difficult to identify who the combatants are and what their motives are.

Second, political elites sponsor violence in Africa for political gains.⁹¹ In state-sponsored genocide, state agents or vigilante groups target masses of people from a particular community, or kill large numbers from a particular ethnic group at random or systematically. States inflict political terror to cause fear and to force compliance. Recently several countries in Africa have carried out mass victimization of their people or stood by and done nothing when sectors of their population have gone on the rampage, killing political opponents, and members of other ethnic groups. The current genocide in Darfur, in Sudan, joins a list of state-sponsored killings that have taken place in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Angola, and Kenya.⁹²

Political elites in Africa have used ethnicity to incite violence and promote their own goals. Atieno Odhiambo argues that the politics of ethnicity in Kenya under Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi responded to the socioeconomic, political, and symbolic world of each ethnic group.⁹³ Both Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga cultivated ethnicity in their anticolonial politics, which was driven especially among the Kikuyu by their anger over stolen lands.⁹⁴ But the post-Mau Mau era was marked by a nationalist agenda that seemed to put ethnic politics at the background. However, when independence came, Kenyatta and the African National Union (KANU) consolidated power in their hands and sidelined members of other ethnic groups. Kenyatta organized traditional oath-taking to ensure that power remained with the Gikuyu.⁹⁵ “The assassination of Tom Mboya in July of 1969, the banning of the KPU, and the detention of Oginga Odinga marked the ascendancy of Kenyatta’s hegemonic enterprise.”⁹⁶ This hegemonic enterprise practiced verbal and physical violence against its enemies, members of other ethnic groups.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on political violence in Kenya during the Moi era noted that the abundance of arms in the region stemmed from long-standing interethnic conflicts, which created a thriving market for arms that Kenyan leaders did not work to defuse. Instead, they used ethnicity to sponsor violence.⁹⁷ Although, in the months leading to its exit the Moi government, which was under pressure from civil society, started to cut down the flow of arms into the country, there was no widespread campaign to stem the tide and proliferation of arms. Moi’s supporters distorted *majimbo* (which means variously, “federalism” and “regionalism”) to promote exclusionary politics, remove nonindigenes of the Kalenjin and Masai, and prevent them from participating in the electoral process. Moi’s “Kalenjinization” introduced violence in the Rift Valley resulting in the death or displacement of over 300,000 people.⁹⁸

Some members of the ruling KANU party also organized a vigilante group called *Jeshi la Mzee* (which means “an old man’s army”) to intimidate and attack people. They introduced religious divisions among

Muslims in the coastal area of Kenya. The HRW report accuses politicians of recruiting attackers, and details the attack on the Likoni region, which was aided by a government leader who provided transportation to the vigilantes. They first attacked a police station, killed some officers, took arms, and used the acquired arms to kill people. The vigilantes also burned down local administrative buildings.⁹⁹ The report charges Kenyan security forces with responsibility for the attacks on the Digo of the South Coast.¹⁰⁰ Moi's political elites perpetrated violence against their political opponents just because they were members of a different ethnic group.

Third, individuals have promoted a political economy of violence for personal gain, not because they wanted to promote a distinct ideology and political doctrine.¹⁰¹ The political economy of violence has fueled a long Liberian war, and mineral deposits have been the driving force for the war in Côte d'Ivoire, the Great Lakes Region, the DRC, and Angola. In the DRC, for instance, Laurent Kabila reportedly received about U.S.\$300 million from contracts he gave to companies in the eastern part of the country, which he controlled before the collapse of Mobutu.¹⁰² The economic considerations have encouraged foreign intervention in the civil wars. Private entrepreneurs and profiteers who do not have to deal with the reality and cost of the wars have encouraged fighting.

The civil war in Angola lasted a long time because leaders of the different factions had their eyes on the mineral resources. The desire to control these resources heightened the personal ambitions of the political leaders and erased ideological grounds that offered the basis for the struggle to gain independence from Portugal.¹⁰³ On the eve of independence, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led by Agostinho Neto, took control of the capital and began consolidating its hold on the rest of the country by beating the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Roberto Holden. The MPLA government received support from Cuban soldiers and the former Soviet Union. This in turn brought American involvement on the side of UNITA, headed by Jonas Savimbi.¹⁰⁴ UNITA continued a long struggle against the MPLA government, making Angola another terrain for the Cold War, as well as a site for a bizarre political economy of war that was driven largely by the rich deposits of diamonds and oil.¹⁰⁵ In the 1990s, this war displaced over 1.5 million Angolans; about 330,000 of them left the country.¹⁰⁶ Large earnings from oil, which generates about U.S.\$5 billion every year, supported the Angolan war. The oil revenue has not made a significant impact on the average Angolan, and many people remain poor because most of the revenue generated has been used to fight a long civil war.¹⁰⁷ The wealth from oil revenues largely benefits elites associated with the president and those who work with the parastatal oil company, Sonangol.¹⁰⁸ Diamonds, on the

other hand, provided support for the UNITA war effort. In both cases, oil and diamonds perpetuated the war, and today Angola, which is a richly endowed country, remains poor. The leaders have used the money from the minerals and oil to finance killings and enrich themselves.

In Sierra Leone, where the masses are extremely poor, the country's diamonds have fueled a protracted civil strife. Beginning with President Siaka Stevens, political elites have looted the mining industry and brought the country to the brink of economic disaster. Stevens's corrupt regime precipitated the rebellion, and rebels who controlled diamond-producing areas of Sierra Leone embarked on the sale of diamonds through third parties in Liberia, with former Liberian dictator Charles Taylor acting as the mastermind behind the trade.¹⁰⁹ The income generated from the diamond sale kept the civil strife alive.

Fourth, perpetrators of violence have finessed violence into genocide. The vicious genocide in Rwanda and the brutality in the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and now Darfur, have been well documented, especially by the United Nations tribunal that is investigating and prosecuting the genocide in Rwanda. Violence that erupted in Congo (Brazzaville) during the transition era was cruel.

Victims . . . were burned, buried alive, shot, thrown into the river, decapitated and/or slashed with machetes. Among the victims were men, women, and children . . . raping the enemy's women seems to have played as an important role here as in Bosnia. Infants have been placed in mortars and pounded to death.¹¹⁰

Victor Davies has argued that in Sierra Leone, in addition to an estimated death toll that ranges from 20,000 to 75,000, "the rebels have amputated, sexually assaulted and conscripted thousands of men, women and children, posing a potential AIDS crisis in the coming years . . . Politicians employed private armies to pillage and rob people of their belongings; torture, rape women and kill innocent civilians. Infrastructure and public and private property have been looted or destroyed."¹¹¹ Observers are not sensationalizing, specializing, or claiming that there is a peculiarity about the Congolese or Rwandan violence; the details on violence in other places around the world are equally appalling.

In the case of Rwanda, anger and frustrations over neglect and abuse that had built up for more than a generation led to one of the most gruesome genocides of the twentieth century. Between 500,000 and one million people were killed within a few months. One could state in summary and provisional manner several things about the Rwandan genocide.¹¹² First, leaders who encouraged the killings pursued personal

ambitions to compromise the long tradition of cohesion. They introduced new ideologies, which affirmed that the Bantu peoples of Rwanda were the authentic residents and thus, "*le peuple majoritaire*." Their leaders introduced extensive structures after 1959 to organize members of the Rwandan society according to their ethnicity.¹¹³ However, ethnic rivalries and long-term preferential treatment of one ethnic group over another by colonials and missionaries ought to be considered together with other factors, such as the poor performance of the Rwandan economy, which exacerbated hatred and brutal killings.

Second, we ought to state the obvious: the Rwandan genocide was senseless and devastating.¹¹⁴ The willingness with which people followed the orders of their leaders to kill other people seems incomprehensible to many. What happened in Rwanda was more than mere complicity because the majority of the killers not only complied with orders, but also planned and carried out the murders.¹¹⁵ However, on the point of compliance, Hintjens has argued:

Widespread popular compliance was achieved through a variety of means and ensured that killing Tutsi became a civic duty of all Hutu, rather than an exceptional or spontaneous act of cruelty . . . Genocide was implemented in a very efficient manner in Rwanda, and social conformism played a part; on the other hand the official genocide policy from the start of the 1990s to 1994 was also a struggle against externally imposed, and domestically desired peace.¹¹⁶

As many have observed, in Rwanda, genocide was regularized, normalized, systematized, and rewarded.¹¹⁷ In his analysis of the genocide, Gerard Prúnier points out that killing a Tutsi male was called "bush clearing," while killing women and children was called "pulling out roots and bad weeds."¹¹⁸ Not all Rwandans complied with the orders to kill, but instead acted at their own risk to protect some people who were the targets of genocide.¹¹⁹

Mamdani's brilliant analysis of the Rwandan genocide invites us to "think" about this gruesome genocide through a critical historical analysis that locates the creation of ethnic identity in the light of the colonial "native," who was also a subject nexus. This nexus created a structure that would enable the rise of a popular agency in the execution of violence at both the leadership and lower levels of the society.¹²⁰ Mamdani's task is to probe the specific political violence through which some people define others as public enemies and not "the universal character of evil."¹²¹ A politicized indigeneity created a deep sense of nationhood among the Hutus, and people played on these sentiments to consolidate a vicious othering process, which resulted in genocide. The ethical questions here

involve not only the politics of exclusion, but also the very movement of consciousness-building that took place over the course of Rwandan history, which permitted rational human beings to isolate and brutalize other human beings because they belonged to a different ethnic group.

If one agrees (as I do) with Mamdani that fear motivated the genocide, one needs to question the very idea of “fear” itself.¹²² In this case, fear was motivated by the belief held among the Hutus that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) forces would take away the lands the Hutus acquired in 1959 and return them to the Tutsis. Thus, this fear was motivated by a desire to safeguard property. This situation still raises moral questions about the sense of justice in a political community. On gaining independence, the Rwandan leadership had an obligation to ensure that all members of the political community had access to productive resources. Furthermore, the leaders ought to have put in place an adjudicative process to enable people to conduct negotiation peacefully.¹²³ Since the government did not do this, Rwanda went through a series of violence culminating in the 1994 genocide. The human, emotional, financial, and social cost of such violence cannot be calculated, and now becomes part of the historical memory of Rwanda.

In the aftermath of the gruesome genocide, the international community has urged Rwandans and other people who have lived through genocide to realize that they have a responsibility to reorganize and move into a future based on justice and not merely on revenge, leaving behind a genocide that was extensive, systematic, brutal, communalized, ritualized, and rewarded. However, as Mamdani argues, this genocide also offers an opportunity to discuss and debate what it means to belong to a historical community. Mamdani is correct in arguing that the goal of such a dialogue has to be justice and not revenge. It is important to think about building democratic values that will allow people to respect one another. Mamdani argues that a democratic and just society needs to take seriously the rights of those who have survived the genocide as well as of those who have perpetrated it. Such an engagement would strengthen Rwandans to move beyond the culture of blame, which could hinder progress toward reconciliation.¹²⁴

Fifth, perpetrators of conflicts, violence, and wars in Africa have exploited religious symbols for their own purposes. In Sierra Leone, rituals reminiscent of initiation were used by rebel forces to force into submission young “recruits,” who were often captured from their villages without the consent of the children or their parents.¹²⁵ Magic rituals and images of the traditional hunter were also employed during this savage civil war.¹²⁶ Stephen Ellis has argued that religious symbols were manipulated and used in violence in Liberia for a long time but this ceased with the rule of political / Christian elites.¹²⁷ However, Ellis points out that the

Poro and Sande institutions of esoteric knowledge have survived, and played a role in the recent war.

Finally, violence has turned many African children into fighters rather than students who ought to be studying and preparing to lead their countries into the future. Child soldiers are a growing problem around the world. Child soldiers have been reported in Angola, Sudan, Uganda, the DRC, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, among others. In some of the wars, rebel groups captured children, but those children watched their captors brutally murder their parents. With the end of the conflicts in some regions, the integration of child soldiers still poses a challenge to society. It might take a very long time for these children to recover from the psychological traumas they have suffered through participating in or seeing the gruesome acts done to their parents or that they themselves were pushed to do to other people.

The consequences of conflicts in Africa have been devastating:

1. Millions have lost their lives in these conflicts. Some have been killed by land mines in the actual conflict while others have been killed or injured after the wars in countries such as Angola.¹²⁸
2. Violence has caused untold displacement in Africa. In the early 1980s it was estimated that a third of the refugees in the world were in Africa.¹²⁹ A rough estimate of refugees in Africa in 1993 stood at about 5.2 million, and about 13 million people were displaced.¹³⁰ Idi Amin used political violence in Uganda and forced many Africans as well as African Asians to become refugees.
3. Economies have been disrupted and entire nations, such as Somalia, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and the DRC, have been destroyed. A regional perspective provided by R. Green and C. Thompson indicated that the wars of Angola and Mozambique cost between U.S.\$44 and 47 billion.¹³¹
4. Violence has forced children to leave school and to fight in makeshift armies whose duty has been to terrorize people, take their food away, and maim, rape, and kill them.
5. Violence has wreaked havoc on the environment. Extensive mining has taken place in Sierra Leone, the DRC, and Angola to finance violence.
6. Violence has created a new dislocation both within and outside Africa.

Within the African borders, people are on the move in search of work and means of sustaining themselves. Africa has a large refugee population, and the case of Sudanese and the Rwandan refugees in the eastern part of the DRC has captured international attention. In that region, the refugee

problem is complicated by the long-standing disputes over who does and does not belong to the community, resulting from the settlement of Rwandan nationals in the area before independence. Conflicts have made it difficult to give a simple characterization of the movements and displacements of people. Harri Englund's study of the Mozambique–Malawi borderland offers such an example in a detailed study of the *ci-Cewa* people who live there.¹³² This study articulates not only the manipulation of the situation by both government and rebel forces in Mozambique but also shows the difficulty of designating who is a refugee among the marginalized people; alongside war, gender, class, and the historical circumstances of the region have also contributed to the loss of identity or development of complex identity among a people victimized by civil war in Mozambique.

In this chapter, I have argued that the African crisis has been brought about by the privatization of power, the pauperization of the state, the prodigalization of the state, and the proliferation of violence. In the next chapter, I will argue that the genesis of these manipulations of the state lies in the political praxis of the postcolonial leaders.

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CHAPTER 2

THE GENESIS OF THE AFRICAN CRISIS: THE MANIFESTATION OF A POLITICAL WILL

Africa is said not to be responsible for the catastrophes that are befalling it. The present destiny of the continent is supposed to proceed not from free and autonomous choices but from the legacy of a history imposed upon Africans, burned into their flesh by rape, brutality, and all sorts of economic conditionalities. The African subject's difficulty in representing him- or herself as the subject of a free will is supposed to proceed from this long history of subjugation.

Achille Mbembe¹

In this chapter, I argue that Africa's postcolonial leadership is largely responsible for the African crisis. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss Mahmood Mamdani's thesis that the two-tier society in postcolonial Africa is a legacy of late colonialism.² In the second part, I will discuss the political philosophy of former Cameroonian president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, to support the claim that the African crisis resulted from the political will of the postcolonial leaders. In so arguing, however, I do not deny the imperial order's devastating effects that continued in the postcolony. Colonial articulations and praxis drastically reordered African history, society, and political realities, and left an indelible mark on a continent it had balkanized and robbed of its economic resources.³ Colonial hegemonic ideology combined racist religious praxis and local structures to dominate Africans in the name of Christianity and civilization.⁴

Although the colonial interlude was decisive, African leaders rejected its ethos and its undemocratic praxis through the liberation struggles that ushered in independence.⁵ However, independence did not mean complete liberation, because the sociopolitical segmentation of the colonial state was replicated in the postcolony. This decision to maintain colonial structures

of domination perpetuated marginalization and political disintegration in a society already bifurcated into “citizens” and “subjects.”

Mamdani on Citizen and Subject

In *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani has articulated clearly the dualistic and debilitating structure of society in the colony and the postcolony. He has argued that late colonialism used indirect rule to establish a “decentralized despotism” and a two-tier society in which a few people were citizens and the others were subjects. This argument about indirect rule is not new; in 1965 Crawford Young argued that colonial administrators actively solidified ethnic boundaries, thereby maintaining the indirect system of rule.⁶ However, Mamdani’s argument is important here for two reasons. First, his argument theoretically grounds the asymmetrical society (which consolidates inequality and injustice) on the question of citizenship and sense of belonging. Although all Africans are citizens in the postcolonial state, the vast majority have been accorded a second-class status and treated as subjects. Second, Mamdani’s argument invites reflection and opens the door for me to assert that postcolonial politicians consciously *decided* to maintain a socially and economically divided society. The outworking of that decision contributed significantly to the decline of the postcolonial state, and one can no longer blame colonialism alone for this Manichaeian society.

According to Mamdani, colonial authorities separated Africans and Europeans by creating separate governing instruments for them. Jan Smuts, the former prime minister of South Africa, following the intellectual legacy of George F. Hegel and later Albert Schweitzer, proposed that Europeans ought to recognize the “childlike” and subhuman nature of the Africans by building for them a civilization anchored on “African foundations, to separate whites from blacks.” This fragmentation of African society would become “the core legacy” of colonialism.⁷ Colonials further consolidated this fragmentation into a “decentralized despotism” called “native” authority. “The impact of this shift was enormous. For nowhere in Africa did there exist centralized judicial institutions with exclusive jurisdiction over an area, something that colonialism created as customary.”⁸ Colonials enforced customary authority with a whip and gun. A central colonial (and racial) authority supervised and created the native authority’s domain as a self-contained, autonomous community—“the tribe”—which was now deprived of its previous independence.⁹ Native authority de-emphasized individuality, glorified the community, and used land as the key commodity, one that was regulated from the central state.¹⁰

This system of governing through native authority was called “indirect rule.” Colonials placed a local chief at its head to collect taxes, supply labor

for colonial projects such as road construction, and provide military recruits.¹¹ Its structures included native courts, native administration, and a treasury.¹² The gross abuse of power and a quest for personal embourgeoisement by both the colonial leaders and the local rulers destroyed the fiscal autonomy of native authority. In East Africa, colonial officials and local leaders used the services of commoners on their plantations. In Cameroon, local chiefs ruthlessly acquired women as recruits for plantation labor through polygamous marriages. Elsewhere, chiefs extorted money from people to buy houses or cars or to finance a personal pilgrimage.¹³

In this racist system, civil authority defended the rights of a privileged few and regulated the market. Rights were guaranteed for the citizens under civil law, but natives were denied citizenship and access to civil law and were governed by customary law instead, thus dividing the population into citizens and subjects. The central state retained the right to define customary law and to subject it to the authority of state, but local administrators were to respect native law if it was not repugnant and if it did not hinder service to Her Majesty (the British monarch).

Like the colonialists, the postcolonial leaders also used coercive labor. In Uganda, such labor was dubbed *bulingi bwansi*; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) it was called *Salongo*. I should point out here that in the DRC, during the rule of Mobutu popular musicians such as Franco and Johny Bokelo composed songs about Mobutu's project *Salongo*.¹⁴ In Cameroon, these projects were part of the national clean-up campaigns. In Mozambique, in addition to extorting free labor, state officials extracted earnings from migrant labor. In many places, peasants were forced to grow cash crops, a practice that led to famine.¹⁵

What Mamdani maps out elsewhere worked in Cameroon. Upon attaining its independence, the Cameroon government maintained the two-tier system that Mamdani has described. In the Anglophone provinces, magistrate courts operated under a constitutional and legal code, while customary laws governed native authority courts. Where French-style municipal councils were introduced, they were organized on the basis of ethnicity. In the Wimbun area in the 1970s, there were three municipal councils and three customary courts divided according to the main family groups of the Wimbun people: the Warr, the Witang, and the Wiya. Members of the customary courts heard cases dealing with all aspects of Wimbun social life—marriage, bride prices, and land disputes. Sometimes, chiefs were appointed as members of the court, but from the 1970s, Wimbun elders with a standard six education were appointed to sit on the customary courts.

Mamdani has argued that postcolonial deracialization projects in Senegal and Ghana attempted to strip whites of their privileges and unify the legal

system. But these projects lacked substance, because reformers maintained the distinction between customary law and constitutional law, and reforms in Marxist-leaning states such as Mozambique and Ethiopia did not achieve integration. “Whereas the conservative states were content with continuing the colonial legacy of customary decentralized despotism, radical states tried to reform that legacy, but in the direction of modern centralized despotism.”¹⁶ Early reforms in East Africa were effective, but the reforms introduced by Yoweri Museveni in Uganda failed because they did not dismantle the institutional legacy of colonialism: the two-tier state and its local–central and urban–rural nexus.¹⁷

Since political reforms have failed to overcome this legacy, Mamdani has concluded that Africa faced a new situation, Afro-pessimism: “a claim highly skeptical of the continent’s ability to rejuvenate itself from within.”¹⁸ The response to this situation by leftists and rightists gave the impression that the colonial era alone laid a foundation for the problems of today.¹⁹ Mamdani has argued that such was not the case, because the three-fold agenda of the postcolonial leaders—deracializing civil society, detribalizing native authority, and attempts to develop the economy—also contributed to problems in the postcolony.²⁰ The deracializing and detribalizing projects were marred by nepotism, corruption, and clientelism. The democratic project was shortchanged because native authority was not destroyed.²¹ Given this situation, elections were a choice of who would rule over subjects, a search for a master of all the “tribes,” a move that has perpetuated patron–client relations. In addition, reforms confined to civil society were not effective, because the real issues were poor governance and bad political praxis.²² To this Mamdani adds: “It is also that the specificity of the political in the African experience lies not as much in structural defects of a historically organized civil society as in the crystallization of a different form of power.”²³ This claim that what was specific in the postcolonial situation was the emergence of a “different form of power” is crucial, because it signals that while decentralized despotism was carried into the postcolonial state, something new emerged. I contend that it was that new form of power that emerged out of the decisive political will of the postcolonial leaders that was decisive in the creation of the postcolonial crisis.

Mamdani’s thesis is bold and conceptually clear, and he has marshaled evidence to support his argument in a dazzling manner. The one criticism I have of his project is that he does not discuss the role of religion and theology in the invention of the subject, especially in South Africa, where theological beliefs created apartheid. In particular, he has ignored the theological and anthropological literature especially the work of Jean and John Comaroff and other scholars of South African history, who discuss the

missionization, colonization, and proletarianization of South African society in remarkable detail.²⁴

Independence Opened a Space for Change

I am convinced that it is the political *will* of the postcolonial leaders that has fostered the two-tier society. One could further argue that if colonial powers had not set up a two-tier society, the postcolonial leaders would have set up that kind of society anyway. I take this position because decolonization and independence gave African leaders both reason and opportunity to dismantle colonial structures and create free institutions, but they did not.²⁵ In many African countries, political transition was a decisive event that required new governing structures and a radical arrangement of sociopolitical relations, coming as it did in the wake of direct violence and war. In Cameroon, the anticolonial struggle was a testament to the high stakes involved in attaining political independence. Similarly, the Mau Mau movement, which symbolized Kenya's struggle for *Uhuru*, marked a decisive turning point in Kenyan political life. Chisanga Siame has argued that the ChiBemba of Zambia perceived independence as *ubuntungwa*, meaning, the freedom to become "fully human as opposed to having a servile or sub-human status."²⁶ Decolonization was not merely a change of leadership; it was also a time to replace colonial institutions of domination with structures of liberation. Instead, postcolonial leaders maintained the old structures and used them to marginalize ordinary people.

One might be tempted to concede that the new leaders had little choice but to preserve the colonial structures that they inherited. But this argument does not hold, because the postcolonial leaders clearly had the capacity to restructure; when forced a few years later to make adjustments, they rejected multiparty systems, created powerful presidencies, and established single-party systems.²⁷ I emphasize the decisive "political will" of postcolonial leaders because they thought and acted as deliberate and purposeful rational beings. They communicated their ideas to their people and convinced their followers to join them in actualizing their vision of freedom for Africa.

Hannah Arendt has argued that human beings are distinct in a very special way.²⁸

Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them men [*sic*] distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; there are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men . . . with word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance.²⁹

Speech and action, according to Arendt, are not always forced on us but are what we engage in by ourselves. As human beings, we take initiative and “set something in motion.”³⁰ Independence in Africa was marked by a specific manner of speaking and acting that spelled out the distinctiveness of the new era and the intention of leaders to reverse the ravages of colonial society by creating a new political community—something that could be described, in the words of Arendt, as a second birth.

However, Arendt also argued that because humans act, we can count on the unexpected to happen. In African postcolonial politics, the unexpected has come in many ways. Besides Lumumba’s terse though accurate remark to the representative of the Belgian Crown that Africans were no longer their slaves, the record shows that African leaders desired to introduce an ideology that proclaimed the dawn of a new era. For example, in a manner similar to Arendt, Kwame Nkrumah, in *Consciencism*, linked thought and practice, arguing that traditional African thought ought to be placed alongside Western and Islamic ideas to develop new ideas that would determine action.³¹ Nkrumah called for revolutionary thought to redeem and emancipate Africa and reinstate egalitarian relationships. Such emancipation demanded the “logistical organization and [the] mobilization of resources to attain the kind of restitution that is needed.”³² There is no doubt that Nkrumah knew that he was obligated to create liberating structures. His ideological tool, consciencism, was intended to map and deploy intellectual forces that would help Africa “sift” and reject thoughts that had been imposed on the African personality. Nkrumah’s views echo Arendt’s and spell out in detail what Mamdani has argued postcolonial states need to consider as they seek to reform society, namely, the question of governance and “mode of incorporation.”³³

Nkrumah proposed a neo-Kantian and egalitarian view of personhood and ethics in the African context built on “The cardinal ethical principle of philosophical consciencism [which] is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means.”³⁴ He rejected views that branded African communities as “tribes” because he wanted to create a society that guaranteed plurality. This required the creation of institutions that would oversee individual behavior and recognize individual worthiness.³⁵ This anticolonial rhetoric rejected the depersonalizing project of the imperial era: the new African leaders pledged to replace the colonial ethos with freedom and justice.

It is significant that Nkrumah explicitly rejected exploitation, arguing that it was contrary to consciencism, which sought development for all people on the basis of equality and an egalitarian spirit.³⁶ He advocated a dialectical activity that would promote positive action and shun negative action. With unusual clarity, he described positive action as any action that

ends the exploitation and oppression of the people by the oligarchy and instead promotes social justice. Nkrumah was also critical of institutions that would create oligarchy because such structures could promote negative action, which he described as forces that prolong subjugation and exploitation that started during the colonial times.³⁷

Nkrumah, however, did not achieve his goals, because he did not introduce a radical departure from the two-tier society created by colonialism. This was a political decision on his part. In fairness to Nkrumah, he recognized that neocolonialism would compromise political changes made by Africans. However, one could argue that by keeping colonial structures in place, postcolonial leaders *chose* to subscribe to a neocolonial strategy, a divisive praxis through which politicians “neglect[ted] the very people who put them in power and incautiously become instruments of suppression on behalf of the neocolonialist.”³⁸ Nkrumah’s Achilles’ heel was his decision to promote consciencism through a single party. He was convinced that “[the multi-party] is in fact only a ruse for perpetuating [neocolonialism] and covers up the inherent struggle between the haves and the have-nots.”³⁹ This view militates against Nkrumah’s own assessments of the pitfalls of coercion and bureaucratic centralization, which he described as not only pathological, but autocratic as well.⁴⁰ When Nkrumah actually instituted one-party rule, K. A. Busia rejected it and denounced him for justifying authoritarian rule in the name of tradition.⁴¹

Perhaps one could argue that African leaders, with the exception of a few, lacked the educational and specialized skills to articulate and execute their political vision. Such a view assumes that if they had the intellectual skills they would have been visionary and efficient in instituting and maintaining structures that would promote freedom; therefore, emphasizing ideology, as I do, misses the point. One could also argue that to claim, as I do, that African leaders had the intellectual and ideological resources needed to do away with the oppressive colonial structures overstates the case. This is probably one way of reading Frantz Fanon’s cogent articulation of “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness.”⁴²

Fanon cautioned new states against the rush to claim nationhood, because the people and their leaders were not prepared educationally (if one takes the view that some of the leaders were not prepared academically for their new task). Fanon argued that there was a gap between the masses and their leaders, whose “laziness, and let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps.”⁴³ He predicted that the postcolony would face problems because the middle class would be incapable of seeing the reasons for popular action. They would become lazy, lack vision, and hang on to a colonial mindset.⁴⁴ They would disregard their task of equipping the people with the “technical

capital” they gained from colonial universities. They would fight to nationalize by transferring unfair advantages into the hands of a few.⁴⁵ They would also seek economic aid from the West. The national bourgeoisie would grab land from the peasants; taking away more than the colonial masters took, as Jomo Kenyatta and his cohorts did in Kenya.

Fanon also argued that African leaders would also promote ethnicity.⁴⁶ Referring to problems in some African countries, Fanon added, “From nationalism we have passed to ultra nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally racism.”⁴⁷ Ethnic strife had already led some politicians to favor members of their own group and play one ethnic group against another to defend the interests of the ruling bourgeoisie and their systems of exploitation, thereby stalling the emergence of a flourishing community.⁴⁸ Fanon predicted that after independence, the postcolonial leaders would ignore bread, land, and their duty to restore the country to the people and instead, “become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie.”⁴⁹

While one may not subscribe to the view that many of the postcolonial leaders were intellectually inept, Fanon has persuasively argued that the postcolonial leaders would not merely carry out the colonial legacy, but that they would also become the agents of a glaring “will to power.” I evoke “will to power” not only to Nietzscheanize the conversation, but also to highlight the fact that the postcolonial leaders made deliberate choices. Nietzsche’s “will to power” refers to personal reinterpretations of human events to suit the desires of the interpreter.⁵⁰ Postcolonial leaders pursued their own interpretations of the state and carried out a disfiguring praxis that has destroyed the African political community. They maintained structures of domination because they nurtured personal ambitions, and they imposed what Bayart has called “the hegemonic project of the state,” which destroyed civil society, limited political access, and subjected its members to the dominant people or co-opted them.⁵¹ Perhaps we can appreciate this further by relating it to Nietzsche’s view that religion demonstrates the will to power in the sense that it reinterprets existing symbols to conform to the will of the interpreter. African leaders have thus reinterpreted the symbols of the state to suit their own imaginations.⁵² They have ignored basic political principles in governance and have cultivated relations of interest centered on a few privileged individuals.

Outworking of Political Will: Ahidjo’s Political Philosophy in Cameroon

Ahidjo’s political philosophy demonstrates that postcolonial leaders decided to keep a two-tier society to promote personal ambitions and

political totality. Cameroon is at an impasse today because of Ahidjo's "false start." My discussion will take the form of a generative political phenomenology in which I undertake a critical assessment of the ideology on which Ahidjo constructed his agenda of domination.⁵³

In 1982 President Ahmadou Ahidjo, "*père de la nation*," stunned the nation by resigning from the presidency and appointing his prime minister, Paul Biya, as his successor. This unexpected move by a man who had choreographed Cameroonian politics for over two decades surprised observers of Cameroonian political life, because the Cameroon state seemed to be doing well and had a balanced budget of 410 billion francs CFA, to be paid for from the country's resources.⁵⁴ Initially, the transition to the presidency of Biya was smooth, and people felt free to criticize the excesses and abuses of Ahidjo. Cameroonians, used to praising the president, now praised Biya, who came to power preaching rigor and morality, as the personification of rigor. When the euphoria was over, what appeared to be a well-organized succession was marred by one bloody coup attempt, and Cameroon was later caught in economic crisis. Nothing has worked well since the mid-1980s. I do not mean to imply that everything worked well before 1982; rather, I contend that Ahidjo's ideology and vision of the state created the conditions for the present crisis.

Ahidjo had a grand view of the state, and he worked to harness together all its forces to promote economic development. In Hegelian terms, Ahidjo distinguished between a state and a nation, arguing that the nation was the sum total of different fatherlands.⁵⁵ The state, for Ahidjo, was "an organization of relations between those who govern and the governed and between a population and a territory."⁵⁶ Although he believed that ultimately, the state and the nation were one, he drew from Hegel to ascribe to the nation, "a sociological formation spontaneously constituted in the course of the history of humanity," two additional features.⁵⁷

First, the nation was a natural fact. As a natural fact, the nation was an organic entity rooted in land, ethnicity, language, and religion. A nation was willed by the free consent of its people and concretized by territorial unity and the history of its people. These "materialize[d] its personality," and gave the nation the important modern concept of "frontier."⁵⁸ Ahidjo defined continuity of power in Hegelian terms as "the permanence of the unity and personality of the group," adding that although ethnic, linguistic, and religious unity were not absolutes, they were powerful elements of solidarity.

Second, the nation was also a spiritual and reasoning community that did not necessarily depend on geographic, racial, linguistic, and religious accidents, but on "an act of liberty" that transcended and humanized its natural determinants. Members of such a community shared a common

history, consent, and desire, and they determined(willed) to be a nation. This desire to be a nation was like a plebiscite, which members participated in on a daily basis. One willed to live in a political community with others regardless of their differences. This permanent choice had to be renewed constantly to strengthen solidarity. It is important to underscore that such a will involved deliberation, choices, and the commitment to respect one another and carry out reciprocal obligations. From this perspective, Cameroon, according to Ahidjo, was not yet a nation but a state with a territory and constitution, still struggling to become a nation.

He argued that the state was responsible for defending and guaranteeing its sovereignty by enforcing the rules that would organize behavior and foster the creation of a nation. (And here again one hears echoes of Hegel.) The state administrators had different functions, which could require broad-based intervention in the life of the state to safeguard the general interest.⁵⁹ This ambiguous remark was not a casual one because in Cameroon, the state was indeed involved in the lives of people in many ways including surveillance and systematic controls at road checkpoints by police and gendarme officers.⁶⁰

Ahidjo then returned to the idea of nation and described it as a space for economic development supported by a diverse market economy. In such a context, the nation “provokes a wide social mobility, a circulation of the elite, unknown in less differentiated traditional societies, which liberates the sense of initiative and the taste for risk.”⁶¹ This was not a reference to free markets, but to a system in which the elites would control the economy. Finally, Ahidjo considered the nation to be the hearth of civilization, where feelings of attachment, fidelity, and devotion to the fatherland would be awakened. Given that the nation was made up of many fatherlands (ethnic groups), the most important task was to transcend the different fatherlands and build one political community.

Ahidjo argued that building a nation required a strong leader and the use of appropriate techniques to change the human and material conditions of the people and their environment, both of which had been undermined by colonial values.⁶² Therefore, it was necessary to develop positive structures such as the state, a political party, and an elite corps to foster development and fashion a nation. Since the state preceded the nation, it was necessary to have a strong state and leader to give birth to the nation. The strength of the state did not lie in its persuasive powers or in its institutions, but in its capacity to impose its will on groups within the state. The unity of the nation depended on the singleness of its chief. Ahidjo criticized faith in a parliamentary system, arguing that at some point in history, the European nations were actually dictatorships, and that strong kings and emperors had played a key role in establishing those nations.

Drawing from Léopold Senghor, Ahidjo warned against two temptations of the state; assimilation and imperialism. The idea of assimilation referred to Hegel's attribution of abstract rights to citizens, a move that equalized people and destroyed differences. In the context of Cameroon, this was a peculiar if not baffling view of assimilation that Ahidjo articulated in order to stifle the expression of individual rights. Such a position was contradictory because the denial of individual rights destroyed differences. A process of amalgamation was needed to set in motion the nation. Ahidjo believed that the army had the important role of imposing discipline and eliminating differences. It is not clear how he expected the army to do this without resorting to the brutality that the police and gendarmes already showed to Cameroonians. By imperial tendencies, Ahidjo meant the temptation of certain groups to take over other groups and therefore exert their control over the state. Ahidjo always maintained that the people were first of all Cameroonians, and then members of different groups.⁶³

However, although he employed security forces to eliminate differences, Ahidjo's favorite organ for uniting the separate fatherlands into one nation was the party. The party provided leadership, brought different people together, and served as a site for civic education to transform people into conscious and responsible citizens.⁶⁴ Such a party needed an elite corps to direct its affairs and run the state. The elites would cultivate values that would unite the diverse secondary fatherlands, motivate love, enable people to move toward a single destiny, and develop a "national spirit in the Hegelian sense."⁶⁵ This would result in the evolution of a national spirit from the values that had been cultivated for several generations in the different fatherlands. The historical tasks were to recover the memory of the people, connect them with their ancestors, and link the present to the past. Such memory would give the people an enlightened consciousness. However, this was not the task of the people. It was up to the intellectuals to seek out this past memory, synthesize it with the present, and forge a new future. The state was responsible for training "cadres," determining priorities, acting as an entrepreneur, and intervening "resolutely" in the economic development of the country.⁶⁶

One could argue that Ahidjo's Hegelian tendencies mirrored Hegel's absolutist views of the state, but Ahidjo grounded his claims to absolute power on a misreading of traditional authority. He argued that in order to build a strong, modern state capable of dealing with the realities of the day, one had to take the historical traditions of the Cameroonian people seriously.⁶⁷ The state in traditional society consolidated political and religious leadership in the chief, with the people and community organizations playing a counterbalancing role. The traditional state was divided into villages governed by a chief, who could be described in modern legal terms

as a sovereign of a territory invested with full legislative, judicial, and executive, and religious powers.⁶⁸ Ahidjo followed Hegel's views of the monarchy by describing a traditional leader as one who had absolute power over the people. However, this was not the case in Cameroonian villages, where the chiefs did not have such absolute power. Ahidjo cited Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes to support his view that African kings and chiefs "hold power by virtue of the agreement of their subjects." The original claim by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes, however, was: "kings and chiefs rule by consent."⁶⁹

Ahidjo knew that chiefs governed with the assistance of a council and other associations, which he described as "democratic," because all the members participated in governance either directly or indirectly.⁷⁰ In many Cameroonian communities, the council, and not the chief, made the important decisions. In Ntumbaw village, the elders always selected one from their midst to present the views of the elders and speak to the village on behalf of the chief. If the chief misrepresented the views of the council, this spokesperson often rephrased them to ensure that the decision of the elders was passed on accurately to the members of the community. Such a practice had its problems, but it served as a kind of check and balance on chiefly power. Noting that one cannot generalize about all of Africa, Kwasi Wiredu argues: "but it seems from available accounts that statecraft in many parts of traditional Africa was based on the principle of consensus"⁷¹ and not on the views of the chief alone. Ahidjo claimed that traditional society combined British democracy and "flexible autocracy with the right of the people to be in the long run, master of [its] own destiny; . . . traditional society . . . reconciles the exigencies of solidarity with the necessity of man's liberty."⁷² However, his interpretation of chiefly power and his comparison of this power with the British system is not correct; the autocratic program he instituted was devoid of any of the checks and balances inherent in the British system.

Ahidjo was primarily interested in African traditions where chiefs ruled supreme.⁷³ He did not allow any opposition to his system. He ruled with a strong hand at the beginning to consolidate his shaky grip on power, since he faced stiff opposition when he came to power as a compromise candidate.⁷⁴ He stealthily used constitutional means to garner broad powers, declare a state of emergency, and rule by decree based on the anti-subversion laws that he pushed through the national assembly in 1962. Ahidjo also consolidated his powers by co-opting or eliminating his opponents. Every political move strengthened his position at the top, *la magistracie supreme*. He created networks and established patron-client relations with supporters, who looked to him for appointments and thanked him "for the confidence he has bestowed in me," an expression that has become a quintessential

Cameroonian tradition. Ahidjo's decrees appointing people to various offices were always the most important items on news bulletins on national radio. He appointed people to most of the key positions in the country, from minister of state down to divisional officer, and all the people he appointed owed their loyalty to one person, the head of state. Senior local administrators owed their loyalty to Ahidjo and reported directly to him.⁷⁵ Ahidjo's cunning tactics worked to consolidate his own rule.

Ahidjo claimed that he would dismantle the hegemony of the colonial state, in which power had been taken away from the chief and given to colonial administrators or governors, who controlled public service, security, and justice, assisted by representatives in local areas.⁷⁶ Ahidjo remarkably observed that under the colonial system, people were not citizens but subjects who were deprived of public and private rights. Ahidjo wanted to return all power to the chief, and Ahidjo himself, as president, would have all those powers.

He argued that the traditional state organization was no longer useful today because of the size of the country and the complexity of modern bureaucracy. Although the colonial state had imposed modern structures, it had not enabled citizens to build a coherent political society. Instead, it had created a divisive party system that promoted ethnic divisions and served personal interest. Ahidjo claimed that the colonial structures were unworkable and had to be adapted to suit African nations.⁷⁷ Reorganization would require a republican and secular state with the president as head of state. Ahidjo predicted that such a system would promote economic development. However, he cautioned that concerns for efficiency could not be used to ignore democracy, because the validity of the state depended on democratic institutions.⁷⁸

Ahidjo rejected parliamentary and multiparty systems as unstable institutions, that had hindered the Western world's attempts at nation-building. Multiparties would generate antagonism, disorder, stagnation, and regression; for that reason, the multiparty system presented "serious impediments to progress."⁷⁹ He told critics of Africa that they had no right to compare African realities with those in the West. In explaining his position, he argued that parliamentary democracy implied an informed public, freedom of expression, and values that guaranteed the stability of the state, but that as Cameroon and Africa were not yet at that stage in their development, adopting European democracy would lead to anarchy and dictatorship.⁸⁰ He thus suggested that Africans needed to adapt democracy to African realities, and that such a system should be anchored in a presidential system and a unified party.

He preferred a strong presidential system that would ensure confidence, stability, and effective national planning, with the president having the same

sovereignty as the national assembly.⁸¹ This was not an indication that there would be any checks and balances, but rather that the president and the assembly would be on the same level. In Cameroon, the president ruled by decree, an indication that the president was in fact sovereign in a way that the national assembly was not. Furthermore, Ahidjo believed the president, and not the presidency, to be the symbol of the state. This perspective not only personified power, but also absolutized Ahidjo's powers to cultic proportions in a manner that even Hegel would have been envious of.

Ahidjo justified his claim of sovereignty in a Senghorian naturalism that is suspect and questionable. He claimed that since there are no two-headed beings, nature shows us by example that the state ought to have one sovereign leader.⁸² The biological metaphors that compare the state to human beings give the impression that Ahidjo considered the state as a single organism. Ahidjo even claimed that an African chief incarnated the unity of the community and was the link between the living and their ancestors; the chief, in his view, symbolized continuity, permanence, and the spirituality of the people.⁸³ I am not sure whether that indeed was the case with traditional authority; but even if it was, to claim that for a political leader in a modern nation state was taking the connection too far.

Three things can be said here. First, the generalization about the absoluteness of chiefly authority in Africa was unfounded.⁸⁴ Second, even if the generalizations about chiefly authority were true, Ahidjo undercut his earlier argument that traditional government was outmoded and inappropriate for the development of a modern state. Obviously, he did not think that such an autocratic perspective of government was too outmoded for the creation of a nation. Third, it is problematic to transfer to a modern secular state contested assumptions about the spiritualism under which the chief operated in African society.⁸⁵

The Single Party as a Mechanism of Political Totality

Ahidjo totalized the state by eliminating multiparty politics.⁸⁶ Speaking in quasi-religious terms, which hinted at the often-secret nature in which the politburo of the ruling party, acting like a mystical community, conducted its business, Ahidjo called the party a mechanism for creating the mythology that would personify power and transform the president into the symbol of the nation.⁸⁷

He preferred the single party for several reasons. First, a single party would promote national unity. He wanted to engage the party in a de-ethnicization process to create a common political community and destiny.⁸⁸ Second, Ahidjo thought that a single party would infuse the "mystique of development into the body politic."⁸⁹ Third, it would provide a base for

training cadres and pull all of the country's talent under one roof. Fourth, it would prevent demagoguery, which Ahidjo characterized as "inconsiderate criticism, based on personal interests, and through demagogic opposition."⁹⁰ He argued that the ruling party in a multiparty system always faces sabotage of its well-intentioned projects by the opposition. Put simply, Ahidjo did not want another opinion on the Cameroon state. Fifth, the single party would mobilize political representation. The reality in Cameroon was that Ahidjo and his supporters handpicked people to serve in the party, the national assembly, and the Economic and Social Council. Ahidjo's talk of a party that would inform people and galvanize the will of the nation was empty rhetoric, because the single party was not representational. Sixth, the single party would educate the masses. This education was carried out at the cell levels of the party and at schools, where civic and political instructions were taught regularly. Several training seminars were conducted, and Ahidjo personally opened them, eloquently delivering his pitch for the one-party system and national unity.

Ahidjo knew that having only one party gave the impression that there were no liberties in the country. He argued that Cameroon respected individual liberties. He challenged two Hegelian views on liberty. First, he challenged Hegel's view that liberty referred to the freedom to identify with the general will of the state. In the case of Cameroon, since there was no general will of the state outside of the project of the political elites, Ahidjo thought that any discussion of the will of the state was an abstraction. Furthermore, he argued that if the exercise of freedom meant that one could only reflect the general will of the state, there was no room for dissent. Second, Ahidjo challenged the view that liberty was a natural human gift. Ahidjo called this second view a universal construct that robbed the state of its right to be involved in shaping the individual. Ahidjo argued that Africans needed to redefine individual liberties in African terms so that they could develop a new civilization and work for the liberation of African society from hunger, ignorance, and disease, so that the African people would experience equality and justice.⁹¹ It is difficult to see any liberating value in the view of liberty articulated by Ahidjo, although he claimed that his view would give individuals the opportunity to develop their personalities for liberation and for a new society and would enable them to fight against forces that held back development. The problem is that Ahidjo's system, structured on the single party, did not give people this kind of liberty.

Nearly forty years after independence, Cameroon continues to experience economic decline and is in much worse shape than it was during the days of Ahidjo. This is because the personal liberties that Ahidjo described were subsumed under Ahidjo's hegemonic vision and praxis. He tried to

soften his totalitarian project by arguing that he had not imposed the single party on Cameroon. Instead, the collective will of the people had created the party in response to his appeal. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Ahidjo had started his campaign for a single party as far back as 1961, claiming at a press conference that such a party would allow free speech and democracy.⁹² Initially, politicians in the eastern part of the federation rejected his call for a single party, stating instead that they were willing to explore his call for national unity. Rather than debate the issue with them, Ahidjo had them arrested under the Subversion Act of 1962.⁹³ West Cameroonian politicians, who were interested in their personal welfare in the system Ahidjo was building, caved into his proposals without protest.⁹⁴ Overall, the people were coerced into accepting this one party for fear that they would be labeled enemies of the state. Ahidjo then devoted his energies toward cultivating the one-party idea by using the personality cult that was already building around him. His leadership was cast in pseudo-traditional terms as a chief and spiritual leader who was presumably linked to the ancestors of the people. Other Cameroonian politicians did not have the freedom to reject such a party.

Although Ahidjo claimed that his party would eliminate class distinctions, his single party in fact created what Milovin Djilas called "*the new class*".⁹⁵ This new class was subject to the authority of Ahidjo, who did not allow any room for differing opinions, although he called for a limited diversity of opinions on the grounds that it was desirable as long as journalists did not use their freedoms to damage and smear others in a systematic manner.⁹⁶ In the Cameroon of Ahidjo, this observation about journalistic practice was not only an opinion but also law, and countless journalists were to pay a high price for its violation. Ahidjo ruled by decree, and left the country in a perpetual state of emergency.

He further argued that the party would ensure liberty by decentralizing the administration. Ahidjo's decentralization was a broad program that incorporated traditional authority into the local government to establish a symbiotic and harmonious relationship between them.⁹⁷ This strategy, Mamdani has argued, solidified the stratification of society into citizens and subjects.⁹⁸ The outcome of this marriage of traditional society with the structures of the modern state in Cameroon was the co-optation and (some would argue) the corruption of traditional authority. The traditional authorities that were co-opted never really had a voice, because the municipal authorities or the civil administrators who boasted that they owed their loyalty to the president alone always overshadowed the traditional rulers and effectively recruited them into the corrupt lifestyle of the political elites, thereby desacralizing their offices.

Ahidjo eradicated political opposition and created a structural totality, the unitary state, to replace the federal system. At first, it might seem as if Ahidjo was changing structures, but a close reading of the path he took indicates that it was all part of a master plan aimed at putting one person, Ahidjo, in charge. Earlier on in his rule, Ahidjo indicated that he preferred federalism because of Cameroon's linguistic and economic imbalance. He argued that the English-speaking sector was lagging behind and that it would not be correct to do away with the federal system. He ruled out a unitary and centralized form of government on the grounds that it could not be justified under the circumstances of Cameroon. The federation he envisioned called for an executive branch that would be responsible to the legislative branch, although he reserved the president's rights to dissolve the parliament. He stressed that since the two states of Cameroon had different political and economic experiences, a failure to consider that would create long-term difficulties.⁹⁹

However, with the successful institution of a one-party system in 1966, Ahidjo, without vigorous debate, institutionalized a unitary state on May 20th 1972 through a hastily organized referendum dubbed a "peaceful revolution."¹⁰⁰ The new structure, the United Republic of Cameroon, fulfilled Ahidjo's dreams to become the sole chief.¹⁰¹ André Marie Talla's song "*Je Vais a Yaoundé*" became a reality. The creation of a unitary state resulted in a massive centralization of the bureaucracy, and all civil servants had to travel to Yaoundé to push their papers, which were held up in the bureaucracy of a central government. They also had to travel to Yaoundé to chase files, salaries, and the ultimate jewel of Ahidjo's system: *integration* into the public service.

Totality Over Subjects

Earlier assessments of Ahidjo's stewardship in Cameroon gave him good marks for the progress of the country. However, Ahidjo's legacy laid the groundwork for the collapse of the postcolonial state. The state that he created could not have fulfilled his dream of building a nation, although Ahidjo claimed that he sought presidential powers in a country united under one party to develop Cameroon through its own labor, internal cooperation, and a system of planning. He called underdevelopment the condition in which a country failed to use all its natural, technical, scientific, and human resources.¹⁰² The state of underdevelopment was created by a number of things, including the poor conditions of the peasantry, poor production methods, and dependency created by colonial domination. Poor countries produced mainly raw materials, lacked investment capital, and technical capacity. Furthermore, African states had limited

access to markets, low productivity, poor technical training, and lacked diversity of labor. Ahidjo noted that Cameroon still had the economic structures put in place by the UN trusteeship, and France was the beneficiary of all of its financial transactions. One wonders why Ahidjo did not work with other African states to change this situation during his long reign over Cameroon.

Ahidjo called his development strategy “humanism” and “planned liberalism.” He identified the means of development as land, labor, and capital. He believed that the state had an obligation to intervene in development through planning to ensure the judicious use of resources. Planning, according to Ahidjo, did not impose the will of the state on the people; rather, planning the state economy offered an opportunity for the state to persuade and dialogue with the people at all levels. In Cameroon, the state remained the main power behind economic planning and growth because it created the institutions that were necessary for economic growth, such as the Cameroon Development Bank and the National Investment Corporation. This heavy involvement of the state created an economic climate that could not be sustained, leading to the crisis that has since plagued Cameroon and other African states. Ahidjo also argued that diplomacy would enhance economic development. But his closest ties were with France, and his critics, especially the Anglophone sector of the country, argued that such strong ties to France would limit the economic opportunities of the country.

In pursuing “planned liberalism,” Ahidjo argued that sovereignty involved working to improve the standards of living and providing social justice to all the people.¹⁰³ Capitalism had contributed to economic development, but it had also created inequalities among people. Socialism used planning to redress some of the inequalities created by capitalism, but Soviet socialist approaches had sacrificed the present for the future.¹⁰⁴ Ahidjo was concerned with food, clothing, education, health, housing, and entertainment, the kind of things that all people crave, regardless of their economic philosophy. But Ahidjo did not transform his ideas into concrete reality because in his structural totality, the political elites dominated and pauperized the masses.

Ahidjo preferred African socialism grounded on the African heritage of community spirit, the respect for African spiritual values, and the centrality it gave to humanity. He did not launch something like the *Ujamaa* project of Tanzania. He did not even articulate clearly what he meant by socialism, other than to state broadly that this was the African way of doing things. However, in agriculture, Ahidjo supported local cooperatives, which became for many communities one of the few means of access to government services. Members got loans through the National Fund for

Rural Development (FONADER). Ahidjo also promoted trade unions, where employers and employees could resolve issues of employment. However, he combined all trade unions under the National Union of Cameroon Workers, which was a branch of the ruling party. This move killed any hopes for collective bargaining.

Ahidjo argued that his system of planning did not prohibit private enterprise and that it was certainly not an excuse to nationalize industries and drive away private capital investments. Planned liberalism offered the best hope of harmonizing human capital with international capital in a situation where the state needed to play a decisive role in harnessing the growth potential of the country. Ahidjo stated that the objective was to promote the spirit of free enterprise, which needed freedom to be established.¹⁰⁵ Planned liberalism made room for the public and semiprivate sectors of the economy to improve individual income, build capital, train the people, and diversify the economy.

Ahidjo claimed that he would accomplish his goals through a humanistic agenda inspired by African values and Islam. African society was not individualistic but granted autonomy within society. Individuals had the right to form opinions and promote a parliamentary option.¹⁰⁶ However, in Ahidjo's Cameroon, there were no guarantees for free speech and expression. He claimed that African tradition respected life and human dignity, but the Cameroon state systematically violated individual rights and dignity. Ahidjo grounded his humanism on Islamic personalism, which protected human autonomy and the importance of human being qua human being regardless of race, class, language, or color of skin.¹⁰⁷ Islam, in his view, did not emphasize individualism to the extent that Christianity did. In Islam, one could accomplish his or her vocation alongside that of the state. It is from community that people get their first glimpse of their individuality. Ahidjo found in Islam a teaching that endorsed autonomy, universality, and communalism. He argued that personalism was rooted in the humanity and dignity of people as human beings. People ought to respect others and work for the liberation of all people. Since liberties implied acting responsibly in solidarity toward others and treating them as equals, Islamic humanism, he argued had dimensions of personalist ethics. However, it was not necessary for Ahidjo to ground his humanism in the Islamic faith, since he was articulating the values of a secular state.¹⁰⁸

Ahidjo thought that the goal of development ought to be the human being. Training and developing the personality of all Cameroonians could accomplish this.¹⁰⁹ He also emphasized that the human being who is autonomous is the end of development, because a person has worth on the grounds that he or she is a spiritual being. God penetrates whatever we do and protects all people. Ahidjo placed Cameroon under the protection of

God, claiming that invoking God did not endorse any particular religion, because the Cameroon state was neutral on matters of religion.¹¹⁰ The idea of divine protection, however, was later removed from subsequent constitutions, because the values that guide a country are not only religious; they also include values taken from the culture.

Ahidjo argued that the state had an obligation to guarantee human autonomy. This required a democratic structure and an environment in which an individual could exercise autonomy and participate in the advancement of social justice. Ahidjo pointed out that since democracies were also vulnerable to corruption, it was necessary for the state to protect human rights in order to guard autonomy.¹¹¹ Ahidjo claimed that the Cameroonian judiciary protected autonomy, because the judiciary was independent and politically neutral. The Cameroon courts were the guarantors of the sacred rights of people. In his address to the members of the courts on the occasion of the transfer of the judiciary to Cameroon, Ahidjo promised to make the Cameroon judiciary independent by maintaining the neutrality of the president's office, so that the judges would make their decisions without partiality.¹¹² Judicial independence, however, has not been one of the hallmarks of the Cameroonian state.

Drawing from Senghor, Ahidjo underscored the spiritual and material dimensions of the human being, arguing that development ought to benefit all persons in society. Because we respected humanity, it was important that those who planned for development took into consideration what he called the "will to work consciously" for the future of the person. People had needs that had to be satisfied for them to be fully human. Development ought to give people the means to live a full life. It was important that people be educated and know their heritage and collaborate with others. It was necessary to address international inequalities to enable developing countries to control their own destinies as well as the common human destiny of all people. Thus, interdependence and dialogue were necessary to promote the hope of humanism. The United Nations Organization could play an important role in this mission, "that of *accoucheur* of humanism which is the most authentic because it is integral."¹¹³

Despite the fact that Ahidjo wanted to establish a humane state, the Cameroonian state was marked by violence at all levels. When the winds of change started in the late 1980s, there was a lot of euphoria about the prospects of Africa, but the state that Ahidjo had created could not fulfill the aspirations of the people. His structural totality exerted control over all activities in the country. His successor, Paul Biya, did not change the system, and the Cameroonian state remained very much out of touch with the people. Ahidjo's hegemony in Cameroon totalized the state and distorted human relationships and political praxis.

If there is going to be a radical change in Cameroon today, its leaders and citizens need to rethink interpersonal relations. Such an exercise could offer fresh perspectives on jettisoning the excesses of political totality and move Cameroon forward into the future. Michael Dillon argues in the opening of *Politics of Security* that “politics must be an art capable of . . . administering the interests of existing subjectivities. It must be capable, also, of allowing new possibilities of political being to emerge out of the unstable, unjust and violently defended sediment of modern political existence.”¹¹⁴ Ahidjo talked a great deal about humanism, but the political totality that he established in Cameroon, prevented the political process from becoming an intersubjective activity in which human beings as free agents could engage in creating new possibilities.¹¹⁵

As Cameroonians think about alternatives for restructuring society, improving governance, and creating a safe place for civil society, they ought to recognize that Ahidjo *willed* the wrong ideologies and established and consolidated despotism through the party machine in the almighty state. In order for things to change, it might be necessary to dismantle the structure of the Cameroon state in order to create a more open society in which Cameroonians can forge new sociopolitical relationships and establish an equitable basis for political praxis. I do not imply that Cameroonians and other Africans do not relate to each other. Cameroonians still relate to each other, as friends, family members, colleagues, business partners, and above all, in patron–client relationship. However, in my visits to Cameroon, I have noticed that the sense of fear and distrust has grown in the wake of the socio economic crisis that has gripped the country. People fear their own family members and worry that they may be harmed by their less-successful relatives.

One could argue that there is nothing new about this fear and distrust, because the logic of witchcraft has always worked this way. However, observers of the scene in parts of the Northwest Province, where incidents of witchcraft have increased recently, suspect that the viciousness with which people have pursued suspects reflects the diseased social relationships that characterize the state today.¹¹⁶ The HIV/AIDS pandemic is taking a toll on many families, and people think only of witchcraft as a cause, pointing fingers at innocent relatives.¹¹⁷ Day-to-day business relationships in Cameroon have been polluted because of the belief and fear that nothing-goes-for-nothing. The school principal sees his or her position as an opportunity to demonstrate superiority and demand rewards in kind from the parents before any student is accepted. Reports indicate that some teachers expect their students to be sex partners before they will give them passing grades. The police and gendarmes stop people at will, beat them up, and terrorize them frequently. Local administrators look down on the

people and yell at them, insult chiefs and sub chiefs, and demand money and other benefits before they settle land disputes. When senior government officers go out to visit the people, their hosts in the provinces and divisions send people to the local government high schools to select young women who will entertain the officials at night with sex. The Anglophones have complained for a long time that they have been marginalized and treated as second-class citizens in Cameroon.¹¹⁸

Ahidjo's political will has left a legacy of misery because his political philosophy constructed a state in which power was located in one leader and in a few elites. Political totality has crippled creativity on all fronts and brought the country to the brink of collapse. Therefore, postcolonial leaders bear an enormous responsibility for destroying the hopes of liberation from colonialism. The task that is at hand calls for a new will to truth. This reinterpretation of the past ought to de-emphasize the notion of benign legacy and admit the specificity of choices made during the declarations of independence. Such a will to truth does not absolve the colonialists, nor does it deny the devastating impact of neocolonialism. Instead, this will to truth should galvanize people into knowing that they have no moral obligation to sustain an oppressive postcolonial legacy.

The project of liberation demanded that African leaders restore freedoms, establish just political communities, and create opportunities for all people to thrive as members of the political community. Let me sketch these three themes briefly.

The quest for independence was an unquestionable longing for what in Kenya was called *Uhuru*. The people longed to govern themselves, to make their own decisions, to choose their own leaders, and to go to the farms and work for their families. The people also wanted to choose their own trade partners and move and settle freely within the now-corrupted geographical boundaries left by the violent imperial project. The leaders of Africa pledged during independence to free their people from domination. When Africans realized that something else had been delivered instead of freedom, they complained about it through the voices of their artists. Wole Soyinka, in *A Dance of the Forests*, provided an early assessment of the new nation-state and found it wanting, because the local council was corrupt.¹¹⁹ In Kenya, when things did not go as planned, Oginga Odinga complained that it was *Not Yet Uhuru*.¹²⁰ In this reading, independence merely replaced the white masters.

Independence was also an imperative to establish a just political community. I have already argued that the leaders were aware that they stood at an important crossroads. There is every indication that they were conscious of the role they played, so much so that they accepted grandiose titles like "*le père de la nation*." Yet they did not live up to expectation

because they decided to build what has been variously described as dictatorships, kleptocracies, and the hegemonic state. Postcolonial leaders created distorted communities that favored political elites and their protégés. There were two worlds: one for the citizens and the other for the subjects. In such a situation, one could not talk of a just political community.

The question now is how to reconstitute a just political community. The creation of such a community could involve the dismantling of what Mamdani has called “decentralized despotism” in addition to the centralized despotism and forms of personal rule that now characterize the continent. Africans have to describe the concept of community in a new way. Such a rethinking would contribute to a better society if those engaged in it can de-ethnicize community without doing away with difference. What I mean is that people ought to conceive of a community in ways that take other human elements into consideration, such as shared interests, shared goals and values, and the quest for the common good. These elements could be the starting point for reconfiguring the notion of a just political community, one in which people will not merely emphasize their place of origin and blood ties.¹²¹

Second, African leaders must promote the notion of the common good.¹²² Given that personal ambition, ethnic preferences, and patron–client relations have obliterated the vision of the common good, the road to such a reconfiguration might involve several things. Leaders need to choose between focusing on themselves and thinking about the needs of the people who have elected them to serve the community. Edith Wyschogrod, writing about the “gift of community,” points out that “Only with the de-nucleation of the self and a relation with exteriority can heterological community come into being.”¹²³ Wyschogrod invites us to face the future not as disembodied, isolated individuals, but as people whose distinctiveness includes the sense of community. She further argues that we need to do so with a special kind of hope. “Community also embodies a mode of self-temporalization, that of the future, which is manifested as hope, the gift that those who have no-thing in common give to one another.”¹²⁴ There are certainly many people in Africa today who may have nothing in common except the dubious, highly volatile, and unpredictable political relations structured at the whims and greed of the chief. Those who have nothing have been yearning and dreaming of a new future, which is grounded on the hope that people can start again.¹²⁵

Finally, the quest for a viable political society would be strengthened if Africans create and nurture equal opportunity for all members of their respective political communities. The quest for independence was accompanied by the desire to create opportunity for all. But a distorted sociopolitical relationship denied opportunity to many. People have not only been

marginalized and alienated, but have also been made victims of and coerced into labor that would have shocked Karl Marx. It is important that a new ethic be grounded on the idea that everyone in the political community deserves an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of society and succeed in carrying out those obligations. Politicians can establish such an ethic on pragmatic grounds; it will expand the economy, a sense of the good will prevail, and the politicians themselves will be credited with creating an opportunity for all people.

CHAPTER 3

RECOVERY IDEAS I: ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENTS, DEMOCRACY, AND GOVERNANCE

I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Nelson Mandela¹

In this chapter and the next, I will discuss selected recovery projects undertaken to redress economic and political decline in Africa brought about by the abuse of political power. In the present chapter, I discuss structural adjustments, democracy, and governance. I will offer an interdisciplinary perspective on these issues, one that is by no means intended to replace expert studies and analyses of these subjects by scholars in the respective fields of study. My aim is rather to mirror the initial debates about economic and political liberalization, which were conducted in a pluralistic manner. In this respect, I concur with Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, who has argued that scholars ought to consider political and economic factors together to think critically about the crisis of the continent.²

Structural Adjustment Program

African states came out of the global economic crisis of the 1970s economically wounded and began a long march of distress that would lead to economic collapse for most of the countries in the region. African leaders took the initiative to address the dismal economic condition of the continent. Concrete proposals for economic reforms were discussed in 1979 and again at the Second Extraordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Lagos in July 1980, where heads of states and governments

adopted the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL). The LPA was an elaborate recovery plan covering agriculture, industry, natural resources, human and resource development, science and technology, transport and communications, trade and finance, environment, energy, and women and development.³ In the FAL, the heads of states and governments pledged to set up an economic community by the year 2000 that would “promote collective, accelerated, self-reliant and self-sustaining development of member states; co-operation among these states; and their integration in the economic, social and cultural fields.”⁴ In the final resolutions of the session, the heads of states criticized the industrialized countries for ignoring industrial and economic development in Africa. Other scholars blamed environmental conditions for Africa’s economic collapse.¹¹

External financial institutions with the inputs and resources needed to mount effective transformation in Africa interpreted the economic crisis from a different perspective and did not agree with the proposals that came out of Lagos. The World Bank (WB) criticized the LPA because it failed to consider the private sector of the economy, failed to discuss public sector reforms needed to stimulate African economies, and was overly optimistic about Africa’s prospects for industrial development. The WB then appointed a team headed by Professor Elliot Berg to assess the situation in Africa. The Berg Report, titled *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*, blamed African states for economic decline, citing bad policies, poor governance, and the marginal role given to private markets.⁵ The report recommended an economic adjustment with growth, and its articulations of that adjustment became the key components of the structural adjustment program (SAP) presented to African states by the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The report initially blamed Africa’s economic crisis on three factors: structural factors, such as historical circumstances and geographical, political, and climatic conditions; external factors, such as unfavorable trade terms; and domestic policy deficiencies, which included overvalued exchange rates, poor agricultural policies, and excessive state involvement in the economy. Therefore, African states participating in SAP were asked to devalue their currency, reduce state intervention in the economy, eliminate subsidies to state enterprises, liberalize trade, and privatize the economic sector, especially the parastatal companies, so that market forces would determine economic activity.⁶ In the 1980s, about thirty-six African states had signed contracts for about 241 loans with the WB and the IMF.⁷

The SAP set new conditions for future loans to African states. It demanded that African states introduce economic and democratic liberalization, establish free markets, and streamline domestic economic policies

to facilitate debt repayment and hasten economic recovery and growth. These aspects of SAP were called “conditionalities.” The WB and the IMF expected that African governments would implement these ambitious plans and make the SAP work successfully. Since there were no compromises to the SAP conditions, observers questioned whether it would be effective.

African leaders contested the claims made by the WB and the IMF that poor domestic policies were responsible for the economic crisis. They also criticized SAP, claiming that its conception and implementation ignored African realities. Codesria (the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) released two studies criticizing SAP because African states were left out of the restructuring agenda that was being proposed.⁸ Many observers argued that the stringent measures imposed on African states would have a negative impact on their economies, and others thought that an unbalanced international market would undermine the low-income countries, as in Latin America, rather than create a climate conducive to economic recovery as the IMF expected.⁹ African leaders reiterated the position they had adopted in the LPA that the crisis was a result of the instability of global market forces and the price fluctuations of the 1970s.¹⁰

In 1985, the OAU conceded that domestic policies were also responsible for the crisis.¹² Member states still supported the agenda set in the LPA, but stated that a “lack of political will” on their part would hinder attempts to implement the LPA.¹³ Many experts concurred that in addition to global economic decline and unfavorable terms of trade, political corruption, mismanagement, and poor policies had created Africa’s economic crisis. Wide agreement that internal conditions were responsible for the economic decline did not lessen criticism of the IMF by some African states, whose leaders argued that the IMF, while conceptualizing SAP, had failed to consider the impact of historical circumstances and the structure and imbalance of global trade on developing countries.¹⁴

Several components of SAP were troubling to African states. First, its call for and subsequent implementation of currency devaluation weakened the buying power of the states and compounded the already-existing problems they had with foreign-debt repayment and servicing.¹⁵ In order to comply, many states implemented salary cuts, a move that drastically reduced the purchasing power of many people while the prices of local commodities rose sharply.¹⁶ The salary cuts had a serious emotional effect on workers. As one civil servant stated in Yaoundé, she nearly collapsed when she went to the bank and realized that her salary was cut nearly in half. From that day on, life was a struggle for her and the large family that depended on her salary. States also cut social services, and standards of living declined in many

countries. Health infrastructure collapsed, and where it survived, it dangled on the brink of collapse.¹⁷

Second, African leaders resisted the idea of privatization. The demands of the WB in 1989 were very direct: "Africa needs not just less government, but better government—government that concentrates its efforts less on direct interventions and more on enabling others to be productive."¹⁸ But African states had an enormous responsibility to their people and could not justify withdrawal from the economy in many circumstances where the state was the primary employer. Politicians in some states also lacked the political will to privatize state-controlled industries, because many of them used these industries to promote political patronage and establish clientele networks for the private accumulation of wealth. Privatizing key sectors of the economy might have cut off such clientele relations and jeopardized the political fortunes of those who controlled those companies. Other countries gave up state control of companies, but sold those companies to the relatives and friends of politicians at very little cost. In other words, the very individuals accused of poor management were again destroying the restructuring process by focusing on their own private gain.

The demand to carry out a complete privatization was unrealistic because the state had an important role in restructuring and regulating economic activities in countries where there was little private capital and negligible foreign direct investment (FDI). Richard Sandbrook has argued that the WB recognized this and "recommend[ed] political liberalization and democracy, believing these will push Africa's states to become more responsible and less predatory."¹⁹ Sandbrook also argued that the early proponents of liberalization should have considered alternatives to privatization such as socialism and "people-centered development." While I agree that African states should have tried other models, I am not sure that socialism would have offered workable solutions, because African experiments with socialism prior to the crises had not been successful.

Despite such disagreements about the role of the state in the economy, when African states later submitted proposals for recovery to the United Nations General Assembly, they supported privatization.²⁰ Privatization remains promising, but requires critical appropriation because it is fraught with difficulties. In reference to privatization, Achille Mbembe has argued that SAP produced "an economy based on concessions . . . lucrative monopolies, secret contracts, private deals, and privileges in the tobacco, timber, transport, transit, and agro-industry sectors, in large-scale projects in oil, uranium, lithium, manganese, and arms purchasing, in the training and officering of armies and tribal militias, and the recruitment of mercenaries."²¹ Privatization must therefore be monitored through a regulatory system that is fair and transparent.

The implementation of the second round of SAP offered new opportunities to rethink the role and future of the state, as well as its capacity to address a variety of issues such as the environment, the availability of food, disparities between the urban and rural sectors, the rise in poverty, and a perennial problem—underdevelopment.²² Scholars speculated that the proliferation of small groups and organizations, especially NGOs, could threaten the state's dominant role in the lives of its people at a time when the African state was weak and could not offer anything to its citizens.²³ The idea here was that some families did not depend on the state anymore because their relatives in the diaspora provided for them instead.²⁴ However, the African state, though weak, is still alive; it dominates and regulates the lives of its citizens.

The economic and political liberalization demanded by the second round of SAP also received mixed reviews, despite the WB's claim that the countries that had carried out SAP had shown signs of growth.²⁵ African governments reiterated their previous criticisms of SAP and its draconian demands, charging that the IMF had ignored the negative effects that SAP had had on African communities. Their complaints were endorsed in 1996 by an International Labour Organization (ILO) study, which described liberalization as a "big bang" solution inflicted at "high social cost." The ILO study recommended gradual liberalization instead.²⁶

The debate about liberalization was important because it refocused interests on development issues. However, the scholarly consensus was that liberalization had to be accompanied by fair trade practices that took into account the import/export axis, the diversity of product and trade partners, regional trade within Africa, maximization of product advantage, and reduction of production costs. In this regard, scholars and African states were not calling for anything new, but merely asking for fair trade practices. These factors remain crucial in an increasingly global market economy. African states must also revitalize their industrial base to increase their competitive position. States must make important investments in the infrastructure needed for technological and industrial production.²⁷

For example, African states must pay attention to agriculture and the food industry. The loss of labor resulting from the HIV/AIDS pandemic poses a serious threat to food security. After independence, some countries, such as Cameroon, created agricultural schools and university centers specializing in engineering, economics, and industry to train scientists and agronomists who would work to transform the industrial outlook and ensure food security. The declining economy has compromised what was achieved in this area. The economic difficulties have led to cuts in research funding, and the quality of education on this crucial aspect of Cameroonian economy has declined. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has further

compromised capacity-building in industry and food production. This situation will drag recovery to a slow crawl unless Cameroon and other African states in a similar position can scale up a comprehensive response.

Overall, SAP was a major disappointment, because it was authoritarian in its conception and implementation. In Zimbabwe, leaders of the Catholic Church criticized SAP for sacrificing the divine image of humanity to the idol of the market.²⁸ However, supporters of SAP argued that Ghanaian head of state, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, had succeeded in implementing SAP in Ghana, recording economic recovery and growth. Despite this euphoria, Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi has argued that although Ghana reversed economic decline, increased tax revenues, increased its labor force, improved roads, and extended hydroelectric power, the results of reconstruction were partial at best.²⁹ Signs of decay were still visible in poor roads, the poor state of the educational system, a poor health care system, poor performance in the public service, and corruption. Ghana's military regime countered public resentment of the WB's austerity program with a range of punitive measures, such as limiting open decision-making about the state's reforms and executing opponents they suspected of "subversion."³⁰

The top-down implementation of SAP in African states mirrored the endemic political style that had created economic decline. Political and managerial processes were not liberalized.³¹ Other critics have argued that SAP failed to transform rural communities because the elites, who controlled and manipulated the transactions with international financial institutions, left the peasants out of economic reconstruction.³² Since the political leaders ignored the peasants, the reforms remained at the institutional level and did not have any significant impact on rural and household economies.

A team of researchers at Cornell University, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has offered a different assessment of SAP. Following criticism that SAP reforms hurt the poor, the researchers inquired whether "trade and exchange rate, fiscal and agricultural sector reforms . . . harm[ed] the poor?" as well.³³ They concluded that only households and institutions participating in economic activities that involved foreign exchange and imports at the official level suffered. They also argued that "model simulations suggest that other household groups, including the rural poor, tended to benefit from trade and exchange rate reforms as rents were redistributed throughout the economy, price incentives for production of many tradables improved, and payments to unskilled labor, land, and informal sector capital rose."³⁴ On fiscal policy, the researchers conceded that government spending relative to debt service declined, but not to the extent that other critics have claimed. African governments did not spend their resources on social programs in an equitable

manner; contrary to stated intentions, their expenditures on education and health did not favor the poor in rural areas.³⁵

The researchers argued that policymakers in the agricultural sector failed to coordinate food production with trade, exchange, and fiscal reforms. State authorities forgot that farmers are entrepreneurs who are also affected by market fluctuations. "Lack of access to information, inputs, and technology and high transaction costs due to deteriorating infrastructure, in addition to price distortions, all work to the detriment of the poor."³⁶ The authors concluded that SAP failed because African states lacked the will to carry out the structural changes and because they deprioritized capacity building.³⁷

Is it the case that African officials did not change their economic priorities and political behavior to conform to the austerity programs they had agreed to implement? Can we isolate the conditionality of SAP from the political will to change in Africa and in the global community? While I share the view that the demands of the WB and IMF were draconian, I also think that Africa and the global community lacked the political will to see SAP or Africa-initiated reforms succeed. Professor Adebayo Adedeji, formerly of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), has argued that the neglect of Africa by the Bretton Woods institutions could have been minimal if African leaders had been committed to their own development agenda. "But given their excessive external dependence, their narrow political base, and their perennial failure to put their money where their mouth is the implementation of these plans has suffered from benign neglect."³⁸ In addition, African states did not repudiate political corruption or trim government expenses. Attempts to cut down expenses in Cameroon were hijacked by corrupt elites who, while reducing waste, auctioned luxury state vehicles to themselves or to their family members at liquidation prices. Furthermore, the number of cabinet-level positions in Cameroon increased during and after SAP. With over forty members of government, whose senior staff insists on driving expensive, imported sport utility vehicles, the expenses for running those ministries have increased exponentially. State bureaucrats have fallen back on waste and luxury instead of spending resources on social needs such as education, health, and food production. Although African leaders complained about the conditionality of SAP, they carried on state business as if nothing had changed, and the crisis actually intensified in the post-SAP period.

Hopeful Initiatives: The African Union and Nepal

Is there hope for the future for African states that continue to face economic difficulties? In the post-SAP period, FDI in Africa has declined because there is less confidence in African management systems. Ernest

Aryeetey has argued that investors also fear that African economies cannot absorb large-scale investments. Although the political situation has changed in some countries, the HIV/AIDS crisis, armed conflicts and civil wars, and capital flight perpetuate the image that Africa is a highly risky place for investments. According to Aryeetey, FDI in other developing countries has increased, but Africa's share of FDI has remained low, rising in the 1990s only from U.S.\$834 million to 4,394 million, a significant rise, but not enough to change the situation drastically.³⁹ In the decade from 1981 to 1991, capital flight from Nigeria alone averaged U.S.\$2.8 billion. It was estimated in 1991 that about 85 percent of the GDP of Africa was outside the continent. By the late 1990s, it was estimated that about U.S.\$22 billion was outside the continent. Capital flight is a serious problem in Gabon, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia.⁴⁰ Aryeetey also points out that some of the resources went out through underinvoicing of exports and overinvoicing of imports, but much more through criminal and corrupt practices.⁴¹ Capital flight and minimal FDI in Africa have crippled economic recovery and increased poverty.

But there are new signs of hope on the continent. African states transformed the OAU into the African Union (AU) during the 2001 summit of heads of states and governments in Zambia. The AU must now prove that it will become a positive political force in Africa and in the international scene. The other sign of hope is the recent establishment of a development instrument, the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (Nepad), which was launched in 2002 to promote a shared vision for development in a global climate, with headquarters in Pretoria and regional offices in Abuja, Nigeria; Algiers, Algeria; and Dakar, Senegal.⁴² Nepad protocols incorporate the United Nation's ECA document, *Compact for Economic Recovery*.⁴³ Claiming that Africa was at a historic juncture, her leaders declared "We will no longer allow ourselves to be conditioned by circumstance. We will determine our own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement our efforts."⁴⁴ They ground their hopes in an increase in the number of democratic regimes on the continent.

Nepad promotes regional resource management to transform Africa, reduce dependence on the international community, and empower Africans to determine their development goals. The hope is that Nepad, as both an ideology and an organization, will provide the framework to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Nepad also encourages the development of infrastructure, technology, energy, transport, water, and the sanitation needs of the African people. African leaders anticipate that Nepad will foster poverty reduction, education, and public health; scale up the fight against HIV/AIDS; generate projects; increase employment; and protect the environment.

To accomplish these objectives, member states of the AU will have to work hard to promote peace, security, democracy, good governance, and regional and subregional collaboration. African leaders have taken a significant step forward. Rita Edozie underscores the significance of this by arguing: "African ownership and leadership and the anchoring of the redevelopment of the continent on the resources and resourcefulness of the African people are the building blocks of Nepad's philosophy."⁴⁵ I might add that this self-reliant approach has finally come to terms with the conditionality of SAP.

The launching of Nepad is an indication that African leaders have accepted the reality of globalization, and its promoters, such as South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, now openly endorse neoliberal economic programs and trade within the region and with the rest of the world. Mbeki has used the idea of an African Renaissance to promote these goals. He defends globalization on the grounds that it offers Africans an opportunity to protest against injustice and "engage . . . development partners with a partnership that breaks the old relationship between hapless African recipients of aid and benevolent donors."⁴⁶ Critics of globalization argue that promoters of Nepad who endorse globalization have capitulated to Western expectations for the continent.⁴⁷ However, a consensus might be emerging on the continent that Africa must adjust to the reality of globalization if it is to escape economic isolation.⁴⁸

Those looking for a tougher self-criticism by African leaders will not find that in Nepad. As with previous documents, the leaders attribute the crisis in Africa to a variety of global circumstances and understate the role played by political elites. The Nepad document states: "The impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the legacy of colonialism, the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system and the inadequacies of and shortcomings in the policies pursued by many countries in the post-independence era."⁴⁹ I have to state that in the light of the vast record of corruption, describing the role played by African leaders as "inadequacies" is a gross understatement. However, the document does recognize Africa's dismal record on democracy and states: "Democracy and state legitimacy have been redefined to include accountable government, a culture of human rights and popular participation as central elements."⁵⁰ Establishing responsibility and accountability will create a climate of confidence and trust in Africa and the global community.⁵¹

Nepad calls for diverse activities to achieve sustainable development. These activities include genuine attempts to prevent conflicts, promote democracy, guarantee human rights, protect economic stability by developing standards for monetary policies, introduce transparency, and revitalize education. Other activities include the desire to "promot[e] the role of

women in social and economic development by reinforcing their capacity in the domains of education and training; by the development of revenue-generating activities through facilitating access to credit; and by assuring their partnership in the political and economic life of African countries.”⁵² This is a welcome development, but much more must be done to stop institutional and structural violence against women. States must mainstream women’s economic activities. Finally, Nepad protocols call for African needs to dictate terms of trade with the international community.

African leaders want Nepad to succeed and to ensure this, they have set up the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to monitor progress toward democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights. While APRM is an important self-critical instrument, it is a mistake to assume that Nepad will succeed just because it is an African initiative. Only careful planning, regional cooperation, and discipline will help African states to achieve the goals projected by Nepad. Nepad has maintained a weak version of the conditionalities imposed by the IMF, and one wonders if there are any incentives for African leaders to pursue good governance and achieve the goals of Nepad. But despite these weaknesses, Nepad might be a post-SAP ideology and institution that could facilitate economic recovery.

Democracy

I define democracy as a system that organizes political existence and participation on the premise that the demos rule. In a democratic system, access to office ought to be open to all through free and fair elections. The people elected to office must remain accountable to the political community that has elected them. Such a system could succeed if it guaranteed freedoms and rights to members of its constituency. A democratic system involving these elements is amenable to different communities around the world.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the leaders of the postcolony decided to a Manichaeian system of citizen and subject, thus departing from the democratic aspirations nurtured during the struggle for political independence.⁵³ The decades of the 1980s and 1990s were critical because in response to the growing economic collapse, movements campaigning for change surfaced in several African countries. This was a period when the once-powerful Soviet Union was collapsing. With the Cold War over, Western countries terminated financial support that they had given to corrupt regimes, such as the government of Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, that were seen as partners in the fight against communism. The call for change in Africa also coincided with the dismantling of apartheid and the emergence of a new South Africa.⁵⁴ South Africa’s historic transition to democratic

rule inspired Africans to believe that political and economic reform was possible.

Although these global developments strengthened the resolve to fight for change, two examples demonstrate that some Africans initiated the call for change before those events. First, in Cameroon, President Paul Biya, who took over from President Ahidjo, challenged his people to respond to the call of history and bring about change—a democratic opening.⁵⁵ Biya also distinguished himself from his predecessor by preaching rigor and morality in politics before Mikhail Gorbachev did so in Moscow. Biya's reform program was called "The New Deal."⁵⁶ Second, the long struggle for democratic change in Uganda started in the 1980s, following the victory of the people's movement in the protracted civil struggle for power.⁵⁷ The victory of the forces led by Yoweri Museveni inspired other African countries to believe that democratic change was possible.

Protest movements, starting in Benin, demanded political reforms, and multiparty elections gave birth to the pro-democracy movements.⁵⁸ Protesters criticized political corruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (former Zaire), and the protesters also called Mobutu a thief. Political activists in Côte d'Ivoire criticized President Houphouët-Boigny for wasting money, citing his construction of an expensive basilica in his hometown of Yamoussoukro as an example.⁵⁹ The dictators responded in various ways, ranging from outright resistance to limited liberalization and reforms. For example, in Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda dismissed multiparty politics, saying that they would set the country back. In Cameroon, Paul Biya, who rejected calls for a national conference, introduced the multiparty system but continued old-school political co-optation and repressive politics. Early on in the struggle, soldiers confronted demonstrators, and 300 people died.⁶⁰ The protests that took place in different African countries gave birth to national conferences that began in Benin and spread to other Francophone countries, setting the stage for political reforms, liberalization, and multiparty politics, gains that soon fizzled out and stalled political and economic reforms.⁶¹

The protests and pro-democracy movements that swept through Africa from 1989 to 1993 rejected authoritarian rule, demanded participatory politics, and criticized poor economic performance.⁶² These movements signaled the desire of the people to join the political arena, but ironically, they also marked a withdrawal of the people from the public square.⁶³ At the time, Botswana, Gambia, and Mauritius were the only countries in Africa with democratic experiments.⁶⁴ In his insightful and now-familiar assessment of these movements, Richard Joseph argued that the new winds of change featured (1) national conferences, (2) regime change through democratic elections, (3) co-opted transitions (in some cases), (4) guided

democracy, (5) piecemeal reforms, (6) armed insurrections issuing in elections, and (7) conditional transitions.⁶⁵ The political liberalization launched by these movements was unfortunately short-lived, and the euphoria over democratic change did not last long enough to effect drastic changes in the political landscape of Africa.

The pro-democracy movements reawakened political discourse in Africa, influenced leadership changes in some countries, and introduced political pluralism and competition. However, some of the old leaders survived the waves of democracy and introduced few structural changes to address the needs of people. Where leadership changes occurred, some of the new leaders pursued personal gain and weakened state institutions.⁶⁶ By 1993, the forces of change in Africa had suffered a setback, and the marshy waters of domination soon subsumed the sociopolitical awakening.⁶⁷ Despite this setback, the democracy movements forged new spaces for critical and oppositional political discourse.⁶⁸ In Cameroon, Anglophone businessperson Ni John Fru Ndi formed the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and ran against President Paul Biya in highly contested elections. Fru Ndi's supporters claimed that he had received the majority of the votes, but Biya was declared the winner.

In rethinking the pro-democracy movements, one might wonder whether there was any substance to them, since they produced no significant shifts in power configurations on the continent. Democratic transitions in Africa failed for several reasons. Changes introduced by the old guard were mainly cosmetic, and went only so far as to close the "clearing" created by the pro-democracy movements. The old guard employed the language of change, reflected in President Biya's claim "*Je vous ai amené à la démocratie*" (I have brought democracy) to hijack the democratic opportunity and consolidate a new political life.⁶⁹

The ruling elites rigged elections, consistently undermined individual freedoms, abused human rights, intensified their reign of terror, and inflicted violence on opponents. The political opposition in many countries was not well organized, and many of the parties lacked the financial and communication resources to bring about political change.⁷⁰ In Cameroon, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, opposition parties failed to put together a winning coalition because they lacked a collaborative spirit.⁷¹ Only later on in Kenya did the opposition collaborate, to defeat President Moi's chosen heir, Uhuru Kenyatta, by electing Mwai Kibaki. Linda Kirschke has argued that the democratic transition failed in places such as Kenya and Cameroon because of informal repression and zero-sum politics.⁷² In Kenya, the Moi regime raided Luo and Kikuyu residents in the Rift Valley. In Cameroon, *Limido* (chief) Rey Bouba of Adamawa banned opposition parties from his region and ordered vigilantes to beat opposition party members.⁷³

The international community contributed to the failure of the democracy project by withholding material and diplomatic support from the activists and protesters, even though the United States supported democratization where US security interests were a major consideration.⁷⁴ There was a feeling that democracy would not be effective in Africa. Samuel Huntington observed that “most African countries are by reason of their poverty or violence of their politics unlikely to move in a democratic direction.”⁷⁵ Huntington’s reservations about democracy in Africa would later be echoed in other critiques of the pro-democracy movements. Rita Abrahamsen has argued that scholars hailed the democracy movement in the South as the “new global *zeitgeist*”⁷⁶ but ignored theorizing on “the meaning and values of democracy,” and advocated a contested concept as if it were a magic bullet.⁷⁷ An undefined democracy in Africa created an illusion and displaced other alternatives that might have worked well in developing countries.⁷⁸ Thus, supporters of democracy promoted democratic elitism that emphasized the operational aspects of democracy by substituting what exists today as what *should* be (emphasis mine).⁷⁹ Abrahamsen has argued that democratic rights, liberty, and equality must be concretized in society and not be “merely abstract or cancelled out by asymmetries of power in daily relations between men and women, [among] blacks and whites, among working, middle and upper classes.”⁸⁰ I agree with the preceding sentence, but I must insist that “asymmetries of power,” ought to have been a strong incentive to work for democratic ideals and justice in an open society.

Patrick Chabal has also questioned the so-called democracy movements in Africa and has argued that recent theorists advocate democracy in Africa as a last resort because all else has failed.⁸¹ He rejects paternalistic arguments that claim that Africa is too immature for democracy. Chabal also rejects views that equate democracy with individualism and a Western electoral system of representative government, which scholars and aid donors have pushed African states to adopt. If, as Chabal himself has argued, African political performance is to be judged by standards that exist in other places in the world, then he has contradicted himself by arguing that current yearnings for democratic ideals that come from outside might not be suitable for Africa.

I contest the view that the West has imposed democracy on Africa and that Africa is ill-prepared for it: liberation from colonialism was a democratic yearning. Africans believed and worked for liberty, freedom, human dignity, open participation in the political process, and fair competition for political office. It is the betrayal of that faith in democracy and the failure of the pro-democracy movements to restore the democratic spirit that has emboldened suspicions of Africa’s preparedness and suitability for democracy.⁸² I am convinced that despite the poor conditions of the economy

and the fragile nature of Africa's civil society, Africans have no compelling reason now to give up the quest for democracy.⁸³ Democratic ideals could create a society where individuals are free to promote human dignity and work for economic reforms and growth. Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, and leader of Burma's National League for Democracy, has argued:

Democratic values and human rights, it is sometimes claimed, run counter to 'national' culture, and all too often the people at large are seen as 'unfit' for government. Nothing can be further from the truth . . . True economic transformation can then take place in the context of international peace and internal political stability. A rapid democratic transition and strengthening of the institutions of civil society are the *sine qua non* for this development. Only then will we be able to look to a future where human beings are valued for what they are rather than for what they produce.⁸⁴

Striving to create a community where people are valued as human beings requires that Africans pay attention to democratic ideals. Perhaps the real questions here are, Was the international community willing to allow change to come to Africa? Was the international community willing to do something about civil strife, war, and the abuse of power in Africa after the United States had pulled its troops out of Somalia because American soldiers on a peacekeeping mission had been killed there? When it became apparent that the dictators had appropriated the language of change to get more loans and aid from the West, one wonders why Western countries failed to provide material support for reform movements.

Theorizing Democracy for the Future

Africans rethinking democracy should consider theories that invest the democratic system with philosophical and moral backbone. I will here draw from David Held's notion of cosmopolitan democracy to make a case for democratic praxis in Africa. Held has argued that cosmopolitan democracy associates democracy with certain virtues, such as equality, liberty, respect for law, and justice.⁸⁵ The democratic system has its roots in the Greek polis, where citizen-governors ruled and participated in its affairs. Members of the political community practiced civic virtues, subscribed to the idea of a republican city-state, and promoted the public good instead of private interests.⁸⁶ Athenian democracy, which provided the early conceptual tools for theorizing about democracy, admittedly had its limitations, such as slavery and the exclusion of women from its governing mechanisms.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, democratic values articulated in that system as

well as in other systems around the world are amenable to the African situation because what is at stake in theorizing about democracy is not Greek exceptionalism, but values that promote equality, liberty, and justice before the law.

Held has also argued that the modern development of the democratic project in Europe established checks on the coercive powers of the state.⁸⁸ Some political theorists define the checks and balances of the executive arm of government as the legislative and judiciary branches of government. African states could strengthen their prospects for democracy if they established such checks and balances. One must add that democratic aspirations and praxis in Africa ought to be grounded in local priorities and institutions; the tradition that emerges would have a chance of succeeding if such a system had institutional structures that would monitor the state to ensure that the state guarantees the rights of individuals to contest and participate in free and fair elections. It is also important that institutions exist that would respect and protect the right to free association, the freedom to dissent, establish appropriate mechanisms for checking the overreaching arm of the state.⁸⁹

A cosmopolitan democratic theory needs to endorse the idea of political legitimacy. Political legitimacy in Africa today is a much-debated issue, but there is no doubt that while elections may not be the only measure of democracy, for now, elections offer Africans the best hope of measuring legitimacy. One could also argue that for such elections to be successful, it might be necessary for several parties to contest for seats or positions in the elections. African states have experimented with single parties and the result has been disastrous. Therefore, if states want to have legitimacy, political competition between contending groups and parties might not be a bad idea.

The place of multiparties in Africa remains a contested idea. For example, in response to the dominance and exclusivism that is inherent in party politics, Kwasi Wiredu has argued that political representation could be based on loose associational life rather than on political parties where “dogmatism, intolerance, and inattention to the ethical refinement of means in relation to the ends that parties, as power machines, are so apt to inspire” are inherent.⁹⁰ The associational model frees elected leaders from party constraints to reason in a more objective manner.⁹¹ Associational life could become the avenue of “channeling all desirable pluralisms but they [associational life] will be without the Hobbesian proclivities of political parties.”⁹² Elected representatives who are freed from party control could make compromises as they seek to reach a consensus.⁹³

The idea of organizing political representation based on political consensus sounds novel. The critical question here is whether consensus can

only be achieved through a non-party politics. One also wonders whether associational life would avoid the violence that has marked party politics. It is overly optimistic to think that representatives elected or nominated to positions of leadership by groups or associations with common interests would establish objectivity and not be beholden to the associations that have elected them. I also wonder whether the drive to achieve consensus could force unity at the expense of a rigorous debate on issues. I suspect that associations might also fall prey to the problems that beset political parties.

Africans must negotiate a cosmopolitan democracy by establishing a workable democratic ethos in a local environment already influenced by a global culture. Information technology has brought the world closer, and this could facilitate democratization. Although there is a clear digital divide, information is easily available to people in different parts of the world as events happen. This development has undercut state censorship, because activists in Africa can now use the Internet to articulate their views. In places where the state police confiscated news publications and detained journalists, people can now read news online and pass it to others through e-mail. A global citizenry is emerging because of information technology and international print and broadcast media. Cable News Network (CNN) dominates global television broadcasts, and although it spreads a global consumer culture in Africa, it gives a perspective on politics that local television stations might not. (This does not mean, however, that all things in the Western media must be taken at face value.)

Cosmopolitan democracy must embrace rights broadly, and “democratic public law.” The rights that ensure individual liberty and political participation must be consistent with and promote individual autonomy at all levels of the state.⁹⁴ Rights are often linked to membership of a political community, which serves as the guarantor and protector of those rights.⁹⁵ It is folly to ignore rights, democratic laws, and their association with these issues in African political thought just because these ideas mirror Western debates and practices. In order for the democratic rights and democratic laws presupposed in cosmopolitan democratic theory to survive in African states, several things must be taken seriously.

First, it is necessary for Africans to rekindle the demand for rights in the context of a democratic society at the local level. The failure of the pro-democracy movements should not deter African politicians from promoting democracy, especially at the rural level. Regardless of the particular governing mechanisms and institutions in a country, the people in rural areas must be central to the process and know that their participation in the democratic process is crucial.⁹⁶ It is in the political interest of leaders that they nurture a climate in which not only will the people understand

and use notions such as grass roots, they will also understand that being part of the grass roots, they have an obligation to articulate their own rights within the limits of the law. They ought to know that having rights involves the responsibility of participating in shaping and carrying out the democratic vision of their society. It involves the responsibility of knowing what the issues for their area are. It also involves being willing to contest for office in an open and fair process. A climate in which members can foster debates on various issues including ethnicity and the threat it poses for cosmopolitan democracy ought to be cultivated in the rural areas as part of an overall agenda to promote cosmopolitan democratic ideals.⁹⁷

Therefore, democratic practice in Africa must respect and promote individual rights in all contexts within the political community because those rights belong to people, first as human beings and second as members of that particular political community in rural and urban areas. Although political communities define rights differently, those rights often include principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other charters that guarantee the rights of women and children.⁹⁸ In Africa, this includes guaranteeing all the rights provided for in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and all its affiliated conventions.⁹⁹ In promoting such rights, one can no longer focus only on the urban and elite members of the state. The rights of all members of the political community must be taken seriously and protected.

Charles Taylor has rejected the attempts to locate community values in the idea of rights, and Michael Sandel has argued that the doctrine of rights serves only to remedy corrupted relations.¹⁰⁰ Both have expressed a preference for communitarian values and obligations toward each other. In my view, regardless of whether one emphasizes individual rights or community values, there is something common to both perspectives. These positions are articulations of Western democratic societies and share the view that the person qua individual has a claim to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as a member of the community. In Africa, while the constitutions guarantee these rights, they are not taken seriously. The reason is often not that Africans prefer a communitarian view of values, but simply that those who are charged with protecting rights are themselves human rights abusers.

Individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, remain inviolable components of a democratic society, but in many African states, restrictive laws often prevent the public from enjoying these freedoms. Cameroon enacted the Mass Communication Law of December 19, 1990 in a bid to revise the ant subversion codes of 1962 and to address freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. However, the new law was undercut by the 1966 Penal Code, which instituted press censorship. The Penal Code was not repealed.¹⁰¹ Charles Fombad has argued that the 1990 law

does not eliminate the practice of curbing freedoms with regularity through a variety of administrative, police, and judicial controls, on the grounds that the press abuses its freedoms.¹⁰² Fombad has argued that it is the government that restricts freedom of speech through censorship laws. Violations and restrictions of freedom have stalled democratic transition in Cameroon.¹⁰³

In talking about rights in the African context, one assumes that the individual would determine the conditions of his or her own existence and make major decisions about his or her life without excessive intrusion from the state. The individual cannot do this in isolation, because he or she exists in a web of social relationships; this social world ought to inspire and empower individuals to seek and protect those rights. Rights and liberties also include the freedom of lawful assembly, liberty to choose and practice a religion, and liberty to travel without being subjected to unreasonable police searches and control. Finally, it is important that individuals have the right to pursue happiness by having the opportunity to pursue values and activities that would enable them to live a good life, enhance the quality of their lives, and promote contentment and satisfaction.

Second, democracy as a praxis ought to combine deliberative and procedural views. Joseph Bessette coined the notion of deliberative democracy to provide a broad interpretation of the American constitution, arguing that the constitution emphasizes feasibility, forum, and consensus.¹⁰⁴ Supporters of deliberative democracy argue that the idea calls for the use of reason and reflection on issues and the principle of justification, which enables members of a political community to ignore personal preferences for the common good.¹⁰⁵ Deliberative democracy must be tempered by procedural democracy, which requires that states establish the procedures and principles needed to extend and enforce fair play at the national and rural levels.¹⁰⁶

During the 2003 legislative and municipal elections in Cameroon it would seem by all accounts that everything went well. The government had postponed the elections for a week when it realized that there were irregularities in the printing of ballot papers and that more time was needed so that ballot papers would reach all parts of the country. Furthermore, several political parties took part in the voting, and no voter intimidation was reported on the day of balloting. However, it is alleged that procedural ideals were violated because senior divisional officers (SDOs), acting as representatives of the ruling party, made it difficult for members of the opposition party to get voter registration cards. Thus, by limiting the registration of opposition party candidates and allowing only the members of the ruling party to register, the SDOs weakened the opposition parties and compromised their ability to compete on equal terms.¹⁰⁷ From the perspective of

deliberative and procedural democratic ideals, it is evident that no prior reflection took place; the electoral process and the rules justifying the process were intended to favor the ruling party.

My account of democratic principles has privileged the liberal democratic tradition because I am convinced that democracy and liberalism go together. As Marc Plattner has argued, you cannot have one without the other.¹⁰⁸ Critics of that tradition have argued that participatory democracy often takes a narrow view of rights. It benefits only the elites and excludes many others from exercising their rights of participation.¹⁰⁹ Some argue that the professionalization, manipulation, and domination of the political process have created a chaotic political and economic situation in Africa.¹¹⁰ In addition to these criticisms, Africanists have raised important questions about the neoliberal democratic ethos.

First, Mamdani has argued that the debate about rights implies citizenship in a particular community and participation in the economy. Market liberalism claims universality, but liberalism, as a theory of political rights, does not.¹¹¹ Mamdani has cautioned against assuming that one-party states are dictatorial and that multiparties are pluralistic, and against restricting democracy to accountability and efficient management, as advocated by the WB. Mamdani has claimed that since the bearers of rights, the “democratic subjects,” have eluded Africanist discourse, social movements ought to be the ones that guarantee rights.¹¹² The liberal notion of society, which presupposes citizenship in a nation-state and participation in economic activity, is mistaken in making citizenship a criterion for political rights. Rather than depend on imposed constitutional safeguards to sustain democratic ideals, the guarantors must be local social movements and activists. Therefore, imposing a liberal democracy centered on rights would be misguided, because the focus ought to be on the “democratic subject” who must fight for those rights.

Mamdani correctly insists that local social movements are crucial for the democratic project, but I do not think that his distinction between individual bearers of rights and the “democratic subject” weakens the case for liberal democracy. I am also not convinced that one ought to separate a democratic “content” such as rights from the “democratic subject” as Mamdani does. The “democratic subject” ought to struggle for democracy, but I contend that democratic “contents” such as rights must inspire and propel the struggle. The needs of each political community ought to determine the democratic content, and all democratic subjects should have the right to choose the vision and context of their struggle. Mamdani’s disquiet about the imposition of nineteenth-century liberal ideas on Africa ought to be taken seriously, but I still think that liberal democratic ideals could be reformulated in the African setting.

Second, Comaroff and Comaroff remind us that such appropriation must rethink the project of neoliberalism because the neoliberal capitalist ethos of today has abandoned central questions pertaining to the production of wealth, labor relations, and the social context of the nation-state, in which the theories of wealth were first conceptualized. Neoliberalism has shifted the emphasis from production to consumption; not only does the market economy stress venture and futures capitalism, it has also been removed from state control and is driven by transnational market forces.¹¹³ There are growing inequities not only in global capital but also in local societies, where many have never known prosperity (let alone places where prosperity is diminishing), as the Comaroffs point out.¹¹⁴ African states and the international community must take seriously the challenge to neoliberal policies that promote consumption at the expense of production and ignore justice. If the democratic project is to succeed, economic inequities must be addressed. Perhaps one place to start is for the international community to couple debt cancellation with the democratic project, so that African states can engage in a thoroughgoing search for social justice that will provide equal opportunity, equal access to state institutions, and justice for all under the law.

Democratic theorists must weigh in on what the international community could do to strengthen the democratic tradition in Africa. Rather than take the long, hard road of standing in solidarity with opposition groups, Western powers have reneged on their support. What has emerged is an aggressive NGO-ization that, as Hutchful has argued, has also increased bureaucratization, "encadrement, tutelage, dollarisation, and officialisation."¹¹⁵ The work of NGOs and PVOs (private voluntary organizations) is important because it creates a space for discourses and actions that would not otherwise exist, but it must not replace international support for democratic ideals and practices in Africa. The question now is, What can be done to ensure democracy, short of invoking the Bush Doctrine? Herbst has argued that states that do not practice democracy ought to be decertified to highlight the unacceptable practices they carry out in the name of national sovereignty.¹¹⁶ I think that decertification could be reconceptualized in economic terms and used to impose strong economic sanctions on corrupt and nondemocratic regimes. I also think that a new regionalism might open the door for negotiations toward state amalgamation in cases where the state is weak and lacks economic resources. In addition to the NGOs that have flooded Africa, Western governments could accompany African states in a serious effort to establish a democratic tradition and empower their people economically, rather than continue with the piecemeal approach established through NGOs.

Africa's socioeconomic and political problems must be recognized as relevant to the overall national and global security interests of the global

community for two reasons. First, the political and economic transformation of Africa is in the national security interests of the West because of the sheer number of people in the West for whom Africa is an ancestral land. Some were forcibly stripped of their dignity and enslaved, others migrated freely, and the migrations continue today in droves, taking away talents needed by most African states for the project of reconstruction. Africans in the West have formed a large “black Atlantic,” which will continue to be a sociopolitical and economic force to reckon with.¹¹⁷ Ideas such as pan-Africanism, black power, black consciousness, *négritude*, Afrocentrism, womanism, and the reparations debate continue to highlight the commitment to social justice and are today being reconceptualized as Africana thought, which might serve as a clearing for reflection on Africa and the African diaspora. These traditions are learning to read Frantz Fanon and other political thinkers in a new way and are realizing that the critique of the national bourgeoisie offered by Fanon demands a complete rejection of the selfish attitude of the national bourgeoisie.¹¹⁸

There is no unified black agenda that can now be articulated to change Africa or global thinking on Africa. For example, some in the diaspora think that the leaders of the ancestral homeland are responsible for the catastrophe of the African state and that Africans cannot expect someone else to solve their problems. Just because Africa is the ancestral homeland, does not mean that diasporan Africans are obligated to liberate Africa. One of the critics who charge that Africans have squandered their fortunes is Keith Richburg, who states clearly that he is thankful that his ancestors survived the appalling Middle Passage and came to America as slaves. Richburg points out that if things had not worked out that way, he would have been one of them—Africans.¹¹⁹ He has offered to point out the images of rotting flesh to any one who talks to him about his black roots. Regardless of the fact that differences of opinion exist, Africans who have recently moved to the West could continue the long collaboration that has existed between diasporan Africans and activists in Africa to promote political change in Africa. It is in the national interest of each Western state to accompany Africans who are seeking change in Africa, because solving Africa’s problems could pave the way for a new dialogue on race. As Africa goes, so goes the race question that has dogged Western states for a long time.

Second, globalization cannot succeed unless Africa becomes an active partner in the global economy. If globalization remains a neocolonial strategy that works for the good of the industrialized countries, then the global community will end up with a vicious cycle of wasted loans. The lenders who continue to give loans to African countries, loans that a future unborn generation must repay, ought to rethink their strategies and work with African states to sustain a viable democratic political process, respect for

human rights and freedoms, and good and transparent governance. Actions that could be taken to punish African regimes that resist change should include isolating corrupt leaders to confiscating all their Western bank accounts, and punishing their collaborators.

Activists in Africa, civil society, Africans in the diaspora, and Western states must increase the level of collaboration with and accompaniment of African states in their journey to recovery, because international organizations such as the United Nations Organization (UNO) cannot do much to change the situation. While I admire the work of the UN staff, the staff of its numerous agencies, and other international organizations around the world, the tragedy is that the situation in Africa deteriorated when two distinguished Africans, Boutros-Boutros Ghali of Egypt and Kofi Annan of Ghana, served as the head of the UN. I do not mean to accuse these leaders of any wrongdoing or neglect, but merely point out that African states cannot depend on the UN system to restore democratic ideals and prosperity because it has not done so when Africans who know the situation of the continent have served the UN. The UN and its agencies do many things around the world, but it is time people should start to question if some of their activities are not merely Band-Aid solutions. Africans in the diaspora and Western nations could have an impact on change in Africa if they put their support behind individuals and organizations fighting to transform the dialectics of pessimism into those of optimism.

Africans need a new discourse on democracy, one that cannot remain neutral. Such a discourse has to inform and empower people to take responsibility for their future. Such thinking and education must begin from childhood if there is to be any hope of rescuing the future. This task cannot be done in a few years because it requires the long-term deployment of Africa's philosophical, moral, cultural, artistic, and spiritual resources. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o has stated eloquently, "There is, indeed, a case to be put for democracy in Africa today; it is a philosophical and moral case before it becomes a political and economic one. [It is a philosophical and moral case] because questions of why people should subject themselves to some form of authority have always been ethical and moral."¹²⁰ Short-term reflections and proposals may put food on the table, but in the end, these proposals might not work out.

The Church and Democracy in Africa

The Christian church in Africa could play an important role in the democratic process instead of serving mostly as a social space where members go on a weekly basis to escape a world that is collapsing economically and politically. There is growing recognition that Christianity (and, some have

argued, Protestant Christianity) has contributed to the building of democratic ideals.¹²¹ The contribution to democracy cannot be limited to Christianity, though, because other faith traditions have also contributed to the spread of freedom.¹²² Despite the fact that the church was ill prepared for change during the recent transition to democracy, it still played a key role by championing national dialogue in Benin, Congo, Gabon, Togo, and Madagascar, and, through individual church leaders, in the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in Kenya.¹²³ Christian churches ought to abandon uncritical support for leaders and work for a democratic society in which human rights are respected.

First, the church has a pedagogic role in Africa today. Religious leaders must continue their mission of educating people and reminding them that all people are created equal and in the image of God. Religious leaders must rethink the belief that the most important task of Christians is to pray for the state and its leaders. Rather, church members ought to be prepared to engage in the civic life of their communities and teach people to raise critical voices against injustice. Communities should read the Bible in the light of the issues of the day: hunger, freedom, human dignity, hospitality to one's neighbor and strangers, and servant leadership.

Second, it is necessary for churches to assume their prophetic role and proclaim the message of justice. There can be no justice in a society that lacks democratic ideals. I do not claim that Christian churches have a monopoly on justice and democratic ideals. I only ask that the example of the Hebrew prophets, who called on the leaders and communities of their day to practice justice and righteousness, inspire churches to pursue socioeconomic justice, democratic ideals, and the restoration of empowering relationships among people. The church cannot abandon this historic role today.

Third, the church has an important pastoral role. Africa is ablaze with the wounds of injustice, and state neglect of health care has exacerbated the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which now threatens to wipe out the productive generation of Africans. The pastoral role of the church could model what public service ought to be. The present crisis challenges church leaders to be good managers of the resources they have. Their responsibilities call upon them to listen to their people and encourage them to participate in the formulation and execution of church policy and programs. It is crucial that the leaders of the church show respect for the dignity of each person and treat him or her as an equal, unlike the African politicians, who have treated their people as subjects. Church leaders have a pastoral role to restore the *imago dei* that has been dragged down and submerged in the abusive political praxis of the postcolonial state.

It is important for church leaders to provide spiritual and physical care to all people wherever it is possible. Members of the community who have

been victims of political violence because of their beliefs need counseling, and church leaders would serve them well if they arranged such counseling and support. It is also important that they provide support to families who have lost relatives to the scourge of AIDS. Pastoral care has to balance spiritual and material care where possible. Religious leaders have an obligation to use the resources of the community to promote the well-being of those who are poor and destitute. In order to do this, church leaders might have to invest in development projects and income-yielding programs and use the money earned to serve the people. Pastoral care in Africa must respond to the grave social crisis that the continent faces, because the church is still part of the world.

Pastoral care must cultivate intense solidarity with the people. Such solidarity requires that church leaders make clear pronouncements against actions that marginalize the people. To remain neutral in such situations is to allow systematic abuse to continue. Standing in solidarity with the people and shunning corrupt leaders is a powerful way of providing hope that justice will come soon. If the Christian church pays attention to these things, it will contribute to the establishment of a democratic society. The democratic tradition must reign, and the international community must work with Africans to sustain such a tradition.

Good Governance

Good governance was one of the central components of recovery after the IMF and the WB had faulted African leaders for poor management. In this section, I argue that Africans must go beyond prevailing discourses on good governance, which mainly emphasize institutional structures, policies, and effective strategies of implementation, and see governance as a praxis that demands the cultivation of virtues and dispositions essential to the science and art of successful political leadership and administration. Starting in 1989, when the debate on governance was at its peak, Richard Joseph, then at The Carter Center at Emory University, popularized good governance through special seminars on African governance.¹²⁴ Since then scholars and WB officials have turned the idea of governance into an interesting field of study.

Goran Hyden has described governance as the “conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm.”¹²⁵ I contend that governance deals not only with managing regime structures and state legitimacy, but also with the functionality of state institutions, the development and articulation of a vision of governance, and the cultivation of dispositions that will concretize and achieve that vision. Hyden and others have developed the notion of governance

into a “field,” which, they argue, has emerged out of the conceptual limitations of notions such as “project,” “program,” and “policy” in development studies. The notion of governance also introduced clarity to studies of the state in comparative politics in situations where the rules of engagement are unwritten. The connection between economics and democracy also created a need to study governance.¹²⁶

In order to add conceptual clarity to the term, Hyden has juxtaposed the notion of governance with the term “regime,” defined as a form of political organization and “a set of fundamental rules about the organization of the political realm. A regime guides political behavior and also sets the framework within which issues enter the political agenda and policies are made . . . It is to this metapolitical activity that I believe the concept of governance belongs.”¹²⁷ Hyden confines governance to the realm of rule-setting, which involves: “constitutions, laws, customs, administrative regulations, and international agreements, all of which in one way or other provide the framework for the formulation and implementation of policy decisions.”¹²⁸ Thus, governance is that science that explores how regimes create an “enabling environment.”

By limiting the concept of governance to rule-making, Hyden undercuts his own rich insights especially since he has also linked governance to the recovery of the Aristotelian formulation of *praxis* and *theoria*.¹²⁹ Hyden has argued (after Arendt) that *praxis* and *theoria* in Aristotle was the development of good judgment on matters of the polis. Marxist appropriation of *theoria* and *praxis* interpreted them to mean the link between theory and practice. Under this interpretation, philosophers and scholars have defined work as a way of realizing one’s full potential, an expression of one’s bond with others, and the creation of social consciousness.¹³⁰ Hyden himself has perceptively pointed out that theory must be linked to the felt needs of individuals. It is for this reason that he calls good governance an idea that is related to business management: treats the regime, which organizes political relations, as a business organization. The conditions for effectiveness, such as influence, oversight of citizens, responsive as well as responsible leadership, and social reciprocity, remain crucial to the study of this aspect of political development.

I am convinced that the notion of *techné* alone points to the limitation inherent in defining governance merely in terms of rules. Aristotle’s distinctions between *theoria* and *praxis* were articulated broadly in practical philosophy (*philosophia practica*), which encompassed all of the arts needed for the well-being of the polis.¹³¹ Philosophy was understood as science, but this knowledge was not restricted to our understanding of scientific knowledge today. Although Aristotle did not oppose theory and practice, he distinguished practical philosophy from theoretical philosophy, such as

physics, mathematics, and theology. Politics belonged to practical philosophy. Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued that praxis/practice referred to the idea of being alive, awareness of one's situatedness, and freedom of choice: "Practice means instead the actuation of life (*energeia*) of anything alive, to which corresponds a life, a way of life, a life that is led in a certain way (*bios*)." ¹³²

In order to appreciate how far I am pushing Hyden's views on governance, let us briefly explore Gadamer's understanding of practice. Practice as a way of life depends on *prohairesis*, which means preference, or prior choice. "Knowingly preferring one thing to another and consciously choosing among possible alternatives is the unique and specific characteristic of human being." ¹³³ Furthermore, when related to the polis, this idea of choosing refers to all aspects of interpersonal relations and life in the polis.

So practice is here no longer the sheerly natural component within a mode of behavior, as it the case with animals set in the schemes of innate vital instincts. The sophistic enlightenment especially insisted that the whole *arete* (performance excellence) of human beings is utterly diverse in each case, even though the whole *arete* that rests upon knowing and choosing is only realized fully in the free statues of the citizen of the polis. ¹³⁴

Later, when Gadamer returns to the notion of *techne*, he argues that it is not merely concerned with learning the crafts and skills of performing something, "rather it has to do with what is each individual's due as a citizen and what constitutes his *arete* or excellence." ¹³⁵ Thus the idea of choosing relates to the notion of excellence and should provide a hint that we are dealing with more than rule setting because there are qualities that could enhance the political community implied in the notion of excellence. If governance is conceptualized mainly as rule-setting, then we ignore the social praxis, to which Hyden calls our attention.

Hyden has also described the basic dimension of governance by highlighting the action dimension of the process, arguing that we ought to see power as a relationship mediated by legitimate authority and reciprocal relations. Politics, from this point of view, is no longer a zero-sum game. At the structural level, governance involves compliance, trust, accountability, and innovation. ¹³⁶ One senses the idea of vision which I consider important because an individual's vision or the moral disposition of a civil servant or group of people could change performance and give people a positive view of the regime. The conditions of good governance include the influence and oversight of citizens, political participation, the means of preference and aggregation, and the methods by which accountability is

given publicly. The other condition of good governance is leadership that is responsive and responsible. Leaders ought to have respect for the civic and public realm, have an open policymaking mechanism, and adhere to the rule of law.¹³⁷ Social reciprocities require political equality, tolerance, and inclusiveness.¹³⁸

Governance involves institutions and structures at the local and national levels. At both levels, governance needs to be marked by efficiency and fairness. The first level of local systems of governance, often ignored in the literature, is the so-called “traditional” ruler. Scholars make this distinction because they differentiate between the nation-state and “traditional” systems ruled by chiefs and kings. It is critical that we include traditional institutions in discussions of governance even though these institutions and their leaders have changed significantly. They were co-opted into the colonial logic and systematized into customary rule, but they have also survived that assault and emerged in the postcolonial state as institutions of governance. These authorities receive respect in much of West Africa: *Limido* in the Fulbe areas, *Sarki* among the Hausas, and *Fon* among the different peoples of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. Local political systems are custodians of values and ethos of their communities. These leaders still preside over ancestral land and make sure that it is distributed appropriately to members of their realm. Their communities expect them to be fair and honest and to provide moral examples to the people. For these reasons, the discussion on governance needs to involve these institutions.

Several institutions and bureaucratic systems exist outside of the national government or are extensions of national institutions at local levels that face similar problems with issues of governance. There are administrative units such as “local government” in Nigeria, municipal councils, divisional administration, and provincial and state governments. In Cameroon, the idea of centralization, which took several years to accomplish, undercut the idea of local rule.¹³⁹ What emerged as local rule was a complex system organized in the following manner.

First, there were the divisional officers, who were under the Senior Divisional Office (or Prefect). In principle, the SDO reported to the provincial governor, who was answerable to the minister of territorial administration. Thus local rule, which worked through divisional administration, was merely part of a centralized bureaucracy, because in many cases, the SDO could report directly to the minister, and the governor could report directly to the president. Second, the state organized local rule in councils and municipalities that were grouped according to ethnic groups; hence, in the 1980s, municipal councils in Donga Mantung Division were established according to the major ethnic groups in the

division as Wimbun, Akweto, Mbembe–Misaje, and Nwa rural councils. The local people elected the members of the council; however, the divisional administration played a key supervisory role in the governance of the local councils. This ensured that the local administration in Yaoundé, which reported to the central administration through the divisional administration controlled local activities. Finally, prior to the advent of multiparty politics in Cameroon, the central administration often appointed what was called a “government delegate” as the head of most of the urban councils.

Under Ahidjo, the state always claimed that these structures existed to bring the administration closer to the people. Elected members from different regions of the municipality met regularly to examine and approve projects and levy local taxes. A council staff headed by an executive secretary, a mayor, or in the case of urban councils, a government delegate carried out the day-to-day functions of the municipality. The local councils ran health centers and customary courts, presided over civil matters such as the issuing of marriage licenses, issued birth and death certificates, oversaw local water projects, and maintained roads. But these services were often plagued by inefficiency, lack of adequate resources, and numerous other problems. In this regard, those who stress institutions, structures, and regulations when they discuss governance point to a pressing need in African countries. In many cases, financial institutions have collapsed because of mismanagement.

Many local institutions are not always run in a democratic manner. In the case of municipal councils, the chairpersons, mayors, or government delegates often exercise excessive control and run them as private estates. Political reforms in African countries will not be effective unless the management philosophy and style of these institutions are changed to make them function effectively. There are many problems at this level with regard to issues such as bribery, lack of accountability, and sheer mismanagement of resources.

Governance Is a Social Praxis

Current debates on governance ought to continue to highlight well-known ideas such as the formulation and execution of policies, management, rules, leadership, and constitutionalism. However, one must also see governance as a social praxis, because that allows theorist to articulate it as a special way of life undertaken deliberately and marked by the actualization of excellence in all respects. This also allows leaders to see the praxis of governance as an art, one that involves vision and moral commitments that states do not always write into the constitution or the regulatory structures of the society. As a science, theories of governance provide scientific knowledge about

the institutions and structures of the state, government departments, their functions, and leadership. As a rule-setting activity, governance can enable leaders to develop measurable standards that will allow them to set and accomplish goals.

One could also conceptualize governance as an art, which requires vision, imagination, and creativity. These may not be measurable in the same way that rules might be, they are concrete, competitive, and compelling enough to drive individuals to develop a vision for their departments. In the case of documentation in state functions, individuals could imagine new ways of keeping records, rather than remain stuck to a blue print or be constrained to forms developed in the early 1960s that have no bearing on state functions today. The articulation and implementation of rules can also be seen as an art because it calls not only for learned behavior but also for certain dispositions, which I will discuss later in this section. Conceptualizing governance as a social praxis and as an art would also allow individuals to cultivate the practice of presence, employ empowering dispositions, build relationality in the process of governing, and strengthen institutional integrity. These four concepts are by no means the only concepts that one could come up with or cultivate to enhance governance, but I will use them here as heuristic devices to articulate the view that governance is a praxis.

First, presence is central to governance. I do not use presence here in any technical sense, but I employ it to refer to the fact that civil servants, officials who govern, lead, and manage state institutions, have a responsibility to be physically present in their offices or where they share political or operational space. Presence denotes being available and handling the business of the institution that is entrusted to an individual. Presence means that (1) individuals clock in when they arrive in the morning and remain at their stations doing the work they are assigned to do. If workers are entitled to a break from work during the day, they should take their breaks and then return to work. (2) Presence also implies that people will put in a full day, so that the operations of their departments will go smoothly and they will meet daily, weekly, and monthly goals. (3) Presence means that people cannot sign up and then go away to a construction site to work on their building project, (a personal house), supervise the construction of the “patron’s” house or of the minister’s palace, or deliver cement at the construction site of the minister’s concubine or boyfriend. In many government offices today people sign up in the morning and walk away to do other things.

The neglect of presence has created a backlog in many government offices in Cameroon. The problem of personnel files that often lie dormant in government offices in Yaoundé, Cameroon, is exacerbated by the fact that the people who ought to be processing files and getting the right signatures so that employees are paid and promoted on time are not always

at their stations doing their job. In a story posted online on April 18, 2005, Ernest Molua offers this analysis of the civil service in Cameroon.

Walking into any office whose occupants are on the payroll of the government of the Republic of Cameroon, you are instantly greeted with strange stares and piercing looks from figures behind ant-infested desks sagging from the weight of dust-laden files begging to be treated. In fact, even finding them in the office is out of sheer luck . . . You will be attended to if, only if, you have the patience to wait for Mr. Civil Servant to wrap up the long chat he is having with his family friend, before he goes for a long walk to see him/her off, returning via another colleague's office where he pauses for trivial gossip . . . what you summarily gather on visiting a public office is that we are an unproductive stagnant bunch . . . It is difficult to find devoted service men anywhere . . . We even have people who earn salaries without an account of any service rendered.¹⁴⁰

Civil servants have also charged that some of the staff members of the various government departments often deliberately hold back files so that those affected will leave the provinces, come to Yaoundé, and bribe these civil servants to locate their files, process them and pass them to the next level, where they may be subjected to a similar hold-up. (4) Presence implies that people will be sober and carry out the responsibilities for which they are paid. They cannot return from the *deuxième bureau* (literally, second office, but refers to a place where food and drinks are sold close to the government offices in Yaoundé) drunk and expect that all will be well.¹⁴¹

Second, governance implies a number of important dispositions that must be cultivated for staff and leaders to be successful. I call them "dispositions" to link them to habituation. I take such dispositions to be cultural, intellectual, political, and, some might argue, spiritual as well. A list of such dispositions would vary and depend very much on the vision, intellect, and cultural curiosity of the thinker, but for now I am interested in what I would call basic dispositions needed to reconstitute governance in Africa today. These include honesty, confidence, patience, gentleness, tolerance, respect for other people, and a passion for justice. One could develop this list further and include qualities that would be attractive for those who aspire to serve the people. For, example, those who serve ought to be humble and respectful of the people they serve. These dispositions are in short supply, and when one enters government offices, the quality of service is generally not good because those who serve do not see themselves as servants of the people, but as masters.

Third, governance is relationality. While this seems very obvious, what I mean is that in a departure from domination and totality, those who seek to govern in Africa today must see their task first as cultivating relations of

participation rather than as building institutions that maximize the power of the political and social elites. One ought to cultivate relations with the people one is invited to lead. Cultivating such relations removes distance and can open up spaces for conversations about the vision of the state and ways of achieving that vision. The idea that governance is relationality stands in opposition to the totality of the state, which is centered on the power of the leader. One cannot lead or govern people well if one ignores human relations. There are rules and regulations in different government departments, but those rules and regulations are there to guide those who serve others to serve well. In the end, administrative functions involve more than exercising power; they are about empowering people to maximize their potential and build progressive communities that are grounded on principles of justice. Relationships of domination have stifled creativity, stalled development, and brought the states of Africa to the brink of collapse. It is imperative that leaders cultivate empowering relationships at all levels of responsibility if they are to succeed in the science and art of governance.

Fourth, governance demands institutional integrity. By institutions, I refer to government and private institutions, as well as to the regulatory services and legal structures that oversee the constitutionality and compliance of these institutions.¹⁴² Regardless of which institutions one has in mind, some of the basic considerations and dispositions that I am suggesting would still apply. Perhaps the greatest threat to the recovery of African states is the fact that people no longer have any faith in the institutions that are supposed to serve them. What is needed is for leaders to work with the people to restore integrity to those institutions, so that people can turn to those institutions for assistance, knowing that their concerns will be addressed in a just manner.

In this chapter, I have argued that projects of recovery such as SAP, democracy, and good governance that have been articulated by scholars are still important in any attempt to deal with the political crisis in Africa. In the next chapter, I will reflect on other agendas of recovery in Africa. I will address specifically civil society and the African Renaissance.

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CHAPTER 4

RECOVERY IDEAS 2: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

Civic organizations can never completely replace the state in all its manifold functions; nor should they attempt to. Instead, they are well placed to exhort and assist political elites to adapt the state's actions to accord more closely with interests expressed by groups in society.

Michael Bratton¹

In this chapter, I reflect on civil society and the African Renaissance. Africans and people of African descent who have wrestled with Africa's engagement and confrontation with the rest of the world root the idea of a renaissance in the quest for identity, but concern with the idea of civil society and its importance to political life is a recent development in African political discourse. I begin with a reflection on the idea of civil society and follow it with a reflection on South African president Thabo Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance.

Civil Society

I take civil society to refer to groups that have evolved in history as separate associations recognized by the state as spheres and articulations of privileges, freedoms, and rights of individuals who also compete with other groups that share similar interests. All of these groups carry out their goals in dialogue or contestation with a constituted government and affirm individual private space in a pluralistic society where different classes promote markets and private as well as public interests.² Civil society is a site of negotiation and contestation of social existence that has evolved with the growth of cities and legal and governmental systems; it negotiates its

interdependence and cannot replace the state.³ Thus, civil society is a realm where groups confront and resist state totality.⁴ Civil society and the state exist in what Eduardo Siteo describes as “asymmetric interdependence.”⁵ Since civil society also includes peasant society, it is a realm where “bargaining” takes place between the peasants and the state.⁶

In Africa, the disappointment with the performance of the postcolonial state has triggered this intense focus on civil society.⁷ Therefore, Africanists have engaged in a vigorous debate about the nature (meaning), development, and project of civil society as a remedy to political chaos with an eagerness that John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff have described as “millennial fervor.”⁸ The discourse on civil society in Africa reflects a recent global focus on the issue.⁹ But it remains a complex concept, which the Comaroffs point out, others have turned into “an all-purpose placeholder [to] capture otherwise inchoate . . . popular aspirations, moral concerns, sites and spaces of practice.”¹⁰

Opinions differ on the genesis of the concept of civil society.¹¹ Dominique Colas traces the development of the term from the time of Aristotle, arguing that civil society meant several things, as well as positing its opposition to family and people (*ethnos*).¹² In the modern era, Hegel claimed that civil society was the intermediate organization between the family and the state and that it existed in a dialectical and often antagonistic relationship with the state. These groups, which required state regulation to maintain their civility, include corporations, trade unions, and professional associations.¹³ Although a powerful Hegelian state emerged in postcolonial Africa, scholars argue that one has to resist the temptation of seeing civil society only through the lens of confrontation and think instead of creative ways in which civil society and other organizations might address African realities.¹⁴ Advocates of civil society have insisted that civil society is necessary for reforms and liberalization in Africa, but some scholars still argue that civil society is a Western project imposed by supporters of liberal democracy.¹⁵

Three perspectives demonstrate the disquiet that surrounds the appropriation of civil society in Africa. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz call the idea of civil society in Africa an illusion. They claim that what supporters call civil society refers mainly to NGOs and groups representing citizens who belong to other interest groups.¹⁶ They contend that civil society cannot work in Africa because the continent has pluralistic and hierarchical societies structured on patron–client relations. The implication here is that hierarchical African societies do not lend themselves to the negotiation that might take place between the state and civil society groups. They also argue that civil society cannot serve as a counter hegemonic force because the state in Africa has not developed Soviet bloc-type

hegemony. One could argue that the hierarchical nature of African society ought to be all the more reason why the idea of civil society needs to be encouraged in Africa. They make a partial link between hegemony and communication, but even if one accepted that link, the African states would qualify as hegemonic because many African leaders have used the communication infrastructure in their countries to promote their own agenda, spy on their people, and subvert power relationships, a political reality that Chabal and Doloz concede.

Rita Abrahamsen has argued that the idea of civil society in Africa has been imposed from outside, especially by the WB. One cannot assume that most civic groups constitute a well-informed civil society, because not all of these groups claim that they play such a role. In addition, civil society is not always a democratic entity, and there is no evidence that civil society will destroy the power and authority of the state.¹⁷ Even if the activities of these groups have weakened the state, we cannot conclude that they support democratization.¹⁸

Mamdani has criticized views that cast civil society into a confrontational relationship with the state and construe civil society as a modernist solution to the problems of tradition.¹⁹ He has argued that some groups actually shy away from the state, while others do not confront the state because they want to reformulate state power and its relation to social forces.²⁰ Mamdani thinks that these groups could also contribute to the democratic ideal.

My view is that civil society could work in Africa, even though the idea has developed in the West. Africans have been part of the modernist project and have appropriated modernist ideals to solve African problems; therefore, adopting the idea of civil society should not be such a problem. To argue, as John A. Hall does, that "Africa seems too condemned to harsh nation-building as to rule out many hopes for civil society," would be to surrender to the concerted efforts mounted by the political elites to snuff out civil society in the name of nation-building.²¹ Civil society is an important part of nation-building and has to be reformulated to work in Africa. Having said that, one ought to state that Africans who promote civil society need to do so critically, knowing that it offers only a dialogic and oppositional space for negotiating competing visions of the political community. Jane Guyer has argued that African states ought to apply the idea of civil society with the understanding that when one transplants an idea from one place to another, it will not work flawlessly; therefore, "one should have theories and concepts but maintain expectation of novelty, surprise, and challenge."²²

In order for civil society to make an impact, it is necessary that Africans conceive of it in broad terms to include indigenous associations,

professional associations, trade unions, faith-based organizations (FBOs), NGOs, and private voluntary organizations (PVOs), all of which inhabit alternative spaces wherein actors question and reconceptualize human existence. As Comaroff and Comaroff argue: “until we leave behind stereotypic, idealized Euro-concepts, we foreclose the possibility of looking critically at either African or European civil society.”²³ Furthermore, advocates of civil society in Africa cannot ignore its relationship to democracy and economic liberalization, because a functioning civil society provides a social climate for democratic aspirations, freedoms, and the recognition of human rights. Likewise, a democratic society would make room for diverse voices to articulate and offer a critique of perspectives that address the wellbeing of the political community.

I now explore the idea of civil society based on the definition I offered at the beginning of the chapter. First, civil society is a historical project that arose in response to the needs of a growing political community. The historical provenance of the idea lies in Western social reality and political philosophy, but that does not rule out the possibility that civil society can have a bearing on Africans, who have an obligation to reflect on the nature of society with their own historical circumstances in mind. The most important service civil society groups could render to African states at this period in their history is to create free spaces from which they can stay in dialogue with the state and impose limits on its power. Civil society would serve Africa best by nurturing the democratic project and the need for a free and open society. To argue that because NGOs did not contribute to the democratic movement in Kenya, and therefore, one cannot expect civil society to contribute to the democratic project is, in my view, wrong. It is not prudent to divorce civil society from democratic aspirations, because it provides a space and structure in which meaningful dialogue could be nurtured regarding the type of political praxis that could change the human condition. For that reason, civil society as a historical project still holds promise.²⁴

Second, civil society is a public realm. Hegelian formulations define “public” as falling between the family and the state. Bratton has argued that there is an “extensive institutional terrain between state and family.”²⁵ While it is important to recognize these intervening institutions, one should also note that in Africa, the idea of family could include a number of groups generally lumped together as extended family, which might look like civil society organizations. Let me illustrate this with the example of the Wimbun people of Northwest Province in Cameroon. Yaje is the daughter of Ngwang. Her grandparents and their brothers and sisters all consider themselves as family to Yaje. Depending on the number of brothers Ngwang has (Wimbun is patrilocal), they may constitute a large extended family.

There may be other sets like that in their area of settlement related in the same way as Ngwang and his brothers. These too, will form another large extended family. It is possible to have a third and fourth set of families like this. They share the idea that one individual started all their families. Each of these sets would then consider themselves one family and cannot intermarry. Furthermore, they belong to one family under one subchief. Thus, if you talk to any one person about his or her family, he or she may include all the members of the four sets of families that make up his or her extended family. Extended families like these may have organizations that individual members can join. Such organizations could conceivably play a role that one would expect of groups that serve as civil society. This makes it difficult, then, in some contexts in Africa, to think of civil society as that realm that exists between the state and the family, because some of the organizations that play the role of civil society could be family institutions.

Civil society is a public realm because members and actors share common concerns. Since they each seek to promote their own interests, they set public rules to govern their quest for such interests. As a public realm, civil society is also a discursive space that offers a clearing for dialogue on the nature of the society people envision. It is necessary that such a dialogue include a critical engagement, interpretation, and reinterpretation of the possibilities open to the state as well as its limits. In this way, civil society is a conceptual apparatus for imagining the future of the political community, a center of public praxis where individuals can work out their vision of the state and restrict its visible and invisible powers. In this sense, it is a "limit" concept as well as an open realm whose boundaries remain porous, because its questions and concerns reflect the wishes of many people. It is a space for probing what it means to belong and participate actively in a particular political community.

Third, civil society could foster a climate for the respect of individual rights and tolerance. Thomas Paine described this aspect of civil society in his 1792 work, *Rights of Man*, in which he emphasized individual sovereignty.²⁶ Paine wrote his polemics both to support the principles of the French Revolution and to respond to Edmund Burke's criticism of it. In modern times, some people consider individual rights natural, and some have regarded the declarations of rights in the American and French Revolutions as general expressions of these rights. For the American revolutionaries, these rights were the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I consider these rights, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations and the African Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, valid desires that could provide a broad agenda for the concerns and work of civil society. Each political community may have

a slightly different view of rights, but the core principles and values of human dignity remain the same all over the world. Ways of articulating these core values may differ, but these core values are amenable to different localities and hence applicable in most places in the world. I am wary of calling such rights “natural rights,” preferring instead the broader term “human rights.” Working to protect these rights, which in Africa should include the right to life, liberty, equality, dignity, food, shelter, and health, remains a central task of civil society groups. The right to shelter also includes the freedom to live anywhere in the national territory of the political community to which one belongs. Civil society groups have an obligation to defend a person’s right to worship freely and the right to a fair trial.

These proposals are not new to Africans; historically, Africans have always used associations and groups to articulate their rights. But political elites have and might continue to violate and abuse rights unless civil society organizations maintain vigilance. In order to do this well, civil society organizations could work with organizations that have similar interests. Joel Barkan calls this collaboration and networking the horizontal dimensions of civil society.²⁷ A good example here would be independent human rights organizations in Cameroon, which carry out their activities independently of the state’s human rights commission. From time to time, these organizations have come up with a list of alleged human rights abuses by the state of Cameroon.

Fourth, civil society exists to put restraints on the excesses of state power and the power of the governing elites. This remains a challenging proposition because the governing elites in postcolonial Africa have systematically drawn a line of demarcation between politics and society, often admonishing civic associations and religious groups to refrain from politics and instead to carry out their civic duties, which often means supporting the agenda of the governing party. During the regime of President Moi, the governing elites in Kenya used the notion of social order to silence political opponents and civil society groups.²⁸ President Ahidjo used the slogan “National Unity” in Cameroon for the same purpose. Civilians were deterred from speaking out when the state overstepped its boundaries. The government restrained those with the temerity to criticize it.

Fifth, it is in the interests of civil society in Africa to balance its goals in critical dialogue with the state in order to fulfill its public role.²⁹ Depending on who the participants are, this could spell success, defeat, or life as usual for many elements and organizations involved in civil society because of the dominant role the state has so far played in Africa. However, it is imperative that those who promote civil society maintain this delicate balance.

In order to make civil society a workable proposition, its advocates need to revisit some of the concepts, structures, and principles that sustain civil society.³⁰ Civil society works well in an environment that has several or all of the following components: an educated and informed public, the structures and economic resources necessary to accomplish such education, and the rule of law. Let me briefly comment on these elements.

Civil society can succeed where an educated public exists. I use “education” here in the broadest sense, not restricting it to the formal educational process that yields certificates and diplomas in the Western sense, or as may be the case, in many African countries. Some members of the society may not have diplomas but they are very aware of what it means to live in a community, to respect duly constituted authority, to engage in trade, to manage informal sectors of the economy, and to function well in self-help associations. Even though they live life within a confused structure inherited from colonialism, such as the imposed “native authority,” there are people in Cameroon for instance who successfully navigate their way through the customary courts, *alkali* courts (local courts that deal with matters from an Islamic perspective), local governments, and divisional administration.

It is imperative that leaders create more opportunities for people who may not have earned academic diplomas both to know and to demand their constitutional rights. To accomplish this, members of the political community must be educated about their constitutional rights in all avenues where such instructions can take place, such as religious houses, local *njangis* (weekly or monthly meetings where members contribute or loan money), and other associations. Public administrators could facilitate this education and use their contacts with the people to educate them about their rights, rather than sing one song that calls on the people to remain loyal to the single leader. The media could play a critical role in educating people by giving them information about their rights and responsibilities.

To succeed, civil society also needs structures and resources. Various elements of civil society, such as ethnic associations and professional/fraternal organizations, provide these structures. Africa has seen the proliferation of NGOs, which have brought in much-needed cash. These NGOs also provide useful structures for members of civil society. The ethnic associations organized in the urban areas provide a place for members to meet regularly to discuss matters affecting their region as well as to raise money for projects. Where those organizations exist, the elites, often targeted for criticism in much of the contemporary literature on politics and society in Africa, have played a critical role. Paul Nchoji Nkwi writes about this in his study of the Njinikom Area Development Association

(NADA) in Cameroon, where Kom elites have been instrumental in promoting development.³¹

The prospects for civil society in Africa lie in the cultivation of what Edward Shils has referred to as a “spirit of public service that intellectual elites could develop.” Shils has also argued that institutional and cultural systems infused with human virtues could enable the praxis of citizenship, foster the emergence of civil society, and, I might add, extend its life in communities where civil society already exists.³² In Africa, intellectuals and elites have often remained too close to the center of power and have been part of the governing minority that has sought to maintain its grip on power. If the civil society project were to depend on them alone, it would almost surely fail. It is therefore imperative that different associations and cultural institutions whose members demonstrate a commitment to public well-being work with socially conscious elites and activists to create spaces that will foster the growth of civil society.³³

Christian Churches and Faith-Based Organizations as Civil Society

In this section, I focus on faith-based organizations (FBOs) and examine them as civil society groups, limiting the discussion to the Christian tradition. I do not subscribe to the view of Edmund Burke’s when he stated: “We know what is better, we feel inwardly that religion is the basis of civil society and the source of all good and comfort.”³⁴ However, I believe that religion serves as a vital element in a constellation of groups that form civil society and that it has the potential to contribute significantly to transformation in Africa. I want to highlight two perspectives on the Christian church as an FBO, and hence, as part of civil society in Africa. I formulate the first perspective as a question. How can FBOs play a leadership role as part of civil society in the transformation of African societies?³⁵ The answer to this seems easy: they ought to get involved in articulating and finding solutions to the problems people face in their communities. We have examples of this from Kenya. During the long reign of Daniel arap Moi, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) offered different social services to empower people.³⁶ Bishop Henry Okullu appealed to the churches to work with other groups to influence public opinion on political matters. The clergy used sermons to call for political pluralism, to call attention to the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and to demand that politics be ethical. The Kenyan churches did this because they had direct access to the people.³⁷

Other FBOs could do similar things in their own countries. First, they have to break the silence and speak out against political abuse, mismanagement, and corruption. Faith-based organizations have a moral obligation

to reject the different ways in which politicians have manipulated the ideology of nation-building to buy the silence of the FBOs.³⁸ By default, FBOs already participate in nation-building through the many institutions they run, including schools, hospitals and clinics, and development projects. They cannot afford to remain silent in the face of colossal abuses just because they want to contribute to nation-building.

Second, in tough times such as those the people in Africa face now, churches need to adopt a worldly spirituality that calls for the reign of God to be actualized in a concrete historical community. The theological mechanism for this kind of spirituality already exists in Africa; what is needed is the faith to live by such a theology. The church could also return to an eschatology that stresses “now.” It could remind people in a fresh way of the eschatological discourse of Matthew, chapter 25, in which Jesus teaches that God will reward people based on what they have done to other people here on Earth. The church cannot afford an eschatology that ignores the present crisis and points only to the future.

Faith-based organizations and churches have a responsibility to set a good example and manage their resources well. These organizations need to engage politicians in a critical dialogue on transformation. Jean-Marc Ela argues that the church “must undertake a profound reflection with a view to the incarnation of the gospel in administrative milieus where the political, economic, social, and cultural orientations of the African countries are in the process of formation.”³⁹

Third, FBOs could contribute to the democratic process by promoting equality. The Christian community has theological resources that could enable its members and leaders to make a case for an open and inclusive society. The two motifs that might be used are the idea of the *imago dei* (image of God) and the Pauline notion of equality. The Judeo-Christian tradition promotes the idea that human beings are created in the image of God. The *imago dei* involves several elements, but the church could profitably emphasize the freedom of God and argue that to be created in the image of God is to share in that freedom. God has given humankind freedom because humanity is created in God’s image. Furthermore, God freely saves the world. As creatures of God, humans also enjoy this endowment of freedom; therefore, human communities ought to be arenas of freedom. God has not only created people in God’s image, but has also created them as equal. This Pauline formulation appears in Galatians 3:28, where Paul states that in Christ all are one and cannot be divided into groups such as master/slave, Jew/Gentile, or male/female.

The Christian church itself has some housekeeping to do in this regard, especially in the area of gender equality. Mercy Amba Oduyoye argues: “Humanity in all its variety exists in the very image of the divine. This

affirmation of the dignity and integrity of humanity is grasped by women theologians as the basis of the prophetic demand that we 'be holy,' women and men together, all races, all ethnic groups, all nationalities."⁴⁰ This perspective underscores the urgency of establishing a society where leaders and members recognize and respect human freedoms because God created all people equal in God's image.

Finally, as part of civil society, FBOs, especially the churches, need to recover their prophetic roots. First, the recovery of the prophetic tradition could Nathanize sociopolitical and theological discourse. The story of Nathan's engagement with the abuse of power is told in 2 Samuel 11:2–17, 26–27; 12:1–7. King David saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired about her and was told that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a soldier in David's army who was away at war. The king desired Bathsheba and sent for her, whereupon "she came in unto him, and he lay with her." Bathsheba became pregnant and informed the king about her situation. This became a major crisis for David, who then sent for Uriah, hoping that when Uriah came home, he would go home and sleep with his wife. However, Uriah was more committed to the national agenda than was the king himself. He declined the permission to go home to his wife and told the king, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and servants of my lord, are camping in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?"

The king tried to trick Uriah with the pleasures of food and alcohol so that he would go and sleep with his wife, but Uriah did not yield to that temptation, and the king's plan of having Uriah sleep with his own wife to make it look as if he was the father of the child Bathsheba was carrying failed. When Uriah returned to battle, King David sent a letter with him to Joab, the commanding officer, demanding that he assign Uriah to the front of the battle where fighting was fierce. Joab followed the king's command, and Uriah was killed. When Bathsheba finished mourning for her husband, David married her, and she gave birth to a son. This sin brought the prophet Nathan into King David's court. The prophet called the king's attention to his gross injustice by telling a simple story. There were two men: one was rich and the other was poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had only one lamb. One day, the rich man had a visitor, so he took the lamb away from the poor man and killed it for his guest. When the prophet finished telling the story, David detected the injustice and unfairness and was furious at the rich man. The prophet pointed his finger at the king and said: "Thou art the man."

This story is an important model for the Christian church and calls upon it to engage in a Nathanizing task as members of civil society. It is not clear from the text if any conversation transpired between King David and

Bathsheba when she was ordered into the king's court the first time. Furthermore, it is not clear if there was a conversation between David and Bathsheba before he seduced her. It is foolish even to speculate whether she was a willing participant. When the king realized that Bathsheba was pregnant, David tried to manipulate Uriah to sleep with his wife to cover up his adultery. Besides committing adultery, King David also abused his power and murdered Uriah to cover up his wrongdoing. Additionally, he manipulated Bathsheba for a second time by marrying her after the death of her husband. This story, then, is about the abuse of power, political killing, and covering up of injustice.

Such abuse of power takes place not only when leaders steal from the public treasury, but also when they exert undue influence on members of the political community. Politicians in Africa have used power to grab land, money, and property, and in some cases, they have acted very much like King David by taking away a wife from a "nobody." As a part of civil society, the church needs to recover its ability to speak out against corruption and abuse of power. Nathan was not alone among the Hebrew prophets in speaking out against this type of injustice. Amos also criticized the social elites of his day for the way they treated widows and the poor; as well as the practice of bribery in the land. He called for justice to "roll down like waters," a phrase forever linked to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for justice and freedom. The Prophet Amos lashed out at members of the upper classes because they demonstrated a social disposition and praxis reprehensible to God. They were proud, conceited, arrogant, and concerned mostly with their own welfare. The leaders did not read the signs of the times, nor did they demonstrate any historical consciousness, for if they had, they would have foreseen the imminent collapse of their social arrangement.

The church as a civil society needs to recover its prophetic mission and speak out as Nathan and the other prophets did. Professional theologians cannot do this through conferences and monographs alone. Christian churches ought to mount a grass-roots effort, borrowing ideas from social movements, appropriating the means of teaching called "pedagogy of the oppressed" popularized by Paulo Freire, and reading the Bible in the light of the massive sufferings that many in the African community experience daily.

Second, in Nathanizing theological discourse, the Christian community may find it necessary at some point to adopt a confrontational agenda to create spaces for freedom and human dignity. African churches could learn a lesson from the South African church's long struggle against apartheid.⁴¹ Both the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) opposed apartheid and worked in different ways to champion racial justice, reconciliation, and

reconstruction in the new dispensation. These organizations questioned the legitimacy of the apartheid state and engaged in overt political activity to end the oppressive system.

As a part of civil society, the Christian churches ought to read Romans 13 in a different way, emphasizing the view that political legitimacy is based on performance. The church in Africa needs to learn afresh the ability to confront the state on the strength of its convictions that God demands justice. The church needs to perform this vital role as an element of civil society.

The African Renaissance⁴²

South African president Thabo Mbeki has made the African Renaissance a key component of his governing philosophy. In this section, I review and endorse Mbeki's call and argue that a renaissance is imperative for reconfiguring the human condition in Africa, even though I remain wary of Mbeki's articulations on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially his earlier view that HIV does not cause AIDS, and his reluctance to champion the fight for licenses to manufacture generic drugs in the belief that some of the medication is toxic. His proclamations may have done a great deal of harm to the fight against the disease. In his "I am an African" speech, delivered on May 8, 1996, to the Constitutional Assembly of South Africa, Mbeki touched on the theme of the African Renaissance, laying the emotional, ideological, and political basis for his project. The idea of a renaissance emerged earlier when Nelson Mandela, in his address to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Tunis in 1994, proclaimed the inception of a renaissance.⁴³ Mbeki has since championed the idea of a renaissance and made it a *sine qua non* of recovery in Africa.

In his inaugural address as chancellor of the University of Transkei in Umtata on May 18, 1995, Mbeki stated that the university was charged, among other things, with the responsibility of "safeguarding an accelerated as well as sustainable social, economic and cultural renaissance."⁴⁴ Two years later, when Mbeki addressed the Corporate Council on Africa in Chantilly, Virginia, he spoke specifically of the African Renaissance. He highlighted the miracle of change in South Africa and expressed hopes that the conflicts in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would end. Mbeki challenged negative perceptions of Africa as a strife-torn continent, arguing, "Those who have eyes to see, let them see. The African Renaissance is upon us. As we peer through the looking glass darkly, this may not be obvious. But it is upon us."⁴⁵ He pointed out that democratic transitions were taking place in Africa, which he called the desire of Africans to govern in a new African tradition in place of failed regimes.

Mbeki called on this generation of Africans, which had been victimized by tyranny, to end the dictatorship. Africans also had to change the perception that they lived on charity. Furthermore, Africans had to work for the emancipation of women and liberation from oppression, against underdevelopment, and for an end to dependence on outsiders. Mbeki lamented the enormous brain drain from Africa and expressed the hope that as rebirth takes place, Africans in the diaspora would return home to contribute to the rebuilding of the continent. For this to happen, the world community had to invest in Africa and support economic reforms that would create a favorable climate for sustained growth, in which the African business sector would play a crucial role.⁴⁶

Mbeki's diagnosis of the African crisis in his Virginia speech was correct, but his optimism about the end of conflicts in the DRC was not fulfilled: conflicts there escalated soon after that speech. Furthermore, democratic transitions have not taken place on the continent as Mbeki expected. Many observers believe that Mbeki has not taken a bold stand against political corruption and questionable elections in Zimbabwe, and these concerns have triggered doubts about Mbeki's commitment to democratic rule in Africa. However, his Virginia speech spelled out possibilities for African states to achieve renewal and sustainable development. Later, the African National Congress (ANC) organized a conference on the idea of the renaissance in Johannesburg on September 28, 1997, and the South African Renaissance chapter was launched shortly after the conference. This chapter is responsible for spearheading the ideas and concepts generated by the renaissance agenda as Mbeki had articulated it. In 1999, supporters of the idea launched the African Renaissance Institute. The ANC has subsequently made the African Renaissance central to its governing ideology.⁴⁷ For the sake of simplicity, I will sketch the key components of Mbeki's African Renaissance and address some of the issues raised by his critics as I argue that Mbeki's call for a renaissance is imperative for the survival of the continent.

Defining the Renaissance

First, the African Renaissance in its present incarnation has its source in Africa's identity politics, which have played an important role in reclaiming Africa from colonial and postcolonial distortions. Mbeki evokes the need for the recovery of an African identity in his "I am an African" speech. While identity issues and modes of consciousness vary, there is a general sense in which African countries have experienced the beginning of the modern state and continue to scrutinize that experience in search of a new awareness of who they are and what lies ahead. Attempts have been made

to see Mbeki's call for a renaissance as synonymous with the recovery of a black identity, but Mbeki was not primarily concerned with the issue of blackness. If there is to be a renaissance, Africans at some point have to face the issue of blackness because race continues to play an important role in human relations in South Africa and around the world. In his call for a renaissance, Mbeki emphasized Africa, and attempts by his critics and supporters to equate what it means to be African with "blackness" miss the point. The idea of Africa in the emerging discourse of the African Renaissance is broad. While Mbeki stands in a long tradition of Africans who have articulated different versions of this identity politics such as *Négritude*, black consciousness, black power, and "black is beautiful," he speaks specifically of the Africa where a number of cultures converge.

It ought to be obvious to observers of recent developments in South Africa that this was no simple amalgamation of ethnic groups by a leader whose government and society had established a truth and reconciliation commission to probe the past and establish a responsible path into the future in the aftermath of apartheid. In the "I am an African" speech, Mbeki highlighted the atrocities experienced by Africans in the past, yet he advocated a multicultural vision of Africa, arguing that the ideology of cultural superiority had victimized both the perpetrators and the victims of violence alike. It is crucial in the interests of nation-building that Africans reject precolonial ethnic divisions and racist projects of modernity. In this regard, the African Renaissance signals a new day in Africa by calling for a renewal of the identity of Africans in a pluralistic society. Interpreting the African Renaissance as a clamor for black nationalism is a distortion of Mbeki's vision. Furthermore, subsuming Mbeki's vision under his presidential politics does a disservice to the broad vision that aims at recovering lost identities of all Africans. To do this would be to miss the historic opportunity that the idea of the renaissance offers to Africans to rethink "the idea of Africa" in a postnationalist world.

It is apparent that by calling for a recovery of an African identity, Mbeki joined Cheikh Anta Diop, who also called for the renewal of Africa. However, Diop's project was limited to African writers and cultural elites who had abandoned African languages and failed to be genuine messengers of an African renaissance.⁴⁸ Mbeki departed from Diop's formulations and joined his fellow South African Isaka Seme, who in a speech at Columbia University in April 1906 had called for a regeneration of Africa. Mbeki's call prioritized political and economic renewal in the postcolonial state, while Seme called for the rebirth of Africa during colonial rule, using the agricultural and religious metaphor of "regeneration" to articulate the need for a new beginning in Africa. The idea of the recovery of African civilization forms part of an ongoing identity politics in which Africans have

been engaged for a long time. Mbeki's current call for a renaissance continues in the tradition that rejects the myth that Africa has no civilization. Such a rejection needs to be constructed on what African intellectuals have tried to do throughout their history to reclaim an African identity, whether through the pan-Africanist movement, the Garvey movements, the *Négritude* movement, black power, or the civil rights movement.⁴⁹ While all of these were renewal movements, Mbeki's call, in my view, remains distinct because he grounded it on values that would promote political and economic freedoms as Africans seek to build a society that is free from pain, abuse, and the fallout of racial and ethnic conflict.

The idea of a renaissance is crucial, because Africa stands at a critical juncture. A renaissance that is multicultural and multidisciplinary in scope could prove indispensably instrumental in helping different African countries and their leaders to establish that new kind of society that Africans have yearned to establish over the years. Such a new society would emerge out of the rubble of the present postcolonial state, which was constructed on the ruins of colonial domination and arbitrary rule. Racist ideas and inept policies, problematic creations of modernity, have shaped Africa's fate. There is a need for Africans to conceive of renewal in terms of diversity; to do so, Africans have to come to terms with their own diverse cultures, which remain important assets, because they will need them to reconstruct the future. The recognition of Africa's multicultural reality does not bury specific cultural norms and regional specificity; rather, it offers an opportunity to share different cultural principles that may offer fresh perspectives on solving what seems to bewilder Africans, the continent's intractable problems.

Second, the African Renaissance is a postnationalist ideology that calls for the renewal of the entire African continent. What is distinct about Mbeki's vision is that he has called for a continent-wide renewal, but he is also resolutely using the institutions of the ANC to support the renaissance. He has supported legislation in the South African parliament that has legitimated the creation of institutional frameworks to provide logistical support for the African Renaissance. Such a high-level involvement by the ANC and the South African government has led some observers to charge that Mbeki and his government were pushing *Pax Pretoriana*, that is, a peace forged in Pretoria, (now called Tshwane) the capital of South Africa.⁵⁰ Others have charged that the renaissance may only be post apartheid nationalism writ large, which aims at promoting a new nationalist and mercantile foreign policy, with South Africa playing the lead role as a regional industrial giant.⁵¹ But this is not the case, because Mbeki has also called for the development of trade relations between African countries on equal terms.

In some ways, Mbeki's call resembles early African nationalist aspirations for the entire African community, although it goes beyond earlier nationalisms in that it embraces the entire continent. In this sense the African Renaissance resembles other "all Africa" plans that have been proposed to deal with the problems of African politics, such as the Lagos Plan of Action 1980; of the Abuja Treaty of 1991; the declarations that came out of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa in 1991; and more recently, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad). The precedent for such reflection in Africa points to a desire to engage in postnationalist politics. A Codesria (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) consultation in March 1996 also called for an African Renaissance in the new millennium.⁵² Mbeki's project was a more resolute one because he argued that although a renaissance arises spontaneously, "without an integrated program of action to build upon those minimum factors, the dream of the renaissance shall forever be deferred or remain a romantic idealistic concept."⁵³ Mbeki has also been behind the initiative to institute Nepad, an important framework for partnership without which the African Renaissance will fail.

Third, the African Renaissance includes a revival of humanistic and cultural ideals. William Makgoba has described the renaissance as a humanistic engagement that reflects African ideas such as *ubuntu* that stress community, identity, and the use of consensus to resolve conflicts. The concept "*ubuntu*" means "humanity" or "humanness." As a philosophy, it upholds individuality and community. It also promotes the exercise of individual responsibility for the good of other persons in the community. Central to the concept is the idea that relations and transactions that take place among people ought to be undertaken humanely, in the light of shared values. The South African government expects *ubuntu* values to guide interpersonal relations. "The principle of caring for each other's well-being . . . and a spirit of mutual support . . . Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual's humanity."⁵⁴ The literature on *ubuntu* is enormous and often tends to project a mainly communitarian ethos.⁵⁵ But while Africans need to nurture a strong sense of community, it would be a mistake during this emphasis on a renaissance to focus exclusively on community at the expense of individuality.

In addition, the humanistic aspect of the renaissance provides the opportunity to launch an ethical engagement that seeks to avoid war and deal with conflict by tapping into African moral values.⁵⁶ South African involvement in conflict resolution in the south-central region was the basis for the hope that the violence would soon end. The desire to recover African cultures rejects what Mbeki has described as the psychology of

nothingness imposed by imperial projects of domination. Africa offers rich cultural resources for rebuilding the continent. African artistic expression and literature have been important vehicles for rejecting negative images of Africans. Continental and diasporan Africans have used the arts to reject negativity imposed on Africans.⁵⁷ The African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos in 1976 was a program of recovery and celebration of African cultures. It is necessary that the artistic traditions of Africa be tapped regularly to revive African culture and recover African identities distorted by colonialism and brutalized by the postcolonial regimes.⁵⁸ The implication here is that Africans themselves have the responsibility of working to institute a cultural renewal that appreciates the problems of the twenty-first century. The responsibility of African political leaders in this regard is to create free spaces that might allow people to engage with discourses that would empower them to meet their basic needs and gather a surplus for the future. Négritude and other ideologies were problematic because although their advocates appealed to Africans to embrace their cultures, those advocates did not provide the political leadership that would empower Africans to face the challenges posed by the totalities of modernity.

Fourth, Mbeki's call for a renaissance is distinct from previous calls because it seeks to promote a new political culture that would facilitate the transformation of the social conditions of African countries. The agenda of the renaissance involves cultural exchange, liberation of African women from patriarchy, empowerment of young people to achieve their potential, the institution of and dedication to democratic values, and sustainable economic development. Observers have pointed out that Mbeki has offered the continent a wish list for development.⁵⁹ Beyond a wish list, the African Renaissance requires commitment to some of the main tenets of liberal democracy, the neoliberal approach to politics and economic management promoted by the WB and the IMF in response to the crisis in Africa.

In his speeches on the African Renaissance, Mbeki has argued that Africans today need a system of "people power" and people rule. From this perspective, the main themes of the renaissance include a range of ideas that have been part of the search for political and economic transformation, such as good governance and economic policies that will promote privatization and encourage private sector investments. African states have also been urged to reduce state ownership; to promote responsibility in building economic systems to meet the needs of the times; to initiate regional economic cooperation to enhance markets; and introduce social policies that will deliver social goods such as good education, good health-care, good houses, clean water, and better sanitation.⁶⁰ Mbeki has clearly linked democratization to the economic revitalization of the continent.

African states need to ensure that the economy works, but it is also imperative that they play a limited role in the economy and encourage the development of an entrepreneurial spirit among the people. An overbearing state has ignored political corruption and mismanagement to the detriment of the economy. For this reason, an African Renaissance would serve the population if it were to reject systems of governance that are corrupt and inefficient as well as the managers of those systems, who seek to enrich themselves.⁶¹ Mbeki affirms: "I am certain that none of us present here will dispute the fact that the cancer of self-enrichment by corrupt means constitutes one of the factors which accounts for the underdevelopment and violent conflicts from which we seek to escape."⁶² The African Renaissance has to generate a cultural and political revival to create the conditions for policies that would enable politicians to work on improving the quality of life for all people. To do this, it is important that the renaissance agenda addresses the question of sustainable development, which also includes a list of things ranging from resource development to the emancipation of women and fair international trade practices.

Mbeki has accepted the reality of globalization and has argued that its benefits will take time. In the meantime, Africa has a place in the global economy, which it needs to fill in order to attract "significant volumes of capital."⁶³ Mbeki has criticized the fact that surpluses generated in the developed countries from the movement of capital around the world are not available to African countries that need such resources most. In this respect, Mbeki's project calls for a serious engagement in building a new world characterized by democratic ideals, peace, stability, sustainable development and "equality among the nations and a just and democratic system of international governance."⁶⁴ Rhetoric alone is not new; it will take a concerted effort from all African communities to turn the victories of liberation into a genuine renaissance.

The challenge to political elites and peasants to work together is welcome, but the sad reality is that in Africa, the elites have ignored the peasants even in countries where the so-called five-year development plans were supposed to cater to the interests of peasants in the rural areas. It is this disjunction between the elites and the masses that has created a two-tier society and hindered progress. The reality of a two-tier society, one rich and the other poor, ought to motivate Africans to embrace the renaissance and depart from the self-serving praxis of the political elites, which has created massive suffering and civil strife.

When Mbeki first called for a renaissance, he thought that the conflicts in the DRC, were about to end, and that reconstruction was about to begin in Africa. That possibility made Mbeki call on people "to be rebels against tyranny, instability, corruption and backwardness."⁶⁵ Mbeki

expressed the hope that Nigeria would exchange corruption and abuse of power “for a system of governance that successfully addresses the challenges of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society and an equitable system of sharing resources, for a path of economic growth and development which benefits the people and reinforces the independence of Nigeria.”⁶⁶

Mbeki lauded the end of Mobutu’s era, lamenting the conflicts that had emerged in the DRC. His optimistic assessments were premature, because violence has continued in this region, because self-seeking politicians took control and neighboring states invaded the eastern part of the DRC. Taylor and Williams have described this as “a malignant condition offering significant opportunities to those in positions to exploit such situations. Such circumstances generate their own instrumental logic of accumulation and can serve to attract ‘businessmen.’”⁶⁷ For a while, Rwanda and Uganda set up colonial-type governance in the areas they controlled and engaged in mineral exploitation. In Angola, the rich oil and diamond deposits fueled the long civil war.⁶⁸ The wars in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire have lasted as long as they have and with unusual brutality because the wars have offered business opportunities to politicians and power brokers in the region.⁶⁹

Taylor and Williams have argued that these conflicts pose a serious threat to Mbeki’s renaissance agenda. While I agree with them, I believe that it would be a mistake to reject Mbeki’s call for a renaissance because the existence of these intractable conflicts also validate the renaissance imperative. The renaissance articulates big ideas such as political and economic liberalization and offers an opportunity for leaders to cultivate and promote the common good. Mbeki has argued that “an enormous challenge faces all of us to do everything we can to contribute to the recovery of African pride, the confidence in ourselves that we can succeed as well as any other in building a humane and prosperous society.”⁷⁰ He has also stated that centuries of denial and abuse of black humanity have taken their toll, and it is incumbent on Africans to employ all resources, including the arts, to end subservience. In this process, intellectuals have an important role in articulating the ideas of the African renaissance which involves, “the education, organization, and energization of new African patriots who, because to them yesterday is a foreign country, who join in struggle to bring about an African Renaissance in all its elements.”⁷¹

Debating the Renaissance

In critical responses to the idea of the renaissance, some scholars have pointed out that Mbeki’s emphasis on economic recovery and development privileges industrialization.⁷² Emmanuel Katongole has correctly called attention to the link that an African Renaissance could have with

developmentalism, which has a problematic history in Africa and other regions of the world. Katongole has argued that both Mbeki and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda have accepted WB solutions that have imposed liberal economic principles in Africa. This imposition from New York, Cape Town, and Kampala does not consider Africa's agenda.⁷³ Katongole has also argued that many Africans do not see themselves in the narrative of the African Renaissance. Addressing the theological implications of liberalization, Katongole has argued that the theologian needs to practice theology in a spirit that reflects the problems of Africa and reject solutions to the problems in Africa that appear in the guise of "overpowering and totalizing stories [such] as [the] African Renaissance."⁷⁴

In the spirit of Foucault, Katongole has further argued that what generally "passes as knowledge or the voice of general well-being may well be the voice of a narrow range of economic and political interests."⁷⁵ Taking a cue from the Zacchaeus story in Luke 19: 1–10, Katongole has reminded theologians and those concerned with the welfare of Africa to come down from their sycamore trees (tenth-floor air-conditioned offices) into the difficult circumstances and tough realities people face on a daily basis.

In the Zacchaeus story, Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, stopped in the town of Jericho. Many people wanted to see Jesus, including a short man called Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector whom people suspected of defrauding the people. He climbed up a sycamore tree so that he would see Jesus when he passed by. When Jesus came to the tree, he called Zacchaeus to come down from the tree because he wanted to eat dinner at Zacchaeus's house. The public murmured that Jesus was going to dinner at the house of a sinner. On hearing these murmurs, Zacchaeus confessed and said that he was going to give half of his wealth to the poor. Katongole has used this story to point out that a few people are wealthy and many people in Africa are suffering. Theologians in Africa have a responsibility to criticize this situation and ask corrupt leaders to do something about their wealth. Such a theological critique of the social realities of Africa would involve divesting African theology of its universalist pretensions and zombie spirit and present a critique of the social conditions by engaging with real-life stories. African theology needs to refocus on the socioeconomic realities of today and become "embodied theology." In other words, theological reflection needs to take the concrete physical needs of the African people seriously.

This is an insightful reading and application of an idea that has spread very quickly in Africa. I fully accept the use of the Zacchaeus story, which implies that the rich ought to reexamine their lifestyles and initiate a new stewardship, but I must state that given the economic decline in Africa today, I doubt that those who have called for genuine reforms are merely

imposing outside solutions to the problems of Africa. I am more open to the different theological position offered by John de Gruchy of South Africa, who has seen considerable hope in the idea of a renaissance and has described Mbeki's proposals as: "visionary yet expressed in more sober terms than those which characterized the rhetoric of many leaders of African liberation."⁷⁶ The realism of the African Renaissance is grounded on the belief that a political will exists in Africa today that can change things if there is enough outside support. De Gruchy has argued that the Christian community should not support the renaissance blindly. The Christian community has two roles to play: a priestly role and a prophetic role. Through the priestly role, the Christian community could contribute to "the moral, cultural and spiritual transformation of the continent, as well as the healing of its past memories and the reconciliation of communities and nations divided by ethnicities and war." The prophetic role invites the religious communities to test "the vision of African renaissance, and especially its implementation, against the more radical vision of the reign of God with its insistence on justice, compassion and the humanization of life."⁷⁷

The African Renaissance in Global Perspective

Scholars may continue to reflect on the merits of an African Renaissance, but the men and women who lead Africa ought to rethink their economic visions and work for a rebirth that will bring new life into communities filled with despair. Such a renaissance aimed at the revitalization of Africa ought to start with reform of all aspects of governance and the political economy and participate in the global market, because merely asking the wealthy to do something about poverty in Africa will not go far. Mbeki's own political stewardship in South Africa has drawn criticism. His handling of the HIV/AIDS crisis is appalling and betrays the very idea of a renaissance. Despite this, (and one does not have to judge Mbeki solely on his discourses on the HIV/AIDS pandemic), the idea of a renaissance is crucial for several reasons.

First, African states need a renewal because of the precarious sociopolitical and economic conditions on the continent. Such a crisis does not call for a quick fix but rather an engagement that requires the moral, cultural, spiritual, political, and economic resources to be channeled toward an effort of transformation. African states face a long and difficult road to change, which has to begin with the renewal of African values. The call for a renaissance underscores the fact that there is a spiritual and humanistic aspect to this need for renewal. Africans have a reservoir of moral resources to draw from in revitalizing Africa and ushering in a new era.

The renaissance project is a moral project that demands a critical appropriation of Africa's heritage, yet it also invites Africans to face the future with a new sense of self that respects what Africans have to offer.

Second, Africans who debate the renaissance need to look beyond personal differences and consider the substantive issues raised by its advocates. Graham Evans correctly argues that the 1999 elections that brought Thabo Mbeki to power were largely dictated by domestic issues: jobs, housing, public utilities, education, health, and crime.⁷⁸ Since then, however, Mbeki has decided that international relations, especially relations within Africa, ought to become an important focus of the ANC administration. There is a debate within South Africa about this move: some want South Africa to strengthen its ties with Europe and North America, while others endorse an Africa-centered approach that stresses ethics and solidarity with Africa.⁷⁹ Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance is his attempt to define foreign policy. In order to do that, he must work with others who may not share his enthusiasm about the African Renaissance. For example, there are segments of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), ANC allies, who may not share Mbeki's Africa-centered foreign policy.⁸⁰ When Mbeki spelled out his agenda, many people in Pretoria's diplomatic circles interpreted it as a pragmatic, interest-based policy rather than one based on an ethics of ideology.⁸¹

However, Mbeki's pragmatism is not devoid of ideology at various levels. First, he has adopted neoliberal economic policies in line with WB and IMF proposals and, in so doing, has angered some in the SACP and Cosatu. Mbeki's ideological move toward a market economy and liberalization signals his desire to collaborate with the forces that shape the global economy. I agree with Evans that this is quite a conversion for Mbeki, a leading member of the SACP who was an insider of the radical wing of the struggle for justice in South Africa.⁸² I am convinced that Mbeki has made the right move, because experiments in socialism have not worked in other parts of Africa, and Mbeki's opponents have not placed anything on the table for discussion. I do not imply that objections to African Renaissance should not be taken seriously. Ultimately, the South African government has an obligation to its people to address the land question, but such projects can be undertaken in concert with a viable and productive economy that promotes justice for all. Furthermore, questions remain about how to maintain a productive and thriving economy in a society where many remain poor and are yet to experience the benefits of South Africa's political liberation.

Second, Mbeki's project is ideological in another sense. He has focused on developing the South African economy and the economy of the continent, emphasizing the oneness of the African continent. Some critics

argue that the idea of a renaissance is nothing but a slogan and will not succeed because of the political crisis to the north of the Limpopo River.⁸³ This is a troubling notion that can only be disproven by a commitment to renewal by all Africans. One cannot ignore the fact that many South Africans critical of state failure in Africa have embraced the African Renaissance.⁸⁴ Evans has argued that the renaissance is a strategy that could counter the negative image of Africa and herald the beginning of a new era in South African foreign policy.⁸⁵ If Mbeki succeeds, he is likely to persuade members of Cosatu and other critics to accept the renaissance project, because South Africa stands to benefit enormously from any economic recovery in this region and in the rest of Africa. I believe that Evans is correct in asserting: "It is not, therefore, fanciful to interpret the African Renaissance idea as representing Thabo Mbeki's grand design to re-invent South Africa as a global trading state with strong regional and continental interests."⁸⁶ Mbeki might indeed have huge plans about the place of South Africa's place in global trade, but the African Renaissance remains a distinct call that addresses a wide variety of issues that affect the African continent now.

Evans overstates his case, because despite the fact that Mbeki wants sustainable development and African participation in the global market, the South African president has focused on Africa and the economic condition of the continent. Mbeki has argued that the problems that beset Africa, while exacerbated by contributing factors that lie outside of the continent, come from within it. In this respect, we cannot take lightly the call for African solutions to Africa's problems. A renaissance would enhance the search for African solutions and could become a process of education in human values. Such values are necessary to enable all people in the African community to place human well-being above personal ambition. It does not serve Africans well to allow outsiders, who (as Mbeki has pointed out) have poisoned the souls of Africans, to hinder them from building a society based on values of honesty and integrity. A spiritual and sociocultural renewal that affirms Africa's values of fairness has to begin with Africans themselves. The quest for new values needs to begin with the discarding of ideas that open doors to corruption, such as the common belief that people ought to give presents to public officials because the gift, or *dash*, is an African value.

Third, the idea of a renaissance has a rich intellectual and cultural history. Mbeki's African Renaissance is similar to other renaissance movements. However, if there is any commonality here, it is largely in the shared sense of renewal and the call for values that would restore and revitalize human communities. It is only in this general sense that I locate Mbeki's call for a renaissance in a wider intellectual and cultural history. The calls for change

do not share similar ideals; each generation has faced different circumstances and has drawn upon different ideals to sustain and renew its society. In Europe, the Renaissance described cultural changes that affected many areas of life. It started in Italy and spread to the rest of the continent, involving scholarly, artistic, and moral endeavors in different countries. The etymological roots of today's English word "renaissance" lie in the Italian *rinascere*, meaning "rebirth." It emerged in Europe during the fourteenth century and was marked by a return to Greek scholarship and an appreciation of new scientific scholarship and the arts. The early leaders of the Renaissance movements were all humanists, including the Italian poets Dante Alighieri and Francesco Petrarch, the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, and the French scholar François Rabelais. These scholars all believed in the noble ideal of improving the human condition and its surroundings.

The Renaissance would later blossom in Italy and boast of a number of artists, including Donatello, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. Elsewhere in Europe, events such as the Protestant Reformation and scholars and artists such as Shakespeare, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and Miguel de Cervantes all contributed to the rebirth. Cornel West, in his famous essay on the genealogy of modern racism, has argued that one of the outcomes of this rebirth in the humanities was the return to and idealization of classical Greek models of thought, including Greek perspectives on proportionality, which led to the view that Greek ideas of beauty were the norm. As a result, physical forms such as the black body that did not fit into this model were denigrated—and this, according to West, contributed to the rise of modern racism.⁸⁷

Despite the fact that West traces the genealogy of modern racism to developments from the European rebirth, supporters of the African Renaissance could learn some things from the European Renaissance. Anton A. van Nierkerk has explored this question, arguing that Africans cannot ignore the outside world and pursue essentialist dreams.⁸⁸ First, the European Renaissance as an intellectual movement developed over a period of about 150 years.⁸⁹ Supporters need to give the African Renaissance some time before they can begin to measure its achievements. Second, the European rebirth took place in small centers.⁹⁰ Rebirth in Africa, then, has to start from what Marcus Ramogale calls "pockets of excellence in the sea of mediocrity that is South Africa."⁹¹ The Renaissance was never a mass movement. An African Renaissance will not emerge from throwing money to people who are not doing anything, but from a commitment by people to change things and the establishment of role models in all sectors of the society. I believe this calls for a strong mobilization of grass-roots efforts to involve people in a project of change grounded in a critical appropriation of competing political and economic visions.

Third, Van Nierkerk has argued that the European Renaissance rediscovered values and the potential of the people because rebirth was grounded on the view that “[humanity] is the measure of all things.”⁹² In this sense, some scholars believe that the African Renaissance is a recovery of the values of *ubuntu*. This is a dream that must be nurtured with a critical eye and vigilance so that the vision and spirit of renewal will not be betrayed. The European renaissance championed human dignity and revitalized a civilization, but some visions of power in modernity created the Holocaust. Promoters of an African renaissance should determine to work against beliefs and actions that have crushed human dignity such as the abuse of power by postcolonial leaders and the genocide of Rwanda and Darfur. The long strife and civil war in the DRC invites Africans to make a new commitment to protect human dignity. *Ubuntu* values should be used to check the abuse of human dignity.⁹³

Fourth, the European Renaissance was accompanied by a rigorous focus on the humanities. The humanities are important to the search for renewal despite the fact that some people are interested in promoting science and technology at the expense of the humanities. Africa’s problems stem from the distortion of human relations.⁹⁴ The humanities are important because a revitalization of the disciplines in the humanities could foster a new a better communication among people. They are necessary to give a humanizing bent to what people do in other fields as well as help individuals and communities deal with the disenchantment many have for the present age.⁹⁵

While I share Van Nierkerk’s views that Africa’s problems stem from the decline of human values, I also believe that implementing a renaissance agenda calls for a holism in intellectual pursuits that must not be compromised. There is no doubt that with the decline of universities in the wake of the collapse of the state, scientific research has also collapsed. Many African scientists have moved to the West, a situation that further complicates any dreams of restoring rigorous scientific research. The intellectual quests for a recovery of African values and the pursuit of sustainable development have to consider humanistic and scientific research seriously. This calls for serious efforts to fund basic research in all fields, encourage liberal arts education, and promote professional and technical education.

Humanistic perspectives alone cannot build a renaissance spirit, but I have called to reforms by focusing on perspectives from the humanities because the insights from the humanities complement ideas social scientist have articulated. Democratic rule, good governance, economic reforms, and civil society offer structural interventions that are crucial to recovery. However, it is equally important that Africans restore the intangible values that one finds in the arts, literature, philosophy, and religion. These disciplines offer different perspectives on human values, such as respect for

people and love of family and community. The humanities help people celebrate life together, maintain rituals that nourish the community, and link people with others. Those intangible values teach people to have concern for others and provide for those who are in need. Community values also teach people to live together, plan together, and anticipate the future together. If they plan together, the elders cannot consume everything. In economic terms this means providing for the community and living as wise people. Among the Wimbumbum, it means that you do not eat the seed corn. If you do that, there will be no corn for you to plant when planting season comes. In postcolonial Africa, the leaders who have governed the state have eaten the seed corn and have left their countries to figure out what to do to ensure that there will be a future. Africans today and in the near future have been condemned to dependence on foreign lenders. A restoration of human values could refocus human relationships and infuse trust in dealing with the major socioeconomic issues in a global economy.

Finally, Van Nierkerk has cautioned proponents of the African Renaissance that rebirth should take place in a climate where there is a free flow of information. This remains a difficult challenge in many African countries, where the government controls the main sources of information, such as radio, television, and newspapers. In many countries, the media is expected to act as an arm of the government rather than play the role of a watchdog. In the early stages of the debate on the renaissance in South Africa, it seemed, that Mbeki wanted the press and the intellectuals to depart from a critical stance and adopt one of advocacy because Mbeki questioned the role of the media at a conference held at the Natal Playhouse in March 1999 and wondered whether the press would play the role of promoting, building, articulating, and defining the African Renaissance.⁹⁶ While one can understand Mbeki's desire that the media disseminate the idea of a renaissance and educate the public about it, such communication certainly needs to take place within the context of a vigorous and robust debate. Such a debate, about the nature of society, the grim reality of the human condition, and the options available to all people, has to begin in Africa. Differing viewpoints cannot be criminalized, as is the tradition in African countries.⁹⁷

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the African diaspora went through a rebirth of black culture and arts known as the Harlem Renaissance, which reached people of African descent around the world. Intellectual giants of the movement included W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke (who wrote the influential essay, "The New Negro"), and Langston Hughes. Other writers included Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer. Artists included Richmond Barthé and Aaron Douglas. This

rebirth was followed by a revival of scholarly representations of Africa and the African diaspora by Francophone scholars studying in Paris, an intellectual engagement that gave birth to the *Négritude* movement and the influential publication venture *Présence Africaine*. The African-American renaissance was an antiracist project, and the movements that began in Paris were anticolonial projects. Both emphasized cultural retrieval. What is different today is that a renaissance cannot only aim at a cultural revival; it must also aim at an economic revival through values that will restore hope and lift African countries out of the present doldrums.

Writing about the quest for peace in 1967, Ali Mazrui challenged Africans to take responsibility for peacekeeping and urged them to police themselves.⁹⁸ In his BBC lectures nearly two decades later, he called on Africans to seek peace and embrace technology and power.⁹⁹ He argued that developments in the feminist movements in the North would just as equally contribute to world peace.¹⁰⁰ The feminist movement now includes positions taken by African women who find themselves at different points on the spectrum of feminism and by women of African descent in America who call their position “womanist.”¹⁰¹ Mbeki has called for the empowerment of women as part of the African Renaissance. This task ought to start at the grass-roots level, and the national agenda in different African countries needs to, and indeed *should*, reflect a serious commitment to the empowerment of women. What happens in this area will determine the success of the renaissance and recovery in Africa.

Mazrui has also argued that cultural adjustment might be needed to eliminate organizational incompetence.¹⁰² This remains a compelling claim today. The idea of a renaissance offers an opportunity to revisit and revive African values of creativity, generosity, communal spirit, and hospitality. The African Renaissance may indeed be *Pax Pretoriana*, in its genesis and provenance, but it is *Pax Africana*, and indeed, *Pax Humana*. Rather than ask (as African diplomats did in Johannesburg), “What is this renaissance thing?” Africans ought to embrace the spirit of the renaissance and work toward the reality of a new day.

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CHAPTER 5

TOWARD AN INTERSUBJECTIVE POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN AFRICA

Beginning with this chapter, I explore humanistic perspectives for recovery. I will focus on the recovery of intersubjective dimensions of social life and argue that members of the political community are first linked in an intersubjective relation and have ethical and political obligations to other members of the community. I do not address the absence of intersubjectivity, because people in Africa engage with each other intersubjectively. Rather, I focus on the crisis that arises because the realities of intersubjectivity have not been translated into political life.

I will begin by discussing subjectivity and intersubjectivity in Wimbun society to highlight the reality of both, and will also identify problems that hinder a vibrant intersubjective life. I will next discuss how intersubjectivity is worked out between ethnic groups. Using examples from Cameroon, I will show that when groups distinguish themselves and diminish the stature of others, intersubjectivity is in crisis. I will then discuss intersubjectivity in political life, starting with the ideas of Edmund Husserl. Husserl's account of subjectivity and intersubjectivity establishes a primordial place for an intentional subject whose priorities determine the social climate in which the subject dominates all others. My goal is to argue that Husserl's project maps out the totalizing praxis of the subject that must be overcome with egalitarian political relationships.

Writing about postcolonial subjectivities in Africa poses a number of challenges. First, political praxis has exploited ethnic relations, created selfish networks of accumulation, and distorted the personal to the extreme. Second, the African postcolony, although concrete, is a construction textualized in a variety of discourses that address identity questions, and which set limits to my phenomenological engagement. For example, one cannot present a new or exhaustive account of subjectivity in Africa in one chapter,

given the different experiences of the African people. However, this difficulty should not deter one from thinking about subjectivities in Africa in broad strokes as part of an ongoing phenomenological hermeneutics and confrontation with the human condition. Recent in-depth studies of particular communities have made room for critical projects that cast a wide net over the critical discourse on postcolonial subjectivities.

Scholarship on Africa focuses on communities and groups as well as on individuals, as they are part of a society or community.¹ However, the question of subjectivity has been raised in a new and compelling way by writings that focus on the dialectics of personhood and community.² Some of the scholarship shows a hesitation to engage with articulations found in Western philosophical traditions, either focusing on African material or privileging the ethnographic approach.³ Regardless of what sources a scholar uses, the good news is that subjectivity and intersubjectivity are receiving attention in the scholarship today. I have argued elsewhere that Africans could make a case for intersubjectivity by emphasizing the communitarian theses as well as continuing to stress individuality, because the two need to be balanced to reflect individual experience in the social world.⁴

Michael Jackson has written about intersubjectivity, and Johannes Fabian has called for the restoration of coevalness. Although both of them highlight dimensions of intersubjective relations in African cultures, the thrust of their arguments is the call for a closer, more open relationship between researchers and the people they interact with.⁵ My goal in this chapter is to address the intersubjective imperative in political life. I will not revisit the argument about communitarianism and individualism here. I begin by discussing articulations of subjectivity in Wimbun society that highlight intersubjective dimensions of social life and some of the aporias of social relations that reflect conditions in the postcolony.

Wimbun Articulations of Intersubjectivity

I grew up in Ntumbaw village, whose members are part of the Warr clan, in the Wimbun area of Donga Mantung Division in the Western Cameroon grassfields. Even though life in the postcolony has been marked by the spread of the subject's conquering horizons and the loss of subjectivity by most of the members of the political community, especially with reference to their basic and political rights, there is evidence in daily social discourse and interaction that the Wimbun people recognize subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The people of Ntumbaw and other Wimbun people recognize individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity in a variety of ways. The Wimbun people express intersubjectivity with the phrase, *fo ni mwe*, which means, one takes pride in another person.

There are times when the intersubjective dimension is swallowed by the strong communalist ethos in African thought. People recite a number of proverbs that spell out this ethos, such as “I am because we are,” and “It takes a village to raise a child.” People generally know that other people are very important in their lives. Through these social relationships people organize for “mutual aid, solidarity, interdependence, collective action, and reciprocal obligation.” These things ought to be encouraged. However, communal activities do not need to dispense with individuality and the distinctiveness of the person who thinks, creates, decides, and makes choices, sometimes contrary to the views of the group. Such individuality is important and needed to counter political thought and life in many African countries, which has focused on one leader who often has ignored individuality, despised difference, and galvanized support through coercion in the name of nation-building.

The Wimbun people as well as other Africans could revitalize intersubjective relations by reconfiguring social relations to underscore the subjectivity of other people so that their views, desires, and priorities would not be swallowed up by the group. This demands a balance of emphasis on communality and individuality. Persons relate to others as sons, daughters, siblings, parents, friends, and spouses. These social relations are also individual relations because in all of them the individual, whose subjectivity should not be suppressed, often makes choices that may fall in line with the wishes of the group, or may differ from the will of the majority.

The idea of choice is one way to examine how individual subjectivity is expressed in community. Choices are important markers of human agency and subjectivity. For example, in Ntumbaw village and other Wimbun communities, individuals choose the kinds of things they like from many options. One of these important choices that reflect individual subjectivity as well as intersubjectivity is the choice of the person one would like to marry. In cases where the decision to embark on this journey is prompted by relatives the search for a partner is a community as well as an individual activity. But even if relatives prompt it, the individual still has to make some important decisions. Popular literature often discusses African marriages as if all of them are arranged, and therefore devoid of romantic love, but the reality is that in the marriage transaction the individual and community are engaged in a negotiation that sets the individual apart, yet involves the larger social circle of that individual.

In general, individual young men and women often decide whose hand they would like to ask for in marriage, and then inform their parents and members of the extended family. In some cases, they tell their relatives before they talk to the person they are interested in. Sometimes they talk to the individual before they inform their relatives, to make sure that the

person is going to accept their proposal. Whichever route they take, this is an important decision for an individual who has found love and wants to spend the rest of his or her life with that person. In Wimbun communities, marriage proposals are not always accepted immediately. Family members often take time to think about the man or woman their relative has fallen in love with. Upon reflection, they could raise objections for a number of reasons. Family members might object to one's choice of a spouse on the grounds that the desired man or woman comes from a family that does not have money or a good name (i.e., a good reputation). Sometimes a suitor may be rejected on grounds that he does not have a good income. The idea of rejecting someone who does not have money is satirized in a popular song written in the 1970s by the late Prince Nico Mbarga, "Na My Choice," in which a young woman pleads with her father to let her marry the man she has chosen. In the dialogue, conducted in pidgin English, her father rejects her choice, telling her that she must marry a certain Mr. Joe, "the Managing Director of Rich People." When the daughter pleads that if her father forces her to marry someone she does not love, there will be no peace, and that everyday there would be trouble and "palaver," the father declares that he does not want peace, but money. This song reflects a dramatic clash of individual subjectivities: that of the woman who exercises her right to choose someone she loves, and that of the father who wants to impose his own wishes on his daughter by making her marry a wealthy individual. Although this song contains lines of liberation and strength on the part of the woman, one cannot escape the impression that the father has the final word when he declares: "You cannot choose choice for ma house" ("you cannot make a choice in my house").

Families can also discourage the consideration of potential partners when the families have had long-standing disputes. These disputes might involve land or a previous marriage deal that did not work out. In the past, many marriages were discouraged because the Wimbun people felt that it was preferable for a son or daughter of Wimbun to marry another Wimbun rather than *nwe nfu* (a foreigner). In the 1970s, two Wimbun sons returned from the United States after earning their doctorates. It was widely reported that both were in love with white women. One of the girlfriends made the trip to Wimbun land to see her boyfriend. There was excitement in the community about this person, whom some called *ngwagu* (bride), but the man's family discouraged him from marrying his girlfriend on the grounds that she was a *nwe nfu*. There was no hard and fast rule about this in Wimbun land because during the same period, some Wimbun men did get married to white women, and many men and women had already married people from different ethnic groups in Cameroon. The negotiations about whom to marry were subjective as

well as intersubjective engagements because they involved both the individuals and their families.

The movement of people from Wimbun land to other areas in Cameroon to work on plantations, teach in church and government schools, or work as civil servants has given Wimbun people an opportunity to exercise their rights to make choices and act as subjects, though often in consultation with their families. Thus, many Wimbun men and women have found partners in the places where they live and work. Some Wimbun who live in the United States and Europe have spouses from these countries, and there have been no objections from their families. Not only are these individuals now able to assert their subjectivity, they are also able to negotiate that subjectivity in a changing social climate where what is foreign is no longer seen as a danger to the cohesion of the family or group.

The fact that an individual's decision regarding who to marry often receives the support of the family, or is negotiated so that all members of the family can agree on that decision, is a further demonstration that transactions such as marriages are indicators of individual subjectivities as well as intersubjective relations. When a Wimbun man has chosen a woman as wife and his family has agreed, then his family will contact the family of the woman, establish a relationship with them, and make the marriage arrangements if the family of the woman also approves the choice that the woman has made. At this level, marriage is no longer an individual affair, but one that involves two extended families. When the families have agreed and supported the decision made by the couple, the man's family will give gifts and later present the bride wealth to the woman's family. The money that is used as the bride wealth often comes from the family fund that is designated for such transactions. If the family does not have the money but the man himself does, and he decides to provide the money needed for the transaction, he cannot just go to his future in-laws and pay the bride wealth himself. He is obligated to surrender the money to his family, who will then present it to the bride's family. Once he has designated the money for the bride wealth, he gives up his claim over that money; from that time on, it becomes family wealth. This is again the out-working of individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

There were times in the past when individual subjectivity was asserted only with the help of the legal system. For example, in the early 1970s a Wimbun *nkfu* (chief of an independent village) decided he was going to marry one of the young women from his village. This young woman, whom we will call Miriam, was still attending primary school. When she finished her primary education, palace retainers and relatives of the *nkfu* took her from the market to the palace on a day they had selected and declared that she was now a *winto* (the wife of the *nkfu*). Miriam cried for

help, but no one gave her help assuming that the *nkfu* had the authority to marry any young woman in his realm. After spending some days in the palace, she escaped, and with the help of her parents sued the *nkfu* in a magistrate court, and won her case. Miriam did not want to marry the *nkfu* and she fought against the imposition of the *nkfu's* will on hers. Two subjectivities clashed and the legal system was called on to intervene.

In addition to marriage decisions, people negotiate their subjectivities today in other ways. Individuals who have gone away from home to work at different places have made decisions to build a house and settle in those places. The Wimbun people generally expect a person to build a house in his home village or in his father's compound. If a financially successful person does not do that, the Wimbun people often say that one has planted guards and others have harvested them. Since the late 1960s, Wimbun people have decided to settle in Bamenda, Kumba, Douala, Yaoundé, Limbe, and other areas of Cameroon. Some of them also build houses in their villages, but many of them cannot afford to build one house at home and another in an urban area, so they build only one house in the area where they have settled and are working. Some of them build houses in several towns as a way of investing in real estate. They often rent those houses to tenants. Their families have come to terms with the fact that it is better for them to own houses where they live and work than to build houses in the village and not live in them.

My point here is that a communitarian ethos has not erased individual subjectivity and agency, but engaged it in an intersubjective dialogue. Individuals make decisions, but they also act in an interdependent manner because they depend on each other to succeed. In that way they live out the expression *fò ni nwe*. Social relations, then, can be seen as a dialectic between the self and other selves, who interact and work out mutual desires in the community. Intersubjectivity in this sense is an ongoing negotiation with members of one's group as well as with members of other groups.

There is a second form in which subjectivity is articulated among the Wimbun people and other ethnic groups in Cameroon, a form that highlights the crisis of intersubjectivity and the crisis of the postcolonial state. One way to illustrate this is to consider the structures of power among the Wimbun people. The Wimbun are divided into three clans: the Warr, the Witang, and the Wiya. Each clan is made up of several autonomous villages headed by a *nkfu*. The clan head, a position that does not change, is an honorary title; even the ritual functions that come with it are not binding. The clan head is something like a dean or first among equals, who was chosen early in the history of the clan when it was still one extended family because that individual was the senior member of the family. In the Warr clan when the male members of the family moved away from the

central location of the family and established separate communities, those new communities became villages. The member of the first large extended family who led a group away and created a new village became a *nkfu* and ruled the new village. The senior member of the family who remained at the primordial location, became the head of the clan in addition to his responsibilities as the *nkfu* of his village. Each Wimbun village today is made up of extended families, and the head of an extended family is called *fai*. The *nkfu's* authority covers the entire village, but that of the *fai* covers only members of his extended family.

Wimbun people and other ethnic groups in the grassfields hold members of the royal family in very high regard. As princes and princesses, members of the *nkfu's* family are expected to behave in an honorable manner, and the rest of the community is expected to pay them respect. Growing up in the village, it was normal to hear people describe attitudes that would actually pass for haughty behavior as *fo bo nkfu* (literally, "the pride of princes and princesses"). Historically (during colonial times) this notion of *fo bo nkfu* prevented members of the *nkfu's* family in some Wimbun villages from attending the schools that were set up in their villages. Members of the royal family objected to sending their children to school because they did not want them to be beaten by the teachers, who themselves were not nobles, but ordinary members of society, or *bkwa* (subjects). (The word *bkwa*, which I have translated as "subjects," literally means "slaves" in Wimbun.). If one stops to think of this, one can see that there is a subjectivity here that distinguished between a prince and a slave.

I do not know the history behind the term *bkwa*, but it was pervasive in the Wimbun community. It is manifested in the distinctions made between the two regulatory societies of the grassfields, the *kwifon*, or *nwarong*; and the *ngiri*. The *nwarong* society is open to all males in the village who can afford the initiation requirements. The *ngiri* society is reserved for members of the royal family and other nobles. The mask figures from that society, the *mbu ngiri* and the *mabu ngiri*, are not as wild as the ones from the *nwarong* which is a society for the *bkwa*. Therefore, it is expected that members of the *nwarong* society and their mask figures that come out to entertain or enforce local laws, will be wild and act in a rough manner because it is a society for commoners and not for members of the royal family and the nobles. Among the Wimbun, it is common to hear retainers of the *ngiri* society praise their mask figures with the expression, "*gwar nkwa sha mu*" ("kill the slave and save the child-noble"). These expressions are used to praise the mask figures and the *ngiri* society, and one does not expect that the mask figures would actually do that. However, these distinctions divide Wimbun society into two groups: one made up of the *nkfu* and nobles, and the other made up of commoners. Subjectivity is recognized and affirmed in these

distinctions, but it is discriminatory. I do not expect that membership of the *ngiri* society will be opened to all members of the community; I note only that the attitude of superiority displayed by members of the *ngiri* society promotes a feeling of superiority, thus reinforcing subjectivity and intersubjectivity in a negative sense.

However, things have changed significantly in Ntumbaw, in Wimbumbum land, and in the grassfields. The prohibition against members of the *nkfu*'s family attending school changed long ago, even before independence in the 1960s. Many of princes and nobles have received good education and are now part of the Cameroon public service. Some of the *nkfus* are very highly educated people, as are their numerous children, who work at home and abroad. In places where members of the *nkfu*'s family did not go to school during colonial times, the sons and children of *bkwa* who attended school later played an instrumental role in working with others to develop not only the *nkfu*'s palace, but the entire village. Here, different subjectivities acted in an interdependent manner.

Subjectivity and the Political Community

The problem with the postcolonial state is that some individuals have used their subjectivities to diminish intersubjective relations in political life in Africa. Social and political recovery in Africa needs to be undertaken in the conviction that the individual is a distinct subject who exists on his or her own terms and who shares a life-world with other people. The life-world in this context refers to a concrete historical community in which people live and relate to each other. In a life-world, people come into a face-to-face relationship with others and carry out a constant social intercourse that cannot and *should* not be avoided. Writing about his stay among the Jelgobe, Paul Riesman states that “. . . we glimpse here what may be a universal element in the notion of humanity: one is fully human only if he is subjected to the human condition as lived by the members of the community.”⁶

Sometimes, distinctions are made not only among members of the same group, but also between other groups, which promote the subjective needs and welfare of those in positions of power but diminish the subjectivity of others and destroy intersubjective bonds. The political elites who promote their own subjective interest at the expense of the political community, have made themselves new subjects and turned the rest of the people into objects who are to be controlled and totalized in a system that exists for the good of the few who have privileges. It is this disregard for the subjectivity of others, for their place, role, and entitlement to the privileges of a political community that I call the crisis of intersubjectivity that has plagued politics and corrupted its personal and communal praxis. The interpersonal realm is

an important dimension of political and communal life because it opens the door for dialogue, acceptance, and tolerance. If people were to recognize that they are bound to others through an intersubjective bond that is already given in a face-to-face encounter, they might accept the obligations that come with such a relationship to other members of the political community. They could be motivated to carry out those obligations, not because they belong to a network of spoils, but because the others with whom they interact are persons who deserve to be respected on their own terms as partners in the shaping of the human condition.

Philip Burnham and Kees Schilder have documented one such distinction that sets others apart in Northern Cameroon, where individuation has centered on "Fulbe ideals of behavior and ethnic superiority."⁷ To summarize, the members of the Fulbe group spread these ideals in a process now called "Fulbetisation . . . [which promotes] Fulbe views of their own cultural superiority which . . . are closely intertwined with their concepts of racial superiority."⁸ The Fulbe conceptualize this special view of their own culture in the notion of *pulaaka*. "This complex concept embodies notions of good breeding (in the sense of both racial ancestry and refined manners), restrained good behavior, intelligence, awareness of cultural heritage, and adherence to Fulbe [Fulani] customs."⁹ Schilder has argued that the feeling of superiority rests on religious ideology, through which the Fulbe distinguish between themselves and others, whom they call *kaado* (pagan). According to Schilder:

Fulbeness is not only closely associated with Islam, but also with *pulaaka* which literally means "the Fulbe way of behavior." This is a social and moral code, and a system of psychic propensities, which emphasizes an introvert temperament and echoes the Fulbe history of a transhumant life of cattle herding. Key values are resignation, intelligence, courage, austerity, and in general self-control and absence of spontaneity.¹⁰

While these distinctions made by members of the Fulbe group have not resulted in a complete closure that could be described as ethnic monadology, they have created categories used to define other people negatively. The process of defining and setting others apart is also an objectification of others that could diminish their subjectivity. These others are seen as *haabe* (singular, *kaado*), which means they are "pagans" and "subjects". They are also called *maccube* ("slaves") and *balebe* ("black men").¹¹ These terms have institutionalized social relations, and members of other ethnic groups around the area seek conversion to Islam and desire to take on Fulbe values. These distinctions have caused ethnic strife and political injustice in Northern Cameroon.

These discriminatory terms and categories could be applied to other ethnic groups in Cameroon and in other places in the world. There is certainly a give-and-take in the relations between the various people in North Cameroon, but one ought also to recognize that something is terribly wrong if one group sees members of other groups merely as slaves or subjects. It raises ethical questions. The negative designations may indeed highlight the subjectivity of other people and highlight difference, but one wonders whether that subjectivity and difference is not already compromised when other human beings are disregarded because they are slaves and pagans, meaning, they do not belong to the "correct" religion.

One could read Hegel's master/slave dialectic into these relations, because even where there is relative harmony between the different groups, the dominant ones continually feed their consciousness of superiority by continuing to marginalize others whom they treat as an underclass. Such distinctions have created a climate where people take pleasure in treating and calling others slaves, even though the laws of the land prohibit slavery. Many ethnic conflicts in Africa result from the fact that people are eager to assert and protect their own selfhood, but disregard the selfhood of others. Thus, people occupy a life-world together, yet they live and engage in monadology, and the only point of contact is found in religious and selected ideological spaces.

In parts of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, where the Fulbe population is in the minority, the main groups in the province for a long time have called the Fulani or Pullo as "strangers." This term, although milder than slave and pagan, puts the Fulani people outside the community. The designation "strangers" limits their voice in community affairs. The view that the Fulani are strangers has existed in the Northwest Province of Cameroon for a long time but it is now beginning to disappear. In a recent conversation, *Fon Angwafor I* of Mankon, a member of the central committee of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) party, told me that in his *fondom* they have made progress in integrating one Fulani family into the Mankon community.¹² Such integration has involved giving the Fulani family they have integrated into their community a piece of land so that they can build a house and settle in Mankon town like any other Mankon person. In the village of Ntumbaw, villagers realized in the late 1960s that Fulani people were members of the community and tried to incorporate them into the activities of the community. This did not always work well because some members of the community continued to use the expression "*mu nwe nfu*" ("stranger." The use of the term *mu* (child) when referring to an adult indicates that some individuals did not respect the Fulani people, even though the village had accepted them as part of the village) to refer to a Fulani man or woman.

What is happening in Mankon is a welcome development. It has taken a long time because both the Mankon and Fulani communities have resisted such integration. It is imperative that other communities recognize the Fulani people and cultivate hospitality toward them. This is necessary so as to encourage people to meet a human other on his or her own terms as a subject with whom they can dialogue, rather than seeing others as a phenomenon to be scrutinized, analyzed, totalized and dominated.

Social distinctions also exist in the Southwest Province of Cameroon, where people who claim the territory as their ancestral land call long-time residents who were born in other places “come no go” (in the Southwest Province of Cameroon, this term refers to all residents who are not considered original settlers; hence, these people came, but have not returned to their original homes). Not only is this clearly a derogatory expression, it also reflects a discriminatory attitude that is often justified by the claim that some people are the original settlers of the region and therefore own the land. However, as we have seen in the case of Rwanda, pushing the autochthonous argument could become a lethal proposition because the line between stranger and enemy could be very thin.

The Ego and the Alter Ego in Intersubjective Phenomenology

Studies from North Cameroon and other parts of the country demonstrate that while people in other parts of the world do not conceive of subjectivities along the lines of the phenomenological distinctions made by Edmund Husserl, they do have attitudes that limit intersubjective relations and build totalizing discourses and practices that are similar to the activities of an ego, described by Husserl in his phenomenology as a subject who objectifies and dominates others.¹³ Husserl, in his *Cartesian Meditations*, has raised the question of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in a compelling manner, and I will turn to his thought because it highlights the crisis that needs to be overcome, especially in political relations.¹⁴ His philosophical perspective requires that we rethink subjectivity and attempt an *Aufhebung* (overcoming) of Husserl and the Cartesian tradition. Hopefully, this approach will offer an opportunity for a metacritical practice of philosophy as a process that includes what Mudimbe describes as the *ekstases* of temporalization, reflection, and being-for-others. “These experiences of consciousness, standing outside of itself in order to grasp and comprehend its always fluctuating identity, show well the impossibility of reducing anyone, any human culture, to an immobile essence.”¹⁵ I will briefly explore Husserl’s thoughts on subjectivity as a background to a critique of political intersubjectivity.¹⁶

In the second Cartesian meditation, Husserl defines phenomenological research as a concrete science dealing with subjectivity, people and animals,

a science that belongs to the world, which begins with the ego.¹⁷ He describes phenomenological subjectivity as a “‘universal subject’ set over against myself and yourself and all other empirical subjects.”¹⁸ According to Husserl, transcendental subjectivity refers to the subject itself not bound by or to anything except its conscious self in a world where all the contents of the world are made for the subject.¹⁹ In his fourth Cartesian meditation, Husserl argues that the transcendental ego constitutes the world as objects appear before her or him as objects of consciousness. He describes the ego’s action of world constitution as a system of intentionality.²⁰ The ego exists as an identical pole and is in a continuous process of self-constitution. The ego is a substrate of habitualities that determines the nature of its actions.

Husserl’s discussion of the ego is not restricted to the psychological level.²¹ The ego’s manifold activities include “positing and explicating being.” The ego establishes his world “by virtue of which the object, as having its manifold determinations, is mine abidingly. Such abiding acquisitions make up my surrounding world.”²² Therefore, the ego posits self as subject and others as objects. Additionally, the ego establishes a sphere of influence to which he claims all objects into the surrounding world that he has created in an act of acquisition that is total and emphasizes the self. In such a world, life and existence for the ego has a specific orientation. “I exist for myself and am continually given to myself, by experiential evidence, as *I myself*.”²³ Husserl called this enterprise an intuitive, a priori science. It proceeds through an eidetic method that uncovers “the all-embracing eidōs, transcendental ego as such, which comprises all pure possibility—variants of my *de facto* ego and this ego itself *qua* possibility.”²⁴ What is important for our purpose here is Husserl’s claim that in this enterprise, the ego is a mastering subject who objectifies and brings everything within his horizons and subjects them to his *Umwelt* (surroundings or sphere of influence). In this sphere of influence, the time sequence here is that of the subject because “the ego constitutes himself for himself in, so to speak, the unity of a ‘history.’”²⁵

Husserl also indicates that the ego’s experience was influenced by nature, the cultural world, and a world of people. This is an indication that there was a world of relations out there that existed before the subject’s self-constituting and other positing activity. However, Husserl’s account remains an egological move because the existence of different forms of sociality does not alter the fact that the ego could bring all phenomena into play in his or her consciousness without regard for the fact that objects constitute and belong to their own realm. Husserl grounds this way of perceiving and appropriating otherness in the very method of eidetic phenomenology because the phenomenologist is an ego who is conscious of the world that is connected to nature, culture (science, fine art, mechanical art), “with

personalities of a higher order (state, church), and the rest.”²⁶ Thus, the ego remains at the center of all relationships.

The constitutive process involves an active and passive principle. The active principle involves “works of practical reason” synthesized with social works so that the ego takes what is given to create new objects in a continuing process. The passive principle refers to the “universal principle of passive genesis” and involves the constitution of objects given before the products of activity. Husserl calls this process “association,” which in the phenomenological sense involves “sensuous configuration in coexistence and in succession . . . [and] conformity to eidetic laws on the part of the constitution of the pure ego. It designates a realm of the ‘innate’ *a priori*, without which an ego as such is unthinkable.”²⁷ This process operates in the realm of intentionality. The phenomenology of genesis makes it possible for one to understand the ego “as a nexus, connected in the unity of an all-embracing genesis.”²⁸ In a further description of his transcendental theory of knowledge, Husserl also places phenomenological consciousness and constitution of objectivities in starker egological terms than he has before this point.

I find myself here as a man in the world; likewise as experiencing and scientifically knowing the world, myself included. And now I say to myself: whatever exists for me, exists for me thanks to my knowing consciousness; it is for me the experienced of my experiencing, the thought of my thinking, the theorized of my theorizing, the intellectually seen of my insight.²⁹

The experience of the world is possible because of the all-encompassing ego, who is more like a “superman;” brings his insights together to make this possible. Such a perspective raises the Cartesian ego to new heights. In a remarkable statement that constitutes the hallmark of transcendental subjectivity, Husserl says: “Every grounding, every showing of truth and being, goes on wholly within myself; and its result is a characteristic of the *cogitatum* of my cogito.”³⁰

In the fifth meditation, Husserl responds to the criticism that his phenomenology of the subject implied solipsism. He attempts to provide a solution to the problem by proposing an “intersubjective phenomenology.”³¹ This is a brilliant move by Husserl to establish important relational concepts as well as lay down the basis for thinking about another subject. However, Husserl fails to concretize in conceptual terms, the independence of the other as a transcendental subject and ego, because he insists on the primacy of the thinking subject. This thinking subject who is the primary ego, experiences the world and other people not as a private synthetic formation, but as something other than his alone. There seems to be an intersubjective world

here.³² However, Husserl fails to establish a distinct and separate subject who cannot be appropriated into the world of the perceiving subject, and his account falls short of genuine intersubjectivity because Husserl has already undercut such a broad agenda by stating that that what exists outside the thinking subject arises out of the intentional life of the subject and is constitutive of the subject's synthesis of his and the surrounding world.³³

The movement toward intersubjectivity involves the establishment of what Husserl calls the "thereness-for-me" of the world and others through a transcendental theory of empathy. It was through this "thereness-for-me" that subjects develops an understanding of existence-sense (*Seinsinn*) which Husserl calls "thereness-for-everyone."³⁴ The thought of a "thereness-for-everyone" also seems to give Husserl an opening to emphasize the independence of the other, but he closes it by prioritizing the self. Anthony Steinbock has argued that Husserl wants to address the problem of solipsism by describing an other that is already given. Husserl's account remains static because the problem of intersubjectivity [is] not treated as an "inter-monic becoming."³⁵ The other who is given in his body remains inaccessible to me, but in Husserl's view, the other's subjectivity always begins with me, and his or her body is derived; what I see may not be a transcendent body as such but a reflection of my perceptual world.³⁶ The world and the other remain the imagination and project of the subject.

In his phenomenological description of an alter ego, Husserl claims that the alter ego is an analog of "my own ego" and "mirrored my self." The other is thus given in "analogizing apperception," through which the mediacy of intentionality creates the possibility of co-presence.³⁷ In the process of abstraction, the ego frees the surrounding world of alienness (we could say destroys difference), grasps nature as he rules, and governs immediately.³⁸ Thus, phenomenological reduction reduces the world of others to my own world through a process of subtraction, which in turn fulfilled my self as the thinking ego.³⁹

We get further insight into the encounter of another ego through Husserl's description of "pairing." He describes pairing as an association of two things to make them similar, or, a pair. What appears on my horizon and is paired with me could not actually be concretized in my space, which was the primordial space.⁴⁰ It is my constituting activity that makes the other compatible with me, not his or her own intrinsic nature. The other is what I say he or she is, not what he or she is in his or her own right.⁴¹ "[In] our experience of someone else as it comes to pass at any time, we find that actually the *sensuously seen body* is experienced forthwith as *the body of some else* and not as merely an indication of some else."⁴² Let us recall that Husserl stated earlier on in the fifth Cartesian meditation that the subject did not experience the world as his or her private "synthetic formation."⁴³ This

phrase seems to add concreteness to the experience of someone else. Husserl underscores the distinction by talking of the other as a monad that has its own world, and this monadology lies behind an intersubjective world.⁴⁴

However, when Husserl discusses community from the perspective of intersubjective phenomenology, he calls it the community between me and another ego. The account falls short of establishing genuine difference and intersubjectivity because even here, the ego as the primordial organism governs this community.⁴⁵ Husserl distinguishes between a simple community, represented by the interrelationship between an ego and an other, and genuine objectivities or a higher-order community, which reflects a larger cultural and social world.⁴⁶ Husserl's distinctions of "own" and "alien" remain faithful to his phenomenological analysis. Such distinctions do not go far enough to break the constituting activity of the subject and in the empirical world are problematic because of the human tendency to overemphasize "own" and "alien" and establish alienation by actually making a Husserlian subject the center of the life-world. In the African context, one could point to the *aporias* of ethnicity that has resulted from an exaggeration "own" and "alien" distinctions.⁴⁷

Beyond Husserl to Genuine Intersubjectivity

Husserl's articulations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity have to be overcome, on two grounds. First, it is not necessary to give the ego the right to posit the identity and existence of others or to bring them into his or her *Umwelt* as objects. Second, Husserl's claim that human social relations and interactions are a "thereness-for-me" that is prior to a "thereness-for-every-one" has to be overturned in favor of a "thereness-for-others." A starting point might be to affirm other subjectivities that are present as independent "egos" and as persons with human faces who exist independently and are not posited by the observing subject. In the postcolonial world subjectivity ought to be defended as radical difference that cannot be neglected or appropriated.⁴⁸ It is necessary to depart from Husserl's "pure ego and pure consciousness," and emphasize that in day to day interaction, the subject encounters a concrete historical person and not merely another ego that the subject constitutes and draws to his or her own horizon and the constituting subject's search light.⁴⁹

In seeking to transform African politics, it is vital for actors to learn in a new way to respect a human face that is distinct and not merely an analog of one's ego (as Husserl formulates it). This individual is someone who is transcendent, infinite, and removed from my sphere and horizon of control. This alterity limits the "imperialism of the ego." Thus, I cannot subject the other to my thinking and constituting process as the Husserlian

ego does. Instead, according to Levinas, the other “escapes my grasp by an essential dimension even if I have him at my disposal.”⁵⁰ Therefore, I cannot always conduct social life with the assumption that the other can be brought to my primordial sphere, where I can control him or her as part of the “thereness-for-me.” Rather, I should approach the other as an independent person who stands on his or her own terms and who stands outside my thematizing sphere.

It is important that participants in all forms of social discourse and interactions reinstate an intersubjectivity that is grounded on radical difference, but one that establishes a community based on a multiplicity of priorities and not merely the priorities of the thinking subject. The prospects for change in the postcolony depend on whether human subjectivities, which are distinct and removed from the constituting projects of other subjects, can be reconstituted as the basis of a new ethics that animates social relations in society. The postcolonial African state is in crisis because a Cartesian and Husserlian subject, who defines and circumscribes the world, bringing all to his or her horizon, has presided over human relations, has absolutized his or her ego, has hindered progress, and has asserted a one-sided subjectivity that has prioritized to the extreme, the vision of the leaders and the individuals who operate within their network.

African communities can and must restore a healthy intersubjective relationship that could enable them reorganize work and structural relations. Such a relationship ought to enhance each individual person’s capacity to contribute to building a strong and viable political community. In order to restore balance in intersubjective relations, there is a need to affirm practices that recognize the dialectic of achievement and affirmation, a dialectic that is often worked out in conflictual contexts by individuals as they seek to assert their personal identities.⁵¹ Suzette Heald has argued that initiation ceremonies might be seen as opportunities for intergenerational negotiation of social existence.⁵² Although participating in the ritual is an obligation placed on the young people, the youths are also taught to internalize the rituals and process (to the extent that they know they are making a choice to be part of the process).⁵³ Expectations about personhood include individual responsibility and community obligations. Those expectations are not fixed but fluid, negotiable, transitory, and contested.⁵⁴ In crisis as well as during other events, the individual desires and strives to achieve goals and receives affirmation in a complex transaction that concretely spells out subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Put differently, an individual seeks to achieve something as a Tanyui, or Munyui,⁵⁵ and in doing so, pursues desires that mean something to him or her. These personal desires may fall within the general expectations of their communities, but people pursue them as individuals who are driven by their own

subjectivities. Writing about what he appropriately titles “managing subjectivity,” Kris Hardin has argued that this negotiation to articulate identity takes place spatially and emotionally.⁵⁶

Intersubjectivity and a New Political Ethics

Individuals and communities could recover Husserl’s “thereness-for-me,” and transform it into a “thereness-for him-or-her” to reformulate social and political existence. Subjectivity that champions the self and encourages self-reflection needs to respect intersubjectivity and reflect other than self.⁵⁷ Such an inquiry does not undermine other proposals that address economic and social recovery in Africa, but rather brings different questions to the table. In contemporary sociopolitical and economic discourse, scholars have not problematized the intersubjective dimensions of their proposals enough. There is no doubt that in order for reforms to take root, good governing structures, constitutional reforms, fiscal discipline, efficiency, a transparent democratic process, and the elimination of corruption need to be pursued seriously. However, what scholars have not theorized is how to deal with interpersonal relations that have been twisted by the projects of a self-defined subject who has assumed that the entire political community is his or her horizon. This subject has carried on activities that have ignored the views of others and has brought political and economic disaster. A new theoretical approach has to appeal to a subjectivity that respects other subjectivities and works with them as partners. What are the implications of such an approach for political ethics in Africa?

Such a recovery of subjectivity would restore respect to persons qua persons. Respecting individuals as persons on their own terms (rather than considering a person only because of where that person falls on the continuum of social relations) offers a different approach to how one treats the people one encounters in a face-to-face relationship. In many African communities there are no rigid caste systems as such, but social segmentation is certain and very real. The class that wields power is made up of the so-called “big men.” These people occupy important positions, have a lot of money, and wield a lot of influence. They are expected to spend as “big men.” They also wield their influence in all areas of social intercourse. (In some Cameroonian communities the term “big man” refers to the sub-chief, also called *fai* by the Wimbun and Nso people of the Northwest Province; but in political parlance the idea of “big man” refers to those people who have influence because of their positions in society.) My concern here is not to analyze their status, but to point out that they are the ones who receive a lot of attention and respect. Restoring the subjectivity of other people demands that they also be respected as persons and not

only because they are “big men.” Everyone in the political community deserves to be treated with respect.

One way the crisis of the postcolonial state has expressed itself in Cameroon is through a growing disrespect toward others in Cameroon society. One encounters this growing disrespect of other people and their individuality everywhere, especially when one takes a road trip by public transportation. When you show up at the taxi station to pay the fare for your trip, you are a “passenger.” Sometimes the people who collect fares run, grab, and drag people, shouting to their competitors: “Leave my passenger.” Once you board their vehicle, you remain a passenger, and the drivers talk to you with little respect. When the vehicle you are riding in is stopped at a checkpoint, the police and gendarmes who demand to see your identity papers treat you with disrespect also. You are merely passengers, and they can yell, demand that you be quiet, and remind you, “*Vous êtes au contrôle.*” They verbally abuse you, and you have very little to say. The atmosphere in some of the taxi rides can be very violent, with people yelling at each other.

In May 2001, I traveled from Nso to Bamenda by taxi, and when we were stopped at a checkpoint in Ndop, the gendarme who stopped the vehicle recognized the driver and started talking to him. Both the gendarme and the taxi driver were members of the same ethnic group. They carried on a conversation for a long time and we waited in the taxi for what seemed like an eternity for them to finish. When it was clear that they did not intend to end their conversation soon, one of the women in the taxi complained about the delay and pleaded with the driver to continue the journey because she was going to take another taxi to her final destination when we arrived at Bamenda. When the woman complained to the driver that he was wasting time, both the driver and the gendarme yelled insults at her and ordered her to stop talking. Both reminded her that the “officer” (i.e., the gendarme) had the right to detain the taxi at that spot if she continued to complain. The men wasted no time in attributing her remarks to the fact that she was a woman. The gendarme boasted that the previous day he had detained another vehicle at the same spot for hours because of a “woman’s mouth,” meaning that another woman had dared to open her mouth and say something critical.

My claim here is that some people have lost respect for individuals as distinct persons who ought to be treated with dignity. The subjectivity of the other person does not matter to them. Even in the major cities such as Yaoundé and Douala, where Cameroonian taxi drivers are known for their fun, humor, and political remarks, there is growing disrespect for persons as persons. I talked about this growing disrespect of other people with a taxi driver in Douala in the summer of 2003, and he agreed that there is a

lot of disrespect. When I asked him why disrespect is growing, he said the taxi drivers who do that are “*licenciés*” who have university degrees and cannot find jobs, so they are now driving taxis; a situation that irritates them and makes them rude to their clients. My sense is that what is manifesting is a general disrespect for people in a society where the socioeconomic difficulties has compromised intersubjective relations.

I refer to everyday actions and practices merely to point out that the way people treat others in daily life mirrors the way political leaders treat members of the political community. If people do not respect others as distinct persons who have dignity just because they are people, it is understandable when that rude attitude is transferred to officers who enjoy insulting people and beating them up at will. If one does not respect another person as a human being, then it is also understandable why government officials hold up official papers or destroy them so that the civil servant whose file is not given attention has to travel to Yaoundé and spend time and money locating those files through the system. In the offices, people insult each other but show respect only to the boss. Politically, citizens who come from the English-speaking part of the country were described at one point as “*les ennemis dans la maison*” (“enemies in the house”) instead of being seen as people who might have had a different outlook on the direction of the country. Insulting those who are different is not unique to Africa: when then governor George Bush was campaigning for the White House, he used an expletive to refer to a *New York Times* reporter. This attitude is prevalent because at the intersubjective level, a different person is not seen as a person on his or her own terms who deserves respect and cooperation in the task of nation-building.

Restoring subjectivity holds promise for the recovery of pluralism. The type of subjectivity that ignores other people or denies community has no place in the reconstruction of African societies. It is important that the idea of subjectivity create a new interest in and a genuine recognition of an “other” and facilitate the celebration of heterogeneity and plurality over homogeneity. The notion of pluralism has several implications for Africa:

1. Pluralism implies the existence of different political options and parties over one-party systems and military rule.
2. Pluralism demands that members of political communities respect ethnic differences.
3. Pluralism celebrates differences due to ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or sexual orientation. Such a celebration of difference, especially in the cases of class and gender, could offer an opportunity to enact an inclusive agenda for the state and members of the political community.

4. Pluralism invites members of a political community to make room for representation and a power-sharing system of governance. One segment of the society cannot dominate and refuse to share power.
5. Pluralism requires that people share social goods together. The social goods or deserts of any given society do not belong to the political elite alone; they belong to the entire community, and leaders should use them to promote the good of the entire community. This has nothing to do with the grand schemes of socialism, African or imported, which have largely been discredited. What I am referring to is the fact that each political community has a certain amount of social goods, which are always scarce in economic terms, but which must be considered the property of the people.

The mandate of pluralism requires a tacit commitment to the idea that each member of the political community has equal opportunity to compete for those goods. In Cameroon, it could be argued that Ahidjo's goal was the development of such pluralism. Dickson Eyoh has argued: "In official rhetoric, the dual colonial heritage and intense cultural pluralism of the 'reborn' nation . . . marked Cameroon as the 'crossroads' of Africa. The dedication and ingenuity of its leaders to forge a prosperous and stable nation out of this diverse population, in contrast to surrounding states that were mired in instability, was affirmation of Cameroonian exceptionalism."⁵⁸ However, a genuine pluralistic agenda that would have given all citizens equal access to the goods of the state did not emerge in Cameroon. Today, the Anglophones, who have been excluded from power from the very beginning of the formation of the state (Cameroon was created in 1961 from out of former French Cameroon and a part of former British Cameroon) charge that power has remained in the hands of the Francophones and that most of the Anglophones are always appointed as assistants and vice-ministers, never as full ministers.⁵⁹ Rather than striving to achieve a pluralism that demonstrates the diversity of the state and that is grounded in respect for its people, the state has done otherwise. The Hausa-Fulani group has been marginalized following the attempted coup of 1984. The Bamileke people have been accused of fascism in the wake of the economic crisis and, along with the Anglophones who have complained about their marginalization, have been labeled "*les ennemis dans la maison*." The multi-party system has not helped the country move toward genuine pluralism. It will take an intersubjective engagement that respects the rights of persons regardless of whether they belong to some privileged ethnic group for this to happen.

If subjectivity is to be recovered, all members of the political community must be engaged as partners in the task of nation-building. Perhaps

one of the greatest pitfalls of statehood in Africa has been the notion that political elites can “build,” or for that matter “sustain,” the state by themselves. As I stated in Chapter 2, Ahidjo believed that the training of cadres to form his loyal elite corps would establish a strong state that would move toward nationhood. He accomplished this by setting up institutions that would train technocrats or *fonctionnaires* who understood the state as an entity constituted by them alone. There never was any indication that building a state or nation involved a partnership with the people. The masses counted only to the extent that the government did things for them if they actually carried out any projects at all. The people have never been considered partners in the task of nation-building. It could be argued that in the early days of the republic, programs such as community development, rural development (which in its heyday was supported by loans from the Fund for Rural Development, or FONADER), and the cooperative movements were all initiatives aimed at motivating the masses to participate in rural development. However, the massive bureaucratic control and corruption that plagued these movements rendered the talk of partnership a sham. State structures must be backed by an ethic that respects people.

Finally, recovery of subjectivity could give individual members of the political community a reason to hope for an inclusive political future. People need to establish the basis for hope, and paying attention to a number of things could accomplish that. For instance, people are invited to a life of dialogue with others if they are recognized as subjects and independent beings who have a right to their own existence and ideas about how things ought to work out, rather than subjected to ideas of one individual and his *Umwelt*. I remain persuaded by what John Dunn offers in this regard. He has argued that the difficulties the political community experiences in becoming what it wishes to be spring from three failures on the part of political thinkers: poor epistemological models, “atomistic social ontology,” and dogmatism.⁶⁰ Epistemological problems refer to a general lack of knowledge; defective ontology refers to a lack of human values; and dogmatism refers to the fact that whether one thinks of the amateur, professional, or politician, people insist on their own solutions and fail to advance solutions in an egalitarian manner.⁶¹ The remedy is for political communities to engage in public dialogue that will bring diverse voices together to reason on the social good.

Thinking together about the social good has been a missing ingredient in African politics because politicians have assumed that they know better than the people. The chief indication of this self-centered approach to politics is that politicians have not been accountable to anyone. In Cameroon, the director of the National Oil Refinery reportedly claimed in 2003 that since the public was not capable of understanding the economics of oil, he

was not accountable to them. He claimed that he reported only to the head of state. He was correct that the public would not have understood all the subtleties of oil economics, but wrong because the issue was not the public's ability to understand the difficult statistics and accounting procedures, but rather, the system's accountability and transparency. There was a dogmatism that manifested itself in the view that only a select few could understand the complexity of oil economics and that the director could therefore give an account only to the head of state and not to the Cameroonian people. Dunn further points out that the practice of dialogue in place of dogmatism would involve coping with the present crisis and remaining open to the future. It would call for justice and prudence as democratic values. A genuine dialogue with another person would certainly introduce different views and remind us that we ought to be prudent about what we think, say, and do, especially to one another.

Political projects could become empowering activities because performance-oriented management would be grounded not on an individual's excellence alone, but on making another member of the political community perform well. Hope for the future could be restored if people were made to share in the vision of the country together. A new social vision for Africa will not be developed overseas (although I think that there has to be massive intervention from the international community). Members of each political community have to cultivate a sense of hope about the future so that they can become engaged with and involved in activities to bring about transformation and help people to realize their hopes and dreams for their communities. Political leadership can help to do this by discussing the crisis and future prospects with the people. Providing the kind of leadership that will give the people reason to hope will only work if differences are recognized and respected. One area in which a new sense of hope needs to be generated is gender relations, where a truly egalitarian vision is woefully lacking. In order to restore subjectivity and create an intersubjectivity along gender lines, it is important that communities engage in a genuine phenomenology of eros. I turn to that aspect of the reconstitution of relations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

RETHINKING GENDER RELATIONS: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

When a religious custom jeopardizes the full human development of a total person and impedes progress, as exemplified in normative ritual prescriptions for the widow, a continuation of that ritual is questionable in modern times.

Daisy N. Nwachuku¹

In this chapter, I undertake a phenomenology of eros and discuss an aspect of gender relations that needs to be reformulated to contribute a new perspective on intersubjective relations and sociopolitical praxis. Social change in Africa demands the establishment of just and equitable gender relations. I argue that restructuring gender relations demands erotic freedom, and I will use the state of widowhood to demonstrate the need for such freedom. The debate about the state of widowhood is pressing because of the complex issues it poses in the light of increasing poverty and deaths from HIV/AIDS. I relate the state of widowhood to erotic freedom to demonstrate that if the transformation of society is to take place, the erotic freedom of widows must be part of an overall transformation of gender relations. Such a transformation is necessary to concretize the quest for freedom and justice in the lives of widows. The intersubjective dimension in widowhood is riddled with rituals and power dynamics whose micro politics involve culture, religion, and economics. Therefore, the state of widowhood also offers an example of the power games that have led to the demise of the postcolonial state. I agree with Daisy Nwachuku that it is necessary to discard all religious customs (systems) that have the potential of hindering human development in order to make room for freedom. Johannes Fabian has argued that freedom could transform human thought

and experiences into creative productions that could then be shared with other members of the community. He has also argued that freedom is contestatory and that it comes in moments. In the state of widowhood, there are many contested issues, and the moments for such contestation are often the most difficult for the widows themselves.²

In discussing gender relations, I use the phrase “African women,” recognizing that it is problematic because it does not reflect the particularity that exists in Africa. I do not assume that there is a unified category of people called “African women;” rather, I employ the description as a heuristic device to discuss an issue that affects women in many African communities. Many issues that African women face reflect important dimension of intersubjective relations that may be symptomatic of unequal relations in the postcolonial state. I do not believe that African women are helpless and hapless or that their lot is much worse than that of women in other places around the world. This does not mean that one should neglect the issues that contribute to their marginalization for fear of particularizing them. Women, even in the state of widowhood, are increasingly positing themselves as erotic others and as erotic subjects who have a right to experience the fullness of life on equal terms with other members of the community.³ All members of the political community have an obligation to join in their quest for erotic justice. My proposals for such an intersubjective engagement come with limitations because as a male, I cannot speak in a direct way to the experience of women.

African Women in Feminist and Gender Discourse

I understand feminism in its different forms and locales to mean advocacy for gender equality in all areas.⁴ The literature on African women has outgrown the confines of a specific discipline because the issues are complex.⁵ African feminists criticize universalist views of women’s experience because they constitute a hegemonic and imperialist discourse.⁶ Josephine Beoku-Betts has argued that colonials claimed that African women were backward, oppressed, unattractive, and had no voice in their societies.⁷ Much colonial ethnographies and Western writing portrayed African women as helpless victims with no voice in their societies.⁸ The other image of African women was that they were strong and capable of bringing disaster to the household: they were the source of problems for men. Many of these early studies oversimplified the situation and often racialized African women. With African women portrayed as objects of pity and sympathy, Westerners could justify their imperial projects and missionary work to civilize Africans.⁹

African women have challenged Eurocentric perspectives by focusing on issues that concern women, such as the struggle to survive from day to

day; the struggle to maintain a critical engagement with culture; motherhood; mutual survival (with men); and interdependence.¹⁰ Obioma Nnaemeka has argued that such issues have emerged in African feminisms—she argues that there is no one feminist perspective—because it is a praxis.¹¹ She proposes to name the practice of feminism in Africa “nego feminism,” a “feminism of negotiation,” which draws upon the diversity of Africa.¹² “In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here negotiation has the double meaning of ‘give and take/exchange’ and ‘cope with successfully/go around.’”¹³ This approach situates feminist studies in a web of complex questions that deal with race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, culture, and national origin.¹⁴ It uses a “theology of nearness” and knows when to fight, and when to negotiate to concretize African feminism as an act of altruism.¹⁵

The scholarship on women has turned to gender analysis and criticism as a way of addressing the issues that African women face. Two Nigerian scholars have challenged hegemonic discourses on gender and have offered alternative discourses from two Nigerian communities. Ifi Amadiume has argued that gender disparity exists, but that African scholars need to reconstruct female power in Africa based on the principle of matriarchy.¹⁶ Amadiume maintains that one cannot equate maleness with authority and power, because the Igbo practice of woman-to-woman marriages demonstrates that “female husbands” have the same status and power as male husbands.¹⁷ Oyewùmí Oyèrónké has argued that in precolonial Yoruba society, seniority, rather than gender, was the primary organizing principle.¹⁸ Oyèrónké has dismissed the use of visual and biological metaphors to understand women’s lives and has proposed that scholars try to understand gender differences by looking at social relations and language. She has also dismissed the distinctions Western feminism has made between man and woman and has argued that Yoruba language suggests instead distinctions based on anatomical differences (“ana-male and ana-female”).¹⁹ Oyèrónké has argued that “seniority placed one within the kinship structure and hence women were not powerless, disadvantaged, and controlled and defined by men.”²⁰

Responses to Amadiume and Oyèrónké praise their attempt to contextualize and localize gender studies as well as their critique of the colonial and postcolonial library, where African women are defined by so-called universal categories. However, critics raise concerns about Amadiume’s generalizations from few examples of woman-to-woman marriage (which worked under a patriarchal logic) and question Oyèrónké’s claim that there were no gender divisions among the Yoruba.

Current scholarship on gender in Africa in studies by Africanists in the social sciences and the humanities has ignored the articulations of religious

scholars and theologians, especially the work done by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter “the Circle”), arguably one of the better-organized theological communities in Africa. This disregard for the work of the Circle is consistent with the marginalization of theological voices in African studies even by scholars who have done research on religion in Africa.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, one of the first conveners of the Circle, articulated the dream for a community of African women who would think and write theology reflecting the experience of women and who would respond to the challenges and crises women in Africa experienced in religion and society as a whole.²¹ Oduyoye’s book, *Hearing and Knowing*, marked a milestone in African women’s theology.²² Nyambura Njeroge argues: “Taking her cue from [the] account of the Samaritan woman in John 4:39–42, Oduyoye paved the way for African Christian women to tell their faith stories as they have heard and known them and not to rely on others to write about them.”²³ Following an International Planning Committee in Switzerland organized by Oduyoye in 1988, seventy women gathered in Ghana in 1989 to launch the Circle.

The Circle has called upon African women to “arise” (in Swahili, *amka*, which is also the title of their journal) and join a project of “cultural hermeneutics” that would explore the lives of women in context, and in tandem with broad issues raised at international forums such as the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the Beijing Conference on Women (1994), and its follow-up conference, Beijing Plus 5.²⁴ The Circle is engaged in a “two-winged theology” because the women expect men to join them in reflection.²⁵ It speaks out on African culture and its rituals, and on culture and religion/Christianity; reads religious texts through the eyes of African women; and does research on African women’s histories, and, more recently, on women and HIV/AIDS in Africa.²⁶ Its work speaks about wholeness and the desire of African women to experience fullness of life; in that sense, it contributes to the journey of women toward eroticism and the restoration of a common humanity, which has been hijacked by abusive power, cultural hegemony, and postcolonial tyranny. The Circle’s scholarship resists the discriminatory and the false view that women are wicked.²⁷ The phenomenology of eros in this chapter serves as an invitation to scholars to continue the debate on feminism and gender in Africa.

African Widows: A Phenomenology of Eros

In this section, I discuss one condition necessary for a phenomenology of eros by highlighting critical transformations necessary in the state of

widowhood. The interest in the state of widowhood continues to grow and is not merely an academic fad, given the sharp increase in the number of widows due to deaths in prolonged liberation struggles, regional conflicts, civil strife, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I will discuss perspectives from other places in Africa and use examples from my own research in Cameroon to make the case for a reconfiguration of the state of widowhood.

In 1979, the Roman Catholic missionary Michael Kirwen published his study, *African Widows*.²⁸ Kirwen's study was an important theological breakthrough because he criticized the theology of adaptation that was being practiced by churches and mission organizations in rural African societies. Later works by other authors, have contributed significantly to the discussion on widowhood and here, I will highlight only two studies of widowhood. Betty Potash edited *Widows in African Societies* in 1986, and in 1996, Kenda Beatrice Mutongi submitted to the University of Virginia a doctoral thesis titled "Generations of Grief and Grievances: A History of Widows and Widowhood in Maragoli, Western Kenya, 1900 to Present."²⁹ Mutongi has since published important studies based on her research on the problems faced by widows in Kenya during the colonial period.³⁰ Her research is important for this study because the issues she addresses are similar to what widows face in other parts of Africa.

Mutongi's study highlights the difficulty widows have faced and continue to face in the rural communities. In addition to the loss of the spouse and the grief they have experienced, widows have also lost the land they cultivated when their husbands were alive. They have also lost the services of their children, and have experienced rivalry with co-wives, isolation, and emotional loneliness. The widows described these difficulties as *kehenda munyo*, meaning, "worries of the heart." These worries have occupied the widows and made it difficult for them to experience erotic fullness.³¹ Although Mutongi has added that some of these problems were to be expected, she has also demonstrated that Maragoli notions of masculinity resulted (perhaps not deliberately) in the paternalistic treatment of widows by men who offered to assist the women in tasks their husbands used to perform.³² When the widows remarried within the family structure, four issues were consistent with the arrangement: the new husband was a relative of the deceased husband; the children still belonged to the deceased husband; the new husband was only a caretaker; and in many cases, the marriage was treated as a legal union.³³ However, such marriages did not resolve all the difficulties faced by widows.

Mutongi argues that at the beginning of the twentieth century, widows also lost the services of their sons when some widows' sons departed to work on plantations so that they could earn money and use it for bride wealth; when they got married, they became independent from their

mothers. Some sons went to work in urban centers, where they became afflicted with new diseases. Others went to work for Quaker missionaries, while still others entered the services of the colonial capitalist system, where they received poor treatment.³⁴ The loss of their sons' support caused grief to the widows, who also lost the influence they wielded over their daughters-in-law. The widows also lost their income from craft making, when the Quaker communes introduced consumer goods.³⁵ Their losses were further compounded in the 1930s, when the demand for land increased and the deceased husbands' relatives deprived the widows of the rights to the land their husbands had previously owned. Many of the widows sued to regain their land. They needed money for school fees, to buy new land, and to meet the higher rents charged by their landlords at a time when the Kenyan economy was declining.³⁶

The widows then tried to send their daughters to school so that they could ask for larger dowries, but the colonial administrators ruled that people had to pay bride wealth in cattle, not in cash. By the end of World War II, the widows faced new worries when they tried to do something about sons-in-law who abused their daughters. Even when the court ruled in favor of their daughters, the widows preferred reconciliation to divorce because they did not have the money to return the bride wealth that their sons-in-law had given them. Rural widows also went to court to challenge their co-wives, who lived in urban areas, because the urban wives claimed the property of the deceased husband for themselves. This proved to be a difficult fight for many widows because the Legal Succession law of 1981 favored urban wives. While not all widows were forced into levirate marriages, the structures of society did not make life easy for them.

Kirwen published his study before those of the social scientists discussed in this chapter. His goal was to offer theological perspectives on the state of widowhood and the institution of levirate marriage. He criticized Roman Catholic missionaries for condemning levirate marriages.³⁷ In the Lou community, the woman could either enter into a levirate union with a relative of her dead husband or return to her relatives. If she returned to her parents' home, her parents were expected to return the bride wealth to the husband's family.³⁸ Some African church leaders supported levirate marriages on the grounds that the system ensured that someone would take care of the widow and that she could continue to have children. However, the sexual needs of the dead husband, and not those of the widow, were the primary concern of such marriages. The belief that a woman was still married to her deceased husband was a central conviction of the leviratic system. Therefore the new husband consummated the marriage on behalf of the deceased husband.³⁹ Among the Kwaya, if the widow and the levirate husband loved each other, the new husband could take care of the

widow as his own wife—but this description of Kwaya arrangements suggests that such a loving relationship may not have been common practice.

The Roman Catholic Church rejected levirate marriages on the grounds that any married man who married a widow was living in a polygamous situation. Kirwen argued that this position ignored the complexity of the matter.

Furthermore . . . leviratic union with a married man could only be considered polygamous if one equated polygamy with a [man] having sexual access to two women simultaneously . . . our definition of polygamy requires that the man be considered legally married to two or more women according to traditional custom—a factor not present in the leviratic union.⁴⁰

Where levirate marriages were practiced members of the community argued that God did not directly forbid levirate marriages. God still loved the widow who remarried, and for that reason, she deserved the right to pray. In addition, the widow had needs to be met, and in marrying, she committed no sin. Kirwen's critical insight on theological adaptation rests on the argument that marriage was a community engagement in which personal "goals and desires [were] . . . lived out in the context of a vital kinship community . . . the sexual union with the widow in these circumstances is a unique type. It is a symbolic union with the physically dead husband, in his name, with his implied permission, and for his interests."⁴¹ Kirwen and the community seem to speak for the widow: "The widow's intention to have intercourse with her deceased husband and the brother-in-law's intention to be the deceased husband are what make it possible for levirate sexual union to be judged as lawful."⁴² In answer to the argument that the custom treated widows as property of the family and hindered the development of a Christian attitude toward the widows involved, Kirwen stated that such questions demonstrated "no understanding of the elements of liberation, freedom, unity, security and happiness present within the levirate institution."⁴³ Therefore, he argued, the Roman Catholic Church had failed to carry out the true adaptation of the Christian message in Africa. Kirwen endorsed the view that the levirate system had liberating dimensions and that it could provide freedom, security, and happiness to the widow.

However, Kirwen did not address the principle of substitution, a topic that goes back to Evans-Pritchard.⁴⁴ This is the view that all that happens to the widow, including remarriage and sexual relations, is undertaken on behalf of the dead husband. I am convinced that it is time to reconsider the principle of substitution, because granting conjugal rights to a dead person through the new husband is a problematic notion. I do not dismiss or call

into question the role ancestors play in African thought. I question, however, the ancestor's right to conjugal love with a partner who is still alive. The deceased husband's conjugal rights infringe and overshadow the erotic freedom of the widow, whose choice of a new spouse could be limited to the family of the deceased to ensure that his conjugal rights are maintained. Although African marriages involve an entire community, ultimately, it is the desire of two people that sets in motion such a community relationship. It is only fair that if one of the parties to this celebration of desire dies, the other party should be absolved of her sexual obligations to the dead person. A woman could do this without destroying the relationship that exists between the families and other members of the community.

Let us consider the situation from a woman's perspective. Were the partner in the marriage who died a woman, would she be entitled to similar sexual privileges if her husband took a substitute wife? Is it right to assume that when the husband remarries, the new wife is merely a surrogate for the former wife? The answer here is crucial, because the original wife entered a contractual relationship with the family, and if that family has the obligation to provide for their dead male relative, does the same thing not apply to females in that contractual relationship?

Furthermore, one could question the assumption that family members take care of the widow after the death of her husband, especially if she remarries within the family. This is expected behavior and part of the ethical worldview of many in some African communities, but things have not always worked that way, because when the husband dies in many areas, the man's family does not provide for the widow. In the late 1980s, several celebrated cases went to court in Cameroon following the deaths of members of the elite class. The issue in these cases was not providing for the widow, but rather taking away from her the deceased's estate. I have followed three such cases in the Northwest and Southwest Provinces of Cameroon, and here I will summarize one case that illustrates the plight of widows and point to the fact that some families do not provide for the widow as they claim.

Mr. Andrew N. Nformi, who hailed from the Northwest Province, died in 1995 after suffering a heart attack, leaving behind his wife, Miriam Nformi, and three children. When he died, the elites from his region assisted Miriam in arranging for his funeral in his village. One of the elites, Mr. Bonsa, was particularly involved in this because he was an in-law to Mr. Nformi. However, his involvement came with a price for the widow. He asked her to give a large sum of money for the burial celebrations. When he arrived at the village, he used the funeral money judiciously, but reportedly told the deceased's family that he had bought everything himself. When I discussed the problems she faced after the death of her husband, Mrs. Nformi alleged that Mr. Bonsa also formed an alliance with

Mr. Nformi's parents and that he had made the funeral and mourning period a difficult experience for her. Members of Miriam's deceased husband's family blamed her for causing her husband's death. Meanwhile, Mr. Nformi's death only exacerbated the bad feelings that existed between Miriam and her in-laws.⁴⁵

Within one month of Mr. Nformi's death, Mr. Bonsa and other elites advised the late Mr. Nformi's father to file for letters at the local customary court to administer his son's estate, claiming that, according to their culture, the older Mr. Nformi and his wife were the rightful administrators of the estate of their late son. Their plans made no provision for Miriam, the widow of Mr. Nformi. In the court papers, the older Mr. Nformi asked for everything his deceased son owned. On hearing about this, Miriam Nformi filed counterclaims with the high court of the seeking the right to administer her late husband's estate. She asked for letters of administration on the following grounds:

1. She had not tried to prevent her in-laws from seeking legal remedy in this matter.
2. She had taken her actions at the advice of her solicitor.
3. The deceased husband had surviving relatives who could provide for the parents and relatives.
4. She rejected her father-in-law's claim of inventory. (This means that Mrs. Nformi contested the claims her father-in-law presented to the court about what was contained in the estate of late Mr. Nformi.)
5. Her father-in-law had not visited her since she returned home from the funeral, and whenever he had been in her area he had not chosen to come to her house.
6. She was continuing to give support to her in-laws following the death of her husband and would do so according to her means if they recognized her as their daughter-in-law.
7. She indicated that her late husband had made plans to have the children study abroad. Any payment she received from his former employer would be devoted to the training of their three children.⁴⁶

When Mr. Nformi's parents realized that the motion Miriam had filed in the provincial high court invalidated their own motion, they filed a counter-motion, asking the court to intervene and give them the letters to administer the estate of their late son on the following grounds:

1. The marriage of their late son and wife had been contracted under customary law.
2. Miriam had not provided a complete inventory.

3. Miriam was hostile to the older Mr. Nformi.
4. Miriam had not given them anything since the death of her husband.
5. The children sympathized with them as grandparents.
6. Miriam had taken all of her late husband's money from the Bank of Credit and Commerce.
7. The older Mr. Nformi had other children under his care, and his late son had been the one providing for their upkeep.
8. Miriam was now living in "opulence" since her husband died, while they were "living in misery."⁴⁷

Mr. Nformi's father also entered pleas referred to in the court documents as "prayers."

After hearing testimony from both sides, the court issued its ruling on July 7, 1996. The judge established that the question under consideration was to determine the beneficiary if a Cameroonian man died intestate. Citing Sections 15, 9b, and 27 of Southern Cameroon's High Court Law of 1955, and Sections 3 and 34 of Ordinance No. 72/4 of August 26, 1972, the court ruled that if the marriage were monogamous, the rule in force in England would apply. In a polygamous marriage "the rules would be those of the relevant native law and custom, provided they are not repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience in which case the general principles of justice, equity and good conscience would apply."⁴⁸ It is important to note that the laws of England applied in this case because Southern Cameroon was a United Nations trust territory governed by the British government following the defeat of Germany in World War II.

During cross-examination, the presiding judge had determined that although Mr. and Mrs. Nformi were married under "native laws and customs," however, in completing the forms declaring next-of-kin, Mrs. Nformi stated under oath "that they were married under the marriage ordinance. This means that the marriage was monogamous. Therefore the devolution of the intestate deceased's property [was] governed by the current law of succession applicable in England."⁴⁹ By so ruling, the judge affirmed that Mrs. Nformi and her three children were the sole legal beneficiaries of the estate and that whatever others received from the estate "depend[ed] on the good will and compassion of the beneficiaries and not on any right. Accordingly, the first prayer of the applicants asking that they be included as beneficiaries in the estate of . . . [the] deceased, is refused as being without legal foundation."⁵⁰

The second prayer, that benefits from the estate be deposited with the court for the late Mr. Nformi's parents to collect, was predicated on the first (rejected) prayer, and since the first had been found to have no legal basis, the court rejected this second prayer as well. The third prayer concerned the

amendment of the inventory of the deceased's property. The judge determined that "[Mr. Nformi's parents] do not have the *locus standi* to seize this court with a view to getting the inventory modified."⁵¹ Finally, "On the general prayer for any other proper order, I hereby order that the letters of Administration be issued directly to the widow, Mrs. Nformi, Miriam, in her personal name and not as a trustee or guardian of her son who is himself of full age and within the jurisdiction of this court. It is further ordered that Mrs. Nformi, Miriam, do effect any corrections that need be made on the inventory in order that it should reflect the condition of the estate."⁵² The court ordered Miriam's in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Nformi, to pay their daughter-in-law a court cost of 100.000 francs CFA (about U.S.\$140).

I must point out several issues that arise from this particular case that turned out to be a major victory for the widow. First, Mr. Bonsa, a well-known elite whose wife came from Mr. Nformi's compound, encouraged and assisted the late Mr. Nformi's father in filing these motions against his daughter-in-law. One wonders if he ever stopped to think whether he would have wished someone else to treat his own wife like that when he passed away. One might have expected him to intervene in an understanding manner, but as in similar cases elsewhere in Africa, there is always a very strong determination to use tradition to take away everything from the widow.

Second, it is ironic that the judge issued his ruling based on colonial law. English law was in force when this part of Cameroon was under British control, and after independence, Cameroon continued to accept the provisions of that law.⁵³ In this particular case, Mrs. Nformi was saved because she used a colonial legal provision to establish herself as next-of-kin. She also stated under oath in the court that she and her husband married according to "ordinance," meaning that they had married according to statutory laws, which recognize only monogamy. One could read several things into this. In a polygamous situation, the estate would go to the first wife. One could also infer that if the Nformis had married under "traditional customs," the judge could have appointed an administrator to take care of the estate. However, the court determined that there was no need to do so since Mrs. Nformi, who was seeking recognition as next-of-kin, was the sole surviving wife of her husband. In this case justice was done, but only after a difficult, lengthy, and expensive court hearing.

There is debate in Mr. Nformi's community about this case. Some contend that Mrs. Nformi was right to ask the courts to grant her control over the estate of her husband. Those who take this position argue that times have changed and that the culture of the people needs to change also. Furthermore, her supporters argue that the deceased person's family hardly takes care of the widow these days. If Mr. Nformi's father had been granted

the power to administer his late son's estate, none of the income and resources from that estate would have been spent for the good of Mrs. Nformi and her children. There are others in that community who argue that what Mrs. Nformi's father-in-law tried to do was consistent with the customs of the people.

It is true that some African customs expect the family of the deceased to take care of his wife and children. This ethic has fallen on tough times in many places in Cameroon. The steps Mr. Nformi's father took make one wonder whether he would have given support to his daughter-in-law. Before the court ruling, he was already calling himself a "managing director" of the estate and had promised to take everything away from his daughter-in-law. Those who know the family have said anonymously that they doubt whether Mr. Nformi and his daughter-in-law would have worked together had the courts ruled in favor of Mr. Nformi. My point here is that customary practices that give all of a deceased person's property to his family instead of to his wife and children are outmoded. Inheritance practices continue to favor the large extended family at the disadvantage of the widow. Such practices have to change so that the widows can continue to take care of their children and experience fullness of life in what is obviously a very difficult situation—the death of a spouse.

I indicated earlier that Kirwen was correct to argue that the church had failed to adapt theological teachings to local situations on the question of levirate marriage. While Kirwen called on the Roman Catholic Church to support the practice of levirate marriages in the African context, my contention is that it is the widow herself who must make all decisions dealing with her erotic life. It is up to her to set the standards on which to base her decisions, but they ought to be standards that would enhance her sense of self and fulfillment as a member of the community. In Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter*, Ramatoulaye, the protagonist, rejected marriage proposals, first from her brother-in-law and then from her friend Daouda, who claimed to be a supporter of women's rights. Ramatoulaye made those decisions herself. While some readers claim that she could afford to do that because she had a Western education, Bâ's point in the novel is the Ramatoulaye herself made the decision and took responsibility for her own erotic expression and fulfillment.⁵⁴

The research of Mutongi and Kirwen and the recent court cases in Cameroon provide the backdrop for a greater appreciation of *Widows in African Societies*, edited by Betty Potash. The studies in this book articulate ideas that strengthen the case for greater independence to widows and point out that several residential options are available to widows based on factors such as natal, affinal, and filial ties.⁵⁵ Potash debunked the myth that men provide for the widows. Without dismissing the role played by kin

relationships, the authors agree that widows are generally independent and that they provide for themselves and their children.

Since African women generally contribute substantially to household economy and often provide most or all of the support for themselves and their children, this should not be surprising. But it does not run counter to perceptions of widows as dependents who in pre-industrial societies are provided for by communal kin institutions.⁵⁶

The conclusions drawn by Potash strengthen my argument that communities ought to adopt in a very deliberate manner, views that will grant maximum freedom to widows and enable them to enhance their erotic experience as they reconfigure their lives within or without the family setting. Potash has pointed out that even in alliance theory, we deal with individuals “who secure personal benefits from marital transactions.”⁵⁷ I want to emphasize that in family alliances, one important goal is an erotic and conjugal journey between two people. If the man dies, the woman, now the main partner in this alliance, is free to make decisions about her future. The erotic experience is primarily an intersubjective experience, but when one partner dies, the decision to marry should belong to the surviving spouse.

The Christian churches and their leaders could learn a lesson from the current trend of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and reread biblical texts that discuss widows and the state of widowhood from the perspective of postcolonial readers. They should ask what in the text empowers the widow, rather than perpetuate images of the widow as a weak and helpless individual.⁵⁸ I do not imply that the church can now renege on its responsibility to care for widows. Caring for people who are in need and often in a vulnerable position when they lose their spouses remains an act of devotion. But providing care should also involve opening up free spaces where women can make decisions about their lives and seek emancipation from cultural practices that they might find objectionable.

In addition to fighting against practices that are aimed at weakening the widow's financial status, Christian churches have a moral obligation to address rites that widows are subjected to that may no longer have any cultural relevance. Widowhood rites include a variety of practices that affect the widow in negative ways. Some rites require that the widow prove that she had nothing to do with the death of her husband, as it is often believed that she might have been responsible for his death. Sometimes the widow has to drink water that has been used to wash her husband's corpse to prove that she had nothing to do with his death. Other rites affect the widow's appearance, such as shaving her hair and wearing mourning

clothes for a long time (although some would argue that it is wrong to pick on shaving a widow's hair, because in most African cultures, all relatives of the deceased are expected to shave their hair as a sign of mourning). Some rites restrict the widow's movements by confining her to her home for an extended period; in some cultures, this can go on for about a year. In cultures where being restricted to the home area does not last for a year, a widow remains in seclusion for several months as part of mourning rites for her late husband.

There are rites that brand the widow as an unclean person. In some communities in Kenya, the widow goes through a cleansing ritual, which might involve having sexual intercourse with a person designated to cleanse her. Historically, this was an important ritual because it was tied to the ritual of conjugal relations that marked the beginning of the planting season. This ritual sexual union after the death of a woman's husband gave the woman an opportunity to fulfill her obligations to the planting rites and be ready for the planting season. A number of questions need to be raised about this particular practice. First, is it not possible to carry out a cleansing ritual that does not involve sexual intercourse? Second, is it necessary for this ritual to continue in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic? If the widow's husband died of HIV/AIDS complications, does not participation in such a ritual expose the widow as well as the man who does the cleansing to the risk of infection? Third, it is widely reported that there are now "professional" wife cleansers who expect the widows to provide them with food, drinks, and, in some cases, lodging. This calls into question the integrity of the rite.

Finally, churches have a responsibility to fight against acts of violence against widows. Here is one well-known account from Kenya:

The day my husband fell down and died in our house, his brothers came to collect his body for burial in his village. There were three of them and they forced themselves on me sexually saying it was their custom. I could not resist although I fought with them. They beat me up and pulled my hair. They said I belonged to them. I pleaded that my husband had never believed in these things, but they were too strong for me. They gave me a special brew to drink so that I felt dizzy. Later when I awoke I found that they had taken away my children and all my household items. They left me only the bed, and one cooking pot. All my husband's clothes had been taken. They had put them in a van with the body.⁵⁹

Behind practices like these, one finds a desire to subjugate. In this story, it is not even the case of ritual cleansing justifying sexual violence; the widow's brothers-in-law abused her and took away her children and her

possessions. Such practices, as well as levirate marriages and the loss of property previously discussed, destroy the erotic freedom of widows. They reflect the brutality of the postcolonial state.

There are indications that many communities are reexamining some of these negative rites. There was a case in Jos, Nigeria where the widow was not forced to wear black clothes nor drink the water used to wash her husband's corpse. Her brother-in-law did not inherit her and her late husband's family did not take anything away from her house. The only thing that was done to her was that her long hair was cut, although the women who did the cutting stopped short of cutting off all the hair of the woman.⁶⁰ Recently, some Wimbun elites of the Northwest Province in Cameroon have spoken out in favor of the rights of widows and have told the widows' families that it is wrong to treat them poorly.

The Erotic Is a Realm of Freedom

The erotic has lost part of its meaning as an intersubjective experience because for many people, it refers simply to sexual love or acts.⁶¹ In order to retrieve the erotic, it is necessary to emphasize that it refers to love and desire that extend, in all their fullness, from the self to others and that seeks to balance self-interest and interest in others.⁶² Audre Lorde, in her brief essay "The Uses of the Erotic," describes eros as a life force that brings together in one whole the spiritual, social, physical, and psychological dimensions of the human being.⁶³ Lorde states that the erotic is the enabling power behind our deep pursuits with others. It gives us joy and a satisfying experience.⁶⁴ This invites us to define the erotic more broadly as the energy that swells up streams of joy in people. It enables us to connect with other people and things. The erotic teaches, nurtures, and provides energy for us to make changes in life.⁶⁵ The various characters in Plato's *Symposium* discuss homoeroticism, but what they articulate applies to love in all circumstances.⁶⁶

In my own research on otherness, the work of Emmanuel Levinas has influenced me and helped me to examine the dynamics of human relations as seen in face-to-face encounters. Levinas describes eros as desire for that which is different, other, and absent—a desire for that which escapes away into its own self and escapes the attempt to possess and totalize the beloved, who must remain inviolable even in her vulnerability.⁶⁷ In the most problematic part of his texts, Levinas articulates erotic freedom when he argues that the lover desires "nudity of an exorbitant presence coming as though from further than the frankness of the face, already profaning and wholly profaned, as if it had forced the interdiction of a secret."⁶⁸ Thus, the beloved presents herself, but on her own terms and must remain out of the

domineering touch and control of the lover. Levinas describes the feminine in this context as fragility that ought to be approached with compassion, caress, and a sensibility devoid of assimilative tendencies.⁶⁹ One could contest Levinas's choice of the feminine here, but what is important for gender relations here is the inviolable distance that Levinas posits between the two lovers.

In the opening speech of the *Symposium*, Phaedrus articulates what amounts to the social virtues and qualities of love.⁷⁰ Love embodies virtues such as courage, willingness to sacrifice, magnanimity, and devotion to the lover: "In short, this, gentlemen, is my theme, that love is the oldest and most glorious of the gods, the great giver of all goodness and happiness to men, alike to the living and to the dead."⁷¹ Pausanias argues that love incorporates earthly qualities such as passion and physical attraction and heavenly qualities such as vigorous intellectual attributes. Lovers enjoy spending time together, sharing their lives together, and telling the truth to each other. The lover does not have to be in haste, should not base his or her love on money or power, but should submit to the beloved because of virtue, the most important being wisdom.⁷² The physician Eryximachus argues that love empowers every scientific or creative endeavor. "The power of love in its entirety is various and mighty, nay, all-embracing, but the mightiest power of all is wielded by that love whose just and temperate consummation, whether in heaven or on earth, tends toward the good."⁷³ Aristophanes draws from mythology to point out that in love, a lover seeks completion. The virtues of such a quest include a daring spirit and fortitude.⁷⁴ Partners in such a relationship "cannot bear to let each other out of sight for a single instant. It is such reunions as these that impel men to spend their lives together, although they may be hard put to it to say what they really want with one another, and indeed, the purely sexual pleasures of their friendship could hardly account for the huge delight they take in one another's company."⁷⁵ Agathon points to the public virtues of love when he argues that love is the genius behind poetic and creative arts and the source of valor, archery, healing, divination, and governance. Love terminates estrangement and restores friendship.

Socrates builds a careful argument that portrays love as the quest for wisdom and the good and ignores some of the earthly qualities of love mentioned by the other speakers. Alcibiades adds a worldly touch to the discussion by admitting that he has taken some wine. He restores the irrational, passionate side of love by describing in detail his attraction to Socrates and his failure to consummate those feelings. Thus, our understanding of love is influenced not only by Plato's stress on the purity of eros, but also by Alcibiades' celebration of the passion of eros.⁷⁶ We are

taught that love is both rational and irrational and that it starts from the self and flows toward others and the cosmos. Love does not subsume the other into union, wherein the identity of the other disappears.

This reading offers several ideas about eros. First, eros is an encompassing emotion that engages the fullness of life. When we reach out to others from our erotic impulses, it is as if we reach out to the unknown. What we receive comes to us as a revelation, made known not through our own creative forces, but through the goodwill of the erotic outreach of the other person. Openness to another person brings us face-to-face with his or her strength, weakness, joy, wisdom, and erotic creativity. Contrary to what we think, in the erotic journey, we do not extend our love to someone whom we have mapped out and studied; instead, we allow those elements of mystery that respect a person's right to be a human other connect us to the other person. Such a vision requires that we maintain a delicate balance between the chaotic and creative impulses of eros. Using these impulses of eros, women can and do draw on their erotic being to assert and reclaim their lives, in all areas including their engagements in society.⁷⁷

Erotic fullness includes sexual love. Contemporary culture has trivialized this aspect of the erotic because what is labeled "erotica" refers to sexually explicit material. Such a perversion of the idea of eros necessarily prevents people from celebrating sexuality as part of eros. African sexuality is complex, varied, and problematic, as it is in other cultures. It has found expression in artistic expressions. And it is subject to cultural, religious, political, and personal prejudices. For example, some foreign workers in Africa often think that when a young unmarried woman gets pregnant, rather than feel disappointed, Africans rejoice because that young woman is going to have a baby. What such observers often miss is the disgust that accompanies the receipt of such news. The Wimbun use the term *bipsi*, which literally means, "to spoil," a term which indicates that Africans do not tolerate sexual promiscuity simply because it happens. In a recent study, T. O. Beidelman argues that although the Kaguru people of Kenya do not have restrictions on seduction, they generally tend to emphasize that sexuality demands responsibility, and the ability and willingness to assume the role of a parent. He asserts: "Sexuality outside conjugality may be fun, but it is distracting, even inimical, to the work of building and holding together Kaguru society through family and kinship."⁷⁸ The Kaguru take copulation seriously and believe that such relations need to take place "only in the marital space at the very heart of any Kaguru house, a spot secret and secluded [such] as the food storage loft."⁷⁹ African communities have always treated human sexuality in a serious manner because sexuality addresses communal values, is ritualized, and is a desirable activity for women and men. In a patriarchal world, individuals manipulate sexuality for their own personal

gain and thus rob it of its dignity and richness. Manipulation also takes place through structural imbalance, which forces women to become sex workers, while those who use their services label them prostitutes.⁸⁰ Those who seek justice have an important obligation to continue their struggle to unearth these injustices as part of the fight for erotic freedom.

Erotic fullness includes the sacred dimension of life. In the *Symposium*, the erotic reminds people of the gods and their relationship to people. The sacredness of sexuality is worth celebrating in different ways: for example, through the initiation and puberty rituals that emphasize the enhancement of community, but which could also enhance the erotic dreams and visions of individual women. Instead, however, initiation rituals such as female genital cutting have brought pain to many women. Some women contest these rituals because they no longer enhance the sacredness of sexuality and the erotic.

Second, the erotic is a realm of difference and transcendence. Human interaction chastened by eros takes place with others who have are part of a historical community, have an identity of their own, and an individual emotional and affective make up.⁸¹ Wendy Farley has argued that the *Symposium* celebrates difference it rejects Aristophanes' view that love brings together separated people who long for reunification.⁸² If the erotic engagement were merely a desire to reunify separated people, it might be open to manipulation for improper interest that could lead to possession and signal the a betrayal of eros and the human other.

Gender differences have shaped socioeconomic and political relations in Africa from precolonial times to the present. Age differences also shed light on the erotic experience of women. Jean Comaroff has argued that the aggregation stage of Tswana rituals demonstrates sexual asymmetry in a number of ways. For example, boys were not allowed to show their teeth because such an action might indicate a response to sexual arousal.⁸³ Boys were also required to remain together in their huts, away from the girls. However, in the evenings, the older men engaged the young women in suggestive dialogue and songs loaded with metaphors of sexual arousal and gave signals that the young men were sexually incompetent. This transaction indicated an asymmetry in Tswana marriage customs.⁸⁴ The rituals transformed the young men into adults, but unlike their female counterparts, their engagement in sexual activity was restricted for a while.

Their female coevals, however, could be taken as wives by the older men of the community any time after their initiation. In a situation where the elite controlled access to both storable wealth and the reproductive rights that such wealth indexed, they were in a position to practice polygamy— itself an important feature in the negotiation of political alliance.⁸⁵

Comaroff published her ethnography of the Tswana people in 1985. If anything has changed since then, it is perhaps the fact that many young women now attend school. Were they to go through such an initiation, they could delay marriage because they are still attending school. However, this does not mean that their new situation erases the asymmetry in sexual relations: even if they are not married, they may still be vulnerable to other forms of sexual exploitation. Where women go on to marry, we may still wonder—given the economic and cultural capital that the older men may have—whether some early marriages for the young women are a genuine expression of erotic desires. While these differences between men and women are negotiable, if we examine these transactions in light of the fact that the erotic is a realm of transcendence, the notion that one is different ought to put that person beyond the tactical advantage of the rich and older subject. Social conditions that push younger women into marriage or sexual relations with economically more powerful people constitute an infringement upon their sense of transcendence and erotic freedom.

Erotic desire must inspire African women and empower them to seek freedom, escape the bonds of totality, neutralize the powers of the subject, and reject all relationships based solely on money and power.⁸⁶ The erotic could enable individuals to forge paths and links to other people and make physical, spiritual, emotional, and bodily connections without collapsing them together.⁸⁷ The other is there and yet is absent. “Eros thrives in this medium in which other beings are simultaneously present and absent: present to conversation, caress, memory, obligation, compassion, and affection; but absent to the consummation that would unify infinitely separate beings into one.”⁸⁸ People could restructure relationships to enrich rather than destroy what Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi has called “sexual plenitude.”⁸⁹ Working for economic justice is important, but women have the right to pursue erotic justice alongside economic and social justice.⁹⁰

Erotic independence and transcendence is even more important in the age of HIV/AIDS because women’s biological make up makes them more vulnerable to the disease. The complexity of HIV/AIDS has obliterated the boundaries between the general vulnerability that comes from patriarchal arrangements and biases and the vulnerability women face because of the erotic pleasures of some men. A genuine erotic engagement demands respect for the bodies of both lovers; the other partner should not be placed at the risk of infection merely because one partner considers himself dominant.

Third, the erotic is the source of creativity: it pushes us to create and strive for excellence in artistic and scientific domains. In the *Symposium*, the physician Eryximachus states that eros is responsible for the creative

force of the medicinal, gymnastic, agronomic, and musical arts.⁹¹ One can add to this list things such as art, dance, and the forms we encounter in popular culture. In Africa, men dominated postcolonial artistic creativity for a while, but that domination is now a matter of history. The literary and poetic imagination unleashed by African women manifests the erotic spirit. African women have expressed themselves artistically in arts, crafts, architecture decoration, music, and dance. Women writers and critics declare not only their right to their own opinions, but also their right to engage in creative discourse born out of erotic exuberance. Women's writings reinterpret the world and social relationships.⁹² The erotic harnesses and channels their energies into creative endeavors. It also radiates beauty and profundity in the arts, science, and literature. Erotic energy drives and gives birth to the creative forces behind the conception and choreography of "traditional" dances, which sometimes take place as public manifestations of some of the activities of women's closed societies. These societies offer spaces for women to create a sense of belonging and, if necessary, serve as a forum for protest.⁹³ In contemporary popular music, women artists have contributed their creative energies to reshape what was once a male-dominated industry. Erotic forces fuel all this creative energy.

Fourth, the erotic is a realm of freedom. One cannot make simplistic generalizations about the freedom of African women just because patriarchal structures have suppressed (but have not succeeded in destroying) their freedom. Women continue to employ their freedom to engage in business and to run households. They have made significant inroads into the academic and the political world. But many women require a greater erotic freedom, one that stresses self-love and self-affirmation if they are to sustain bonds of love. In this respect, erotic passion, as a realm of freedom, challenges people to deal honestly with the subjectivity of others. One has to look beyond what is often called "needs" and take into consideration a sense of self-worth that derives from the self. Women, as friends and lovers, do not have to yield their right to self-definition to someone else. The danger, however, is that the love of the other could become an Aristophanic search for self-esteem that the lover lacks or an Aristotelian vision of a friend who is another self. The lover does not seek another self through love.

Erotic freedom is clearly characterized by a back-and-forth movement that rules out manipulation and calls for a dialogical engagement with the other, whom Levinas claims "moves away from itself; it abides in a vertigo above depth of alterity . . . a depth exhibited and profaned."⁹⁴ Diotima makes a good case for self-love in the *Symposium*: "Every one of us, no matter what he does, is longing for the endless fame, the incomparable glory that is theirs, and the nobler he is, the greater the ambition, because

he is in love with the eternal.”⁹⁵ The search for fame and glory pushes a healthy self-love to the extreme, but it certainly has a place.

The strongest case for erotic freedom is the character of Socrates, who reserves the freedom to choose his relationships. Alcibiades spells this out for us when he graphically describes his own passion for Socrates. When Alcibiades fails in his attempts to entice Socrates, he accuses him of arrogance. But what Alcibiades calls arrogance may be another way of looking at Platonic freedom, as expressed in Socrates’ freedom to choose whom to have as a friend and lover. The desires of the individual concerned determine such a choice. Alcibiades did not have an opportunity to express and experience the passion of his love for Socrates in a way he would have liked to. We call adult sexual relationships characterized by individual choice and responsibility consensual relationships. Sexual access needs to be based on mutual desires, with each partner assuming responsibility for their actions.

I have discussed the treatment of widows in this chapter as one way of reconfiguring gender relations to empower individuals to experience erotic plenitude. My argument is that the treatment of widows in African societies reflects gender inequalities, which itself mirrors the inequities, injustices, and abuses of power in the postcolonial state. A reconfiguration of gender relations by restoring erotic plenitude, therefore, only highlights one area of social relations that needs to be reconstructed to transform the postcolony. In addition to transforming gender relations, African communities could rethink the idea of power itself from a humanistic perspective. In the next chapter, I discuss such a possibility by examining religious and theological perspectives on power.

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CHAPTER 7

RETHINKING POWER IN AFRICA: RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES¹

The church needs to discover what it means theologically to “live between the times” if it is to share in the process of political renewal. It needs also to realize that it is historically not well-equipped to do so.

Charles Villa-Vicencio²

In this chapter, I discuss religious and theological perspectives on power that could be explored as part of a pluralistic reorganization of political power in postcolonial Africa.³ First, I discuss the place and the ambiguous use of religion to argue that religion could play a major role in the transformation of society. Second, I discuss perspectives on power in Yoruba religious discourse to demonstrate that there are spiritual resources that could serve as a critique of the excesses of power. Third, I present theological perspectives on power in dialogue with Paul Tillich’s theology of power. I do not claim that theological perspectives on power serve as a *deus ex machina* that would resolve all the crises of the postcolonial state. Although it is not possible to provide a detailed study of religion as an institution here and compare its power mechanisms with those of political power, this discussion is far from being what Pierre Bourdieu described as a “legitimizing discourse.” I argue that religious communities, specifically Christian churches, best serve their communities when they maintain a critical relationship with the state and articulate critical theological insights on the nature and purpose of political power.⁴

Religion has played a significant and conflicting role in Africa and continues to be the one single institution that has the trust of many Africans, even though the imperial forces that instituted colonialism employed religion to justify their praxis, which named, claimed land and established rule

over Africans.⁵ Postcolonial leaders have also used religion in conflicting ways. But religion, both as a way of life and as an institution and thought system, appeals to millions of Africans; it offers possibilities to transform the dynamics of power in the postcolonial state.

Religion and Society: Ambiguity and Promise

I use religion here to refer broadly to concrete institutions and their structures, belief systems, and communities in general. Religion also refers to the human experience, which Tillich described as a sense of ultimacy. From this perspective, religion is an orientation toward beings, values, and things that individuals and communities perceive to have influence on them; it provides meaning to their lives. Religion refers to a belief in external and unseen forces that influence human experience. It is an instrument employed by people to meet their needs. The sense of ultimacy might be expressed as a set of practices and propositions that organize the lives of adherents and their communities.⁶ Religion also involves a belief in an invisible world and supernatural spirits that interact with and impact the visible world and its inhabitants.⁷

Religion is alive and well in Africa. Indigenous religions thrive, and their practices of rituals, divination, and healing, which have provided meaning for many Africans in the past, have gained new currency in the wake of the collapse of the state. Neotraditional movements such as the Mungiki in Kenya have revived indigenous religious ideas in confrontation with the postcolonial state. This movement claims to carry on the traditions of Kenya's revolutionary war. The Mungiki encourage female genital cutting, sing traditional Kenyan songs, and wear dreadlocks. Its members have appointed themselves the guardians of public morality, and recently several of their members have allegedly attacked six women for wearing trousers. There was widespread belief that the actions might have wide support within the movement even though the leader of the Mungiki, Ibrahim Ndura Waruinge, denounced the attacks against the women as unfortunate and inhumane.⁸ When the alleged attacks occurred, Kenyan police moved swiftly to arrest those who were involved in the attack. During the regime of President Daniel arap Moi, the group rejected calls to register with the government, stating: "We do not need to be registered by [the] government which only abets poverty, insecurity, killings and social instability."⁹ The case of the Mungiki might be an extreme one, but it demonstrates that indigenous religious ideas remain at the center of meaning for some people on the continent and that they are ready to use them in their confrontation with the postcolonial state.

Islam has been a strong and influential religion in most African countries. It is indeed an African religion that has developed its own forms through the spread of Islamic brotherhoods such as the Mourides, founded in 1927 in Senegal to express the teachings and practices of the Senegalese saint, Ahmadou Bamba. The Mahdi movement of Sudan is another example of African interpretation of Islamic thought and life. Global connections link Muslims in Africa to the Middle East, North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Islamic radicalism has drawn the attention of the world because it is concerned with hot button issues, such as Sharia in Nigeria and Sudan. The centrality of the Sharia has raised new questions about constitutional law and ethical and human rights issues, especially in the case of Amina Lawal, who was sentenced to death by stoning for acts of adultery; Nigerian activists, with the support of international groups, worked to reverse that sentence. The Nigerian and Sudanese states have experienced numerous acts of violence because of conflicts between Muslims and Christians. The news about Islam in Africa, however, is not all bad, because groups such as the Mourides continue to spread their work ethic, and Islamic organizations continue to do works of charity.

Christianity established roots in Africa early in its history, developing theological perspectives and monastic orders that have remained the hallmark of the Christian tradition. Ethiopian Christianity was regarded as the state religion and maintained its connection to the Hebrew faith. Missionaries revived Christianity in Africa in the colonial era, and by the nineteenth century, the primary mission institution, the mission station, was dotted all over Africa. Missionary Christianity maintained an ambiguous relation with colonialism, often endorsing it, but its educational and social projects anticipated a future democratic culture. Africans have introduced reforms by establishing Christian independency, thus creating new Christian communities (African Initiated Churches, AIC) to respond to the felt needs neglected by mainline Christian organizations on the continent. Many of the new African churches and Pentecostal revivalist churches accent faith healing and offer new "survival packages" that include the gospel of success and deliverance, which is very appealing to people on a continent that has been ravaged by political and economic crisis. Pentecostal healing ministries attract thousands of believers who have been traumatized by the abuse of political power and the daily drudge of life under uncertain and dismal economic circumstances. The promise of healing also appeals to a large number of people living with the HIV/AIDS virus, who have nowhere to turn because there is no adequate healthcare in their respective countries.¹⁰ The AICs have been transplanted into Europe and North America from the 1960s and seem to enjoy a new

revitalization, especially with the rise of migrations from Africa to North America, Europe, and Asia.¹¹

Several religions, which originated in Asia and Southeast Asia, have a large following in Africa. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Hinduism, Arcanum Nama Shivaya Mission, and the Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai of Japanese Buddhism all have branches in Ghana.¹² The degree of domestication of each religion differs, but each religious tradition has established strong roots in Africa. Judaism maintains a strong presence in South Africa.

Second, religion, as a broad conceptual, experiential, and practical world, involves several aspects. The different components of the religious world include religious thought (theology); narratives of the memories of a particular tradition, which offer perspectives on the rise, development, and spread of the religion (history); structures and organizations, where adherents find a community; religious praxis; spiritual and mystical interpretation of the faith. These structures organize individual or corporate religious lives of separation and dedication; religious outreach, which involves all forms of proselytization and the recruitment of new members into the faith community.¹³ These areas shape religious identity and determine how others within and outside a tradition view that religious community and competing religious communities.

One of these areas of religious life, its thought and theology, is used to develop and summarize the beliefs and important tenets of a religious community. Such beliefs are dynamic because developments bring new perspectives and interpretations. Religious communities and their experts often use their beliefs to articulate what sets them apart, to prescribe or proscribe praxis, to sanction members of the community, and to define their place and relationship to a political community and the rest of the world. These beliefs are often contested even within a religious community and sometimes generate conflicts and fanaticism.¹⁴

Religious thought in some areas has become a hindrance to nation-building where it has been used to promote violence. In Nigeria, religious beliefs have been at the heart of the violence that has erupted between Christians and Muslims and has taken many lives, destroyed property, and hindered attempts at nation-building. In both Sudan and Nigeria, the disputes over Sharia have had the same effect. Such violent setbacks instigated by extreme religious thought are not unique to Africa.¹⁵ Religion has also destabilized and disrupted nation-building where practitioners of religion have misappropriated the values and teachings of their religion for their own selfish purposes. Many religious traditions have used their teachings to promote discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and class with devastating consequences for the human family. These are all loaded issues that

have to be faced and addressed in African states where religious sensitivities continue to fuel violence.

Religion and Power in the Post-Patrimonial State

Religion is engrossed in the power dynamics of the continent at different levels. It could continue to play an important role in what could be a post-patrimonial state if a serious transformative agenda is implemented in different African countries.

Some religious leaders and their religious organizations have maintained a close relationship with those who hold political power. In several countries in Africa, political and religious leaders have looked to each other for support as they have staked claims to power. Villa-Vicencio argues: "This modern day Constantinian settlement type scenario between state and religion is of course not peculiar to Africa. It is present in numerous states elsewhere in the world. It is implicit in the cozy relationship between church and state in America despite a constitutional separation of church and state." In Africa, many politicians have stayed in power because they have received the support of religious leaders, who have refused to mount any opposition against the regime.¹⁶ One should also point out that African politicians have not always given clerics room to criticize the government. Politicians have coerced religious leaders into supporting their regimes. In Uganda, Idi Amin eliminated clerics whom he considered a threat to his power. Sometimes this confrontation has been played out over larger ideological issues, but the goal is to silence criticism from clerics. For example, one of the first tasks of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) government of Samora Machel was to denounce churches and nationalize church assets, setting off a confrontation that led to the departure of many foreign and local clergy.

In the postcolonial state, religion has been used by individuals to accumulate wealth and power. Examples include the use of religious office as a means of personal embourgeoisement. In an interview, a secondary school teacher in Cameroon told me that corruption had entered the church-run school system to the extent that the principals of church-run secondary schools require bribes from parents before admitting their children into their schools. He also stated that the principals and bursars of church-run schools were engaged in overinvoicing requisitions for the schools in order to cover up embezzlement of school funds.¹⁷ Church leaders also act as the proverbial "big men" who are expected to display the fruits of their power.¹⁸ They wield great influence with NGOs and have even created their own NGOs to ensure that they have the power they need.

Religious groups have been involved with power by offering alternative spaces for their followers to reconfigure their existence. Christian religious groups and Islamic brotherhoods have opened up spaces where their followers enact an interactive spirituality that incorporates modernity and its larger socioeconomic realities. While one could expand this point and lose sight of the theological motifs that have given rise to religious movements, it is instructive to note, as Achille Mbembe has done, that revival groups that have sprung up also offer counterhegemonic spaces for people who exist on the margins of the postcolonial state.¹⁹ These groups might not provide all that a state could offer its citizens, but they promise at least to meet their felt needs and offer a world of meaning that is being destroyed by the monstrosity of the postcolonial state.

Religion is further involved in the power equation because some religious groups continue to exert control over the state.²⁰ In Sudan, Nigeria, and South Africa, religion has played a major role in defining political power. In Sudan and Nigeria, religious groups have mounted a campaign to institute Sharia law and introduce what seems to be a never-ending debate on the constitutions of those countries. In South Africa, religious ideals inspired the apartheid system, but progressive forces used religious ideals to mount a successful antiapartheid struggle that lasted several decades. Elsewhere, religion has been used to segment clusters of power along ethnic lines. For example, in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Sudan, the Islamic faith was linked with being Arab, and in places such as Cameroon, becoming a Muslim was a process of taking on a new *pulaaka* identity and participating in the spoils of the postcolonial state.²¹ In Sudan especially, the Islamic brotherhoods have worked closely with politicians to strengthen the Islamization of the country, consolidate the Sharia, and perpetrate further intrigues that have led to the present crisis in the country.

Religion has also offered people a vehicle of dissent. Religious groups have joined movements to demand democratic reforms, and segments of society who have thought that they were being marginalized and used religious symbols to stake their claims, as the Mungiki have done in Kenya. This youth movement started because its members had been excluded from the Kenyan political and social system. Other movements include the *Mayi Mayi* in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement in Uganda. The case of Alice Lakwena is striking because Alice claimed that the Spirit Lakwena who possessed her had instructed her to shift the focus of her work from healing to a war of liberation. Therefore, Alice and her followers launched a war of liberation, complicating a civil war that already had several factions fighting to regain control of Uganda after the destruction brought on it by Idi Amin and the incompetent regime of Milton Obote.²²

Although religion and its ideas have been used to perpetuate injustice, many Africans still belong to a religious community and have used their religious ideas and communities to mount dissent. A recent report on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) claims that most Africans still trust their religious leaders more than other leaders on the continent.²³ Villa-Vicencio wonders why people turn to cultural and religious symbols as a means of protest:

Could it have something to do with the depth of the sense of marginalization and alienation experienced by the historic poor? Historic and enduring, impacting on the body, limb and soul, with implications for social identity, human meaning and what is left of hope, the cry is from and to the very ground of being itself. It is a cry to the most essential sources of life—the ancestors, the spirits, the soil, tradition and the gods.²⁴

I suspect that these sources of power influence the kind of cry we hear everywhere in Africa, even where there is no open rebellion against the powers that exist. The cry articulated through religious symbols demands that secular symbols and political arrangements should work to improve the lives of people and make them feel good by addressing the needs of all members in the political community. Although religious symbols may not have any coercive force, except in places where there is open warfare; these symbols could enable members of a political community to respect their secular commitments to the community. Here, the task of the religious community is to call on state leaders, who themselves may be members of different religious communities, to uphold the constitution of the state and ensure that justice is done to every member of the political community.

Religion and the Possibility of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding and reconciliation have received attention recently in an enormous amount of scholarly literature. The focus on peace has changed in a number of ways. First, it has shifted from being mainly a political concern to being an intellectual and social praxis with peace institutes and centers, such as the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and the Boniuk Center for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance at Rice University. Second, the discussion has shifted the old debate on pacifist and nonpacifist views to a broader investigation and dialogue on the imperatives, strategies, the mechanics of peacebuilding and role of religion in the process. Third, there is a greater recognition that peacebuilding is a complex contextual

process that involves a deliberate effort to listen, learn, give, and take in situations of conflicts where local needs have to set the agenda for interactions with local and global perspectives on mutual survival. One individual who has been involved in peace studies for more than two decades is John Paul Lederach of the University of Notre Dame who has published widely on the subject and has participated in peace negotiations throughout the world. Lederach takes peacebuilding to be a moral praxis and an art.²⁵ In his book *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach has argued that moral imagination is that ability to think of things that are part of the challenges people face in the real world, creating something new in the process. He believes that peacebuilding is a journey, a view that is reflected in his other publications. He has argued that in this journey, one's strength lies in the quality of his or her relationships with other people, not the kind of weapons they have. Since peacebuilding is a long journey, people are bound to wander and wander, but those engaged in the process have to wait and work patiently if they want to accomplish something.

Although religion has been appropriated for selfish political reasons, it could play an important role in political life by facilitating peacebuilding. Religion as such is not violent, but the misappropriation of religion by individuals and communities has created conflicts.²⁶ In seeking solutions to these conflicts, religion alone might not be the key, but it remains what Villa-Vicencio has called the "underbelly" of the African state. "[It] may be hard, it may be soft, it is the underbelly that impacts the initiatives of the secular state for good and for bad."²⁷ Therefore, members of a religious community could regard their institution as a source of power, but a power that could be transformed from being one that fuels violent activities into one that promotes peacebuilding. Religious beliefs could offer a basis for thinking through conflicts and peace, and religious ceremonies could be used to rally people to fight for a cause or to usher in peace and reconciliation. Here, religious communities could play an important role in organizing and leading negotiations that could establish a basis for peace. In order to do this successfully, religious communities could consider the things they share in common with other religious communities, rather than emphasize their differences. At the national and international level, religious ideas could also help in resolving human rights issues and in ending all forms of discrimination, especially since most religious groups stress the oneness of the human family.

In the Christian church, the task of peacebuilding depends on the type of relationship a particular denomination has with the state. Jean-François Bayart, writing as a social scientist, mapped out the relationship between the church and the state in Africa in an essay in 1973, arguing that the church in Cameroon (and Africa), which some considered part of civil society,

often acted as a zone of freedom, and in some cases functioned as a state within a state.²⁸ Such a relationship developed because in postcolonial Africa the church often competed with the state in the delivery of social services. While the state often saw the church as an agent of development, it is also true that the state often competed with, co-opted, and, in extreme cases, nationalized church institutions and investments in this area, as it did in Congo (Zaire) under Mobutu and in Nigeria and Cameroon.

Bayart conceptualized the relationship between the church and the state as collaborative, complementary, and conflictual. The church and the state collaborate in national development with a unity of purpose, and in doing so, the church recognizes the legitimacy of the state. They complement each other in situations of stalemate: both develop a policy of coexistence, the churches continuing to carry out their obligation to the citizenry by providing services in crucial areas where the state was no longer able to provide those services (in such a situation, the church acts like an NGO, now called FBO). Their relationship is conflictual when either the state or the church can no longer tolerate the issues that bring about the stalemate. Bayart argued that conflict arises when the state perceives the church as a competitor or as a threat to its power and influence.²⁹

Other Africanists have also discussed the church's complicity with power in Africa and have indicated that in some instances the church seemed to offer its blessings to the abuse of power by political elites. A glaring example of collaboration with the elites is the role played by the church in Rwanda leading up to and during the genocide of 1994.³⁰ However, when the state has neglected the poor and when political leaders have violated the rights and freedoms of the citizens to speak freely and have stifled civil society, the church has in some cases challenged the state and worked to restore those freedoms.³¹ Although the Christian church has often supported the elites, there is evidence that it has also worked to clear a space for free speech and facilitate the work of civil society, FBOs, and NGOs.³² For example, when former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, faced with economic decline and mounting political opposition, resorted to undemocratic tactics, he invited active church opposition to his regime. Churches in Zimbabwe fought the illegal declaration of independence by Ian Smith in 1965, and later challenged the dictatorial tactics of Robert Mugabe. In other African countries, the church has gone from strongly endorsing the nationalist agenda of the immediate postcolonial leaders to adopting an agenda of protest.

During the movement for democracy in Africa, members of the clergy in mostly Francophone countries actively organized discussions through the national conferences that brought together people from different backgrounds to think about the future of their countries. It is noteworthy that

in many countries the Roman Catholic clergy played an important role in organizing these conferences.³³ This development, though welcomed by some, came as a surprise to many, because churches in sub-Saharan Africa whose political agendas were not well defined, making it difficult for them to play an active political role, were now playing an important role in the negotiations. In some countries, the church was not prepared for this turn of events. Pierre Titi Nwel points out that the church in Cameroon was not adequately prepared as it entered this challenging phase in the history of its relation with the state. However, at a time of conflict, the Federation of Protestant Churches and Missions in Cameroon (FEMEC), whose member churches represented different political alliances, was instrumental in organizing a visit by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to Cameroon to defuse an explosive political situation, following the state of emergency imposed on the Northwest Province, where militants of the opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), were protesting the election results that declared Paul Biya the winner over SDF leader Ni John Fru Ndi.³⁴ In Mozambique church leaders facilitated dialogue between Renamo rebels and the government of Joachim Chissano, which led to the setting up of a Peace and Reconciliation Commission with the Anglican Bishop of Lebombo, Denis Sengulane, as the chair (it must be noted, however, that the peace process took a long time to negotiate because it involved many other external and internal participants).³⁵ In some instances church leaders openly criticized the actions of politicians. Nigerian church leaders vehemently condemned General Ibrahim Babangida for annulling the election of Chief Mashood Abiola in 1993.³⁶

However, some churches shied away from such activities because they did not want to offend politicians. These churches rather preferred to work with politicians who openly practiced their faith as evangelical believers. Some church leaders called these politicians God-fearing individuals, and offered the support of their churches to some of these political leaders who were not democratic at all. Paul Gifford laments that in Kenya, the Redeemed Gospel Church assisted the regime of President Moi, and its leader referred to President Moi as a "God-fearing man."³⁷ Moi used this to his advantage, frequently attending church and evangelistic crusades organized by Evangelical and Pentecostal preachers, and was as a result hailed as a God-fearing leader even by visiting evangelists unfamiliar with the internal problems of the country.

Religious communities and theologians should be interested in the state of political power in Africa today because several African leaders who came to power more than a decade ago remain in power, offering little new besides a bankrupt state. It is not merely that they do not want to give up their position. Rather, they have clearly refused to permit the winds of

change that have blown across Africa, bringing hopes of freedom, liberty, and justice, to move them to follow suit. Few dispute that Africans need local approaches to usher in a new social reconstruction of the African community. However, those who govern in Africa have used their power to block social reconstruction. Therefore, if reconstruction of society is going to proceed and if theology is going to play a new role in this, theologians have an obligation to reflect and practice theology in a manner that offers a critical assessment of political power to enable communities to create space for a new praxis.³⁸

In this era of transformation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa has paved the way for a new society. I know that others have contested both the premise and the work of the TRC, but there is no doubt that it has offered to the people of South Africa, a compelling alternative route to the resolution of a long struggle. Africans have also witnessed a transition from the first state president of the new South Africa, Nelson Mandela, to Thabo Mbeki. This has generated hope that other African leaders will follow Mandela's noble example by moving off from the stage of power when their time comes.

Religion could be a source of peace if the resources of indigenous religious thought and the resources of theology are employed to understand the nature and deployment of power. One could explore this subject through previous discourses about power in different indigenous religions in African communities, but let us take one brief example from Yoruba religious life, where the notion *àse* means several things, including power.

On *Àse*—Yoruba Perspectives on Power

The cosmological system of the Yoruba, whose conception of reality is grounded in the notion of *àse*, translated variously as “power” and “life force,” continues to fascinate me. Although many interpret *àse* as “power,” the term has multiple meanings.³⁹ Bolaji Idowu, in *Olódùmarè*, gives us a clue to the numerous nuances of this word by pointing out that the *Òrìsà Nlá* is also called *alabalàse* (one who controls the scepter), indicating that the *Olódùmarè* gave him “authority to speak and act and be implicitly obeyed.”⁴⁰ Here, *àse* refers to legitimate authority. *Àse* is also used when petitioners go before the Supreme Being with their requests and petitions. Since they know that the will of *Olódùmarè* is supreme, they submit to the will of the divine being and thus respond to the petitions others offer by saying “*àse, àse,*” meaning “may it come to pass.” They believe that nothing can happen unless the Supreme Being allows it.⁴¹ People use *àse* as either “power” or “life force” to signify different relationships and situations. We can summarize these by offering several interpretive comments.

The first of these is obvious. *Àse* is an important notion in conceptualizing reality and, in that respect, is central to Yoruba cosmology and to its conceptual and relational world. Power operates in all aspects of life, particularly on two levels: *orun* (heaven), the domain of the supreme deity and the *Òrìsàs*; and *aye* (earth). The notion here does not posit a dualistic or Manichaeian understanding of power, but rather highlights power as an important component in understanding the totality of reality created by *Olódùmarè*. The Supreme Being's power, which is also given to all creation, is distributed throughout the created order and is an important ingredient that sustains that order.

Second, *àse* comes from *Olódùmarè*. Religious leaders among the Yoruba stress that *Olódùmarè* has been gracious by distributing *àse* to all beings and things because *àse* is the basis of existence.⁴² The Supreme Being intends that all people experience and have *àse*, and for that reason, all people and all things have received it from the Creator. People are expected to give recognition to the fact that they have been endowed with it. Henry Drewal and others argue that since no one knows the details about another person, it is important that one approach another person with a proper attitude, which recognizes the *àse* of the other person. Therefore, when one approaches another person, one ought to demonstrate certain graces and virtues, such as *eso* (caution), *ifarabale* (composure), *owo* (respect), and *suuru* (patience). The broad idea here is that one cannot take otherness for granted or approach other people as objects for manipulation. Recognition of the other person's *àse* rules out manipulative schemes and marginalizing projects. It is wrong, therefore, for politicians to assume that they can dominate other people because they have been given the opportunity to lead the political community.

Third, *àse* has important social dimensions. Central to the idea of community is the belief that all of its members will use their *àse* to contribute to the well-being of one another. This points to the importance of unity in the community and the uniqueness of its individual members. "The recognition of the uniqueness and autonomy of the *àse* of persons and gods is what structures society and its relationships with the other world."⁴³ In other words, because *àse* comes from divinity and makes each person special, it provides a conceptual grid through which one can recognize and relate to other people and things. Failure to do this would bring chaos into the human community and the created order.

Fourth, *àse* has important aesthetic and artistic dimensions. In composition, an artist may design a piece in such a way that the parts and unities of a whole "share equal value with the other units."⁴⁴ This strategy recognizes equal but autonomous elements while at the same time invoking a diversity of forces into the world.

Finally, *àse* is part of ritual language, described by Andrew Apter as “talking texts” that are intertextual and link meaning with doing.⁴⁵ In other words, *àse* constitutes what we can call a social praxis. Apter’s exploration of the language of *àse* interests me because it implies that ritual and human communication exceed immediate political and pragmatic purposes. If people communicate with the understanding that *àse* combines meaning and doing, we could formulate human communication as an empowering praxis, rather than as the imposition of the dictates of political elites.⁴⁶ Human communication does not have to be a situation where leaders merely pass on the dictates of the ruling elites. Instead, it can empower people to come to grips with their being-in-the-world. It is difficult, then, to interpret the conception of power among the Yoruba from a strictly secular perspective. Furthermore, it would also be a misrepresentation to see power as a commodity and as the privilege of political and ritual power, because among the Yoruba, all human beings have some form of power and deserve respect. Power and legitimate authority are derived because *Òlodúmarè* gives power to everyone, including inanimate objects. *Òlodúmarè* has given power to people to effect the smooth functioning of society, where each person maintains a balance and fulfills his or her personal and social destiny. Some people have more power than others. Jacob Olupona has argued that the Ondo people praise the *Oba* (“king”) as “*ekeji Òrìsà*” (“the one whose power is like that of the *Òrìsà* or gods”).⁴⁷ However, a Yoruba ruler’s “power is curtailed through power-sharing with his chiefs and by means of a series of checks and balances.”⁴⁸ *Òlodúmarè* has given *àse* to people so that they will use it to sustain harmonious relationships in the phenomenal world. The conflict that has marred the postcolonial state, where some have worked to assert their own power and privileges over others, is contrary to the ideals that underlie the notion of *àse*.

Theological Perspectives on Power

In this section, I offer theological perspectives on power in dialogue with the theology of Paul Tillich, as articulated in *Love, Power and Justice*.⁴⁹ In the last decades of the twentieth century, African theologians began to reflect on the possibility of a new theological moment, which Villa-Vicencio described as “a theology of reconstruction”.⁵⁰ Villa-Vicencio called on theologians and churches to work for human rights as part of a reconstruction project needed to establish a just and peaceful coexistence.⁵¹ It was imperative that human rights that had been taken away be restored, in the light of God’s reign, to translate Christian values into real-life experience. This called for a postexilic theology that would address systemic violence and break down prejudices based on race, gender, and class.⁵² Such bold

thinking could offer a utopian vision for promoting basic rights that people should have as humans, rather than as a favor a government bestows on its people, or as political concessions or bargaining tools.

Jesse Mugambi has argued that reconstruction is a fitting theological motif because it invites Africans to create a new society.⁵³ A third book on the theology of reconstruction, edited by Mary Getui and Emmanuel Obeng, contains essays that address environmental degradation and ask for ecological renewal, a new theology of creation, a theology of nature, and a return to African spirituality. The authors call for a theology of health to address the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians have deplored the negative deployment of power in the family, community, and national, regional, and international politics. Beginning with the publication of *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, members of the Circle have engaged in theological reflection to advocate the dignity of African women.⁵⁴ Circle members have used theological reflection to address issues such as the marginalization of women, oppression of women, denial of equal rights, and the misuse of culture to exclude women from participating in political life and development of their countries. Members of the Circle have also addressed contentious practices such as genital surgery, polygyny, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.⁵⁵

While theology holds no magic key to understanding power, it offers perspectives on power that could be considered seriously in the post-patrimonial state, where the Christian church has played such a dominant role. The theological voice remains at best a moral voice, which may be used to influence public life in the midst of crisis. The constructive proposals I offer here are provisional and open to amendment. The revolutionary dimension of religious thought has the potential to shape social praxis on the continent, where political power has distorted human condition. The church in Africa needs to reinterpret political power in the light of its theology and offer views that will motivate politicians to implement a transformation process.

Power is constitutive of being

In the preceding section, I have shown how power and the balance of power are central to Yoruba cosmology. Even in the Western tradition, ontological and theological views of power suggest that power is constitutive of being, by virtue of the fact that all human beings are created equal and in the image of God. Tillich has spelled out the ontological dimensions of power by arguing that the concept of power is what fundamentally describes being and has discussed the importance of this concept in Aristotelian and Augustinian understandings of reality.⁵⁶ Nietzsche's "will

to power” refers, in Tillich’s words, to “the self-affirmation of life in its self-transcending dynamics, overcoming internal and external resistance.”⁵⁷ Tillich has argued: “Being is the power of Being.” The theological view that humanity is created in the image of God and Tillich’s point that power is part of being mean several things. First, since power is constitutive of being, at a basic level power could refer to human capabilities and self-affirmation, because humans exercise power over nonbeing, which resists the power of being.⁵⁸ Therefore, every being strives in different ways to affirm its own being and resists negation. Power is that innate capability that constantly resists all projects that impose a sense of nonbeing on people. No one ought to think of himself or herself more highly than they think of others. In political terms, while the agenda of the state is important, it should not be used to hold people captive under the power abused by political elites. Put differently, power is self-affirmation.⁵⁹

This is an important notion for members of different political communities who have been kicked around and abused for a long time. They do not have to perceive power as the hold that someone else, or the institutions that circumscribe their being-in-the-world, have over them. Instead, power is part of being itself. In his phenomenology of power, Tillich has demonstrated that the power of being is manifest and measurable. It is manifested through the process in which its power is actualized in all activities of self-affirmation and resistance to nonbeing.⁶⁰

Power is interactive. Since all people possess power, human interaction is an exercise of power. Human interaction includes what Tillich refers to as an encounter with other human beings, which brings out the reality of power because those people are also bearers of power.⁶¹ It might not be immediately clear, but the claim here is that social intercourse between individuals is an exercise of power. In the colonial and postcolonial state, people have been dominated and subjugated and constantly reminded that they are subjects. Therefore, to claim, as I do, that power is interactive should not be construed as a misreading of the social dynamics of political and economic power, which continue to dwarf and destroy people who count only as objects. If power is interactive, it should not serve only the needs of a privileged few. As difficult as this is notion of power as interactive is, it is important that people appropriate it because it is needed to affirm their capabilities.

People do not need to believe that the leaders who exercise constitutional authority over them are the only ones that have power. All beings exercise power as they encounter others. Members of the political community are all agents of power and carry in them the potential to affect and to influence others in the process of asserting themselves against the forces of nonbeing. Tillich has argued that this analysis is not a systemic

understanding of the encounter process: this actualization of power is not a “system of solutions,” since one encounters others in a situation where they make no a priori decisions. Instead, these encounters offer the opportunity for continuous decision-making. Individuals make decisions regularly about the power they need in their social encounters with different beings, all of whom represent sites of power.⁶²

From an ontological view, power does not imply a monopoly of constitutional authority. But in the postcolonial state, daily encounters have been a manifestation of negative forms of power. Power is manifested at the local level by the *nkfu* (“chiefs”), who in the postcolony have to compete with state authorities in governing the village. There are people who claim that they have occult powers to influence the lives of others. This kind of power continues to wreak havoc in the postcolonial state, where people accuse of others of using witchcraft against them. In the Northwest Province of Cameroon and the Northern Province of South Africa, several people have been killed on suspicion of being witches. In Cameroon, public and private school authorities now demonstrate that they have enormous power by expecting, and sometimes demanding, that parents bribe them to secure admission of their children into school. Security officers display their power by shouting and beating up individuals. Against all of these, one has to affirm theologically that all people are created in the image of God and that every manifestation of power is also an opportunity for the contestation of power. In daily interactions, one is likely to push others aside or run ahead of them; the other person does the same thing, and his or her actions resist our power or withdraw in the face of such power. Regardless of what happens, self-affirmation is taking place and negative power is being contested, especially in situations where power is being assimilated.

Tillich has pointed out that Arnold Toynbee, in *A Study of History*, uses power relations to interpret historical movements.⁶³ We draw from such a study categories such as challenge, reaction, and withdrawal; and in return, we realize that we belong to what Tillich has called “a phenomenology of encounters,” which works with individuals and groups. One cannot define a theological understanding of power and power relations in isolation of what happens in a concrete historical situation. Any theological perspective on power in Africa has to take seriously the transactions and encounters that define being on a day-to-day basis. Political encounters today ought to show preference to the poor and to the young who are victims of sexual abuse, political corruption, violence, and the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.⁶⁴ This will shift power encounters away from a one-dimensional call to honor the powers that rule the land.

Power is derived from God

The claim that God created human beings in God's image and endowed all creatures with certain capabilities underscores the fact that all power derives from God. The divine source that bestows power on all does not single out the elites and rulers for the honor of possessing power. However, we also know that the apostle Paul told Christians in the epistle to the Romans that God ordains the powers that govern on earth (Romans 13). All who have power draw that power from the same source—the divine being. The divine sanction of power also calls on those who have been given power to assume great responsibility. I have already referred to the story of King David, who used his power to commit adultery, blackmail, and eventually murder. Although God anointed David as king, God did not condone David's actions. Therefore, to claim that all power derives from God is also to claim that no one has the right to use his or her power to dominate and brutalize others.

Divine sanction of power does not mean that a few people can monopolize power. Such a monopoly of power is not consistent with the perspectives offered by the Yoruba tradition and by Tillich. It is the responsibility of the African leaders to understand that the divine origin of political office does not mean that only a select few have the ideas that are necessary to lead. In a pluralistic society, politicians are expected to recognize that other people also have ideas and have a right to an opportunity to lead. Many politicians in African countries have monopolized government positions for decades, even when it is clear that they have nothing new to contribute. When they have done so, many of them have turned to the church to sanction their rule or have shown favor to some Christian denomination in order to receive their support. President Moi used this strategy in Kenya when his political fortunes declined. Such a determination to stay in power robs others of the opportunity to lead and corrupts the notion of divine distribution of power.

God, who is the source of power, does not favor some people because they have the privilege of ruling. Instead, God, as Karl Barth has argued, has always acted on behalf of the lowly and those who have been denied privilege here on Earth.⁶⁵ The theological task of the church includes the articulation of the liberating dimensions of God's power. In order to do that, the church needs to develop a counterdiscourse to its Constantinian project by recovering what Johann Baptist Metz has called the "dangerous memory" of the faith. It needs to assert that the alternative reading of power, which has come from God, demonstrates that God takes sides with the oppressed and the marginalized people of the world.⁶⁶

Those who have political power must not use it for self-aggrandizement

Tillich has argued that in social encounters the manifestation of power lends itself to the development of hierarchies. Individuals in these encounters center self to gain power. "The completely centered, self-centered and self-aware being, man has the greatest power of being. He has a world, not only an environment, and with it infinite potentialities of self-actualization."⁶⁷ There is a role for centers of power. Even the most egalitarian states have them. Centers of power are problematic only when certain representatives employ their power as a means to their own self-aggrandizement.⁶⁸ When that happens, such centers disappear. Therefore, the use of power for self-aggrandizement destroys power.

In a discussion of Tillich's views, Kyle Pasewark has argued that the social dimension of *Macht* (power) exercises its will through *Machtpositionen* (positions of power), which are created by humans.⁶⁹ Leaders have responsibility for the group's power of being, even though their own self-assertion of power could interfere with that of the group. This is where most of the social and political problems of the postcolonial state lie, because the individuals who have social power have used it for their own good. "Centers of social power lose their real power as soon as the inner power of the social group fails to find expression there."⁷⁰ This means that such centers of power lose legitimacy. When this happens, people could remove those in power by a constitutional process or a revolution, but such a process of removing abusive powers has eluded many Africans.

In order to avoid this loss of legitimacy it is important that those who hold political power think of their power as temporary, given to them to strengthen the commonwealth. To think of power as a temporary endowment is theologically problematic for some religious practitioners who tend to stress the permanence, stability, and ultimacy of power, especially of God-ordained power. But if people learned to see power as a temporary endowment they would avoid the temptation to capture, confine, and commodify power. If power is temporary, those who hold power serve well if they use it to enhance human existence. God who gives power can also take it away. God appointed Saul to be the first king of Israel, but later rejected him when he turned away from God. For many in the postcolonial state, the puzzle is why God has allowed dictators to rule for such a long time. This is the cry of the oppressed that has to be lifted to God. Many of them are aware of the intrigues politicians have used to create a sense of the permanence of power where there should be none. If people were to accept the view that power is fluid, they would understand the shifting dynamics of power. In terms of the institutional dimensions

of power, people think and assert that some one has power today because he or she occupies a certain position. When that individual leaves office, people also claim that he or she no longer has power. However, the ontological perspective Tillich offers indicates that the fact that someone no longer has political office does not mean that he or she does not have power—they still have power, and it is manifested in their interactions with other people.⁷¹

The idea that power is temporary has several implications. First, it means that people have an obligation to resist the commodification of power. Political power works better when it is based on the needs of the public that politicians serve, rather than on the ability to buy such power or use it to accumulate wealth at the expense of the state. Second, the temporality of power also means that religious and theological views of power should be open to other perspectives offered by democratic political traditions, perspectives that demand power-sharing mechanisms and constitutional transitions from power, rather than have people hold on to power indefinitely.

Third, the temporality of power calls into question the idea of a natural leader, especially if used in the context of political power. Theologically, one could say that power is natural only to the extent that as human beings and participants in nature, we participate in the energy, force, and dynamism given to all of the created order. This implies that there is nothing particularly special about our kind of power. Power is not “natural” if by that we mean that certain people are natural rulers, a statement that generally means that certain people are born to exercise power over others. People corrupt religion when they use it to legitimate political power. It is therefore important that theological insights offer grounds for rejecting what Tillich has called the “instrumentalization of Christianity” in the exercise of abusive political rule.⁷²

Power should be exercised in the light of human finitude

It is clear from theological history and other cosmological systems (such as that of the Dogon of Mali), that creation, and especially the *imago dei*, is fallen. The fallen state of humanity has imposed finitude and temporality. The idea of the divine origin of leadership has to be tempered with the reality of finitude and its implied limitations in time and space. Human limitations may manifest themselves in a lack of knowledge and a lack of vision, even when our intentions are good. Such an awareness of human limitations should serve as a guard against the imposition of arbitrary power on those who have entrusted their leaders with the task of governing. It is not wise for political leaders to declare themselves people of God or for religious leaders to proclaim them as such merely because particular politicians

share their narrow spiritual vision. As finite human beings, it is prudent for leaders to promote dialogue, understanding, and deference to other opinions.

If humans are finite beings, then it also follows that power is subject to finitude and could be exhaustible. The point here is that there comes a time when people have to recognize that their best days lie behind them. The retirement of religious leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu has set an example and opened the door for others to take on responsibility for the flock. Ecumenical News International (ENI) reported on May 21, 2002, that after calling on President Moi of Kenya to step down from his post as party leader and head of state when his term expired at the end of that year, the Anglican archbishop, David Gitari, announced that he was retiring that September as required by the edict of the church. The archbishop was sixty-five years old; at that point, President Moi was seventy-six years old and had been in power for twenty-four years.

Power should be tempered with the spirit of Christ

Jesus Christ as a suffering servant is a good example of another side of divine power. The life of Christ shows us that power is not fixed, strong, and domineering, because God is also a suffering God. The kenosis, through which Christ divested himself of all claims to power and took on the form and likeness of a servant, offers a divine angle on power and serves as a critique of the imbalance of power that has destroyed the notion of service and servant leadership. Through this example, one could state as the New Testament (Philippians 2) does that power is not a commodity one can grasp and hang on to; instead, it is a specific disposition that requires that we imitate Christ (practice *Imitatio Christi*). Jesus adopted the role of a servant; hence, all those who want to exercise power are invited to imitate Jesus and play that role instead of dominating others.

Political power should be used to empower people

The task for many concerned with transformation in Africa is to get African leaders at all levels to see power as an empowering mechanism. If power reflects the sum total of all the relations between people in a society, and if all people derive power from a divine source that gives power to all living and nonliving entities, then political power ought to serve as an empowering mechanism. Let us recall Tillich's argument that individuals exercise power or become aware of their power in encounters with other people. People do not encounter each other primarily because they want to overcome, overtake, or dominate them. Human encounters are most profitable when people strengthen, energize, revive, revitalize, and empower the

people they encounter. Takatso Mofokeng has argued that power is “for” others and not “over” others.⁷³ Mofokeng implies that powerful and influential people have an obligation to employ their power to strengthen others, rather than dominate them.

The Christian tradition has always looked to Jesus as the exemplar of this kind of power. James Cochrane has argued that the Amawoti community in South Africa believes that Jesus demonstrated this power in the things he did on Earth.⁷⁴ Jesus used his power to enable others to be what they ought to be. Theology can contribute to politics by offering this anthropological reading of the life of Jesus, stressing that members of Christian communities can certainly follow Jesus’s example. It could call upon Christians and others who serve in public office to be good examples and to enable people to participate in governing the political community. Those who govern could foster reform by refraining from using political power as they have used it in the past to impose totalizing systems and networks that privilege a small section of the political community. Churches have an important calling to speak out when politicians use power to fix the outcome of elections because they want certain candidates to win. It is imperative that churches condemn the use of power to brutalize people.

Power should be used to strengthen intersubjective relations

Both individuals and those who exercise power over others have an obligation to use their power to strengthen intersubjective bonds. The subject of otherness is discussed in various ways in the New Testament in the teachings of Jesus as well as in those of St. Paul. The golden rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you—is a strong ethical and political axiom that underscores intersubjective relations. Jesus ordered his disciples to love one another and do good to all people (John 14:12). In several New Testament passages, Paul exhorted some of his readers to build up one another, encourage one another, and love one another (Romans 14, Galatians 6:1–5, Ephesians 4:25–32). In one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament, the apostle commanded people to subject themselves to one another, and specifically called on people in positions of power to treat their subjects well (Ephesians 5:21–6:9). Both Jesus and Paul invited people to relate to one another in an intentional and responsible manner.⁷⁵ The leaders who recognize and respect the subjectivity of others ought to practice this ethic of love. Such a practice would have profound implications for the understanding and deployment of power.

First, political leaders ought to be open to other people. Although people may inhabit the same political space or share the same discursive community, it is still good for them to remember that each person they

encounter is a different person. Each meeting is a meeting of two potentialities, and it is best to come to that encounter with an open mind. Tillich has argued: "One never knows *a priori* what the outcome of an encounter of power with power will be. If one judges such an encounter according to previous power proportions, one is necessarily unjust, even if one is legally right."⁷⁶ Several things should be emphasized here. One has to be open to what may come from another person who carries the *imago dei*. Such openness involves listening to the other person to receive a word that may judge and offer forgiveness for past wrongs. Beyond forgiveness for past wrongs, the other could also offer his or her promise of support. It is important that one remain open to receive another's teaching and, above all, his or her love. Similarly, in the realm of politics, one ought to be open to other ways of configuring the state and of making the state function. One of the reasons why things have not worked in the postcolonial state is the fact that the leaders have not listened to other people, but instead chosen to dictate their own political agendas to the people. This monopoly of power has not left any room for new and different ideas. At the social level, openness includes openness to different groups, whether these differences are of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

Second, thinking of power as an intersubjective experience calls on people to practice hospitality. I use hospitality here to include welcoming others, providing for the needs of others, and listening to their opinions and making them feel at home even if their perspectives differ from yours. This grants space and value to their ideas, values, goals, dreams, and visions; indeed to all those things they most need in order to actualize their power. All people are invited to extend such hospitality not only to those who make up one's discursive field, but also to strangers and people whose worldview one may not share. Hospitality in this sense implies welcoming someone unknown and demonstrating a profound willingness to listen to and learn from them. Sometimes the stranger is vulnerable precisely because of the state of being a stranger.⁷⁷

If, as I have suggested, intersubjectivity also implies the practice of hospitality, one ought to be careful not to allow it to become an exercise in egoism. If people bring their needs to one's doorstep only to have the individual who offers help use the occasion to consolidate himself or herself as the center of activity and as a supergenerous person who distributes hospitality and power from his or her own resources, then they might assume the power roles that have led to the collapse of political community in Africa. Instead, hospitality describes a definite moral perspective, which in political life would allow the other to speak on his or her terms. What is articulated by the other who speaks on his or her own terms might call into question "my egoism, requiring me to take into account another

center of meaning and valuation, another orientation [into] the world, in making my own decisions and in carrying out my own actions.”⁷⁸

Third, an intersubjective perspective on power calls for a life of dialogue. Members of the Christian church need to emphasize that power functions well not only when people subject themselves to authorities but also when people carry out a fruitful dialogue with their leaders on the issues that concerns all of them. By “dialogue” I here refer to a discussion of the political vision of the leaders for the people they lead that is at once critical and moves both ways. It ought to include all issues relevant to the life of the commonwealth and its members. Such a dialogue stands a good chance of being fruitful if it is open and free from intimidation. All members of the community deserve some access to the instruments that will encourage and facilitate dialogue. For a long time, political leaders in Africa have encouraged the kind of dialogue that works in only one direction and that maintains the continuum of subjection, namely, that religious groups have to pray for leaders. Dialogue need not serve as an excuse to dictate to the public the ambitions of the elites and those in power; rather, it should invite leaders to empower members of the political community to participate actively in shaping and carrying out state policy. Carrying out such a dialogue recognizes that God has given us power to use in serving others. Dialogue between two individuals is something that one could conceive of easily; but dialogue in society, perhaps mediated by different structures that are at times inimical to dialogue, might be harder to imagine. This should not deter politicians from engaging in dialogue with those they serve. The leaders have a responsibility to carry on a dialogue in good faith, demonstrate a willingness to consider counterproposals seriously, and carry out those proposals if that is the consensus of the population.

Leaders should use their power to promote justice

Tillich’s did not offer a simple definition of justice. His definition derived in part from the fragments of Parmenides’ and Heraclitus’s understanding of the logos, the laws of nature and of the city. Plato believed that justice united the individual and his or her social group. This basic belief is what later underpinned the formulation and administration of Roman law. Although he did not spell it out, Tillich thought that the ideas presented by the Hebrew prophets contained notions of justice that could be useful in governing society. He also suggested some principles that could shape our understanding of justice. The first principle was adequacy. The laws had to be adequate in form and content.⁷⁹ Most African constitutions have provisions for social justice and the respect of all human rights, but these have never been followed. It is time that politicians looked at the rhetoric

of their own governing instruments and implemented the changes they have taken an oath to defend. The second principle is equality before the law. In Plato's *Republic*, equality did not extend to slaves. One might add that this was once the case in the United States as well, but the slaves were able to mount their struggle for equality before the law and eventually claim it. All people deserve to be treated equally because of their potential for rationality. This might seem today to be an absolutist position that grounds equality solely on the criterion of rationality, but what was important for Tillich was his view that all people could reflect, decide, and participate responsibly in the exercise of justice, which for Tillich was grounded in the power of being. Human communities violate justice when they deny other people the opportunity to participate in the deliberations and exercise of acts of justice, and instead treat them as objects.⁸⁰ Thus, in Africa, the marginalization of people, their reduction to objects, and the implementation of policies that disregard the views of the public on matters and processes of governance constitute injustice.

What, then, would be levels of justice in a society? Tillich argued that justice is a claim (vocal or silent) that is raised on the grounds of the power of being. Thus, any suppression of the actualization of being was injustice.⁸¹ Tillich also mentioned other forms of justice such as distributive and proportional justice—distributive, attributive, and retributive—which gave to all proportionally what they deserved. He also referred to “transforming and creative justice.”⁸² Creative justice deals with the “intrinsic claim for justice in being,” and “[It] is fulfillment within the unity of universal fulfillment . . . [and] the religious symbol for this is the ‘kingdom’ [or reign] of God.”⁸³ Tillich referred to the classic formulation of the reign of God in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as an example of justice. The just are the ones who keep the laws of God and the ones who practice the grace that forgives and unites.

Although, as Tillich pointed out, power has compulsory elements, I am convinced that it is immoral for the state to oppress people. In Tillich's view, the totalitarian state dehumanized people, dissolved their power of being, and rejected their intrinsic claims to self worth.⁸⁴ In a systematic manner, it denied the peoples' intrinsic claims to power and justice. This constituted a denial of humanity. Structures that used compulsion negatively become weakened, and “the unacknowledged, justified claims although suppressed, do not disappear.”⁸⁵ It may be almost wishful thinking to believe that any claims of justice remain in many of countries in Africa today. However, they do, even if they have been silenced for now.

Aware that this call for justice may not be relevant if it is spelled out in mainly theological language, Tillich proposed an ethical approach. Justice should be reflected in personal encounters in which a person encountered

an other—a “thou” who acts like a wall and who demands recognition as an ego. “Man [sic] can refuse to listen to the intrinsic claim of the other one. He can disregard his demand for justice. He can remove or use him. He can try to transform him into a manageable object, a thing, a tool. But in doing so he meets the resistance of him who has the claim to be acknowledged as an ego.”⁸⁶ The master who treats a slave as a thing also endangers himself. The abuse, marginalization, and decimation of people and the disruption of meaningful existence for a majority have also affected the few who have perpetrated this violence. This explains why most dictators cannot live in their own countries when they are out of power. The wealth they have hoarded haunts them; they can only spend that money when they are away from home, and they live with a guilty conscience.

The quest for justice also involves checking nationalist sentiments. Such sentiments often are a manifestation of the will to power, which often gets out of hand.⁸⁷ In addition to nationalism, capitalism is open to the temptation to overreach its power and become demonic. It is this belief that unchecked power, in the form of either nationalism or capitalism, could lead to a certain will to power, that Tillich interpreted as a spiritual estrangement resulting from the desire for self-assertion—a desire that ignored other people and made the self the center of power as well as of all other things.⁸⁸ This constituted a refusal to accept human finitude, especially one’s own finitude. This refusal to recognize finitude has robbed African countries of their potential. What Fanon termed the national bourgeoisie has implemented a capitalist system that has catered only to the needs of the few people who themselves have siphoned much wealth from their countries and stashed it in foreign banks. The nationalism of the Western countries where this money has been stashed has also blinded their leaders to the pursuit of justice; they take no steps to ensure that money is returned to the countries from where it was stolen.

Justice has to take place in centers of power, through legitimate authority, and in social institutions. Power becomes problematic at the personal and social level when certain individuals ignore principles of justice and promote their self-actualization for personal gain. It is on this issue that the bulk of the literature on power and authority in Africa by scholars such as Robert Jackson, Carl G. Roseberg, Jean-François Bayart, Achille Mbembe, Patrick Chabal, Mahmood Mamdani and others has rightly focused.⁸⁹ The elite groups have indeed carried out self-actualization for their own purposes and have employed force and compulsion to destroy justice in the postcolonial state.⁹⁰

According to Tillich, force was the strength and influence an individual had, and the ability to use it to affect others to move or change their

behavior.⁹¹ Force in this sense is persuasive and has nothing to do with the brute force that has been demonstrated by political elites and the violence that has consumed many lives in Africa. However, Tillich argued that when force and compulsion were used, one was no longer exercising power. It might be necessary to use force and compulsion to overcome the abuses of power, but for Tillich power was none of these two. "Power needs compulsion. But its use of compulsion is only effective if it is an expression of the actual power relation."⁹² If compulsion is part of power, how can such power be related to love, since Tillich had previously argued that power was related to love because love conquered nonbeing and was a foundation for power.⁹³ Martin Luther called compulsion the work of love. Luther's agenda was dualistic because he regarded compulsion and force as one side of love, and sweetness, self-surrender and mercy as the other. These were the proper works of love, while bitterness, killing, and condemnation were the strange part of love. The proper work of love was charity and forgiveness, and it couldn't be done through judging and punishing.⁹⁴ One has to unite power and compulsion to destroy what is against love. The question then is, how does this work out? How does one put power, compulsion, and love together?

Tillich argued that justice was what was needed to bring them together.⁹⁵ He defined the reality of the community in several instances as a relationship to justice.⁹⁶ The practice of justice today calls for a genuine respect of persons. Tillich argued that each culture need not follow a golden rule but had instead to find something in its culture that would enable the preservation of its society, because no society could merely point to some natural law to justify its existence. The practice and content of justice could only be adequately understood and expressed if people thought of justice in terms of the functions of creative justice: listening, giving, and forgiving.⁹⁷ Thus, practicing justice called for a new kind of dialogue. Theologically, this should remind us of the claim made by Abraham Joshua Heschel that the prophets were not concerned primarily with "the mysteries of heaven, the glories of eternity, but the blights of society, the affairs of the market place."⁹⁸

Postcolonial leaders have not listened to their constituencies and have failed to provide the freedom and social amenities they promised at independence. In order to transform the postcolonial state, some countries have tackled the third function of creative justice, forgiveness, which has created a basis for political negotiation and peaceful coexistence in postapartheid South Africa. This is a welcome development, one that has saved that country. It could change the fate of many countries in the rest of Africa if they initiated a serious dialogue to end the abuse of power. The

process that leads to forgiveness cannot be construed as a simple one that involves putting in place a set of well-defined proposals and expecting to secure an agreement easily and give the troubled states a new lease of life. The process might be a lot more circular than linear and has to be choreographed as a difficult dance that involves different movements and many dancers, who bring different styles. Such a process requires patience, consideration, and tolerance. In that process, people ought to ask serious questions about the idea and process of forgiveness itself. They need to ask what it means to forgive, who benefits, and to what extent the fruits of forgiveness will benefit the entire community and lead to a genuine transformation of the notion of polis and the demos.

Wole Soyinka has raised the question of forgiveness by asking: "Would the Truth and Reconciliation ethic have been applicable, even thinkable in post-Acheampong Ghana? In post-Mobutu Zaire? Will it be adaptable in post-Abacha Nigeria?"⁹⁹ Soyinka has bewailed the fact that the destruction and abuse of people on the African continent continually remind us of the wrongs of the past. "The ancient slave stockades do not seem ever to have vanished; they appear more to have expanded, occupying indiscriminate spaces that often appear contingent with national boundaries."¹⁰⁰ He has argued that the voice of memory, which seeks a catharsis, objects to amnesia although it remains amenable to closure. The implication here is that in the pursuit of justice we cannot allow amnesia to sweep under the rug conversations on the nature and abuse of power, which has balkanized the continent through its politics of greed and left it impotent. It would be a misuse of religion and of the nature of the divine being to avoid giving an account of what has happened in the past in the name of forgiveness, even though in a world of carnage and destruction forgiveness and reconciliation offer a much more fruitful path into the future.

Social relations may offer a context for justice if rulers use power structures to enforce the law, which may sometimes demand compulsion. According to Tillich, if they have to use compulsion, they must do so to provide justice for all people because the task of those in power is to provide justice for the whole group and not for themselves alone.¹⁰¹ The ruling class received acknowledgement from the group, which could only be understood from the perspectives of eros and *philia*. Their role was to promote communal self-affirmation: "The spirit of the group is expressed in all its utterances, in its laws and institutions, in its symbols and myths, in its ethical and cultural forms. The ruling class normally represents it. And this very fact is perhaps the most solid foundation of their power."¹⁰² From this analysis it is clear that in the African continent, the ruling classes have failed to live up to the idea of self-affirmation of the political community. If the political communities' laws have to be changed frequently to allow

particular individuals to stay in power or get away with murder and theft, then the spirits of their polis no longer live in their laws.¹⁰³

Political power should be employed to promote freedom

The religious and theological views of power that I have discussed offer an opportunity to argue that theological perspectives grounded in the Christian monotheistic tradition, which articulates the theme of suffering, reject domination. The themes of monotheism and a suffering God offer what Hegel called “shapes of freedom.” Achille Mbembe has argued that the divine libido, as a monotheistic expression, communicates sensual delights, suffering, unhappiness, and physical degeneration. Mbembe outlines the phantasm of power involved in the act of divine possession expressed in the idea of salvation.¹⁰⁴ God’s phallus, represented in the monotheistic model as a phantasm, involves five ideals: primacy, totalization, monopoly, omnipotence, and ultimacy. This formulation rules out the relativity of truth. By this, Mbembe means that other perspectives cannot be considered.¹⁰⁵ Because the monotheistic model, in the course of history, has also become synonymous with Western civilization, the spread of the one necessarily resulted from the spread of the conquering other. Monotheistic ideals according to this account have created a totalizing culture.

I am interested instead in the idea of power that emerges from Mbembe’s interpretation. An alternative reading could enable us to rethink and recast the monotheistic tradition from its tendency toward domination to one of liberation. I would like to push the debate further because we are dealing not merely with God’s phallus, which in its classic formulation could be considered redemptive (even though religious traditions have ignored female symbols for a long time), but also with the transformation of the phallus into a particular gender (the male gender) and specific power configurations and relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. I assert that this transformation of the idea of God’s phallus has robbed it of its potential and has altered the dynamics of power in African society.

In many African countries, ideas of power reflect a totalizing tendency borrowed from monotheistic ideals that talk of the divine being in superlatives. Such a theology indicates that God (and thus, divine power) is always primary, totalizing, monopolistic, omnipotent, and ultimate. This mode of thinking about divinity, which seems to be the norm in many traditions, often fails to help because it conjures up a magical sense of divine power that frequently ignores the gentle, suffering, and loving nature of God (reflected in Easter and its surrounding symbols). One must insist that no conception of divine power is complete if it ignores the reality of a suffering God. While I neither share the view that suffering always has an element of divine

ordering to it nor believe in the oversimplification of redemptive suffering, one cannot ignore the symbolism of the image of a suffering God. That image is important because it gives us a holistic understanding of the mystery of divine power and holds promise in any attempt to recover human power that has been subjected to the whims of certain individuals and the violence of the almighty state.

Hegel, through his speculative philosophy, was one of the modern philosophers to ponder this aspect of divine power as seen through God's weakness, particularly the submission of God to suffering and death.¹⁰⁶ In *Faith and Knowledge*, where we first encounter the statement "God is dead," Hegel was not merely stating what Nietzsche stated later, that "the culture of the day has killed God."¹⁰⁷ Hegel's purpose was to argue for a philosophy of freedom by proposing an absolute Passion-speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday. Hegel argued that what in the historic Good Friday was seen as a defeat could be interpreted in a different light because through that event, the highest totality reached resurrection from this harshness to attain its most serene shape of freedom. In other words, religion has to rise out of the cultural atheism that has proclaimed the death of God. Hegel took the phrase "God is dead" from a Lutheran hymn by Johannes Rist written around the year 1641. In describing the burial of Jesus, Rist says, "O great distress, God himself lies dead. On the cross he died, and by so doing he has won for us the realm of heaven."¹⁰⁸ Hegel then recovered that expression to speak of new possibilities for freedoms that come from the view that Jesus died and was resurrected.¹⁰⁹

Mbembe relates phantasm and passion to the idea of the phallus and its expression in the politics of domination in imperial Christianity. Hegel saw in the passion of Jesus an opening into freedom. Thus, one could see primacy in tandem with forsakenness; freedom, according to Hegel, emerges from the resurrection—that is, after the experience of humility. According to Hegel, the picture that emerges, contrary to the monotheistic ideals of monopoly, omnipotence, and ultimacy, is the most serene shape of freedom. The idea of God's suffering gives us a different conception of power than that which currently prevails in Africa. Theologians could help people think about the redemptive nature of God's power in Africa as a way of divesting human power from the absoluteness attributed to it and encourage them to adopt instead a relational model that highlights love and freedom. Conversion amounts to nothing if it is not conversion to love and freedom.

Peter Hodgson appropriates Hegel's dialectic but departs from the intellectual legacy of Western theology, which is grounded in the metaphysics of St. Augustine and St. Thomas that emphasizes "memory, knowledge, and will." He adopts a model that allows one to think of God as appearing in

three modes: God as the one, God as love, and God as freedom. "God is a continuing (con)figuring process, which with regard to essence is eternally complete and self-constituting, but with regard to existence is eternally unfinished and open to otherness, difference. What is configured is in the first instance the matrix of ideal self-relations that comprise the abstract subjectivity of God; and in the second instance, the matrix of real spatiotemporal relations that make up the world in which we live and through which God becomes a concrete, spiritual, existent God. With respect to the latter, God is increased or diminished by what actually happens in the world."¹¹⁰

In this model, God is one, God is love, and God is freedom. For our purpose here however, the key idea is that God is open to otherness and difference. The idea that God could be thought of as unfinished and open to otherness and difference may be uncomfortable for those who want to impose totality. But what Africa needs is not a new totality, but rather the inexorable emergence of a freedom grounded in love that reflects divine presence, a presence that we cannot diminish, even though spatiotemporal relations have distorted the divine image. The process of conversion employs the metaphor of resurrection to underscore the fact that the cross does not eliminate divine presence. In order to understand divine presence fully, one has to think of the entire process of incarnation (*Menschwerdung Gottes*)¹¹¹ as the humanization of divinity and the experience of suffering, and not merely as the idea of primacy and totality, because "its telos is to become a communal and world-transforming embodiment."¹¹² It is for this reason that we can echo Hegel and argue that out of the ruins of a distinctly new form of cultural atheism in a religion-infested Africa, Christians have an obligation to proclaim the suffering and the death of God so that they can also proclaim the death of human totality, which has impoverished the idea of power in a drastic manner. It is imperative then that we rethink power and the nature of power in light of the potential of God's phallus.

The dynamics of power requires a new theology of the future

Political theologies, theologies of hope, liberation theologies, theologies of reconstruction, and the emerging postcolonial theologies all share a common concern because they focus on the human and environmental conditions on this planet in the here and now. In doing so, these theologies offer a utopian vision for a humanity that lives in a fallen world and wrestles with human finitude. At best, these theologies offer only a glimpse into new possibilities that could be employed to transform human relations, reconstruct the present, and construct models for a future community of justice. While these possibilities are grounded in the belief that divine power is and has always been operational in the

human community because of the incarnation of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit, human agency remains a central component of this utopian project. In light of this, every social interaction and activity that reconstructs public discourse and reforms the aporias of power is an eschatological project.

Eschatology and the future cannot be pushed to some distant date, but should be seen as an on-going praxis that invites all believers to walk with one another and stand in solidarity with all who suffer marginalization and dehumanization. Therefore, an eschatology that passes the Christological test ought to enquire about what individuals have done and are doing for the “least of these,” as Jesus stated in the eschatological discourse in Matthew 25. In theological language, this is often called realized eschatology. It is an eschatology that asks, what are the resources of power that lay the grounds for hope now? It also establishes the basis for a community to succeed the community that has been devastated by the neopatrimonial state. An eschatological imagination that takes people seriously needs to provide resources for them to jettison abusive power structures. One must embrace an eschatological vision that affirms life in the wake of death, or in the wake of the impending death of nearly 25 million Africans who are living with HIV/AIDS (unless humankind has a new miracle through the discovery of new forms of therapy that could reverse the deadly course of the virus).¹¹³ The future, in theological terms, is now. What happens now in the intersubjective world empowers people to experience the fullness of life here on Earth.

Christian theology in Africa has a new imperative to bring new reflection to bear on political power in Africa today. Churches in Africa now have the opportunity to engage with political leaders, empower the weak, and take a stand against the abuse of power, which has led to crisis and to the neglect of the state and of its most vulnerable members. In cultivating such an understanding of power, Christian churches will have to provide models of empowerment as alternatives to the abuse of power by post-colonial politicians. Christian churches ought to work toward a new *kairos*, where political power and authority are a gift and blessing to the political community, not a curse and tool of domination and marginalization.

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CONCLUSION

BEYOND PESSIMISM TO OPTIMISM: IN LOVE WITH AFRICA

The true development of human beings involves much more than mere economic growth. At its heart there must be a sense of empowerment and inner fulfillment. This alone will ensure that human and cultural values remain paramount in a world where political leadership is often synonymous with tyranny and the rule of a narrow elite. The people's participation in social and political transformation is the central issue of our time. This can only be achieved through the establishment of societies which place human worth above power, and liberation above control.

Aung San Suu Kyi¹

Africans seeking transformation that would move beyond pessimism to optimism ought to live in love with Africa. I have argued that the African crisis has resulted from political practices that have eliminated political participation, created a closed society, encouraged a culture of despoliation and violence, and resulted in economic stagnation. Independence offered to African leaders a fresh start and an opportunity to articulate a new political vision and participatory politics, but the leaders maintained a two-tier society that favored some and marginalized others.

I have discussed recovery projects such as structural adjustment, democracy, civil society, and the African Renaissance and have proposed the recovery of intersubjective relations as a way of reconfiguring social and political relations. I have offered a theological critique of power, arguing that from a religious and theological perspective, power is derivative and should be used to empower members of the political community to promote human dignity. In order for Africans to undo the destruction of the patrimonial state and rebuild the postcolony, they have to strive to implement

ubuntu (which means “humanity,” or “humanness”) values and love for one another in their political praxis.

African community values are expressed in different ways. *Ubuntu* offers one way of articulating community values that must be recovered to build a viable society.² The concept *ubuntu* prioritizes human and social relationships without jettisoning the individual dimensions of human life. Descriptions of this concept vary among African scholars. The Zulu expression “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,” which means, “a person is a person through persons,” has been articulated in a number of expressions in different parts of the continent. Other popular sayings include “I am because we are” and “It takes a village to raise a child.”

Bénézet Bujo describes another understanding of this concept when he states:

The human being does not become human by *cogito* (thinking) but by *relatio* (relationship) and *cognation* (kinship). The fundamental principle in this ethics is not *cogito ergo sum* (I think, so I am), but rather, *cognatus sum ergo sum* (I am related, so I am). Somebody living far from any *cognatio* will never reach the *cogito*. Without communal relationship one can neither find his or her identity nor learn how to think. Self-awareness presupposes somebody opposite to you in human form.³

While this reflects aspects of *ubuntu*, Bujo places the weight of his argument on the communitarian dimension of identity and runs the risk of eclipsing the thinking dimension in African thought. Far from prescribing mainly a communitarian thesis (as it is generally perceived to do and which it does very well), *ubuntu* is a loaded concept that invites active participation in the promotion of the well-being of all members of the community at all levels through intersubjective engagements. It is important to see *ubuntu* as a concept and as an articulation of a broad personal and social vision grounded on the person and the community.

As an ethical idea, *ubuntu* underscores the anthropological focus on moral life in any person who is part of a community with distinct values. This position prioritizes the human person and the human community because human beings are more important than conceptual phenomena such as religion, philosophy, and other sciences. If *ubuntu* prioritizes the person, and I believe it does, then it places value on human experience and life. To claim that human life is important is to accept that humans have a basic desire and right to thrive and not merely to struggle to survive, as many do in Africa. Moral values ought to enable all members of the community to experience well-being. As they are intersubjective, moral values ought to start with simple practices, such as showing mutual respect. Beyond respect, acts of

caring, compassion, and the delegation of responsibility could enable individuals and the community to experience well-being.⁴

One cannot show concern for others and then abandon one's own family. I agree with Bujo that the appropriation of modernity in the African context has led some people to selfishly use their wealth to acquire consumer goods, neglecting members of their own community in the process.⁵ Today, many Africans are in this position, because some members of the extended family expect more and more from the successful members of the family. Many African elites have resorted to corruption to meet the needs of the large extended family that depends on them.

The idea of *ubuntu* includes an anthropological vision that transcends family, village, ethnic, or regional trappings and is antithesis of the selfishness. Embedded in the idea of *ubuntu* is the preferential prioritization of another person, regardless of family of origin, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, or political views. Such a prioritization of a human other, which may be inherent in an ethnic community or a particular group of people, rises above the particular without destroying that particularity. The values that spell respect for another human being regardless of ethnic origin (as is implied by *ubuntu*), offer Africans an opportunity to construct a national identity and renew the structures of their society. The recovery of *ubuntu* values is crucial for political reconstruction. John W. de Gruchy has argued:

[*ubuntu*] does not imply the denial of individuals or individual political rights. On the contrary, a respect for each person as an individual is fundamental. But it is very different from possessive individualism. The emphasis is on human sociality, on inter-personal relations, on the need which each person has for others in order to be herself or himself. This is the root of African humanism, and it relates well to biblical anthropology, Trinitarian theology and the idea of Christian community.⁶

In recovering *ubuntu* values, African communities have to present a bold national agenda. However, they ought to be careful that such an agenda does not destroy pluralism; instead, it should enable individuals and communities to strive toward the kind of society that would promote respect, care, and responsibility for one another.

Ubuntu values imply that the members of the political community are the ones who ought to determine who has authority as well as the limits of that authority. Dictators who have installed themselves for life violate the *ubuntu* spirit because in doing so, they destroy the self-determination of the people. Augustine Shutte has argued: “[self-determination] makes us persons, and this is the capacity that must develop and flourish if we are to grow as persons. An authority imposed on us from outside or above would

contradict and prevent this.”⁷ Recovery of the sociopolitical dimension of life in Africa will go well if people are given the opportunity to determine who has earned the right to exercise legitimate authority over them.

In addition to *ubuntu*, love needs to become a basis for a new political praxis. It is crucial that love, which is a rational activity, be deployed to serve the goals of the political community. In the *Symposium*, the physician Eryximachus states that love empowers every scientific or creative endeavor. Agathon, echoing Eryximachus, makes our point when he says that love is the genius behind poetic and creative arts. Love is the source of valor, archery, healing, divination, and governance. It terminates estrangement and restores friendship.

I am particularly intrigued by the idea that love lies behind the practice of governance. What can we make of this claim? It is clearly wrong to read this view as an indication that some people love governance. I assume that in the *Symposium*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic*, love is not merely the love of something, but is the ground for and basis of a particular experience and action.⁸ Love with all its passions then becomes the driving force behind many activities, including public life. The lovers in Plato’s dialogues are not the only ones who give us the impression that love could be used to motivate public life and governance.

Saint Augustine, who like Plato believed in ideal forms, stated that love was central to the political community. He developed this idea by sketching and distinguishing between the heavenly and earthly city. Augustine thought that Jerusalem was the ideal city. It was the City of God, which he contrasted with the earthly city, whose first political leader was Cain. People in the earthly city spent their time dreaming of the heavenly city and worked very hard to make it as good as the heavenly one. Therefore, they worked hard to bring into the earthly city such virtues as love and friendship. Augustine thought that love and friendship were the foundation of social life:

For a state is neither founded nor preserved perfectly save in foundation and by the bond of faith and of firm concord when the highest common good is loved by all, and this highest and truest thing is God; when, too, men love one another in God with absolute sincerity since they love one another for his sake from whom they cannot hide the real character of their love.⁹

Augustine thought that God was the highest good; for that reason, he argued, people should love God. He admonished people to love one another for the sake of God. In *The City of God*, Augustine also advised rulers to “serve one another in love: superiors with a loyal care: subjects by their obedience.”¹⁰ He did not give up on an earthly city in his quest for the ideal city in heaven.

The admonishment to love all, serve in humility, and cultivate friendships was intended to make earthly life as pleasing as possible.

In separate instructions, Augustine told rulers to carry out their duty with such grace that their followers would obey them with pleasure.¹¹ He argued that leaders ought to remember that they too were human and that they had weaknesses. They needed to control their desires, practice justice and mercy, and execute the law with love and kindness.¹² Augustine saw governance as a service. Although Augustine had some good ideas about governance, he was not always what one would today call a democrat. He accepted monarchy, arguing that God chose David to rule as king. On the other hand, he also suggested that people could select their leaders directly themselves. He pointed out that in a state where the leaders were not good, the people could take over the responsibility of choosing leaders and set up a monarchy or oligarchy of the best.¹³ One cannot, however, rush to argue that in this Augustine anticipated Marx, because it is likely that Augustine had oligarchy in mind.

Africans striving to reconstruct their societies would do well to learn a lesson from Augustine and develop an abiding love for Africa. I am not referring to love for fatherland or motherland, which could lead to a radical nationalism and reckless wars caused by people who want to show how much they love their fatherland. What I mean is a moral ethos that is expressed in love for others, for the land, and for the institutions of their states. These institutions are not frozen in time, but are dynamic and have to reflect the complex interplay between the local and global. A future agenda does not have to rehash the opposition of “tradition vs. modernization” but should rather negotiate the human experience in a critical dialogue with the past, present, and the future.

The practice of such love calls on Africans to think beyond racist stereotypes and negative media images in order to renew their love for Africa as a human and political praxis. Such love is not devoid of its sentimental quality; it could be used to motivate people to show a new appreciation for fatherland or motherland. Such sentiments serve as a basis to appreciate the natural beauty of Africa’s environment. A sentimental attachment to Africa would make people cultivate, nurture, guard, enjoy, and protect that beauty from abuse and despoliation.

The object of love should also include fellow Africans. Africans need to extend their love to people from other parts of the world too, but it is important that they do not lose sight of their overwhelming obligation to love other Africans: their relatives, colleagues, and fellow politicians. Love could motivate them to see each other as individuals—people with names, identities, histories, and social location—and as partners in development. They cannot love African institutions and traditions if they do not love the

people who have created those institutions and who have to carry those traditions forward. If Africans see love as praxis, they have a responsibility to engage in loving social practices that promote the common good.

There is a temptation here against which people need to guard. It is important for members of the political community to work with the realization that love for other people does not depend on one's social location and anticipation of love in return. People ought to engage in social practices that are loving because they love and respect people as people. The giving and receiving of unconditional love could have a powerful impact on social practices that promote the common good. To see love as a praxis is to open the possibility of tapping into the rich reservoir of human creativity and desire and employing them in political life.

Regarding love as an integral part of one's political praxis demands several things from members of the political community.

First, love invites Africans to listen to one another. People have been traumatized through direct and indirect acts of violence. The mental and verbal abuse of people by government officers has forced them into a state of fear and anxiety. African leaders need to start listening to their people, and the people ought to listen to each other, in a new way so that they can hear each other tell stories about their lives, their struggles, their hopes, and their visions. The ordinary people, peasants, workers, mothers, and youths who experience hardship have something to say. Their leaders cannot assume that they know the needs of the young people growing up in Africa today. In order to understand the needs and yearnings of African youths, the leaders ought to listen to them and hear them speak about their experiences in their own voices.

If African leaders listen to their people, they will hear alternative visions from the catastrophic projects that they have imposed on them. When I visit and talk with people in Cameroon, they invariably share their dreams of living in a free society where the gendarmes and police will not always stop them and demand papers. It does not immediately occur to the individuals who bear the brunt of abuse, to think in terms of systemic violence. Thus, they first blame the perpetrators, and only later the system these perpetrators represent. Although members of the public do not use the vocabulary of specialists when they talk about the absence of freedom, they know that law enforcement officers who are hired to protect them often brutalize many people. The leaders have a responsibility to listen to these people, understand their agony, and take steps to bring justice to them.

If leaders listen, they will also hear people talk of their dreams to start a business. But the individuals who aspire to start a business often also complain that they do not have the "power" to do so. By this, they do not mean that they cannot do the work. Rather, they complain that state officials

repeatedly hinder their efforts to establish a business by imposing bureaucratic bottlenecks that make it difficult to get the business permits and licenses. People who succeed in acquiring a permit often face prohibitively high taxes and constant demands for bribes from officials who appear frequently to carry out inspections without any warrants.

The one area about which people experience the most frustration is the transport business, where entrepreneurs face many difficulties. Mr. Tamngwa,¹⁴ a man in the Northwest Province who had a transport business in the towns of Ndu, Nso, Bamenda, and Douala, told me that the transport business in Cameroon reflects everything that is wrong with the society. Only a few people can afford to buy, license, and insure new vehicles, so most people start transport businesses by importing used vehicles from Europe. But if an individual imports a vehicle, he or she needs to be prepared to bribe custom officers at the port when the vehicle arrives. Even offering bribes does not guarantee the individual that he or she will receive the vehicle intact or that it will be operable, since people believe that thieves posing as employees of the port authority often remove parts from vehicles when they arrive.

Business people who surmount these difficulties and start a transport business tell difficult stories about the licensing process. Here again, the entrepreneurs say they often have to bribe several people before they can obtain the required papers. Once they have won this stage of the battle, they face a problem that remains every transporter's nightmare and demonstrates a lack of love for people and country: the police and gendarme checkpoints. The Cameroonian police and gendarmes are notorious for mounting roadblocks and checkpoints, which they call "control," purportedly to check motor vehicle papers. Even when the operators in fact have all the required papers, both police and gendarmes still extort bribes from the drivers. When a driver sets out from one town to another, he or she needs to carry enough change to bribe the police and gendarmes at all the checkpoints.

My informant also told me that entrepreneurs have to deal with the dishonesty of the drivers they hire to operate their vehicles, especially township taxi drivers. Most entrepreneurs prefer to pay the drivers a monthly salary. However, the taxi driver's union and the drivers prefer that the owners agree with them on a daily sum. Most drivers work only on the condition that they will deliver to the owner of the taxi a fixed sum of money everyday, regardless of the amount of money they make for the day. This makes it seem as if the driver has leased the vehicle for the day. This contractual arrangement works to the advantage of the driver in most cases. The drivers can earn more than the required amount, but only turn in what they have agreed to turn in. This is not good business practice.

The ramifications of such business practices become clear when we multiply these stories. A picture begins to emerge of a society locked in corruption and dishonesty. One of the partners of Vatican Enterprises, which operates vehicles from Bamenda to different parts of Cameroon, told me that he preferred working with an agency, a corporate entity that is licensed to run transport businesses, because if he tried to work alone he would not be able to survive financially. Leaders who love their people ought to listen to such stories and regulate the industry, eliminate corruption, encourage fair business practices and restore trust.

Political leaders ought to listen to parents tell stories about negotiating admission for their children into schools. Many parents complain that they have to bribe school officials to admit their children into government secondary schools, which are supposed to be free. They have to pay bribes to register their children for competitive examinations into the public service and to get them admitted into professional schools. When you ask parents why they do this, they tell you that they love their children and want them to have a good future. As parents, they believe they owe it to their children to do all they can to get them into the right professional schools, even if it means giving bribes. They are clearly motivated by love, but I must emphasize that this type of love will not take Africans out of the present crisis. The love that will rescue society has to contribute to a position where all people are equal under the law.

When leaders listen to ordinary people tell their stories, they will also listen to families, quarters, villages, ethnic groups, or parts of a political district and a political community. Hearing individual stories is only a prelude to hearing the stories of larger political communities. Love for a district or any larger political constituency that pays no regard to individuals is abstract love. While such love may be necessary when we are thinking of large communities, it does not have to replace concern for the individuals—the women, men, and children of Africa.

Second, a spirit of love has to cultivate dialogue with the people. Such a dialogue could take place at all levels of society and give people an opportunity to reflect honestly on difficult issues, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, political corruption, fiscal mismanagement, democracy, the economy, human rights, and gender disparity. A dialogue that is motivated by love cannot merely be an information session where politicians read and explain the decrees of the head of state. It has to foster an open critical engagement with what is wrong with the state. Political leaders cannot claim that they alone understand the crisis that their communities face. The formation of policy on HIV/AIDS must involve people living with AIDS, activists, and medical experts. The outcome of dialogue must ensure that all policies and treatment options are based on a spirit of love and dignity.

Third, love ought to translate into a working relationship with the people. It is the responsibility of leaders to establish a working relationship with the people at all levels. At the local level, authorities ought to realize that their job is to work with the people on the most pressing needs of the community, such as healthcare, education, and good drinking water. It is necessary that leaders give people the opportunity to come up with local initiatives and that they support these initiatives by committing resources to these projects. Leaders need to make sure that there is adequate funding for worthy projects and that the funds are accounted for.

In working with people, leaders at all levels ought to set an example for people to follow. One area in which leaders could set good example is political corruption. If the local leaders, such as school principals, municipal authorities, divisional officers, and local law enforcement groups, all decide to work together to eliminate corruption within their district, political leaders ought to highlight this and give them support by using the system to punish those who engage in corruption.

A good working relationship with the people would be strengthened if the leaders improved their communication with the people. Take the case of the senior divisional officer in Cameroon who is appointed to serve in an area where the people speak, say, French (one of the major official languages), and he does not speak that language. What can this official do in order to have a dialogue with the people? He or she could learn one of the official languages specific to the area (usually French or English). This often does not happen, and so there are officials working in one area who do not speak the major official language of the people they are supposed to work with. Some of the administrators do not see this as a problem, because they are mainly career administrators who are posted to a division to administer ministerial orders and presidential decrees: a large part of their function is to attend meetings and tell the people the program of the head of state or read messages from him. This makes local administration a top-down affair, lacking any dialogue with the locals. If leaders want to serve their people, they would do well to communicate in a language that the people understand.

A remedy to this situation might involve rethinking political decentralization, which means, "taking the administration nearer to the people." If decentralization is to mean anything, it is important that it includes the decentralization of power by creating a system through which the people in each locality will elect their own divisional and provincial administrators. Those who campaign for these offices and are elected might just love the people enough to listen to them, talk with them in a language they understand, and be ready to work with them to set the priorities of the district and province.

This step will move love away from a one-dimensional and sentimental trajectory that administrators develop toward the president who has

appointed them and direct it toward the people who have elected them. Love that results in action springs inevitably from those who seek office in a district because they love the people and want to work with them to accomplish specific goals. Leaders elected at the local level can then demonstrate their love by carrying out an agenda established in communion with the people.

In order to serve people well, one has to establish a relationship of respect and responsibility as well as respect the laws of the land. Such respect might not come easily if leaders are given enormous authority over people with whom they have no connection, or especially if these leaders consider their transfer to districts that they perceive as being backwards as a form of punishment. However, were the local leaders elected, they might respect and act in a responsible manner toward the people they serve, since they would owe their power to the people rather than to some central authority.

Some might argue that such a decentralization, which involves the election of local administrators, could lead to an ethnicization of politics, because only indigenes of a particular area might stand the chance of winning an election to become a divisional or provincial administrator. I must concede that ethnicization might be one of the outcomes of such a radical decentralization. But I am also hopeful that with political education, maturity, and legal instruments, residency requirements would outweigh indigeneity, and political issues and the ability to define a vision and set goals to accomplish that vision would outweigh ethnic considerations.

This approach calls for a radical reinterpretation of citizenship. In this regard, citizenship *should not* be linked primarily with ancestral land, autochthony, and indigeneity but rather with cosmopolitan considerations that include length of residence, participation, and commitment to the goals and well-being of one's political community. In Cameroon, these issues have become central to local politics. In Anglophone Cameroon for example, members of some communities in the Southwest province have argued that some of their neighbors who came to the area from other parts of the country to work in plantations are "come no go," a designation that means they have come, settled, and do not intend to return to their place of origin. The debates on these issues involve internal migration, right of settlement within the same country, and a sense of belonging to the political community where one lives.

Cameroon needs to have an open debate on whether those who have moved from one province to another are citizens or resident aliens. Such problems are not unique to Cameroon. When I lived in the Nigerian town of Gembu (in the present Taraba state when it was still part of Gongola state), the locals considered the Fulani people "foreigners" to their land. During the 1979 transition to democracy, local leaders campaigned on a

platform that called for the restoration of power to the indigenes—the Mambila people—because the Fulanis had dominated them for a long time. One could therefore argue that were local leaders to campaign and be elected in Cameroon, a similar situation might occur.

One must concede that to many people, “local” might be synonymous with “indigenous.” However, I contend that citizens of a country ought to come to accept residence in a locality as a basic qualification for public office. People ought to settle where they can afford to settle and participate fully in local politics. It would be wrong to carry out acts of discrimination against others because they moved to the area from another part of the country. Following this logic, an individual who was born in one part of the country but who has taken up residence in another part could compete for political office in the area where he or she is residing. While I do not think that practices in other continents should be imposed on Africans, it is dishonest for Africans in the diaspora, who have claimed a right to settle in any place of their own choice, to insist on referring to others back home, who also claim a right to settle in a place of their choice, as “come no go.” Cameroonians debate these issues on Camnet (an email subscription group) and other discussion groups on the Internet, and one would think that they would want others to enjoy the liberty to settle where they choose to, but that is not the case. If broad-based liberal approaches to settlements (and I am not claiming that there is no discrimination in settlements in the United States or in other Western countries) work in other places in the world, it could also work in Cameroon. Cameroonians have no difficulty with it in the United States, Canada, England, or France. If anything, they profit from it; why then is their ancestral land back in Cameroon different? If they expect their fellow Texans, Californians, and Parisians to love them, they ought to support such ideals back at home.

What I say about local political elections might be considered to apply to the election of religious leaders as well. If people were to elect their own leaders, that might make things easy for the community and the church at large. Leadership in the Catholic Church has caused a number of problems in recent years. In 1998, when the former Roman Catholic archbishop of Yaoundé, Mgr Jean Zoa, died, the pope appointed Mgr. Andre Wouking, president of the National Episcopal Council and bishop of Bafoussam to replace him. Members of the Beti ethnic group did not approve of this appointment and organized a group of people to block the road into Yaoundé so that Mgr. Wouking would not come there to take up his position. Similar problems arose in 1991 in the Douala archdiocese when local priests, who feared that another Bamileke could be appointed to head the archdiocese, wrote a letter to the Vatican protesting against what they called “the Bamilekisation of their diocese by expatriate clergy.”¹⁵ It is surprising

that the priests who wrote that letter chose the term “expatriate,” used in the past for missionaries and religious workers from other countries, to describe a Cameroonian bishop. The protesting priests claimed that the expatriate clergy who worked in the Douala archdiocese promoted Bamileke priests for purely political and economic reasons.¹⁶ The Vatican, wanting to avoid a problem, appointed Cardinal Tumi, who came from the Anglophone side of Cameroon, to lead the Douala archdiocese. Although his appointment calmed down feelings because Cardinal Tumi had a higher rank, it did not address the problem of indigeneity, which is still a source of tension within the Catholic Church in Cameroon. The Vatican makes these senior church appointments and one cannot talk of decentralization as one would while discussing a country’s politics. My point here is that a more cosmopolitan attitude could have resolved the appointment of bishops from different ethnic backgrounds.

Fourth, love has to translate into specific political behavior that is consistent with the ideals of a democratic and free society. Leaders need to conduct themselves as servants of the people, not as their masters. Love also demands that the leaders defend and protect the constitution and institutions of the state. They do so when they enforce the rule of law equally. It ought to be clear that leaders cannot use the law to protect themselves from the crimes they have committed. Instead, they have an obligation to use the law to protect the people who have elected them to serve. In order to do this, checks and balances between the executive, legislature, and judicial branches of the government ought to be created. One cannot love one’s country, constitution, laws, flag, and all the symbols around which political life is organized and still disrespect the law or run the state as if it were a mafia.

Fifth, love ought to translate into respect for human rights and freedoms. This is perhaps where the African postcolonial state has failed most pitifully. Since African leaders believed that they could solve all the problems of their country without regard to their constituencies, they have taken away the rights and freedoms of their people. What has emerged is a state where inhumane treatment of people is the norm. People arrested on suspicion of committing crimes routinely suffer beatings and torture, especially if they are suspected of making anti-government remarks. The criminalization and brutalization of political opposition has been the rule in most African countries. Regimes have forced most of the intelligentsia into exile, instead of working with them to create a vision of a society that would promote the well-being of all people. All of this has taken place because African leaders have paid no regard to human rights and freedoms. The civil strife, barbarity, civil wars, genocide, coups, and countercoups, reflect a culture where people have decided to abuse the rights of others and blatantly display a lack of love for one another. It is for these reasons that love has to become a political

virtue. Almost all the political killings in Africa have not occurred because the perpetrators loved the state any more than the victims did, but because the perpetrators did not love their victims.

Sixth, Africans have an obligation to use love to resolve the problems of the past and move forward into the future. Change is possible, and it will come if people work for it. A good example remains the transition to democracy in South Africa, where truth, reconciliation, amnesty, and reparations have offered a compelling way of dealing with the past and facing the future. But this is not an easy proposition. Proposals that offer the truth and reconciliation model of South Africa imply that Africans could deal with the rape of their economies by their own leaders in a similar way. To call for truth and reconciliation is to ask Africans to offer love as an antidote to brutality, violence, barbarity, genocide, abuse of power, human rights abuses, dishonesty in public life, and all that has dehumanized people in the postcolony. To adopt the path of love, reconciliation, and healing is not to expect quick fixes, because none exist. However, a call for truth and reconciliation invites reflection, deliberation, the cultivation of certain dispositions, and the articulation and implementation of virtues that could replace ruthlessness with the spirit of tolerance. Such an engagement does not deny wrongdoing, nor does it ignore the fact that it might take several generations before African states can dig themselves out of this pit of desperation into which postcolonial misadventure has thrown them. Furthermore, it does not sacrifice justice for the sake of peace, but instead asks tough questions about the nature of justice.

A spirit of love that cultivates such a careful deliberation on ways of resolving Africa's difficult past is altogether consistent with the idea of politics. Politics involves resolving conflicts and assuming responsibility for the future conduct of an intersubjective community. Africans can open a new page and continue to write history, but they dare not construct such a history on the principles of revenge; instead, they must do so on the basis of love and tolerance. This applies even to Africa's national bourgeoisie, which has embodied its characterization by Frantz Fanon to extremes that Fanon himself could not have imagined.

My proposition that love ought to be seen as a political praxis is mainly to Africans because they alone bear the weight of the obligation to establish the kind of political community that would contribute to the enhancement of the human condition and replace pessimism with optimism. As they do that, the international community needs to show more love for Africa, love that exceeds mere emotional sympathy or postcolonial guilt and that involves instead a critical and practical engagement with Africans about the fate of the people. A new love for Africa will certainly engender a new ethic, one that will reject blood diamonds and looted wealth. Love can bring a new spirit of determination into the international community,

motivating it to work with Africans to pursue justice and resist the temptation to see corruption and abuse of power as something that happens “over there.” The need to show love to Africa could be motivated by the view that an injury to the human species in Africa is injury to all humanity.

Finally, in an age of globalization, love ought to translate into fair trading practices. On that point, one can only state the obvious. Africans, who have been bombarded with the idea of globalization and transnationalism—terms that are not merely metaphors for this ever-shrinking world, but that reflect an economic and social reality—are waiting for the rest of the world to concede that there no longer exists any kind of “over there.” In its report, the Commission for Africa (CFA) has pointed out that sustainable growth and poverty reduction will be achieved only if Africa’s share of trade increases. In order to increase trade, Africa’s capacity to trade has to be given a boost with investments in infrastructure that can create a climate conducive to trade.¹⁷ The CFA calls for “custom reform; removal of regulatory barriers, especially in transport; improved governance; air and sea transport reform; and regional integration.”¹⁸ This is what African states could be doing with additional investment. However, trade barriers in other countries have to come down. “Rich countries must agree to eliminate immediately trade-distorting support to cotton and sugar, and commit by 2010 to end all export subsidies and all trade-distorting support in agriculture when they meet in Hong Kong.”¹⁹ The CFA makes an important statement on liberalization that could spark a new round of debate.

. . . Liberalisation must not be forced on Africa through trade or aid conditions and must be done in a way that reduces reciprocal demands to a minimum. Individual African countries should be allowed to sequence their own trade reforms, at their own pace, in line with their own poverty reduction and development plans. Additional financial assistance should be provided to support developing countries in building the capacity they need to trade and adjust to more open markets.²⁰

This is an interesting development, especially coming from a commission mostly made up of Western leaders who have always insisted that trade and political liberalization go together. One way of reading this is to see it as a caution against imposing liberalization, not a rejection of liberalization. A failure to carry out political reforms and establish democratic and transparent institutions could lead to the same problems that created economic decline. Although trade has grown and continues to grow in China, there is every reason to believe that trade will fare better where liberal and open policies prevail. If the international community is in love with Africa and its people, fair trading practices will go a long way in transforming African states.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. *The Economist*, May 13–19, 2000, p. 17.
2. John Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility: Essays 1981–1989* (London: Polity Press, 1990), p. 193.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 202–203.
5. Ali A. Mazrui, *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1; Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble With Nigeria* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 1; Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
6. Mbembe, 2001, p. 42. See also his “Provisional Notes on the Postcolony,” *Africa* 62, no. 1 (1992): 3–35.
7. See George Munda Carew, “Development Theory and the Promise of Democracy: The Future of Postcolonial African States,” in *African Today* 40, no. 4 (1993): 31–53.
8. James S. Coleman and C. R. D. Halisi, “American Political Science and Tropical Africa: Universalism vs. Relativism,” *African Studies Review* 26, nos. 3 and 4 (Sep., Dec. 1983): 25–62. This history of Afro-pessimism remains an interesting subject that will not be pursued here.
9. Mbembe, 2001, p. 2. Italics in original.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
12. Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 5–6.
13. See Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory* (London: Verso, 1997); D. Pal Ahluwalia and Paul Nursey-Bray, eds., *Post-Colonialism: Culture and Identity in Africa* (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1997); Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
14. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 4.

15. Michael Bratten and Van der Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 42.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.
17. See Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993); see also Stephen Ellis, “Power and Rumor in Togo,” *Africa* 63 (1993): 462–477; Achille Mbembe, “Power and Obscenity in the Post-Colonial Period,” in *Rethinking Third World Politics*, ed. James Manor (London: Longman, 1991), pp. 166–182; Michael Schatzberg, “Power and Democratisation in Africa,” *Africa* 63 (1993): 445–461.

CHAPTER 1 DEFINING THE HUMAN CRISIS IN AFRICA

1. Thabo Mbeki, “Partnership Africa” (statement delivered by Thabo Mbeki at conference on Partnership Africa, Stockholm, Sweden, June 25, 1997), in Thabo Mbeki, *Africa The Time Has Come: Selected Speeches* (Johannesburg: Mafube, 1998), pp. 206–207.
2. Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273 (February 1994): 46–48. See also Keith, Richburg, *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
3. Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996), p. 6.
4. See Achille Mbembe, “African Modes of Self-Writing,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 243.
5. Robert Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg have argued: “Personal rule is a system of relations linking rulers not with the ‘public’ or even with the ruled . . . but with patrons, associates, clients, supporters, and rivals, who constitute the ‘system.’ If personal rulers were restrained, it is by the limits of their personal authority and power and by the authority and power of patrons, associates, clients, supporters, and—of course—rivals. The system is ‘structured,’ so to speak, not by institutions, but by the politicians themselves.” *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 19.
6. Max Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947), p. 152.
7. Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
8. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 187.
9. Foucault, 1980, pp. 142, 60, 98. James Cochrane, in *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), points out that some scholars argue that sociologists and philosophers [Max Weber, Bertrand Russell, Talcott Parsons, Gerhard Lenski, C. Wright Mills, Stephen Lukes] cast power as an attribute or commodity possessed by

- members of the ruling class. Hannah Arendt emphasized communicative power, and Jürgen Habermas “communicative competence.” Cochrane, 1999, p. 72.
10. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 83.
 11. Joshua Forrest, “The Quest for State ‘Hardness’ in Africa,” *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 4 (1988): 423–442.
 12. See Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle’s Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
 13. Swanson, 1992, p. 7.
 14. Jean-Paul Azam and Christian Morrison, *The Political Feasibility of Adjustment in Côte d’Ivoire and Morocco* (Paris: Development Centre Studies, OECD, 1994).
 15. Ahmadou Ahidjo, *The Political Philosophy of Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Monte Carlo: Paul Bory Publishers, 1968), p. 29. A recognizable form of rule in precolonial Africa is not the issue. Robert Jackson argued that precolonial establishments were “societies” rather than states, a position that provoked debate on the nature of precolonial power. See R. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 67; Joseph K. Adjaye, *Diplomacy and Diplomats in Nineteenth Century Asante*, 2nd ed. (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1996); Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: SOPECAM, 1987); Robert Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
 16. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 40. For a discussion of power in the precolonial state, see Igor Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
 17. I return to this in Chapter 2 when I discuss Ahidjo’s consolidation of power in Cameroon.
 18. See Jacob Olupona, *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festivals* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991); Andrew Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); John Pemberton III and Funso A. Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship: A Power Like that of the Gods* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).
 19. Forrest, 1988, 427.
 20. In his paintings, Tshibumba, then of Zaire, portrayed Mobutu Sese Seko seated at the right hand corner of a frame, and to the left he added, “*un seul chef, un seul parti, un seul peuple.*” See Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the*

- Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 155.
21. Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, "The DRC Conflict and the Way Out: Some Ideas," *Black Radical Congress News*, January 31, 2000. I am indebted to Ian Taylor and Paul Williams for this citation. See their "South African Foreign Policy and the Great Lakes Crisis: African Renaissance Meets *Vagabondage Politique*?" *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 265–286.
 22. Human Rights Watch, "Playing with Fire: Weapons Proliferation, Political Violence and Human Rights in Kenya" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002), p. 20.
 23. Social Democratic Front List, sdfmembers@sdfparty.org, June 3, 2002.
 24. Posting on SDF list-serve, May 28, the Secretary-General indicated that the National Electoral Commission has not showed up in the field to prevent abuses. See sdfmembers@sdfparty.org, May 28, 2002.
 25. Francis Nyamnjoh, "Liberal Democracy: Victim of a Partisan and Ethnic Press in Cameroon" (paper read at the "Cameroon Transitions and Transformations" Conference at Rice University, April 6, 2001).
 26. There is considerable scholarship on the Mau Mau movement. For spirit mediums independence struggle in Zimbabwe, see David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas & Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, 1989).
 27. Bayart argues that some African politicians (Biya of Cameroon, Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique) also practice Transcendental Meditation and joined orders such as the Rosicrucian Order. Jean-François Bayart, "L'Afrique Invisible," *Politique Internationale* 70 (1995): 287–299.
 28. See Peter Gescherie, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1997). See also Eyoh Dickson, "Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship: Identity and the Politics of State Reconstruction in Cameroon" (unpublished paper, 2000).
 29. See Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, no. 2 (1998): 175–201.
 30. See Lamin Sanneh, *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 95. See also Blaine Harden, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).
 31. See Fabian, 1996.
 32. Nyamnjoh and Fokwang argue: "Tchana Pieree, Francis Bebey, Eboa Lotin and Anne-Marie Nzie are other examples of leading musicians who have participated voluntarily or when commissioned in bringing their art to serve their country by singing the praises of President Ahidjo." See Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Jude Fokwang, "Entertaining Repression: Music and Politics in Postcolonial Cameroon," *African Affairs*, 104 (April 2005): 253, 263.
 33. See Manu Dibango, with Danielle Rouard, *Three Kilos of Coffee: An Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1994, p. 134.
 34. See O. Essono, "La Démocratie en Chanson: Les Bekut-si du Cameroun," *Politique Africaine* 64 (1996): 52–61.

35. Graeme Ewens, *Congo Colossus: The Life and Legacy of Franco & OK Jazz* (Norwich, England: Buku Press, 1994), p. 237. I am thankful to Ewens for the information on Franco.
36. George Collinet, *La Vie et Mort de Franco*, (Paris: Kalim Productions, 1991), video recording.
37. Ewens, 1994, p. 236.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
39. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoirs on Pauperism*, trans. Seymour Drescher with an introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1997), p. 51. Tocqueville rejected public charity for able-bodied persons because such charity ignored a basic fact, that people would work to improve their conditions.
40. For a discussion of poor growth rates and indications of the resources of the continent, see UNCTAD, *Economic Development in Africa: Performance, Prospects and Policy Issues* (Geneva: United Nations, 2001).
41. H. W. Singer and Soumitra Sharma, eds., *Economic Development and World Debt* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), pp. xix–xx.
42. The idea of development as a theory and practice is a contested notion. While developmental theory has been discarded, a noted scholar like Claude Ake argued in 1996 that African states had not taken development seriously. See Ake, 1996.
43. Commission for Africa, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 101. Reference used here is taken from the online report at: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/home/newsstories.html>
44. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 106–113.
51. This report is also called the Berg Report. World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: WB, 1981).
52. Maxwell Owusu, “Democracy and Africa: A View from the Village,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 3 (1992): 375. For his part, Riddell argued that the problems of Africa could be attributed to endogamous causes that include “misallocation of funds, excessive military spending,” and exogamous causes which include “declining terms-of-trade, all-too-frequent droughts.” J. Barry Riddell, “Things Fall Apart Again: Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992): 53–68.
53. N. N. Susungi, “Water Resource Crisis Facing the Wimbun,” *Nwensung* 1, no. 6 (2005): 1.
54. M. L. Daneel, *African Earthkeepers: Environmental Mission and Liberation in Christian Perspective* (Pretoria, SA: UNISA Press, 1999).

55. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance* (New York: Penguin, 1992), pp. 283–294. Al Gore called attention to the activism of Wangari Matthai, the Kenyan environmentalist who mobilized and planted trees in the Greenbelt Movement. Wangari Matthai won the Nobel Peace prize in 2004 for her efforts.
56. Georg F. W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 173–190.
57. Robert Fatton, Jr., *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992); René Lemarchand, “Uncivil States and Civil Societies: How Illusion Became Reality,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (1992): 177–191.
58. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity, Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
59. William S. K. Reno, “Mines, Money and the Problem of State-Building in Congo,” *African Issues* 26, no. 1 (1998): 14.
60. René Dumont, *False Start in Africa*, trans. Phyllis Nauts Ott (New York: Praeger, 1966).
61. Colonials were authoritarian and promoted dependency. “Authoritarianism was the basic vice of the system, as of all Belgian colonialism. It was based on the monstrous slogan, ‘no elites, no problems.’ They opened up opportunities for higher education to the Congolese in 1955.” Dumont, 1966, p. 70.
62. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza argues that in places like Algeria, French colonials did not intend to establish any industries until after World War II. Then, “Manufacturing capital was confined to small industries in food processing, such as wineries, flour mills, tobacco factories and fish canneries.” See Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century* (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1993), p. 251.
63. For literature on industrial development in Africa, see Robin Fincham, “A Select Bibliography,” in *Industry and Accumulation in Africa*, ed. Martin Fransman (London: Heinemann, 1982); A. F. Ewing, *Industry in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); P. Kirby, *Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945–1966* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); D. S. Pearson, *Industrial Development in East Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1969); UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), *World Industry since 1960: Progress and Prospects, Special Issues of the Industrial Development Survey for the Third General Conference of UNIDO, New Delhi, 21 January–8 February 1980* (New York: United Nations, 1979); S. M. Wangwe, ed., *Exporting Africa: Technology, Trade and Industrialization in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995); UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), *Foreign Direct Investment in Africa* (Geneva: UNCTAD, 1995); P. Anyang’ Nyong’o and Peter Coughlin, *Industrialization at Bay: African Experiences* (Nairobi, Kenya: Academy of Science, 1991).
64. Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Soludo, *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999), pp. 9–10.

65. Fred Nixon, "Import Substituting Industrialization," in Fransman, 1982.
66. See Kirby, 1969.
67. Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, "Explaining African Economic Performance," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37 (March 1999): 64.
68. Ernest Aryeetey has pointed out that foreign donors and lenders did not take Africa seriously at all. See his essay, "A Case for Enhanced Resource Flow to Facilitate Development and Reduce Poverty," *Journal of African Economies* 11, no. 2 (2003): 282–307.
69. *Ibid.*, 287.
70. Shadrack N. Ndam, "Africa's Industrial Performance, A Review and Needs Assessment," in Nyong'o and Coughlin, 1991, p. 111.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–118.
72. Members of the elite class also prefer that their wives travel to Europe or to the United States to give birth so that the child would be a citizen of the country in which he or she is born, although the immediate reason for this may just be a form of conspicuous consumption.
73. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 21–24.
74. Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Africans in the Diaspora: The Diaspora and Africa," *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 186.
75. *Ibid.*, 183.
76. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 56–57.
77. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Cassandra R. Veney, "Editor's Introduction" in "The African 'Brain Drain' to the North: Pitfalls and Possibilities," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 1.
78. Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982). The definition of diaspora has traditionally included dispersion and the idea of a homeland that is real or imagined. William Safran offers several criteria for what qualifies as diaspora, which include (1) dispersals to one or more areas, (2) a collective memory or myth about the homeland, (3) a feeling of alienation in the new homeland, (4) a view of the ancestral homeland as the home to which the people or their descendants belong when conditions change, (5) a collective responsibility for maintaining and protecting the original homeland and working for its safety and prosperity, (6) a conscious multi-level relationship with the home land. See William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99.
79. Akyeampong, 2000, 211.
80. Uwem E. Ite, "Turning Brain Drain into Brain Gain: Personal Reflections on Using the Diaspora Option," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 77.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Anthony Barclay, "The Political Economy of Brain Drain at Institutions of Higher Learning in Conflict Countries: Case of the University of Liberia," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 45.

83. Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*, trans. from the French by John Pairman Brown and Susan Perry (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 152.
84. Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 6.
85. Kofi Annan, *The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa* (report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, 16 April, 1998); Guy Arnold, *Historical Dictionary of Civil Wars in Africa* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1999). These references point to a volatile political situation that exists, although Arie Kacowicz argues that, "the convoluted reality of West Africa can be characterized by relative international peace, in contrast to domestic conflicts." See Arie M. Kacowicz, "Negative International Peace and Domestic Conflicts, West Africa, 1957-96," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no. 3 (1997): 367-385.
86. See Jean-Paul Azam, "The Redistributive State and Conflicts in Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 4 (2001): 431.
87. Some of these issues were recently addressed in studies published in *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3 (2000). See essays by Ali Abdel Gadir Ali, "The Economics of Conflicts in Africa: An Overview" (235-243); Ibrahim Elgadari and Nicholas Sambanis, "Why are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflicts" (244-269); Jeffrey Herbst, "Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa" (270-294); Victor A.B. Davies, "Sierra Leone: Ironic Tragedy" (349-369). See also P. Collier, "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," in *Managing Global Chaos*, ed. C. A. Crocker and F. O. Hampson with P. Aall (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000). See also his "On the Economic Consequences of Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 51 (1999): 168-183.
88. Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 271.
89. See M. I. Khalil, "Conflict Resolution in Africa," *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 295-322.
90. See <http://www.stratfor.com/MEAF/specialreports/special3.htm>.
91. For state-sponsored violence elsewhere see Peter Carey, foreword to *The Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1974-1989: A Chronology*, ed. John G. Taylor, pp. i-ii. (London: Catholic Institute of International Relations, 1990); Ted Robert Gurr, "The Political Origins of State Violence and Terror: A Theoretical Analysis," in *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research*, ed. Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, pp. 45-72 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986).
92. See René Lemarchand, "Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?" *African Studies Review* 41, no. 1 (April 1998): 3-16; See his "Managing Transition Anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi, and South Africa in Comparative Perspective," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, no. 4 (1994): 581-604; David Newbury, "Understanding Genocide," *African Studies Review* 41, no. 1 (April 1998): 73-97; Mahmood Mamdani, *When*

- Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Christian P. Scherrer, *Genocide and Crisis in Central Africa: Conflict Roots, Mass Violence and Regional War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); See also the massive chronology of the Rwandan genocide in *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance* (London: African Rights, 1994); Gerard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Alison Des Forges, "Leave None to Tell the Story," in *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998); Jennifer Widner, "State Reconstruction after Civil Conflict: Courts and Democracy in Postconflict Transitions: A Social Scientist's Perspective on the African Case," *American Journal of International Law* 95, no. 1(2001): 64–75.
93. Elisha Stephen Atieno Odhiambo, "Hegemonic Enterprises and Instrumentalities of Survival: Ethnicity and Democracy in Kenya," *African Studies* 61, no. 2 (2002): 230; See also T. O. Beidelman, *The Cool Knife: Imagery of Gender, Sexuality and Moral Education in Kaguru Initiation Ritual* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), pp. 30–31.
 94. Odhiambo, 2002, 232–233.
 95. *Ibid.*, 241.
 96. *Ibid.*, 242.
 97. Human Rights Watch, "Playing with Fire: Weapons Proliferation, Political Violence, and Human Rights in Kenya," (London, New York and Brussels: Human Rights Watch, May, 2002). See online publication at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/kenya/Kenya0502.pdf>.
 98. *Ibid.* p. 20.
 99. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
 100. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
 101. William Reno has called this type of political praxis "warlord capitalism," because leaders of factions control and exploit economic resources for their war efforts. See William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).
 102. See J. M. Balancie and A. de La Grange, *Modes Rebelles. Guerres Civiles et Violences Politiques* (Paris: Michalon, 1999).
 103. See L. H. Henderson, *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979); W. M. James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974–1990* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992); I. Tveden, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
 104. Other countries that gave support to Savimbi and his movement were apartheid South Africa and Zaire (DRC) under Mobutu.
 105. M. J. Anstee, *Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process, 1992–93* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

106. See Phillippe Le Billon, "Angola's Political Economy of War: The Role of Oil and Diamonds," *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 59.
107. *Ibid.*, 61.
108. *Ibid.*, 65.
109. Davies, 2000, pp. 357–359.
110. This is taken from the research of Kajsja Ekholm Friedman and Anne Sundberg titled "Ethnic War and Ethnic Cleansing in Brazzaville" (unpublished, n.d.); quoted by John F. Clark "Congo: Transition and the Struggle to Consolidate," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, ed. John F. Clark and David E. Gardinier, p. 74 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
111. Davies, 2000, 350. See Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga's chapter, which gives some information on violence in Congo, in Mar Le Pape and Pierre Salignon, eds., *Une guerre les civils: Reflexions sur les pratiques humanitaires au Congo Brazzaville (1998–2000)*(Paris: Karthla and Médecins Sans Frontières, 2001).
112. Newbury, 1998; Gourevitch, 1988; p. 47; Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Ferdinand Nahimana, *Le Rwanda: Emergence d'un État* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).
113. Helen M. Hintjens, "When Identity Becomes a Knife: Reflecting on the Genocide in Rwanda," *Ethnicities* 1, no. 1 (2001): 32. The search for a space where the authentic people would control society, presents an example of Omar Bartov's argument that some people have perpetrated violence in their quest for utopia. See Omar Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 153.
114. René Lemarchand, "Hate Crimes: Race and Retribution in Rwanda," *Transition* 9, nos. 1 & 2 (2000): 114.
115. Newbury, 1998.
116. Hintjens, 2001, p. 38.
117. See Gourevitch, 1998, p. 96; René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 125–126.
118. Prunier, 1995, pp. 138–142.
119. Hintjens, 2001, p. 40; Prunier, 1995; Gourevitch, 1998.
120. Mamdani, 2001, p. 8. Such an approach makes it possible to conceptualize the genocide in terms of what Mamdani calls "planning and participation"; ideas that underscore a systematic and thorough normalization of killing to ensure that the job was well done. The thoroughness with which the killers did their job is captured by Alison Des Forges's title: "Leave None to Tell the Story" in Forges, 1999.
121. Mamdani, 2001, p. 229.
122. Mamdani argues: "one needs to recognize that it was not greed—not even hatred—but fear, which was the reason why the multitude responded to the call of Hutu Power the closer the war came home. Hutu Power extremists prevailed not because they promised farmers more land if they killed their Tutsi neighbors—which they did—but because they told farmers that the alternative would be to let RPF take their land and return it to the Tutsi who have been expropriated after 1959." Mamdani, 2001, p. 191.

123. See Gourevitch, 1998, p. 196.
124. Mamdani, 2001, p. 271.
125. Paul, Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (London: The International African Institute with James Currey and Heinemann, 1996), p. 30.
126. Ferme, 2001, pp. 224–225.
127. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–223.
128. Africa Watch Committee, *Angola: Violations of the Rules of War on Both Sides*. (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1989), p. 1.
129. Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 13.
130. See E. Keller, “Introduction: Toward a New African Political Order,” in *Africa in the New International Order: Rethinking State Sovereignty and Regional Security*, ed. E. Keller and Donald Rothchild, p. 3 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996).
131. See R. Green and C. Thompson, “Political Economies in Conflict: SADCC, South Africa and Sanctions,” in *Destructive Engagement: South Africa at War*, ed. P. Johnson and D. Martin, pp. 271–276 (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, Southern African Research and Documentation Center, 1986).
132. Harri Englund, *From War to Peace on the Mozambique-Malawi Borderland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; London: International African Institute, 2002).

CHAPTER 2 THE GENESIS OF THE AFRICAN CRISIS: THE MANIFESTATION OF A POLITICAL WILL

1. Achille Mbembe, “African Modes of Self-Writing,” *Public Culture* 14, no.1 (2002), p. 243.
2. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
3. See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L’Ouverture, 1972); and Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Course of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992).
4. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). See also vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
5. Eshetu Chole has argued: “Those of us who lived through those heady times will recall what euphoria they generated and what expectations they created. That euphoria and those expectations, as is only too well-known, turned out to be short-lived, and the legacy of a generation of ‘flag independence’ has been nothing but a ‘harvest of sorrow.’” See Eshetu Chole, introduction to *Democratization Process in Africa: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Eshetu Chole and Jibrin Ibrahim (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1995), pp. 1–2.

6. Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 24, 242–251, 256; Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 61ff.; Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993); Thomas Callaghy, *The State–Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988); Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969–1982* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Nelson Kasfir, ed., *State and Class in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1984); Zaki Ergas, ed., *The African State in Transition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
7. Mamdani, 1996, p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 48. From now on in the text I will use “native” without quotations.
9. *Ibid.* p. 51.
10. *Ibid.* p. 52.
11. In some cases, religious leaders were made chiefs. Both the British and French colonials governed through “middlemen.” In the Belgian Congo in 1921, “all Africans were. . . required to return to the rural areas from which they were deemed to have come in the first place. The native must belong to his tribe: the notion of the native as permanently peasant and only temporarily a worker was given legal reality through a series of decrees between 1931 and 1933” (*ibid.*, 86). In South Africa, this was codified as Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 (*ibid.*, 89).
12. *Ibid.*, 1996, p. 54.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 57. This abuse was replicated in the postindependent state where arbitrary taxes were created in several administrative units in the DRC (*ibid.*, 58).
14. See also Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
15. Mamdani, 1996, pp. 158–159, 162–163.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 285. The other expression used in the literature is extraversion. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
19. Other scholars see some hope in some African countries. See, for instance, Abdi Ismail Samatar, *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership and Colonial Legacy in Botswana Development* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999).
20. Mamdani, 1996, p. 286.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
22. Mamdani argues: “This is why civil society politics where the rural is governed through customary authority is necessarily patrimonial: urban politicians harness

rural constituencies through patron–client relations. Where despotism is presumed, clientelism is the only noncoercive way of linking the rural and the urban.” Mamdani, 1996, p. 289.

23. Ibid.
24. For a discussion of religion and apartheid, see Alan Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977); John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979); John W. de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, eds., *Apartheid Is a Heresy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983); Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991, 1997; J. Alton Templin, *Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundation of Afrikaner Nationalism 1652–1910* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984); and Douglas Bax, *A Different Gospel: A Critique of the Theology behind Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, 1979).
25. Atieno E. S. Odhiambo, “Democracy and the Ideology of Order in Kenya,” in *Democratic Theory and Practice in Africa*, ed. W. O. Oyugi and others, p. 118 (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1988).
26. Chisanga N. Siame, “Two Concepts of Liberty through African Eyes,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2000): 55–56. John Mukum Mbaku has argued that Africans fought to end “the exploitative colonial state, its laws and institutions, and provide Africans with structures that reflected the people’s traditions, aspirations, values, and hopes for the future.” See John Mukum Mbaku, “Constitutional Discourse and the Development of Structures of Sustainable Development in Africa,” *Journal for Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 22, no. 1 (1998): 15.
27. William Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Africa*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 82.
28. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 175.
29. Ibid., pp. 176–177.
30. Ibid., p. 177.
31. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (New York: Monthly Review, 1964), pp. 78–79, 95–105.
32. Ibid., p. 55.
33. Mamdani, 1996, p. 295.
34. Nkrumah, 1964, p. 56. Nkrumah also talked of dialectical materialism but did not spell out his materialism clearly. See philosophical perspectives on Nkrumah in E. A. Ruch and K. C. Anyanwu, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981), pp. 337ff.
35. Nkrumah, 1964, p. 58.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 56. See also Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle against World Imperialism* (London: Heinemann, 1962).
38. Nkrumah, 1964, p. 61.
39. Ibid., p. 60.

40. Ibid., p. 62.
41. K. Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy*, (New York: Praeger, 1976), pp. 27, 90.
42. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), pp. 148ff.
43. Ibid., p. 148.
44. Ibid., p. 149.
45. Ibid., p. 152.
46. On ethnicity in Kenyan politics, see Stephen Ndegwa, "Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Moments in Kenyan Politics," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 3 (1997): 599–616.
47. Fanon, 1963, p. 156.
48. See Bayart, 1993, p. 91.
49. Fanon, 1963, p. 166. See Ngugi wa Thiongo, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle to Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey, 1993), p. 65.
50. Robert Solomon argues: "The will to power manifests itself in just that prescription which we encounter at the very beginning of Nietzsche's philosophy: live your life as a work of art." *From Rationalism to Existentialism: The Existentialists and Their Nineteenth Century Backgrounds* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1972), p. 30.
51. Bayart, "Civil Society in Africa," in *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 113.
52. Naomi Chazan and others present different incarnations of leadership in Africa: administrative and hegemonic regimes where ethnicity has been an important factor (Moi in Kenya and Biya in Cameroon); pluralist regimes, defined as separation of powers between different branches of government (Senegal, Gambia, and Botswana); party-mobilizing regimes (Nkrumah, in Ghana, Nyerere in Tanzania, and Boumedienne in Algeria, Mugabe in Zimbabwe); party-centralist states, (Marxist regimes of Ethiopia, and Angola); personal and coercive regimes of Idi Amin in Uganda, Bokassa in Central Africa, and Mobutu of Zaire); and populism (Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, Qaddafi in Libya, Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso). See Chazan and others, *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), p. 141.
53. Ahmadou Ahidjo, *The Political Philosophy of Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Monte Carlo: Paul Bory, 1968). I will not offer a detailed political history of Cameroon. For Cameroonian authors who praise Ahidjo see, J. B. Alima, *Les chemins de l'unité. Comment se forge une nation: L'exemple camerounais* (Paris: ABC, 1977); J. C. Doumba, *Vers le Mont Cameroun: Entretiens avec Jean-Pierre Fogui* (Paris: ABC, 1982); S. M. Eno-Beling, *Cameroun: La révolution pacifique de 20 mai* (Yaoundé: Lamaro, 1976). Other scholarly approaches include Victor LeVine's *The Cameroon Federal Republic*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1963), reissued in (1971) is an early study. According to LeVine, Ahidjo ruled with a strong arm, but the prospects for the future were "relatively good" (LeVine, 1971, pp. 179–184). Willard R. Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society* (Princeton,

- NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970) gave Ahidjo good marks for integration in Cameroon; studies critical of Cameroon under Ahidjo include Jacques Benjamin's *Les Camerounais occidentaux: La minorité dans un état bicom-muniataire* (Montréal: Les Presses de L'Université de Montréal, 1972); Mongo Beti, *Main base sur le Cameroun: Autopsie d'une décolonisation* (Rouen, France: Éditions Peuples Noirs, 1984); *Remember Ruben*, trans. Gerald Moore (London: Heinemann, 1987); See also Achille Mbembe, "Pouvoir des morts et langage des vivants: les errances de la mémoire nationaliste au Cameroun," *Politique Africaine* 22 (1986): 37–72; Richard Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Richard Joseph, ed., *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension, 1973). Bayart, 1993; Joseph Takougang and Milton Krieger, *African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's Political Crossroads* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).
54. African Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial and Technical Series 19, 10 October 15–November 14, 1982, p. 6611.
 55. There are no references in Ahidjo's text, but the exposition draws heavily from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. All the references here would be from Ahidjo's text.
 56. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 18.
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 60. In the early period of reunification, Anglophone Cameroonians carried pass-books to go into the French sector.
 61. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 22.
 62. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–28.
 63. Paul Biya evoked this state when he said that citizens were first of all Cameroonians before belonging to other ethnic groups.
 64. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 32.
 65. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 66. The Cameroonian elite has certainly done its part not only in shaping but also in contributing to the problems of the country. Paul Gifford, 1998, p. 307.
 67. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 39.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 69. *Ibid.*, p. 41. See Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, eds., *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 12.
 70. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 41.
 71. Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 173.
 72. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 42.
 73. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 74. LeVine, 1971, pp. 134, 139.
 75. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Roseberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 153.

76. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 43.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
78. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 47. See also Ahidjo, *Contribution to National Construction* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1964), p. 33.
79. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 49.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
84. See Adrian Hastings, "The Churches and Democracy: Reviewing a Relationship," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 36–46; Mamdani, 1996.
85. Gifford, 1998.
86. David E. Gardinier, *Cameroon: United Nations Challenge to French Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 123.
87. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 55. Ahidjo argued that Mennen Williams, a former American Secretary of State for African Affairs, suggested that there was really only one party in the first eight years of the American republic and that in 1820 James Monroe was elected unopposed. This is clearly more than a conflict of interpretation; it is a misreading of the American political history.
88. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflicts of Interpretations* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).
89. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 57. Paul Biya might not have really moved away from Ahidjo when he renamed the party, CPDM-The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement in 1985 at the Bamenda Congress.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
92. See Takougang and Krieger, 1998, p. 43.
93. *Ibid.*
94. Ndiva Kofele-Kale, "Class, Status and Power in Post-Unification Cameroon: The Rise of the Anglophone Bourgeoisie 1961–1980," in *Studies of Class and Power in Africa*, ed. I. Markowitz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 161.
95. Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957).
96. Ahidjo, 1968, pp. 62–63.
97. Ahidjo continued to prefer what he called the "Gaullist option," referring to the strengthening of the powers of the French president during the French crisis to restore order. Ahidjo however, preferred national unity and progress, arguing that Cameroon's children could create ten or fifteen parties in the future and "spend their time debating. I am not sure that our children will be able to afford this luxury in this twentieth century, the atomic age." Ahidjo, 1968, p. 64.
98. Mamdani, 1996.
99. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 65.

100. Mark DeLancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and Independence* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).
101. Takougang and Krieger argue that after 1972, Ahidjo's main task was to stay in power and maintain the union, which he dominated and ruled—a centralized monarchy with everything centered on Yaoundé. Takougang and Krieger, 1998, p. 50.
102. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 74.
103. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 86. He was aware that his critics called his regime neo-colonial but he argued that what was needed was a plan to achieve economic independence.
104. Citing Camus he said, "Personally I like those who share today the same earth as myself and those are the ones I salute. It is for them I fight and for them I agree to die. But for a far-off city of which I am not sure . . . I shall not add a dead justice to a living injustice." Ahidjo, 1968, p. 90.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
107. *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.
108. There are numerous articulations of ethical relations in intersubjective philosophies. This is the teaching one finds in Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and to a certain extent the phenomenology of Schutz.
109. Ahidjo, 1968, p. 109.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
114. Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.
115. *Ibid.*
116. In January of 2000, I attended the New Year Party of Chairman Ni Fru Ndi at his compound. I was seated near the Archbishop of Bamenda, Bishop Paul Verdzekov and we talked about these recent witchcraft accusations. He commented that he knows that our people have always been concerned with witchcraft, but he was shocked when recent witchcraft accusations led to so many acts of violence in Wimbun land recently.
117. Elias K. Bongmba, "The Priority of the Other: Ethics in Africa - Perspectives from Bonhoeffer and Levinas," in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 190–208.
118. See Takougang and Krieger, 1998.
119. Wole Soyinka, "A Dance of the Forests," in *Five Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964). Chinua Achebe fictionalized the situation in *A Man of the People* (London: Heinemann, 1966).
120. Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* (London: Heinemann, 1967).
121. Gyekye argues, "What distinguishes a community from a mere association of individuals is the sharing of an over-all way of life." See Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 42ff.

122. See Gyekye, 1997, pp. 42ff.
123. Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 219.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid., pp. 240–241.

CHAPTER 3 RECOVERY IDEAS I: ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENTS, DEMOCRACY, AND GOVERNANCE

1. Quoted in *ANC Today*, February 11, 2005.
2. See Peter Anyang' Nyongo, ed., *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Peter Anyang' Nyongo, "Political Instability and Prospects for Democracy in Africa," *Africa Development* 8, no. 1 (1988): 71–86. See other interdisciplinary studies in Thandika Mkandawire, "Crisis Management and the Making of 'Choiceless Democracies'," in *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*, ed. R. Joseph (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Mkandawire, "Comments on Democracy and Political Instability," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1 (1989): 11–12; Mkandawire, "Further Comments on the Development and Democracy Debate," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 2 (1991): 11–12; Mkandawire, "Adjustment, Political Conditionality and Democratisation in Africa," in *Democratisation Process in Africa: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Eshetu Chole and Jibrin Ibrahim, pp. 83–99 (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1995); Kempe Ronald Hope, Sr., *From Crisis to Renewal: Development Policy and Management in Africa* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002); Thandika Mkandawire and Charles C. Soludo, eds., *Our Continent Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999), p. xiii; Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi Neto, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (January 1997): 155–183; Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Larry Diamond, "Introduction: Roots of Failure, Seeds of Hope," in *Democracy in Developing Countries*, vol. 2, *Africa*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988).
3. Organization of African Unity, *Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980–2000* (Addis Ababa: OAU, 1981), http://www.uneca.org/itca/ ariportal/docs/lagos_pan.pdf (accessed March 11, 2005).
4. Organization of African Unity, "Final Act of Lagos," in OAU, 1981, p. 99.
5. World Bank, *Accelerated Development for Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981).
6. See J. Barry Riddell, "Things Fall Apart Again: Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992): 53–68.
7. Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 7.

8. Thandika Mkandawire and Adebayo Olukoshi, eds., *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa* (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1993); Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999; Bade Onimode, ed., *The IMF, the World Bank and the African Debt*, vol. 2 *The Social and Political Impact* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1989); Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, "Explaining African Economic Performance," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37 (1999): 64–111; Eva Jespersen, "External Shocks, Adjustment Policies and Economic and Social Performance," in *Africa's Recovery in the 1990s: From Stagnation and Adjustment to Human Development*, ed. G. A. Cornia, R. van der Hoeven, and T. Mkandawire, pp. 9–52 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Rolph van der Hoeven and Fred van de Kraaij, eds., *Structural Adjustment and beyond in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: James Currey, 1994); Benno Ndulu and Nicolas van de Walle, eds., *Agenda for Africa's Economic Renewal* (Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1996); Thomas Callaghy and John Ravenhill, eds., *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa's Economic Decline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); John Ravenhill, ed., *Africa in Economic Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); David E. Sahn, Paul A. Dorosh, and Stephen D. Younger, *Structural Adjustment Reconsidered: Economic Policy and Poverty in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1994).
9. Nicolas Van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 9.
10. Organization of African Unity, 1981.
11. David Wheeler, "Sources of Stagnation in Sub-Saharan Africa," *World Development* 12, no. 1 (1984): 1–23.
12. Organization of African Unity, *Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1985–90* (Addis Ababa: F.O.A. for the OAU, 1985).
13. John Ravenhill argues that there was no faith in the LPA because it did not offer specific proposals for economic recovery. See John Ravenhill, "Adjustment with Growth: A Fragile Consensus," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 26 (1988): 181.
14. Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Goran Hyden, *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
15. Ernest Harsch argues: "To make matters worse, the combined impact of high debt-servicing obligations and external demands for budgetary austerity further undermined state capacities, among other ways by constricting the flow of funds into the patronage networks upon which many regimes relied." "Structural Adjustment and Africa's Democracy Movements," *Africa Today* 40, no. 4 (Fourth quarter, 1993): 14.
16. Several essays in *Revue Économique* 46, no. 3 (1995) discuss the effect of devaluation.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

18. World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1989), p. 5.
19. Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Recovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 19.
20. Organization of African Unity, "Africa's Submission to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis" (Addis Ababa: OAU, March 1986), p. 18.
21. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 85–86.
22. Riddell, 1992, p. 59.
23. For further discussion of the notion of weak states, see Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
24. Riddell, 1992, p. 61. See also Janet MacGaffey, *Entrepreneurs and Parasites: The Struggle for Indigenous Capitalism in Zaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1980).
25. World Bank, *Africa's Adjustment and Growth in the 1990s* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1989).
26. International Labour Organization, *World Employment 1996/97: National Policies in a Global Context* (Geneva, Switzerland: ILO, 1996), p. 157. The ILO report pointed to high social costs of adjustments, rise in imports and decline of exports compounded where there was little devaluation; less job creation; and pressure on balance of payments.
27. Mkandawire, 1999, p. 105.
28. See Peter Balleis, SJ, *ESAP and Theology* (Harare: Mambo Press, 1992).
29. Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, "Ghana: Adjustment, State Rehabilitation and Democratization," in *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, ed. Thandika Mkandawire and Adebayo O. Olukoshi, pp. 217–229 (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1993).
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 224–225.
31. Gabriel Tati has argued that to change this top-down approach and ensure the kind of participation necessary for SAP required an alternative political life: Tati, "Congo Social Reactions and the Political Stakes in the Dynamics of Structural Adjustment," in Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1993, p. 347.
32. See Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century* (Dakar, Senegal Codesria, 1993), p. 8.
33. Sahn, Dorosh, and Younger, 1997, p. 1.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 186. The authors are critical of public service employment in Africa because they receive far more rent than others.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
37. Van de Walle argues that notions such as state autonomy and capacity in carrying out reforms are important; however, African leaders have used their

- own autonomy to limit freedom of assembly for different groups. See Van de Walle, 2001, pp. 46 and 47. Peter B. Evans has made a distinction between state autonomy and capacity. See his *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
38. Adebayo Adedeji, "From Lagos Plan of Action to the New Partnership for African Development and from the Final Act of Lagos to the Constitutive Act: Whither Africa?" (keynote address presented at the African Economic Forum for Envisioning Africa held in Nairobi, Kenya, April 26–29, 2002), p. 4. The plans Adedeji refers to are the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development 1980–2000 and the Final Act of Lagos, 1980; Africa's Priority Program for Economic Recovery 1986–1990 (APPER) later changed to the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD), 1986; the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), 1989; the African Charter for Popular Participation for Development 1990; and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), 1991.
 39. Ernest Aryeetey, "A Case for Enhanced Resource Flow to Facilitate Development and Reduce Poverty," *Journal of African Economics* 11, no. 2 (2003): 282–307; P. Collier, "The Marginalisation of Africa," *International Labour Review* 34, nos. 4–5 (1995): 541–57; Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, "Explaining African Economic Performance," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 37, no. 1 (1999): 64–111.
 40. All the figures are taken from Aryeetey, 2003, 294.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 294–295.
 42. <http://www.nepad.org>, accessed June 1, 2004 and March 11, 2005.
 43. See Hope, Sr., "From Crisis to Renewal: Towards a Successful Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development," *African Affairs* 101 (2002): 388.
 44. See Nepad documents at <http://www.uneca.org/nepad/>, p. 2.
 45. Rita Kiki Edozie, "Promoting African 'Owned and Operated' Development Reflections on the New Partnership for African Development (Nepad)," *African and Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2004): 148.
 46. Thabo Mbeki, "Building Africa's Capacity through Nepad," *New African*, October 2002.
 47. See Trevor Ngwane, *The World Movement against NeoLiberal Globalisation and Resistance in South Africa* (Port Louis, Mauritius: Ledikasyon pu travayer, 2001); Darryl Thomas, "Between Globalization and Global Apartheid: African Development in the New Millennium," *International Journal of African Studies* 3, no. 1 (2001): 201–220.
 48. See for instance, Samir Amin, "Africa: Living on the Fringe," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 53, no. 10 (March 2002): 41–50.
 49. Nepad, p. 4.
 50. Nepad, p. 10; Hope has pointed out that in the abundance of literature that deals with governance, "very little can be found with respect to economic

- and corporate governance on the continent. The Nepad therefore adds value in this area as a significant precondition for the renewal of Africa." Hope, Sr., 2002, 390.
51. See Jeffrey Sachs, "A New Partnership for Growth in Africa," in *Making Aid Work: Innovative Approaches for Africa at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Peter H. Koehn and Olantunde J. B. Ojo, pp. 157–189 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).
 52. Nepad, p. 11.
 53. Peter Nyong'o Anyang', "Political Instability and Prospects for Democracy in Africa," *Africa Development* 8, 1: (1988): 71–86. His positions provoked a response and he wrote a rejoinder. See Peter Anyang-Nyong'o, "A Rejoinder to the Comments on Democracy and Political Instability," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1 (1989): 13–14; and later, "Development and Democracy: The Debate Continues," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1 (1991): 2–4. See also Larry Diamond's introduction to *Democratization in Africa*, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, p. xi (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
 54. Jennifer A. Widner, "Kenya's Slow Progress Towards Multiparty Politics," *Current History* 91 (May 1992): 217.
 55. Hubert Mono Ndjana, *La Mutation: Essai sur le changement politique au Cameroun* (Yaoundé: Editions du Carrefour, 1992), p. 33.
 56. Pius Njawe, *World Press Review*, January 1992, 51; See Paul Biya, *Communal Liberalism* (London: Macmillan, 1987); see also Biya's early speeches in *The New Deal Message* (Yaoundé: Editions Sopecam, 1983). Pierre Titi Nwel reports that a Baptist pastor, Rev. Simon-Bolivar Njami, wrote to Biya asking him to resolve the leadership problem in Cameroon by introducing the multiparty system and "put an end to the avalanche of motions of support, some of whose flimsiness and fanciful demagoguery made the whole process seem ridiculous." Pierre Titi Nwel, "The Churches and Democratic Upheaval in Cameroon 1982–1993," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford, pp. 170–171 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).
 57. See John Mary Waliggo, "The Role of Christian Churches in the Democratization Process in Uganda," in Gifford, 1995, p. 221.
 58. See Samuel Decalo, "Benin: First of the New Democracies," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, ed. J. F. Clark and D. E. Gardiner (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 43–61; Achille Mbembe, "Democratization and Social Movements in Africa," *Africa Demos* 1 (1990); Richard Joseph, "Africa: The Rebirth of Political Freedom," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Fall 1991): 11–24; Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Emmanuel Terray, "Les révolutions congolaise et dahoméenne de 1963," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 14 (October 1964): 918–925.
 59. Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997, p. 105. *Time Magazine* did a story on it July 3, 1989 and titled it "The Basilica in the Bush." See Richard Ostling, "The

- Basilica in the Bush: The Biggest Church in Christendom Arises in the Côte d'Ivoire," *Time Magazine*, July 3, 1989.
60. See Joseph Takougang, "Cameroon: Biya and Incremental Reform," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, ed. John F. Clark and David E. Gardiner, pp. 171–172 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
 61. Pearl Robinson, "The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (July 1994): 575–610. Historically, the roots of national conferences can be traced to French political theory. These conferences reflected and sought to rebuild society on African values. See F. Eboussi Boulaga, *Les Conférences Nationales en Afrique Noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1993); René Lamarchand, "Africa's Troubled Transitions," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 4 (1993): 98–109; Michael Chege, "Between Africa's Extremes," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1995): 44–51; Achille Mbembe, "Complex Transformations in Late 20th Century Africa," *Africa Demos* 3(1995): 28.
 62. For studies of democratic transitions in Africa see: Richard Joseph, 1991, 10–24; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Clark and Gardiner, 1997; and Pearl Robinson, "Democratization: Understanding the Relationship between Regime Change and the Culture of Politics," *African Studies Review* 37, no. 1 (April 1994): 39–67. For studies of transition elsewhere, see Guillermo O'Donnell and others, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). I have followed Bratton and Van de Walle's time frame. Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997, pp. 1–6; Rita Kiki Edozie, *People Power and Democracy: The Popular Movement against Military Despotism in Nigeria 1989–1999* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), p. 41.
 63. See Mkandawire, 1995, p. 82.
 64. Bayart argues that declining support to authoritarian regimes by the international organizations spurred old social movements to revive old expectations. Power holders determined to stay in power resorted to brutality. Jean-François Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion," *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 217–267.
 65. See Joseph, 1991; see also his essay "Africa, 1990–1997: From Abertura to Closure," in Diamond and Plattner, 1999, pp. 3–17.
 66. Diamond and Plattner, 1999, pp. 7–9. Ian Taylor and Paul Williams argue that leaders like Laurent Kabila, Mugabe, and the so-called "new generation" of leaders like Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda have promoted their self-interest in politics. See their essay, "South African Foreign Policy and the Great Lakes Crises: African Renaissance Meets *Vagabondage Politique*?" *African Affairs* 100(2001): 265–286.
 67. Robert Fatton Jr., *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), p. 103; Kwasi Wiredu has remarked: "It seems clear that the notion that the recent trend toward multi-party politics in Africa is a permanent blessing may turn out to be one of the costliest fallacies

- ever entertained about the continent." *Cultural Universals, and Particulars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 178.
68. See Jean-Pascal Daloz and Patrick Quantin, *Transitions Démocratiques Africaines* (Paris: Karthala, 1997).
 69. Crawford Young, "The Third Wave of Democratization in Africa: Ambiguities and Contradictions," in Joseph, 1999, p. 15.
 70. Joseph, 1991; Mbembe, 1990, 4; Célestin Monga has argued that democracy failed because opposition parties were weak, rulers manipulated the electoral process, a narrow political field, and a lack of political ideas and political vision, constrained civil society and press freedoms; international support for dictators. See Monga, "Eight Problems with African Politics," in Diamond and Plattner, 1999, pp. 48–62.
 71. Preben Kaarsholm and Deborah James argue that: "In Kenya and Zimbabwe, for example, oppositional movements, having emphasized multipartyism as in important antidote to the *de facto* one party regimes of their societies, experienced problems constructing alliances in the absence of parties of representation, and thus were unable to achieve much clout against the powers of state control." "Popular Culture and Democracy in Some Southern Contexts: An Introduction," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (June 2000): 191.
 72. Linda Kirschke, "Informal Repression, Zero-Sum Politics and Late Third Wave Transitions," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 3 (2000): 383–405.
 73. Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion," *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 217–267.
 74. Young, 1999, p. 28.
 75. Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984): 216.
 76. Diamond and others, 1988. See the introduction.
 77. Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2000), p. 67.
 78. Abrahamsen criticizes Diamond and others for promoting what Eboe Hutchful has called "formal democracy" because they associate the idea of democracy with free elections, multipartyism, free press, and free judiciary, rule of law. See Diamond and others, 1988, p. xvi; Hutchful, "The Limits of Corporatism as a Concept and Model," in *Corporatism in Africa: Comparative Analysis and Practice*, ed. Julius E. Nyango'oro and Timothy Shaw (Boulder, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989), p. 104. Abrahamsen has traced contemporary usage to Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 69. See Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
 79. This is similar to Archie Mafeje's observation that there was hardly anything substantive about the democracy discourse because African scientists arbitrarily employed Western jargon to mean democracy without considering the social forces and movements at work in their societies. See Archie

- Mafeje, "Theory of Democracy and the African Discourse: Breaking Bread with My Fellow-Travelers," in Chole and Ibrahim, 1995, p. 19.
80. Abrahamsen, 2000, pp. 75–76.
 81. Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa: An Essay in Political Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1992).
 82. See Patrick Watson and Benjamin Barber, *The Struggle for Democracy* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1988); Denis Smith, *Capitalist Democracy on Trial: The Transatlantic Debate from Tocqueville to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Bjorn Beckman, "Whose Democracy? Bourgeois Versus Popular Democracy," *Review of African Political Economy* No. 45–46 (1989): 84–97.
 83. Africans do have an interest in continuing to work for what Bratton and Van de Walle describe as "a form of regime whose legitimacy derives from the principle of popular sovereignty: namely that ordinary citizens are equally endowed with the right and ability to govern themselves." Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997, pp. 10–11, 13.
 84. Aung San Suu Kyi, "Freedom, Development, and Human Worth," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 18–19.
 85. David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). See also W. Ivor Jennings, *Democracy in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963, 1968).
 86. Held, 1995, p. 6.
 87. Held has argued that both in the Greek tradition and during the Renaissance, citizenship involved active participation in the affairs of the state. The notion of the polis as a means of self-fulfillment was de-emphasized, and civic virtue was emphasized, although people recognized that it was subject to corruption from one of the groups.
 88. Held, 1995, p. 9. Held also argues that James Madison and Jeremy Bentham provide two examples. Madison advocates "pure democracies"—small group of citizens who run government personally, and tend to be "intolerant, unjust and unstable" (Madison, 1966, no. 10, p. 20). Representative government overcomes these problems and individuals can pursue their interest and government as facilitator of these interests (10). Bentham understood representative democracy to have as "its characteristic object and effect. ... securing its members against oppression and depredation at hands of those functionaries which it employs for its defense," p. 10.
 89. Held, 1995, p. 12.
 90. Wiredu, 1996, p. 180.
 91. Another advocate of such a system is Mihailo Marković of Yugoslavia.
 92. Wiredu, 1996, p. 188.
 93. *Ibid.* See also Wiredu's essay, "The State, Civil Society and Democracy in Africa," *Quest* 13, no. 1 (1998): 241–152.
 94. Held, 1995, p. 81.
 95. *Ibid.*, p. 176. Held links these rights to the nation-state and transnational institutions, recognizing an overlap in different areas, which he defines as

- “sites of power.” These sites include a person’s physical body and the social needs of the person as well as the social groups and institutions that cater to the social, cultural, and political well-being of people in a community, and the organizations that organize the production and distribution of goods and services. What is interesting here is that he also includes the coercive power of the state that could be deployed to maintain the peace and other regulatory apparatus available to the state (pp. 80–81). Access to sites of power must be open to all . . . Power should seek to create “a system of rights that prevents asymmetrical power from arising” (Held, p. 82).
96. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yu-Han Chu, and Hang-mao Tien, eds., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. xix.
 97. Will Kymlicka and Christine Straehle, “Cosmopolitan, Nation State, and Minority Nationalism: A Critical Review of Recent Literature,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 65–88.
 98. See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on: <http://www.un.org/Over view/rights.html>
 99. See the full text of the African Charter of Human and People’s Rights on African Union web page: http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/Banjul%20Charter.pdf
 100. See Alkis Kontos, ed. *Power, Possessions and Freedom: Essays in Honour of C.B. Macpherson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 42; Michael Sandel, *Liberalism, and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 15–56.
 101. Charles Manga Fombad, “Freedom of Expression in the Cameroonian Democratic Transition,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (1995): 211–226.
 102. *Ibid.*, 217, 222–223.
 103. See Susan Dicklitch, “Failed Democratic Transition in Cameroon: A Human Rights Explanation,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 24(2002): 152–176.
 104. Joseph Bessette, “Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government,” in *How Democratic is the Constitution?* ed. R. Goldwin and W. Shambra, pp. 102–116. (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1980). See also Bessette, *The Mild Voice of Reason: Deliberative Democracy and American Constitutional Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); James Bohman and William Rehg, eds., *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); and Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “Deliberative Democracy Beyond Process” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 153–174.
 105. James Bohan has argued that deliberative democratic theory has come of age after first focusing on the process of deliberation, on reflection, on institution, and on the various settings in which the processes and institutions work out the deliberative process. See James Bohman, “The Coming of Age in Deliberative Democracy,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6, no. 4 (1998): 400–425.
 106. Gutmann and Thompson, 2002, 153, 154.

107. sdfmembers@sdfparty.org, June 3, 2002.
108. See Marc F. Plattner, "Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One Without the Other," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April, 1998); Larry Diamond, "Universal Democracy," in *Policy Review Online*, no. 119 (June–July, 2003); <http://www.policyreview.org/jun03/diamond.html>; and John A. Hall, "Consolidations of Democracy," in *Prospects for Democracy*, ed. David Held (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 275.
109. See Björn Beckman, "Whose Democracy? Bourgeois Versus Popular Democracy," *Review of African Political Economy*, no.45/46 (1989): 84–97.
110. See Sandbrook, 1985, p. 157.
111. Mahmood Mamdani, "Democratic Theory and Democratic Struggles," in Chole and Ibrahim, 1995, p. 51.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
113. See John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "Alien-nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 3/4 (1999): 17–28; see also their essay, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 291–343.
114. John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999): 279–303.
115. Nyang'oro and Shaw, 1989, p. 106.
116. Herbst, "Responding to State Failures in Africa," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1997): 132, 142.
117. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
118. See Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of the European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
119. Keith Richburg, *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
120. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, "Discourses on Democracy in Africa," in *Discourses on Democracy: Africa in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Julius Nyang'oro. (Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam Press, 1996), p. 40.
121. Robert D. Woodberry and Timothy S. Shah, "The Pioneering Protestants," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2(2004): 47–61. See other essays in this issue that focus on Christianity and democracy.
122. See Larry Diamond and Alfred Stepan, eds., *World Religions and Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
123. See John W. de Gruchy, "Theological Reflections on the Task of the Church in the Democratisation of Africa," in Gifford, 1995, pp. 47–60; see also de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: Towards a Just World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Kwame Bediako, "Unmasking the Powers: Christianity, Authority, and Desacralization in Modern African Politics," in *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context*, ed. John Witte (Boulder, CO: Wedgewood Press, 1993).
124. Goran Hyden, "Governance, and the Study of Politics," in *Governance and Politics in Africa*, ed. Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton (Boulder, CO: Lynne

- Rienner, 1992), p. 6. For a discussion of governance, see John Yoder “Good Government, Democratization and Traditional African Political Philosophy: The Example of the Kanyok of the Congo,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, no. 3 (1998): 483–507; James S. Wunsch “Refounding the African State and Local Self-Governance: The Neglected Foundation,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 3(2000): 487–509; R. Jackson and C. G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); J.S. Wunsch and D. Oluwo, eds., *The Failure of Centralized State: Institutions of Self-Governance in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); J. Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Joseph, 1999; Paul Gifford, 1995; Pearl T. Robinson, 1994; Robert Fattouh, Jr., “Africa in the Age of Democratization: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society,” *African Studies Review* 38, no. 2(September 1995): 67–99; Edward Dommen, “Paradigms of Governance and Exclusion,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no. 3 (1997): 485–494; and Goran Hyden and others, *The African Perspectives on Governance* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000).
125. Hyden, in Hyden and Bratton, 1992, p. 7.
 126. Goran Hyden, “Governance and the Reconstitution of Political Order,” in Joseph, 1999, pp. 181–182. See Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; and Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993).
 127. Hyden, 1999, p. 185; 1992, p. 7.
 128. Ibid.
 129. Hyden, 1992, p. 21.
 130. Ibid.
 131. See Hans-Georg Gadamer “Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy” in *Reason in an Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
 132. Ibid., p. 90.
 133. Ibid., p. 91.
 134. Ibid.
 135. Ibid., p. 92.
 136. Hyden, 1992, p. 13.
 137. Ibid., p. 15.
 138. Hyden links this scheme to regime types pointing out that governance crisis exists in the communitarian type because of its structural embeddedness; the libertarian because of structural fragmentation; the corporatist because of structural patronage; and the statist because of structural monopoly, pp. 18–19.
 139. See Willard Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 202–203.
 140. Ernest Molua, “Reflecting on Cameroon’s Depraved Civil Service,” *The Post*, April 18, 2005. Posted online April 18, 2005. Distributed by All Africa Global Media (allafrica.com).

141. *Deuxième bureau* is the name for places that sell food and alcoholic beverages near government offices. Civil servants used to go to these places during break and would often return to their offices drunk.
142. One example is George B. N. Ayittey's *Indigenous African Institutions* (Ardley-Hudson, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1991).

CHAPTER 4 RECOVERY IDEAS 2: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

1. Michael Bratton, "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa," *World Politics* 41, no. 3 (April 1989): 428.
2. I have adapted for use here Salvador Giner's definition in "Civil Society, and Its Future," in *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 304.
3. A. Seligman *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: Free Press, 1992); see Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*; Hall, 1995; Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988); and Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
4. Jean-François Bayart, "Civil Society in Africa," in *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 111; I. L. Markovitz, ed., *Studies of Power and Class in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 10.
5. Siteo argues that regardless of how one looks at it, Africa's weak states still influence civil society and make room for it. See Eduardo Siteo, "State and Civil Society in Africa: An Instance of Asymmetric Interdependence?" *Quest* 12, no. 1 (1998): 203–204.
6. Joel D. Barkan and Frank Holmquist, "Peasant–State Relations and the Social Base of Self-Help in Kenya," *World Politics* 14, no. 3 (April 1989): 359–380.
7. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 41. See also John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, eds., *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Bayart, 1986, p. 111; Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993); Robert Fatton Jr., *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992); John W. Harbeson, Donald Rothchild, and Naomi Chazan, eds., *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1994); Célestin Monga, *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); Stephen Ndegwa, *Two Faces of Civil Society: NGOs and Politics in Africa* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996); Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).

8. See "Introduction" in *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*, ed. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 1.
9. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 1n2. Robert Wuthnow pointed out in his Rockwell Lecture at Rice University that a search using LexisNexis returned 3,700 news articles between 1994 and 1995; a dramatic increase from the years between 1985 and 1994, when a similar search yielded 2,900 articles.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
11. Dominique Colas traces the origin of the term back to Aristotle's *koinonia politiké*. Colas argues that references to the concept, including *société civile* and *societas civilis*, appear in translations of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nichomachean Ethics*. Dominique Colas, *Civil Society and Fanaticism: Conjoined Histories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. xvii–xviii; in *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Achille Mbembe traces the idea back to the classical period, beginning with St. Augustine.
12. Colas also refers to notions such as St. Augustine's City of God and Thomas Hobbes's and Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas concerning the state of nature. He argues that Catholic thought (through its social teachings), Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, and John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus* offer a critical response to totalitarianism and sociological perspectives on the state. Colas, 1997, pp. 23, 32–33.
13. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) (see third part, ii Civil Society, p. 122ff.); Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 234–235.
14. One might read developments in Africa as being similar to what Colas describes of the emergence of the concept in the Gorbachev era. See Hall, "In Search of Civil Society," in Hall, 1995, p. 1.
15. See Goran Hyden, "Reciprocity and Governance in Africa," in *The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa*, ed. James Wunsch and Dele Olowu (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); For a view that grounds civil society in African politics, see Rita Kiki Edozie, *People Power and Democracy: The Popular Movement Against Military Despotism in Nigeria, 1989–1999* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2002), p. 42.
16. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 17, 19.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
19. Mahmood Mamdani and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, introduction to *African Studies in Social Movements and Democrac* (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1995), p. 5.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.
21. Hall, 1995, p. 25.

22. Jane Guyer, "The Spatial Dimensions of Civil Society in Africa: An Anthropologist Looks at Nigeria," in Harbeson, Rothchild, and Chazan, 1994, p. 215.
23. Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999, p. 23.
24. Michael Bratton justifies its usefulness "because it embodies a core of universal beliefs and practices about the legitimation of, and limits to, state power." See "Civil Society and Political Transitions in Africa," Harbeson, Rothchild, and Chazan, 1994, p. 52.
25. Bratton, 1994, p. 56.
26. See Philip S. Foner, ed., *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: Citadel Press, 1945).
27. Joel D. Barkan, "Nurturing Civil Society from Above: Decentralization and Democratization in Kenya, Nigeria and India" (paper presented at the conference on Civil Society in Africa at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1992), p. 6.
28. See E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, "Democracy and the Ideology of Order in Kenya," *Democratic Theory and Practice in Africa*, edited by Walter Oyugi, E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, Michael Chege, and Afrifa K. Gitonga, pp. 111–138 (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1988).
29. Robert Fatton describes different realms that could intervene between the state and society to enable a mutual transformation. See Fatton, 1992, pp. 12–13.
30. Bratton's studies from Kenya and Zambia demonstrate that material resources, organizational experience, and an articulated ideology contributed immensely to a viable civil society. See Bratton, 1994 p. 64ff.
31. Paul Nchoji Nkwi, "Rethinking the Role of Elites in Rural Development: A Case Study from Cameroon," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 15, no. 1 (1997): 67–86.
32. Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 46.
33. Wuthnow, 1996, p. 2.
34. This quotation is taken from Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 41.
35. For a discussion of the role of the churches during the period of transition, see Victor C. Ferkiss, "Religion and Politics in Independent African States: A Prolegomenon," in *Transition in African Politics*, ed. J. Butler and A. P. Castagna, pp. 27–28 (New York: Praeger, 1967). In Russia, the Orthodox churches worked hard to rebuild civil society after the collapse of the Soviet empire. See Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).
36. Bratton, 1994, p. 64. Oded Arye argues that the Christian churches in Kenya have played a more active role in the democratic process than Muslims; see *Islam and Politics in Kenya* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

37. Wuthnow describes one of the public roles of religion as “civil criticism” (Wuthnow, 1996, p. 91). I have in mind what traditions that support liberation and reconstruction theologues describe as the prophetic role of the church.
38. Victor C. Ferkiss, *Africa's Search for Identity* (New York : Braziller, 1966), p. 27–28.
39. Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry*, trans. from the French by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), p. 78.
40. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), p. 69.
41. Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa 1980-1994* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).
42. The material in this section is a revised version of my essay published as “Reflections on Thabo Mbeki's Renaissance,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (June 2004): 291–316. I thank the publishers for the permission to use it here.
43. Ineke van Kessel, “In Search of an African Renaissance: An Agenda for Modernisation, Neo-traditionalism or Africanisation,” *Quest* 25, nos. 1–2, p. 43; Eddy T. Maloka, “The South African ‘African Renaissance’ Debate: A Critique,” *Polis/RCSP/CPSR* 8, Numéro Special (2001). See also Peter Vale and Siphon Maseko, “South Africa and the African Renaissance,” *International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1998): 271–287. For further analysis that details other perspectives on the idea of renaissance, see Pieter Boele van Hensbroek, “Philosophies of African Renaissance in African Intellectual History,” *Quest* 25, nos. 1–2 (2001): 129.
44. Thabo Mbeki, *Africa, The Time Has Come: Selected Speeches* (Johannesburg: Mafube, 1998), p. 38.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 200–204. My summary is taken from the online version of the South African government site <http://www.gov.za/speeches/index.html>. I have not taken time to study the relationship, but in preparation for the first democratic elections, the ANC commissioned a recording by several South African musicians on the theme of time, titled, “*Sekunjalo*” (“Now is the Time”).
46. Moletshi Mbeki, “The African Renaissance: Myth or Reality” (address to the SAIIA, Jan Smuts House, Johannesburg, 21 October 1997). Mbeki also referred to the Cape Town Olympic bid, asking that other African countries support that bid to make the new century Africa's century. However, we know today that in early voting the African delegates on the Olympic committee did not support Africa's bid.
47. Maloka, 2001.
48. Cheikh Anta Diop, *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture and Development: 1946–1960*, trans. Egbuna P. Modum (London: Karnak House, 1996), p. 34.
49. Vale and Maseko rightly point out that Mbeki links reconstruction in Africa with African identity. Vale and Maseko, 1998, 278.
50. Maloka, 2001, 5.
51. Peter Vale and Siphon Maseko point out that this was the vision of Jan Smuts, Vale and Maseko, 1998, 274.

52. The continent-wide plans for African recovery have been discussed widely in the literature on political transitions in Africa championed by Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo, then Senegalese leader Abdulaye Wade, and former Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, as well as OAU initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action.
53. Quoted in Moletsi Mbeki, "The African Renaissance," *South African Year Book of International Affairs*, 1989/99, 211.
54. See <http://www.gov.za/whitepaper/index.html>.
55. The journal *Quest* 25, nos. 1–2 (2001): 145–153 has a bibliography of works on the African renaissance and the concept *ubuntu*.
56. See William Makgoba, "Patterns of Thought: A Critical Analysis," in *The African Renaissance: The New Struggle*, pp. 1–10. (Johannesburg: Mafube, 1999).
57. Rosey E. Pool, "The African Renaissance," *Phylon* 14, no. 1 (2000): 5–8.
58. David Coplan has argued that South Africa's mix of musical genres shows that promoting cultural retrieval in music is not always an exercise of preferring "traditional" over other forms of music. See David Coplan, "Sounds of the 'Third Way': Identity and the African Renaissance in Contemporary South African Popular Traditional Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 21, part 1 (2001): 107–124.
59. Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, "South Africa's Foreign Policy and the Great Lake Crisis: African Renaissance Meets *Vagabondage Politique*?" *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 265–286.
60. Thabo Mbeki, "The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World" (speech delivered at the United Nations University, April 9, 1998).
61. Thabo Mbeki, "On the African Renaissance," *African Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1999): 5–10.
62. *Ibid.*, 6.
63. *Ibid.*, 7.
64. *Ibid.*, 8.
65. *Ibid.*, 9.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Taylor and Williams, 2001, 272.
68. M. J. Anstee, *Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process, 1992–93* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).
69. See William Reno's insightful study of what he called "warlord capitalism" in *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998); see also Chabal and Daloz, 1999.
70. Mbeki, 1999, 10.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Emmanuel Katongole, "African Renaissance and the Challenge of Narrative Theology in Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 102 (1998): 30.
73. *Ibid.*, 32.
74. *Ibid.*, 32.
75. *Ibid.*, 33.
76. John W. de Gruchy, "Christian Witness at a Time of African Renaissance," *Ecumenical Review* 49, no. 4 (October 1997): 477.

77. Ibid.
78. Graham Evans, "South Africa's Foreign Policy after Mandela: Mbeki and His Concept of an African Renaissance," *The Round Table* 352 (1999): 621–628.
79. Ibid., 623.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., 626.
83. Ibid.
84. See Vale and Maseko, 1998, 271–289.
85. Evans, 1999, 626.
86. Ibid., 627.
87. Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminister Press, 1982), pp. 50–64.
88. Anton, A. van Nierkerk, "The African Renaissance: Lessons from a Predecessor," *Critical Arts* 13, no. 2 (1999): 66–80.
89. Ibid., 68.
90. See Kenneth Clark, *Civilization* (London: BBC Books, 1969).
91. Van Nierkerk, 1999, 69.
92. Ibid., 70.
93. Ibid., 71. Van Nierkerk argues that *ubuntu* values are as important as the values articulated by the American Declaration of Independence.
94. Ibid., 72.
95. See the essay by W. J. R. Alexander, "African Renaissance or Descent into Anarchy?" *South African Journal of Science* 95, no. 10 (October 1999): . 423–235.
96. Jeffrey M. Sehume, "Strategic Essentialism and the African Renaissance," *Critical Arts Journal* 13, no. 1 (1999): 127–128.
97. Van Nierkerk, 1999, 73.
98. Ali Mazrui, *Towards Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
99. Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 113.
100. Ibid., p. 134.
101. See R. Kiki Edozie "(I) am Esi! Toward a Non-nationalistic African-centered Feminist Theory" (unpublished paper, New York, 2002).
102. Mazrui, 1967, p. 128.

CHAPTER 5 TOWARD AN INTERSUBJECTIVE POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN AFRICA

1. Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1994); Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologist: The Modern British School* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); and Richard Werbner, "The Manchester School in South-Central Africa," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 12 (1984): 157–185.

2. See Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, *Person and Community* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992); Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ivan Karp and Michael Jackson, eds., *Person and Agency: The Experience of Self and Other in African Cultures* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); Paul Riesman, "The Person and the Life Cycle in African Social Life and Thought," *African Studies Review* 29, no. 3 (June 1986): 71–138; Philip Burnham, *The Politics of Cultural Difference in Northern Cameroon* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Kees Schilder, *Quest for Self-Esteem: State, Islam, and Mundang Ethnicity in Northern Cameroon* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994); Elias K. Bongmba, *African Witchcraft and Otherness: A Philosophical and Theological Critique of Intersubjective Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); and Richard Werbner, ed., *Postcolonial Subjectivities in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2002).
3. See Werbner, 2002, especially his introduction.
4. Bongmba, 2001.
5. Michael Jackson, ed., *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
6. Paul Riesman, *Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography*, trans. Martha Fuller (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1977), p. 149. Riesman's comments here refer to his experience of sharing life with the Fulani people, who at first were very hesitant to open up to him. Elsewhere, Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued: "It is clear that the life-world is always at the same time a communal world that involves being with other people as well. It is a world of persons, and in the natural attitude the validity of this personal world is assumed." See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinshiemer and Donald Marshall (New York: Crossroads, 1989), pp. 246, 267.
7. Burnham, 1996, p. 53; Schilder, 1994.
8. Burnham, 1996, p. 53. I think that Burnham uses race here in the general sense to mean an ethnic group, except that this group sees itself as a totally different group from the others. I do not think there is any technical meaning attached to the notion of race here in Burnham's work.
9. Ibid.
10. Schilder, 1994, p. 37.
11. Burnham, 1996, p. 53; Schilder, 1994, p. 37.
12. Fon Angwafor I, conversation with the author, May 2002.
13. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).
14. For a recent work that develops the ideas of Husserl in African philosophy, see Paulin Hountondji, *The Search for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture, and Democracy in Africa*, trans. from French by John Conteh Morgan (Foreword by K. Anthony Appiah) (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).

15. V. Y. Mudimbe, *Tales of Faith: Religion as Political Performance in Central Africa* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), p. 199.
16. Husserl's project opens a conversation that is joined by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Alfred Schultz, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and, to a certain extent, Jacques Derrida, to name only a few.
17. Husserl, 1960, pp. 29–30.
18. See Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 15–16. Theunissen rightly points out that Husserl leaves room for a concrete subjectivity because the individual ego is its "initial object." Husserl's move, though, was not only to set the base for understanding subjectivity in the ego but also to argue that it cannot ignore an alter ego. What is important to my purpose here is the notion that this base for subjectivity does not have to be understood as a transcendental superindividual.
19. Quoted in the introduction to Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. xix.
20. Husserl, 1960, p. 65.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
23. *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p. 82
30. *Ibid.*
31. David Carr, *Interpreting Husserl: Critical and Comparative Studies* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 16.
32. Husserl, 1960, p. 91.
33. *Ibid.* David Carr points out that Husserl has already established the transcendence of the world as such, and transcendence here means nothing more than the irreducibility of what appears to my individual ego. This remains a paradox because Husserl also argues that all things in the world acquire determination and "existential status, exclusively from my experiencing, my objectifying, thinking, valuing, or doing . . . notably, the status of an evidently valid being is one it can acquire only from my own evidences, my grounding acts" (Husserl, 1960, p. 26).
34. Husserl, 1960, p. 92. Husserl includes the existence of spiritual beings and cultural objects and argues that all this is also there for everyone. Writing in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes encountering the other in ways that are remarkably close to what Husserl states in *Cartesian Meditations*. Merleau-Ponty argues that it is through my consciousness that I encounter an other in his or her body with the same structure as mine,

- through whose body I become aware of “a miraculous prolongation of my own intention.” See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and Shoichi Matsuba, eds., *Immersing in the Concrete: Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Japanese Perspective* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Publishers, 1998), p. 378. See also M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. from the French by Colin Smith, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).
35. Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology After Husserl* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 64, 65.
 36. As Steinbock argues: “In my primordial sphere, my body, my lived-body, my psychological ego are always set in relief, prominent, at least prereflectively” (Steinbock, 1995, pp. 67–68).
 37. Husserl, 1960, p. 109.
 38. Paul Ricoeur points out appropriately that “this nature which is my own is a nature centered in my body. When this nature becomes the sphere for the exercise of my powers, it is what I can see, touch, and hear. Thus, the reduction to the ownness of sphere makes the body as body stand out . . . Thenceforth, the ‘own’ is my flesh (*ma chair*), to use Merleau-Ponty’s term.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 122. David Carr writes: “While the other is not merely an object in the world of things given to me, he is nevertheless related to the world, and this in two ways: first he is given to me somehow through his body, which is part of the world as a perceived object, second, this object and the rest of my world must be for him as well as for me. Husserl must point to a form of my experience through which another subject is given as an individual when his body is given and through which the world becomes the world for both of us” (Carr, 1987, p. 53).
 39. Ricoeur, 1967, p. 123.
 40. Husserl, 1960, pp. 113, 117.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 44. Carr, 1987, p. 58. Merleau-Ponty discusses the relation with the other but affirms that regardless of what the ego does, its activities are self-centered or radiate from the world of the ego. “I enter into a pact with the other, having resolved to live in an interworld in which I accord as much place to others as to myself. But this interworld is still a project of mine, and it would be hypocritical to pretend that I seek the welfare of another as if it were mine, since this very attachment to another’s interest still has its source in me.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 357) This is a remarkable attestation not only of ego-constitution and world making that is consistent with Husserlian perspectives, but also of the self-centeredness of egology. However, Merleau-Ponty also suggests that rather than understand intersubjectivity as mainly a problem of the other, one could try to understand it from what he describes as the constellations of others (Steinbock, 1995, p. 75). See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968)

45. Husserl, 1960, p. 120.
46. Matsuba also argues that Merleau-Ponty talks of transcendental subjectivity as a revelation to itself and others, and that this is intersubjectivity. It is a community that the thinking subject is still in control, of because as Merleau-Ponty points out, "I can evoke a solipsist philosophy but in doing so, I assume the existence of a community of men endowed with speech, and I address myself to it" (Tymieniecka and Matsuba, 1998, p. 379). Ricoeur points out that Husserl makes distinctions that can be transferred to his discussion of community because one can clearly see the distinctions between "own" and "strange" (Ricoeur, 1967, p. 138).
47. According to Matsuba, Merleau-Ponty's position in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be summarized in the following way: as an ego, I exist, others exist but the state of affairs between others and I is something like antagonism, and intersubjectivity remains solipsism (1998, p. 380).
48. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969). Such a defense does not endorse the primacy of the Cartesian subject nor the transcendental subject of Husserl, but affirms the individual human subject who not only thinks but also experiences the full range of human emotions and whose being-in-the-world is a shared experience with other persons.
49. Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984).
50. Levinas, 1969, p. 39.
51. Meyer Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on Tallensi Religion*, ed. with introduction by Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See chap. 10, "The Concept of a Person," pp. 247–286.
52. Suzette Heald, *Manhood and Morality: Sex, Violence and Ritual in Gisu Society* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 3.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
54. Writing in the introduction to their well-received volume on personhood in Africa, Karp and Jackson argue that "Africans and Europeans alike experience a tension between the way the world appears in its givenness or facticity and the way one wants it to be. It is in moments of crisis, when the routines of ordinary life are held in abeyance, that people most dramatically bring into focus and negotiate a sense of meaning for their lives" (Karp and Jackson, 1990, pp. 27–28). Karp and Jackson later add: "Formalized notions of personhood are not to be construed as descriptive of a static, preordained, social world; they are instrumentalities which people actively use in constructing and reconstructing a world which adjusts values and goals inherited from the past to the problems and exigencies which comprise their social existence in the here and now" (*ibid.*, p. 28).
55. The names Tanyui and Munyui are names given to male and female twins in Wimbun society.
56. Kris Hardin, *The Aesthetics of Action: Continuity and Change in a West African Town* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p. 93.

57. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
58. Dickson Eyoh refers to the diversity of Cameroon as comprising the “co-existence of Christianity and Islam alongside an indigenous belief system and a population divided into more than 100 ethnicities.” See Eyoh, “Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship: Identity and the Politics of State Reconstruction in Cameroon” (unpublished paper, 2000). Under President Biya, emphasis has been placed on the politics of belonging, creating a situation where the privileged Hausa Fulani of the Ahidjo era have now been replaced by a process that Eyoh describes as “the privatization of the state by the *essingan* (a closely knit circle of senior politicians, bureaucrats, and academics from the Beti and related ethnic groups), and *les Yaoundés* were collectively the beneficiaries.”
59. Piet Könings and Francis Nyamnjoh, “The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (1997): 207–229.
60. John Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility: Essays 1981–1989* (London: Polity Press, 1990), p. 203.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

CHAPTER 6 RETHINKING GENDER RELATIONS: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

1. Daisy N. Nwachuku, “The Christian Widow in African Culture,” *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 64.
2. Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom: Anthropology and Popular Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1998), pp. 20–21.
3. African female writers who have addressed erotic justice include Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Bâ, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Calixthe Beyala, Rebecca Njau, Nawal El Saadawi, Zaynab Alkali, Bessie Head, and others.
4. Some African scholars criticize feminist discourse, claiming that the enemies of Africa use it to misrepresent Africa. Femi Ojo-Ade is also critical of feminist perspectives, as demonstrated by his essay “Still a Victim? Mariama Bâ’s *Une si longue Lettre*,” in *African Literature Today*, no. 12 (1982): 71–87; Owomoyela Oyekan, *The African Difference: Discourses on Africanity and the Relativity of Cultures*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996.
5. Some general works on women go back to colonial times. See P. M. Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields: A Study of the Economic Position of Women in Bamenda, British Cameroons* (London: HMSO, 1952); Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Denise Paulme, ed., *Women of Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Kenneth Little, *African Women in Towns* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973); J. D. Bryson, *Women*

- and Economic Development in Cameroon* (Yaoundé: USAID, 1979); Shirley Ardener, ed., *Perceiving Women* (New York: Halstead Press, 1975); Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Women in Africa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); Barbara E. Harrell-Bond, *Modern Marriage in Sierra Leone* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975); Jacklyn Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1980); Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter, eds., *African Women South of the Sahara* (New York: Longman, 1995); Catherine Coles and Beverly Mack, eds., *Hausa Women in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Piet Könings, *Gender and Class in the Tea Estates of Cameroon* (Leiden: African Studies Center, 1995); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing, *Women in African and the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996); Gwendolyn Mikell, *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Florence Abena Dolohy, *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1991); and Obioma Nnaemeka, *The Politics of Mothering* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997).
6. For a good introduction to feminism and gender in Africa, see Andrea Cornwall, "Introduction: Perspectives on Gender in Africa," in *Readings in Gender in Africa*, ed. Andrea Cornwall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 2005), pp. 1–19.
 7. See Josephine Beoku-Betts, "Western Perceptions of African Women in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Africana Research Bulletin* 6, no. 4 (1976): 86–114. Beoku-Betts points out that Denise Amaury Talbot's book, *Women's Mysteries of a Primitive People*, is the first significant work that took women seriously by describing their daily lives, folktales, legends, and court cases. She was convinced that "primitive woman was still unknown save through the medium of masculine influence . . . Not one word of information essentially depicted the feminine point of view without some man interfering as inquirer or interpreter" (Cornwall, 2005, p. 24).
 8. See Maria Rosa Cutrifelli, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* (London: Zed Press, 1984).
 9. Cornwall argues that this negative portrayal of African women has run its course, because works such as Denise Paulme's *Women of Tropical Africa* and Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay's book *Women in Africa* emphasize the everyday experience of women and add a historical dimension that demonstrates the agency of women and their power in the community. See Paulme, 1963; Hafkin and Bay, 1976.
 10. Gwendolyn Mikell has argued that the emerging African feminist is concerned with "bread, butter, culture, and power issues" (Mikell, 1997, p. 4). Women will continue to bring their own resources to the fight for liberation, but they will also turn to other places for additional resources that will improve the human condition.

11. Obioma Nnaemeka, "Mapping African Feminisms," in Cornwall, 2005, p. 32. See also Nnaemeka's introduction to *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 1998).
12. Nnaemeka, "Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 2 (2003): 257–285.
13. *Ibid.*, 378.
14. *Ibid.*, 361. See also Nnaemeka, 1998.
15. Nnaemeka, 2003, 378. Gwendolyn Mikell argues that if women have shown complicity by subscribing to ideologies of domination, they have done so as a pragmatic choice for themselves and their children. Mikell, 1997, p. 5.
16. Ifi Amadiume, *Re-inventing Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 194.
17. Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Societies* (London: Zed Books, 1987).
18. Oyewùmi Oyèrónké, *The Invention of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
19. See her discussion on p. 33ff.
20. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
21. Nyambura J. Njeroge, "The Missing Voice: African Women Doing Theology," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (November 1997): 77–83. For accounts of the Circle, see: Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "The Circle," in *Talitha Qumi!: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians, 1989*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1990); Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (November 1997): 68–76. For a full length study of the Circle, see Carrie Pemberton, *Circle Thinking: African Women Theologians in Dialogue with the West* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003); Bridget Marie Monohan, "Writing, Sharing, Doing: The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" (BA Honors thesis, Boston College, 2004).
22. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986).
23. Njeroge, 1997, p. 77.
24. See M. R. A. Kanyoro, "Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Contribution," in *Women's Visions: Theological Reflection, Celebration, Action*, ed. O. Ortega (Geneva: WCC, 1995).
25. Oduyoye, "Spirituality of Resistance and Reconstruction," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. M. J. Mananzan and others (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 169.
26. For a bibliography of publications by members of the Circle, see Pemberton, 2003.
27. Dorothy Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy, eds., "*Wicked*" *Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001). See also, for instance, Ifi Amadiume, 1987, 1997; Helen Chukwuma, *Accents in the*

- Nigerian Novel*, (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Pearl Publishers, 1991; Carole Boyce Davies, "Introduction: Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism," in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Anna Adams Graves (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1986); Nnaemeka, 1998; Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994).
28. Michael Kirwen, *African Widows : An Empirical Study of the Problems of Adapting Western Christian Teachings on Marriage to the Leviratic Custom for the Care of Widows in Four Rural African Societies*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).
 29. Betty Potash, *Widows in African Societies: Choices and Constraints* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); Beatrice Mutongi, "Generations of Grief and Grievances: A History of Widows and Widowhood in Maragoli, Western Kenya, 1900 to Present" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1996).
 30. See Kenda Mutongi, "Worries of the Heart: Widowed Mothers, Daughters and Masculinities in Maragoli, Western Kenya, 1940–60," *Journal of African History* 40, no.1 (1999): 67–86.
 31. Mutongi, 1996, p. 12.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45, 47–48.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
 37. Michael Kirwen, *African Widows: An Empirical Study of the Problems of Adapting Western Christian Teachings on Marriage to the Leviratic Custom for the Care of Widows in Four Rural African Societies*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979). When churches in Kenya tried to address the issues of widowhood, the strategies adopted to solve the problem included asking the woman to live outside the homestead, in some cases, the church provided land for the widow and people called the widow the pastor's woman. Some churches also suggested that the woman could marry outside her husband's family, or live a single life (Kirwen, 1979, p. 12).
 38. Kirwen, p. 30.
 39. pp. 35–36.
 40. p. 167.
 41. pp. 204–205.
 42. p. 206.
 43. p. 208.
 44. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 110–117.
 45. I interviewed Mrs Miriam Nformi at her residence in the Southwest Province in May 2001.
 46. Court Papers, Suit No. A.E. 06/96/1m/96 No. 4.
 47. Court Papers, Suit No. A.E. 06/96/1m/96, No. 5.
 48. Court Papers, Suit No. AE'06/96/1m/96, No. 7.

49. Court Papers, No. 7, p. 3.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
54. See Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (New York: Routledge Press, 1994), p. 133.
55. Potash, 1986, p. 42.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 27. Potash argues that the literature supports this perspective and she cites Bay, 1982; Christine Oppong, ed. *Female and Male in West Africa* (London and Boston: Allen & Urwin, 1983); and Filomina Chioma Steady, ed. *The Black Woman: Cross Culturally* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1981). Studies show that the economic condition of the Nandi widows remained the same as when their husbands were alive (Potash, 1986, p. 28). Potash argues that the data calls for a rethinking of anthropological theory, which readily suggests that women are “objects of male transactions.” She calls for a reconsideration of alliance theories, affinal relationships, and descent theories.
57. Potash, 1986, p. 38.
58. See discussions on postcolonial reading of the Bible by Musa Dube, *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. (Atlanta: GA: Society for Biblical Literature; Geneva, WCC Publications, 2001); Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000). See also the work of R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 22–23.
59. Margaret Owen. *A World of Widows* (London: Zed Books, 1996), p. 14.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
61. Audre Lorde argues: “The superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and feel both contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence.” Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), p. 53. Robert Solomon argues that eros is virtuous and that people often fail to see this aspect of eros. See also Robert C. Solomon, “The Virtue of (Erotic) Love,” in *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love*, ed. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, Foreword by Arthur C. Danto (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), pp. 492–518.
62. According to Solomon, this desire includes the desire to be with the other person, to be appreciated, to be happy together, to be and do the best that one can do for the other person (Solomon, 1991, p. 511).
63. Lorde, 1984, pp. 53–69.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 59, 68. See also Carter Heyward, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987) and *When Boundaries Betray Us: Beyond Illusions of What is Ethical in Therapy and Life* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1983).

66. Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961). The translation of the *Symposium* is by Michael Joyce.
67. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 33, 34.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
69. *Ibid.*
70. In invoking Plato, I do not mean to imply that Greek thought is superior to African thought. I simply mention him here because the *Symposium* is an important text on the subject of eros.
71. Plato, *Symposium*, 179a, 180b
72. *Ibid.*, 184c, 185b
73. *Ibid.*, 188d
74. *Ibid.*, 191a, 192a
75. *Ibid.*, 192b, 192c.
76. The genius of the *Symposium* lies in the fact that Plato brings together multiple voices on love and sexuality. Solomon argues: "If love is a virtue in the sense that I want to defend here, it must apply to Alcibiades as well as Socrates. Socrates gives us a noble sense of the idealization that is part and parcel of eros, but I think that we can safely say that he goes too far in abandoning the eroticism of the particular" (Solomon, 1991, p. 504).
77. Lorde, 1984, p. 55. Lorde writes: "Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives" (*ibid.*, p. 57).
78. T. O. Beidelman, *The Cool Knife: Imagery of Gender, Sexuality, and Moral Education in Kaguru Initiation Ritual* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p. 8.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
80. See Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
81. Wendy Farley, *Eros for the Other: Retaining Truth in a Pluralistic World*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), pp. 158–177.
82. Farley, 1996, p. 73.
83. Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 112.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–113.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
86. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 90.
87. Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues: "There is an erotic 'comprehension' not of the order of understanding, since understanding subsumes an experience, once perceived, under some idea, while desire comprehends blindly by linking body to body." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. from the French by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 157.

88. Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 57.
89. Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 84.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
91. Plato, *Symposium*, 187a.
92. Nfah-Abbenyi argues that the writings of Cameroonian writers Calixthe Beyala and Werewere Liking exude erotic energy (Abbenyi, 1997).
93. Miriam Goheen, *Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grassfields* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).
94. Levinas, 1969, p. 266.
95. Plato, *Symposium*, 208: d, e.

CHAPTER 7 RETHINKING POWER IN AFRICA: RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. The material used in this chapter is a revised version of my essay, "Rethinking Power in Africa: Theological Perspectives," in *Religion and Theology* 11, no. 2 (2004): 103–138. I am thankful to the editors for permission to use the material here.
2. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Civil Disobedience and Beyond: Law, Resistance and Religion in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), p. 2.
3. For a recent discussion of religion and power in Africa, see Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (London: Hurst and Company, 2004).
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For a historical analysis of these distinctions, see Adrian Hastings, "The Churches and Democracy: Reviewing a Relationship," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1995), pp. 36–46.
5. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 1–2; Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (London: James Currey, 1990); and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 1–2.
6. Jeff Haynes argues that in a spiritual sense, "religion pertains to models of social and individual behaviour that help believers to organize their everyday lives. In this sense, religion is to do with the idea of transcendence – that is, it relates to supernatural realities; with sacredness – that is, as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with ultimacy – that is, it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence." *Religion and Politics in Africa* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers; London: Zed Books, 1996), pp. 1–2.
7. This description is based on the definition of religion by E. B. Taylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 8.

8. "Exposed, Terror Gang of Kayole," *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), October 25, 2000.
9. Muthui Mwai, "What Makes Mungiki Tick?" *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), October 23, 2000.
10. For a partial list of works that discuss healing in independent churches, see Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); Gerhadaus C. Oosthuizen, *The Healer-Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992); Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); J. P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu City* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); G. C. Oosthuizen, S. D. Edwards, W. H. Wessels, I. Hexham, eds., *Afro-Christian Religion and Healing in Southern Africa* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989); Stuart C. Bate, *Inculturation of the Christian Mission to Heal in the South African Context* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999). See also works that address the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa, such as Brigit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); and Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2000).
11. Gerrie ter Haar, "African Christians in Europe," in *Religious Communities in the Diaspora*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001). Professor Jacob Olupona of the University of California, Davis is leading a study of immigrant congregations in North America funded by the Ford Foundation. He organized the first conference of researchers at UC Davis in December 2004.
12. See Ellis and ter Haar, 2004, p. 2.
13. See ter Haar, "Religion: Source of Conflict or Resource for Peace?" in *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar and James Busuttill (Leiden: E J Brill, 2005), p. 22.
14. An example here would be cases in Christian history where members of the Christian church have been sanctioned or killed for expressing what church authorities considered heretical ideas. Confrontation has arisen in Nigeria, for example, because some people think that the society ought to be governed by Sharia. See Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998).
15. From the beginning of independence, violence has erupted between Hindu and Muslim communities in India, resulting in the loss of life and the destruction of temples and masjids. In the 1992 Babri Masjid violence, about 3,000 people died, and the Babri Masjid, which was the oldest mosque in India, was destroyed. See Chandra Muzaffar, "Religious Conflict in Asia: Probing the Causes, Seeking Solutions," in Gerrie ter Harr and Busuttill, 2005, p. 57.
16. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).
17. This conversation took place in Bamenda, Northwest Province of Cameroon, summer 2003.

18. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993); Paul Gifford, 1998, especially see his discussion of the Catholic Church and development in Uganda.
19. Achille Mbembe, *Afriques Indociles. Christianisme, Pouvoir et état en société post-coloniale* (Paris: Karthala, 1988), p. 96. See Haynes, 1996, especially chap. 5, 6, and 7
20. The Nigerian religious leader Father Matthew H. Kukah declared: "The religious question . . . is now the single greatest threat to the existence of the Nigerian state." See Matthew H. Kukah, "Religion, Ethnicity and the Politics of Constitutionalism in Africa" (lecture, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, November 13, 2000). Reported in *Post Express*, Lagos, November 13, 2000. Quotation taken from Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Prophets, 'False Prophets,' and the African State: Emergent Issues of Religious Freedom and Conflict," in *New Religious Movements in the 21st Century: Legal, Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective*, eds. Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 152.
21. See Haynes, 1996, pp. 100–102; see also Kees Schilder, *Quest for Self-Esteem: State, Islam, and Mundang Ethnicity in Northern Cameroon* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994).
22. See Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits War in Northern Uganda 1985–97*, trans. Mitch Cohen (Oxford: James Currey, 1999).
23. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4246754.stm>
24. Villa-Vicencio, 1990.
25. See John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and *The Journey toward Reconciliation* (foreword by Harold H. Saunders) (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).
26. Chandra Muzaffar, "Religious Conflict in Asia: Probing the Causes, Seeking Solutions," in Gerie ter Haar and Busuttill, pp. 57–79.
27. For brief remarks of Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio, see <http://www.nd.edu/~krocinst/research/villavicencio.html>. I am indebted to some remarks on this subject by Professor Jean Comaroff. See <http://www.nd.edu/~krocinst/research/jinjaconf.html>. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to this material.
28. Jean-François Bayart, "La fonction politique des églises au Cameroon," *Revue Francaise de Science Politique* 3 (June 1973): 514–536.
29. *Ibid.*, 514
30. See Timothy P. Longman "Christianity and Crisis in Rwanda: Religion, Civil Society, Democratization and Decline," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1995).
31. Isaac Phiri, *Proclaiming Political Pluralism: Churches and Political Transitions in Africa* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).
32. See Michael Bratton, "Non-Governmental Organizations in Africa: Can They Influence Public Policy?" in *The Changing Politics of Non-Governmental Organizations and African States*, ed. Eve Sandberg (Westport, CT: Praeger,

- 1994). See also Karen Jenkins "The Christian Church as an NGO in Africa: Supporting Post-Independence Era State Legitimacy or Promoting Change?" in Sandberg, pp. 83–99.
33. See Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, *Les conférences nationales en Afrique noire: Une affaire à suivre* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).
 34. Pierre Titi Nwel, "The Churches and The Democratic Upheaval in Cameroon 1982–1993," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 171, 178.
 35. Alex Vines and Ken Wilson, "Churches and the Peace Process in Mozambique," in Gifford, 1995, p. 138.
 36. Matthew Hassan Kukah, "Christians and Nigeria's Aborted Transition," in Gifford, 1995), pp. 233–235.
 37. Gifford, 1995, p. 4.
 38. Anne Tristan Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa 1980–1994*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).
 39. J. D. Y. Peel points out that Bishop Crowther, in his translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* in 1850, used the word *agbara* to translate "power" in order to avoid *àse*, because of its associations with the *Òrìsà*. See, J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 195.
 40. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (New York: Wazobia, 1994), p. 72.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
 42. Henry John Drewal and John Pemberton III with Rowland Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (New York: The Center for African Art, 1989), p. 16.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. Andrew Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 117.
 46. Ruth Marshall has criticized Apter for "[investing] overwhelming significance in a religious form which in the post-colonial period has relatively little influence in the daily lives of people, and hardly touches on the relationship between this and the contemporary importance of Christianity and Islam." See "God is not a Democrat, Pentecostalism and Democratisation in Nigeria," in Gifford, 1995, p. 240. Marshall also excoriates academics for failing to see the big picture because they are locked in disciplinary approaches. In addition, scholars pass on Western models to Africa in an ahistorical manner. Marshall calls for an approach that examines the yearnings of the people by looking at the new political language of the demos, which draws popular Christianity. I think Marshall's criticism of Apter and other social scientists is misdirected. But Marshall's point about the desires of the people for democracy is well taken, so is her critique of the powers of Pentecostal leaders.
 47. Jacob Olupona, *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festivals* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1991), p. 59.

48. Ibid.
49. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
50. Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); J. N. K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War* (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers, 1995); and Mary N. Getui and Emmanuel A. Obeng, eds., *Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 1999).
51. Villa-Vicencio, 1992, p. 2.
52. Ibid., p. 7.
53. Mugambi, 1995, p. 15.
54. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, eds., *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).
55. Rosemary Edet, "Critical Review of the *Lineamenta* on Dialogue, Justice, Peace and Social Communications," in *The Church in Africa and the Special African Synod*, ed. J. S. T. Ukpogon, T. Okure and others (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: CIWA Publications, 1991) pp. 168, 171. See Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Prophetic Mission of the Church: The voices of African Women," in *Mission in African Christianity: Critical Issues in Missiology*, ed. Nasimiyu-Wasike, A. and D. Waruta (Nairobi, Kenya: Uzima Press, 1993), pp. 168–169.
56. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
57. Ibid., pp. 36–37.
58. Ibid., pp. 38–39.
59. Ibid., p. 40.
60. Ibid., p. 41.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934–60).
64. The notion "preferential option for the poor" articulated by liberation theologians also articulated a preferential option for the young.
65. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957), II/I, p. 386. See also *Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 493.
66. J. B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology* (London: Barnes and Oates, 1980), p. 88.
67. Tillich, 1954, p. 44.
68. Ibid., p. 45.
69. Kyle A. Pasewark, *A Theology of Power: Being and Beyond Domination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 285.
70. Ibid., p. 285, For an earlier analysis of power by Tillich, see *The Interpretation of History*, trans. Elsa L. Talmey. (New York: Scribner's, 1936), pp. 185–187.

71. Tillich, 1954, p. 120.
72. Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 3.
73. Takatso Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1983), p. 234.
74. James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 76.
75. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
76. Tillich, 1954, pp. 64–65. Tillich also points out: “When individualization reaches the perfect form which we call a ‘person,’ participation reaches the perfect form which we call ‘communion.’” See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1: 176.
77. Thomas Ogletree has described this notion of stranger in his book *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 2ff.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
79. Tillich illustrated this by indicating that laws intended to govern family structure at some period may actually destroy the family at another period (Tillich, 1954, p. 57).
80. Tillich, 1954, p. 60.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
88. It is because of this demonstration of self-assertion at the expense of others that Tillich articulates his views on love (Tillich, 1954). See also my discussion of Tillich on love in Elias Bongmba, *African Witchcraft and Otherness: A Philosophical and Theological Critique of Intersubjective Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
89. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Roseberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa: An Essay in Political Interpretation*. (London: Macmillan, 1992); Bayart, 1993; See also John Gledhill, *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 1994).
90. They have established networks of accumulations and established clientele relationships that cater to their own desires. See Bayart, 1993, particularly chap. 2, 7, and 8.
91. Tillich, 1954, p. 46.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

96. See Tillich's essay, "The State as Expectation and Demand," in *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), p. 97ff.
97. Tillich, 1954, p. 84.
98. Abraham Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1966), p. 102.
99. Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 19.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.
101. Tillich, 1954, p. 97.
102. *Ibid.* pp. 98–99.
103. The discussion on love, power, and justice is grounded on being, and Tillich links justice to God by arguing that God is being and is the source of love, power, and justice. These three are one in God and ought to be part of a holy community. In this community, agape elevates the libido, eros and *philia*. While agape elevates the libido, *eros* is the driving force of "cultural creativity." However, as agape rescues the ambiguities of other forms of love, spiritual power also addresses the ambiguities and nature of power (Tillich, 1954, p. 117).
104. *Ibid.*
105. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 214–215. Mbembe's conversation partners in his chapter "God's Phallus" include H. Eilberg-Schwartz, from whom Mbembe has taken the notion of God's phallus, as well as Sigmund Freud and Hegel. See H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Sigmund Freud, *Introduction à la psychanalyse* (Paris: Payot, 1989) and *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1957). See also C. Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone, 1992) and *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
106. See, Elias K. Bongmba, "The Death of God" (unpublished paper, 1992).
107. G. W. F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. and ed. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 189.
108. Eberhard Jungel points out that the expression "God himself lies dead" was a well-known Lutheran theological expression, and indeed is an expression that we can trace from the theologies of the past. Tertullian said that God died, but lived eternally. Eberhard Jungel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 1983), p. 64.
109. For a contemporary use of the notion of death of God in the way that the theological tradition (and Hegel) used it, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
110. Peter Hodgson, *God in History: Shapes of Freedom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 93.

111. Hans Küing spells out Hegel's Christology in his work *Menschwerdung Gottes* (*The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*), trans. J. Stephenson, (New York: Crossroad, 1987).
112. Hodgson, 1989, p. 95.
113. See Isabel Apawo Phiri, "A Theological Analysis of the Voices of Teenage Girls on 'Men's Role in the Fight against HIV/AIDS' in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 120 (November 2004): 34–45. Phiri argues that hope today has to come from gender relations: men must work in a responsible manner to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

CONCLUSION BEYOND PESSIMISM TO OPTIMISM: IN LOVE WITH AFRICA

1. Aung San Suu Kyi, "Freedom, Development, and Human Worth," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 18.
2. For philosophical discussions of morality in Africa see, Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, *Person and Community* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992); Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflection on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Paulin Houtondji, *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture, and Democracy in Africa*, trans. John Conteh-Morgan, foreword by K. Anthony Appiah (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).
3. Bénézet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue Between North and South* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines, 1998), p. 54.
4. Bujo, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines, 1990), p. 50.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 68
6. John W de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: Towards a Just World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 191.
7. Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), p. 180.
8. Martha Nussbaum argues: "For it is the genius of Plato's philosophical writing to show us here the intervening of thought with action, of the experience of love with philosophical speech about love, of the philosophical defense of passion with a personal acknowledgment of openness and receptivity. If these characters can bear to experience passion as they do, it is in part because they dare to think and argue as they do, because philosophical speech shows them ways of looking at the world." *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 211–212.
9. Augustine, *Letters 100–155 II/2*; see also *Letter 137*, 5.17, translation and notes by Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1900), p. 223.

10. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1950), bk. 14.28.
11. Augustine, *On Order*, trans. R. P. Russell (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 2.8.25
12. Augustine, 1950, bk. 5.24.
13. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff, with an introduction by L.H. Hackstaff (Indianapolis: The Boobs-Merrill Company, 1964), p. 14.
14. Not his real name. This conversation took place in his store.
15. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 256–258.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
17. Commission for Africa, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 2005). See online version at: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html>
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
20. *Ibid.*

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