

ANALYZING AFRICAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the nature, objectives and trends of African social and political philosophy. It distinguishes two major axis: identity and emancipation of Africa as well as democracy and cultural diversity. The former includes theories such as negritude, African socialism, African humanism, pan-Africanism, while the latter concentrates on ideas of democracy, civil society and cultural diversity.¹

Introduction

African social and political philosophy is deeply interlaced with the daily life of African people. Therefore, the paper explores the development of this philosophy in agreement with some major events characterizing African history from the colonial period up to now. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section explores both the object and nature of African social and political philosophy. Three objectives are considered: the well-being of African people, the issue of power and the search for a suited paradigm of social and political organization. This section also examines the relationship between African social and political philosophy and ontology as well as it reminds some neglected sources of this philosophical thought, such as literature, music and art. The second section concentrates on antecedents of today's African social and political philosophy, introducing personalities such as Africanus J. B. Horton and the issue of modern African states, Edward W. Blyden about African regeneration, J. E. Casely Hayford with regard to the claim for African self-governance. The third section analyzes ideas of African identity and African emancipation. It puts emphasis on notions such as African socialism, African Humanism, African liberation, and African modernization. The fourth section focuses on the current context of Africa exploring challenges such as African rush towards democracy, African civil society, and cultural diversity. African social and political philosophy is an important field of research. The paper concentrates on its panoramic presentation, evoking main trends and suggesting new debates and challenges. The expression "African political philosophy" will stand for "African social and political philosophy".

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I. Defining African Political Philosophy

I-1. What is African Political Philosophy about?

African political philosophy is a less explored field of study in comparison to research areas such as metaphysics, anthropology, theology, sociology and economics (Táfwo 2004, 243; Boele van Hensbroeck s.d., 9). Many people confine this discipline to theories of one or another emblematic African leader such as Nkrumah (1909-1972), Senghor (1906-2001) and Nyerere (1922-1999). Others reduce this philosophy to both the vicissitudes and hazards of African politics in considering it as a chronicle of ups and downs of African nations. These two approaches deform the nature of this philosophy and they skip over the effort of African people to frame rationally their social and political organization. As a reflection on the polis, African political philosophy is concerned with people's everyday life, everyday experience of alliances and collective actions. This reality constitutes its roots and nourishing sap. It is advisable speaking of "common world", to make use of Arendt's expression (Arendt 1994). This idea defines political sphere as a space where people reveal themselves to each other as equal, and where they manifest their desire to build together a humanizing community. This anchoring of political philosophy in the common world is unavoidable and necessary at a time, because it is the means by which this philosophy specifies its object and forges its identity. Three classical concerns of political philosophy can be considered as essential to African political philosophy: the well-being of African citizens, the power, and the suited paradigm for social and political organization. The issue of well-being of citizens is a permanent topic of political philosophy. From Socrates up to today, nobody omits this topic even if each philosopher assigns to it a particular content and sketches differently the modalities of its achievement. In this regard, African political philosophers have to deal with multiple challenges: African emancipation, poverty, human rights, gender, and democracy, to mention some few.

African political philosophy also addresses the issue concerning the nature and justification of power. Following questions are often debated: who governs the polis? By which principles does he/she achieve such a duty? According to what modalities and in response to what purpose does he/she rule? The search for a suited paradigm of social and political organization has been reduced to the choice between capitalism and socialism, in Africa. For many leaders, socialism was the best option because it was thought to be in compliance with African culture. Senghor, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Sekou Touré, Mboya have made of this option their priority. Many others leaders remained loyal to capitalism. This was the case of people such as Mobutu (Congo/Zaire), Ahidjo (Cameroun), Eyadema (Togo), and Bongo (Gabon). Beyond this ideological option, they all remained submitted to foreign (Western) interests and policy as well as they developed a philosophy of power based on a single party rule principle.

I-2. African Political Philosophy and Ontology

The relationship between political philosophy and ontology is a fundamental issue because it concerns the relevance of ontological considerations in the sphere of political philosophy, and vice versa. This issue is very complex about Africa: on the one hand, some African philosophers consider the search of African quintessence as an unavoidable background to analyze issues of the polis. On the

other hand, the political sphere is viewed as only a space of empirical attitudes and pragmatism.

The debate on Tempels' work, *Bantu Philosophy* (1947), contributed to denounce epistemological and cultural imperialism denying the existence of any particular philosophy beyond that inherited from the Greek genius. It also revealed the difficulty for African philosophers to formulate a consensual definition of African philosophy (Bell 2002, 21-22). However, it is convened –at expenses of the concept of philosophy- that African philosophy exists even before the work of Tempels (Bidima 1995, 9). This assertion can be also considered valid about African political philosophy, as this philosophy has always accompanied African people in their search for a better polis. The evoked debate allowed the systematization of premises underlying this search. Theories of African humanism and African socialism, for example, rest on this premise. For many scholars and political leaders the ontology as sustained by Tempels constitutes an invaluable *vade mecum*. The idea of Senghor concerning African peculiarity, for example, rests on this background (Bidima 1995, 13).

This ascendancy of ontology in African political philosophy rises suspicion about two stumbling blocks of political philosophy, formerly denounced by Strauss in his famous lecture: *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie politique?* (Strauss 1992). First of all, it can be mentioned the temptation to consider political philosophy as a particular application or a subcategory of general philosophy, by transposing problems and concepts of the latter in the sphere of politics. The search for African quintessence characterizing political reflection of many African thinkers made this deviation more than likely. Theories such as negritude, African socialism and African humanism are likely the most affected by this criticism, because they put more emphasis on ontological speculation than on the daily struggles of African people (Adotevi 1998, 51-80). This attitude can be compared to what Arendt denounced in her criticism of Plato's political philosophy: the withdrawal of the thinker from the world (Arendt 1994). According to Arendt's view, the concept of "world" refers to the notion of "common world" which includes factors that are essential and essentially not philosophical at a time, and they cannot be reduced to metaphysical category. Such is the case of poverty, social exclusion and gender, for example.

The second stumbling block concerns the propensity to perceive political philosophy as a systematization of opinions that are already present in the polis. This perception is the Achilles' heel of trends of African political philosophy relying on the exhumation of African past and the rehabilitation of African cultures.

I-3. Neglected Sources of African Political Philosophy

This reflection started by an observation about the scarcity of studies and publications on African political philosophy. This observation can make believe that this philosophy is a discourse conceived and expressed only by professional philosophers² and political leaders. To think in this way hides the diversity of its

² The expression «professional philosophers» is not here opposed to «ethnophilosophers» as it is the case for many scholars classifying African philosophy in categories such as ethnophilosophy, ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy (Smet 1980, Mudimbe 1988). It just refers to the institutionalization of African philosophy.

protagonists and also its modalities of diffusion. More and more studies claim the relationship between African philosophy and other disciplines such as literature, music and art. Scholars such as Appiah (2004), Bidima (2004), Okolo (2007), and Rettová (2013) denounce the prejudice confining mentioned disciplines to the sphere of entertainment, and consequently denying them all aptitude to conceive and express philosophical ideas. As an illustration, let us explore the relationship between African political philosophy and literature.

According to Bidima, “both literature and philosophy have a number of intertextual relationships, particularly as regards three domains: namely, political philosophy, philosophy of history, and aesthetics. One illustrative fact in particular should be emphasized. The political tendency of the critique of ethnophilosophy among African francophone philosophers (...) owes a great deal to numerous passages in *Discours sur le colonialisme* by the poet Aimé Césaire; which is yet another confirmation of the extent to which philosophy and literature both journey along similar paths” (Bidima 2004, 557).

Taking stand on the existentialist philosophy developed by Sartre (1905-1980) for whom the main broadcasting mode of ideas was theater, Rettová shows both the aptitude and the relevance of literature to express philosophical questions, to reach the public and to call it to an interactive and productive debate (Rettová 2013). In the same vein, Okolo examines the relationship between African literature and political philosophy (Okolo 2007). For Okolo, both these disciplines are equally interested in dealing with ideas. The affinity between them is noticeable in areas such as their moral influence on human behavior, their effect on language, their contribution to development, their social incidence and political criticism (Okolo 2007, 13-22).

The proliferation of African writers interested in African political philosophy strengthens the previous hypothesis that the overlooking of African literature –as well as areas such as music and art- as one of the major loci of production and diffusion of this philosophy is a prejudicial attitude.

II. Precursors of African Political Philosophy

The history of ideas cannot oversee events that have marked the development of Africa, such as slavery and slave trade, colonization, African emancipation and globalization. This section introduces some antecedents of today’s African political philosophy, particularly personalities such as Africanus J. B. Horton (1835-1883), Edward W. Blyden (1832-1912) and J. E. Casely Hayford (1866-1930).

II-1. Africanus J. B. Horton: The Plea for the Constitution of Modern African States

The interdiction of the slave trade propelled England to the rank of the most active marine police in tracking recalcitrant slave-traders. The concern to assure a land of freedom for freed slaves and to re-locate “slaves to become” captured in the triangular trade led British authority to establish, in 1787, the colony of Sierra Leone whose capital city took the name of Freetown (Wesseling 1991, 142). According to Ilife, approximately 74,000 freed slaves were deported to this colony that they dominated soon after thanks to the education received from *Church Missionary Society* (Ilife 1998, 203), which was based on British cultural

model. Taking stand on this education, many people from Sierra Leone dreamed about their political freedom. Horton embodied this aspiration.

Horton was born from parents of Igbo origin who have been captured by British police on their crossing to slavery, and were relocated in Sierra Leone. He studied at King's College of London and at University of Edinburgh where he got his doctorate in medicine. During his stay in London and Edinburgh, he adopted the nickname of Africanus which will be associated with his identity and his political engagement. This choice was very challenging in a context where to be different – to be "someone colored" - was not the best asset, as it was during this period that pseudo-scientific racist doctrines, of which Gobineau is one of the striking names, were expanding (Delacampagne 2000, 164 -174).

A report of the House of Commons of 1865 proposing the disengagement of British in Western Africa was the opportunity for Horton to express his political concern. This report stipulated that British policy “should be to encourage in the native the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to the natives the administrations of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except probably Sierra Leone” (Boele van Hensbroek s.d., 39). In reaction to this report, Horton published, in 1868, *West African Countries and Peoples*. This work includes a description of Western British African communities and proposals for the implementation of African institutions. Horton aimed at the creation of autonomous West-African British colonies built according to the example of Australia and Canada. Concerning his own native land, for example, he notes that: «constitutional form of government must form the basis of his administration, consisting of House of assembly which should be composed of men elected by the people, as it will be difficult for his Government to stand without popular confidence, and the only means by which that can be secured is by giving the people the power to elect one branch of the Legislature... Each member should have landed property, be over the age of twenty-two, and be properly educated» (Ibid., 44).

Horton was persuaded of the possibility to modernize African States in agreement with the principle of self-government. For him, the mediation of a modern State with a similar experience was necessary to implement such a project. Therefore, he insisted on that British authorities should rather consider it a duty to promote and to oversee the advent of modern African States as part of their mission.

Some people considered Horton as either a paternalist thinker or a voice of British domination because of his favorable attitude about British protectorate. Let's note that the issue of Western protectorate has been very present in the mind of various African freedom fighters, as many of them considered it as a good strategy towards emancipation. This idea was proposed, for example, by the Belgian scholar, Professor Van Bilsen, concerning Congolese independence. The “Van Bilsen plan” recommended to Belgian Kingdom to keep his Congolese colony for about thirty years more, the necessary period of time to prepare Congolese to assume and manage themselves. Some Congolese leaders accepted this project and included it in their political agenda (M'Bokolo 1985, 201).

II-2. Edward W. Blyden and African Revival

Blyden is native of Saint Thomas, in the Danish Antilles. He arose from black, free and educated parents. In 1850, he went to United States to study theology.

Unfortunately, he was never admitted to any American university because of racial discrimination. Blyden migrated to Liberia, in 1851, thanks to the support of the *New York Colonization Society*. This new orientation of his life derives from his passion for Africa that he considered as his fatherland. It also derives from his commitment to promote pan-Africanism. Once in Liberia, he took courses at Presbyterian High School of Monrovia. In 1858, he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister of worship.

At the beginning, Blyden defended the abolitionist concern for which slavery, including the deportation of black slaves to America and the return of former slaves or of their descendants to Africa, were part of the divine providence project. God would have allowed these tragedies to happen in order to promote the regeneration of Africa. Thanks to the return of former slaves - now civilized and Christianized- to Africa, the sons of Cham remained in African darkness have access to Christian faith and civilization.

By his work within African communities and thanks to his journeys inside Africa, his studies of African cultures and history - including the study of Arabic and Islamic culture-, Blyden enlarged his knowledge of Africa. This allowed him to make an epistemological break with regard to his original perception of Africa. He got rid of Christian abolitionist hypothesis leaning on a pejorative image of African cultures to justify their eviction. Paradoxically to his position as a Presbyterian worship minister, Blyden does not consider any more Christianity as a universal paradigm and as a suitable factor to regenerate Africa. For him, African cultures must not be annihilated for the benefit of Christianity or in order to regenerate Africa. They must be protected because they are essential to African identity and they hold values that don't exist in Western culture. Standing on his epistemological break, Blyden develops a new perception of African Regeneration which excludes the purification of black Africa of its alleged paganism. This regeneration must be rooted in African cultures.

The premise according to which all black people of the world are a single nation, and consequently they must unite is one of Blyden's main ideas. It also constitutes the background of pan-Africanist movement. For Blyden, every race is a natural unit with its own territory and specific mission. He is proud to be black, and he exhorts his fellow black men to behave in the same way: the consciousness and the pride to be black are essential to the progress of Blacks. Following his abandonment of Christian abolitionist view, Blyden became critical about the mixing of races being even against the idea of identifying as black someone having a drop of black blood. In this respect, his attitude seems rather close to the theory of racial purity. To put things positively, he developed an antiracist racism.

II-3. J. E. Casely Hayford: the Claim for Native Self-Governance

African colonization and its subsequent economic exploitation always did not go without awakening the resistance of local communities. Such was the case, for example, in Sierra Leone, about a colonial law of 1890 aiming at the attribution of idle lands to the Crown (*Waste lands, crown lands*). This law hurt the patriotic feeling of Sierra Leone's leaders because, in addition to the land concern, it affected the foundation of their culture and social organization. As a result, «West Africans felt cheated of their land, deprived of their right of self-government,

defrauded of their economical resources and stripped of the very essentials of their culture and way of life» (Quoted in Boele van Hensbroek s.d., 63).

In reaction to this law, Sierra Leone's intelligentsia set up an association to defend their rights and to protect their social and cultural assets, named the "*Aboriginals Rights Protection Society*" (ARPS). This association also developed political ambition as it claimed the right of indigenous to their own educational system and self-government. «We want our education to enable us to develop and to improve our native ideas, customs, manners and institutions» (Ibid., 62). For the ARPS leaders, Japan represents the model to follow because this country rested successfully on its values and traditions while undergoing the assaults of Western culture under Meiji era.

Casely Hayford who was a journalist and a Cambridge trained lawyer, counted among noticeable leaders of the ARPS. Contrary to a wide-spread prejudice considering African cultures as conservative, he was optimistic and he believed in the potential modernization of these cultures. For him, there was no contradiction between modernization and African cultures. He thought that like Japanese traditions, African traditions were able to match the requirements of modernization if such an opportunity is offered to them. Casely Hayford was opposed to the idea of cultural purity sustained by Blyden.

III. African Identity and African Emancipation Discourses

III-1. Ethnophilosophy

The Word and the Thing. The term *Ethnophilosophy* was successful in the euphoria subsequent to the debate on the existence of African philosophy. Contrary to a wide-spread opinion (Appiah 1992, 85-106; Hallen 2009), this concept did not appear in the 1970s, particularly as a consequence of the usage that thinkers such as Hountondji (1970) and Towa (1971) made of it. Its earliest usage in African philosophy is attributed to Nkrumah. After his Master's degree in philosophy, in 1943, Nkrumah intended to present a doctoral thesis in *Ethnophilosophy* at the American university of Pennsylvania. He drafted a doctoral dissertation entitled: "Mind and Thought in Primitive Society: A Study in Ethno-Philosophy with Special Reference to the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast, West Africa" (quoted in Hountondji 2004, 533. See also: Hallen 2002, 72). Out of the evoked reference, there is no comment about the meaning of this expression. Considering this want of explanation, Hountondji formulated the hypothesis to search for the meaning of this word in the domain of "ethnic sciences". For him, when Nkrumah elaborated his doctoral project "l'ethnophilosophie (...) était une de ces disciplines nées aux Etats-Unis dans la foulée des ethnosciences, qui s'étaient elles-mêmes développées à partir de l'étude ethnolinguistique des langues et cultures amérindiennes: ethnobotanique, ethnozoologie (...), l'originalité du chercheur qu'était Nkrumah était donc d'appliquer à sa propre société la théorie et la méthodologie de cette discipline déjà reconnue"³. In using this expression, Nkrumah sought to promote the idea according to which anthropology should, by going beyond its traditional topics, set up "a synthetic ethno-philosophy" through which "[elle] s'efforcera de

³www.exchoreasis.refer.ga/IMG/P.J._Hountondji.pdf.

pénétrer les significations les plus fondamentales et les plus profondes qui sous-tendent toute culture, en sorte qu'elle atteigne une *Weltanschauung* culturelle de base par laquelle l'humanité reconnaîtrait que, malgré les différences de race, de langue et de culture, elle est une en ce sens qu'il n'y a qu'une race: l'Homo sapiens." (Ibid. Underlined in the text).

The attempt to trace the genesis of the concept *Ethnophilosophy* clarifies the very contribution of Hountondji and Towa, which consisted in that these two philosophers diverted this expression of its previous and positive meaning, and they consequently assigned to it a pejorative content consisting in a criticism of some philosophical method and attitude. They denounced «une pratique de la philosophie qui se donnait pour tâche de décrire les visions du monde collectives, pratique qui (...) trahissait la vision première de la philosophie qui est non de décrire, mais de démontrer; non de reconstituer de manière conjecturale le système de pensée de tel ou tel peuple, de telle ou telle société, de tel ou tel groupe de personnes, mais de prendre soi-même position, de manière responsable, sur des questions posées en acceptant la contrainte de justifier de manière rationnelle ces prises de position» (Hountondji, art. cit.). According to Hountondji's own words: "Le mot existait bien avant les années soixante-dix. Towa et moi ne l'avons pas forgé. Notre seule originalité était de l'utiliser dans un sens péjoratif et polémique pour stigmatiser une pratique que nous rejetions, alors qu'il était jusque-là, quand il était employé, le nom d'un projet consciemment revendiqué" (Ibid. Underlined in the text).

It is advisable to note that Hountondji and Towa evolved in their perception and criticism of ethnophilosophy, as they both recognize some positive contribution of this trend of thought to the development of African philosophy (Ibid.). However, some scholars denounce the silence of Hountondji and Towa on the limits of scientific methods that both thinkers consider as essential to African philosophy. Bidima, for example, criticizes the positivist attitude underlying the thought of both the mentioned thinkers and their lack of coherence regarding epistemological imperialism and obscurantism. He notes: "Hountondji et Towa ont le réflexe d'un positivisme du XIXème siècle qui faisait de la science le sauveur. On surprend chez une attitude bizarre se traduisant par la suspension de l'esprit critique. Tout se passe comme si la réflexion critique qui les anime s'arrêtait au seuil de la science (...) Towa et Hountondji se taisent quand il s'agit de la technoscience, on ne critique plus, on fait confiance à la science qui sauve des impérialismes et obscurantisme. Il y a un glissement d'une attitude critique (...) à une attitude de foi. Leur discours sur la technoscience est celui de l'idéologie dominante qui, pour mieux capter, saisit chaque objet en le coupant de la réalité de ses contradictions" (Bidima 1995, 99).

Ethnophilosophy and African Political Philosophy. Ethnophilosophy is based on the assumption that "there is a metaphysical system, and an ideology, embodied in the traditional wisdom, the institutions and the languages of Africa" (Kaphagawani 2000, 89). It aims at trashing out from myths, folktales, beliefs, proverbs, and languages, "the quintessential African approach to the world" (Ibid.). This project aims at disqualifying the racist discourse defending the ruling system. Thinkers such as Hegel, Kant, Hume, count among those who shared this discourse. Hegel's attitude to reject Africa from the world history under the pretext that this continent doesn't have any contribution to the history of the world is one of the most frequently evoked illustration in this respect (Eze 1997,

8-10). Against this attitude, protagonists of ethnophilosophy looked for equivalences between African heritage and Western culture. Some among them dedicated themselves to make the inventory of African contributions to the history and development of humankind (Bidima 1995, 29-31). Standing on this background, ethnophilosophy can be viewed as both a political attitude and a research method.

Thinkers such as Tempels (1948), J. Mbiti (1970), and Gyekye (1987), to quote a few, represent this trend of thought. African leaders of the first generation, such as Kaunda, Senghor, Nyerere, Nkrumah, can be viewed as pragmatic ethnophilosophers, for relying on both ethnophilosophical methodology and perspective to perform their political project. Their search for African quintessence through the exhumation of African past is illuminating in this respect.

It is also advisable noting that *Ethnophilosophy* is not a single theory (Bell 2002, 22-23). It includes two major trends: universalistic approach and particularistic perspective. These approaches rest on the metaphysical premise asserting the uniqueness of the being. They differ from each other in that the former universalizes its assertions on cultural unity while the latter emphasizes the diversity of African cultures. Thinkers such as Tempels (1945), Mbiti (1977), and Senghor (1995) illustrate the universalistic trend, while Scholars like Gyekye (1987) and Wiredu (1996) represent particularistic approach that aims “to show that cultures differ – specifically cultures within sub-Saharan Africa - and that each has its own coherence and distinctive truth - functional way in which it conceives of and expresses its world. The philosophy of one culture is not to be extended to another – thought there may be a number of family resemblances between cultures. Thus the Dogon and Yoruba, the Sambura and Dinka, the Kuria and Bambara, the Zulu and San have differing cosmological, ethical, and social systems that may be seen to be coherent world views in their own right” (Bell 2002, 23).

Criticism of Ethnophilosophy as a Trend of Political Philosophy. Subsequently to works of Hountondji (1970) and Towa (1971), the concept ethnophilosophy originated productive debates: Appiah (1992, 185-106), Bell (2002, 22-26), Mudimbe (1988), and Eboussi-Boulaga (1977). Two criticisms can be applied to its usage in the context of African political philosophy: the temptation to consider political philosophy as collective and anonymous thought, and the ascendancy of ontology in political philosophy.

To consider philosophy as a collective thought implies the exemption of thinkers from their statements by covering them with the authority and the anonymity of cultural traditions. As a result, this approach cancels all responsibility of African leaders and thinkers on their own action and thought. It is worth reminding that this perception gave support to authoritarianism as it sterilized all political debate in the name of African cultural traditions.

The search for unicity favors the escape into ontology, as it promotes the ignorance of the common world. This attitude encourages what Arendt called the “retreat of the thinker from the world” (Arendt 1994), and that Césaire qualified as the search for “ontological satisfaction” in his criticism of Tempels (Césaire 1955, 36-37).

III-2. Concerning African Identity

The concern for African identity rests on two premises: the rehabilitation of African cultures and the threat of cultural homogenization due to globalization. Let's focus on Senghor's perception of African peculiarity.

*Negritude: A Struggle for Recognition and Cultural Rehabilitation.*⁴ Negritude is one of the best known movements struggling for both African recognition and rehabilitation. For its protagonists, it is essential to assume being black, to cultivate one's pride and self-appreciation. That is the reason why, being themselves in a situation of despair, contempt and powerlessness, the founders of this movement didn't have another choice than the courage "to get rid of (their) loaned clothes, those of the assimilation, and to assert their being, that is (their) negritude."⁵ Sartre saw in this movement a kind of paradox consisting of a "negation of the negation of black people"⁶.

The claim for the recognition of black peculiarity put the question of identity in the heart of negritude's concern, as it implies the statement of constituent features of this peculiarity. Senghor remains one of the most enlightening thinkers on the issue. According to him, contrary to Western people for whom Reason constitutes the fundamental characteristic, black people are characterized by the ascendancy of emotion. Emotion defines their epistemology and configures their world vision (Senghor 1995). The famous aphorism according to which "*the emotion is as negro as the reason is Hellenic*" seems to be the best synthesis of this perception of African peculiarity (Kasanda 2013, 213).

This theory of Senghor provoked a general outcry of African intelligentsia. Some people considered it as the continuation of Western racism towards black people (Adotevi 1998, 99-105). Others denounced the essentialism characterizing this perception (Eboussi-Boulaga, 1977) that puts all black people of the planet in the same and unique category of *black race*, and this without any consideration for specific trajectories of various social groups and individuals (Kelman 2005). Some others thought of this analysis as a treason of African struggle.⁷

Senghor is aware of those criticisms. He wrote : "Some (...) Negro intellectuals (...) have reproached me for having reduced the knowledge of the African negro to pure emotion, and for having denied that African negro is endowed with reason and technical knowledge" (Senghor 1995, 121). In his own defense, he sustains that Reason is unique and common to everybody, but its articulations and modalities of application depend on psychological and physiological features of every race. Therefore, he maintains his idea according to which West is characterized by its reference to analytical reason, whereas African universe is based on intuitive and participative reason. He notes: "They have read me absent-mindedly (...) Reason has always existed (...) Reason is one, in the sense that it is made for the apprehension of the Other, that is, of objective reality. Its nature is governed by its own laws; but its modes of knowledge, its 'forms of thought'- are diverse and tied to the psychological and physiological make up of each race (...) The reason of classical Europe is analytic through civilization, the reason of the African negro, intuitive through participation." (Ibid.).

⁴This section is based on our work: Kasanda (2013).

⁵<http://www.tidiane.net/culture/afrique-negritude.htm>.

⁶<http://www.tidiane.net/culture/afrique-negritude.htm>.

⁷<http://www.africamaat.com/SENGHOR-le-Ya-bon-Blanc>.

The reaction of Senghor is far from calming down criticisms due to his perception of African peculiarity. Let's leave aside this interesting debate, and underline the originality of Senghor's intuition. Senghor developed his reflection in a racist context. In the first half of the twentieth century, France or rather Europe was under influence of racist theories inherited from the nineteenth century, for which thinkers such as Blumenbach (1752-1840) and Gobineau (1816-1882) are among the most representative (Delacampagne 2000). Senghor was aware of these surrounding theories. His originality consists in the reversal of stigmas and claiming for racial difference. It is in this perspective that he interprets emotion not as the reign of low instincts, but as a source of high spirituality and deep sense of artistic creativity (Mosley 1995, 219).

The concern for the emancipation of African cultures is still relevant even nowadays, as numerous studies postulate a potential disappearance of cultural diversity because of globalization (Barber 1996. Fornet-Betancourt 2011). In this respect, it is worth assuming that the point here is not only the defense of black people and cultures for themselves, but also the claim for recognition of human diversity and defense of otherness.

Senghor doesn't consider difference as a sign of exclusion nor as an expression of any antagonism. On the contrary, it is and it should be the hyphen between peoples and cultures, because it contributes to their mutual enrichment. Therefore, he pleads for a civilization of the universal: "*Le rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir*". Such a civilization doesn't absorb other people and cultures, but it calls for the knowledge of values of the other cultural and geographical areas through dialogue (Senghor 1995. Shutte 1998).

III-3. About African Modernization

Since African independence, the idea of modernization appears at the top of the schedule of African countries. Two reasons explain this priority at the same time as they suggest the content of this discourse: the African deficit of development and the desire of African leaders to distinguish their project of society from colonial purposes.

African Modernization as a Development Project. Strictly speaking, the concepts of modernization and development are not synonyms. However, they can stand for each other to refer to a worldwide pattern in which local cultures and communities undergo important changes due to different factors at both the national and international levels. Those factors include the need to improve human living conditions, technological progress and sciences. With regard to Africa, these two concepts express the Westernization or the Americanization of African communities regarding economy, science and technology. In this respect and as Karp and Masolo observed "Africans have been ambivalently drawn to both sides of the dominant and competing development ideologies and strategies. (...) The debate between collective and individual reason or between reason and culture produce antagonistic categories and ambivalences similar to those found in the Enlightenment period from which capitalist ideology derives its terms" (Karp and Masolo 2000, 175).

However, modernization of Africa was mainly conceived as a "*jump forward*" in a linear progress. In this perspective, it refers to the idea of "*catching up*" Western nations by overcoming the accumulated delay of African nations on technological equipment and sciences. Modernization was thought as the

cornerstone of the struggle against stagnation which represented, according to the American President, H. Truman, a challenge for humankind and also a threat to rich nations (Gélinas 1994, 24). African leaders followed philosophies of development proposed by both the world ruling countries and institutions (Karp and Masolo 2000, 175). The heel of Achilles of those philosophies is that they are not rooted in the “common world” of African people. Consequently they don’t match African expectations. The balance sheet of Structural Adjustment Program imposed to Africa in the 1980s is illuminating in this respect (Traoré 1999, 39-51).

This situation calls for a permanent critical approach to development, its mechanisms and articulations. Several African scholars get involved in this process, regardless of their domain of investigation, analyzing topics such as African knowledge and development (Wiredu 2000, Eboussi-Boulaga 2000, Hountondji 2004, Karp and Masolo 2000, 175-258), African culture and human rights (Njoku 2004), African economic growth and global economy (Moyo 2009), globalization, international cooperation and governance policy (Lauer 2007).

Modernization as a Reform of African political institutions. Two trends can be outlined in this respect: the will to keep as such structures inherited from colonization and the desire to transform them in agreement with African cultures (Teffo 2004, 443-449). More than a simple choice between two political reforms, this dilemma concerned the nature of African state.

Majority of African leaders opted for Western paradigm because they considered it able to overcome ethnic cleavages and to contribute to the rise of modern African states. The opponents to this option think that building African state on account of a Western paradigm leads to the absorption of African peculiarity. Such a state is nothing else than a centralized entity that has nothing to do with the people’s reality. Consequently, they insist in organizing the state in agreement with African traditions (Wiredu 1996, 155-190).

These two perspectives constitute the background on which are debated issues such as democracy, one party rule, development, human rights, African integration in both the regional and international (and economic) structures (Wiredu 1996. Eze 1997).

III-4. Struggle for African Liberation

The concept of liberation expresses the experience of majority of human beings consisting in the struggle to break chains of domination and exploitation, as well as to overcome the subsequent poverty. In Latin America this expression favors the concern for the “poor” as a category of victims of the ruling system (Dussel 2002), while in Africa, this notion refers first of all to the idea of national sovereignty. Let’s explore some of its penetrating formulations: African “désaliénation”, African humanism, African socialism, and pan-Africanism.

Fanon and the «Désaliénation» of Africa. Fanon’s impact on African philosophy is noticeable (Hallen 2009, 98-99, Keucheyan 2010, 281). He was persuaded that colonization caused deep traumas in African people. In order to promote a new African society, Fanon aimed at the purification of mind of former colonized people from negative representations of themselves inherited from colonization. Works such as *Peau noire, masque blanc* (1975) and *Les damnés de la terre* (1979) are instructive in this respect.

Fanon distinguishes individual alienation from collective alienation. The former focuses on individual sphere as it deals with the assimilation of

stereotypes and prejudices by Individuals. Such is the case concerning, for example, the myth of superiority of white man, and reversely the idea of inferiority of black people (Fanon 1975).⁸ The latter refers to social sphere, to African collective life. For Fanon, many African leaders and members of labor unions, for example, have a deep complex towards their fellow countrymen, particularly to peasants and illiterate (Fanon 1979).

Considering this double context, Fanon thinks that African emancipation cannot be a simple permutation of roles between colonizers and colonized. It rather implies a radical change: the exorcism of African mind.

African Humanism. It is worth noting that the idea of African humanism doesn't fully coincide with Western perception of humanism. If these two approaches consider the human being as their starting point, they interpret it differently. The Western perspective puts emphasis on human being as an individual being; the individual is viewed as able to perform and acquire knowledge about different aspects of human life as well as to manage, by virtue of his/her reason, a political order that is useful to his/her own self-realization as a human being (Spitz 1996). African conceptions of humanism insist on human being as a social being. For this approach, the individual is a relational being; he/she is viewed as a "bridge maker" or a "hyphen" between different beings.

The Zambian leader, Kaunda (1914 -) develops his humanist vision on the basis of two roots: Christian faith and African cultural heritage (Smet 1980, 54). For him, human being is the final purpose of all political initiative. He declared: "I am deeply concerned that this high valuation of Man and respect for human dignity which is a legacy of our [African] tradition should not be lost in the new Africa. However "modern" and "advanced" in a Western sense the new nations of Africa may become, we are fiercely determined that this humanism will not be obscured. African society has always been Man-centred. We intend that it will remain so" (quoted in Eze 1997, 42).

For Senghor, human being remains also the measure of everything. It is on account of this premise that he criticized Marxism to stress on "materialism and determinism, praxis and means, to the detriment of dialectics and ethics (...) to the detriment of man and his freedom". (Senghor 1964, 76; quoted in Taiwo 2004, 246). Senghor describes African humanism as follows: "Thus, though our humanism must have West African man as its major objective. It cannot, without peril, end with West Africa, not even with all of Africa. An effective humanism must be open; it obviously includes not only Malianism (...) but also nationalism and pan-Negroism, (...) pan-Africanism and, with greater reason pan-Arabism. The one "Pan-isme" that meets twentieth-century requirements is (...) pan-humanism- a humanism that includes all men on the dual basis of their contribution and their comprehension (Ibid.).

It also is advisable noting the emergence of the concept of Ubuntu as an expression of African humanism. This idea has been popularized by the Anglican archbishop Tutu within the framework of his responsibility as the head of Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. For Tutu, the concept of Ubuntu can be considered as "a central feature of the African *Weltanschauung* (...) Ubuntu is very difficult to render into Western languages. It speaks of the

⁸See also: Memmi (1985).

very essence of the human being. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, U nobuntu'; 'Hey, he or she has ubuntu'. This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong.' I participate, I share." (Tutu 1999, 34 – 35. Underlined in the original).⁹

African Socialism. It is worth keeping in mind that since the last decade of the twentieth century, African socialism is no longer an appraised topic in African political and philosophical landscape. However, this trend of thought is still significant as an original contribution to African intellectual history as well as a specific address of African intellectuals on "issues of (...) colonialism, neocolonialism, Africa as a victim of the so-called cold war (...) where Africa's best interests lie when it comes to contemporary social, political, and economic development" (Hallen 2009, 94).

African socialism was a syncretic attempt to reconcile Marxism, Christianity, modern economic theories and African values. The Dakar Colloquium¹⁰ revealed two major trends of this socialism: humanitarian socialism and scientific socialism. The former relied on precolonial African values and traditions as the starting point to tackle African people's needs and to build a new Africa. This option rested on the idea that socialism is closed to African world vision. In this respect, the *Ujamaa Project* launched by Nyerere is an illuminating illustration. The latter form of African socialism puts emphasis on scientific objectivity and considers socialism as a universal doctrine that is free from all cultural admixture. National peculiarities are not important, as they are only a result of social praxis, and in any case they are not contrary to the ideal of universal brotherhood. Nkrumah can be mentioned as one of the leading figures in this respect. To disentangle a bit this distinction, let us sketch the vision of African socialism developed by these two statesmen: Nyerere and Nkrumah.

Nyerere is also known as "*Mwalimu*", the Swahili term standing for "Teacher". He was the leader of the party¹¹ that led Tanzania to national emancipation in 1961. Like many leaders of his generation, he became the first president of this new country. His Tanzanian socialism, qualified as *Ujamaa* (the Swahili concept for "family-hood"), drew on African culture and traditions. For Nyerere, there was an African style of life, traditions and values in precolonial Africa, particularly in Tanzania. These values and traditions must be regenerated in order to build a new African nation-state free from the spirit of capitalism. According to Hallen, traditional values of greatest significance for Nyerere were: "that every member of society was expected to do work of some form as a contribution to their own well-being and thereby that of the community, and for that reason every one deserved to be rewarded sufficiently to satisfy their needs; that the sense of being a community (*ujamaa*), on the part of the people was

⁹See also: Coetzee and Roux (1998, 41-50), Derrida (2004), More (2004, 156-157), Ramose (1999).

¹⁰J. Schleimann.1963. Colloque sur les politiques de développement et les diverses voies africaines vers le socialisme. In *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1, 242-248.

¹¹The Tanganyika African Union (TANU) was created in 1954. It became later «*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*» (The Revolutionary Party).

conscious and was significant in terms of determining their relationship with and regard for one another” (Hallen 2009, 97).

In Nyerere’s opinion, capitalism could destroy this humanitarian worldview because of both its individualism and propensity for the exploitation of other people. Nyerere is distrustful of theories that value class antagonism (capitalists against workers, for example) and present this conflict as motivating force for social change. For him, this way of thinking is not relevant to Africa (Tanzanian) because there are very few capital owners, and subsequently majority of people are subsistence farmers. Nyerere wanted an ideology that is pragmatic and tailored for African context. He encapsulated his socialist project in One-party rule, which he thought to be representative of African way of living.

Nkrumah also assumed the existence of precolonial African values. He equally insisted on the opposition of these values to Western world vision, as he considered them more communally than individually oriented. Subsequently, he thought of capitalism as not able to bring development for African people. For political reasons, he served both the masters at a time: capitalism and socialism. Hallen notes in this respect: “Nkrumah was no overt enemy of the so-called West but, obviously, he was no champion of it either since he had negotiated the liberation of his country from European (British) rule. The Cold War between East and West unquestionably had an effect on his international policies and status. In certain respects he was forced to play both ends (East and West) against the middle (himself and his country’s interests), eventually at some cost” (Hallen 2009, 96).¹²

Contrary to Nyerere, Nkrumah was more theoretically and a speculatively inclined. For him, African cultural heritage must be systematized prior to all usage and philosophical considerations. He insisted on African Consciencism that he considered to be not a psychological attitude, but the “effect, the expression, the articulation (...) of a people’s cultural predispositions at a particular point in time. Once articulated (...), it can then be refined and explicitly instituted by deliberate social and political programs” (Hallen 2009, 96-97). Hence, for him, African socialism has “to be a formalized, (economically and politically) institutionalized expression of indigenous humanitarian social and moral values.” (Ibid.)

African socialism didn’t survive its founders. This disappearance doesn’t imply the end of the search for a suited paradigm of social and political organization. Many former defenders of socialism have recycled themselves joining alternative trends of thought and critical of liberalism such as post-colonial theory, ecology and sustainable development, global justice and debt issue, intercultural dialogue, and so forth.

Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism originated in African Diaspora at the end of the nineteenth century, and spread in Africa in the beginning of the twentieth century. It relies on the premise that black people all over the world constitute a single race; they have a common destiny and therefore they must unite to fight against humiliation, injustice and discrimination inflicted on them by the West. The paternity of this thought is commonly attributed to Blyden. This movement had many leaders, different philosophical interpretations and political strategies. People such as Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), for example, considers that

¹² See also : Appiah 1992, 158-172.

this solidarity has to begin with the sensitization and education of Blacks; for Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), the emancipation of black people includes their return to Africa. W.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) structured this movement giving to it a theoretical frame and defining its objectives. He chaired the five first Pan-African congresses.

The torch of Pan-Africanism was transmitted to African leaders thanks to the support of G. Padmore (1903-1959). Nkrumah became the chief proponent of the movement, sometimes to the detriment of the interests of his own country (Appiah 1992, 158-172). He organized both the sixth and the seventh Pan-African congresses in Ghana, Kumasi (1953) and Accra (1958). Several African leaders also joined the movement such as Fanon, Diop, Sekou Touré, Modibo Keita, to quote a few. For African Diaspora, racial solidarity aimed at the rehabilitation of black people and the claim for their civil rights, while for African leaders, this solidarity aimed at African emancipation. Two tendencies shaped pan-Africanist movement in Africa: «maximalist» pan-Africanism and «minimalist» pan-Africanism.

«Maximalist» pan-Africanism contests the division of Africa inherited from the Conference of Berlin (1884-1885). It aims at the recomposition of African geopolitics through the creation of a wide state structure susceptible to transform Africa into a major economic, political and cultural level: the " United States of Africa ". Nkrumah, Nasser, Modibo Keita, Sekou Touré were among defenders of this tendency. «Maximalist» pan-Africanist project came up against two obstacles: first, the resistance of former colonial powers who saw in this project an infringement on their interests; secondly, the lacking support from the world leading countries, such as the Soviet Union, China and the United States.

«Minimalist» pan-Africanism insists on the right of every African state to be autonomous and sovereign. This tendency defends the intangibility of frontiers inherited from colonization and it advocates for the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of every African country. Houphouët-Boigny and Senghor are representative of this trend which gave rise to the Organization of African Unity (1963), which later became the African Union (2001).

The search for African unity on account of the idea of race has been a topic of severe criticism. According to Appiah, for example, the definition of African unity on such a basis follows Crummel's world vision which claims both racial purity and community. Taking a stand on the experience of Nazism, Appiah considers this form of pan-Africanism to be a threat for common life and African unity itself. For him, Africa should unite more on basis of common issues such as ecological challenges, struggles against poverty and underdevelopment, than around the idea of race (Appiah 1992, 180).

However, the concern for the rehabilitation of African cultures remains a preoccupation for many scholars and researchers on African studies: Appiah; People such as Molefi Kete Asante and Kemi Seba lean on the intellectual legacy of C.A. Diop to claim the cultural unity of Africa, while scholars such as Appiah (1992; 2006), Karp and Masolo (2000), Eze (1997), Wirdu (1996), Wamba-dia-Wamba (1994) and many more explore challenges such as democracy, African cultural diversity and globalization.

IV. African Democratic Turn

African political landscape has dramatically changed in the two last decades of the twentieth century due to factors such as the collapse of communist system, the change of development aid policies by the international financiers and Western countries, the disappearance of one party rule, the liberalization of African economies (Mbembe 2005). This change originated new challenges for African political philosophy; consequently, topics such as democracy, good governance, cultural diversity, ecology, gender, peace, justice and reconciliation, have become of major interest. This section explores three topics: democracy, African civil society and African cultural diversity.

IV-1. Rush Towards Democracy

The yearning for democracy was expressed through the criticism of the single party regime that dominated African political scene during more than a quarter of a century. This criticism denounces the unpopularity of the single party rule and its sophism about, for example, the usage of African traditions as a basis to both social and political organizations (Eboussi-Boulaga, 1977). In addition to that, single party rule was not able to achieve its own promises on development, eradication of tribalism and construction of national unity (Appiah 1992, 158-172). This situation gave rise to the craze for liberal democracy. However, the history of Africa reveals that, soon after independence, majority of African countries had opted for political pluralism. Most of them gave up this option for the advantage of single party rule. The idea of national unity, the concern for development and the desire abide by African cultures were evoked to justify this change of paradigm.

With respect to this antecedent, it is worth wondering about the increase in value justifying this return to democracy. Does this change outline new values that are favorable for a better living and development of Africans? What do African leaders understand by democracy? How do they consider its achievement? These questions generate a long debate that can be divided into two tendencies: universalistic trend and particularistic approach to democracy.

Universalistic Trend of Democracy. This perception is actually the most widely shared among African thinkers. It borrows its main ideas from conceptions of democracy putting emphasis on human rights, civil society, freedom of speech and freedom of association, freedom of religion, separation of powers, multi-party rule and free elections.

This approach suffers from a gap between the claim for principles of democracy and their concretization. Indeed, democracy is more than a matter of principles, as it deals with people's culture and traditions. In this perspective, it constitutes a permanent struggle against egocentricity and obscurantism. Escapades of African leaders regarding their endless reign illustrate how much the concern for principles for themselves can be a piece of bluff for democracy. Universalistic approach to democracy rested on the premise that democracy is a sacred and untouchable principle that is valuable for everybody regardless of time, social and historical peculiarities. For this premise, any potential dysfunction would not be attributable to the ruling institutions as such, but rather to individuals, particular cultures and traditions. It is in this sense that many studies on African political philosophy fall in excessive generalization and condemnation

of African cultures as not being able to assume fundamental principles of democracy.

Particularistic Approach to Democracy. Protagonists of particularistic perception to democracy have something in common with the defenders of universalistic perspective: the rejection of single party rule. For Wiredu, for example, “*the disappearance of the one-party system from the African scene is, and should remain, unlamented*” (Wiredu 1998, 378). The reason to adopt this attitude is not, according to Wiredu, “to flog a dead horse; it is, in fact, to point out the good parts of a bad case. One valid point which was made again and again by the one-party persuaders is that there is no necessary connection between democracy and the multi-party system. An associated insight was that indigenous African systems of politics (...) offered examples of democracy without multi-party mechanism” (Ibid.). According to Wiredu, the drive towards liberal democracy has been achieved “*under sustained Western pressure to adopt the multi-party way of life*” (Wiredu 1998, 378-379).

Wiredu considers the alleged universalistic approach to democracy as a transplanted model from Western to Africa. Taking stand on that this approach doesn't take into consideration any African peculiarity, its opponents call for a wide scope of forms of democracy through which every culture can be represented. Several among them defend the idea that democracy must be rooted in the culture of each people. It is in this perspective that people such as Wiredu develops a plea for a non-party polity (Wiredu 1996, 182-190); Wamba-dia-Wamba sustains the idea of palaver democracy (see: Boele van Hensbroek s.d., 216); Wamala explores the idea of African monarchical democracy (Wamala 2004), while Teffo defends the premise that indigenous cultures are holders of suitable traditions of democracy that must be retrieved (Teffo 2004, 444-445), while Gyekye explores both the coherence and democratic treats of traditional African thought (Gyekye 1988).

IV-2. African Civil Society

African civil society is a heterogeneous compound including organizations such as labor unions and student associations, but also a multitude of social actors such as human rights activists, gender protagonists, Churches, ethnic and cultural associations. This grouping came to light after the collapse of single party rule and thanks to the support of international organizations (Kabarhuza *et al.* 2003, 23-25).

The mission statement of African civil society can be resumed in three points: the concern for self-regulation of modern African society; the legitimization of African state, and issues regarding the participation of citizens in decision making spheres, equality and justice (Kabarhuza *et al.* 2003, 22-25). African civil society promoted major political changes in Mali (Traoré 1999), Cameroon (Gatshi 2001), and Democratic Republic of Congo (Houtart 2005, Kabarhuza *et al.* 2003), for example.

African civil society still committed to both the preservation of benefits of democracy and the conquest of new spaces concerning, for example, gender, ecology, peace and mediation of conflicts, cultural diversity and recognition. The multiplicity of organizations integrating this compound make difficult a global analysis of the philosophy underlying their respective action. In this respect, a case by case study can be considered as an opportune attitude (Houtart 2005).

IV-3 African Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue

Cohesion and unity were essential for African independence fighters. As Appiah outlined on account of his own experience as a child in Ghana, during the struggle against colonialism, the myth of African unity – including the idea of national unity- was so powerful that nobody could think of diversity of African cultures. He notes: “I grew up knowing that I live in Asante and that the Asantehene was our king. I also grew up singing enthusiastically the Ghanaian national anthem (...) and knowing that Nkrumah was, first, our prime minister, then, our president. It did not occur to me as a child that the “we”, of which this “our” was the adjective, was fluid, ambiguous, obscure” (Appiah 1992, 158). This consciousness of the diversity constituting the “we” was even more occulted by the single party rule which, under the pretext of national unity and development, occulted and suppressed all kind of diversity (Kasanda 2013, 216-222).

For many years, the debate on African diversity focused on relationship between Europe and Africa, putting emphasis on the opposition between modern and traditional, progress and stagnation. Nowadays, this issue involves internal challenges of African communities, such as ethnic membership and national identity, power, human rights and gender. Many studies denounce the standardizing paradigm inherited from one party rule; while many others explore how complex is the notion of African identity as well as they develop a plea for the integration of Africa in the current world context which is characterized by issues such as global market, cosmopolitanism, global solidarity and intercultural dialogue. Scholars and writers such as Achebe (2000), Ngugi (1986), Mudimbe (1988), Appiah (1992; 2006), Wiredu (1996; 2003), Eze (1997), Amselle and Mbokolo (1999), and Bayart (1989), to mention a few, are illuminating in this respect.

Conclusion

This paper explored the nature, features and trends of African political philosophy. This philosophy is rooted in everyday life of African people, and it has as main objectives the well-being of African populations, both the nature and legitimization of power, as well as the search for a well-suited paradigm of social organization. Topics analyzed included the question of negro-African identity and solidarity, African revival and the building of modern African states. The struggle against colonization put forward ideas of African emancipation and cultural rehabilitation, particularly through discourses of negritude, African humanism, African socialism and Pan-Africanism. Standing on the changes which occurred at the end of the twentieth century, we examined new challenges including democracy, human rights, cultural diversity, gender, sustainable development and globalization. These challenges represent a long-term duty for African thinkers who are called to get out of their ivory tower and join the common world, assuming a permanent reflexive equilibrium between their philosophical intuitions and constraints of people’s daily life, in order to bring successfully to completion such a mission. The future of African depends on such a critical attitude.

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