

**AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CROSS CULTURAL
UNDERSTANDING**

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**A Thesis in the Department of Philosophy, submitted to the Faculty of
Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

OF

**University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria**

March, 2014.

ABSTRACT

Many of the conflicts in the world today, in the areas of politics, religion and ethnicity, are reflections of a dearth of understanding among cultures. Several studies have identified the need for cross cultural understanding and tried to establish a basis for it in human biological make up, the universality of emotions and lived experience. However, these attempts have not satisfactorily addressed the universal epistemological basis for cross cultural understanding, the absence of which has caused social conflicts to persist. This study, therefore, provided an epistemological foundation for cross cultural understanding in terms of the relationship between basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs, with a view to facilitating a resolution of the conflicts generated by cross cultural misunderstanding.

This study adopted aspects of Donald Davidson's theory of triangulation. This theory states that two persons from different cultures cannot have incommensurate basic belief about an object, if the same object serves as the origin of the belief as well as a basis for justifying the belief state. Relevant core texts in Philosophy of Culture (5), Epistemology (5) and Political Philosophy (5) were purposively selected. The analytical, critical and reconstructive methods of philosophy were employed in this study. The analytical method helped in clarifying concepts like culture, understanding, epistemology, belief and universality of emotions that form the basis for cross cultural understanding. The critical method was employed to examine earlier positions on cross cultural understanding and the method of reconstruction was adopted to establish an epistemological basis for it.

Texts on Philosophy of Culture revealed that cultural incommensurability is not tenable in the light of universal human rights advanced by universalists though they fail to define the element in human nature that constitute the foundation for cross cultural understanding. Works on Epistemology showed that universality of emotions is problematic because existence transcends emotion. The universalists have not explained what qualifies as lived experience, hence, the need for an epistemological variable of belief. Beliefs form the basis for cultural overlaps because they are elicited by common objects in the world. Materials on Political Philosophy revealed the imperativeness of peace in human society. Belief interconnectedness was expressed in the condemnation of genocide in Rwanda and the extermination of Jews by Nazis. Critical interrogation showed that belief overlap is justified by common objects. Given that beliefs overlap, cross cultural understanding is possible. It is basic belief about common nature, need for justice and transcendence and not non-basic beliefs like religion and ideology that make cross cultural understanding possible contrary to the position of cultural relativists. Cross cultural conflicts result from holding too rigidly to the dictates of relativism in forms of life to the neglect of the overlap of universal, basic or primary beliefs which constitute viable factors in the resolution of conflicts among cultures.

Recognition of overlap of primary beliefs between cultures serves as the main basis for facilitating the resolution of conflicts engendered by cross cultural misunderstanding. Therefore, a universalist epistemology of beliefs constitutes an essential basis for cross cultural understanding.

Key words: Cross-cultural understanding, Beliefs, Epistemology, Relativism, Universalism

Word Count: 497

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I will start by acknowledging the creator of the universe and Blessed Trinity for protection and provision as well as the insight to accomplish this task. My appreciation goes to my supervisor and mentor Prof. Olatunji Oyeshile, who did not only supervise this work but also taught me the virtue of humility and the transitory nature of position. I am indeed grateful to you Sir. My special thanks go to the following people for their unflinching support and guidance through out the period of this research: Prof. ‘Dipo Irele, Prof. A. B. Ekanola, Dr. Isaac Ukpokolo, Dr. C. A. Udefi, Dr. F. Offor, Dr. Bolatito Lanre-Abbas, Dr. C. O. Agulanna, Dr. A. L. Afolayan, Dr. A. L. Adegbindi, and my dear friend whom I prefer to call Bose, all of the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan. May God reward you all. I am especially grateful to Dr. S. A. Odebunmi, the Sub-Dean (Postgraduate) Arts whose timely and critical interventions at the abstract stage proved very useful. To those who sowed the seed of philosophy in me – especially my teachers at the University of Calabar, may God continue to make his face to shine upon you.

My appreciation also goes to my friend and colleague, De Phil, and his lovely wife for all the care and all that we shared together in the duration of this work. Phil I say may God richly reward you. Also worthy of mention, are my friends Sir Myke, J. T., Kola, Okaka, Bright, Akpos, Mr Osamede, Emeka, Chisimdi, Patrick, Sir Brown, Francis, Iyanda, Raymond, Baba Ginola (Gabs), Wayne, and to my brother and friend Oyatiède. I appreciate you all.

To my family members who have always urged me on with prayers and words of encouragement I want to say thank you. They include Mr and Mrs Inah Mike Inah, Mr and Mrs Okah Inah, Auntu Isu, Auntu Ubana and to all my siblings especially I. B. and his dear wife Koko, I say a very big thank you to all of you. I also want to thank all those who have one way or the other contributed to the success of this work, I appreciate you all. And to my gem, Ufuoma whom I call My Gail, I thank you for being there in my frequent journeys to Ibadan even when you needed me to be around. Thank you for your love and patience. I equally appreciate the encouragement and the support of my students – Fadeelah, Steve and Bishop.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Olusegun Oladipo (1957-2009) who taught me that philosophy should be made to bear on contemporary problems, and to all the victims of the onslaught of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Michael Eyong ABAM in the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the problems confronting the world today is the problem of tension of identities. Culture has become a major reason why so many societies are plunged into one form of war or the other. By culture we are referring to the embodiment of a world view learned and transmitted through beliefs, values and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. Culture also encompasses a way of life informed by the historical, economic, ecological and political forces of a group. These definitions suggest that culture is fluid and dynamic and that there are both cultural universal phenomena and culturally specific or relative constructs. In recent times, there has been an ongoing tension in the world that scholars of culture have not been able to properly explain. Some of these cultural tensions include; the menace of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Alshabab in Somalia and Kenya, the Tuareg invasion in Mali and the persistence in global terrorism. On-going tension between North Korea and the United States on the one hand and the feud between Argentina and United Kingdom over the Faulkland Island on the other. This study, therefore, provided an epistemological foundation for cross cultural understanding in terms of the relationship between basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs, with a view to facilitating a resolution of the conflicts generated by cross cultural misunderstanding.

Some major texts in philosophy of culture like Ani's *Yurungu*, Beattie's *Other Cultures*, Bell's *Understanding African Philosophy: A Cross Cultural Approach*, Anyanwu's *The African Experience in the American Market Place* and Wiredu's *Are there Cultural Universals?* Were consulted to shed light on the problematic. Other texts in epistemology like Ayer's *The Problem of Knowledge*, Ozumba's *Introduction to Epistemology*, Rorty's *Shaping our Culture with our Thought*, Ricoeur's *The Conflict of Interpretation* and Harman's *Reflections on Knowledge and Limits* were analyzed to provide the epistemological foundation for the research. More so, we also looked at books like Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, Hawkes' *The Empire Writes Back*, Mckinnon's *Toleration*, Sweet's *Dialogue of Cultural Traditions* and Oladipo's *Philosophy and Social Reconstruction In Africa*. These books help us understand the social and political dimensions of cultural conflicts.

The major question is: what can be responsible for these tensions and how can they be resolved? One school of thought holds that the problem of cultural tension is one that is tied to the very core and nature of humankind – for this school, human

nature is selfish, individualistic, and naturally conflictive, that cultures will naturally pursue their interests defined as power, and that such interest will come into conflict with those of other cultures leading to the inevitability of conflict – in a word, world cultures are incommensurate and as such, there will always be conflict. But does the egoistic nature and feeling of self preservation inherent in world cultures negate a possibility for cross cultural understanding? A different school of thought answers in the negative that in spite the flaws in human nature and the idea incommensurability among world cultures, cross cultural understanding is possible.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The central question this research addresses is whether cross cultural understanding is possible, if yes, what is its basis? This problem has plagued researchers over the years and attempts have been made to answer this question in the affirmative. However, most of the attempts failed in adequately establishing the basis for cross cultural understanding. This study therefore, provides an epistemological foundation in terms of the relationship between basic beliefs and non –basic beliefs with an a view to facilitating a resolution of the conflicts generated by cross cultural misunderstanding.

For instance, in order to establish a basis for cross cultural understanding, Charles Darwin appealed to what he called the ‘universality of emotions theory’ that is traceable to the Santa Barbara school of evolutionary psychology.¹ The major thrust of the argument of this school is that there is a single universal psychology present in all members of the human specie that can serve as a basis for understanding the emotions of the other. Darwin’s work *Expression* sheds more light on this theory when he argues that sexual selection had led human races to diverge from each other in various ways, but he believed that in spite the divergence, humans were all members of one single species, and that the common ancestors of all races were similar. He attempts to show this by demonstrating similarities in emotional expression of humans from all over the world thereby providing:

a new argument in favour of the several races being descended from single parent-stock, which must have been almost completely human in structure, and to a large extent in mind, before the periods in which the races diverge from each other.²

The point Darwin is trying to buttress here is that, regardless of cultural differences, humans express themselves in many similar respects which can provide a basis for understanding each other. His evidence was obtained by sending questions to an international army of correspondents whose responses increased his confidence in the universality of many expressions as basis for cross cultural understanding. Darwin as quoted by Lewens writes that:

These statements, relating to Europeans, Hindoos the hill tribes of India, Malays, Micronesians, Abyssinians, Arabs, Negros, Indians of North America, and apparently the Australians – many of these natives having had scarcely any intercourse with Europeans – are sufficient to show that shrugging the shoulders, accompanied in some cases by the other proper movements, in a gesture natural to mankind.³

For Darwin, this evidence from cultures that had little contact with Europeans is important, for it counts against the hypothesis that human cultures owe their similarities in emotional expression in recent learning from each other, rather than to more ancient inheritance from a recognizably human ancestor. Darwin concludes that the explanation for trans-cultural resemblance that implies cross cultural understanding does not lie in natural selection but rather to a common ancestry. So for him, the basis for cross cultural understanding rests on universality of emotion.

Be that as it may, theorists like Ekman have argued that common ancestry does not in any way explain why diverse cultures express emotions in the same way; but all the same agree that emotions themselves (or at least what Ekman recognizes as the six basic emotions themselves of happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust) are universal and can serve as basis for understanding the emotions of the cultural other. This theory to say the least, has been criticized for establishing the basis for cross cultural understanding on emotions ignoring the other faculties and aspects that make up or constitute the human person. This may be what Wiredu unveils in his attempt to establish a firmer foundation for cross cultural understanding.

In establishing the possibility for cross cultural understanding, Wiredu rests his analysis on two important factors (1) the universal mode of human cognition or what some term our common biological make up, and (2) the actuality of inter-conceptual scheme dialogue. The possibility of inter conceptual scheme dialogue propels Wiredu into asking a pertinent and fundamental question: Can philosophy be intercultural? By

this question, Wiredu was at the same time asking whether it is possible for there to be cross cultural understanding. He responded in the affirmative giving the fact that African philosophers do in fact carry out their quest in a foreign language and for this singular reason, their works are open to scrutiny making such exchange intercultural⁴. He went on to explain that there is an intercultural dimension to any exposition of the thought of one culture in the language of another. But since conceptual framework forms the basis for meaning in any culture given the canons of conceptualization from which such frameworks are derived, does this not close the door to any form of understanding across cultures that differs in framework? If this is so then we are thrown into the realm of relativism be it social or cultural. These forms of relativism are inimical to cross cultural understanding, but the most damaging of these forms of relativism is relativism in its conceptual sense. According to Wiredu

This affects the question not just of truth or validity or goodness but, more radically, of intelligibility. The idea is that what is intelligible is so only relatively to the conceptual framework of an individual or group. Thus, something which is intelligible in terms of one conceptual framework may be irresolvably unintelligible in terms of another; but no conceptual framework is superior to another⁵

Relativists are often too quick in insisting that the intelligibility of a proposition is 'relative' to a conceptual framework, but they do not let us into what the intelligibility of the conceptual framework is relative to. Consequently, for one from a particular culture to be able to communicate with any one even from the same culture at all, there has to be a way of referring intersubjectively to things that are directly accessible to all concerned. Such things normally are objects or things given to us in experience. From beginning such as this, there is what Wiredu terms a natural, slow, extension of intersubjectivity by means of continued observation, induction, deduction, composition, abstraction, extrapolation, analysis, and other various mental devices (459). All the problems of communication are encountered at this stage but these problems are not in any way insurmountable and cannot prevent cross cultural dialogue because:

So long as there can be some sharing of meanings at a preanalytic level of discourse, that is, at some level below that of sophisticated theory, the possibility of communication and dialogue remains unprejudiced. And

it is through the same mechanisms for sharing preanalytic meanings within the same language that it is possible to learn another language and enter into the systems of thought articulated therein⁶.

There is a way of developing instinctual drives that are eventually transformed into structured thought and action that are common to all human beings. Stimuli accumulation registers on an evolving mind in its active interaction with the environment. These stimuli are in turn organized into discriminations of objects and possibilities of action without which there cannot be what might be called human way of knowing. Consequently, the very characterization “human”, in other words implies the existence of some semantics and epistemological universals⁷. And this is all we need for cross cultural dialogue to be effective. More still, if there was no universal way humans come to know about their world, there would be no sharing of meanings and reactions among individuals therefore, no human society; because communication will be impossible. To this end, Wiredu writes:

either there exists no such community of meanings and reactions, in which case human society is, contrary to palpable fact, impossible; or it exists, in which case communication among persons and group-to group dialogue and understanding in the community of humans is conceded and relativism is ceded⁸.

Consequently, the fact that there can be sharing of meaning by people in the same society or culture, also means that sharing of meaning can also take place in all human societies if the *will* is there, therefore cross cultural understanding is possible.

Another argument in favour of the possibility of cross cultural understanding lies at the core of Western philosophy that is replete with inter-framework dialogues. There are different conceptual frameworks in Western philosophy each representing a different school. More so, if Hume can read and understand Hegel who belongs to a different conceptual framework, it follows that inter-framework understanding is possible and all cultures even though embedded in their respective frameworks can indeed interact with one another. Elsewhere Wiredu opines that “until recently the dominant philosophy in China was a philosophy originating in the Western world, namely, Marxism with some Chinese tinges”⁹. This was made possible due to the possibility of cross cultural understanding for how would the Chinese have been able to grasp the philosophy of Marx which belongs to a different conceptual framework if not for the reason that inter conceptual framework is not only a possibility but an actuality?

Granted that it is not everything that can be understood across different conceptual frameworks, this does not in any way mean cultures cannot understand each other because the same problem can also be seen within the same conceptual framework. More often we have failed to understand one of our own even when we are using the same framework. Wiredu in his *Canons of Conceptualization* shed light on this kind of intra-conceptual framework misunderstanding that took place between Locke and Hume on the nature of substance¹⁰. One is not saying that it is possible for one to translate all the words in one natural language to another. This may be why Wiredu cautioned that it should not be taken to imply that all languages are inter-translatable without remainder. This is so because the manner in which people interpret their reality may not be common to all cultures. For this reason, a culture may develop a concept for an aspect of reality that another culture downplays. The implication of this is that some concepts and propositions formulated in one language may not have counterpart in another, to that extent, endangering cross cultural understanding. But this is not to say cross cultural understanding cannot take place because in all languages there are certain core areas called “pre analytic” discourses that are inter-translatable. But even in situations where there is no one to one correlation between words in both languages, iteration can also aid inter conceptual scheme intelligibility. This may be why Wiredu writes that:

it is cross-cultural intelligibility of the ordinary conceptions of substance and quality that makes possible a cross-culturally intelligible critique of doctrines of substance in western philosophy from the point of view of language of a different culture, such as that of Akans¹¹.

Consequently, no matter the conceptual framework one is using or belongs to, it is possible to indeed have understanding across all cultures because of our process of coming to know about the world is tied to our common biological make up as humans. This is why even when propositions that are apparently meaningful in one language, seems to lose all intelligibility upon being rendered with all circumspection, into the conceptual framework of another language. It is always in principle possible to explain the fate of that proposition on independent ground, that is, on grounds that are peculiar to any one of the languages involved. From the fore going, Wiredu concludes that we must be ready to make concessions for inter cultural dialogue to take place. He advises that we employ the virtues of charity and respect in inter-cultural discussions. He writes:

the concern now is not just with the fact that inter-cultural discourse is possible and actually has gone on after a fashion in human history, but rather that it should go on in a manner that merits the designation “dialogue”. Dialogue is, in fact, impossible, unless the principals have a basic epistemic respect for each other¹².

This assertion implies that where there is no epistemic respect there can never be inter cultural understanding. Respect cannot be attained unless there is first and foremost a basis for understanding. Wiredu puts respect before understanding and we disagree with him on this ground because where people do not understand themselves on what basis can respect be established? So the idea of epistemic respect should follow from understanding and not vice versa.

For Schleirmacher, the possibility of cross cultural understanding rests on hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the art of understanding, so the goal of hermeneutic practice is to understand correctly what has been expressed by another, especially in written form. “Every utterance has a dual relationship, to the totality of language and to the whole thought of its originator”¹³. This may be why the idea of hermeneutic circle was introduced into hermeneutics. This is due to the fact that expressions in language relate to the totality of that language at that time and to the whole thinking of the author as embedded in the history of an era. There exists an interdependence of whole and part, which is known as the hermeneutic circle. The bottom line of this is that “complete knowledge is always in this apparent circle, that each particular can only be understood via the general, of which it is a part, and vice versa”¹⁴

This being the case, Schleirmacher introduced two kinds of interpretations namely: Grammatical interpretation and psychological interpretation. In grammatical interpretation Schleirmacher holds that one must understand the author’s original language for one to be able to interpret. Put differently, Schleirmacher presupposes a common use of language for interpretation and understanding to take place. Psychological interpretation on the other hand involves aims to reconstruct the author’s thinking and the way these thoughts are expressed before one will be able to interpret. Whether from the grammatical or psychological side, people are able to interpret and understand each other irrespective of culture. How is this possible? Schleirmacher used the divinatory and comparative factors as that which aid interpretation and understanding.

How can we reconstruct an author's creative process for us to understand him since our cultural backgrounds are different? To answer this question, Schleiermacher identifies two methods as already hinted, that will be of great use, namely, the divinatory and comparative methods. "The divinatory method is the one in which one, so to speak, transforms oneself into the other person and tries to understand the individual element directly." Through the divinatory method, the interpreter would come to reconstruct what particular circumstances lead the author to his seminal decision as well as to his secondary ideas. It would also include on the technical side the individual way the author connects his ideas for presentation and his individual use of the chosen genre. Schleiermacher goes further to indicate how the divinatory method can work. In addition to being an individual, every person according to him

has a receptivity for all other people, this receptivity is based on the fact that everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themselves, and divination is consequently excited by comparison with oneself.¹⁵

So, although one cannot actually place oneself in the thinking of the cultural other, one can guess or intuit how the cultural other thought by comparison to how one thinks oneself since human beings are similar. That is why in the case of written interpretation from one culture to another Schleiermacher thinks it is important that the interpreter be versed in writing and thinking.

Schleiermacher claims that the way to understand the thoughts of an author from another culture is to go back in time and place oneself in the author's cultural milieu. He presents two cases. In one, "the thinking and connection of thought is one and the same in each, then, if the language is the same, understanding results on its own accord."¹⁶ Since the language is shared and each thinks in language the same way, then the meaning of the thoughts and their connections would be similar in each person because the schematization of experience is similar. Schleiermacher does not see a fundamental barrier to understanding. However, he argues that in every case of understanding we must assume there is some sort of difference in thinking between the speaker of a language and his/her listener, but this difference is not one that cannot be overcome. Even in every day discourse he continues, we suppose a difference in conversations across cultures but in wishing to understand, we presuppose that the difference can be overcome.¹⁷ The argument is that since we do, in fact understand each

other even where language is different, whatever difficulties encountered in cross cultural dialogues can indeed be overcome to a large extent.

In line with the quest for the possibility of intercultural intelligibility, Wilhelm Dilthey discovers four crucial ideas in Schleiermacher's contribution to hermeneutics as a means of understanding other cultures both written and oral. One is that hermeneutic rules for interpreting texts are a specific case of the process of understanding in general so that "the analysis of understanding is therefore the groundwork for the codification of interpretation"¹⁸. Secondly the interpreter and author share a "general human nature" that permits the understanding of others. Thirdly, because of this shared human nature, the interpreter can recreate "an alien form of life" by imaginatively modifying her own psychic (mental) processes and thus understand the inner life of another (i.e. divinatory method). But for Dilthey, the basis for understanding is in language because it is only in language that human inner life finds its complete expression. But how can one understand the inner life of a cultural alien? For Dilthey, lived experience provides the solution. A lived experience is a unity identified in the flow of life. We have states of consciousness that are expressed in gestures, looks, and words; and they have their objectivity in institutions, states, churches, and scientific institutions. Just as the physical object may be abstracted from life, so too may the mental or spiritual object. Dilthey holds that cross cultural understanding may be possible "only if we project our experienced life into every sort of expression of our own and other's lives".¹⁹

In the beginning of his essay on understanding others Dilthey writes "on the basis of lived experience and self-understanding and their constant interaction, there emerges the understanding of other persons and their manifestations of life. Manifestations of life are the external, empirically cognizable data that express or indicate the inner spiritual and mental aspects of human life. This spiritual mental aspect of life is understandable across cultures." He identified three classes of manifestations of life. The first "consists of concepts, judgments and the larger thought formation".²⁰ Actions make up the second class of manifestations of life. As manifestations, actions do not intend to communicate but are able to indicate a relationship to a purpose. This may be why there is always a regular relation of concern between an action and what it expresses of the human spirit that allows us to make probable assumptions about it. According to Schmidt, seeing someone nailing boards side by side, we can understand that his purpose is to build a fence.

Expressions of lived experience constitute the third class of manifestations of life. This class is unique for there is a special connection running from the inner life of the one who expresses his lived experience, through the manifestations of this lived experience, to the understanding that occurs in another who understands this expression. In manifestations of life that express lived experience, the inner state is manifested in the outer empirical world. An expression of lived experience can contain more of the nexus of psychic life than any introspection can catch sight of. This is due in part to aspects of an expression that one may not be aware of. For instance, my knitted brow reveals my disdain for the critical question while I believe I am politely answering the question. The unconscious elements that enter expressions of lived experience according to Dilthey are the basis for understanding a cultural alien better than the way he may even understand himself.²¹ Consequently, for each class of manifestation, there is an elementary form of understanding. Understanding begins first in the practical or pragmatic situations of common interactions. This presupposes that through outer empirical expressions we can know aspects of the inner life of others that the other has expressed. This connection between expression and inner meaning and outer expression starts in the earliest part of human life. This is the basis of acculturation, and the connection between expression and inner meaning is the essential basis of all understanding. The three classes of manifestation following Dilthey are united. For instance, series of letters form words that in turn express propositions; swinging a hammer expresses a purpose, such as fence building; facial expression expresses pain. In elemental understanding the empirical manifestation and the inner content expressed there are united.

Higher forms of understanding are built from this basis. One essential requirement is that there is an ordered structure in objective spirit and humanity. This means that all human beings share some very general structures in living their lives. All human beings share very general ways of manifesting their lives. The example is a legal system and their inner sense of justice. A continuum of ordered structures exists from the very particular ones that one is acculturated into, through ever-larger groups of people in time and space, until one reaches the universal for objective spirit and humanity. This alone provides the possibility of understanding human beings from a different temporal and cultural situation.

The ability to understand others outside one's acculturated group depends on the two modes of higher understanding. The milieu and external situation allow the

location of types and then more specific types of universal structures that the other embodies. The second mode concerns the human ability to create in one's own consciousness a lived experience that one has not had by imaginatively modifying the psychic states one has experienced. This mode is more essential than the milieu and the external circumstances different from my own, but especially for re-experiencing the internal states of others irrespective of culture.

Although Dilthey restricts hermeneutics to the science of the art of understanding written documents, since the written contains the most complete expression of human spirit and mind, we infer that philological hermeneutic understanding is a model for all understanding. Seen in the context of the theory of knowledge, the theory of interpretation becomes an essential connecting link in intercultural discourses. In spite these attempts at establishing a basis for cross cultural understanding, the question as to its basis still persists. This is because of the fact that the theories that have been proffered so far, remain inadequate as to what actually constitute the basis for cross cultural understanding.

STATEMENT OF THESIS

The thesis of this study is that cross cultural understanding can be established on the basis of interconnectedness of beliefs as members of the human family. Irrespective of cultural differences, our beliefs are interconnected with each other, and it is this interconnectedness of beliefs that make for the possibility of cross cultural understanding. The beliefs we are referring to are the basic or primary beliefs and not the secondary or non basic kind. It is at the level of basic beliefs that cross cultural understanding occur. Every sociological context as in Dilthey, linguistic context as in Schleirmacher, and biological context as in Wiredu rests on beliefs (especially the basic kind). This is the one epistemological factor that these theories fail to address. If this were not so, that is, if human beliefs did not form a web or interconnect, the world would have been very chaotic to live in. the relative order experienced in the world can be attributed to the interconnectedness of human beliefs.

When we talk of beliefs what do we mean? By beliefs we are referring to the primary cognitive state representing the world as being in a certain way, regulating our behavior and guiding us around the world.²² Can we say that any cognitive state qualify as belief? This is not the case because for a cognitive state to be termed belief, it must be distinguished from other cognitive states by possessing certain epistemic traits.

These traits include: (1) commitment to truth (2) sensitivity to evidence – for a belief to be termed reasonable or rational, or for it to be properly designated an epistemic belief, it must possess an adequate ground for its justification, this is where the idea of perceptual beliefs come into play – i.e. beliefs that are governed by evidential norms in the sense that a rational perceptual belief is one that is supported by sensory experience. This implies that the idea of basic belief that provide evidence for the other beliefs are founded on experience. (3) Epistemic beliefs also have the feature of eliciting certain behavioural patterns from those that hold these beliefs. We shall try to show how these three factors help our thesis in the work proper. But the bottom line is that, irrespective of cultural differences, we all ascribe to common belief justifiers and it is on these that beliefs converge.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- a) To show that the possibility for cross cultural understanding rest in the interconnectedness of human beliefs.
- b) To show the features beliefs must possess for them to be designated epistemic beliefs.
- c) It also examined how the identified features of epistemic beliefs can be used to establish a basis for cross cultural understanding.
- d) The research also shows that irrespective of cultural differences, human cultures have a convergent point in certain common belief justifiers.
- e) The research also makes the point that true human cooperation and relative world peace can be realized and sustained on the basis of respect and tolerance among world cultures.

METHODOLOGY

The analytical, critical and reconstructive methods of philosophy were employed in this study. The analytical method helped in the clarification of concepts like culture, understanding, epistemology, belief, and universality of human emotions that form the basis of cross cultural understanding. The critical method was employed to critique earlier positions on the problematic in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The method of reconstruction provided the veritable justification for Davidson's principle of triangulation and how it can be adapted in establishing an epistemological basis for cross cultural understanding.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted Donald Davidson's principle of triangulation as its theoretical frame work. This principle is relevant given the fact that it helped us in our quest for understanding each other. Donald Davidson was an analytic philosopher whose works gained some level of prominence, especially towards the concluding part of last century. These works are said to include ideas in epistemology, ethics, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. Davidson rejects the constructivist thesis that cultures shape and control communication and our knowledge of reality, together with the idea of cultural incommensurability. He holds the view that understanding other cultures is as simple as understanding our next door neighbor. This according to him is due to the fact that there are connections everywhere between the world and the contents of our thoughts; it is not limited to a few words but is true of a very large number of them.²³

Consequently, Davidson's argument with regard to how cultures can understand each other lies in his principle of triangulation. According to him this metaphor represents a triangular structure that requires interaction between at least two individuals (or cultures) and a set of common objects in the world. The idea of triangulation is a way of saying why it is that communication is essential to the concept of an objective world; that is; communication and objectivity go together. To admit that the world is objective is to admit trans-cultural communication. We cannot communicate unless we relate to an objective reality from which we derive the meaningfulness and usefulness of our linguistic expressions.

It is from this principle that we surmise that since nature is objective, it acts as evidence and the justifier of beliefs. More so, for a belief to be true, it must either correspond or be exact representation of the object that generated that belief. Since all cultures generate their beliefs from the objects in their environment and we all share in the same human objectified environment, beliefs and knowledge that ensue there from cannot be incommensurate to the extent that cultures cannot completely fail to understand each other. The principle of triangulation helps our thesis of epistemology as basis of cross cultural understanding to flourish.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

It is a fact that so many attempts have been made to establish a basis for cross cultural understanding. Some of these attempts include Darwinian universality of

emotions theory as basis for understanding the cultural other, Schleiermacher's divination method and Dilthey's lived experience that are embedded in hermeneutics. The other is Wiredu's universal human nature. All these theories make the point that cross cultural understanding is possible based on the respective factors adduced.

This research contributes to the volume on literature to the problematic by adding that without human beliefs interconnecting, neither Darwin, Wiredu, Schleiermacher or Dilthey would have succeeded in his quest for establishing a basis for cross cultural understanding. What we have contributed to the discourse on cross cultural understanding is that understanding from all ramifications be it intra or intercultural is possible because of the overlap in human beliefs. This point has not been adequately pursued as far as resolving this problematic is concerned. So if cross cultural understanding is possible it is because of the interconnectedness of all human beliefs. More so, many people are of the opinion that the traditional branches of are no longer useful in tackling modern challenges. This work negates such view by applying epistemology to contemporary world problems.

JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

The world is becoming very unsafe to live in because different cultural groups are now more than ever exerting their presence on the world stage and this has led to a form of clash among world cultures. We witness reactions and counter reactions in form of terrorism in countries like the USA, Britain, Iraq, Pakistan, Kenya, and Boko Haram incidence in Nigeria. We need cross cultural understanding so that people belonging to different cultural groups will not continue to see others as threat to them. In the hands of different cultures are technologies capable of demolishing the whole world in one sweep or by the push of a button.

We have a duty as well as the moral responsibility to save humanity and increase mutual respect so that people from all corners of the world and for posterity may live with full dignity and be able to build on secure foundation. This can only be possible if cultures cease to be antagonistic to each other by looking for those things that engender understanding. Mutual respect among cultures cannot be attained unless there is first and foremost a basis for cross cultural understanding. Epistemology erects that platform that can engender that understanding. It is in this respect that this work is justified.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE

NATURE OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In this chapter we examined the meaning of the concept of culture, the nature of understanding. Here we made the point that we often take for granted the notion of 'understanding' as needing no further exegesis, but in depth analysis shows that to understand has to do with ability to comprehend, appreciate, know, cognize, etc. and to properly apply the term 'understand,' we need to consider some objects of understanding. These objects include: the self, other people, religious rituals and language and meanings. We also considered some models of understanding to include visual representation, capacity, interpretative model, scientific, aesthetic, etc all help shed light on the nature of understanding. Beyond that we looked at the obstacles of cross cultural understanding and the consequences of the dearth of cross cultural understanding.

CHAPTER TWO

SOME THEORIES OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Here we looked at some selected theories of cross cultural understanding. We examined the universality of religious experience theory of cross cultural understanding, the universality of emotions theory, common biological make up theory and hermeneutic theory. All these theories point to the simple and open fact that humankind is more similar than different and for this reason cross cultural understanding is possible.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DABATE BETWEEN CULTURAL UNIVERSALISTS AND RELATIVISTS

As popular ideologies in humanities, cultural universalism and relativism are simple, antithetical, and antagonistic. Taking into serious academic consideration, however, one finds a much more complex relationship between the two perspectives. Consequently, in this chapter, we continued the long existing debate between the proponents of these schools of thought that has barely found symmetry. This debate is likened to that between conservative and liberals, all pulling from different sides. Universalists anchor there arguments in the idea of universal similarities and

commonalities among human kind and the idea of human rights for all human beings irrespective of culture, while relativists counter them with the constructivist's argument that whatever one perceives to be the case is dependent on concepts inherent in one's culture. The challenge to relativism lies in incommensurability, unintelligibility and differences. Bidney argued that relativist stress cultural differences to the neglect of common elements based on the imperatives of a universal human nature. The debate between these schools is the hub around which this chapter revolves. The debate is also extended to the realm of philosophy.

CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEF AND CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Here we established the fact that epistemology is the basis for cross cultural understanding. We, in this chapter, considered the epistemological factors like truth and evidence as justifiers for human beliefs. The interconnectedness of beliefs makes for the possibility of cross cultural intelligibility. The question remains how? The answer is through triangulation. Nature as we know it is objective and presents itself to all cultures irrespective of the language you speak. How do we come to know that reality? It is mainly by means of perception, and human beings all perceive the same reality and for beliefs about reality to be formed. Because of this fact, cultures cannot fail to attain some level of understanding or rather there is always something that is similar to all cultures that can serve as basis for which understanding can occur because they all perceive one nature. All perceivers of nature seem to triangulate on some common natural objects that serve as belief justifiers for all cultural traditions. More so, in the course of perception, beliefs are formed, and as human beings, our subjective beliefs are at times communicated and made known to others because of the simple reason that human beliefs are interconnected. The interconnectedness of these beliefs makes it possible for communication to occur. If we hold a contrary opinion, that is, if beliefs are not interconnected, how is it possible to pour our thought content into another because communication is simply the outpouring of thought content into one another. The answer is that beliefs form a web, and that web makes for the possibility of cross cultural intelligibility. We also in this chapter made the point that since epistemology is about erecting foundations for our knowledge claims, human knowledge about the cultural other rests on our constitutive activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE HUMANISM

In this chapter we argued that now that we have been able to establish a basis for cross cultural understanding, it is pertinent we put such human understanding into positive use to enable us create a relatively safe world for all cultural traditions. We considered some theories that will help us attain such a world. We examined the idea of humanism and made the point that if we want to attain global humanism we all must strive for peace. But there are conditions. This peace must require mutual collaboration true to proportion in the harboring partnership of cultures. Individuals as well as cultures must tune to each other in depth and height. Humanity must experience immanence into one another, as well as transcendence viz a viz their particular cultural traits. All must give up something in other to embrace the higher, the highest being of peace. If any culture desires peace as all sane cultures do, then instead of monologue, dialogue is essential; instead of injustice and gross inequality, justice and fair sharing of the earth's resources are imperative; instead of politico-economic chauvinism, a humane and reasonable 'live and let live' is called for; and instead of terrorism and destructive wars, we need openness and mutual sharing in our different cultures. In one sentence, an inclusive global humanism is possible in a communicative communion of cultures.

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CHAPTER ONE

NATURE OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In the twenty first century when humanity ought to strive towards making the world a relatively safe place where individuals, groups and nations can aspire to achieve their goals on the basis of common or shared humanity, we rather witness a tremendous increase in violence and threat to world peace championed by our emphasis on differences that are rooted in culture. Cultural antagonism is an evil that has proven to be both disastrous and endemic in many nations of the world. Lives have been lost, property destroyed and many people displaced and disabled- all in the name of identity. This may be the reason why Huntington writes that “cultural identities are shaping the manner of cohesion and disintegration in today’s world order. Ethnic antagonism and tribalism are evils that have been proven to be both disastrous and endemic in many nations of the world”¹. The question that comes to mind is: Why is it difficult for different identity groups to understand each other? Even when they try to do so, what are the impediments to cross cultural understanding that if overcome can lead to cohesion amongst the peoples of the world? These are the possible questions this chapter shall attempt to address. May be if we channel our collective energies into ways the different cultures on the globe can interact and understand each other, we may be able to reduce the tension of identities currently afflicting the world. For us to actually determine whether cultures can interact or whether there can be understanding across cultures, we need to first examine the concept ‘culture’ because it is the pillar on which the entire work rests. We shall also consider the possible obstacles to cross cultural understanding. Beyond that we shall examine some possible consequences concerning a lack of understanding between the cultures of the world.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

It has often been remarked that the employment of the term ‘culture’ suffers from a lack of precision and clarity and that a satisfactory elucidation of its connotation is not likely to be found.² Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to devote some further thought to the meaning of the concept of culture in order to show that its vagueness is in some measure due to the absence of adequate philosophical approach to the subject in the sociological literature which has assumed the authority to deal with this topic.

As a starting point for our analysis we shall have recourse to Brahnislow Malinowski's treatment of the concept of culture, taking his approach as a representative example of the prevalent outlook before examining other authors on the subject. In one of his essays, Malinowski states that culture is the widest context of human behavior and is important to the psychologist, to the social student, to the historian and the linguist.³ Now, one cannot but ask for an explanation of what is meant by "the widest context of human endeavor." It stands to reason that the introduction of such extremely general concepts as "the widest context" into the conceptual framework employed in actual research is rather hazardous. For one thing, it can readily be shown that general notions of this sort are extremely difficult to define and delimit, just as it is difficult to define concepts such as "life" or "being". Secondly, because such concepts do not readily lend themselves to definition, there is tendency to assume that their content is either self-evident or derived from experience. This is certainly not the case. No one is likely to claim that the meaning of the concept of culture is self-evident or that we know its content from our experience. Thirdly, under the notion of widest context, we can subsume or include various shades and diverse spheres of human activity. Thus, for example, in the definition under consideration the dividing line between the concept of "society" and the concept of "culture" is entirely blurred.

The essential fact of culture, continues Malinowski, as we live and experience it and as it lends itself to our scientific observation, is at the organization of human beings into permanent groups.⁴ According to this opinion, it follows that the very fact that a society of human beings exists constitutes a manifestation of culture. All the same on the basis of this determination, it remains to be shown whether society is a pre-condition, a product, or lastly, qua a group of human beings, a part of culture. Oladipo in his analysis of Wiredu's conception of culture draws the connection between culture and society when he writes that "the broad sense of culture explicated above enables us to appreciate the intrinsic link between culture and society and the place of culture in the development process".⁵

Be that as it may, Wade Nobles defines culture as "a process which gives people a general design for living and patterns for interpreting their reality." Its aspects he says are ideology, ethos, and world-view; its factors are ontology, cosmology, and axiology; and its manifestations consist of behavior, values and attitudes.⁶ According to Abraham, culture is the means through which the required moderation, and

consequently, the creation of order is achieved. This is how he expresses this regulatory role of culture:

by uniting people in common beliefs and attitudes, or at least in tolerance for certain beliefs, actions and values, culture fills with order that portion of life which lies beyond the pale of state intervention.⁷

This is also what Dafinone expresses when he examines culture as a mesh of references indicative of a people's pattern of living (material, intellectual, and metaphysical) which as a cross-cultural disciplinary entity impacts upon the intellectual and emotional features that identify a social group. It transverses such aspects of existence as human rights, value systems, beliefs, traditions as well as arts, and crafts, and can be descriptive, historical, narrative, genetic or structural. Culture is also the entirety of man-made knowledge, beliefs, customs, traditions and skills at the disposal of society. It is a network of symbols characteristic of a people.⁸ Haruna sheds more light on the concept when he quotes Paras that culture:

is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing [them as] a people from their neighbors.⁹

The main components of culture has also been identified and classified into various aspects. Among these are the material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects of culture. Ukpokolo identified four features of culture to include:

1. Culture is symbolic: his argument here is that culture is based on symbols- that is, abstract ways of referring to, and understanding ideas, objects, feelings or behavior- the ability according to him to communicate with symbols using language.
2. Culture is learned: for him while people biologically inherit physical traits and behavioral instincts, culture is socially inherited. People are not born with culture but rather are born into a culture which they have to learn.
3. Culture is shared: it is through culture that people in a given society are said to share common behavior and ways of thinking, language and dressing.

4. Culture is adaptive: culture enables the human society to survive in changing material environments.¹⁰

Ukpokolo also identified the diverse definitions of culture to include topical, historical, behavioral, normative, functional, mental, structural and symbolic perspectives.¹¹

On the basis of the analysis so far, if we look at the phenomenon of culture, we are inundated with the following facts:

1. It acts to unify and to order experience, so that its members perceive what it takes for there to be organization and consistency. In this respect it provides a “world-view” that offers us orienting conceptions of reality.
2. It gives people group identification, as it builds on shared historical experience, creating a collective cultural identity.
3. It ‘tells’ its members what to do, thereby creating a voice of prescriptive authority. To its members, culture represents values (which they themselves have created out of shared experiences) as a systematic set of ideas and a single coherent statement.
4. It provides the basis for commitment, priority, and choice, thereby imparting direction to group development and behavior. Indeed, it acts to limit the parameters of change and to pattern the behavior of its members. In this way culture helps to initiate and to authorize its own creation.
5. It provides for the creation of shared symbols and meanings. It is therefore, the primary creative force of collective consciousness, and it is that which makes it possible to construct national consciousness.
6. For the above reasons, it impacts on the definition of group interest and it is potentially political.¹²

Willie Abraham’s understanding of the nature of culture is helpful to our study in that he perceptively acknowledges its applicability to all spheres of human endeavor. This may be why he writes that:

Culture is an instrument for making ...cooperation natural. Its success depends on the extent to which it is allowed to be self authenticating. Though it allows internal discussion... The principles of decision in discussions are themselves provided by the culture. By uniting the people in common beliefs and attitudes. It fills in such a way as at the time to integrate its society, on the

basis of common reactions, common actions, common interest, common attitudes, common values. It creates the basis for the formulation of a common destiny and cooperation in pursuing it. If one looks at the West one finds that this use of culture is well-developed. It is what is involved, when one hears it said that this or that belief will destroy a certain way of life, and that way of life must be defended no matter what the cost.¹³

The exegesis of culture explicated above leads us to another dimension of culture earlier mentioned but not pursued, i.e. the ideological aspect of culture. The ideological thrust of culture is inescapable and is mainly responsible for the crisis the world is grappling with. The ideological side of culture to say the least boldly confronts us. Culture is ideological since it possesses the force and power to direct activity, to mold personalities, and to pattern behaviour. This recognition implies a theory of culture. According to Ani, Raymond Betts puts it this way: “ideology is here used in a cultural sense, to denote the verbal iconography by which a people represents itself in order to achieve communal purpose”.¹⁴ For Leonard Barrett, as quoted in Ani, ideology is “the spiritual and intellectual foundation of group cohesion”.¹⁵ Both culture and ideology are extremely political in nature, since they are about the definition of group interest, the determination of group destiny and common goals. Political behavior is simply behavior that issues from an awareness of group definition as distinct from other groups. We think politically when we assess our group interest in relation to the interests of other groups and determine whether those interests are compatible with or in opposition to ours. We act politically when our behavior and strategies reflect those assessments. Cultural identification and ideological commitment are bases for political consciousness. With this “repoliticized” and “ideologized” understanding of culture, we are prepared to state why there are obstacles to cross cultural understanding.

According to Robert Armstrong, the ideological thrust of culture derives from the idea of a primal consciousness present in all human beings. It is this primal consciousness in us that instills in us certain characteristics that make us see our respective cultures as better in comparison to those that are not ours.¹⁶ This consciousness acts as a “generative germ”, it is thus, “the causative factor of culture.” This “pre conceptual”, “pre affective”, “pre spatial”, and “pre temporal” factors of culture function to maintain the integrity and homogeneity of any culture. Armstrong calls it “mythoform”.¹⁷ Armstrong’s approach to what he calls “humanistic

anthropology” makes “mythoform” its subject matter. As he presents it, mythoform links the unconscious and the conscious expressions of culture. In terms of consciousness, then, we could say that the cultural process progresses from mythoform to mythology and then to ideology. By extending Armstrong’s conception, mythological systems present synthesizing symbols that help to collectivize the consciousness of persons within the culture, at the same time stating pre conscious hidden experiences in a more outward modality. Mythological stage of the cultural process creates icons out of collective unconscious experience. Ideology is an intensely self – conscious extension of this process, which began with pre conscious mythoform. Ideology involves the more intentional use of sacred icons of culture for political purposes. That is, for survival, defense, and projection of the culture. Ideology is mythology politically interpreted.

These facts of the presentation of culture can be understood as experiential actions (intellectual, emotional, spiritual) in a consistent process. Each cultural activity leads to or grows out of the other when all the causal circumstances are present. The process moves from the pre conscious (mythoform) to the conscious (mythology) to the self conscious (ideology).¹⁸ But this is neither a hierarchical nor a strictly unidirectional process. Ideology is not necessarily the “highest” stage, except in a political context.

The ideological aspect of culture may have two thrusts: (1) It is in every culture – giving direction to the lives of its members and their group creations; (2) it gives the culture momentum. But in some cultures the ideology is also outward, seeking to project the culture, assuming a competitive and hostile posture towards other cultures. All cultures do not have an intensely developed ideological statement in this last sense. The lack of an aggressive ideology seems to be related to the lack of the perception of a threatening ‘outside’ world, the inability to perceive other cultures as “the enemy”. In western culture, the outward thrust, the aggressive stance, is developed more intensely than in any other culture. It is in this light that Sekou Toure defined culture as

all the material and immaterial works of art and science, plus knowledge, manners, education, mode of thought, behavior and attitudes accumulated by the people both through and by virtue of their struggle for freedom from the hold and domination of nature; we also include the result of their efforts to destroy the deviationist politics - social systems of domination and exploitation – through the production process of social life.¹⁹

As we x-ray the notion of culture in its ideological sense, we find out that the dominant modes of expression of Western culture reveals an almost fanatically or confrontational consciousness in which all cultural phenomena that are “other” or different are considered hostile to the group interest. This is also what we now witness among the Arabs who have also become very fanatical about their religion and culture to the extent of exterminating the lives of any group they consider hostile to their tradition.

Thus while we seek to investigate into the nature and possibility of cross cultural understanding, it is pertinent to remind ourselves that the ideological dimension that culture has assumed is greatly militating against the idea of cross cultural understanding. Before we pursue this argument further, let us consider the concept ‘understanding’.

THE NATURE OF UNDERSTANDING

It is often taken for granted that the notion of ‘understanding’ needs no further exegesis since virtually every scholar knows what it means for one to understand a thing, a book, a language, a state of affair etc. indepth study of the notion of understanding has let us into the fact that this is not always the case because to understand has to do with the ability to comprehend, appreciate, know, recognize, realize, be familiar with, fathom and cognize. As we analyze the concept, we come to know that ability is only an aspect or a mode of understanding. Consequently, to make understanding clearer, we will have to consider some possible objects of understanding before we examine the different modes of understanding.

Mason identified different objects of understanding to include:

1. The self: Here one may feel sure, or not, that he or she understands himself, though he may be uncertain about what this means. One may feel that his motives and intentions are directly or infallibly accessible to him/her possibly as their owner, and possibly in some unique way. The priority given to self understanding is important. One knows plainly that he can achieve an easier and more evident perception of his own mind than anything else. This may be why Descartes used the *cogito* as foundation for knowledge and by extension understanding. So for one to understand others or anything, it presupposes that one ought to understand himself to a reasonable degree.²⁰The self therefore is a possible object for understanding.

2. Understanding other people: Just like with self understanding, there is the temptation to absorb the understanding of other people into a form of judgment, or better still, into the acceptance of assertions or propositions. For instance one might say: “I thought she was faithful until I caught her cheating on me.” So first, I believed (the proposition) that she was faithful and then I believe (the proposition) she was unfaithful. There might still be the need to understand the understanding of other people in terms of the acceptance of lists of judgments about them. Understanding the self is usually seen in the individual or particular level but understanding other people is seen as instances of whatever they are: members of a family, colleagues, scientist, politicians, strangers etc.
3. Religions and religious rituals: In this case a set of practices and beliefs can be immunized against understanding within a code of mutually reinforcing terminology and symbolism. Religion may seem to offer archetypal frameworks of rationality and explanation that may be inaccessible to each other. There may even be intimations of obstacles to understanding that may only be surmounted by participation or initiation. Here understanding is meant to be modeled on a certain lucidity.
4. Another object of understanding has to do with language or meanings. This appears most grandiosely in the claims made by Gadamer that “man’s relation to the world is absolutely and fundamentally verbal in nature, and hence intelligible.”

MODELS OF UNDERSTANDING

1. Visual representation: in this case, to understand is simply to form a mental picture of anything. As far as this model is concerned, one cannot understand without reverting to a visual picture.
2. Capacity: in this case, to understand is being linked to being able to handle a thing or an ability. For instance, if one claims to understand a language let’s say Yoruba but fails to respond appropriately to questions in Yoruba, there would definitely be doubts about how far his claim could be stretched.
3. Interpretive model: here understanding is based on some general idea of interpretation. This is useful in the sense that understanding is seen more in the act of doing something (interpreting).

4. Scientific model of understanding: like several models already considered, scientific model may be considered to be separate and special, or to be the basic type to which others can or should be reduced. "Science" may be considered to be coterminous with knowledge, or to be a special compartment of it. The means of or styles of scientific understanding may be thought to be more successful than other forms of understanding. This is so because in the scientific model, to understand is to have an explanation.²¹

Other models of understanding include mathematical, aesthetical, moral, intuitive etc. for the purpose of our study, the different models considered so far should suffice for the notion of understanding.

THE NATURE AND OBSTACLES OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

By cross cultural understanding we are referring to the exchange of understandable information between individuals or groups that belong to different cultural traditions. We have earlier made the point that the ideological dimension culture which has assumed has greatly endangered intercultural understanding; this is not to write off any sense in the possibility of such understanding, but to state that without the ideological thrust which culture has assumed coupled with forces of domination, most cultural groups would have been more tolerant of the other thereby creating room for cultural dialogue that will engender understanding.

An excursion into history will shed light into the problem of cross cultural understanding championed by the forces of hegemony and imperialism especially as it concerns the West and her attitude towards the cultural other. A major factor that entangles Africa with western modernity is the philosophical shaping of the concept of "race" by three of the most prominent modern Western philosophers: David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich Hegel - each of whom, perhaps unwittingly, established a rationale for conquest and subjugation for people of the black race. Hume took the lead in his essay *On National Character* (1897) with this comment, as quoted by Ani:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no art, no sciences... such a uniform as constant difference (between the whites and Negro race) could not

happen... if nature had made original distinction betwixt these breeds of men...²²

Hegel completely saw Africa south of the Sahara as irrelevant because it is of no universal nor historical significance. “The Negro”, he opines exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. “We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in his type of character”. So with this 18th century groundwork on the idea of “race”, colonialism had its “rational” to “civilize” and economically exploit the “inferior race”, - “those for whom one can lay aside all thought of reverence and morality.” In the wake of such extra ordinary ideas, the subsequent colonization, the anthropological study of black cultures, the rise of ethno philosophy seemed naturally to follow.²³

Another attitude of white nationalism can be deciphered in the address of P. W. Botha, president of South Africa in 1985 as quoted by Ani:

My beloved white Afrikaaners, greetings to all of you brothers and sisters in the name of our holy blood....Pretoria had been made by the white mind for the white man....We are superior people.....The Republic of South Africa has not been created by wishful thinking. We have created it at the expense of intelligence, sweat and blood....Intellectually we are superior to the blacks; that has been proven beyond any reasonable doubt over the years....Isn't plausible therefore that the white man is created to rule the black man?²⁴

The themes of Western cultural essence are what is significant in this sampling of white nationalist literature: the conqueror, world savior, bearer of order, and most importantly, of civilization, superior and therefore magnanimous in his effort to impose on the cultural other the benefits of his knowledge and talents. To this end, the various ways the West views herself combine to form a self image that externally supports Western imperialistic behaviour and internally or intra culturally supports extreme rationality, fanatical scientificism, a superficial and analytic aesthetics, and a severe lack of spirituality. Imperialism is supported by the scientist who constructs theories by which the world is governed, by intellectuals and academicians who use this knowledge as power', by missionaries who seek only to impose their 'peace' on the world. All of these types of individuals have the mentality of the “world saviour” – the counterpart of

the “world conqueror.” The Western humanitarian shares many of these features as well. He often has the same image of himself in relation to others, as has the western imperialist. Both believe that they are in possession of an “absolute truth” that they would have to share with the world. Invariably, western style rationalism ends in western hegemony which has to do with her supposed superiority over the “cultural other”.

Having had a glimpse at history to prepare us as to why cross cultural communication and understanding is a problem among the different cultural groups in the world, let us now examine some of the factors that militate against cross cultural understanding. The chief factor that has undermined cross cultural understanding is western conception of the “other”. The image that the west has created about her cultural opposite most times does not engender cross cultural understanding. To most westerners, as the words of Hegel, Hume and Kant have shown, the other is a composite of all those things that represent lack of value; i.e., ‘negative’ human characteristics, within the dictates of European ideology. It is this opposite, this negative image that the west breeds for, that their culture strives to produce. The western self image is a positive one in terms of normative western behaviour; it is functional in terms of western goals. A negative conception of the “other” is basis upon which the west builds her image of other people. Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* is one of the most notorious theoretical works in this regard, it is not atypical; its basic assumptions are those of most westerners who consider themselves to be ‘liberal’ and ‘objective’, even as they use others to theorize about their own psychological and cultural development, one that is supposedly natural to all humans. Implicit even in enlightened anthropological theory is the invidiously comparative image of westerners with peoples of other cultures, which manifest itself as unconvincing apologia for the failure of those who did not “develop civilization.” Elmer Barnes offers the following characterization of the other:

Practically speaking, the primitive mentality is dominated by comparative ignorance from which the civilized and educated man today is relatively emancipated. Primitive man also lacks the mental discipline which comes from some training in logic. Consequently, his imagination is more or less unrestrained. He creates and believes in a great number of mythologies. He tries to control Nature by magic – that is

by incantations, prayers, rituals and festivals. Such intellectually advances as civilized man has made have been achieved mainly through release from such naivete.²⁵

These are statements that capture western treatment of the 'other'. These images are to be found in what they call "the intellectual histories of mankind" and the histories of mankind are the histories of western civilization. Gobineau described the Negroid variety as the lowest and stands at the foot of the ladder. He went further to say that the strength of the Negroid sensations is the most striking proof of his inferiority,²⁶ while Stoddard writes that the black race has never shown real constructive power, and has never built up a native civilization. Such progress as certain Negro have done has been due to external pressure.²⁷

"Whiteness" is central to western self image just as their image of others necessarily involves "blackness" or "non whiteness", as it is put negatively in western terms. This aspect of western aesthetic helps to define the content of western cultural nationalism, and white supremacy, in this way, becomes identifiable as one of its most significant characteristics. Statements such as those by Gobineau and Stoddard are tied to the reason why it will be difficult for the cultural other to enter into dialogue with the westerner.

In the same vein, for Merlin Stone, one of the problems associated with cross cultural understanding has to do with cultural racism which she describes as "stages" of racism in which land, resources and labour are stolen from one group by another, and the supportive state of cultural racism in which beliefs about the racial or ethnic group under attack are paganized by the conquerors. Stone assiduously avoids the obvious in the presentation of her theory: and this is that this pattern of behavior is characteristic of the West. She opines that theft of land is supported by the assertion that the victims are "innately immoral, dishonest, cunning, sly, and devious etc."²⁸ In this stage, the moral inferiority of the cultural other is the issue. She goes on to say that the purpose of cultural racism is to incite unprovoked aggression and the extreme violence characteristic of the first stage of economic racism. According to Stone, this stage of cultural racism lasts until the other is subdued; their land is now in the conqueror's name. In the next stage of economic racism, overt violence is no longer necessary. The supportive form of cultural racism in this stage is one in which the objects of aggression are said to be "innately mentally inferior, e.g, less able to learn, less

inventive, less creative, less motivated towards cultural accomplishments, at a lower level of human mental development.” These assertions are then institutionalized, which forces their internalization on those who have been enslaved or conquered.

Western cultural image of the other is designed to achieve two purposes: one, to support the western self – image of being superior to the rest and two, that self image is to be imposed on the cultural other in such a way that they indeed become that which they have been imaged to be. Thus a reality is constructed. From the foregoing, the political implications of cultural imperialism become very clear. The west is successful in her efforts to economically and politically control others, because culturally she is able to force the other to assimilate her definition of inferiority into our self image while at the same time gaining support for her image as superior. As Ani says, western definition of ‘good’ functions destructively for the cultural other who accepts it. It functions constructively for the western mind by projecting and reinforcing his own positive self image, and establishing a functional cultural norm which has political/social/economic benefits.²⁹ Terms such as master/slave; man/boy are initiated by westerners from their frame of reference and function to serve their purposes, in opposition of the communities on which they are imposed. Here again we see the value of the myth of universalism – for what enables westerners to impose their definitions so successfully is, in part their ability to convince their political objects that they are not western definitions and do not serve western interests, but that they are universally valid definitions, which serve the benefit of humankind.

As a follow up to the just described climate of western bias towards the study of other cultures and the damaging and demeaning remarks of Hume and Hegel about the black race, the rise of an elitist class did not wait for a second invitation to set the records straight. Led by Senghor, the idea of negritude was developed to champion the emancipation of the African personality from the claws of western cultural prejudice. Senghor’s elaboration of the idea of a unique African world view and form of rationality as response to the dominance of western canons of rationality is too well known to require reiteration.³⁰ What we won’t fail to mention is that negritude shares the universalizing tendency with some aspects of ethno philosophy in identifying common, fundamental cultural characteristics that were thought to be specifically African or “Negro”. Senghor emphasized the uniqueness of racial and cultural consciousness. The particularity of the African racial and cultural consciousness contributes to the idea of its singular cultural identity.³¹

The problem of cross cultural understanding at the macro level therefore lies in the battle for ontological space between the west on the one hand and cultural others on the other. Going by our exegesis in history that yielded insight into the ideological thrust of western culture and its weapons of imperialism and hegemony countered by forces of negritude, what is at stake is whether the actors on either side of the divide will agree to place themselves reciprocally at each others stand point because it is only on this premise can cross cultural understanding be made possible

In trying to understand and make meaning out of something or an action in a culture alien to us, we are bound to encounter obstacles of language, different customs, and there may be some epistemological differences. This is why it has become pertinent for one that wants to understand the other to strive to be able to determine what is significant from the point of view of the cultural other he wants to understand. One cannot understand anything outside its context which includes language, customs, geography, iconic traditions, and the ordinary practices of the people. When we talk of cross cultural understanding, we are often too quick in thinking of the understanding that involves large cultures like western, Chinese or African while ignoring smaller cultures sometimes within the same geographical territory. Therefore in cross cultural understanding what is in fact important is awareness of differences between cultures large or small and how understanding may pass between them. Bell writes that “whether understanding is between cultures or within a given culture the difficulties are many”.³² We think Archie Bahm recognizes this difficulty when he writes that:

Usually a person is culturally nurtured within a particular society with its own world – view. If he knows only one philosophy, then when he meets another, he must naturally compare it with his own. If his own has been accepted as true, which is normally the case when no alternatives are presented then he must judge the other in terms of what he already knows and thus, he must judge the other in terms of his own as standard.³³

This is usually one of the problems of intercultural dialogue, that is, the tendency to judge other cultures from one’s stand point thereby closing the window for communication. This tendency has been criticized by P.T. Raju. Raju puts the matter this way:

The philosopher who thinks that his own philosophy is the absolute model does not gain anything from cross

cultural understanding. He is already self-assured, and his interest can at most be one of vain curiosity or self glorification.³⁴

What Raju seems to be fighting here is apparently, the idea of cultural relativism that such take off point in cross cultural understanding amounts to. Peter Winch's endeavour towards cross cultural understanding was termed relativistic (even though erroneously so) when in response to E.E. Pritchard's description of the Zande poison oracle, he stated that however well one might describe the practices of the Zande in their particular surroundings, one may still go away without understanding them. For this, Winch was labeled a relativist even when he was only trying to point out the inherent problems associated with cross cultural comparison and the indeterminate nature of understanding itself.

Consequently, for Bell, the spring board for intercultural dialogue is to see the other in ourselves. Wittgenstein sees the opportunity for cross cultural understanding "when linear thinking gives way to disruptions in our ordinary patterns of thought – hesitations, new beginnings imaginative reconstructions are always the order of the day. He recommends that we stop thinking and start looking"³⁵ What Wittgenstein is saying in essence is that the major problem and obstacle to cross cultural understanding is embedded in people's attitude in constructing realities that are not there about the other. So by starting to look rather than think, people can now begin to shift from critical rationalistic approach to understanding others to an aesthetic one. In this sense, we can now begin to extend our vision to overcome "aspect blindness" – an ability to see what is in front of our noses or hear what is clearly auditory. It is in such seeing and hearing that brings other cultures to us and allow it penetrate how in turn, we see and understand our world.³⁶In entering into dialogue with other cultures, Winch remarks that:

We shall hope for a description of the alien practices that creates some pattern that we can recognize; we shall also perhaps hope to find some analogies with practices characteristic of our own which will give us some landmarks with reference to which we can take our bearing.³⁷

In understanding the other culture, Winch is of the opinion that we have to bear in mind that, we are first of all practical beings that are in tune with others or simply as

individuals trying to see one another as fellow human beings that are both surrounded by similarities and differences that mark off our respective communities. Bahm seems to be at variance with Winch when he opines that a comparative philosopher may find himself confronted with an intricate maze of similarities and differences that make achievement of an ideal (cross cultural understanding) of clear systematic comparisons seem hopeless.³⁸ The question remains, how do we enter the world of the cultural other if we reject the similarities/differences trend of Winch by virtue of Bahm's criticism? Geertz offers an alternative when he writes that

The truth of the doctrine of cultural relativism is that we can never apprehend another people's or another period's imagination neatly, as though it were our own. The falsity of it is that we can never genuinely apprehend it at all. We can apprehend it well enough, at least as well as we apprehend anything else not properly ours; but we do so not by looking behind the interfering glosses which connect us to it but through them.³⁹

What Geertz means is that it is possible for us to understand the way of life and practices of the cultural other. We can describe how he inhabits his world just as he can describe ours. We can from there go on to understand that world to such an extent that can only be limited by how we understand our own. Consequently, it is primarily by virtue of the limits we have in "seeing something as it is" in ourselves and our own culture that we are inhibited in understanding another's world as it is. In other words, I can only understand the other to the extent I understand myself.

Another setback to intercultural dialogue is centred around meaning. Such understanding is possible by virtue of shared meaning which Wittgenstein conceives in terms of going up to someone. For one to make meaning out of a thing, we have to go up to the thing. Consequently, the mutual understanding we would like to achieve is being hampered. If the other person is a stranger we may naturally turn away or talk or dwell only reticently in their company; the tendency of not spending enough time or give enough attention to the other is always there. Going up to the thing will mean involving me in the circumstances related to my approach to it. Lack of attention or interest in the "thing" – another person or culture – Wittgenstein sees as a more important hindrance in understanding the other person than believing the other has a different way of thinking or a different rationality from our own stand point.⁴⁰

Furthermore, in our quest for cross cultural understanding, Wittgenstein would rather we probed into the differences we encounter in practices that are alien to us so that we would connect up these differences with something we can understand. In this sense, we will be shifting meaning from an epistemic mode to an aesthetic one because meaning in this regard is linked more with our perception and experience (including recognition, interests, and expectation) than with intellectual cognition and empirical fact.

Another difficulty in cross cultural understanding especially in modern epistemological paradigm is the tendency to make thinking easier by shifting the burden of investigation on to an abstracted level and away from the level where the ordinary human activity, with its language, stories or ceremonial acts, are doing something, i.e., their job. The burden of understanding is shifted from ourselves on to a theory. Finding one's self in a strange cultural environment is difficult. But with adequate attention, one can find out what the cultural other is saying and how his actions have meaning within his life pattern. Even at that, one might still not have a perfect understanding of the other, one can however, be able to locate at least one aspect of the cultural other that is similar to his own from there he can move towards a more comfortable understanding. This may be what Winch had in mind when he opined that the one should strive to find some analogies with practices of our own culture.

More so, theorists enter into cross cultural dialogue without a proper grounding of the character or spirit of the people he engages in such dialogue. For instance, a Hindu wishing to enter in to dialogue with a European must be armed with the European attitude to (let's say desire). While Europeans approve desire, Hindus approve suppression of desire. The notion of desire to the European is good in the sense that without desire there can be no satisfaction. The Hindu on the other hand suppresses desire because it is the source of frustration. Without desire, there will be no frustration.⁴¹ If one is fully aware of the prevailing spirit and attitude of the cultural group he/she wants to enter in to dialogue with, cross cultural understanding become less problematic.

More often than not, people tend to describe as 'absurd' certain cultural practices different from theirs because of their inability to understand the character of the people that make up the other cultural group. We can only make meaning out of their 'absurd' cultural practices if and only if we are able to describe the sort of people who take part, their way of behavior, their character, and their kind of game. In meeting

all these, we will come to know that what is absurd, lies not in the activity but in the character of the people. One can also put himself in the position of the cultural other by going deep in to imagination, to think about what might also be ‘absurd behavior’ in one’s own culture and thus, ‘find one’s self in them.’ Thus, to do away with the problem of cross cultural understanding, we have to think of our own experiences, find some analogies or some reference point similar to the activities of the cultural other, it is only in such experiences can we find a reference point from which to take our bearing. The problem is that very few sociologist, anthropologist, linguists, and philosophers are ready to take a cue from this because of emphasis on difference. In line with this Bahm writes that

Although comparisons should involve examining both Likenesses and differences, we tend to stress the differences and ignore the likenesses. People all round the world are, I believe, more alike than different, both biologically and Culturally. But differences attract more attention.⁴²

Entering into cross cultural dialogue with a mindset of difference will hardly yield any meaningful result. This is so because if two people from two distinct cultures enter into dialogue with already preconceived suppositions of difference, the result at cross cultural understanding will be minimal when compared to those who enter into such dialogue from the perspective of similarities. Thus a great challenge to the problem of cross cultural understanding can be traced to the emphasis on difference.

Returning us to the things that should engender cross cultural understanding that are common amongst cultures, Wittgenstein is quoted in Bell thus:

It goes without saying that a man’s shadow, which looks like him, or his mirror – image, the rain, thunderstorm the phases of the moon, the changing of the seasons, the way in which animals are similar to and different from one another and in relation to man, the phenomena of death birth, and sexual life, in short, everything we observe around us year in and year out, interconnected in so many different ways, will play a part in his thinking and in his practices; or is precisely what we really know and find interesting.⁴³

From the above, Wittgenstein is making the point that, there is something spiritual in all human kind and this lie in the connectedness of such phenomena as

death, birth, and sexual life, and in our way of acting, that expresses the depth of joys, sufferings, hopes, and desires associated with these phenomena. These according to him are what “we really know”, they “play a part in” our cultures and what we come to find interesting. Both character and spirit are interconnected with and shaped by community, by its ceremonies, and in individual moral lives. This forms the criterion of how we come to know our world and what we take as true, whatever the particular cultural point of departure might be. It is also what, as Wittgenstein opines allows us to identify the similarities and differences in meaning – the thinking, the culture, the philosophy and the practices – between people’s conception of life and our own.⁴⁴ Bell remarked that in all these, Wittgenstein is preparing us for understanding; creating the possibility of a two way conversation.

The point to note is that when approaching another’s culture, we should in turn find room in ourselves to see connections, new aspects of the others life with our own, and possible appropriations of the practice in our life. When we connect with the cultural other by treading on grounds that are mutually familiar, we will end up harvesting seeds of cross cultural understanding. This has become difficult because of the ideological thrust inherent in most cultures especially in the so called primary cultures like that of the West.

Can all we have adumbrated be said to be sufficient for cross cultural understanding? To begin with, cross cultural understanding must begin with an experience in ourselves - we must deal with our own feelings of guilt and anxiety, of disquiet and joy and find some analogous experiences in the other culture that matches our experience. This surely is the foundation for understanding the cultural other. To contemplate the depth of the experience of others, we must look into ourselves for some analogous experiences.⁴⁶ These analogous experiences require some form of imaginative transfer of the cultural other’s life into my own – some kind of mutual understanding of their and my own cultural similarities and differences. Through this process it may become evident that certain aspects of the other’s culture are inadequate and/or that aspects of the one’s own are – in which case the understanding of the other may lead to a transformation of one’s own. In this regard, Bahm writes that

A comparative philosopher may gain new understanding of the philosophies in his own civilization by seeing them contrasted with those in the others. I was able to discover that Western civilization has been dominated by concern

about two kinds of ideals which are relatively peculiar to it only by studying Asian philosophies in which they were ignored or despised.⁴⁷

Understanding is gained within community because a person's self reflection or life view is only possible within the community that is why we must look into ourselves and to what others are saying of themselves and put together those links from what we have seen and heard, from what we experienced and already understood to properly understand both ourselves and the other.

The possibilities for cross cultural misunderstanding or not understanding at all are always present; we may not be open to another person's circumstances or we may have limited capacities in how "we go up" or approach another person or a different cultural situation. What we have called understanding another culture, as we have said, must not be seen as always being between two distinct larger cultures like Western and African. Within a single society, nation, continent, cultural differences may be pluralistic thereby leading to a problem in cross cultural understanding.

Taking a cue from philosophy of science, Kuhn maintains that cross cultural understanding is not possible and even if it does occur, no rational explanation can be attributed to it. This is because every culture holds tenaciously to the fact that it is superior to the other and the standard for this judgment is found within the same culture trying to judge the other. According to Kuhn as quoted by Chalmers:

A second reason why no logically compelling demonstration of the superiority of one paradigm over another exists stems from the fact that proponents of rival paradigms will subscribe to different sets of standards, metaphysical principles, etc. judged by its own standards, paradigm A (culture A) may be judged superior to paradigm B (culture B), while if the standards of paradigm B (culture B) are used as premises, the judgment may be reversed. The conclusion of an argument is compelling only if its premises are accepted. Supporters of rival paradigms (cultures) will not necessarily be convinced by each other's arguments.⁴⁸

What Kuhn is implying is that there are a number of interrelated reasons why when cultures compete with each other; there is no logically compelling argument that dictates that a man from culture 'A' can enter into dialogue with one from culture 'B' because they both subscribe to different sets of standards and view the world in

different ways. Consequently, it is absurd talking about intercultural understanding when cultures are incommensurate.

Further more, cross cultural understanding goes beyond two or more people sitting over a coffee table trying to fashion out ways each can enter the other's world. Translation is another dimension that has proved problematic in cross cultural dialogues. According to Bell, in approaching another culture there are basically three kinds of "translation" one must encounter. First is translating what you see and generally experience on the aesthetic level. This is what is often called an "eye witness" account where something is perceived and an account rendered in the perceiver's own language. This limits cross cultural understanding in many ways than one because to begin with, the understanding of the incident is relative to the perceiver's familiarity with the thing observed and the familiar landmarks he can find in his culture that connects with the perceived incident from which he can take his bearing. If there are no such landmarks or his scheme is such that it is difficult to see his landmarks in the other, then translation suffers a setback that will not only impact negatively but may hamper cross cultural understanding.

A second kind of translation is the detailed and art of actual translation. Although the linguist and ethnologist have trained themselves to listen to and learn the native language of the cultural other, then renders a translation into his own language, there is still much room for difference and variation which Quine called "indeterminacy of translation thesis". This is a kind of skepticism about supposed rigorous, objective, detailed analyses about the way of life or culture of the 'other' in translation. If translation is what is required for us to understand the cultural other, and translation according to Quine is suspect, where does that leave the quest for cross cultural understanding?

The third kind of translation is what takes place in an individual's understanding. This is the understanding in each of us that renders the just read text or act meaningful in the same sense it would be to us if we were the actual first person perceiver. This sense of translation shows how it is that other people's creation can be so utterly their own and so deeply part of us.⁴⁹ Even in this there are inherent problems of understanding because a gap is created and how is one to be sure that the proper meaning to be communicated does not fall within the created gap for cross cultural communication? In line with this, Hawkes writes that

the danger in 'trans cultural dialogues ' such as those represented by some traditional anthropological texts, is that a new set of presuppositions, resulting from the interchange of cultures, is taken as the cultural reality of the other. The described culture is therefore very much a product of the particular ethnographic encounter – the text creates the reality of the other in the guise of describing it.⁵⁰

What Hawkes is saying is that any text that is culture laden hardly incorporates the cultural other in sharing relatively from its meaning. Such meaning can never be wholly grasped since the cultural other does not share in the mental experience of the author thereby blurring mutual understanding. Even when the other claims that he or she understands, such understanding is only superficial. This may be why Anyanwu maintains that “in the realm of culture... we cannot fail to examine the cultural mind of any individual who claims to have an authoritative knowledge of other cultures”.⁵¹ Anyanwu is not saying that a westerner is incapable of understanding African culture for instance, but that the understanding of a people through their culture necessarily entails the understanding of their basic assumptions about reality, the concepts and theories in terms of which they interpret their experience, their world view and how they pursue that goal, and so on. All these factors form what may be called the value system of a people. In fact, the understanding of the mindset of a people leads to the understanding of their behavior. We see how people behave in their daily lives, but we do not empirically see their mental world – the world of beliefs and ideas exists. Therefore, for one to understand the other, then he must see the other's world with the other's eyes. In other words, he or she must know the assumptions, theories, concepts and world view in terms of which the other justify their expressions, institutions, and behavior.

But because some cultures dissociate themselves from the rigours that can lead into understanding the other, they thus contribute to the problem of cross cultural understanding. This disconnect is mostly seen in the attitude of Westerners towards the so called lesser cultures. This is why Okot p' Bitek observes that the western scholars have never been genuinely interested in African religions (cultures) per se. Their work has always been part and parcel of some controversy or debate in the western world. This helps to explain why the western expert especially the anthropologist, the ethnologist, and ethnographer finds it difficult to understand the African people from

their own cultural stand point but rather choose to subordinate other cultural facts (especially African) to the arbitrary hypothesis of science or to the assumptions, concepts, theories, and world views suggested by western culture. In this climate of suspicion and doubt sparked up by western prejudice, how can cross cultural understanding take root? As a single phenomenon, western cultural imperialism is the attempt to encourage and project western ideology. The cultural self is spread in order to control others, and by controlling others, the culture multiplies. Hawkes observes that

the dominant discourse constructs otherness in such a way that it always contains a trace of ambivalence or anxiety about its own authority. In order to maintain authority over the other, imperial discourse strives to delineate the other as radically different from the self.⁵²

Construing one as being radically different from the self is at variance with what Winch advocates (which we have discussed earlier). But if such construal persists, does it not greatly jeopardize our attempts at cross cultural understanding or understanding each other across cultures? This may be one of the reasons why tension of identities will continue to persist for a long while. We think Anyanwu agrees with us when he opines that

Any keen observer of western epistemological attitude towards African culture will notice that whenever the Western experts perceive an event in the Asian world, they look for its cause in their own world, or in the Asian cultural world. In other words, seeing an event in the African world, they want to know which alien culture influenced it or caused it. It means that the Western expert start from their own cultural beliefs, values, and institutions in their interpretation of African cultural behavior with the result that they misinterpret what they observe... if on the other hand African cultural experience does not fit into the schemes of the Western thought, then they conclude, it is not culture at all and does not deserve any scrupulous study.⁵³

It is the erroneous belief that philosophy is valid in all cultures that prevents many from delving into the nature of cross cultural communication. Even the few that try to go into it do so with bias that prevents the meeting of ideas. At the end, what comes out of such deliberations can at best be described as monologues rather than dialogues.

In a climate of doubt and mistrust of the cultural other how can cross cultural understanding be possible when philosophers like K. C. Anyanwu have had their works rejected by publishers because “Western students reading the books with any other mind set but western would not attract enough interest from the academic market place to make publication feasible”⁵⁴. This becomes an issue according to Anyanwu, because

The (Western) experts are afraid of ideas that will Refute their claims as authorities and specialists in African culture because their popularity, importance And financial interest depend on the extent to which their claims are recognized and accepted.⁵⁵

Cross cultural understanding cannot be attained when western experts hold tenaciously to claims explicated above. Most of them consciously or unconsciously believe that their mindset constitute the trust worthy route to any knowledge claim. Socrates was once proclaimed the most intelligent man on earth by the oracle of Delphi because he was full of the saying that “all I know is that I know nothing.” Even when full of knowledge, Socrates was always humble. For the western expert to expect all claims subjected to their rationale otherwise the knowledge lacks merit, if anything, prevents others from wanting to go into any form of cultural exchange with the west and thus negating cross cultural understanding. In line with this, Anyanwu contends that this attitude of the westerner makes him culturally and spiritually undernourished and prevents him from growing as an integrated human being. Even when the western intellectual insists on analysis, Anyanwu reminds him that analysis without synthesis breeds chaos.⁵⁶ Anyanwu recognized the need for cross cultural understanding hence his emphasis on synthesis.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE DEARTH OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The lack of synthesis in cross cultural matters necessitated by the factors we have explicated can have far reaching consequences for humanity thus necessitating Huntington’s thesis *The Clash of Civilizations*. We witness this lack of synthesis in cross cultural understanding in strained relationships between the different cultural groups in the world. At the macro level, the most violent fault lines are between the ‘West and the rest,’ with the most intense conflicts occurring between Muslim and

Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other. These cultural tensions have led to even greater problems namely the proliferation of arms and other forms of nuclear technologies that help to unbalance the already strained ecosystem.

The rupture of social harmony is another catastrophe triggered by the problem of cross cultural understanding. The problem of social harmony can be seen in two perspectives. The first is at the individual level where an individual oscillates between two tendencies: keeping together and doing everything after one's own fashion, customs and tradition, on the one hand, and following others, on the other. These two tendencies have to be kept in balance, in a proportional measure for the individual not to lose his identity or remain within the confines of his tradition alone. The second perspective which is easily noticed hinges on cooperation among peoples and cultures of the world. Directly related to the problem of cross cultural understanding is the notion of hegemony. Hegemony is born when a particular philosophical view or culture forcefully claims to be dominant and ignores or marginalizes other philosophical views and cultures. Hegemony only brings about rejection, conflict and oppression.

Hegemony and conflict are not only associated with people of different cultures and philosophical outlooks, but also emerge from people living in the same geographical space. Hegemony and lack of respect for the other's cultural tradition can be very disastrous. For instance, in Somalia in the 1970s and 1980s, a system of military governance with an authoritarian rule arose, and it waged a war of genocide against part of its nation (Somali land) where, according to human rights organizations, more than 50,000 people were killed or displaced. Another case is Rwanda, where more than one million people of the Tutsi tribe, which constituted a minority part of the country's population, were killed by their own government.

Closely related to the issue of hegemony is the phenomenon of racism. Racism, a relation between parties lacking equality of status in the same society transforms 'otherness' or merely 'difference' into hostility by the firm establishment of prejudices and xenophobia, which entails an unwavering hostility to those coming from 'alien parts' because they cannot understand them. The extent to which racism can endanger human existence is seen in the holocaust of the 20th century.

Despite western military, political and economic might, it seemed that terrorism – a strategy of asymmetric warfare could deal the west a blow that would not only shatter the sense of security of the west, but also send shockwaves around the globe. The peaceful and secure world hoped for and simultaneously, the dream that

“globalization” would produce prosperity and harmony has become an illusion. The question remains: why should cultural commonality facilitate cooperation and cohesion among people and cultural differences promote cleavages and conflicts? Herein then lies the major problem of cross cultural understanding. The increased extent to which people throughout the world differentiate themselves along cultural lines means that conflicts between cultural groups are increasingly important because they play a central role in world politics. To summarize this chapter, difficulty in cross cultural understanding can be attributed to the following factors:

1. Feelings of superiority (and occasionally inferiority), towards people who are perceived as being different.
2. Fear of and lack of trust in such people on the basis of a dearth of understanding.
3. Difficulty of communication with them as a result of differences in language and what is considered civil behavior.
4. Lack of familiarity with the assumptions, and motivations, social relationships and social practices of other people.
5. The ubiquity of conflict. It is human to hate, for self definition and motivation, people need enemies: competitors in business, rivals in achievements, and opponents in politics. They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them (we now know why the west does not want Iran to develop nuclear technology). The resolution of one conflict and the disappearance of enemy generate cultural, personal, social and political forces that give rise to new ones. “The ‘us’ and the ‘them’ tendency is as Ali Mazrui said, in the cultural arena, almost a universal”. Events of September 11, 2001, have shown us that the issue of cross cultural understanding is in dire need of attention. In the next chapter, we shall examine some theories that can engender cross cultural understanding.

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CHAPTER TWO

SOME THEORIES OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In the previous chapter, we argued that the lack of cross cultural understanding can have far reaching consequences that are inimical to the good of the human race. This being the case on what can we rest the notion of cross cultural understanding? After all, Obi Oguejiofor and Godfrey Onah have argued that “it is part of his nature as a social and socializing being that man does not and cannot search for knowledge alone and in isolation”.¹ What they are saying in essence is that the search for absolute truth, which is natural to the human being, is not something we can attain at once and neither can it be grasped by one cultural group alone, there is need for a kind of communion between different identity groups that are part of the human race. This implies that not only will individuals and cultures listen to each other, they also have to share knowledge acquired by each culture for the good of humanity. The above assertion implies that there has always been some form of understanding among the cultures of the world because to socialize is to go into relationship with others.

Consequently, to listen to each other, to dialogue with each other, to share acquired knowledge with each other presuppose that identity groups overlap. The aim of this chapter therefore is to examine some areas of convergence of identities that can allow for cross cultural understanding. This leads us to selected theories of cross cultural understanding. Our summation here is that even though epistemology serves as a basis for cross cultural understanding, we can not rule out the possibility of other modes humans can come to transcend identities and culture to understand each other given the complexity of human nature. We shall in this chapter identify four theories of cross cultural understanding namely; universality of religious experience theory, existential theory, the universality of emotions theory, Wiredu’s common biological make-up theory and the hermeneutic theory of cross cultural understanding.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE THEORY OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Before we consider the religious theory of cross cultural understanding, a good working definition of the term ‘religion’ would be helpful. A good definition of religion is hard to come by, mostly because it must incorporate an enormous array of beliefs and activities all the way from magic to mysticism; from private prayer to sacred community. This tendency does not indicate that we are short of definitions of religion.

All sorts of persons, eminent and otherwise, can come up with a good definition of religion. For example, the important nineteenth century – and early – twentieth century anthropologist Edward Tylor defined religion as “belief in spiritual Beings”.² In more recent times the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead declared religion to be “what an individual does with his own solitariness”.³ For Immanuel Kant, religion is “the recognition of our duties as divine commands.” The German theologian Friederich Schleiermacher, a generation after Kant, discerned the common element of religion to be “the consciousness of ourselves as absolutely dependent”. The late Paul Tillich identified religion as “mankind’s ultimate concern.” Someone, perhaps not as intellectually formidable as the above cited but exercising an equal right to answer the question, has said that “religion ain’t doing nobody no harm; leastwise not intentionally; and anyways not very often”⁴ Consequently, we might add that religion is a form of human behavior in which people exorcise the demonic elements of life (its horrendous finitude), and experience the divine elements of life (the transcendence of finitude).

What is obvious about the several notions of religion we have considered is that even though they all sound good, there is still need for more analysis for the concept to be properly understood. Admitting that an adequate definition of religion is difficult to accomplish, we shall try to look for a working definition that will direct us in our explorations – all the way from magic to sacred community. We shall use this working definition as an outline of our study. It will address two aspects of religious phenomena: (a) functional aspect – which deals with questions of why people practice religion, the question of what they do when they practice religion, and the question of what benefits accrue to their doing it and; (b) the “sacred” aspect – which deals with the experience of something mysterious and magnificent that reportedly happens to people when they practice religion, or even, sometimes before they start doing it. Religion can be understood as a phenomenon in the life of humans by observing it from one or both of two directions: (1) as something special that people do in order to achieve benefits – a functional approach; and (2) as something that happens to people – an existential approach.

Having made that point, religion can therefore be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life. It is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear one apart from one’s human associations.⁵ This is obviously a

functional definition. Religion is what people do to deal with the horrendous and uncontrollable dimensions of human existence with such things as death, suffering, guilt, meaninglessness. But other scholars go the other route. They concentrate their definition on “sacred experience”. They say that the essential feature of religion is an awareness of sacredness. Objecting to the functionalists’ definitions, the history of religions scholar Mircea Eliade, insists, that to define religion as primarily a method of dealing with human needs is to ignore “the one unique and irreducible element in it the element of the sacred”⁶

To conclude our definition of religion, we would say these principles of defining religion do not exclude each other, for religion is both something that people do to deal with certain elements of their own finitude and something that happens to them that is mysterious, tremendous, and wonderfully renovating. Indeed, the “sacred experience” aspect of religion is one of its functions. It is one of the things perhaps the most desired thing, that people are trying to achieve when they do religion. The functional and the experiential aspects of religion are compatible, and both should be included in any attempt to understand what religion is.

Affirming that a definition of religion must include both the ‘functional’ and ‘sacred experience’ aspects of religion, we attempt a functional – experiential definition of religion as

1. Religion is a complex form of human behavior whereby a person (or community of persons) is prepared intellectually and emotionally to deal with those aspects of human existence that are horrendous and non manipulatable.
2. Doing so from the conviction that there is at the centre of human experience, and even of all reality, a being, or beings, or process (a divine reality) in which and through which a person (or community of persons) can transcend the life – negating traumas of human existence, can overcome the sense of finitude.
3. And doing so by the employment of various religious techniques (a) belief systems (myths, doctrines, and theologies). (b) a ritual system (reverent behavior and dramatic performances), (c) a moral system (ethical doctrines and rules).
4. With all of this (and especially in the conviction that there is a divine order basic to life) religion turns out to be for people not simply a method of dealing with religious problems (those horrendous non manipulatable circumstances of life), but also is itself an experience of great satisfaction and immense personal worth. Religion is not

only something people “do” and “use”, it is also something that happens to them. It is an experience – a highly treasured experience, and even, at times, an experience of sheer ecstasy.⁷

So far we have been trying to define the concept ‘religion’. Let us now examine how religion as a human phenomenon that many have termed inimical to human cooperation can be used as a factor for cross cultural understanding. Apparently, humankind is the only animal that practice religion. This makes us special animals: religion – doing animals. Of course we are the only animals that do quite a number of things – philosophy, science, retail merchandising, plumbing – for our purposes here the specialty in religion will suffice. First we want to know why we do religion. What motivates us to this kind of thinking and acting? We suspect that the answer is somewhere in the statement; humans do this because they have special kinds of minds. We have the kind of mind that presents us with a vivid and immediate awareness of ourselves. Not only do we have cool, problem-solving (rational) minds, but we have disturbing (self-conscious) minds that tell us what we are and where we are. And knowing that we are and where we are is disturbing, even horrendous, because it informs us accurately that we are living in a self-defeating world. The self is disturbed because once old enough to have much sense, it gets the sense of the true situation into which it has been born. All humans are involved, even trapped in a world, in a human environmental condition, that sooner or later annihilates all selfhood. Put simply, this is to say that none of us ever gets out of life half of what we want; and humans are the animals who really know this. This feeling being the foundation of religion is also the melting point of all religions that has made it quite easy for humans to understand religious experiences because this experience is universal whether we want to accept it or repress it, it is present for the simple reason that you are human. And this is indeed the starting point for such understanding irrespective of culture.

The above fact may be why the biologist, Julian Huxley insists that humans have an innate capacity to experience sacredness. Huxley writes that “not only does the normal man have this capacity for experiencing the sense of the sacred, but he demands its satisfaction”.⁸ More recently, Abraham Maslow, a psychologist is saying a similar sort of thing. He proposes that for human beings, sacred experiences are very normal sorts of experiences. He argues that the “peak experiences”, as he calls them, are common among people not simply as religious experiences, but as experiences that occur in art, love and music as well. Indeed Maslow believes that people who do not

have such experiences are, in fact, persons who, because they fear such experiences, suppress them.⁹ What we have been saying in essence is that since religious experience is a human phenomenon with universal application, all religions cannot be fundamentally different from each other, and if this is the case there must be aspects in each religion that transcends the religion in question that adherents of other religious faiths can fit into without any form of orientation. John Hicks supports this view when he writes that

I was drawn into the work which is variously called “race relations” and “community relations”, and soon had friends and colleagues in all these non-christian communities as well as in the large black community from the caribbean. And occasionally attending worship in mosque and synagogue, temple and gurdwara, it was evident to me that essentially the same kind of thing is taking place in them as in a Christian church – namely, human beings opening their minds to a higher divine Reality, known as personal and good and as demanding righteousness and love between man and man.¹⁰

Hicks seems to be making the point that all religions are one because all religions propose divine wisdom to its followers. This wisdom is enshrined in sacred texts of the various religions. Faith is a commitment one makes to God in response to His self revelation. Because God is the creator of all, His love and grace will certainly be what all men can share in; and his revelation will include some provisions for the needs, guidance, welfare and joy of all. Since the supreme God, the Parmeshwar, Allah, Ahura mazda, or Hari is one, there has to be and there is an essential unity of basic teachings in the scriptures. To illustrate this let us say that virtually all world religions tend to agree with the golden rule principle. The following passages teach the same golden rule of treating others as oneself:

“Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the law and the prophets” – Christianity, (Matt. 7:12).

“Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” Islam (Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 13).

“A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated” – Jainism (Sutrakritanga 1: 11.33).

“One should not behave towards another in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality”. Hinduism, (Mahabrata, Anubasana Parwa 113:8).

“Regard the sorrows and suffering of others as yours and hasten to assuage them”. Zoroastrianism (Avesta).

“Comparing oneself to others in such terms as: just as I am so are they; just as they are so am I, he should neither kill nor cause others to kill”. – Buddhism (Sutta Nipata 708).

We can find the same scripture among different religions on anger, honesty, jealousy, etc. it is true, not all texts on any one theme, taken from the different scriptures, use the same words and expressions or present the same thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, there is no contradiction among them, in fact they complement one another. In all the scriptures we notice a deep search for God or the ultimate reality because earthly life is not all; there is another kind of life, life of pure bliss, after death. All the considered religions teach virtue and condemn vice. Understood and expressed in different ways, yet common to the Jewish religion, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism are the concepts of creation, the fall of humanity, sin, the conflict between good and evil, forgiveness, death, resurrection, last judgment, reward for one's deeds, heaven and hell. All these religions believe that God created the world and everything in it; he is eternal, all powerful, all knowing, merciful, He is to be both loved and feared. Some of these concepts are quite clearly found in Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism – such as creation, sin, conflict between good and evil etc – though they are not expressed in the same manner.¹¹

It is worth noting the following words here, “Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism understand the various deities to be expressions of a single Absolute Reality, and the various paths to lead to the supreme God. Judaism has the doctrine of the Noahic laws, God's revelation to humankind through which non – Jews can be righteous before God. The Christian Bible contains passages affirming that God had intimated Himself in the religion of the Greeks. Sikhism affirms the common origin of Islam and Hinduism”.¹² The Islamic scriptures affirm that Jews and Christians are people of the Book who share the same God as the God of Mohammed (World Scripture: a Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts, P. 40). Jews, Christians, and Muslims accept the authority of the Bible, though in different degrees and ways. All these and other religions commonly believe that the human being is in some way eternal; that the reality of the human being is not annihilated by death and that the spirit survives the body.

Another religion worthy of attention because of the harmony that permeates it is African Traditional Religion (ATR). Christianity and other foreign religions did not teach Africans the idea of God because the traditional African is in the words of John Mbiti 'notoriously religious'. What he means is that the entire life of the African is saturated with a sense of the divine. Mbiti believes that religion exercises the strongest influence upon the people's thinking and living. And because religion is not distinguished from the spiritual and material, one cannot detach oneself from the religion of the community, for to do so would be to isolate oneself from the group and to disrupt one's sense of communal membership and security, and to lose much of the meaning of life.¹³ Religious life among Africans is not individualistic, it is woven into the culture of the people. Each community has its own system of religious beliefs and practices. According to Gyekye, despite the multiplicity of religious systems, there are many doctrines, practices, and rituals that are common to all of them. These commonalities justify the idea of an African world view.¹⁴

Bolaji Idowu, one of the foremost African scholars of religion, has proposed five features which characterize African Traditional Religion. These are:

1. Belief in God or Supreme Deity.
2. Belief in the divinities.
3. Belief in spirits.
4. Belief in ancestors.
5. The practice of magic and medicine.¹⁵

There is no doubt, literature of Traditional African Religion must have grown quite vast, for this reason we will not pursue the analysis of the above mentioned features of African Traditional Religion.

Traditional religion has no problem of contextualization, neither does it parade with an air of superiority over other religions. It is an integral part of the culture of the people. They are born into it; it speaks the language of the people. It exists in the very air they breathe and in the water they drink. There are no founders in this religion; and so there are no cults of personality nor creeds to fight for. Of all the religious wars, riots and conflicts which have been recorded in Africa within the last decade, not a single one could be charged to the fanaticism, intolerance, or overzealousness of the adherents of Traditional African Religion, or the inciting utterances of their keepers. According to Udo Etuk:

of all the religions practiced in Africa, the African Traditional Religion is the most accommodating. Rather than actively seek to convert others to its tenets, it neither objects to its members holding membership in one or more other religions as they feel the need; nor does it frown at its adherents borrowing from into it any elements from other religions which may appear to enhance its practices and rituals.¹⁶

The reason why African Traditional Religion is very accommodating is found in Gyekye when he opines that to him the reason why he thinks Africans are not interested in spreading African Traditional Religion to others lies in their conviction that the human being, irrespective of the culture to which he or she belongs, is essentially a religious being who will, sooner or later, come to see himself or herself as a created being and to appreciate the need not only to look for his or her creator but also to depend on the omnipotence and bounty of that creator. This conviction of God's existence, power and dependability will lead the people to evolving specific ways of worshipping him.¹⁷ This is why it is very easy for human beings to immediately understand when one is performing a religious rite irrespective of culture because humans are religious beings.

More still, adherents of African Traditional Religion do not all agree on the object and form of worship. For instance, while some see the rock to be sacred, others may revere the lake, stream, tree etc. yet no form of conflict ever ensue between these adherents. Among the Yoruba is a saying '*ka rin ka po, yiye lo n ye ni*' (literally, walking together is always suitable). In fact any one in need is free to visit as many medicine men as possible in as much as solution is found at the end of the day. This is one of the lessons that overzealous adherents of revealed religions like Islam and Christianity ought to learn.

On the basis of the background provided, religion serves as ground of our unity, this is even more so given the fact that these religions overlap in their beliefs and suppositions. Religious experience is commonly shared by man even if the object of religion is variously conceived and interpreted. Due to this common experience, religion can be seen as a means for mutual understanding since there is really no opposition between the different purposes of religion with regard to the underlying and unifying experience that determine human consciousness. This is even more so, given the fact that every religion, even the so called pseudo religions contain the moment of

man's attempt to comprehensively give satisfactory response and even answer to his agitating mind on matters concerning his ultimate destiny. Thus, religious expression according to Asouzu, "is the outburst of being seeking unity".¹⁸ Consequently, we could say that religion gives humankind the possibility of getting rid of the void in his being.

If scriptures complement each other and can indeed be grasped across cultures why has religion become a divisive factor in today's world order? The answer is not far fetched. As we have earlier mentioned, the problem with religion has been its neglect of its essential fundament that has led to camp being pitched, battles waged, and victories proclaimed without any recognizable victor.¹⁹ A situation where one religion claims an air of superiority ignoring the basic unity which all religions search for is responsible for the seeming misunderstanding among religions forgetting that the optimal and ultimate fundament of meaning which is sought by religions is not something which can easily be decided by one religion alone nor by a group of religions together. Again it is not something that one religion could exclusively provide answers and ways to its realization within singular situations of human existence.²⁰ It is for this reason that there are different religions in the world today, similar in their fundamental pursuit but different in doctrines. Understanding therefore is made possible given the basic reality they seek to comprehend. This may be why Gandhi was so positive that the prophets and seers of different religions brought to mankind the consciousness of the unity underlying the whole universe and a deep sense of brotherhood of man. It is this inter-religious understanding that finds primacy in Gandhi's Ashram prayers that contain passages from the holy books like the Gita, Bible, and the Quoran. He felt that it is the duty of every cultured man and woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world.

The possibility for cross cultural understanding founded on religion seems to rest on the fact that "all life is one i.e. all life comes from one universal source, call it Allah, God, or Paramenshwara." Elsewhere Gandhi writes that the possibility of cultural understanding lies in the common unity of all religions and religion is a visible storehouse of culture. To this end, God may have a thousand names as Ishwara, Siva, Vishnu, Rama, Krsna, Jehovah, Christ, Allah, etc according to the traditions in which a man is brought up. But is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis, and Christians? No, there is only one Omnipotent God. He is named variously, and we remember him by the name which is most familiar to us.²¹ It is this perceived understanding among different religions that is evident in their call for peace

and brotherhood amongst man. In the words of Vivekananda “if any one hopes that this unity we share came by the triumph of any one religion and the destruction of the others, to him I say, ‘brother, yours is an impossible hope’. Do I wish that a Christian would become a Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that a Hindu or Buddhist would become a Christian? God forbid... the Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian.” There is no need for such conversion for the simple reason that each religion serves as a vehicle for transforming the human society on its journey towards Divine Being. All religions share this aim that is why we can today talk about the religious theory of cross cultural understanding.

In the words of Xiu Ping and Yinping, “both christianity and Buddhism answer the questions of where persons come from and go to, and inquire into the nature of life. They demand people to do goodness and remove evils in actual life, so as to make life more meaningful”.²² In the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu, “the first law of our being (which has made religion a vehicle for intercultural understanding) is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God’s creation”.²³ To this end, in God’s family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian – all belong.

In conclusion, because all religions tend to address problems common to man in his search for what lies beyond and controls his being, and how to make life on earth bearable, there cannot be differences of kind among them. Granted that differences may be detected in some areas, they are not insurmountable since all religions seem to be reechoing the point ‘do good and shun evil.’ Gandhi’s perusal of different religious texts and his subsequent comprehension of them attest to the simple fact that religion is indeed a means of intercultural understanding.

EXISTENTIAL THEORY OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Existentialism is the philosophical position which claims that the starting point for every philosophical investigation is concrete human existence. To the existentialist, “things are, persons exist.” Man begins to exist only when he has left the undifferentiated reality that he shares with ‘things’ and begins to assert himself as a free and responsible person. It is only in making free choices that man encounters existence. Although existentialism is the name of a school of philosophy, people who are termed

existentialists are not professional philosophers. Most of them have expressed their thoughts through other forms of literary works, but all tend to agree that every philosophy must anchor on human predicament as he/she goes about his daily life. Existentialism is about human existence and the meaning that is created out of it. There is only one truth that is self evident according to existentialist and that truth is that man exist. But he exists as an unfinished product and needs to make meaning out of his existence. Consequently, you find existentialist making use of concepts like God, responsibility, choice, freedom, anguish, loneliness, dread, and death.

Man is born alone and faces his death alone. The fact of loneliness creates fear and anguish, because the responsibility to create meaning is enormous. This causes dread in man. Even when people try to rely on others for a way out of this anguish, they still bear the responsibility of their choices. Thus, individuality, freedom, choice, and responsibility are the most important themes of existentialists. Their common dictum is “existence precedes essence.” Some existentialist include Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Nietzsche, J. P. Sartre, Albert Camus, to mention but a few.

We have so far been looking at the outline of existentialism. How does this serve as a theory of cross cultural understanding? Human life is full of misery, pain, suffering, fear, anxiety, hunger, disease, and death. Human beings all over the world encounter these problems of life because these problems know no religion, race, nor creed. They confront us as members of the human family. Without being explained to, any time we see one passing through any of these life’s problems, we are able to immediately key into the person’s feelings irrespective of whether he is an African, a Hindu, an American or Japanese. We are able to immediately identify ourselves with and empathize with the cultural other to the extent of stretching a helping hand where need be. This may be why Camus writes that:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or not worth living amounts answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories comes afterwards.²⁴

Human existence for him is nothing but a cosmic joke in which the major actors wait in vain for an understanding of their situation. Life is full of human suffering, anguish, and death. Suffering is a universal human phenomenon that comes to us not because we

are Africans, Asians, Americans, or Europeans, but because we are human. Because we are human we must be hungry, we must fall ill, we must be driven to despair, anguish, and eventually death. Death comes to us not because we are Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Ibibio, Esan etc, but because we share a common humanity. So when the vicissitudes of life come visiting, we accept them as part of the human lot. According to Agulanna, “many others feel on occasion that life is absurd, and feel vividly and continually. And this feeling is exacerbated by the precariousness of our existence which often makes us think of ourselves as engaged in endless drudgery”.²⁵ In the face of the gloomy picture painted by existentialists like Camus, is there a way out of this quagmire or should we yield to despair and commit suicide? The response to this is an emphatic No. Humans should effectively tackle the problems confronting them by choosing to join others in a corporate action. This is the core of existentialists’ theory of cross cultural understanding. Because the problem does not spare any human, it comes knocking on all doors irrespective of ones station, colour, culture, or creed, solution can only come when all join hands to confront this common existential problem. The fundamental question is: can humankind come together to confront these problems if there is no form of understanding among humankind? Of course without any kind of understanding amongst human kind there is no way they can come together. Existentialists call to arms in the form of solidarity underscores the fact that there is basic understanding common to all human beings from all parts of the globe because people cannot come together unless they agree at least to some degree on something basic to all of them. This may be what Camus captures as quoted in Asouzu when he writes that:

in a world whose absurdity appears to be so impenetrable we simply must reach a greater degree of understanding amongst men, a greater sincerity. We have to achieve this or perish. To do this, certain conditions must be fulfilled: men must be frank (falsehood confuses things), free...²⁶

Camus’ belief in fighting injustice lies in his conviction that men do understand and can indeed understand each other irrespective of their cultural backgrounds and this understanding is made possible because of their common enemy – their problems of life. It is on this basis that existentialism can be seen as a possible theory of cross cultural understanding. We shall shed more light on this when we shall use existentialism as basis for attaining global humanism in our last chapter.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF EMOTIONS' THEORY OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

The universality of emotions theory of cross cultural understanding is traceable to the work undertaken by what Lewens²⁷ calls the Santa Barbara school of evolutionary psychology. Its members tend to argue that we can best understand how the human mind works by reflecting on how problems posed during the Pleistocene have shaped our specie's psychology. They also argued that there is a unitary human nature: a single universal psychology, present in all members of our species.

Darwin's work *Expression* x – rayed his ideas on the subject in which he thought that the sexual selection had led human races to diverge from each other in various ways, but he believed that humans were all members of one single species, and that the common ancestors of all races were similar to modern humans. He attempted to show this by demonstrating similarities in emotional expression of humans from all over the world thereby providing

a new argument in favour of the several races being descended from a single parent – stock, which must have been almost completely human in structure, and to a large extent in mind, before the period at which the races diverged from each other.²⁸

Darwin tries to establish that, regardless of culture, humans express themselves in many similar respects. His evidence was obtained by sending questions to an international army of correspondents whose responses increased his confidence in the universality of many expressions:

This statements, relating to Europeans, Hindoos the hill tribes of India, Malays, Micronesians, Abyssinians, Arabs, Negroes, Indians of North America, and apparently to the Australians – many of these natives having had scarcely any intercourse with Europeans – are sufficient to show that shrugging the shoulders, accompanied in some cases by the other proper movements, is a gesture natural to mankind.²⁹

This evidence from cultures that had had little contact with Europeans is important, for it counts against the hypothesis that human cultures owe their similarities in emotional expression to recent learning from each other, rather than to more ancient

inheritance from a recognizably human ancestor. Darwin concludes that the explanation for trans-cultural resemblance does not lie in natural selection but rather to a common ancestry. So when psychologists speak of universality of emotions, common ancestry explains its foundation.

Some like Ekman argued that common ancestry does not in any way explain why diverse cultures express emotions in the same way; but all the same agrees that emotions themselves (or at least what he recognizes as the six basic emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust) are universal.

Our concern here is not to approve or disprove whether conventions or common ancestry is the basis for universality of emotions, but rather in the fact that there is intercultural understanding any time these emotions are evoked. In this case, language plays no role since it is usually far easy for a human beings irrespective of culture to tell when a cultural other is happy, sad, in pain etc. be it common ancestry or convention, it is usually very easy for any human being to understand another any time matters of emotions are concerned. The understanding that takes place between persons of different cultural standpoints is made possible by the fact that humankind shares the same cognitive adaptations. To this end, the Santa Barbara school of thought has argued that cross cultural understanding is supported by the fact that human beings have genes that specify the same adaptations. And this is why human nature must be universal: the psychic unity of humankind – that is, a universal and uniform human nature – is necessarily imposed to the extent and along those dimensions that our psychologies are collection of complex adaptations. If this is the case, that is, if humankind has a common ancestor, have a universal human nature as well as psychic unity, how can there not be cross cultural understanding given these common denominators? This is the whole idea of universality of emotions as a theory of cross cultural understanding.

WIREDU'S COMMON BIOLOGICAL-MAKE UP THEORY OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In establishing the possibility for cross cultural understanding, Wiredu rests his analysis on two important factors (1) the universal mode of human cognition or what some term our common biological make up, and (2) the actuality of inter-conceptual scheme dialogue. Let us now examine his analysis in details. The possibility of inter conceptual scheme dialogue propels Wiredu into asking a pertinent and fundamental

question: Can philosophy be intercultural? He responded in the affirmative giving the fact that African philosophers do in fact carry out their quest in a foreign language and for this singular reason, their works are open to scrutiny making such exchange intercultural.³⁰ He went on to explain that there is an intercultural dimension to any exposition of the thought of one culture in the language of another. But since conceptual framework form the basis for meaning in any culture given the canons of conceptualization from which such frameworks are derived, does this not close the door to any form of understanding across cultures that differ in framework? If this is so then we are thrown into the realm of relativism be it social or cultural. These forms of relativism are inimical to cross cultural understanding, but the most damaging of these forms of relativism is relativism in its conceptual sense. According to Wiredu

This affects the question not just of truth or validity or goodness but, more radically, of intelligibility. The idea is that what is intelligible is so only relatively to the conceptual framework of an individual or group. Thus, something which is intelligible in terms of one conceptual framework may be irresolvably unintelligible in terms of another; but no conceptual framework is superior to another.³¹

Relativists are often too quick in insisting that the intelligibility of a proposition is 'relative' to a conceptual framework, but they do not let us into what the intelligibility of the conceptual framework is relative to. Consequently, for one from a particular culture to be able to communicate with any one even from the same culture at all, there has to be a way of referring intersubjectively to things that are directly accessible to all concerned. Such things normally are objects or things given to us in experience. From beginning such as this, there is what Wiredu terms a natural, slow, extension of intersubjectivity by means of continued observation, induction, deduction, composition, abstraction, extrapolation, analysis, and other various mental devices.³² All the problems of communication are encountered at this stage but these problems are not in any way insurmountable therefore cannot prevent cross cultural dialogue because

So long as there can be some sharing of meanings at a preanalytic level of discourse, that is, at some level below that of sophisticated theory, the possibility of communication and dialogue remains unprejudiced. And it is through the same mechanisms for sharing preanalytic

meanings within the same language that it is possible to learn another language and enter into the systems of thought articulated therein.³³

This takes us back to what we discussed in our previous chapter that it is indeed possible for people to share meanings even before any of them utter a word. It is the same thing that Wiredu implies here. This is even more so given the fact that the build-up of our perceptual powers start from humble beginning and this has a crucial significance for conceptual relativism we have been trying to puncture. This growth in perceptual ability has to do with the powers of the mind for language cultivation and skills of communication. There is a way of developing instinctual drives that are eventually transformed into structured thought and action that are common to all human beings. Stimuli accumulation registers on an evolving mind in its active interaction with the environment. These stimuli are in turn organized into discriminations of objects and possibilities of action without which there cannot be what might be called human way of knowing. Consequently, the very characterization “human”, in other words implies the existence of some semantics and epistemological universals.³⁴ And this is all we need for cross cultural dialogue to be effective. More still, if there was no universal way humans come to know about their world, there would be no sharing of meanings and reactions among individuals therefore no human society; because communication will be impossible. To this end, Wiredu writes

either there exist no such community of meanings and reactions, in which case human society is, contrary to palpable fact, impossible; or it exists, in which case communication among persons and group-to group dialogue and understanding in the community of humans is conceded and relativism is ceded.³⁵

Consequently, the fact that there can be sharing of meaning by people in the same society or culture, also means that sharing of meaning can also take place in all human societies if the will is there, therefore cross cultural understanding is possible.

Another argument in favour of the possibility of cross cultural understanding lies at the core of Western philosophy that is replete with inter-framework dialogues. There are different conceptual frameworks in Western philosophy each representing a different school. More so, if Hume can read and understand Hegel who belongs to a different conceptual framework, it follows that inter-framework understanding is

possible and all cultures even though embedded in their respective frameworks can indeed interact with one another. Elsewhere Wiredu opines that “until recently the dominant philosophy in China was a philosophy originating in the Western world, namely, Marxism with some Chinese tinges”.³⁶ This was made possible due to the possibility of cross cultural understanding for how would the Chinese been able to grasp the philosophy of Marx who belong to a different conceptual framework if not for the reason that inter conceptual framework is not only a possibility but an actuality?

Granted that it is not everything that can be understood across different conceptual frameworks but this does not in any way mean cultures cannot understand each other because the same problem can also be seen within the same conceptual frame work. More often we have failed to understand one of our own even when we are using the same framework. Wiredu in his *Canons of Conceptualization* shed light on this kind of intra-conceptual framework misunderstanding that took place between Locke and Hume on the nature of substance.³⁷ One is not saying that it is possible for one to translate all the words in one natural language to another. This may be why Wiredu cautioned that it should not be taken to imply that all languages are inter-translatable without remainder. This is so because the manner in which people interpret their reality may not be common to all cultures for this reason a culture may develop a concept for an aspect of reality that another culture down plays. The implication of this is that some concepts and propositions formulated in one language may not have counterpart in another, to that extent, endangering cross cultural understanding. But this is not to say cross cultural understanding cannot take place because in all languages there certain core areas called “pre analytic” discourses that are inter-translatable. But even in situations where there is no one to one correlation between words in both languages, literation can also aid inter conceptual scheme intelligibility. This may be why Wiredu writes that

it is cross-cultural intelligibility of the ordinary conceptions of substance and quality that makes possible a cross-culturally intelligible critique of doctrines of substance in western philosophy from the point of view of language of a different culture, such as that of Akans.³⁸

Consequently, no matter the conceptual framework one is using or belongs to, it is possible to indeed have understanding across all cultures because of our process of coming to know about the world is tied to our common biological make up as humans.

This is why even when propositions that are apparently meaningful in one language, seems to lose all intelligibility upon being rendered with all circumspection, into the conceptual framework of another language, it is always in principle possible to explain the fate of that proposition on independent ground, that is, on grounds that are peculiar to any one of the languages involved. From the fore going, Wiredu concludes that we must be ready to make concessions for inter cultural dialogue to take place. He advises that we employ the virtues of charity and respect in inter-cultural discussions. He writes

the concern now is not just with the fact that inter-cultural discourse is possible and actually has gone on after a fashion in human history, but rather that it should go on in a manner that merits the designation “dialogue”. Dialogue is, in fact, impossible, unless the principals have a basic epistemic respect for each other.³⁹

THE PLACE OF HERMENEUTICS IN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

To begin our discussion on hermeneutics, let us return to the word itself. It is not a common word. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “Hermeneutics” entered the English language in 1937 in the second edition of Daniel Waterland’s Review of the Eucharist. A century earlier the German Johann Dannhauer coined the Latin word “hermeneutica”. “Hermeneutics” is a modified transliteration of the Greek verb “hermeneuin”, which means to express aloud, to explain or interpret and to translate. The word “hermeneutics” used to be related etymologically to the Greek god Hermes who expressed the wishes of the gods to human beings, but this etymological connection is questioned today. The Latin translation of the Greek word is “interpretatio”, which, of course, is the root of the English “interpretation”. Therefore in general, hermeneutics does mean interpretation.

Hermeneutics in the very general sense of interpretation has probably existed since human beings began to speak. With writing, mistakes would also be made, if just in the mechanics of writing. As writing developed and could say more, interpretations were probably also required more often. Since ancient times theories of interpretation developed in several specific disciplines. Legal hermeneutics concerned the correct interpretation of law and its codification to prevent misinterpretation. Biblical hermeneutics developed rules for interpreting the Bible correctly. In the Renaissance, philological hermeneutics grew and concentrated on interpreting the classics.

Having said that, our submission is that hermeneutics is the philosophical theory of knowledge that claims all cases of understanding necessarily involve interpretation and application. At the most rudimentary level of comprehension, interpretation – the exchange of words for words, what we may call dialogue – is concerned with the ‘world’, ‘reality’, the historical, cultural, political, economic, technological context or setting into which it is inserted, and against which it is asserted. Interpretation does not release or disengage us from the world, our surroundings; through the act of interpretation the world becomes what it is to us. Interpretation sets the stage for engagement: We draw the world closer to us through words and language. As with any text, we represent its heterogeneity to ourselves and others; we demonstrate our comprehension of this world through words and language; we articulate our needs and desires, our joys and disappointments, our question and insights, on the basis of interpretation.

To sum up our general discussion of hermeneutics, we should note the point that according to this method, all understanding and comprehension of not only a foreign word but also of an “other” is altogether impossible without the original unity of all objects within the spirit. For how long can the one affect the other, the latter absorb the influence of the former, if they are not related to each other, and how is the one able to approximate the other, to fashion itself in its likeness or, conversely, the other to shape itself in a similar way? Thus we would understand neither antiquity in general nor a work of art or a text, if our spirit were not, in itself and fundamentally, one with the spirit of antiquity, so that it is able to comprehend this spirit which is alien to it with the spirit of antiquity. This may be why the central argument of hermeneutic tradition is that the whole is dependent on its part just as the parts can also be understood from the whole. It is this idea of dependency that makes understanding possible.

Having put forward a general outline of the hermeneutic tradition, let us at this juncture consider how advocates of this method use it to strengthen our thesis that cross cultural understanding is ensconced in epistemology. We shall limit ourselves to the works of Schleirmacher and Dilthey.

SCHLEIRMACHER AND THE NOTION OF DIVINATION

For Schleirmacher, hermeneutics is the art of understanding, so the goal of hermeneutic practice is to understand correctly what has been expressed by another, especially in written form. “Every utterance has a dual relationship, to the totality of

language and to the whole thought of its originator”.⁴⁰ This may be why the idea of hermeneutic circle was introduced into hermeneutics. This is due to the fact that expressions in language relate to the totality of that language at that time and to the whole thinking of the author as embedded in the history of an era. There exists an interdependence of whole and part, which is known as the hermeneutic circle. The bottom line of this is that “complete knowledge is always in this apparent circle, that each particular can only be understood via the general, of which it is a part, and vice versa”⁴¹

This being the case, Schleiermacher introduced two kinds of interpretations namely: Grammatical interpretation and psychological interpretation. In grammatical interpretation Schleiermacher holds that one must understand the author’s original language for one to be able to interpret. Put differently, Schleiermacher presupposes a common use of language for interpretation and understanding to take place. Psychological interpretation on the other hand involves aims to reconstruct the author’s thinking and the way these thoughts are expressed before one will be able to interpret. Whether from the grammatical or psychological side, people are able to interpret and understand each other irrespective of culture. How is this possible? Schleiermacher used the divinatory and comparative factors as that which aid interpretation and understanding.

How can we reconstruct an author’s creative process for us to understand him since our cultural backgrounds are different? To answer this question, Schleiermacher identifies two methods as already hinted, that will be of great use, namely, the divinatory and comparative methods. “The divinatory method is the one in which one, so to speak, transforms oneself into the other person and tries to understand the individual element directly.” Through the divinatory method, the interpreter would come to reconstruct what particular circumstances lead the author to his seminal decision as well as to his secondary ideas. It would also include on the technical side the individual way the author connect his ideas for presentation and his individual use of the chosen genre. Schleiermacher goes further to indicate how the divinatory method can work. In addition to being an individual, every person according to him

has a receptivity for all other people, this receptivity is based on the fact that everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themselves, and divination is consequently excited by comparison with oneself.⁴²

So, although one cannot actually place oneself in the thinking of the cultural other, one can guess or intuit how the cultural other thought by comparison to how one thinks oneself since human beings are similar. That is why in the case of written interpretation from one culture to another Schleiermacher thinks it is important that the interpreter be versed in writing and thinking.

Schleiermacher claims that the way to understand the thoughts of an author from another culture is to go back in time and place oneself in the author's cultural milieu. He presents two cases. In one, "the thinking and connection of thought is one and the same in each, then, if the language is the same, understanding results on its own accord." Since the language is shared and each thinks in language the same way, then the meaning of the thoughts and their connections would be similar in each person because the schematization of experience is similar. Schleiermacher does not see a fundamental barrier to understanding. However, he argues that in every case of understanding we must assume there is some sort of difference in thinking between the speaker of a language and his/her listener, but this difference is not one that cannot be overcome. Even in every day discourse he continues, we suppose a difference in conversations across cultures but in wishing to understand, we presuppose that the difference can be overcome.⁴³ The argument is that since we do, in fact understand each other even where language is different, whatever difficulties encountered in cross cultural dialogues can indeed be overcome to a large extent.

DILTHEY AND THE IDEA OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

In line with the quest for the possibility of intercultural intelligibility, Wilhelm Dilthey discovers four crucial ideas in Schleiermacher's contribution to hermeneutics as a means of understanding other cultures both written and oral. One is that hermeneutic rules for interpreting texts are a specific case of the process of understanding in general so that "the analysis of understanding is therefore the groundwork for the codification of interpretation".⁴⁴ Secondly the interpreter and author share a "general human nature" that permits the understanding of others. Thirdly, because of this shared human nature, the interpreter can recreate "an alien form of life" by imaginatively modifying her own psychic (mental) processes and thus understand the inner life of another (i.e. divinatory method). But for him, the basis for understanding is in language because it is only in language that human inner life finds its complete expression. But how can one

understand the inner life of a cultural alien? For Dilthey, lived experience provides the solution. A lived experience is a unity identified in the flow of life. We have states of consciousness that are expressed “in gestures, looks, and words; and they have their objectivity in institutions, states, churches, and scientific institutions. Just as the physical object may be abstracted from life, so too may the mental or spiritual object.” Dilthey holds that cross cultural understanding may be possible “only if we project our experienced life into every sort of expression of our own and other’s lives”.

In the beginning of his essay on understanding others Dilthey writes “on the basis of lived experience and self-understanding and their constant interaction, there emerges the understanding of other persons and their manifestations of life. Manifestations of life are the external, empirically cognizable data that express or indicate the inner spiritual and mental aspects of human life. This spiritual mental aspect of life is understandable across cultures.” He identified three classes of manifestations of life. The first “consists of concepts, judgments and the larger thought formation”.⁴⁵ Actions make up the second class of manifestations of life. As manifestations, actions do not intend to communicate but are able to indicate a relationship to a purpose. This may be why there is always a regular relation of concern between an action and what it expresses of the human spirit that allows us to make probable assumptions about it. According to Schmidt, seeing someone nailing boards side by side, we can understand that his purpose is to build a fence.

Expressions of lived experience constitute the third class of manifestations of life. This class is unique for there is a special connection running from the inner life of the one who expresses his lived experience, through the manifestations of this lived experience, to the understanding that occurs in another who understands this expression. In manifestations of life that express lived experience, the inner state is manifested in the outer empirical world. An expression of lived experience can contain more of the nexus of psychic life than any introspection can catch sight of. This is due in part to aspects of an expression that one may not be aware of. For instance, my knitted brow reveals my disdain for the critical question while I believe I am politely answering the question. The unconscious elements that enter expressions of lived experience according to Dilthey are the basis for understanding a cultural alien better than the way he may even understand himself.⁴⁶ Consequently, for each class of manifestation, there is an elementary form of understanding. Understanding begins first in the practical or pragmatic situations of common interactions. This presupposes that

through outer empirical expressions we can know aspects of the inner life of others that the other has expressed. This connection between expression and inner meaning and outer expression starts in the earliest part of human life. This is the basis of acculturation, and the connection between expression and inner meaning is the essential basis of all understanding. The three classes of manifestation following Dilthey are united. For instance, series of letters form words that in turn express propositions; swinging a hammer expresses a purpose, such as fence building; facial expression expresses pain. In elemental understanding the empirical manifestation and the inner content expressed there are united.

Higher forms of understanding are built from this basis. One essential requirement is that there is an ordered structure in objective spirit and humanity. This means that all human beings share some very general structures in living their lives. Our example is that we all need shelter. All human beings also share very general ways of manifesting their lives. The example is a legal system and their inner sense of justice. A continuum of ordered structures exists from the very particular ones that one is acculturated into, through ever-larger groups of people in time and space, until one reaches the universal for objective spirit and humanity. This alone provides the possible of understanding human beings from a different temporal and cultural situation.

The ability to understand others outside one's acculturated group depends on the two modes of higher understanding. The milieu and external situation allow the location of types and then more specific types of universal structures that the other embodies. The second mode concerns the human ability to create in one's own consciousness a lived experience that one has not had by imaginatively modifying the psychic states one has experienced. This mode is more essential than the milieu and the external circumstances different from my own, but especially for re-experiencing the internal states of others irrespective of culture.

Although Dilthey restricts hermeneutics to the science of the art of understanding written documents, since the written contains the most complete expression of human spirit and mind, we infer that philological hermeneutic understanding is a model for all understanding. Seen in the context of the theory of knowledge, the theory of interpretation becomes an essential connecting link in intercultural discourses. In the next chapter, we shall examine the nature of the debate between cultural universalists and particulars to prepare the ground for establishing a basis for cross cultural understanding. This is important given the fact that radical

relativists believe cross cultural understanding is a farce. In this chapter, we have been trying to examine the platform for cross cultural understanding as espounded by universality of religious experience theory of cross cultural understanding, the universality of emotions theory, Wiredu's interconceptual scheme dialogues as well as Schlieirmacher and Dilthey's hermeneutic theories. The fact remains that all have not been able to adequately or categorically state the basis for cross cultural understanding hence the tension among identity groups that have been attributed to the inability to reconcile the universlist and the particularists schools of culture especially at the theoretical level. In the next chapter, we shall consider the debate between these two shools of thought (cultural universalist/particularists').

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CHAPTER THREE

UNIVERSALISTS AND RELATIVISTS DEBATE ON CULTURE

Most times, we start our argument between the proponents of cultural universalism and cultural relativists without first making clear the meaning of these concepts. It has been argued that the atomistic theory of Democritus laid the foundation for relativism, though it was Protagoras that explicitly expressed this view when he asserted that “man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, that they are, and the things they are not, that they are not” this is interpreted as each man being the one that sets his own standards, the yardstick of all things including truth, the good, the real, and the meaningful, and that even when men differ, there is no objective truth in virtue of which one is right and the other wrong.

Other instances of relativism can be gleaned from the works of Descartes. In the ‘Methodic Doubt’ Descartes embarked on an enterprise which culminated in the assertion that “there remains... something that can not be doubted ... I think, therefore I am”.¹ One might interpret this as saying Descartes supposes himself as the starting point for what is the case. He sees himself and by implication every other man, as the potential measure in everything. More so, Berkeley’s idealism can also be said to be enshrined in relativism. For instance, Berkeley denied the existence of matter and maintains that material objects exist through perception which we cannot deny involves some mental cognitive processes. Hence his dictum “*esse est percipi*,” this has relativistic colouration.

In this chapter, we will examine the nature of the debate between universalist and relativist in the area of culture as well as philosophy. We shall start by defining relativism. We shall also look at forms of relativism as well as the idea of cultural universalism.

DEFINING RELATIVISM

Having made that point, what then is relativism? According to Brian Longhurst, relativism is a doctrine of social knowledge that has as its tenet the claim that all thought is socially determined.² Edward Craig puts it differently when he states that the idea of relativism holds that truth, reality, and what is right or wrong depends on our point of view or theory.³ Relativism can appear in subjective form, an ethical form, as

well as in an epistemological form. It can be rationalistic, perceptual and conceptual. Let us examine some forms of relativism.

TYPES OF RELATIVISM

Subjective Relativism:-

This kind of relativism holds that whatever is true to me is true and whatever is true to you remains to you. This is in line with the Protagorean dictum of man being the measure of all things. Invariably, if James believes that mountains are made of sand, then it is true for him, and if Biodun believes that they are made of ice, it is also true for him. Both beliefs are true in their own respect.

However, if we allow the subjective relativist to have his way, it portends danger for the community. Imagine a community where each person is allowed to his subjective claims, such a community will definitely be chaotic.

i. Ethical Relativism:-

Ethical relativism is a doctrine which denies that there really is only one correct moral code that binds all human societies. Put differently, there are diversities of moral beliefs across all societies such that what is taken to be good or right and what is regarded as being bad or wrong differ from society to society. Invariably, grounds for moral beliefs are held to be relative to particular positions, where such positions could be individualistic or communal.

The problem with this position is that it can lead a society to the edge of an abyss because in as much as moral ideas are as correct as any other, there may be a breakdown in morality as beliefs and practices are equally legitimated, there being no method for the evaluation of good or bad practices.

ii. Epistemological Relativism:-

This kind of relativism is what Kirk calls “true-for-us” relativism. It means that truth always remain truth by the standards of X where X could be a group all a whole society. An example may be a theory that understands truth in terms of its being satisfactory to believe. Such a theory allows that truth may differ from group to group or society to society. Here there is a break away from the idea of a culturally independent truth.

Since in traditional epistemology belief and truth are considered essential ingredients of knowledge, and since in relativism what is considered as true and worth

believing depends on agreement, it becomes the case that knowledge depends solely on a group's or society's point of view. We can deduce a fundamental difference between epistemological relativism and subjectivism. The difference lies in the fact that while it is the case that they both emphasise on relativity of truth, one applies strictly to singular entities while the other transcends the singularity to situate at the collective.

According to Edward Craig, this kind of relativism does not go unscathed in the sense that firstly, its proponents have nothing to say to convince other cultures to accept their views (which may be superior or more effective). Secondly, by holding firmly to what they consider to be knowledge, is a given group or society not indirectly maintaining an absolutist stance?

iii. Relativity of Rationality:-

Lucien Levy – Bruhl, at the beginning of the twentieth century caused a controversy by proposing that there is a distinct type of primitive mentality, which differed from the mode of thought of Europeans. Although his position did not tell us which mode of thought was superior, he non the less let us into the fact that the primitive mentality was characterized by a distinct mode of rationality that is different from what Europeans regard as the laws of thought. This position was succinctly supported by Africans like Senhor who believe that there is something like the African mode of thinking and knowing.

iv. Perceptual Relativism:-

In perceptual relativity, it is the perception of reality that is held to be relative to the situation of the knower. Perception is the process by which we acquire information about the world around us using our five senses. Perceptual relativism leads to the idea that language differences and language itself have an important role to play in perception. This is so because it is believed that language imprisons concepts. So where languages differ, concepts will differ and so making it possible for people of different cultures confronted with the same experience to have different perceptions.

WHAT IS CULTURAL RELATIVISM?

We have all along been looking at the various forms of relativism. What is cultural relativism? According to Anthony O'Hear, cultural relativism is a deterministic doctrine which makes culture too definitive of the group to which it belongs, in that any reception of outside influence is going to seem either impossible in appealing to values

not recognized by insiders or undesirable in diluting the purity and distinctiveness of a culture.⁴ This view holds that the ways of men vary endlessly across societies.

In recognition of the above stated fact, Kwame Gyekye defined cultural relativism as the doctrine that denies objectivity or universality of cultural values.⁵ The view holds that values held by a particular culture or people are true and valid for that culture or people. Hence our abstraction, perception, conception of the real, or the true or the good, our conception of rationality, is as valid as any other, there being no simple or common culture – neutral standard by which the various goods or values can be evaluated.

DEFINING UNIVERSALISM

Proponents of universalism assert that everyone is endowed with certain entitlements merely by reason of being human, and that such rights should be universal to the extent of their nature. By cultural universalism, we are referring to the school of thought that holds that there are certain human values that are present in all known human cultures irrespective of geography or any other factor or variable. And it is the availability of these values that makes for the possibility of human rights. To the proponents of this school, human rights are to be conceived in a universalist's and egalitarian fashion. Such entitlements can exist as shared norms of actual human moralities, as justified moral norms or natural rights supported by strong reasons, or as legal rights either at a national level or within international law.

There are as many shades of universalisms as there are relativisms. Each strand of universalism contradicts its variant of relativism already espoused above.

THE RELATIVIST/UNIVERSALISTS' DEBATE ON CULTURE

There has existed a long standing debate between universalism and cultural relativism, to the extent that academicians have barely found acceptable symmetry in the debate between these schools of culture. The nexus between these schools of thought may largely be said to be sustained by conservatism and liberalism, both pulling from different angles. As we have already mentioned, relativists hold that all religious, ethical, aesthetic, and political beliefs are completely relative to the individual within a cultural identity. Universalists argue that if truth is relative, then rights are relative and not absolute. Among scholars of the separate schools, there seems to be an endemic and congenital trait of what could be described as "a natural

benign docility generally brought about by years of blind social submission and unquestioning compliance to the mystique of higher authority that reigns surreptitiously yet effectively in the two blocks of ideologues in varying degrees”.

This benign natural docility is generally regarded as positive, legitimate and virtuous strictly within the context of a fixed intellectual regime. Left without dialogue, the two ideologies remain antagonistic. For a fact, one of the relatable issues of the past decades has been the dispute between ideologies of human rights on a global scale, universalism, and cultural relativism. Universalism holds that more “primitive” cultures will eventually evolve to have the same system of law and rights as Western cultures. Cultural relativists hold an opposite, but similarly rigid viewpoint, that traditional culture is unchangeable to its enthusiasts. Academic literary criticism has attempted to be transformed from customary inquiry into an overreaching search for symmetry between universalism and cultural relativism.

The major problem in different cultures is that the question about morality is not settled and the common moral norms are not invented. In most cases disagreements between different cultures appear because of disagreements in facts. So, regulation of the most important facts leads to the solution of this problem. Another source of cultural disagreements and criticism of other cultures are caused by differences of values. They are fundamental moral disagreements and their solution is practically impossible to the extent of variance.

According to cultural ethical relativism, morality is a matter of culture. Moral principles of the individuality are found according to the social morality. The conclusion is that people should follow moral norms and laws of their own society. Their own morality gives them a possibility to judge and to critique all other cultures.⁶ The concept of rights according to the cultural universalist has no meaning unless of course, rights are universal, but rights cannot attain universality without a certain social anchoring argues the relativist. Rights must be founded upon equality of access to economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The declaration of human rights occurred immediately after the atrocities of WW II. Then the end of the cold war created a series of tentative attempts to define “a new world order” for the stability of states the world over. Pursuant to this, the globalization of human rights began when the world was awakened to the crimes committed under one government (Hitler), and the need for a more universal system of accountability and responsibility. The Second World War led to many undertakings. The universal Declaration of Human Rights was

created following the Holocaust during World War II. The sheer atrocities committed by the Nazis through the enslavement and annihilation of Jews in Europe caused the cry out for global justice. The Holocaust changed the worldview on human rights. Prior to the war, human rights were then considered a domestic concern; they were to be enforced by only the governments of individual countries. This view shifted considerably during the war, the world as a whole felt the need for the security of inalienable human rights. The declaration describes how the rights in it are not to be enforced, but rather, represent a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. Among these rights include the right to life, the right to not be tortured or enslaved, and to not be unfairly persecuted. The declaration also grants freedom of thought, expression, and religion. The cultural rights laid out include the right to marriage, education, employment, food, and shelter. The declaration was only a resolution adopted by the General Assembly. Since its adoption, it has grown to become a major factor in international law. Here lie, the strongest argument put forward by cultural universalists.

In the wake of global terrorism and strengthening of natural security measures, does universalism favour global progress? Does cultural relativism favour the same or antagonize it? Taken to its extreme, this relativism would pose a dangerous threat to the effectiveness of international law and the international system of human rights that has been painstakingly constituted over the decades argues the universalist. If cultural tradition alone governs state compliance with international standings, then widespread disregard, abuse and violation of human rights would be given legitimacy.

Just as academic universalism is more nuanced than ideological universalism, so is academic relativism more practical and defensible than the conclusions that flow from Boas' assertion. Boas has early written that culture is not innate, but is learned through processes of socialization. The implication of this thinking is that conceptions of rights, as extensions of culture, are similarly learned and are thus particular. The popular manifestation of this thought is a relativistic approach that views all cultures as unremarkable in terms of moral rightness or any other measure. It follows then that objectivity is clouded by the observer's own culture, all cultures are beyond reproach and their diversity is not to be protected from the cosmopolitan.

Dowdle does not reject the notion of rights in its entirety. In his defense of cultural relativism, Dowdle dismisses the notion of rights (the very premise on which most universalists rest their argument) as absolutes or hard rights especially as

explicated by universalists. He rather favours a more context driven “soft rights”.⁷ Dembour on his part rejects universalism as arrogance for its refusal to acknowledge the “other”, yet takes issues with relativism for making “moral agents indifferent to immoral situations”.⁸

The practical implications of this tempered relativism manifest themselves in a philosophy Dembour likened to a pendulum, throwing universalist and relativist policies into a dialect where both parts are necessary to create and evaluate policy. Dowdle writes that respect for context “is not contrary to the notion of universal rights,⁹ rather, it is refinement of that notion”.¹⁰ Merry takes the argument further, touching on Dembour’s dialogue proposition while providing relativist reasoning for Barnhart’s universalist argument of rights as a spreading construct. Merry argues for an expanded definition of culture that recognizes intracultural struggle and dialogue. These intracultural struggles both result from and contribute to a larger global rights debate, acting as a providing ground for globalization’s impact on different cultures.

As can be seen from the similarities between Merry and Barnhart’s arguments, the contemporary rift between cultural relativism and universalism is much narrower and the area is much greyer than we are led to believe. In this light, many critiques leveled by each side against the other are immaterial. Charges of universalists ignorance of context are countered by Barnhart’s theory of commensurable and incommensurate cultures. Charges of relativism’s indifference are countered by Dembour’s pendulum.

With possible exception of Hood, the authors discussed agree that neither absolute universalism nor absolute cultural relativism provide comprehensive solutions. Dembour, Merry, Barnhart, and Morris all agree, to varying extents, in the necessity of the relativist – universalist dialogue in facilitating a more humane progress. With that said, however, several critiques remain valid.

Because universalism remains rooted in a fairly well – entrenched position of right and wrong, it can often exclude the experience of the other, as Dembour contends. This is distinctly obvious in Hood’s essay, where while he considers the relative virtues of Confucianism and Islam as regards the Western conception of human rights, he ultimately dismisses them both as unable to provide their own comprehensive rights-based alternatives. His reasoning is rooted in somewhat shaky ground requiring the belief that neither Confucianism nor Islam supports the individual’s ability to challenge authority. This argument has its own problem of reifying culture, denying that moderate

Islamists or Confucians are truly members of their respective cultures, or marginalizing them if they are. It is interesting to note that the reification of culture is a charge that was initially leveled as Boasian cultural relativists' failure to allow fluid definition of culture, one that provided for internal struggle.

While the cultural universalist rests his argument on the idea of universal rights for all human beings, the cultural relativist rests his on the ideas of constructivism and incommensurability. The constructivist thesis holds that reality is a creation of the way we think and talk. In other words, reality is generated from language and since language is relative to culture, it becomes the case that reality is culturally determined. Constructivism is of two kinds – social constructivism that is concerned with the generation of social facts and scientific constructivism that is interested in the construction of facts about the physical world – gravity waves, microbes etc.

Another argument always put forward by the relativist rests on the idea of incommensurability. According to this view, there is no common measure or scale for evaluating different cultures. Cultures cannot be weighed from the same respects. There is no common ground for them. Hence, beliefs, canon of rationality, morality, moral values, concepts and theoretical frameworks, perceptions and reality is relative to cultures and there is no meeting point; this is the basic argument from incommensurability advanced by the relativist to knock off the strongest rights argument of the universalist.

THE RELATIVISTS/UNIVERSALISTS' DEBATE IN PHILOSOPHY

Another area where the debate between cultural universalists and particularists expresses itself is in the area of philosophy. Philosophers have vigorously argued in support of one school or the other. No one can dispute the fact that philosophy is an age long discipline, but even this does not preclude disagreement among philosophers of different traits and shades. Even though one of its many interests lies in conceptual clarification, it is still finding it difficult to define itself because a definition and method adopted by one philosopher is criticized by another, and it is this seeming dialectics that makes philosophy interesting. Philosophy has been classified according to geographical regions, religions or cultures. When we speak of Asian, western, Christian, or African philosophy, the impression is that there is a way of reasoning common to a group of persons for the fact that they are from the same part of the world or share the same religious convictions. For instance, if we look at the major issues in the thoughts of

some philosophers or their method of philosophizing, one notices that a religion or a culture often provides some elements for valid philosophical reflection, elements which can only be sufficiently appreciated by people who belong to that religion or culture and which actually find their way in to their philosophies, sometimes even without their being conscious of it.¹¹

When the concept 'African' became attached to some philosophical thought in the second half of the 20th century, it sparked up a debate because the considerations were not always purely philosophical but also political and racial. This informs Sekou Toure's definition of culture to mean:

all the material and immaterial works of art and science, plus knowledge, manners, education, a mode of thought, behavior and attitudes accumulated by the people both through and by virtue of their struggle for freedom from the hold and domination of nature; we also include the result of their efforts to destroy the deviationist politics – social systems of domination and exploitation through the productive process of social life.¹²

THE UNIVERSALIST' CHALLENGE IN PHILOSOPHY

In spite of the racial and politicized outlook of philosophy in some quarters, some philosophers have not allowed racial bias hoodwink them from the clear aim of philosophy which is mainly to inquire into the nature of human problems with the view of proffering solution to them. Many Africans who argued against an African philosophy culturally understood did so, on the grounds of the universal character of philosophy. Peter Bodunrin wondered why African philosophers must be expected to produce an African philosophy when no one ever demands an African mathematician or physicist. On the other hand were the likes of Kagame and Senghor, who defended the position that there was a particular way of cogitation common to all Africans. Theophilus Okere and Kwasi Wiredu are among those African philosophers who try to steer a middle course between what may be called the two extreme positions. Okere defended the universal character of philosophy as a discipline, but argues that every particular philosophy grows out of and is inserted within a particular cultural context. According to him therefore, philosophy even in its universality is culture bound, but the existence of a distinctive culture does not necessarily mean the existence of a corresponding philosophy. In other words, culture is a necessary but not sufficient

condition for philosophy. And that there is something in every philosophy that transcends the culture in which it was nurtured.

Consequently, Odera Oruka classifies the works of African philosophy into: ethnophilosophy, philosophical sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. The professional philosophers are bifurcated into the particularists and the universalists – this bifurcation clearly shows the crux of the tension between these schools of culture or philosophy. The universalists include Peter Bodunrin, Odera Oruka, Paul Hountondji and Kwasi Wiredu. While the particularists include C. S. Mommoh, and K. C. Ayanwu. There is no unanimity as to the thought of members of these groups beside the fact that the particularists agree and hold tenaciously to the tenets of cultural relativism while the universalists also do the same to the tenets of cultural universalism.

According to Wiredu, the particularists see African philosophy as “coterminous with philosophical investigations having a special relevance to Africa”.¹³ The particularist concern is that no philosophy is African philosophy unless it concerns itself with a specific African theme, topic, or problem. Bello in Wiredu (2006) argues that there is some merit in the particularist position for

first if we accept, if only for the sake of argument the definition of philosophy as the criticism of the ideas we live by, it goes without saying that African philosophy should be concerned with the criticism of the ideas that Africans live by (Wiredu, 264).¹⁴

Bello went further to say that, to admit all manner of discussions, for example, of logic and ontology, greek science and religion, the bundle theory of substance into African philosophy, is by implication having foreign cultural imports into African philosophy because they belong to another philosophical tradition. It is in this sense that cultural particularists are appreciated.

Bello eulogizes the universalists because their argument has better merit. First, the insistence on criticism and reconstruction is to make the efforts of contemporary African philosophers truly philosophical. All philosophizing for him must involve assertion, explanation, and justification, and anything less than that will not be termed philosophy. Secondly, Africans should not pretend to the uniqueness or purity of culture, since Africans, apart from being part of the human race with which it shares universal biological features, have been influenced by factors like Islam, Christianity,

colonialism to mention but a few. Lastly, cultural products are best seen as common wealth of humankind to be approached as the need arises.

In support for universalism and contempt for particulars, Okere writes that the black African philosopher is not to become a cultural historian, a laudatory *temporis acti*, or a curator of the ethnic museum, jealously guarding the purity of ancestral heritage and protecting it from the adulterating encroachments of time and evolution... background for black African philosophers certainly means traditional institutions, symbols and values, but also the often violent culture contact that was the colonial experience and its aftermath.¹⁵

Paulin Hountondji's critique of ethno philosophy and his position that philosophy be critical, scientific and written gives impetus to the universalism of Okere. Wiredu's input into the debate makes a distinction between what he calls the universalist and nationalist approaches to philosophy in Africa. The universalist approach supposes that philosophy like the natural, the mathematical and even some social sciences should be the same, whether it is done in Africa by Africans or in any other continent of the world. The nationalist approach underscores the differences between the various philosophical traditions in the world and wonders why an African should not be trained first and foremost in traditional cultures before engaging in the enterprise of philosophy.

From the foregoing, we can assert that Wiredu is in agreement with Paul Hountondji. But unlike Hountodji, Wiredu does not think that just any philosophical literary work produced by an African author qualifies as African philosophy. To qualify as such, a philosophical work has to have some organic relationship with other philosophical works produced within the African cultural context and over a period of time. In line with this Afolayan writes that:

aware of the weaknesses of traditional philosophy Wiredu opines that contemporary African philosophy has to do more than just repeat and preserve traditional African philosophies. A forward looking contemporary African philosophy should be cognizant of the rich variety of sources of philosophical insight in the modern world".¹⁶

But what constitutes a forward looking philosophy from universalists' perspective is one enmeshed or grounded in western canons that seek to provide common ground for the justification of claims. This may be why Ernest Cassirer writes as quoted by Wiredu that:

a philosophy of culture begins with the assumption that the world of human culture is not mere aggregate of loose and detached facts. It seeks to understand these facts as a system, as an organic whole.... Its starting point and working hypothesis are embodied in the conviction that their varied and seemingly dispersed rays may be gathered and into common focus.¹⁷

There is no problem if the search for grounding principle is encouraged, the issue as far as the particularists are concerned, is the westernization of what constitutes this unitive principle. This may be why the philosophers of enlightenment develop 'objective science', universal morality, law, and autonomous art according to their so called inner logic.¹⁸ If the quest for universalisms were pursued without cultural bias, there would not have been any counter argument neither would there have been any tensions between these schools of culture. But the fact that the universal principle pursued by some western philosophers and others sympathetic to their world view for the purpose of repudiating other cultural groups calls for a response. According to Ani, universalism in European definition is an expression of Western culture. The seed of the culture gives birth both to the intellectualist, liberal-humanist tradition and to the pattern of western behavior towards others.

Furthermore, it is easier to speak of universality of philosophy or culture than to give an instance of a universal philosophy or culture. For instance, what are the conditions a thought or an essay must meet for it to be branded philosophical? This question has rubbed universalism of its foundation in the sense that there seem not to be a universality among universalists as to what a thought must meet for it to be philosophical. Some have argued that some of the conditions must have to do with rigorous use of reason and reason alone, logical coherence, systematic organization, some amount of intercultural intelligibility of concepts, objectivity and open mindedness. A relativist would argue that what list of characteristics one may offer will largely depend on one's conception of philosophy. For Wiredu, there is no generally accepted technique of philosophizing. If this is so can one not be easily led to dubbing him a relativist? He writes

I am all for rationality, rigour, objectivity, etc in philosophy but the point is that if we demand that a philosophy has to have all these attributes by definition, then we are debarred from pointing out what is a well-known- fact – that some philosophies are unrigorous, or unsystematic, or dogmatic, or irrational, or even anti rational.¹⁹

One of the indicators cited by Universalists as a philosophical and cultural thought has to do with objectivity which Ani rejects on the grounds that:

universalism, when translated scientifically becomes objectification. The illusion of objectivity promotes the myth of universalistic commitment, that is, it is a stance that disavows political or group interest. It thereby services group interest more subtly by calling it something other than it is. We can conclude that this universalism semantically represents European value, is not a universal valid goal, and as an “imperative” serves the interest of European cultural imperialism in the following manner: once individuals are persuaded that universal characteristics are the proper human goals, European patterns and values can be presented as universal while others are labeled as “particular”.²⁰

Consequently, the relativists argue that the claim to ‘universalism’ is a formidable weapons in the hands of the west to exploit, impose and conquer the cultural other. This may be why L. Gordon writes that “at the heart of existential thought are two questions; ‘what are we?’ and ‘what shall we do?’” These questions can be translated into questions of identity and normative action. They are questions, further of ontological and teleological significance, for the former addresses being and the latter addresses what to become – in a word, ‘purpose’.²¹ This also informs Anyanwu’s thesis that “all material education or all reasoned knowledge in the western world is the organization of force for conquest”.²²

Furthermore, following the plural nature of cultures and their different interpretations of experience, the search for one ‘Truth’ about the meaning of life and the world in any culture is made an insurmountable task. The history of culture shows that experience can be understood in different ways in terms of the different principles or standards of interpretation. In spite of all the claims to ‘objective’ judgments, especially in the field of culture, experience shows that it is extremely difficult in spite

of all intentions to arrive at 'objectivity'. This is so because the tendency to misconstrue the cultural behaviour of a people is always there. This is for the reason that "man experiences everything in the light of culture", which stamps and molds his experience by generating the conceptions which inform his perception of the world, himself and his fellow men. As a result, he cannot cast off the fetters of culture since everything he perceives is through the prism of culture. And to be objective in the interpretation of other cultural activities and expressions seems to require that the interpreter should not commit himself to the cultural values in question. People passionately defend their cultural values – beliefs, and ideas that enable them live meaningful lives- and in certain circumstances are willing to die in defense of such values. There is therefore no doubt that all cultures are relative to their different assumptions about the nature of reality and that people have certain emotional commitments to their cultural values. This is the argument of the cultural relativist that the universalist tries to counter. The relativist commitment to the argument that "all philosophies are particular cultural phenomena that follow specific cultural evolutionary pathways"²³ is not misplaced because this informs or give impetus to nationalist philosophy as an attack on the universalists. As Herskovits points out:

the very core of cultural relativism is the social discipline that come of respect for difference – of mutual respect. Emphasis on the worth of many ways of life, not one, is an affirmation of the values in each culture. Such emphasis seeks to understand and to harmonize goals, not to judge and destroy those that do not dovetail with our own.²⁴

This is hardly the case as western canons of evaluation tend to see anything that comes from the cultural other as particular. For instance, Robin Horton (1994) rejects the claim that the African mentality is most fundamentally symbolic and/or ritualistic in character. Regarding himself as a descendant of the "intellectualist" anthropological tradition as epitomized by E. E. Evans Pritchard and Daryll Forde, Horton argues that indigenous African religions, for example are better approached as genuinely theoretical systems, whose purpose is to provide members of the relevant culture with models of explanation, prediction, and control that will allow them to link events in the world of everyday life with causal forces that either transcend or underlie that world. It is this fundamental claim or insight that entitles him to compare them as explanatory

vehicles with the theories formulated and proposed by (western) science. This is the very attitude that relativists like Anyanwu find annoying. According to Anyanwu:

the American experts consciously or unconsciously believe that their mindset constitutes the trustworthy route to any knowledge that deserves the name. So, they think that any one and any culture that wants something different must submit their rationale to them for approval, otherwise, their knowledge has no merit... What I disdain in the epistemological attitude of the self – proclaimed experts is the spirit of fragmentation, psychic dissociation, the triumph of brain over the mind, cold impersonality, all of which make them culturally and spiritually undernourished and prevents them from growing as integrated human beings. I have no quarrel with analysis, but analysis without synthesis breeds chaos.²⁵

If Horton had stopped there, his comparative analysis probably would have received general applause within African academia. However, in the second part of his essay he proceeds to identify a number of logically empirically erroneous types of reasoning, which he also claim are characteristic of African systems of thought because they fall short or fail to meet the standard of universality set by western canons. To a large extent, Horton's argument discredits the integrity of African system of thought as intellectual statements that many African scholars have responded to by criticizing as both methodologically flawed and empirically false. Horton tried to disguise his quest for universalism by arguing that the basis for his comparisons between African and western systems of thought is meant to be at the level of what he described as those comparatively abstract elements or forces that are said to be responsible for what happens in everyday life. Because Africans are said to have yet develop a notion of objective truth, of truth as independent of any special interests or values, "truth" in African culture is said to be fundamentally linked with whatever happens to be the local world view. It is arguments such as Horton's that made Afolayan conclude that "there is an ontologically attempt to efface black Africans identity from the template of a supposed universal culture".²⁶

Consequently, Africans are said to be only marginally capable of imagining or experimenting with alternatives to that world view – precisely the kind of theoretical alternatives that would promote the development of a notion of objective truth. Hence,

they are said to be less able to reflect upon and distance themselves from their theoretical or religious beliefs as possibly true or possibly false, or to imagine what it might mean to envision, much less to embrace, alternative beliefs, and therefore to identify the nature of the logical and empirical criteria and testing that would need to be employed to facilitate serious consideration of such alternatives. With submission of this kind, Afolayan's question cannot be more timely when he asks: "if a people's humanity is seriously interrogated as the African was in colonialism, then why should it not be logical to question the putative universal humanism?"²⁷

Given the exceptionalist attitude, the question of African philosophy not only as an academic discursive field but also as a reality was greatly downplayed by white South Africans in south Africa. The two journals of cultural philosophy in the country – obviously under white control and editorship – until recently, hardly published a single piece on African culture and philosophy even though located within the geographical space of Africa. The obvious reasons are first, the European construction of the African as the absolute cultural other, and second, the constructed self image and self conception of philosophy itself. Africa and Africans supposedly lack what both the European and philosophy share: rationality, and so lacks universality. This attack on the African might have prompted Fanon to opine that:

the black person is not only burdened by geography, history, time, and place, he or she is most particularly saddled with the heavy weight of difference, the difference exacted by the idea of race" (Fanon, 217 - 218).²⁸

Moreso, the universalist argues that the notion of cross cultural evaluation of thought implies the universality, at some levels, of some canons of thought. Such an argument is nothing short of an anathema to many traditionalists, for they are apt to suspect that African culture might thereby become subordinated to western culture. Accordingly, universalism especially as applied to a fellow African, is a term of reproof. It is not clear that particularists wish to commit themselves to an unlimited inconsistency, for, in espousing African traditional philosophy, they do not hesitate, either on behalf of their communities or themselves or both, to make universal claims, such for example, as that every human being comes to the world with a destiny apportioned by God. This is most assuredly, not intended to be true only of Akans or Yorubas, but of all human beings everywhere.²⁹

Another argument against the relativist worthy of mention is based on the empirically verified biological unity of the human species. A subsidiary premise is to be found in the actual fact of cross cultural communication among the peoples of the world, in spite of the well – known difficulties of intercultural translation.

Further more, the universalists have criticized the particularists' culture base thesis as closed, resistant to change or revision on the basis of critical or reflective thought. Hountondji (a universalist), contends that philosophy is a theoretical discipline like mathematics with a methodological orientation and some set of substantive issues with which practitioners are preoccupied. To this end, practitioners of philosophy especially the relativists should come out of their close system termed philosophy and begin to confront the problematic of philosophy that has universal relevance for humanity. He writes:

philosophy never stops; its existence lies in the to and fro of free discussion, without which there is no philosophy. It is not a closed system but a history, a debate that goes on from generation to generation, in which every thinker every author, engages in total responsibility: I know 'I'm responsible for what I say, for the theories I put forward.... A philosophical Work is intelligible only as a moment in debate that sustains and transcends it. It always refers to antecedent Positions, either to refute them or to confirm and enrich It takes on meaning only in relation to that history, in relation to the term of an ever-changing debate in which the sole stable element is the constant reference to one self – same object, to one sphere of experience, the characterization Of which, incidentally, is itself part of the evolution.³⁰

The above quotation is a direct attack on cultural relativist which Hountondji called 'ethno philosophers'. Afolayan reacts to this attack when he opined that:

Hountondji's absolutism about the theoretical circumference of autonomous philosophy therefore excludes the ethno philosophers' conception of philosophy as primarily a cultural field preoccupied with the analysis of oral literature and other items of the preliterate culture.³¹

Hountondji went further to criticize the essential characteristics of cultural particularists as presenting a philosophy of peoples rather than that of individuals. He also made the point that ethno philosophy which is the crust of cultural relativism depends on the past, in what is described as authentic, traditional African culture of the

pre-colonial variety, of the people prior to ‘modernity’. These are to be found primarily in products of language: parables, proverbs, poetry, songs, myths – oral literature generally. To this end, the relativists may have no argument from a methodological point of view since ethno philosophy portrays African beliefs as things that do not change, that are somehow timeless.³² This being the case, Hountondji insists that the relativist argument lacks criticality, reflectiveness, rationality, scientificity and progressive content as such can hardly be cross cultural.

Another universalist who has brought his thought to bear on the universalist/relativist debate is Anthony Appiah. Appiah opines that the fact that the western world has chosen to embrace analytic philosophy is all well and good, but this is no reason for it to deny other cultures in the world an equal right to develop their own ways of doing and expressing their ideas about what should qualify as philosophy. Any one that reads this words of Appiah might be quick to term him a relativist. As we expound his thoughts more we will soon come to the realization that Appiah pitches tent with the universalists. For a work to qualify as philosophical he insists that it must amount to something more than a mere catalogue, or mapping of beliefs, concepts, and meanings. There must, in addition, be some evidence of efforts to determine whether they are critical or reflective. In line with this Hallen writes that:

there is an important underlying qualification to this discussion that demands clarification. By making this assertion, is Appiah closing the philosophical “door” to those African philosophers who would insist that the beliefs, proverbs, and customs of their cultures do amount to a form of philosophy? I think not. He certainly advocates that the door be open to them as well, but once they are inside, he, as an African philosopher in his own right, would side with someone like Kwasi Wiredu in saying that what also is advisable is that these elements of a people’s “folk philosophy” then be subjected to critical analysis and evaluation.³³

Appiah like other cultural universalists deploy arguments for an autonomous philosophy with a substantive concern for certain fundamental problems. These problems – causation, good and evil, mind-body, justice, illusion, reason, reality, etc. – even though may appear western, may have universal relevance. For any work to be worth the name philosophical, it must be able to reflect on these fundamental

philosophical problems no matter the place, or culture from which it originates. This may be why he writes that:

we will solve our problems if we see them as human problems arising out of a special situation, and we shall not solve them if we see them as African problems, generated by our being unlike others... if there is a lesson in the broad shape of this circulation of cultures, it is surely that we are all already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer fully autochthonous echt- African culture... that there is a clear sense in some post colonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over and against a monolithic West – the binary of self and other – is the last of the shibboleths of the modernizer that we have to live without. Elsewhere, he writes that Unless all of us understand each other, and understand each Other as reasonable, we shall not treat each other with proper Respect. Concentrating on the noncognitive features of traditional Religions not only misrepresents them but also leads to an under-Estimation of the role of reason in the life of traditional cultures.³⁴

Appiah concentrates his attack on the relativists by calling for a scientific approach to selling their culture to the world because it is the only method that is ‘open’ and can lead to progress in our understanding of the world. One thing we can glean from the synopsis of Appiah’s contribution to the debate between the universalist and the relativist, is that, for him, African philosophers should transcend relativism by employing the canons of rationality, criticism and scientificity in their respective philosophical endeavours.

Kwasi Wiredu remains a reechoing voice in this debate because he has always been concerned with what he describes as “the possibility of universal canons of thought and action”. In a series of articles, he argues that certain logical and ethical concerns are necessarily common to all human cultures simply by virtue of the fact that they are human. Exemplary logical universals to which he makes specific reference are the principles of non contradiction (“that a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time”) and induction (described as “the capacity to learn from experience”). As for the ethical, the priority assigned to the “harmonization of the interests of the individual with the interests of society also becomes a candidate for cultural universality”. Wiredu’s commitment to universal rationalism, a commitment which consistently persuades him to reject relativism as a productive philosophical alternative

because his universal rationalism serves as the basis for his humanism. He contends that cultures can and do differ from one another, but on a more fundamental level as expressions of a common humanity, they manifest and share important common principles. It is on this basis that he can argue against cultural relativism, that despite our apparent differences, it is this common humanity with all it may entail which, once recognized and acknowledged, cannot fail to unite and thereby benefit all human kind. Oyeshile's humanistic cultural universalism also makes a case for cultural universalism from this perspective. In line with this, Afolayan writes that:

In humanistic cultural universalism, Oyeshile provides a critical elaboration of this critique of ethno philosophical reason, and particularly an argument for a cultural Universalism that can motivate Africa's search for a paradigm of an authentic post colonial development.³⁵

Though not really directed at the ethno philosophical project in the same way Wiredu and Hountunji did, Oyeshile's critical analysis also relegates ethno philosophy to the background especially its (ethno philosophy) search for an African identity. The basis of Oyeshile's argument is that African development should only be sought in universalist terms involving certain humanistic values.

THE PARTICULARISTS' RESPONSE IN PHILOSOPHY

In response to the argument put forward by the universalists, Segun Gbadegesin employs conceptual analysis and critical evaluation of argumentation and evidence underlying "traditional" beliefs and practices (which most universalists see as anachronistic) as fundamental methodological techniques.³⁶ He argues that there always has been an individualistic, reflective, and critical dimension to the formation and reformation of such beliefs and practices in African cultures.³⁷ In response to the universalists denial of rationality in ethno philosophical enterprise, especially as it relates to the work of Robin Horton, Gbadegesin writes that "if we grant that such thought systems are eminently logical, what else is required to demonstrate their philosophical nature?"³⁸ Because to solve Africa's current social, cultural, economic, and political problems, Africans need to be fully informed about their cultural past, about where they are coming from. Herein, then lies the relevance of the tenets of cultural relativism.

This is even more so given the fact that at the base of this tension between the universalists and particularists, between the west and the cultural others, is a more fundamental question of existence: who are we? And what shall we do? Gordons opines that these questions can be translated into questions of identity and normative action. They are questions, further of ontological and teleological significance.³⁹ It is in this sense that Afolayan notes that the tension between the particularists and the universalists especially as it concerns the west and Africans, is an ontological struggle for relevance.⁴⁰ And if a people's humanity is seriously interrogated as the Africans' was in colonialism, then why should it not be logical to question the putative universal humanism. That is if they have been ontologically effaced from the anthropos, what possible means could they have of participating in it? To this end, humanistic humanism as basis for cultural universalism as put forward by Oyeshile was countered by Gbadegesin when he writes that the moral values that distinguish 'traditional African culture determine a form of humanism: cooperation, a healthy sense of community, generosity and respect for others.' He criticized western universal Christian ethics as culturally irrelevant and socially corrupt. He ended on a particular note by calling Africans to invigorate traditional religion because it is traditional religion that is compatible with African cultural priorities.

Furthermore, in "Cognitive Relativism", Hallen and Sodipo in defense of cultural relativism invoked the work of Quine to buttress their point. Quine had argued against the notion of cultural universal propositions or meanings. Quine challenges the apparent presupposition that underlying meanings are essentially shared, common or universal, even if the word (or phrase) used in a particular language culture to express a certain meaning is very different from the word or phrase used to express the same meaning in another language culture. Quine hypothesized that each human language may be viewed as a unique creation, with emotive meanings and conceptual networks that are compelling evidence of human genius. Quine opines that for the purpose of intercultural translation, such unique elements must be downplayed, sacrificed to the need for cross cultural communication. But this does not in any way justify the unique untranslatable elements they contain.

In the same vein, Sodipo and Hallen⁴¹ are of the view that one fundamental point of difference arises over the issue of whether, when the meanings of key epistemological terms in Yoruba for instance, are proven to be fundamentally different from their purported English language equivalents, it makes sense to maintain that

members of different language cultures do share the same notion of rationality. They conclude their analysis by saying that propositional attitudes are culturally relative.⁴² Sodipo continues that there are certain dimensions to African forms of life that are unique and cannot be adequately or fairly treated or understood using the techniques of a western philosophy that originated from western forms of life. For him, philosophical methodologies as well as theories and paradigms are culturally relative. Consequently, the only way for African philosophers to make their mark and contribute to the development and progress on Africa in the sense of accurate and unbiased representation is when African philosophers begin to develop methodologies for studying their societies that are uniquely suited to the African cultural context. This may be why Anyanwu writes that:

every culture has its own science, that is, its own basic assumptions about nature and the method that the owners of the culture use in arriving at what they consider as the trustworthy knowledge of reality.⁴³

Anyanwu and Makinde may be saying the same thing in different languages. In his *African Philosophy, Culture, and Traditional Medicine*, Akin Makinde makes the claim that African systems of thought, including especially systems of divination, may contain and constitute alternative but legitimate approaches to and methodologies to understanding the nature of reality. Divination for instance, may not be based upon the same methodology as science. But this need not mean that the conclusions it arrives at about the nature of reality are untrue. Consequently, for Anyanwu, if one asks the American expert (with his claim to universality) to make explicit the system of reference with which they interpret African social facts as having fallen short of rationality as such primitive and relative, they merely reply that they are using the “approved method of science” in studying African culture.

The question remains: whose science are they referring to? Who approved of that method? Must ethno philosophers and other relativists bow before the pronouncements of science and worship it because science says so? First science is not a fact in the world. Rather, it is man’s mental attitude towards the object of knowledge, therefore, science does not say anything. It is man who makes what he calls a scientific statement, and he alone must accept the responsibility for the truth and error inherent in science. Therefore the universalists cannot hide themselves under the mask of scientific

methodology and thereby claim immunity from error or try to persuade others to the side of objective truth. This might have prompted V. Y. Mudimbe to comment that “whatever field of western scholarship one looks to – whether anthropology, history, literature, or in particular philosophy – the portrait of Africa that emerges is as much a product of western cultural priorities and prejudices as it is of anything African”.⁴⁴

To this end, Serequeberhan responded that relativist should not deter from their cultural milieu as basis for philosophy especially in the area of hermeneutics because no matter how meticulously neutral and universal western philosophy may pretend to be, it will always have a political dimension.⁴⁵ He therefore castigates the universalists’ philosophical tradition for playing along with the intellectual and political issues involved in the portrayal of ethno philosophy as irrational and primitive, especially when viewed against the background of European colonialism. Western civilization with her claim to universalism was indeed propagandized as the cultural paradigm, and most times Africans were viewed as the negation of the ideal. This is why T. Serequeberhan rejected the rationalistic approach and criticized Bodunrin, Hountundji, and Wiredu for too easily advocating, adopting, and imposing an essentially western tradition of philosophy upon the African context in the name of universalism.⁴⁶ It is this attitude that gives impetus to Anyanwu’s words when he enthused that:

The... experts consciously or unconsciously believe that their mindset constitutes the trustworthy route to any knowledge that deserves the name. So, they think that anyone and any culture that wants something different must submit their rationale to them for approval otherwise their knowledge has no merit.⁴⁷

Anyanwu is here attacking the self acclaimed African universalists as having played themselves into the hands of their western counterparts by unconsciously becoming mouth pieces of imperialism.

To the philosophers that castigate Oruka’s philosophical sagacity to the background for not meeting the requirements for proper philosophical grounding, Serequeberhan replies that:

the foundational wondering and musing of traditional African sages have their continuous critical and safeguarding relation to the traditions (i.e. the ethnic world views) they inhabit – a hermeneutic and

philosophic function. To this extent, it has to be conceded in principle that their reflections and intellectual productions are products of philosophic efforts.⁴⁸

Still in support of cultural particulars, if we accept that every culture interprets its experience with different assumptions, theories, and concepts, we must admit the plurality of cultural philosophical systems. Following the same line of argument, we must also accept that no cultural philosophical system can claim to be applicable to all cultures. The relativists argue that unfortunately, most African and western philosophers do not pay attention to the basic assumptions, concepts, and theories of the cultural interpretation of experience. It is erroneous to view western philosophy as “world philosophy” or as establishing the criteria of western philosophy as the absolute standards of all cultural knowledge.⁴⁹

Consequently, for the cultural particularists, due to the plurality of cultures and the different interpretations of experience, it is impossible to look for the ‘one truth’ about the meaning of life and the world in any culture. Experience can be understood in more ways than one in terms of the different standards of interpretation. In spite of all the claims to “objective” judgments especially in cultural matters the relativists argue that experience shows that it is extremely difficult to arrive at objectivity. This is simply because man experiences everything in the light of culture, which according to Anyanwu “stamps and molds his experience by generating the conceptions which informs him, when he perceives the world and himself or his fellow – men.” As a result no matter the claim to objectivity, scientificity, by universalists, all cultures remain relative to their different assumptions about the nature of reality and that people have certain emotional commitments to their cultural values. He continues:

the relativity of culture is further evidenced by the fact that each person is inclined to assess the questions of ethics, politics, and social relations from the stand point of his culture, social status, feelings, education, and temperament therefore, in studying other cultures, we should bear in mind the wholly relative nature of the principles which we are tempted to establish as absolute truth.⁵⁰

Anyanwu went further to remind the universalist about subjectivity of objectivity as well as the relativity of the absolutes. This is so given the fact that the

understanding of the cultural basis of human knowledge may help academicians and universalists in particular to grasp one of the basic roots of cultural conflicts in the modern world, namely, the ideological conflicts arising from different normative theories of culture.

So far we have been trying to counter the arguments put forward by cultural universalists by the relativists. We shall conclude this chapter by revisiting the basic tenets of the proponents of cultural universalism ably summed up in the works of Paulin Hountondji and their counter arguments. The first summation according to Hountondji is that philosophy be written. Philosophy according to him is “critical reflection par excellence” and cannot develop fully unless it “writes its memoirs or keeps a diary”. This appears to be a direct attack on Odera Oruka’s philosophical sagacity or the oral reflection of Africans reputed for their wisdom. Such sagacity according to Hountondji is mythological discourse rather than philosophical discourse. Hountondji’s thesis excludes the transcriptions of ethno philosophers and literary scholars of African culture as having no place in philosophical discourses because oral tradition cannot qualify as philosophy.⁵¹

The cultural particularist, response to this is quite simple: for as long as Socrates continues to remain a prominent figure in western philosophy even when he left no writing of his own, Hountondji’s exclusion of philosophical sagacity from the annals of philosophy greatly missed the mark. Oruka has suggested that the activity of reflection upon certain themes of fundamental importance to human life – the existence of a Supreme Being (or God), the nature of time, of freedom, of death, of education (which are all subjects of philosophical sagacity) – has always been of concern to some selected number of people in all societies. Therefore one task of the philosophers that are academically trained becomes to identify these ‘sages’. It is in this regard that Afolayan remarked that:

after immersing ourselves in historical thinking, a point of Nietzschean modesty is in order. This is because Nietzsche holds that the “virtue of modesty” is allied to the necessity of historical philosophizing. This takes many dimensions. The first is that after the ontological determination of the self-identity of the Africans and African philosophy, African philosophers must go on to confront socio-existential dimension of the African predicament that bears directly on the problems of

African development. This is generally how African cultures can be modern.⁵²

The point Afolayan is making is that, Africans need to first establish themselves as Africans by taking into consideration those things that make them Africans. These things can only be gotten from the African culture that is why it is pertinent to look into our history as Africans before we can come up with solutions to some of the problems that confront us as Africans. This is why there is a call for Africans to recapture their past.

Without the works of sages, how would Africans have been able to recapture their cultural past with which to confront the challenges of modernity? After all, as earlier mentioned, Gbadegesin has argued that “Africans cannot be in a strategic position to solve current problems and plan for a better future unless they are fully informed about their cultural past. About where they are coming from” The truth about Africa’s cultural past lies in oral tradition, myths, proverbs – all of which form the subject matter of sage philosophy that Hountondji castigates.

The second point raised by Hountondji to counter the culturalists is that philosophical discourse or literature must be scientific. Related to the first criterion, Hountondji makes a distinction between what he calls “artistic literature” and “scientific literature”. Philosophy belongs to the scientific kind while mythology, folk tales, poetry (iconic traditions of a culture) belongs to the former. To counter this argument, Anyanwu writes that:

Facts have no meaning except within a system of reference. If one asks the American (western) experts to make explicit the system of reference with which they interpret African social facts, they merely reply that they are using “the approved method of science” in studying African culture. But whose science are they referring to?⁵³

Scientific methodology with which the universalist judge the works of particularists is not independent of western cultural assumptions about reality and the western cultural approach to that reality. Its underlying assumption is that reality is a material process in space and time and this assumption generally is not held by all cultures.

P. K. Ferayabend brought his voice to bear in answer to the universalist call to make scientific methodology the standard of any rational judgment when he questioned the basic assumptions of science:

Having finished his “reconstruction” of modern science, He (Lakatos) turns it against other fields as if it had already been established that modern science is superior to magic... and that it has no illusory results. However, there is not a shred of an argument of this kind. “Rational reconstructions” takes Basic scientific wisdom for granted, they do not show it is better than The basic wisdom of witches and warlocks.⁵⁴

Ferayabend’s quarrel with universalists like Hountondji lies in their justification that scientific method is superior to other methodologies without adequately investigating those other forms. Ferayabend is not prepared to accept the necessary superiority of scientific method over other methodologies. He rejects the idea that there ever can be decisive argument in favor of science over other forms of knowledge or methodologies. If this is the case, where is the justification of Hountondji’s call for scientificity in African philosophy? Anyanwu is of the opinion that the west has conspired to accept that only the facts that fits into the scheme of scientific thought shall be regarded as ‘true’ facts. Therefore, the scientific mind has to reject all other facts that cannot be subjected to scientific treatment, and it may call them “irrational”, “superstitious”, “religious”, or whatever. But the essential thing is the recognition that the mind discriminates between “relevant” and “irrelevant” facts, depending on its own interests, and the fact that nature makes no discrimination. So, even if the universalists are using the methods of science in their study of particular cultures like African, it does not follow that the structure of reality to be known approves of that method. Archie Bahm writes that

If comparative philosophy as a field of inquiry is open to the use of the scientific attitudes and methods, and if efforts to be objective and willingness to be tentative regarding ones conclusions are essential to those attitudes and methods, then ought not the comparative philosopher try to be objective and tentative? My answer is yes. But my critics point out that science and scientific ideals are themselves peculiarly western products. By urging the use of scientific methods I thereby do not rise above my culture but express its bias.⁵⁵

This shows, following Bahm, that even when the philosopher is asked to be objective and scientific in his approach to philosophy, these factors are also factors that are bound to another culture. These arguments to a large extent have depleted the initially inviting arguments of the universalists ably represented by Hountondji.

He also made the point that the texture of philosophy be purely dialectical because all learning is an event in language. African philosophy must develop in the context of a constant free discussion about the problem concerning the discipline. He concludes that in this light, African philosophy will develop beyond relativistic ethnic boundaries and become universal. This is not unlike Wiredu's remark that the universality of African philosophical reflections will arise out of concern with the particulars. But man cannot live without the attempt to interpret the meaning of existence, and the African man has his own ideas. After all:

the experience out of which come the insights in terms of which men try to organize their lives and their total world views is much more complex and subtle, if less precise or less capable of exact formulation. It embraces not just one set of institutionalized activities but a host of others as well – there are none we have pointed out which may not give rise to a philosophic response.⁵⁶

So, being dialectical is not the only thing that qualifies sages as philosophers. Insights are not the products of rational but religious experiences. This is why philosophic experience especially among ethno philosophers is intimately related to religious and social experiences, and why it is, sharing of attitude and habit, belief and feeling, observed facts and aspirations. And it is the poet that the universalist relegates who has successfully caught and expresses this complex living human experience, and not the analytic thinker or scientist. Universalist should look for African philosophy not in the systems and canons of western thought but in the language of the African people; not in linguistic analysis of the logical positivists but in the African language of intuitive poetry. With these words, Anyanwu fully surrenders to the tenets of cultural relativism as against the universalism of Hountodji, Appiah and Wiredu.

To conclude this chapter, it is pertinent to note that, we started by looking at the nature of the tension between the cultural universalists on the one hand and the particularists. We first examined the arguments put forward by universalists before proceeding to the counter arguments of the relativists. Consequently, the need for

understanding man as a product of culture as well as meaning maker cannot be downplayed, so philosophers on both sides of the divide cannot afford to dissipate their energy on methodology. The plurality of philosophies depends on the different ways of interpreting experience. Therefore, one cannot find the “one truth” in philosophy because philosophy does not possess it. In the same vein, it is quite unlikely that philosophers will all agree on one meaning of life and the world and neither will the relativist nor universalist agree to give up their positions as far as matters of culture and philosophy are concerned. There can never be one philosophical position to end all tensions as long as human beings remain what they are – the products of culture and meaning-makers. The argument of the cultural universalist makes is more tenable according to Bello because its criticism of relativism only helps to make the works of African philosophers truly philosophical, and it also unrealistic for Africans to pretend to the uniqueness of African culture. For Anyanwu, the argument of the relativist has greater merit for the obvious reason that each person uses his or her culture as reference point to judging other cultures. Whichever argument appeals to us, we should not forget the fact that humanity is all that matters. This is where Oyeshile’s ‘universal humanism’ and Wiredu’s and Appiah’s humanism come into relevance. In the words of Benhabib:

my anti – essentialism is simply introducing this moment of narrative articulation into the concept of culture and seeing how members of cultures identify themselves as members in creating narratives of belonging. These narratives of belonging, of history of memory, always have references to other narratives to other moments of identification. I’m interested in the interaction between the self and other, the ‘we’ and the ‘they’. And I think this is a universal aspect of all human communities. We are different from those over there, on the other side, in so far as we narratively identify ourselves with a group.⁵⁷

Benhabib tries to synthesize the different opinions into one that will remind us of our common humanity and so douse all tensions between the divergent schools of culture. Our shared humanity should serve as reference point for each group to begin to enter into dialogue with the cultural other because it is only in this light will the world become a relatively safe place for all the cultural foundations of the world to actualize their aspirations on an equal footing. In this chapter, we tried to remind ourselves of the

nature of the debate between universalists and relativists. Our submission here is that there is need for a melting point between proponents of both schools of culture if we must address the tension of identities facing humankind today. Consequently, if cultures must enter into dialogue, what factor or factors can make for the possibility of understanding each other? The next chapter will attempt to answer this question by arguing that epistemological factor of belief makes for cross cultural understanding possible.

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CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEF AND CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In this chapter, our task is to establish that human beliefs especially at the basic level can help to promote cross cultural understanding thereby reducing the cultural tensions that the world is grappling with today. We have made the point that the crux of the central argument of particularists rests in a two- fold assumption: the first is that of constructivism while the second is incommensurability. Their implication is that cross cultural communication is impossible. Constructivism portrays reality as being a creation of language and that the community determines what is essentially true; that truth is a product of social agreement which itself is a function of language. The thesis of constructionism is that language distorts, prevents or stands for reality. This implies that where language differs, as culture does, reality will also differ. Related to this is the idea that each language has embedded in it a conceptual scheme which distorts, prevents or stands for reality; and the result is that different conceptual schemes translate to plurality of incommensurable views. This as we have argued does not make cultures insular as there are lots of areas where human cultures overlap. In chapter two for instance, we made the point that because of the universality of emotions, the universality of religious experience, our common biological make up as well, it makes it easier for cultures to understand one another. This position was greatly rejected by Scholars like Huntington and some constructivists, their argument is that cultures are different because of the way each culture constructs reality. This is tied to the reason that, different conceptual schemes translate to plurality of incommensurable views.

The consequences of the above mentioned position is tied to the notion of objectivity. This means that there cannot be objective reality; hence, reality is culture determined. In line with the particularist thesis, how can we explain the possibility of the prospect of understanding and cooperation across cultures? Put differently, how could we account for the possibility of cross cultural dialogues if cultures are windowless? This brings us to the idea of cultural varietism which is at times confused with cultural relativism. Cultural varietism implies that there are different ways of responding to the same environment, different beliefs as to the primary constituents of the universe, differences in language to mention but a few. It is pertinent to mention that cultural varietism does not in any way imply multiple worlds which are unintelligible to those outside them. It does not say that our different ways of

organizing experiences are incommensurable. If this is the case, on what is the commensurability of different world views and schemes founded? Our thesis is that the basis for cross cultural understanding rests on the epistemological principle of belief. Put differently, the interconnectedness of belief is the foundation for cross cultural dialogues.

As already mentioned, we shall be arguing that the possibility for cross cultural understanding rests in the interconnectedness of beliefs. We shall start our analysis by examining the concept 'epistemology' since belief is an epistemological variable. We shall from there examine the ideas of language and meaning, this is necessary because without language and meaning, epistemology will be bare. The role of beliefs in cultural dialogues will be examined. We shall also see the applicability of Davidson's principle of triangulation to the process of belief formation.

DEFINING EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is as old as philosophy because it happens to be one of its traditional branches that deals with the foundation and extent of human knowledge. To this effect, traditionally, epistemology spells out condition or criteria by which knowledge claims are defined. These criteria are meant to define the scope of what can qualify as knowledge and also to distinguish between knowledge and pseudo-knowledge. More still, to have a proper understanding of this branch of philosophy, it is pertinent we look at its root meaning. Epistemology is coined from two Greek words 'episteme'-knowledge and 'logos' meaning 'the theory of' which means the theory of knowledge. Another term for epistemology therefore, is theory of knowledge. It deals with the problems of knowledge. It is seen as an integral aspect of philosophy because philosophy is concerned with knowledge; wisdom and general understanding of reality.¹

Epistemology centres around the fact of wanting to know, to understand and consequently to offer a well considered explanation of why things are the way they are. This may be why Rooney as quoted by Alcoffs writes that:

A noun-sense of epistemology is the one that has been prominent in what is often identified as traditional epistemology that subscribes largely to the goal of arriving at a specific fixed of knowledge: specific claims about the nature and limits of knowledge or about the structure of rational beliefs.²

Curiosity and wonder are the driving spirits behind philosophical speculations. This may be why metaphysics is an integral part of epistemology because while metaphysics is concerned with 'being', reality and existence, epistemology is concerned with how to know these existences and realities.

Consequently, epistemology is about human knowledge. It deals with what Ozumba calls human cognizers.³ Epistemology therefore is concerned with the scope, nature, extent, limits of human knowledge. It deals also with the certainty and reliableness of human knowledge. It was John Locke who in his theory of knowledge declared that his aim was to "enquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge".⁴ Knowledge in this regard, is the act of being aware of existence of a fact. The problem is that the objects of knowledge are unlimited while the human subject is limited and almost ill equipped for a reliable quest into matters of knowledge.⁵ The main thrust of epistemology or questions of epistemology are: what is knowledge? How can we attain knowledge? Can we have certain and indisputable knowledge? These questions may appear simple but a closer look at them tells you the amount of work to be done should one attempt to answer any of them. For instance, knowledge does not imply the awareness of a fact only, but the indisputable awareness of such a fact. The idea of certainty becomes an important qualification for determining what constitutes knowledge. Secondly, the basic fact that our human means of reaching knowledge are inadequate further creates a problem as to how an inadequate means can provide us with adequate information about the world. These problems have led to camps being pitched among philosophers. While some are of the view that the acquisition of knowledge is impossible, that all we can hope to have are opinions of how things are and what we think them to be, yet others argue that some form of knowledge is possible, and that we can indeed have certain knowledge about reality. This is why we have skeptics, dogmatists, and foundationalists in the enterprise of epistemology.

Having made that point, it is pertinent to draw our attention to the fact that we have not one but different epistemological model. Even though we shall be adopting western epistemological model in our work, there is still need to superficially x-ray the African model. African epistemology is Africa's own way of carrying out its own inquiry into the nature, scope, and limits of knowledge. African epistemology according to Ozumba is of "compound scope".⁶ By compound scope, Ozumba is referring to all that is knowable through whatever means that knowledge can be attained. It is limited to human ascertainable knowledge. Here knowledge refers to both

seen and unseen, empirical and rationalistic, psychological and spiritual realities. According to Ozumba, knowledge in the African sense consists of rehearsed and rationalized sense of ideas, which are seen as having met the optimal standard of rationality, acceptance, with evidential corroboration within the traditional community. For him, this makes African epistemology universalistic, particularistic and relative at the same time. It is universalistic because opinions are canvassed subject to rigorous analysis, after which it is either rejected or upheld. It is particularistic because every event elicits the same kind of adequacy test. The acceptance of an opinion does not confer on it the stamp of universal application in future similar cases. Each case is examined against the same opinion to ascertain its relevance or otherwise. However, any opinion that has stood the test of time becomes a maxim.⁷ More so, knowledge in the African sense is considered relative in view of the circumstance, place, time and strategy adopted. And it may also be relative because it is adjudged from the views of a selected few in a community that are said to be wise. Here we forget that a wise man may not always be wise in all matters. In African traditional societies, as soon as a man distinguishes himself in the field of knowledge, he is seen as a sage. He becomes one that is consulted like an oracle any time the need arises.

In African epistemology notions such as truth finds primacy due to their preoccupation with the idea of truth. This might have prompted philosophers like Wiredu to devote time to explicate the concept of truth in African epistemology but this time, in his native tongue Akan. The concept of truth in African epistemology is said to have many dimensions. The African is said to have both mundane and eternal or divine truth. Mundane truths are reached through consensus, that is, social practice as Rorty will call it. This kind of truth requires the verdict of oracles, visionary insights, ancestral transmissions, and the words of sages, meaning that morally upright elders play significant role in determining truth in African epistemology.

There are also truths that are beyond human knowledge giving rise to the idea of objective, relative, absolute and subjective truth in African epistemology. Individuals have the right to hold on to their subjective truths derived from their convictions about certain experiences. Objective truth is truth accepted after communal vetting that may span years. And absolute truth belongs to the almighty God. This kind of truth can be revealed to man through oracles, divinities or godly inspired elders. This gives African ethics an ethico-religious and socio-linguistic dimensions.⁸

Another concern of African epistemology is seen in the area of proverbs, myths, folkways, and language. In traditional African society, an elder that is gifted with proverbs is said to walk with the ancestors. You find this among the Yoruba, Igbo, Binis, Akan, Mende, etc peoples. According to the Igbo people, if you know proverbs, you know your ancestors and as such are more likely to speak the truth. The Yoruba will say that a native doctor that does not know proverbs has nothing to tell you. So for one to be truly knowledgeable the African way, such a person must know how to use and interpret proverbs.

Beyond proverbs are myths that traditional societies use to explain mysteries to their people. These myths are said to have or play crucial role in social order in traditional societies. We are also not forgetting the place of folklores and extrasensory knowledge in African epistemology. This may be why it is usually very easy for traditional Africans to tell when a child reincarnates a departed family relation or friend because of the knowledge displayed by such child about his previous life existence. In this vein, the African has been described as an epistemological optimist in that what cannot be known today may be known tomorrow.⁹ African epistemology is simple because it believes that as man confronts the universe and relates with divine forces, he will come to know all that is to be known about earthly existence. Since existence is a continuum, what cannot be known in this world, will be made known in the other. The essence of knowledge according to the African is simply to enable him live harmoniously with nature.

To this end, the thrust of epistemology right from inception i.e. from the ancient, through the medieval, modern, and contemporary times is to proffer explanation as to the status of our cognitive inquiries. Do they constitute knowledge or are they mere evocations of opinions. This is the central issue surrounding epistemology. But since epistemology is all about knowledge, it is pertinent to define knowledge because it helps us shed light to the nature of the problematic that epistemology deals with.

THE IDEA OF KNOWLEDGE

The term 'knowledge' is the noun form of the verb "to know". Knowledge then can be said to be the state of awareness of a given fact. Knowledge can also be said to be the fact of understanding information acquired through learning or experience. To know therefore can mean any of the following; to be aware of something; to be certain

about it; to learn and remember something; to have understanding or grasp of the object of knowledge; to be familiar with something; to be able to identify or recognize something; ability to distinguish between things; to have enough experience and training; to be intimate with something.¹⁰

From the above different senses of “to know” we see partly the cause of confusion about the term ‘knowledge’. To ‘know’ has implicit in it the requirement of certainty, assurance, indubitability. If we are mistaken about an object we claim to know, are we still justified in claiming to know that particular object? This is what gave rise to the traditional account of knowledge that permeates the entire the fabric of traditional epistemology.

In the *Thaetetus*, knowledge was defined as perception. The things we perceive constitute what we know, but Socrates retorted that we can be mistaken in our perception and would therefore not be justified in claiming to have knowledge about what we perceive. Socrates concludes that what we term knowledge should go beyond mere perception. This led to Plato saying that the objects of knowledge must be completely real and unchanging while the objects of opinion are not real and unstable. In the *Thaetetus*, Plato contended that knowledge should be certain, and for it to be certain it must be about the unchanging, immutable objects and not the mutable things which cannot be grasped due to the fact that they are always undergoing change. This implies that knowledge is not about the ‘fluxy’ things or objects but rather of those objects that are fixed. If this Platonian view is correct then we can never have knowledge of corporeal realities as they are always changing.

Furthermore if as Plato implies, the possibilities being mistaken is what removes knowledge from what a human may be able to possess, then , the entire program of knowing is brought down and the art of knowing reduced to mere opinions and make-beliefs. That nothing in the physical world is knowable is the bedrock of skepticism that holds that nothing can be known with certainty. This led Descartes into the search for one truth that can be known with all certainty and he concludes that consciousness is that one truth that cannot be doubted because to doubt our consciousness only goes to prove it. Aristotle rejected Platonian skepticism and being a realist presented an epistemological foundation erected on knowledge about physical form and matter that are perceptible and knowable through human sense organs.

Descartes on the other hand through his systematic methodic doubt founded knowledge on the *cogito*, that is, himself as a thinking being or substance. *Cogito ergo*

sum, means “I think therefore I exist.” This fact of his being as a conscious and thinking substance became the corner stone of the possibility of knowledge. It also ushered in a new epistemology, the epistemology of foundations for knowledge. He further identified distinctness and clarity as the criteria for knowledge. Real knowledge must start or begin from intuition and through the method of deduction reach other truths that must be known with certainty.

This Cartesian conception of knowledge provided the basis for the popular conception of knowledge which philosophers like Ayer and Chisolm readily represent. That is, knowledge as “justified true belief”. In line with this Ayer writes that:

I conclude then that the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is the case are first that one is said to know it to be true, secondly, that one be sure of it and thirdly that should have the right to be sure.¹¹

This notion of knowledge as “justified true belief” was rejected by Edmund Gettier in his seminal paper “Is justified true belief knowledge?” The article destroyed the justified true belief thesis by the counter examples provided by Gettier. These counter examples need not be reiterated here. Accordingly, traditional account of knowledge does not guarantee a sufficient condition for someone knowing that a given proposition is the case.

Thus far, we have seen that the task of epistemology is not an easy one viz a viz our definitions of knowledge. We have seen knowledge being defined as perception, as justified true belief, as *cogito*, as a matter of certainty or indubitability and as transcendental. All these form the subject matter of knowledge in particular and epistemology in general.

Having made that point, let us not miss the fact that the essence of this chapter is simply to erect the idea of cross cultural understanding on epistemological foundation. And if we are to succeed in our quest, we are first to examine the place of language in such understanding. This is pertinent given the primary role of language in epistemology. Put differently, language is one if not the basic determinant of culture and the problem of cross cultural understanding therefore is the problem of whether a person from culture ‘A’ can understand the forms of life and language of another from culture ‘B’ whether spoken or written. If such understanding takes place then it implies that the language of culture ‘A’ is meaningful to the cultural alien. In other words, we

can not talk of cross cultural understanding without communication. The possibility of communication depends on the extent to which people share common assumptions, experiences and purposes. The effectiveness of social people depends on the ability of individuals to see other's points of view. In other words, their perceptions depend on linguistic categories available to each perceiver. To this end, language is a meaning making process. The meaning making of language allows us to see the meaning maker-the individual. The individual as meaning maker continues to create new meanings through purposeful transactions with his immediate environment. Over time, a culture is entrenched making language and meaning the platform on which culture is erected.

Let us start by considering what language designates, put differently, what is language? Generally speaking, language is the vehicle of communication. It is that factor that gives humankind advantage over other species. Language is employed for the purposes of communicating information effecting interpersonal discussion, expressing feelings, stating or describing facts, arguing, defending or proving cases, asking questions, giving advice and command, and so on. For these and similar purposes, language is variously organized in form and content in different societies.

The two principal factors which determine the organization of language are syntax and semantics. The syntax of a language is the science of the grammatical structures of its sentences, and consists of certain pre-established rules and principles for the association of a given linguistic sign. The semantics of a language is the science of the meanings of its basic components which are usually words and sentences.

The two organizing factors of language, that is syntax and semantics, constitute the two major aspects from which language may be studied and are intimately related. Their relation can be seen in the way that the meanings which one can communicate in a language depend on the possible linguistic structures which its syntax permits. Conversely stated, the limits of the grammatical constructions of a language determine what meanings the linguistic signs can be used to convey. Perhaps, this relationship between syntax and semantics is a part of what Wittgenstein means when he says "the limit of my language is the limit of my world." This can be understood to mean that the given syntax of a language holds the key to what we know propositionally and can possibly speak about. We may conclude therefore that the extent to which human beings are successful in employing language optimally for its various purposes is a function of its syntax and semantics.

THE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

It was Chinua Achebe who once presented to humankind a picture of pre-linguistic human existence when he writes that:

A man strays into a rock shelter without knowing that another is there finishing a meal in the dark interior. The first hint our newcomer gets of this fact is a loose rock hurled at his head.¹²

He went further to explain that confrontation would have been avoided by the simple question: Who are you? Or what do you want? Achebe's exegesis underscores the importance of language to human relationship. This implies that without language, man would have become extinct because of the senseless wars against all that would have ensued.

What we have just explained, shows the importance of language or rather shows a fundamental function that language only can perform. According to William Alston, the primary social function of language is to facilitate communication.¹³ Communication simply put, is the transfer of ideas or thoughts from one person to another or from one group of persons to another group of persons. Communication can also be the interplay of words in the form of thoughts within an individual. This occurs when a person is said to be ruminating. From our analysis, we can infer that communication can occur at different levels; at the intra-personal level, at the interpersonal level, and even at the supra-interpersonal level (as found in international relations). The notion of communication leads us back to the idea of language.

In the view of the fact that language serves as the springboard for the erection of the human society, language also plays an important role in its sustenance and maintenance. The first important point that would be raised in line with this conception is that language serves as an integral part of a symbolic order through which human beings acquire their identities.¹⁴ This means that it is language that differentiates humans from brutes. The idea that language enhances our identities produces this sense of solidarity and empathy for humankind as members of the same species.

In respect of the role language plays in the life of man in relation to himself (i.e. man relating with others of his kind), language serves as a vehicle for identification. This is true in the sense that language spoken among a group of people gives that group a sense of belonging. That is why language is seen as a system of words used by a

particular society or group with shared history or set of traditions. We can say that the sense of belonging created by language makes it possible for a group of people to exist for a long period of time even in the face of danger.

The just stated point leads us to another role of language which is the idea that language is an effective instrument for cultural continuity.¹⁵ Not only does language help to reflect culture, it also helps to pass cultural traditions from one generation to another. Our beliefs, food, eating habits, dressing, morality etc, are transferred to the next generation through the medium of language.

Another most interesting role of language is that language reflects social progress; as it develops with society. Language is a kind of barometer of social development; language reflects the social life of its speakers as faithfully as a mirror. As a result, the use of well-developed language reflects all the scientific, technological and cultural achievements of humanity. This is why any time a scientific discovery is made or a technological invention is attained, they constitute new realities; since language is used to capture reality it then becomes imperative that new linguistic expressions be formulated or old ones restructured in order to express these new realities. Be that as it may, language on its own will not be able to perform these roles if not for the fact that words have meaning. This takes us to the idea of meaning.

THE QUESTION ABOUT MEANING

There will be no difference between language and the noise, sounds, and grunts made by other animals if not for the fact that human language must be meaningful else communication and understanding cannot occur. This brings us to the idea of meaning. Among the typical questions which philosophers of language interest themselves with are questions about meanings. Are there meanings and if there are, what kind of entities are they? Is meaning anything at all? Is it the same as what an expression refers to? Or is it a psychological entity such as an idea, an image or a concept in the mind? If not, do meanings exist on their own independent of the mind, facts about the world and the linguistic signs which form the vehicle for their expression? These questions have evoked disagreement among philosophers, including Wittgenstein and Renford Bambrough who thought that rather than inquire after the ontological status of meanings, i.e. meanings as substantive entities, we only have to look and see that words acquire meaning in the manner they are used by the speakers of a language in different

circumstances. For these philosophers, the question should be: How do words acquire meaning through use?

This has been the main issue philosophers of language try to address for a long time. For instance, questions like what is it for a linguistic expression to be meaningful? Are there specifiable criteria for determining the meaningfulness or otherwise of words and statements? What is it for a sign to mean such and such? What is it for two expressions to have the same meaning? How does one learn or acquire a language? Is it conventional and if so, how? It is answers to questions of these kind will make us consider some theories of meaning.

As earlier mentioned, words are linguistic signs with which we convey meanings. One of the philosopher's problems therefore is to inquire about the nature of word meanings. Another question about meaning is one that borders on the epistemological quest for how we know the meanings of words by sense perception or by intuition? In response to the question 'what are meanings?' or what is the nature of meaning, different philosophers have proposed different theories. There are for examples, the denotation or referential theory, the realist or Platonic theory, the image ideational or psychological theory, and the use theory of meaning. Let us at this juncture shed light on a few of them.

Denotation theory of meaning: According to this theory, a word, name, or linguistic expression does not only have meaning, its meaning is explained in terms of what is named, denoted or referred to by the word. In other words, the denotation theory simply says that the meaning of a word is the physical object which the word stands for in reality. A word is meaningful if and only if there is a physical object which the word stands for. This theory of meaning is traditionally referred to as 'denotation theory' or 'reference theory' of meaning. Its proponents include Bertrand Russell and B. F. Strawson. This theory of meaning has its shortcoming. For instance, it is possible for two different expressions to have different meanings but the same referent. For instance, Gilbert Ryle says, "I can use the phrases 'the morning star' and 'the evening star', as different ways of referring to Venus. But it is quite clear that the two phrases are different in meaning".¹⁶

The Mentalistic theory: This theory, of which there are many versions holds that an expression is meaningful if and only if it is associated in some manner, with a certain mental item – an image, say or a thought, or an idea. Correspondingly, the theory holds

that two expressions are synonymous if and only if they are associated with the same mental object.

The Behaviourist theory: This theory also has different versions. It holds that an expression is meaningful if and only if utterances of it produce certain behavioural response to certain stimuli. Two expressions will be synonymous, correspondingly, if and only if utterances of them produce the same responses and or are produced in response to the same stimuli. According to this view, meaning is elicited in terms of corresponding behavior connected with the utterances or expressions.

The Use theory: This theory holds that an expression is meaningful if and only if people can use it for certain purpose, and in certain ways. Two expressions, correspondingly, will be synonymous if and only they can be used in the same way. On this view, examining meaning is essentially a matter of examining the role that expressions have in human activities.¹⁷

Thus far, we will say that language helps human organize, classify formulate and symbolize perceptions and cognition, that in turn help them organize institution that are embodiment of culture. This would not have been possible if language had no meaning. Perception and conceptualization stand in constant interaction with language that is why even though we all perceive the same reality, our interpretation of that reality may differ from culture to culture. This being the case, is it possible for cultures to understand each other given their different conceptualization of reality made possible by their different languages? It is answer to this question that epistemology will try to proffer.

Cross cultural understanding can be established on the basis of interconnectedness of beliefs as members of the human family. Irrespective of cultural differences, our beliefs are interconnected with each other, and it is this interconnected of beliefs that make for the possibility of cross cultural understanding. Every sociological context as in Dilthey, linguistic context as in Schleirmacher, and biological context as in Wiredu rests on beliefs. This is the one epistemological factor that these theories fail to address. If this were not so, that is, if human beliefs did not form a web or interconnect, the world would have been very chaotic to live in. the relative order experienced in the world can be attributed to the interconnectedness of human beliefs.

When we talk of beliefs what do we mean? By beliefs we are referring to the primary cognitive state representing the world as being in a certain way, regulating our behavior and guiding us around the world.¹⁸ Can we say that any cognitive state qualify

as belief? This is not the case because for a cognitive state to be termed belief, it must be distinguished from other cognitive states by possessing certain epistemic traits. These traits include: (1) commitment to truth (2) sensitivity to evidence – for a belief to be termed reasonable or rational, or for it to be properly designated an epistemic belief, it must possess an adequate ground for its justification, this is where the idea of perceptual beliefs come into play – i.e. beliefs that are governed by evidential norms in the sense that a rational perceptual belief is one that is supported by sensory experience. This implies that the idea of basic belief that provide evidence for the other beliefs are founded on experience. (3) Epistemic beliefs also have the feature of eliciting certain behavioural patterns from those that hold these beliefs. Let us be quick to point out here that these conditions are not without there shortcoming.

THE GETTIER PROBLEM

Edmund Gettier in a seminal essay, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” greatly undermined the three stated criteria for identifying epistemological beliefs. To buttress his argument, he gave some counter examples letting us into the fact that we may have justified beliefs and yet not have knowledge. His counter examples set to prove that the traditional account of knowledge does not state a sufficient condition for someone knowing a given proposition.

In the first counter example, Gettier used two applicants – Smith and Jones – to buttress his point that it is possible to believe a proposition that is true and at the same time justified yet not have knowledge. In this example, Smith draws an inference from conjunctive proposition and believes the proposition based on what he is told by the president of the company about who was going to get the job they applied for. For Gettier, eventhough the three conditions or criteria for knowledge I have highlighted above have been met, the man Smith cannot be said to know the proposition:

“the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket”.¹⁹

This has been the nature of the problem necessitated by using the three conditions above to justify epistemological beliefs. Be that as it may, life must go on and progress must be made. William Rozeboom for instance argues that knowledge is an ideal which is never fully represented by the world of experience. This being the case, the issue of the definition of knowledge based on these three criteria or more should not be something epistemologists should concern themselves with if there must be human progress. For Rozeboom therefore “lying dark and unfathomed before us, we stand to

profit from continued epistemological preoccupation with the nature of 'knowledge' to just about the same extent as would psychology from a return to study of the soul."²⁰ He is asking epistemologists to move beyond questions of knowledge because it appears to be open-ended. We may also ask that if Gettier counters the traditional account of knowledge as justified true belief, what alternative did he provide? Against this background, we will proceed with the criteria as spelt out by Vahid.

Consequently, before we try to buttress how these three basic features of epistemic beliefs like truth, evidence and behavioural patterns can establish the interconnectedness of human beliefs, it is pertinent to consider the classes of beliefs.

BASIC AND NON- BASIC BELIEFS

Beliefs are distinguished from other cognitive states by the fact that they are sensitive to evidence. Evidence, however, can be either doxastic or experiential. Our concern in this research is tied to the latter type of evidence that is, experiential beliefs. Eventhough there has been questions as to the epistemic liason between sensory experience (perception) and belief. This has led to a diachotomy between foundationalists and coherentists theories of the structure of our justified beliefs. According to the coherentist theory, for a belief to be true, it has to fit neatly into a given system of beliefs or rather it should be explained within the given system that generated it. While for the foundationalist, a belief is true only if it is traceable to an object causing stimulus that serves as the basis for that belief.

Drawing from our theoretical framework, we intend to limit our study to the foundationalist theory as that which can serve as a viable theory of justification for beliefs irrespective of ones cultural standpoint. In this sense, we will say that beliefs are always about something especially the perceptual beliefs, that is, there must be an object that invokes certain dispositional attitude towards it. Since we will later be making the point that common belief justifiers serve as basis for our beliefs, let us turn attention to classes or types of beliefs.

Beliefs to say the least are of two major kinds, namely; primary (basic) beliefs and secondary (none basic) beliefs. By primary beliefs we are referring to the beliefs states that are caused by common natural objects in the world like trees, mountains, rain, and so on. At this level of belief, there is usually no much disagreement because our beliefs are justified by some of these common denominators observed in nature. For instance, a Hausa man and a Spaniard may not have much to disagree about concerning

the phenomenon of rain at the basic level. The Hausa man knows he will be wet if he goes out in the rain. The Spaniard has the same belief about being wet in the rain. At this point, both the Hausa man and the Spaniard's belief concerning rain is tied to and justified by a common object – rain. At this point there is usually no disagreement. The question that readily comes to mind is: if our perceptual beliefs are justified by common objects, why are there disagreements that at times degenerate into conflicts among cultures? This question takes us to the second class of beliefs known as the non basic or secondary beliefs. At this level of belief, diverse interpretation set in. For instance, even though the Hausa man and Spaniard both have the same basic belief about being wet if one goes out in the rain, yet the Hausa man may hold another belief still about rain that if he does go out while it is raining, his illness might be cured. This position or belief may not be in tune with the Spaniard's. At this point, disagreement sets in. It is at this level of non basic beliefs that all forms of interpretations are invoked that might lead to conflict.

Another example about basic and non basic beliefs is the one generated by the idea of speaking in tongues in Christianity. At the basic level almost all Christian denominations believe in the idea of speaking in tongues because it has its foundation in the Bible as recorded in the book of Acts. Yet more controversy seems to be generated by this same belief among Christians. The controversy arises from the interpretation of the basic belief. (It is important to note that at the level of interpretation, basic beliefs lose their foundational status making them non basic). While some denominations like Jehovah's Witnesses hold that the days of speaking in tongues are over, that it was necessary during the times of the Apostles for the fulfillment of the scriptures, some believe that its relevance in prayers in contemporary times cannot be down played (Pentecostals). For Roman Catholics and Anglicans, speaking in tongues is quite okay in as much as the language is a known language spoken by a cultural group currently inhabiting a part of the earth. It is pertinent to ask: Why are denominations having disagreement when they all agree that this practice is Biblical? The reason is because at the interpretative level or level of application, the basic has become non basic. This shows that conflict is mostly generated by secondary beliefs and not the basic ones as our analysis has just portrayed.

Consequently, in a technical sense, basic beliefs are those beliefs that acquire their justified status without standing in any relevant relation to other beliefs, whereas, non basic beliefs or secondary beliefs are arrived at by reasoning (broadly construed

from basic beliefs).²¹ Reasoning can only confer justification if the beliefs from which we have reasoned are themselves justified. So there has to be a set of basic beliefs whose justification obtains independently of other beliefs – these beliefs are what we refer to as basic or primary beliefs. And the basis for cross cultural understanding rests on the basic and not the non basic beliefs.

BASIC BELIEFS AS BASIS FOR CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

As earlier mention, belief is the paradigm propositional attitudes that regulate our actions and guide us around the world. Beliefs represent the world as being in a certain way, and it is said to be true if its representation matches its content, consequently to believe a thing is to represent it as true. This means what distinguishes beliefs from other cognitive states like assumption, supposition, and imagination is its commitment to truth. Once the truth of a belief has been established, it carries some dispositive attitude towards that particular belief. The question now is how is truth conferred on a belief? Does it vary from culture to culture or do all cultures come to the tribunal of common experience to confer truth on a belief? Truth is conferred on a belief if that belief matches or represents what generates it and this is the same in all cultures. That is to say that for a belief to properly qualify as being epistemic, it must be based on evidence. The evidence in turn serves as the justifier for that belief state. This also means beliefs must have referents.

Consider for example, a class of beliefs about the spatial world whose members have the content that a particular mind-independent thing is determinately thus and so. Consider now how a Hausa man trying to explain certain a priori facts to someone from a different culture by means of descriptive analysis that $4 + 4 = 8$ will be able to achieve his aim especially where language is different and there is nothing to which his analysis refers. No amount of analysis can help him achieve his aim especially when there is no referent. But consider another scenario where his explanation involves bringing together four stones and another four stones, in this case, understanding is made easier since his analysis will involve a form of demonstration – referents. This implies that where the Hausa man's analysis is not purely descriptive because it involves some form of demonstrative components, the cultural other stands a chance of understanding him because of the objects in question that serve as referent. The point here is that, beliefs cannot be about individual things merely by containing descriptions, but must ultimately inherit the individual components of their contents from perceptual

demonstratives, that is, from experience having intentional content of that “thing is thus”²² . If our belief justifiers all have referents and our referents are those things or objects in nature like rivers, lakes, ponds, beaches, trees, mountains, animals, etc, our beliefs about them cannot be absolutely incommensurate. There must be areas where my belief as a Hausa man must interconnect with the belief of a Spaniard for the simple reason that they share a common referent. For instance, the Hausa man knows and believes that if he goes out in the rain he will come back wet. The Spaniard knows also that he will come in wet if he goes out in the rain. How did they come to have the same belief about the effect of rain? It is because both beliefs are ensconced in the same referent – rain. Put differently, they both have the same conclusion about their beliefs because they both have the same referent. To this end, objects that give evidence to our beliefs at the same time serve as their justifiers. So the interconnectedness of human beliefs can be justified on the basis of common justifiers for the contents of these beliefs.

In our previous chapter we made the point that religion can serve as a basis for understanding one another across cultures. While this is so, it can also be argued that religion can only be a vehicle of understanding if perceived from the basic level. For instance, Islam and Christianity are religions that profess belief in the existence of one God. Belief in one God remains the basic thing that binds these religions. At the secondary level of belief, there are usually serious tensions arising from the interpretation of the basic belief. For instance, while Islam acknowledges that Jesus Christ is a Prophet, Christians argue vehemently in support of Christ divinity as the Son of God. Herein then lies the reason for all the tensions generated by these religions especially in Nigeria that has led to the loss of millions of lives and property. The point to note here is that at the basic level, there is usually agreement because beliefs of the opposing cultures are justified by a common reality. But as soon as we leave the realm of the foundational belief, we are bound to encounter some level of disagreement.

Accordingly, we will say that religious experiences, as intentional states whose object is reality, give rise to “demonstrative” beliefs with the same or at least overlapping content. From our analogy, Islam and Christianity share the same reality with the belief it gives rise to. This may be what Vahid echoes when he writes that “there is a conceptual link between the basis of a belief and its content (object).”²³

DAVIDSON'S PRINCIPLE OF TRIANGULATION

Having made that point, we shall at this juncture invoke Davidsonian idea of triangulation to strengthen our argument on how beliefs overlap irrespective of cultural differences. Before we proceed to explain how this is done, we may remind ourselves of some of the pertinent points in Davidson's project of radical interpretation where an interpreter seeks to understand the language of an alien community without any antecedent knowledge of their thought or what their words mean. The assumptions involved in Davidsonian project provide an appropriate epistemic setting whereby the question of basing relation can be pursued without incurring the charge of circularity.

The principle of triangulation represents a triangular structure that requires interaction between at least two individuals (cultures) as well as interaction between each individual (culture) and a set of common objects in the world. The idea of triangulation is a way of saying why it is that communication is essential to the concept of an objective world; that is, communication and objectivity go together. In any case, to admit the objectivity of the world is to admit intercultural communication. For one to communicate, one must relate to an objective reality from which the meaningfulness of our linguistic expressions are derived.

More so, the idea of triangulation is likened to having access to another person's beliefs and as soon as this is attained, the issue of failure of translation especially from its extreme form is put to rest. It is in line with this that Davidson makes a case for the principle of charity. This (charity) is knowing and accepting whatever a person believes to be the case irrespective of our cultural standpoints. He writes that "charity is forced on us, whether we like it or not if we want to understand others we must count them right in most matters."²⁴ In other words, for Davidson, a different culture involves tolerance if we must get a near perfect interpretation. Consequently, both the principle of triangulation and that of rational accommodation (charity) point to the fact there is commonality in the midst of difference.

Furthermore, for Davidson, belief ascription is constrained by the principle of charity. As emphasized, the process of charitable belief ascription is characterized by the aim of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity in the speaker's belief system, which is actually how epistemic justification is generally characterized, namely, in terms of the aim of the maximization of truth and minimization of falsity in an agent's body of beliefs.²⁵ Justification is widely understood as an evaluative concept whose attachment to a belief makes the belief worth having from the epistemic point of view –

which as just noted is the goal of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity in a large body of beliefs.

According to Davidson's project, interpretation rests on reflections on what assumptions the interpreter has to make so that he could bring into harmony the concepts of the theory of interpretation with the speaker's behavioural evidence. Adopting the radical interpreter's stance, thus, requires that the meaning of an utterance and the object of a thought depend on how a speaker is embedded in her environment. To identify the meaning of the speaker's utterance, Davidson, as we saw, introduced the principle of charity. The problem is that charity requires only that a speaker's belief about her environment be true. More is needed to ensure that these beliefs are actually correlated with the conditions that prompt them so that statements of such conditions can be taken to express the content of her beliefs. This means that, a speaker, what her thoughts are about will depend on what the pattern of their typical causes is.

In the case of a single responder, however, what she is responding to is indeterminate. If we take response to be just a causal relation, the production of an effect on an agent by a cause in her environment, then an agent responding to the environment can be regarded as responding to everything along the chain of stimulation. In order to generate a determinate interpretation, therefore, there must be some objective way to select one of the links as the correct one. So there must be an objective way of narrowing down the choice of the relevant causes of the speaker's thought. What objective criterion can tell us what the thought is about? The suggestion Davidson makes here is 'triangulation' that is, the idea that what the speaker's thoughts are about makes sense only against the background of a pattern of interaction with other speakers. So we have the interpreter and the speaker triangulating upon mutually salient stimulus. Otherwise the stimulus is arbitrary and nothing ensures that any one's thoughts are about the external world as opposed to say, internal neural firings.

For instance, an observer's thought (Hausa man) about trees are typically caused by trees. However, to determine the typical cause, we need to look at a number of situations in which tree-thought thoughts are caused and see which elements these situations share. The idea is to locate the stimulus typically causing the tree thoughts. Davidson's proposal is a form of triangulation where one line goes from the first observer (Hausa man) in the direction of the tree, and another line from the second (Spaniard) in the direction of the tree, and the third line goes between the two

observers. Where the lines from the Hausa man and the Spaniard to the tree converge, there the stimulus is located. Davidson writes:

Until the triangle is completed connecting two creatures, and each creature with common features of the world, there can be no answer to the question whether a creature is discriminating between stimuli at the sensory surfaces or somewhere further out, or further in. Without this sharing of reactions to common stimuli, thought and speech would have no particular content – that is no content at all.²⁶

The point Davidson is making here is that our beliefs form a web because of their convergence on stimulus causing objects. For any form of understanding to take place, the evidence for perceptual beliefs must triangulate at some point. The point at which these perceptual beliefs triangulate are usually on objects out there in the world that are common to all cultures – stones, trees, lakes, etc, these really are said to be responsible for our beliefs about them and the world. In the face of this convergence, how can we completely fail to understand each other? Consequently, because of content and shared objects of stimulus, beliefs are interconnected and the interconnectedness of beliefs makes for the possibility of cross cultural understanding.

A CRITIQUE OF DAVIDSON'S PRINCIPLE OF TRIANGULATION

There is no principle in philosophy that is fire-proof and Davidson's principle of triangulation is not an exception. Some responses have been made concerning Davidson's views. Anis Bawarshi for instance argues that it is nearly impossible to set aside our conceptual schemes in the spirit of adhering to Davidson's theory of triangulation because we cannot help but rely on already established conventions even as we encounter new realities. Bawarshi seems to be alluding to the point that these conventions are innate and have nothing to do with objective reality.²⁷

More still, Halvor Nordby in his "Davidson on Social Externalism" attacks the principle of triangulation when he asserted that it is possible to have the same belief with a subject of radical interpretation based on the same objective evidence and yet either the radical interpreter or subject, or even both can have their beliefs predicated in false premise.²⁸ He buttressed his point with the following example:

If Jones and Smith believe that Oscar has anthritis based on the evidence in front of them, then we can assign truth-value to their beliefs. But if Jones thinks that anthritis is caused by calcium deposits and Smith knows better about anthritis than Jones, it becomes the case that both of them have the same beliefs, but one (Jones' case) is based on a false premise.

Irrespective of the appeal of the above argument, it is important not to be distracted by not losing focus of the fact that whether one arrives at a propositional attitude based on a false premise has no direct bearing to the evidence on ground and the conclusion reached. The bottom line remains that Oscar has anthritis. Davidson's argument is that irrespective of cultural standpoints, in as much as there is an objective reality that justifies beliefs, there will always be a meeting point.

From our exegesis so far, a Hausa man can understand a Spaniard or an English man to the extent to which their perceptual beliefs converge. This may be why culture may be insignificant while reacting in the face of danger. Let us for the sake of argument use thunder as an instance. Irrespective of cultural differences, nearly all known cultures tend to respond in the same way in the face of thunder (*aradu in Hausa*). The sense of apprehension that tend to grip the English man and Hausa man when lightening strikes in anticipation of thunder points to the fact that their beliefs concerning the phenomenon of thunder overlap at the basic level. Although at the secondary level, they may have different interpretation to this phenomenon like thunder being a result of the collision of electrically charged particles in the sky for the English man, or being the result of activities of certain divinities for the Hausa man, the truth remains that in spite their cultural standpoint, something remains that cut across both beliefs in the phenomenon – hence their similar reaction in sensing it. That thing that prompts their belief is embedded in their sharing a common belief justifier. This implies that the overlap of beliefs can indeed serve as basis for understanding the other.

As stated earlier, epistemic beliefs are distinguished from other cognitive states because of the epistemic features like truth, evidence, and ability to elicit some form of behavior on those that hold these beliefs. So far, we have been able to argue that one of the factors that make a belief true is its ability to refer to something, i.e., for a belief to be true, it must have a referent or correspond to reality, cohere within a system of other beliefs or put to test to be sure action matches words. This is not true for Western epistemology only but can also be applied to Hausa conception of truth (*gaskiya*). The idea of *gaskiya* as expressed in Hausa shows that once a statement deviates from

what is accepted as paradigm case, it immediately ceases to be the truth but falsehood. This implies truth corresponding to reality or what is the case. But if what is the case always requires evidence of that which is objectified, then the English man and the Hausa man will always present the same evidence as basis for their beliefs in their respective cultures, where this is the case, the idea of not understanding each other at all cannot be said to be plausible. The evidence cultures proffer for their respective beliefs have a common referent – nature. Wittgenstein underscores this point as quoted by Bell:

What is spiritual in all human beings lies in the connectedness of such phenomena as death, birth, and sexual life, and in our way of acting that express the depth of joys, sufferings, hopes, desires associated with these phenomena. These are what “we really know” they play a part in our philosophies and what we come to find interesting²⁹

According to Wittgenstein, the evidence for interconnectedness or overlap of beliefs is centred around the fact that human experiences are similar to all cultures and in our discussions as members of the human family they come into play in belief formation, for this reason the possibility of not understanding the other at all is impossible given the common denominator evoked by all cultures as forming the basis for their beliefs.

Against this background, our argument is that nature is one and objective and at the same time, not an exclusive property of one culture. Because nature is objective, the idea of cultural incommensurability may no longer be tenable. Since nature is one, it follows that members of divergent cultures justify their beliefs on the same objective nature. This being the case, their must remain elements stemming from nature that can be identified in all cultures, the presence of these elements explicated in constitutive activities makes the theory of web of beliefs plausible.

The third feature that a belief must meet for it to be designated epistemic is that it must be able to elicit some form of behavior on those holding that belief. This idea leads us to human sensuous activity. The thrust of this feature is that because our beliefs interconnect, we are able to carry out certain common human practices or activities irrespective of cultural standpoint. These common human practices are embedded in labour. Labour has the property of being intelligible and can be

understood across cultures even when no word is uttered. This would not have been possible if beliefs do not form a web. So cross cultural understanding is founded on web of beliefs that find outlet in labour.

Cross cultural understanding comes from labour that is not restricted or limited to a group of people, culture, race, or religion but rather labour cuts across the whole human race and serves as vehicle for conveying meaning even when words are scarce. According to Doyal and Harris, “the view that structures of meaning are created on the foundation of human labour is not one that most would.... dispute”.³⁰ Two culturally different aliens can still make sense of each other even when neither understands the language of the other because of the role of ‘human constitutive activities.’ By constitutive activities we are referring to those activities that every human being must indulge in irrespective of his or her cultural leanings. Because these activities are not culture bound, a Hausa man and a Briton will already have theories about them in their respective languages about the nature of these activities because it will be recognized that any form of human life will require them in some way or other for physical survival. For example, whatever their cultural background, the Hausa man and the Briton will share a certain measure of understanding of the distinctively human and social ways of doing a variety of different sorts of things (e.g eating, sleeping, agricultural production, reproducing, construction, sheltering, healing, playing, etc), none of these can be done in any old way. They are constrained by the laws of nature, as they affect, for instance, human biology and health, the communication of certain types of emotion, processes of agriculture and technological production, and the possibility of representing, communicating and storing information.³¹

The question that readily comes to mind is: what is or is not a constitutive activity and how can one tell whether the Hausa man identifies and understands what the Spaniard is engaged in? For Doyal and Harris, the ability of the Hausa man correctly joining the Spaniard in it – correctly perceiving what does and does not constitute success without necessarily saying anything. More still, imagine someone confronted with the construction of a new hut in a strange culture. Many things will already be known about such construction (e.g. how to hold a support while a roof member is being positioned). Without a word, it will be possible in principle to join in and help, thereby communicating that something is understood of what is going on and by implication, the cultural other uses shelter too. It is this prior intelligibility which puts the translator in a position to try and translate some alien language associated with

constitutive building activity – for example. Their words for ‘roof’, ‘support’, ‘wall’, for materials and actions involved and for the identification of the grammatical character of their utterances. The same will go for other activities less narrowly economic, which the Hausa man might share with the Spaniard: respect for the dead, making music, cooking food etc.³²

The point the practical foundation theory is making here is that we are able to join in the activities of other cultures because of the fact that our beliefs are interconnected to the extent to which we understand that activity. If the Hausa man joins correctly in the constructive activity of the Spaniard, he is letting the Spaniard know that he has beliefs relating to the use of shelter in his culture and at the same time affirming the Spaniard’s belief in the need for shelter also. Here is the connection between the belief of the Hausa man regarding shelter connecting with that of the Spaniard in the need for shelter hence his ability to comfortably join in this activity. Daniel Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe* buttressed this analogy of web of beliefs between Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday. Through constitutive activities Crusoe was made to believe that his belief as a European are not completely different from that of the savage hence, the easy and friendly relationship that ensued between them even where neither understood each other’s language.

Consequently, it is because of the notion of shared belief that is why it is possible for countries to rise in condemnation of Nazism during the Second World war. The fact that nations came together to defeat Hitler underscores the point that irrespective of cultural differences, beliefs overlap – in this case it is because of the corporate understanding in diverse belief systems of the value of human lives and the recognition of evil inherent in all human beliefs that led to the great apathy against Hitler. More so, if beliefs do not overlap, it would not have been possible for the United Nations Organization to be established with its different charters especially the charter on human rights for all members of the human family. Further more, the idea of FIFA, International Olympic Committee, World Tennis Federation etc, would never have come into existence. All these are made possible because of the fact that all human beliefs converge at a point. The point at which they converge confers epistemic characteristics like truth, evidence and actions that follow from holding these beliefs.

To conclude our analysis, for beliefs to be true, they require evidence, this implies that our beliefs are susceptible to empirical contingencies that is to say, our beliefs are dependent for their justification on experience and human experiences

overlap. These overlap in human experiences, their idea of truth, and the common justifiers of all human beliefs that serve as evidence, make for the possibility of cross cultural understanding. Put differently, our beliefs as Yoruba, Efik, Igbo, Spaniard, Chinese, Arab, etc, are justified on the basis of certain environmental factors that give rise to them and these environmental factors abound in all human cultures – hence the ideas of web of beliefs and human constitutive activities. It is on this note we surmise that epistemology is a basis for cross cultural understanding.

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CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE HUMANISM

The world is becoming smaller and smaller by the day with interactions at various levels by peoples of different creeds, colour, and cultures. In a word, we are in an era of cultural varietism. What this means is that different cultural traditions try to express themselves on world stage for them to be seen and heard. From the face value, it appears there are interactions going on among these world cultures, but a closer look brings to light the inherent tensions tied to the notion of identity. While for some scholars, the seeming tension in today's globalized world can only be tied to the definition of identity, our argument has been that it is not identity per se that is the cause of these tensions but the dearth of understanding among persons and cultural groups. We have argued that the epistemological principle of belief can help us understand each other. Our objective in this chapter therefore, is to examine the possible ways the principle of cross cultural understanding can help different cultural groups and traditions live together in a globalized world. For scholars like Huntington, it is not possible to attain such a world because we are different. We want to prove that it is possible for different cultural traditions to live together. The aim of this chapter therefore, is to ascertain means of attaining a relatively peaceful global order. We shall begin this chapter with a general discussion on global humanism before we will eventually bring up theories that will help strengthen our argument. The theories we shall be employing will include the theory of communalism, African Christian Humanistic theory and existentialists' humanism.

In the previous chapter we examined the basis for cross cultural intelligibility which we anchored on the epistemological factor of belief. If there is indeed intercultural understanding, why do we continue to experience all sorts of tension among human groups? Although numerous human cultures have developed rich storehouses of ethical, philosophical, spiritual, and ecological wisdom, these are in danger of being buried and lost occasioned by the inability of cultural traditions to live peaceably with one another for the obvious reason of each seeing itself as superior to the other. We witness this in the seeming tension between states and people where each group looks at the other with suspicion. A case in point is the on going unrest in the Middle East tagged 'The Arab Awakening'. Every government experiencing one form of protest or the other is immediately suspicious of external influence and most times this influence is termed Western. This lack of trust is attributed to the misunderstanding

and lack of trust between the different cultures on the globe. Immediate to us is the on-going massacre in the northern part of the country for the simple reason that we are different in language, culture, and religion. This shows how far human kind can go to annihilate any perceived danger tied to the notion of identity. The major issue in America and other Western states is the notion of security especially from Islamic fundamentalists. In the African continent, in countries like Nigeria, Sudan, Rwanda etc, we have witnessed ethnic tensions that in some cases have metamorphosed into full blown wars. Some states in Nigeria are termed high risk zones because there is always one form of conflict or the other going on, a case in point is Plateau State and of recent Bornu state. Either we are witnessing ethnic conflict or religious conflict week in week out. All these are tied to the notion of identity.

In the face of this constant fear of the other, it becomes pertinent to examine ways humankind can enjoy relative peace. To attain this, there is need for us to have a sense of humanism that will be all embracing and inclusive in the sense that it will neither discriminate nor exclude any person or group on the basis of gender, tribe, religion, race, culture or tradition. What kind of humanism should we strive for given the fact that we have civic humanism, liberal humanism, protestant humanism, romantic humanism, positivistic humanism, Nazi humanism, etc. which all have there respective bias based on the interest they represent?¹ The answer lies in inclusive humanism.

Before we shed light on the idea of inclusive humanism, it is pertinent to first consider the notion 'humanism'. Put differently, this work is concerned with the tension of identities currently experienced and how that tension can be doused. We made allusion to the fact that our common humanity is the basis for which we can begin to understand certain things common to all humankind that can in turn be understood across cultures. If this is the case, human languages are capable of being understood by people from other cultures due to the principle of shared meanings that is founded on epistemology. The embodiment of human languages is simply objective reality which each language tries to picture. More so, the idea of shared meaning is not only provided by the medium of speaking a language as language itself goes beyond uttering meaningful sounds to include body language, eye contact etc, which are all forms of communication. Body language can serve as a means of communication if and only if the persons concern also share similar features in common like the way of responding to stimuli or the way we come to terms with and engage our environment. Now that we

have made that point, how can we proceed from there to resolving the tension of identities that has plunged the world into chaos? The possibility of this rests in the idea of humanism which we will now turn to.

The idea of humanism is not new because it has been in use for a very long time. This may be why J. Herrick writes that:

the word has developed since its use to describe renaissance humanism' to its twentieth century use to describe a belief system that calls upon reason and values to enable us develop our lives and our societies.²

At times adjectives like 'scientific humanism', 'ethical humanism', 'religious humanism', etc. are used. These adjectives are added for clarity of purpose. It is a system of thought that questions existing ideas and quests for new ones. The idea of humanism can be traced to ancient through renaissance and enlightenment periods to the contemporary times. In the ancient period, a group from Miletus a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor, took up the major questions. One of them was Thales who said all existence was based on water. Anaximander is thought to have written a book *On Nature* which has not survived, while a fragment from his friend Anaximenes *On Nature* remains. They set out the 'naturalistic view that everything is matter.' The drama and sculpture of ancient Greece shows a preoccupation with the entirely human which was new to human culture. It is hard to imagine that the human form will ever be captured in stone so well again. Socrates is renowned for his use of dialogues as a means of philosophical exploration and it is profoundly a humanist method of inquiry,³ a method Aristotle adopted especially in his study of Ethics based entirely on the human. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were all interested in one thing – namely how society could be made better hence their different ideas on systems of government that could bring about the better life. This coincidentally is the reason for this chapter – how we can bring the different cultures of the world together in such a way that antagonisms will be greatly reduced so that individuals can aspire and attain their aspirations. This may be why Aristotle say that the reason why men came together to form society is for the attainment of the good life. This very assertion qualifies Aristotle and his predecessors as in Plato and Socrates as establishing the foundation for humanism in the ancient times.

In the renaissance, the revival of classical learning was underpinned by the development of cities life Italy. Like all such cultural movements, it may have been fuelled by increased trade, prosperity and leisure time. This justifies the reason why renaissance thinkers used the phrase *studia humanitas* to referring to the humanities. Vittorina da Fletro, Giovanni Bruno, Michel Montaigne, even Bacon all made their contributions to humanism in different ways during the renaissance. And in the enlightenment, the works of Gibbon, Hume, and Owen all portrayed their call for humanism. But the most outstanding of enlightenment works is the work of Mill, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (1822). Where he puts forward arguments that could help man build society especially his emphasis on education. He capped his humanism with the ethical thesis of utilitarianism that calls for the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. And it is still in the spirit of humanism that people can today argue about the notions of fundamental human rights. The formation of the U.N. is another corollary of humanism.

Having said that, we can define humanism as that idea that attempts to return to humans the power and definition of our being - a return from narrative or textual notions of our being to the human condition and human experience as we live it in the present age. This may be why Herrick states that “humanism is a way to live, to give meaning to life and to find and understand our place in society and, indeed the universe”.⁴ Since enlightenment, humanism has focused on fairly specific human abilities especially the ability of each of us to reason out the world and our being within it, and has concentrated on science and the scientific method to distill and clarify the ways in which we can obtain truth about the world, and potentially about the human.

As already mentioned, the greatest challenge confronting us today is probably that of bringing cultures together i.e. the West and the rest to harmony. We are in a time when the world’s greater and lesser political and cultural entities and traditions now meet in the large, but also in the small of interpersonal acts and interactions in many regions and most cities of the world. Through developments in communication and transportation, we now form an increasingly cosmopolitan population which meets frequently in actual interaction and in the global instanteity of television and visual reality. This is also a time when the world’s greatest gathering traditions and ideas are exchanging and changing. West meets East as South affects North. Western (Judeo-christian), Islamic, Confucian, Buddhist, Ameridian, African concepts express

themselves in politics, in medicine, in ecology, in economics, in intellectual exchanges and critiques which affect us in myriad and complex ways. Television, conversation, movies, journals, theatre, talk – the cosmopolitan buzz grows more intense each day.

In some contexts these ideas expand and enlarge all our thinking. In others, they seem to conflict and compete as each of the large traditions which have had the conceptual power to gather large numbers of persons, want to claim its own authority within the obviousness of its pronounced truths and histories. It is this setting, in moments of great gathering and /or conceptual conflict or competition that we address the possibility of an inclusive global humanism. It is in this moment that there is competition for ideas, that there are also potential openings for the development of creative ideas. Can we develop a notion of global humanism which is inclusive more than competitive; which might grow beyond the particularities of various world traditions to become more truly global? An initial difficulty is that humanism is at some variance with the range of world histories and traditions in which our ideas of universality may be seen as an imposition of western ideas upon the rest of the world: an intellectual and political colonization more than concepts which might be more truly global and free of the traditions in which they originally gained meaning and power – a new form of or cloak of power grab. Global humanism may well be associated early and directly with the prevailing world political economy, and opposed (even adapted) within the various traditions as they are. In other words, the argument is that the concepts of individual freedom and integrity which underlie humanism are derived particularly from western history, irrespective of their potential global application. This may be why Huntington writes that:

what, however, do non western societies have in common other than the fact they are non western? Japanese, Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, and African civilizations share little in terms of religion, social structure, institutions, and prevailing values. The unity of the non west and the east-west dichotomy are myths created by the west.⁵

Be that as it may, we may be able to develop a global humanism which is not bound to the ideas of any religion, tradition or culture, but cuts more to some core of human experience. Can we somehow relook at the human condition – outside any oppositional derivation of humanism – and attempt to see what gathers and creates meaning in the

human condition? If so, can we find gathering ideas which can still be seen as global humanism, rather than some ideas wrenched from contexts of enlightenment, universal rationality, and so on? Can we, that is, circumnavigate cultural, political, and historical issues in order to explore and establish a global humanism? How can some, at least partially very different cultures and traditions come together in some unity of humanism, with a sense of positive virtue more than hegemonic yearnings? As our previous chapters have shown, each culture, tradition and civilization has similar or mutually understandable ways or ideas of considering the nature of the human. The openings for new ideas therefore, reside in the loci of the definition of being human as have been formulated in different contexts. This is what you find in the pragmatism of Dewey, James and Meads.⁶

At this point of our thinking towards a global humanism, it seems important to critique whence our ideas have derived, but particularly to begin to rethink the nature of the human. What needs to be included in such a study, and how do we go about it? How do we think about a global humanism in the context of the world's traditions? Does humanism easily and directly expand or does it have different resonances as it claims to have a place in the thinking of non-westerners, and to expand to include potentially all the people of the world? Is this humanistic feeling universal, following some usually western notions of human being and knowledge? – in the wake of current arguments with China and other countries over questions of human rights. In attempting to expand an idea of humanism derived from western ideation as many see it, is it reasonable or legitimate to expand the idea of humanism to the entire world? How can we go about seeking some core aspects of human nature which might resonate globally, yet still develop a recognizable humanism which expands the concepts of individuality, rationality, and human understanding? Our quest for attaining an inclusive humanism, shall attempt to answer these legitimate questions.

The world as many know is rapidly becoming smaller, peoples and ideas interacting everyday in computational time. There is an increasing sense that all is becoming one: a global society. What sort of world would we have? Can we form a singularity which is not dominated principally by political economy – transnational corporations – or by some religious and or political totalitarian? Can we find, live in harmony dominated, say by a universal golden rule: a rational and inclusive humanism supporting participatory democracy, extended to the sense of the universality of objective knowledge? Or do we witness the rise of forms of cultural hegemony which

are less inclusive and tolerant? Will an emerging global culture look like democracy, a word in which each person have some say; a top-down despotic rule control and power?

To the pessimist, it seems some how inevitable that an inclusive humanism will never be feasible given the fact that very soon another cultural tradition will attempt to take over as China is already doing with the Proliferation of China town in most countries of the world. Also there are some pessimistic views that an inclusive humanism will never be feasible because the future will see an increasing number of anarchic, small wars similar to Somalia, particularly over water, gangs, tyrants, localisms, fundamentalisms etc.

For the optimist, the facts of our cosmopolitan global communication seem hopeful. A global melting pot has very real dimensions for many people. In the context of these global gatherings, we can begin to imagine and construct a globality, a sense of being and governing which would be more inclusive, sense of some – think to which we could adhere, with which we could agree – a global humanism. According to Sarles as quoted by Huntington:

there is now a vast and growing cosmopolitan awareness of the ideas and traditions of the world's constellations of being and meaning. We are, remarkably, able to communicate to a large extent with everyone, and can at least find glimmerings of what is in common to all humans. There is ample evidence of some commonalities of human nature: experience, abilities, practices virtues. Human grounds for a global sociality are, that is, apparently available, irrespective of history and polity. The path: from commonality to communality.⁷

The commonalities of the world's traditions which have been successful in gathering large numbers of people overtime, is that they somehow promise a good and hopeful future. The west, might render to this as utopic or transcendent: a time when all will be good, and will do well; a return to heaven for Christians, the idea for the Jews that the best is yet to be; for Buddhists that nirvana is a great release from life conceived as a burden, for the Confucians that if we remain on the way, life will increasingly reward us. All these religious traditions have something in common which is; they are all futuristic. There is apparently something in the human condition about futurity and its promises and possibilities that work to gather people; to gather persons

beyond the families and small direct-experience communities into the imagined communities which have become states foundational thinking for our notions of the body politic.

Consequently, the ideas which have worked to gather peoples and their notions of self-definition, their sense of belonging and covenant with others, their willingness to become subservient to institutions and ideations, have been notions which transcend individual lives. These are notions of the future. The promise of an all inclusive humanism is to say the least utopic because we can never have a world devoid of cultural clashes, but we can aim at a near perfect global society since:

competing traditions are actively receding in their demands upon their people(s), tending to place many of the world's persons in a cosmopolitan setting and sensibility. This is to say that establishing a global notion such as Humanism has a fairer possibility of realization than any other era so far. Something of global dimension will happen in the near future. It is timely to have this discussion at this moment in what is soon to be: Global history.⁸

To this end, the possibility of an inclusive humanism can only be possible if we continue to hope for a better future for humankind. This idea of futurity will help men live peaceably with one another in the hope of the future bliss that will come hereafter. Fanon on his part proposes that despite his insistence on violence, he was reaching for a new form of humanism to come into effect. Fanon proposes an ethics of recognition of difference within the postcolonial paradigm as the first step on the route to the new humanism. Through mutual recognition, subjectivities are forged, and from this point a humanist vision is possible. Once mutual recognition has been accorded, it can lead to a collective ethics. Finally Fanon calls for a shift in national consciousness – which ought not to stay confined to the ‘national’. Fanon proposes that ‘oppressed’ peoples join up with peoples who are already sovereign if a humanism that can be considered valid is to be built to the dimensions of the universe in what is surely a universalism.⁹

Furthermore, for us to have that humanist order that will carry all cultural traditions in its stride, Rosseau argues that the west must downplay its air of technical supremacy which she regarded as a criterion of civilization that she in return passed to others. More than one modern thinker has perceived this evil which has disseminated

throughout the world by the contagion of an error. We may question in this connection the following remarks made by the Lord Porthsmouth in his book *Alternative to Death*:

we have committed a crime against the Oriental (the rest) countries by the arrogant super-imposition of doubtful alien techniques as ideologies ... spiritually we have been iconoclastic ... and for that, far more than the fact that we have appeared as conquerors, we shall not lightly be forgiven.¹⁰

We must look for a complete reversal of this state of affairs, that is to say a resurrection of spiritual life would demand the abject capitulation of technical civilization. The question is not as simple as that because the inclusive humanism we are concerned about is not some abstract value but something that must address and solve a human problem. This may be what Brosse in Gupta and Banerji admiringly stated in the following lines:

the most urgent problem of our times is the foundation of a science of man which shall not be only a science of the human animal, but a science of the complete man, with all his spiritual values studied both from the individual and from the social point of view. Man has just wrested from matter the secret of its universal forces. Unless he simultaneously turns the same zeal for discovery on himself in order to mobilize in his consciousness all his potentialities of understanding and of love – or if this power over matter only falls into his hands to sow terror and death – then it is the end of humanity.¹¹

The problem is therefore a universal one, a mere question of settling an opposition or finding an equilibrium between the west and the rest, considered as antagonistic worlds. It is indeed for both worlds, united in the same danger and face to face with the same destiny, the same problem of the reconquest of a real and complete humanism. If we are to attain this inclusive humanism, the west and the rest must take the same road, in the direction opposite from their common error.

Let us start with the rest, which should be the less committed to the error, since it was attacked more recently and by contagion. It must in any case cease to revere as unquestionable principles of civilization and certain formidable elements that go to make up political and social power in our times. It would be hard to find a more

pertinent comment on this than the warning given to one of the great civilizations of Asia, that of India¹², about losing her soul while pursuing western model of progress. A warning like this holds good for other peoples and civilizations of the East and Africa. The error the West committed struck first of all at itself. That error was committed at the expense of resources which it possessed, which it has neglected, not to say compromised, but which could non the less be brought back to honour. Since the west bears the prime responsibility for the ills of modern world, the question of how it can rediscover itself is one of the most important we have to examine.

If the word 'humanism' connotes the homeland of the human spirit, then Mediterranean Europe is not its sole and permanent seat, nor is its only source a certain idea of Greco-Roman antiquity which, particularly as concerns Greece, corresponds less to the total reality of the classical world than to a picture of which renaissance man saw the lineaments in his own mirror. On the other hand, once present day western humanism is placed back inside the boundaries which must beset it, the crises which confronts it today will cease to appear either as unexpected or as an inevitable catastrophe. The calamity would only be absolute if we persisted in regarding the prestige of human reason as absolute. If we recognize this fact, then will be able in the words of Russell as quoted by Herrick be able to:

care for what is noble, for what is beautiful, for what is gentle. To allow moments of insight to give wisdom at more mundane times' and to see in my imagination the society that is to be created, where individuals grow freely, and where hate and greed and die because there is nothing to nourish them.¹³

These are the true goals of inclusive humanism. These goals of Russell may never be realizable if humankind fails to resolve the fundamental problems that can bring about an inclusive humanism. These problems include the problem of multiplicity; the one and the many in terms of culture and religion.¹⁴ This problem arises from a special conjunction – the perfect storm if you like. On the one hand, there is the new awareness of human freedom as creatively shaping, and thereby constituting each culture as unique. In a highly diversified world this entails an evermore intense awareness the multiplicity of cultures and civilizations. On the other hand, there is the process of globalization which brings these cultures and civilizations together in increasingly

intense interaction with one another. Together these generate a new mode of the classical issue of unity and multiplicity in terms of the relatedness of the many cultures, religions, civilization and peoples which constitute our world.

Ancient clues for understanding and responding to this can be found in Plato's notion of participation. To begin with, the uniqueness of each culture is central to this analysis. As a culture is created by the free self – determination of a people, it is unique to that people. Like each act of freedom it is not only from that agent, but is the responsibility of that agent and could be done by no one else. Each culture is the distinctive manner in which a specific people realize its life. It is according to its own formative and commitments for which that people is responsible.

Cultures then are unique in as much as each people realizes its life or being, not as an univocal instance of the same specific type, but in its own existentially proper manner as shaped over time by the creative exercise of its own freedom making its own decisions and commitments. It is crucial to the exercise of human freedom then that the cultural uniqueness of each people not be compromised, but rather maximized. There must be no dismissal of human creativity, but lobotomy of peoples in search of a common or universal least-common-denominator. The real challenge now is rather to be able to live fully our unique identities in the newly global context.

Another point is the similarities between cultures. This lies paradoxically in the effort of each people to live its own proper culture in its own way, that is, not univocally, but according to an analogy of proper proportionality. Where before now, philosophers spoke of an abstract, universal and univocal nature (e.g. rational animal), now however it is possible to take account from within of the long exercise of freedom by a people in their concrete circumstances. The nature according to which we live is not a genuine freedom, but the actual cumulative freedom that has contributed our culture as the pattern in terms which we see, judge, and act. Similarly, in these existential terms is realized not by diminishing or compromising one's identity or culture but in the living of it to the full.

More still, complementarity between cultures is another point worthy of our consideration. The unity between cultures is complementary according to an analogy of attribution. A being acts and causes according to its nature or essence. Hence, the cause of the existence of each of the multiple peoples or cultures must be Being whose essence is to be itself (we shall shed more light on this when we examine the existentialist perspective to attaining global humanism). As such it is unlimited, infinite

and hence unique. Plato's insight regarding participation means that all else are limited effects, participations or images of this one. But if each culture is limited but unique manifestation of the one infinite existent the facet each expresses must be complementary to all other manifestations.

The next point is the convergence of cultures. Here the relation between cultures must be one of convergence. Living is a matter not of theory but of teleology for, as noted, all are not only from the One by the efficient causality of the creator, but all also are in pursuit of that one as goal and omega: each culture, in pursuing its own unique and limited perfection, pursues more ultimately the perfection which is one and infinite. Therefore, as mentioned above, each culture is not only both similar in being a pursuit of its own perfection by an analogy of proper proportionality and complementary by an analogy of proper attribution based on efficient causality. More so, all cultures are convergent in that each in its own distinctive manner tends towards the One divine or infinite perfection in an analogy of attribution base on final causality.¹⁵ In striving actively for their own perfection as images of the same one perfection all draw together in a convergent manner. This dynamic pursuit of perfection is the way Wiredu for instance contrast the theoretical, detached and distant work of philosophy to culture, which he pictured as active, engaged and uniting one with another.

Having made that point, what are the possible implication(s) for living together in a multicultural and multi religious world tilting towards an inclusive humanism? The first implication of a culture for being the cumulative freedom of a people is that all means or structures for living together must avoid any sense of domination or suppression of the freedom of the other, any freedom reduction of the other to either a clone or client. Rather stress must be placed upon recognizing others as fellow and creative humans. All are pilgrims on the path of development in search of peace and justices. This is the condition of human growth, it is also the search for a more full participation in truth, goodness and beauty.¹⁶ This entails a number of principles and conclusions

If we must attain a relatively peaceful world where all cultures and traditions will live and let live, we must avoid

1. A pseudo generosity based on the supposition that what one has worked out for some particular group should be imposed on others.

2. A pseudo stability, which for a limited time can come from an overwhelming power ruthlessly applied.
3. A pseudo peace, that comes from suppression as practiced in the so called real politik.

Instead for an inclusive humanism to take roots, we have to recognize that

1. All are created equal and therefore free – and hence peace lies in the mutual promotion of the pursuit of human fulfillment.
2. That the human person is essentially relational – and hence our futures are so bound together as to require mutual recognition, respect and cooperation, and
3. That peace can be had only from the free pursuit of harmony and hence in a global age, “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall possess the land”.

For all these to be possible, we must learn to cultivate the virtue of toleration. Toleration is a matter of putting up with that which you oppose; the motto of the tolerant person is ‘live and let live’.¹⁷ Even when what he or she lets live shocks, enrages, frightens, or disgusts her. As such, toleration is an invaluable value. In a world of conflict in which the need for toleration is increasingly urgent, there is a greater effort to reeducate citizens as they form and revise their beliefs, customs and traditions so as to ensure that the commitments informing their inevitable oppositions are responsibly held, thereby positioning them as potential tolerators. And it mandates a framework for deliberation about the resolution of such oppositions whereby the content of the rights used to set the limits of toleration can be expanded to deliver protection to those who can make a case for it consistent with acceptance of the fact of the reasonable pluralism while exercising their capacities for a sense of justice.¹⁸ In a world in which pluralism is reasonable, permanent, and not-to-be-regretted, and in which the conflicts to be mediated by principles of toleration will not disappear, there are no other politically feasible options fit to provide a baseline of fair stability through toleration on which all further visions of justice and human cohesion depend.

From all said so far, we can glean the following principles for an inclusive humanism to be feasible in a multi cultural, multi religious and multi racial world.

1. That the understanding and skills for responding to, and cooperating with, other culture must supplant ideological aggression that hitherto characterize earlier notion of humanism that has made it suspect.

2. That the only real safeguard is not closure upon one's own protection, but openness of heart to the existential concerns of others and the cultures they have struggled to create.
3. That the true real politik is that imaged by prophet Isaiah that "all peoples each on their own pilgrimage and all converging on the one holy mountain where God will be all in all".¹⁹

We are not categorically stating that this inclusive humanism will succeed in overcoming humankind's immense problems – with the Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds making their transition from medieval to modern mentality without succumbing to the dangers so evident in the west; with Marxist and Maoist civilizations developing their own forms of personal freedom and creativity; and with the Christian west learning nonviolence from the profoundly peaceful tradition of Buddhism, and learning a certain detachment from material possessions from traditional Hindu wisdom. We do not profess to know whether any of these things will happen. But what can be said with assurance is that each great stream of culture, tradition, faith, etc. within which human life is lived can learn from the other's and that any hope for the future lies largely in the world of dialogue which is only possible when there is understanding across cultures. It is His holy will that all should live in peace, harmony and mutual support. Intolerance of any person is anti humanism. Love and truth are of the best and highest values. These and other common lessons are enough to unite all people in harmony. They make up the ground of our oneness. How wonderful a thing it would be, and how joyful life would be, if the cultural minorities enjoy the goodwill of the majorities and if the majorities enjoy the goodwill of the minorities, mutual understanding, acceptance, and brotherhood would be the result – something wise and enlightened people desire, and something which today's world needs so badly. This is indeed the sense of an inclusive humanism. According to Huntington:

human society is "universal because it is human' particular because it is a society". At times we march with others; mostly we march alone. Yet a 'thin' morality does derive from the common human condition, and "universal dispositions" are found in all cultures. Instead of promoting the supposedly universal features of one civilization, the requisites for coexistence demand search for what is common to most civilizations in a

multi civilizational world, the constructive course is to renounce universalism, accept diversity and seek commonalities.²⁰

Talking about commonalities, we notice that at least at a basic “thin” morality level, some commonalities exist between Asia, Africa, and the west whatever the degree to which they have divided humankind. The world’s major traditions – western Christianity, orthodoxy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism – also share key values in common. If humans are ever to develop a universal civilization, it will emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of these commonalities. Thus, in addition to the abstention rule and the mediation rule: peoples of other civilizations should search for and attempt to expand their values, institutions, and practices they have in common with peoples from other civilizations. Since religion to a large extent is the storehouse of culture, bringing the different religions together will be a very good starting point toward this inclusive humanism we crave for. Rousseau writes that by bringing religions together, “every value in every part of the world and in every period of the world’s history, recovers not only its use but its place in an ordered hierarchy”.²¹ Whether such values come from the East or from the West, they are no longer rivals, but converge towards this new humanism which leads towards some form of universality not in virtue of some questionable claim, but of its own inner logic.

Consequently, there is no question of confounding various spiritual/religious traditions in a hotchpotch of improvised equivalents. The impulse that is needed today is one that will free the life of the mind from the limits within which the western outlook has so long confined it. The essence of inclusive humanism will be that in the methods of life and work that western intelligence has been able to master will be employed in the discovery of long abandoned religious domains. Thus, intelligence, instead of exposing mankind to the risks that results from its presumptions and its encroachments, will need all its alertness and its strength to serve the cause of a man who will be really complete this time; not a man sidetracked into the materialistic aspects of life but a man who will be united, body and soul. For a man of this kind, it will be difficult to want to harm another for the simple reason that his is different. This is the spirit of an inclusive humanism.

It is our summation that if a humanism such as this is to be realized, East and the west, north and south will find out that much that separates them will disappear and everything that unites them – and unites the whole human race – would emerge.²² All the grounds for disagreement and misunderstanding which we discussed in the previous chapters would be done away with. It would then be seen that the necessary condition of any real liberation of any group of people be it Africans, Asians, or Westerners would be the general liberation of the spiritual nature of man – a liberation which is no less necessary for humanity. It is non the less true that certain habits of thinking are not too easy to disturb and that certain reclassifications of values may come as a shock. That is perhaps a further reason why international, intercontinental and inter-confessional leaders of thought will have to unite their efforts with a view to reaching together the spiritual bases found in all men where common truths irrespective of culture, tradition, race, or creed merge. Where this is the case, we will according to Arkes achieve a near perfect state – a New Jerusalem, as it were on earth.²³

So far, we have been making general analysis as to how global humanism can be attained. Let us at this juncture be more systematic as we try to locate some theories that can accommodate most of our analysis for easy understanding. In this regard, we shall be considering African idea of community sometimes termed communalism, existentialists' humanism, and African Christian humanistic value theory.

THE THEORY OF COMMUNALISM

There is no gainsaying the fact that in many African traditional cultures, the idea of the individual person is, for the most part, tied to the idea of the community. The community here is characterized as a life community in which there is an intimate personal interaction among human beings as opposed to the recently impersonal modern Western set-up where everyone minds his or her own business. In a typical African setting, community is neither to be understood in the additive sense of a non-organic bringing together of atomic individuals into a unit akin to an association. In the African sense, there is an assumed organic dimension to the relationship between the component individuals that form the community. Put differently, community here is constituted of a group of people who together experience reciprocity of awareness.²⁴ The existence of common ties, and biological bonds, interdependent relationships, common interests, and goals is crucial to an adequate sense of community; that in fact

constitutes a people into a community, into a social train driven by communalism. This may be why George Ehusani writes that:

The African values community living not only because “it is good for kinsmen to do so,” but because life is his or her ultimate concern, and that life can only grow in relationships. Outside the community, there is no life. To excommunicate oneself or to be excommunicated from the community is to be dead.²⁵

He buttressed this assertion by saying that the traditional African does not retreat from people to some lonesome part of the world but rather, he is interested in people because life is drawn from persons, energy is found in the midst of person, so also does beauty inhere in human beings. The idea of individuals withdrawing into solitude is very far from the African.

Africans are known all over for their kin sense of family and kinship. The characteristically African family loosely called “extended family” is an institution in which “everybody is somebody”. It provides social security against sudden death, crop failure, natural disaster and group feud and incursions.²⁶ More so, most analysts have attributed low rate of suicide in Africa to the idea of community. Also the notions of hospitality – an equally widely acknowledged African virtue, flows from the African spirit of solidarity and inclusiveness. Another virtue tied to the African sense of community is that of sacrifice for the common good. All these put together places Africans on a better position to propel the rest of human kind in her search for global humanism.

In line with above analysis, Julius Nyerere, one of Africa’s advocates for communalism is of the opinion that for Africa and Africans, and the human race to live well, we must imbibe the principle of ‘Ujamaa’. Ujamaa is a Kiswahili word that means “familyhood” or “brotherhood”. It is an attempt to build communalism from the extended family system and brotherhood of traditional Africa. Ujamaa signifies a set of ideas and principles, a mass ideology, a programme of action and an African brand of socialism. According to Nyerere, African socialism must be “rooted in our past – in the traditional society which produces us – the recognition of society, an extension of the family unit.” Through ujamaa, Nyerere wanted to recapture the old African social order where everybody was his brother’s keeper and where there were no unemployed adults.

To him, traditional society serves as a guide to us on how to attain intrinsic good both materially and psychologically. He maintains that in traditional Africa, every man contributes to the general pool for the general welfare. This is exemplified in the communal ownership of land which every generation held in trust and exercise sacred responsibility to the future generation.²⁷ One of the basic tenets of ujamaa is its rejection of individualism. African society was communalist. Individualism is an European trait. It is alien to the African. Another is the idea of hard-work. In traditional African communal setting, everybody worked for the wellbeing of the entire community. Idleness was considered a social sin. “Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a jembe (hoe)” is a famous African saying. African socialism must guarantee full employment. There is complete absence of class stratification and racial inequalities.

To maintain the African value standard and purge her of alien ideas inconsistent with them, ujamaa is required. The people must be reminded of their past egalitarianism and pristine virtues. The question analysts have asked is whether Nyerere considers the whole of human race in his conception of Ujamaa or only Africans. This assertion tells us that ujamaa is capable of having universal application when he writes that:

Ujamaa requires that the traditional attitude of mind be projected out ward to incorporate not only every (Tanzanian) but all mankind. Thus, the crusade will not only rediscover and revitalize native values but extend these present parochial values to the entire human race.²⁸

If everyone sees everyone as brother or family irrespective of one’s cultural standpoint or religion, it will take a beast to want to harm that person he or she calls brother. From an African perspective, we remember what happened to Okonkwo in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* when he raised a machete against Ikemefuna, the slave boy that calls him father. That single act led to the break down of the existing social order. In the same vein, in the spirit of brotherhood, it will be against the dictates of ujamaa for one to want to hurt a fellow human being. It is this African sense of community that runs through the works Kenneth Kaunda, Kwame Nkrumah and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

If global humanism must be attained, it is pertinent we imbibe these African virtues of one being his brother's keeper as exemplified in the dignity placed on human worth. If beauty actually inheres in the human person, peoples of the world ought to strive to be more accommodating to all human beings irrespective of their skin colour or culture. We have to transcend these barriers individualism has placed on us to becoming more human. More human implies being more sociable, this again is captured in the African sense of being hospitable to strangers because at the end, it is humanity that counts. The bottom line of African communal sense is captured in the assertion "I am because we are, because we are, therefore I am." The worth of an individual is tied to the global community therefore, we have to work to protect it, because in protecting it we are invariably protecting ourselves since our fate are now bound together.

THE AFRICAN CHRISTIAN HUMANISTIC VALUE

The African Christian humanistic theory is developed by George Ehusani. According to him, the world is getting more and more divided and polarized making it very difficult to live in. there is a growing suspicion between the identity groups that permeate the globe. For this reason it is important to look for means of introducing a more human global order that will aid human bonding so as to eradicate or greatly reduce the tension of identities in the world today. Ehusani holds that the threat to human survival is caused by senseless pursuit of a lopsided technological development. He writes:

Western technological civilization has brought a lot of good to the world, it has also popularized a dysfunctional worldview, and a destructive axiology. Western technological civilization has traded half-truths and illusions to all the lands of its conquest, and these half-truths and illusions have largely been accepted as the reality.²⁹

His problem with Western technological development seems to hinge on the fact that the main cause of tension is civilizational/technological driven. This point underscores Huntington's thesis. But the inability of western patterned development to see to the dignity of the human person makes it too materialistic. So many have come to see materialism as the driving philosophy that everyman, or culture should imbibe

ignoring the spiritual dimension of man. This may be why we are witnessing all forms of social ills – murder, arson, rape, ethnic cleansing, genocide, etc. around the world all in the name of development. In the face of these senseless killings, human life has ceased to be significant as abortions are being committed on daily basis without giving a thought to the morality of this and other kinds of acts. For true humanism to be enthroned, we have to reject this trend of development because it implies a definition of the human person by how much he/she eats, how fast he/she travels, and how well he/she uses space and people, etc; but not by who he/she actually is.

It is in the face of this that African Christian Humanism becomes relevant. This is only an alternative to the lopsided development agenda put forward by the west. A system that has turned man into what material benefit he can add to the society and not his worth as a human being divinely created. Pope John VI abhors the developmental paradigm when he writes that “the promotion of the good of the people, every person, and the whole person should be the focus of any meaningful development”.³⁰ For John Paul II, “the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of persons over things, and the superiority of spirit over matter” should be the essence of development. In the same vein, Emmanuel Milingo enthused that there can never be such thing as a developed nation unless that nation has been able to make its people live together in harmony and unity. By extension, there can never be such thing as a developed world no matter our technological and scientific feats unless the peoples of the world live in peace with one another irrespective of culture, tradition, or religion. Put in a different sense, that development is worthless that is not channeled towards global unity and harmony. But how can we achieve this development? Ehusani opines that this development we yearn for:

has to be integral or “holistic”. In addition to material advancement, development has to embrace the soul and the spirit of the human person, and the physical environment in which he or she thrives.³¹

From the above assertion, Ehusani seems to be making the point that the human person should be the end of development. Development must see to the growth and fulfillment of the human person, and of every human person as the goal of progress in science and technology, in economics, in politics as well as religion. For him, development must be a human fact that must be more spiritual and cultural than

economic and technical. It must mean a commitment that is on going. One that must advance from the less human conditions of disease, hatred, crime, war, racism, oppression, injustice, etc; to the more human conditions of health, love, peaceful coexistence, equity, global justice etc. the question is, how can this be attain? The answer lies in African Christian Humanistic value. To properly understand this theory, it is pertinent to examine that thing about the African that has caught the attention of Christianity which is a purely Western tradition. This theory is eclectic in the sense that it is a combination of those cherished African values with that of Christianity, a religion founded on love.

Let us begin by x-raying the African cherished values that has endeared it to Christianity. Africans recognize the dignity of the human being and, in consequence, hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare and happiness. For Africans, the powers of the supernatural are to be tapped and used for the welfare of humans in this world. This underscores the reason why prayers are usually channeled towards the betterment of lives. More so, the thoughts, actions, art, and institutions of the African people according to Gyekye are replete with expressions of concern for human welfare and the importance of the human being.³² Further more, recognition of the value of humanity is intrinsically linked with recognition of the unity of all people, whether or not they are biologically related.³³

More still, the extended family system and clan structure is a pointer to the deep seated appreciation of humanity by the African. This is seen in different ways from complex networks of social relationships to opening one's doors to complete strangers and showing them acts of generosity. The question one may ask is: Why do Africans value humanity to a fault? The answer according to Gyekye is found in this Akan proverb "the human being is more beautiful than gold".³⁴ The idea of beauty here has nothing to with looks but rather in terms of value attached to the human being. Whereas money will over time loose its value, the human being is invaluable even in death.

The importance attached to humanity is seen in the partying and merrymaking that accompany birth, naming, and even the timely death of an elder. In Africa, it is a negation of a person's humanity to pass him on the way without greetings. It is in greeting that our mutual humanity is affirmed. Failure to do this is greatly frowned at. But is this idea of humanity for Africans alone? Gyekye says no when he writes that:

implicit in the African belief that all human beings are children of God, and therefore irrespective of their racial or ethnic background belong to one universal human family is the idea of human brotherhood. And part of the African view of humanity is to recognize all persons as brothers.³⁵

Why must an African call someone of a different race brother? The reason is that our brotherhood is necessarily tied to our shared humanity – all human beings belong to one specie. This may be why we sometimes hear proverbs like “humanity knows no boundary.”

In the face of this African idea of common brotherhood, Christianity found a fertile ground to plant its message of love and brotherhood to a people that already know what it feels like to be loved by those whom we all know as brothers. So the idea of African Christian humanistic value as basis for an inclusive humanism springs from an African conception of humanity and the Christian virtues of love, peace, and universal brotherhood in Christ Jesus. Now how does this help our thesis?

We made the point that western developmental paradigm negates the spiritual dimension of the human person. African Christian humanism redirects development towards the spiritual and the material at the same time to enable us achieve global justice both at the individual level and at the national and international levels. If human kind tailors development towards the goals of love, peaceful coexistence, equity, and global justice, then we can to a large extent attain a relatively peaceful global order. This is because it is difficult for one who believes in the cherished value of the sanctity of human life to fan the embers of discord among people and between cultures. This is even more so given the fact the pattern of development pursued by African Christian humanistic theory is one that upholds an upward movement in the spiritual, moral, and material welfare of the human person and of all peoples. According to Ehusani:

on the one hand, the maximal presence of human dignity and integrity, mutual love and justice, sociability and hospitality, presence or absence of war, homicide, suicide, drug addiction... oppression and starvation... African Christian humanism seeks to promote this humanization of society by championing a movement away from the materialistic and mechanistic, and towards the humanistic.³⁶

The crux of this theory is centered around the Christian virtues of peace, love, and brotherhood of all men in conjunction with the traditional African recognition of the intersecting co-existence between the physical and visible, and the spiritual and invisible forces of the universe. It is the combination of this African world view with the mentioned virtues of Christianity that form the basis for African Christian humanism which Ehusani believes can launch us into a more comfortable, and relatively peaceful global order.

EXISTENTIALIST HUMANISM

In chapter three, we made an exposition of the basic tenets of existentialism. Here our focus will be on how existentialism as a philosophical system can help us attain a more humanistic world devoid or with reduced tension emanating from definition of identities. We will be looking at existentialism as the opening up of subjectivities. Some have argued that existentialism is a purely subjective philosophy that may not aid our quest for global humanism. Olatunji Oyeshile debunks this claim when he argues that this claim:

is at variance with the tenet of existentialism in the sense that there is an inbuilt regulator of human freedom, which is found in inter subjectivity. In other words when we pursue the concept of individual freedom to its logical conclusion, it could be discerned that it allows for the freedom of others in spite of impressions to the contrary. This is found in Sartre's statement that "when I choose for myself, I choose for others"³⁷

From this assertion, what can be gleaned is that even though we all pursue our respective lives differently as free beings, our freedom is also tied to the freedom of others. In other words, it is the freedom of others that define my freedom as a unique and different individual. In the realm of culture, we stress the uniqueness and diversity of many cultures especially as it relates in their rigorous pursuit of perfection. In this sense we are too quick to conclude that cultures are incommensurate as such it is difficult for one from a different culture to understand another. Mclean used what he called the "3 term analogy of attribution" to debunk the incommensurability thesis of culture, thus placing us on a path to global humanism. For him, the 3 term analogy of attribution is used to explain the similarity or relatedness of two by their causal relation to a third on which they both depend.³⁸ Here the proper perfection being considered is

in the third, i.e., in the one upon which the others depend. This for him is the creative power of the divine source on which all depend. What is essential in this existential, transcendental realization of participation is not that each is a replica of the same form in an identity of kind. Rather each is an actual realization of being according to the exercise of freedom that has come to constitute this as a unique culture. Yet each is similar in being related to the other one cause on which each depends. Hence, there is a similarity in each of the effects of the absolute one in that each depends for it being on the one creator, source or efficient cause.³⁹

In our search for global humanism we discover that even though different cultures and religions may profess to be different from each other, we find out that each culture and religion even though unique, tend to converge in its direction to the One (God). Put differently, while each culture or religion may be coming from distinct quarter, they tend to converge because they tend towards the same goal.

In the light of this, relativism or principle incommensurability ceases to hold because rather than each culture being isolated from, and against the other, they are both unique and at the same time convergent in their deepest search for perfection and self realization. Mclean writes that:

from this follows a founded hope, namely, that the more the cultures approach the one goal of their pilgrimages, the more they will be able to appreciate the significance and complementarity of each other. The cultures will be natively cooperative with one another precisely to the degree that they advance in their own realization.⁴⁰

Still in furtherance of existentialists' means of attaining a humanistic world, Oyeshile use Theodoros Kiro, Martin Heidegger, J. P. Sartre, Merleau Ponty, and Gabriel Marcel to provide answer to the question: how do individuals and minority ethnic groups especially, survive in a multi-cultural society? Having already considered the work of Mclean, we shall look at Heidegger and Sartre as we argue for a humanistic world.

Heidegger's existentialist philosophy is centred around the notion of 'Dasein' which means man as being there in the world. The basic condition or state of man (Dasein) is being-in-the-world. To this familiar words being- in-the-world, Heidegger provides a novel analysis and interpretation by further elucidating the essential nature

of Dasein (man). The very idea of being in the world underscores being with others. Oyeshile opines that, “Heidegger, although re-emphasizes over and over again why the Dasein should be authentic, nevertheless allows for the consideration of others in interpersonal relation which is also a basis for multi-ethnic harmony”.⁴¹ What Oyeshile is saying in essence is that even though primarily, Dasein refers to the individual in the world, he does not exist in the world alone as there are others that one way or the other will affect his being there in the world. Now that we have made the point that we exist with others in the world, how do we achieve a sense of harmony that will help us attain our goals as individuals and as a single whole? The answer lies in the interdependency of Dasein with others. Oyeshile continues that:

as Daseins, both at the individual and ethnic group levels, survival is only possible if and only if we recognize the importance of others not as mere objects standing in the way of achieving our goal of survival, but as ends in themselves who are not only important but also inevitable and inescapable in the realization of our goal of survival and freedom.⁴²

We see a tincture of Kant in this assertion when he asked that we should always see human beings as ends and not as means to different ends. From Heidegger’s perspective, global humanism is possible if we apply the principle of live and let live. The principle of ‘thrownness’ invariably binds us together because we are thrown into the same world irrespective of race or religion or culture. Whether we like it or not we are condemned to living together. But must we tear each other apart in our quest for ontological space or try to make meaning by making our sojourn on earth worthwhile? As rational beings, the choice is that we pursue peace together because such is our ‘facticity’. The notions of ‘anxiety’ and ‘anguish’ caused by the fear of the unknown should guide the hearts and minds of Daseins towards lasting peace. Dasein cannot prolong or have the freedom to actualize his essence in a world of strife, discord, and disharmony. A world of this kind will only help re-emphasize the “nothingness” Dasein tries to run away from. Global humanism is possible when we all affirm our authentic selves while not jeopardizing the freedom others equally have to express theirs.

Further more, Sartre’s analysis of the nature of existence gives us insight on how to attain global humanism. Underlying his popular formulation of existentialism is his idea that unlike other objects, man possesses consciousness. For this reason, he is

related to the world of things and people in a variety of ways. It is the possession of consciousness that will guide Sartre's analysis towards humanism. As conscious beings, we are aware of the plight of other conscious beings in the world. We need others to be able to carve out our essences. We exist, we find ourselves here because there are no prescriptions and we must define, decide for ourselves the kind of persons we want to be. The essence thus follows existence.

In existentialism, the question of identity is central: basically, who am I? Sartre thought that we are, in principle, free to define our identity. There is no script for our roles, there is no 'essence' that tells us who we are and what we ought to be. We are all free, and we all bear the responsibility to find the answer. Sartre inherited the problem of identity and recognition from Hegel, who viewed the question of identity as a question of relationship between human subjects: when two subjects meet, a struggle for recognition arises, a struggle to determine how they are mutually to view themselves as well as each other. This is a spiritual 'struggle' in the sense that it is not primarily a struggle for material things, but for mutual recognition. Still, for Hegel, it was a struggle of life and death; the question of who we are in relation to others is vital for us. Moreover, from Hegel's perspective, it was a question of being recognized either as superior or as inferior. It was a struggle to determine who is to be 'master' and who is to be 'slave' – and Hegel also related these positions to material conditions.

Hence, Hegel conceived of human identity-our self-understanding and our understanding of the other(s) – as a vulnerable product of an ongoing socio-psychological process. Identity is not something that we have, like hair colour or genetic make up, it is something that we gain through a tension-filled intersubjective process, and it is something that can be endlessly rechallenged. We are vulnerable not only as physical beings, in regard to sickness and death, but also as social beings, in regard to others' definition and redefinition of our identity.⁴³

But by pretending that our identity is merely a product of nature, we can give the impression, to ourselves and to others, that this socially defined identity is as unchangeable as other natural phenomena. The slave is slave by nature and the master is master by nature – as something externally fixed. Hence, both the noble man and servant subvert the thesis that social status is really a socially defined mutual understanding that can be changed. This is how we may interpret Hegel's point, and these were the kinds of interpretations that Sartre inherited from Hegel.

For Sartre, such a rationalization would be an example of ‘bad faith’, that is to say, self-deficit: a failure to take the existential responsibility for our own life, for answering the question of who we are. But this is actually part of a struggle, for Sartre as well as for Hegel. There was always for Sartre, the perception of a power struggle when two people face each other: who will gain control, who will define their relation?

Even in the unequal forms of mutual understanding and identity, both parties are involved, both parties accept the inequality. It is a question of a mutual relationship. We cannot have the identity that we want without the acceptance of others. We can infer that for Sartre, it is because we are dependent on what others think of us that the struggle is inevitable.

We have been examining the possible reason for the struggle between humans that have led to the tensions between experienced from Sartre’s perspective. We had to bring in Hegel as a fore runner of Sartre in this regard. Our analysis so far has not let us into how to achieve the aim of this chapter namely; how to live together in a globalized world. According to Oyeshile, Sartre has within his existentialist philosophy those elements necessary for the accommodation of the self ‘and others’.⁴⁴ One of the ingredients is found in Sartre’s two modes of existence – being in itself and being for itself. The main feature of being for itself is the inability of being acted on from without while that of being in itself is characterized in terms of a complete incapacity for any relationship to itself. The bottom line of Sartre’s exegesis is that in human society we engage each other in mutual reciprocity. Oyeshile captures this well when he writes that:

Sartre’s subjectivism adequately provides for the existence of other consciousness in the world. Sartre believes that the self must first be for the others as a precondition for having consciousness of himself and others as being for him. What all these show is that as individuals and groups, we have our various latent and manifest identities; we cannot overlook the importance of others and we must accommodate them, because it is when we accommodate them that they will also accommodate us.⁴⁵

This is exactly what Camus put in a different way when he made the call for humans all over the world to come together to confront their common enemy (no sea). For him in face of human calamity (especially the one caused by our inability to see

one another as one), humankind cannot afford to stand aloof or remain apathetic to human suffering. By dint of sheer human solidarity, we must come together to fight against all manner of injustice and cruelty: man's inhumanity to man. Man must not submit to fate (even if our fate is such that we must add to our misery by hating anyone we perceive as different), but must impose meaning to life. We must defy the tendency to hate each other with a rebellious spirit – instead of hate, we must love. Out of our existential predicament, must human solidarity arise to counter the weight of meaninglessness. We see this very clearly in *The Plague* where men irrespective of their creed, position, religion, culture, tradition etc had no choice but to band together to confront their common enemy – the bubonic plague. In our case, our common enemy is our inability to see each other as brothers and sisters that have more to face together than the little differences noticed here and there. If we must attain this global humanism from an existentialist perspective, we must recognize that we are beings with other beings in the world who are all in dire need of actualizing their essences. This can only be possible if all men come together in solidarity to look for means of overcoming their perceived differences that has led to all sorts of problems for the human race.

We conclude our analysis on global humanism with the point that if we mean it, we can actually attain peace. But there are conditions. This kind of peace must require mutual collaboration true to proportion in the harboring partnership of cultures. Individuals as well as cultures must tune to each other in depth and height. Humanity must experience immanence in to one another, as well as transcendence viz a viz their particular cultural traits. All must give up something in order to embrace the higher, the highest being of peace. If any culture desires peace as all sane cultures do, then instead of monologue, dialogue is essential; instead of injustice and gross inequality, justice and fair sharing of the earth's resources are imperative; instead of politico-economic chauvinism, a humane and reasonable 'live and let live' is called for; and instead of terrorism and destructive wars, we need openness and mutual sharing in our different cultures. In one sentence, an inclusive global humanism is possible in a communicative communion of cultures.

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CONCLUSION

In this research, we examined the problem of cross cultural understanding and its implication for human kind. Some of its implications we reiterate, have led to the destruction of lives and property in many nations of the world. In Nigeria for instance, we witness countless killings in Plateau State where marauding Hausa-Fulani hide in the shadow of the night to kill unsuspecting villagers because they belong to different cultures and creeds. Identity seems to be the fundamental reason for the endless Jos chaos. Beyond Jos is the reoccurring hydra headed security threat posed by the radical Islamic group Boko Haram. Their grievance lies in their call to halt anything Western, the basic of which is education and the democratic system of government. This call has turned violent especially in their strong hold Bornu State of Nigeria where so many innocent people have lost lives and property.

In the world stage, it appears the line has been drawn between Euro-American Christianity on the one hand and Islam on the other. We witness series of bombings in Europe and countries that align with the European Union. The Israeli Embassy in Egypt was attacked because of the former's position on Palestine. Turkey of recent is in a diplomatic row with Israel over failure to allow her ship dock at Gaza. In August 2011, there was a very serious riot in London following the death of a black man shot by a white police officer. The list is unending. If we consider the trouble spots in the world, one thing stands out and that identity is actually giving direction to world politics today. To this end, most of the ongoing conflicts from Sudan in Africa to Bosnia in Eastern Europe are all conflicts of who are we?

People are now answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values customs and institutions... we know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know who we are against.¹

This assertion underscores the fact that the battle line has been drawn against those we perceive as different from us. This being the case, we will continue to experience the tension of identities which is quite bad for human flourishing. Let us at this juncture remind ourselves of what we did in this work.

In the third chapter, we considered the debate between the proponents of cultural universalism and cultural particularism. We extended the debate to the realm of philosophy to enable us shed more light on the nature of the problematic as far as the issue of cross cultural understanding is concerned.

The question of whether cultures do in fact understand each other was addressed in our second chapter where we provided some theories of cross cultural understanding. These theories all alluded to the fact that human nature makes for the possibility of cross cultural understanding but did not adequately address the variable in human nature that makes this possible. Hence in our fourth chapter we went beyond the earlier theories of cross cultural understanding to erecting the basis of cross cultural understanding on the epistemological principle of belief.

Having established the fact that epistemology is the basis for cross cultural understanding, we argued in the last chapter that when cultures understand each other we can attain a more harmonized, and relatively peaceful global order. This is possible if we try to see one another as brothers and sisters of a human family. Our oneness is better appreciated if viewed from space as astronauts do on their mission to space. They see one earth, one globe, one world that envelopes the entire human race.

Whether living constrained by physical boundaries or living in a borderless world in which movement between communities, cities, and nations is relatively unimpeded, we are continually negotiating spaces and developing identities within those spaces. Negotiating spaces or dwelling, to use Heidegger's concept, refers to the state of being within a socially constructed spatialization. Heidegger points out that dwelling and being are not synonymous with each other; for dwelling to occur, space must contain a place that provides a location for being to exist. For being to exist, there must be enabling conditions that can enable the flourishing of all within a defined space in our case, the world. With the dangerous weapons in the hands of different civilizations that are capable of destroying the world in one sweep, must we continue to view each other with hate and expect to live in a peaceful world? It is not possible in as much as hate begets hate. But we can make the world better for all if we put aside differences that are capable of throwing us back into the era of the world wars – to say the least, the horrors of this period stares us in the face. For any human to prefer war to peace, chaos to order, such a person must be an anarchist.

To live in a better world, it is our submission that we imbibe the African principle of '*ubuntu*'. *Ubuntu* is an all embracing African interpretation of peace. This

concept is widely used in diverse societies in Africa. It is a humanistic and holistic conception of peace. This human-oriented conception of peace embraces the six different dimensions of peace operating in the individual, local/societal, national, regional and global levels.² In the African sense, every single human being only becomes a truly human being by means of relationship with other beings. As an indigenous conflict-prevention and peace building concept, *ubuntu* embraces the notion of acknowledgement of guilt, showing of remorse and repentance by perpetrators of injustice, asking for and receiving forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation as a prelude for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

The word according to J. Francis is derived from the Bantu languages of East Africa, Central and Southern Africa. *Ubuntu* is not only an African concept, but also a cultural world view which tries to capture and convey the meaning and essence of what it means to be human. In the words of Desmond Tutu:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks to every essence of being human. When you want to speak in high praise of someone we say, 'yu u nobuntu'; he or she has ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, and compassionate. they share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs, we belong to a bundle of life. We say 'a person is a person through other people'... I am human because I belong, I participate, I share. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.³

Post apartheid South Africa applied *Ubuntu* in her quest for a strong and united South Africa. After Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first black President of South Africa, he sought to bury the past injustices and rally the entire country to the path of greatness. He did not go to the West, East, North or South to look for a binding principle. He picked what Africa has in abundance – *ubuntu*. With *ubuntu* as the point of reference, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed headed by Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu. The Commission encouraged grief stricken South Africans to

come and testify to the atrocities of their white counterparts in the hail days of apartheid. *Ubuntu* encouraged speaking up and pouring out of grief instead of bottling it inside. To a large extent, the commission delivered on its mandate as there was a great mending of fences between black and white South Africans spearheaded by Mandela's visit to the widow of his jailer Mrs Botha. This was the spirit of *ubuntu*. South Africa is today the greatest country on the continent because of *ubuntu* powered reconciliation.

In the face of great threat posed by Boko Haram, Nigeria is in dire need of the gains of *ubuntu*. When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate and when we oppress others, we oppress ourselves. If only Boko Haram would understand that all our humanity is dependent on recognising the humanity of others. If the group realises that our humanity was intertwined, may be we can start to engage in meaningful dialogue that can help reduce the security threat posed by the sect. It is true that South Africa has not solved all her problems yet, it is also true that there are instances of violence and rape reported on international media in South Africa, but the gains of *ubuntu* cannot be lost on the country. Since technological advancement has failed in bringing an end to the menace of Boko Haram, it is time to look at our values to see what can be of use in putting this problem to rest. The African principle that can be very valuable in resolving the security problem of Boko Haram is the principle of *ubuntu*.

The essence of *Ubuntu* is to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and mutual development. As a humanist concept, *ubuntu* is based on the principle of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples and communities. The *ubuntu* tradition will help us in our quest for attaining a global order devoid of social antagonisms if pursued and implemented to the later. Beyond the idea of *ubuntu*, are the principles or theories of humanism already considered. These include existentialist perspective to having a humanized world, the theory of communalism especially Nyerere's variant, and African Christian humanistic values. If all these are religiously held and practiced we can start blurring the features that make us draw lines between 'we' and 'them'. Only in this regard can we start enjoying our place in the world. The interconnectedness of human beliefs can help us attain this aspiration.

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